

Fiction on the Quad



Krista Goodman/Index

Professor of English James D'Agostino's senior seminar students sit on the steps of the Kirk Memorial Building on Tuesday to listen to Senior Ella Huelman read her short fiction story.

Court hears rate hike case

BY BAILLIE JAMES
Staff Reporter

Evidentiary hearings by the Missouri Public Services Commission ending this week will determine whether Ameren UE will be allowed to increase energy costs by up to 18 percent in May. This increase would be in addition to a 9 percent price increase last year. Truman is taking measures to be more sustainable to offset these price increases.

The PSC is reviewing evidence presented by lawyers representing Ameren UE and transcripts of three recent public hearings. Gregg Ochoa, public information coordinator for the PSC, said these public hearings allow citizens to have a voice in the review process. Before March 20, citizens could also submit their own opinions to be included with the evidence.

"Most of the citizens' comments at the public hearings have been concerned," Ochoa said. "The estimated rate increase done by the Public Service Commission staff for the commissioners just gives a snapshot in time, but a lot of factors impact how much a rate increase for Ameren UE would be."

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Gregg Ochoa
Public information coordinator for the PSC

March 15 to 19 and March 22 to 26. A decision will be made in late May, and Ameren or any participant in the case can appeal the verdict. The Missouri PSC regulates utility companies and annually examines companies' financial records to ensure that rate increases are reasonable.

Joshua Mantooth, executive member of Environmental Campus Organization at Truman, testified at the Feb. 2 public hearing on Truman's campus. He wrote a letter to the commission along with about 20 other ECO members asking it to decline the rate hike request. Those letters will be included with the evidence examined at the evidentiary hearings.

Mantooth said most people who testified at the Feb. 2 hearing had fixed incomes and expressed concern about their ability to pay rising costs for the same amount of energy.

"I don't see how they can approve it," Mantooth said. "[Ameren's] profits are doing fine. They even said that at the hearing. I think it's ridiculous for them to ask people who are on fixed incomes to pay that much more for electricity."

The increasing costs would certainly boost Truman's electricity expenses. As of the end of the 2009 fiscal year in June, electricity for

Ameren UE Price Comparison Electricity Bills:

2009 Fiscal Year

Academic Buildings: \$1,066,000
Residence Halls: \$665,000
Student Union Building: \$104,860

With an 18% increase

\$1,257,880
\$784,700
\$123,735



Design by Cameron Ballentine/Index

academic buildings cost more than \$1 million, residence hall electricity bills totaled \$665,000 and electricity for the Student Union alone cost \$104,860. With an 18 percent increase, Truman would have to pay an additional \$191,880 per year to maintain academic buildings alone.

Karl Schneider, director of Truman's physical plant, provided these statistics and said Truman estimates possible price increases when they create the electricity budget each year.

John Gardner, interim director of Residence Life, said the residence halls are doing all they can to conserve energy to offset increasing electricity costs and other energy expenses. He said housing costs include many things, such as

Internet and staffing, in addition to electricity. Gardner said making residence halls more sustainable or adjusting these other expenditures may be a way to offset increases in electricity costs.

"When [Ryle's renovations are complete] it will be the most energy-efficient building we have," Gardner said. He said that renovating residence halls allows Truman to save a great deal of energy and money while conserving the environment by installing certain lights, showerheads, faucets and heating/cooling systems and using stickers rather than glue on carpet tiles.

Lisa Manzo, Ameren UE Communications Executive, said Ameren has begun implementing

efforts to use more renewable energy. In 2009, Ameren UE announced efforts to utilize wind power, solar power and methane gas to increase the company's use of renewable energy.

Manzo said the pending rate hike would recover money from past expenses, but would not cover these new changes.

Many of Ameren's renewable energy efforts are accomplished through the Pure Power program in which households add a per-kilowatt-hour fee onto their monthly bill. The Pure Power Web site estimates this adds about \$15 to each participating household's monthly bill.

Manzo said she could not comment on the ongoing hearings.

The Adair County Health Department

invites Truman Students to join us for
"Public Health Week"
April 5th - April 9th, 2010

Please go to
<http://adair.lphamo.org>
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