

## Student initiated courses create opportunities



**Shawn Shinneman**

Student Initiated Courses (SICs) sit in the shadows of Truman opportunities.

As the name suggests, SICs are courses taught by undergraduates under the supervision of faculty advisers. This is an initiative that more students should take advantage of, from both sides of the lectern.

Because these courses are meant as enhancements to the Truman curriculum, rather than substitutes for existing courses, the subject matter is usually specialized. They provide

an excellent chance for students to get a more in-depth look at something they may find interesting.

Last year, a student-led course called "Bio-Social Components of Global Health" created a pamphlet that currently is being distributed in Haiti to cut the high infant death rate by educating women on breast feeding. This semester, senior Grant Berry is teaching "Introduction to Semantics," a course focusing on how society uses and interprets signs. Berry wants to get a jump start on a future career in teaching.

Sometime down the road, there might be a student-taught course on documentary-making or the history of Truman athletics. I don't know, but I do know that students tend to come up with some exciting classes, and it will be well worth your time to look them up come registration.

Or, if you have an area of

expertise to share with the world, I encourage you to start thinking about how to make an educational course out of it. The deadline for spring class proposals has come and gone, but it is never too early to think about next year. The application is fairly extensive and I imagine the course-planning process is not an easy one.

However, if you go through the necessary steps, gain approval and teach a course, the rewards will be great. Throwing a teaching gig on top of a full schedule of classes could be quite challenging, but it will build organizational skills and leadership — qualities we will

constantly be evaluated on in almost any career path.

Not to mention, teaching the course will look great on a resume. There aren't many graduates who

will be able to boast about teaching college students for a full semester.

As Truman students, we should be thankful to have such a progressive program in place. My calls to surrounding universities asking if

similar programs existed were met with awkward silences and frequent department transfers. It turns out, none of the five schools I contacted allowed similar teaching opportuni-

ties for undergraduates. And I didn't call Slacker University and Dropout College. These were good schools — Creighton, Drake, Northern Iowa, Missouri University-Columbia and Missouri State University. Not one could match Truman's SICs.

Student Initiated Courses are another way Truman has put the power in the hands of students. I've always thought that Truman students have immense freedom in deciding their school experiences outside of the classroom with organizations and student research. Now that freedom has moved inside the classroom.

Don't miss out on an opportunity to one-up the graduates of many of our neighboring universities.

*Shawn Shinneman is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.*

## Marriage should be regulated by religions, not government



**Toby Hausner**

Marriage, one of the oldest institutions in human history, has recently emerged as a hot topic. It has become an issue about homosexual unions, and the argument has garnered much heated support on all sides. There are movements calling for preservation of the traditional family and movements that see marriage as a matter of civil liberties. But what I find most interesting is how all parties involved turn to the same entity to uphold their values — the government. There are petitions and rallies and fund-raisers all begging the government to step in and take a stand.

The fundamental problem with the current system and the arguments on both sides is the matter of governmental involvement. Marriage has deviated from its initial purpose, taking on meanings and implications that it does not really represent. At its core, marriage is a religious institution that has merged with a statist ideal for society.

To fully understand what the government's role in this issue should be, we must understand why the government seeks control and involvement in the matter. In other words, why does it behoove

the government for marriage to exist? Our government could see it as pivotal to preserving a moral compass for society, or perhaps it seeks to encourage the practice for its economic benefits. If the reasoning is, in fact, to preserve a societal moral compass, then we risk hypocrisy. Unless the government were to outlaw homosexuality in an effort to remain consistent, this policy would send the message that homosexuality is permissible, but society refuses to accept its legitimacy.

For our society as a whole, the most important factor in this issue is that the government offers fiscal rewards (a tax break) to married couples while refusing to offer them to others. No matter what your viewpoint, this practice shows a bias set in place within the system. The government sees it as beneficial to have heterosexual couples in society but not other kinds of couples. But if the government does seek to encourage marriage for economic reasons, why should this be refused to a couple because of their lifestyle? They still are pooling resources, which allows them to use less of their finances on functioning costs and enables them to consume more, providing society with an economic boost.

It is very hard to look at this issue and see anything other than an act of discrimination that effectively amounts to a tax on homosexual couples and unmarried couples for not adhering to a religious institution. The fact of the matter is that the government's only interest should be encouraging people to pool their

resources in a way that increases the buying power of society. Whether that includes a flamboyant male couple should be of no interest to our government. The net economic gain to our society is still served through their union.

We should not demand that our government define marriage in a way that we feel is moral. Such an act would simply be handing our government the authority to define marriage differently in the future. Marriage is a religious institution, which is why people care so dearly about it. As such, churches, not the government, should define it. If a Methodist church wants to give a marriage certificate to a homosexual couple it should be their right. Christian conservatives that seek a governmental definition of "between a man and a woman" fail to see the damage this might later create to their own cause, by handing the "definition keys" to a secular governmental body.

The civil union policy is the only one that preserves the sanctity of marriage. It is the only policy that protects against governmental discrimination based on sexual orientation. This policy is the only one that protects the interests of all parties involved. Marriage is about love and commitment, and no government should be able to define, tax, rebate or restrict that.

*Toby Hausner is a junior political science major from Kansas City, Mo.*

## Home sprinklers will cause problems



**Zach Vicars**

The progressive government of Kirksville has done it again. They enacted one more silly, if not destructive, piece of legislation.

In about two years, all new homes in Kirksville will be required to install a sprinkler system, a costly and often sloppy affair. Many readers might find the legislation acceptable, even helpful, for the community, and many simply might not care at all because they hope to never own a home in Kirksville. However, the sprinkler system mandate is not only an ineffective and costly measure, but it also comes at a great cost to our American way of life.

Although sprinkler systems might stop a fire, they do not prevent property damage. Allow me to give an example from my own experience. I worked at a disaster restoration company during the summer. In short, if your basement floods or your house burns down, we're there to help. However, although we worked at very few fires this summer, we did work on multiple occasions to assist customers whose sprinkler systems either had malfunctioned or had gone off inadvertently. I spent an entire night sucking up water from a hotel in St. Louis where the sprinklers were tripped for a fire that never happened. Some coworkers of mine renovated 10 stories of another hotel in St. Charles because a bride had hung her wedding dress on a sprinkler head.

Each of the incidents cost the hotels thousands of dollars in damage, and there's no reason to think that something similar couldn't happen to an unsuspecting Kirksville homeowner. The alleged drop in insurance prices quickly would be erased by a deductible and a hike in premiums from just a few sprinkler head accidents.

Further, mandated sprinkler systems pose a serious threat to the housing market of Kirksville. Whether the installation of a sprinkler system costs \$2,000 or \$10,000, it is still a significant expenditure that should not be taken lightly.

Initiative supporter and city council member Tom Kuhns said on his blog that the addition of a sprinkler system would only cost \$1.40 per square foot. That might not seem like much, but when builders start

to put together two- and three-thousand-square-foot homes, the price racks up. Many Americans save for years to build their own home, and the added cost of a sprinkler system poses one more deterrent. Progressives should not anticipate an economic turnaround while burdening the real estate market with petty expenses like sprinkler systems — that is fiscal hypocrisy that only serves to slow down the free market.

The last issue I take with the sprinkler system mandate is the statement it makes about the individual. According to a Sept. 22 article in the Kirksville Daily Express, government officials passed this law "for the betterment and health of everybody" and to "ensure the safety of everyone in the community." Those statements, warm and fuzzy as they may seem, are terrifying and altogether false when they come from the mouths of those in government. The government should fight crime. They should impose laws about drugs and narcotics. They should defend us from imminent threats from the outside and within. The government should not, however, ensure personal safety. That is the responsibility and the right of the individual. The sprinklers are just one example of the shrinking American right to take care of oneself.

Again, allow me to use an example from experience. I own my own house, and I ensure the safety of myself, my wife and the animals that live there. If I do not want a sprinkler system in my house, then I should be able to decide that for myself. If the house burns down, I am responsible. The government presently has nothing to do with it and should never have anything to do with it. By stepping into my individual responsibilities, the government would undermine my authority as a homeowner and would overstep its own boundaries.

So I hope you can see that this governmental mandate, disguised as a health and safety measure, will be ineffective and costly in the long run. It also robs the people of Kirksville of some of the rugged individualism that makes this community great. Although it might be too late to stop this measure from being enacted, I encourage all Kirksville citizens to be vigilant in the future as the government tries to poke its surly finger into individual affairs.

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## AROUND THE QUAD

### What is your opinion on tasing?



**"It's an effective way to get people who are out of hand to calm down ... And its kind of funny."**

*Ross Carter senior*



**"I'm for it, if it is used for self-defense."**

*Audrey Schickler sophomore*



**"It is necessary sometimes, but best avoided."**

*Avishek Banskota senior*



**"For use as a non-lethal weapon, its acceptable."**

*Cameron Jones sophomore*

## Communication key to alcohol awareness



**Brenna McDermott**

Alcohol use is something we all are aware of. We either drink ourselves, or we know someone who does. But do we talk about it? This week, University Counseling Services is sponsoring Alcohol Awareness Week on the Quad. Although I might not support alcohol awareness for the same reasons, I do support the open and honest discussion about alcohol — something that rarely ever happens in our society.

It is not a secret that underage

drinking is a staple of high school and college life. We all remember our first drink — or at least remember waking up hung-over for the first time — and the attempt to hide it from our parents. But I'd wager that 95 percent of parents are more savvy and observant than we give them credit for. They know the dealio. And they know the dealio because once upon a time they, too, boozed it up while still underage.

So why is underage drinking treated like a secret when it obviously isn't? Why can't we talk about it with our parents? We all know it happens. Most of us condone it, so why can't we just talk about it? Not talking about it, as a society, leads to disastrous consequences.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reported in 2005 that 23.7 percent of students had their first drink of al-

cohol, other than a few sips, before age 13. That means that children should be getting their first talk about alcohol use before age 13. It sounds like overkill to talk about binge drinking with a 12-year-old, but we should all be talking about it, young and old, because despite the public service announcements, beer-goggle experiments and surgeon general's warnings, people get addicted to alcohol. They cause accidents while drunk, and they die from alcohol-poisoning. In fact, in 2006, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 22,073 alcohol-induced deaths, not counting accidents and homicides, and 13,050 deaths from alcoholic liver disease. This is too big of an issue for us to keep doing what we've been doing, because obviously it is not working.

We do have awareness weeks and Mothers Against Drunk Driv-

ing, but people as individuals need to start talking to and confronting each other about drinking. In days gone by, alcohol use or abuse was a taboo subject. We've been taught to mind our own business, and if a friend or a coworker has an alcohol problem, it is their problem, not ours. We can't continue to mind our own business. Abiding by the rules of society to not bring up other people's problems or vices is a practice that must be abandoned.

There are Good Samaritan laws all over the country, which insist on people helping people however they can. Watching someone deteriorate from an addiction and an illness is negligent. Whether it's talking to your kid about that first drink, a college roommate about that weekly binge or a loved one with a decades long history of alcohol abuse, people need to start talking. Otherwise these statistics

will never change.

The University Counseling Services have it right that we need to start talking about alcohol abuse. Keeping our skeletons in our closets isn't helping us. Talking about alcohol abuse won't stop underage drinking, and it won't keep adults from throwing a few back, but friend-to-friend or parent-to-child conversations about alcohol abuse might show people who have a problem that they are loved and noticed. Scary statistics, drunken simulations and drinking laws don't keep people from drinking, but honest conversations could be the key to keeping loved ones alive.

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