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EDITORIAL

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Our View

corrections

Smaller universities lead to more learning during first two years of college

College is the time to throw yourself into the academic battlefield and hope you come out wiser at the other end. You are armed with textbooks and professors to help you along the way, but the driving force of this scholarly mission must lie within you, the student.

Everyone learns differently — there is no right or wrong method. However, some learning situations help students to more actively engage in the course material and thus learn more. A recent book titled “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses” by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, reports that students don’t learn anything in their first two years of college. The book explains that this is largely because colleges don’t make academics a priority.

Arum and Roksa must not have studied Truman. The first two years of college are vital to a college education. You begin taking the core classes of your major. These become the foundation for further, more detailed education in a specific department. True, this is also the time to take all the required general education classes that might seem pointless now but are important to a liberal arts education. We are always learning, and this liberal arts attitude proves the essence of Arum and Roksa’s book false.

We are not naive. There is more to learning than taking classes. The best learning comes from doing. This is where Truman stands apart from many other universities.

Students learn by becoming involved in co-curricular activities, too. While you learn a lot from taking a biology class, you can learn even more by doing research with a professor outside of the classroom. It seems to be a common trend for students to hold off joining organizations during their first few years of college. At Truman this isn’t always the case. The smaller size of Truman’s student body creates less competition and easier access to information. It isn’t uncommon to hear about a freshman or sophomore being a member of the executive board of a particular organization on campus.

A smaller campus leads to smaller class sizes, as well. At a larger university, it wouldn’t be uncommon to have 100 or more students in one massive lecture hall. Large classes make it easier to hide. And when you can hide, you don’t have to work as hard. Why not sit in the 17th row of a classroom, hide behind the tall guy and spend the lecture checking the latest gossip on Facebook? Unmotivated students can easily “not learn anything” in a class where the professor doesn’t know they exist.

At Truman though, the average class size is 24, with many classes having fewer students. In a small class, the professor notices when you are absent or when you raise your hand. This encourages, if not forces, learning because it isn’t as easy to get away with not paying attention.

You can learn from anyone, anything, anywhere, as long as you put effort into it, which Arum and Roska’s book doesn’t take into consideration. And, maybe learning earlier on in your college career will make the battle toward a college degree a lot less bloody.

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please e-mail index@truman.edu, call us at 660-785-4449 or send a letter to Index, 1200 Barnett Hall, Truman State University, Kirksville, Mo., 63501.

° A photo on page 8 of the Jan. 20 edition of the Index, was labeled as a stall. It is actually a birthing stall.

cartoon



Letters to the Editor

Drug testing for TANF recipients proves offensive

So, our representative in Jefferson City, Zach Wyatt, thinks people on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families should be subjected to drug testing “to make sure government funds are distributed to people who will not use the money to support a drug habit?”

Really? You think farmers receiving subsidies, merchants receiving tax rollbacks, the officers of firms receiving abatements on utilities or other assessments the rest of us have to pay, all these people should have to pee in a bottle too? Would they be comfortable with the logic of “if you’re clean, whatcha got to squawk about?” How about you, Zach? Every time you put one hand for that paycheck, you’ll be handing over a warm yellow vial with the other?

No need to answer — this is just something we do to remind the poor that we control them in the most intimate way, a not-really symbolic invasion of their very bodies as the price of assistance for the desperation originally created by the privatization of the commons. Maybe adding humiliation and violation to the disincentives attached to going on the dole. It’s also something we do to rile the base with images of the poor living lives of wild luxury and please at our expense (“heck, it’s so good to be on TANF it’s a wonder more people aren’t getting themselves laid off!”).

I will not argue that this proposal is offensive because so many of these people were until bankrupted by legal banditry that eclipses even what we’ve come to expect and even support (perhaps in hopes that some day we too will get to be bandits?) This would be revolting if every last one of these people were multigenerational, strung-out welfare sponges. It’s offensive because it is a transparent attempt to awaken hostility and suspicion, to create and exploit division in a society that suffers from way too much of it already.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the problem, which you’re going to fix by

spending \$3 million we don’t have, even exists. You were one of those people who ran on a program of smaller, more efficient government, right?

It’s class warfare, Mr. Wyatt, though that’s a term we rarely apply when the comfortable collude against those at the survival level of the motivation-pyramid. As you well know, the measure has been defeated before, and although you claim that it’s constitutional because these people are getting a handout ... though legal opinion and precedent on similar initiatives suggests it won’t stand up to scrutiny under the unreasonable search and seizure clause. And you don’t mean for it to survive challenge. You know it has no legs, so you stand convicted of the meanest kind of grandstanding at the expense of the most vulnerable. Here’s hoping you’ve grossly underestimated the decency of the constituents you’re trying to rile with this pitch.

Adam Davis
professor of English

Students must embrace Kirksville restaurants

In response to the Jan. 20 column “Kirksville lacks restaurant variety,” every decision we make is a trade-off between costs and benefits. Choosing to attend Truman is no exception. Hopefully as prospective students, we analyzed the costs and benefits of attending a smaller liberal arts school in a rural town. To attend Truman we get the advantages of lower tuition, a high teacher-to-student ratio and the prestigious reputation of Truman on our resumes. However, to obtain these advantages, we chose to give up the diverse opportunities for entertainment, shopping and food that larger cities can offer.

As students who chose to attend a college in rural Missouri, I feel we should embrace our off-campus opportunities

instead of expressing our dissatisfaction for the amenities a town of 17,000 people can sustain. I have often been disappointed at the lack of understanding/knowledge students have about the reality of bringing restaurant chains to Kirksville. Kirksville doesn’t have the variety of restaurants simply because it cannot support a variety, nor does it have the demographics to bring in certain chains. For example, according to Panera Bread’s franchise documents, for someone to open a Panera they must also open 14 others in a span of six years. This would be an almost impossible feat for an entrepreneur in rural Northern Missouri. For a Chipotle to be opened, it must be in a major metropolitan area with at least 15,000 people between the age of 18 and 49 and have a median household income higher than the national average. According to the last census, Kirksville’s median income was almost half of the national average.

Ideally we want bigger and better things, but who is going to sustain them so they generate enough revenue to keep their doors open? Kirksville does not have the population-base to bring in and support all the great places we can find in the city. This is one of the trade-offs we made when coming to Truman, so we should appreciate the things Kirksville actually does have to offer, like no traffic jams, low crime rate, lower cost-of-living and cleaner air.

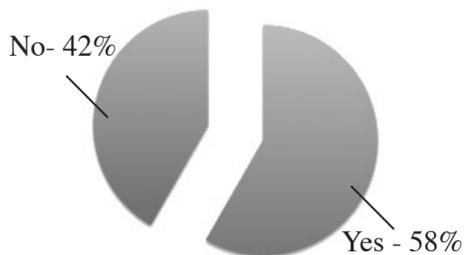
For its population, Kirksville has plenty of bon appetites to choose between — gyros, sushi, Mongolian stir fry and the classic steak. We even could enjoy dinner over-looking a lake. As for alternatives to Java Co, try the Mocha Hut, a coffee shop with a lounge, computers and Wi-Fi or Steve’s Garden Deli, where you can also get a healthy, balanced lunch.

Let’s take a look around and be thankful for what we do have. Whereas it may not be the ultimate culinary cuisine, it’s not too bad for a small rural northern Missouri town.

Alicyn Wyatt
senior

Web Poll

Should the U.S. have stricter restrictions on purchasing firearms?



This week’s web poll question:

Should downtown Kirksville be updated?

Vote online at trumanindex.com

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