

OUR VIEW

## MIAA makes decision without enough scrutiny

Ten presidents from the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association — Truman's athletic conference — unanimously voted Sept. 24 to admit Lindenwood University and the University of Nebraska-Kearney into the conference. This act, along with the addition of two Oklahoma universities in July, completed a four-month process to expand the MIAA from 12 to 16 teams.

But here's the problem: The MIAA presidents have left too many questions unanswered. How will the MIAA be split into divisions?

How will the universities — Truman in particular — save money? What makes a 16-team conference better than a 12-team conference? These questions should have been answered before the conference expanded.

With 16 teams already admitted, it is too late for a do-over. The conference has taken on a tremendous project of scheduling and budgeting for 16 teams with no evidence that the addition of four teams will positively impact the conference in comparison to the schedule and budget for 12 teams.

The MIAA presidents first voted in June to consider conference expansion. At that point, President Troy Paino said he was concerned with three things: students missing more class time, increased travel costs and whether the four universities were a good fit for the conference. When the two Oklahoma schools were admitted in August, Paino said he still had no evidence to diminish those concerns. Paino's opinion was outnumbered — no matter how he voted, there still would have been the necessary eight votes to admit the schools.

Now, four months later, those three concerns are still on the table, and they will not be resolved for approximately nine months. Athletics Director Jerry Wollmering said last week that an expansion task force likely will not have scheduling for the conference worked out until the summer of 2011. How is this responsible? The MIAA has expanded by 33 percent, and we

won't know for another year what the scheduling will be? What happened to thinking before acting?

These issues would not be as bad if the conference at least had a plan moving forward. But even that is uncertain, as there seems to be a disagreement as to how the conference will be split into divisions.

Wollmering suggested one division with eight Missouri schools and another with eight non-Missouri schools. This would create a natural east-west divide. That sounds all right for Truman, because the University is on the eastern side of the MIAA. But what if Truman is outvoted — again — and other presidents want a north-south divide? That would be disastrous. Unlike some of the other conference schools, Truman doesn't have millions of dollars laying around to be spent on athletic endeavors.

Even Kearney and Lindenwood disagree about how they understand the conference will eventually be divided. Lindenwood Athletic Director John Creer said last week that he was told the conference would be split into four "pods" of four teams each. Meanwhile, Kearney said, in an expansion brochure to the MIAA, "This summer (2010), MIAA institutions voted overwhelmingly to expand to 16 members, organized in two divisions."

Also, Jim Johnson, former MIAA commissioner and current Pittsburg State University athletic director, told the Kansas City Star: "We didn't want to draw boundaries or lines in the sand. Sometimes with divisions, it ends up feeling like two conferences."

That means four different schools each have a different viewpoint. No wonder it's going to take until next summer to work out the details.

The MIAA just took its largest step in the last 20 years. Maybe it will be a step in the right direction. Maybe not. With the lack of advance planning and so many unanswered questions, it seems no one knows for sure.

CORRECTIONS

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

\* On page 2 of the Sept. 2 edition of the Index, Evan Engelage was reported to have received a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Intoxicants and Possession of up to 35 grams of Marijuana. However, he only received the Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Intoxicants.

CARTOON

By Sam Kyker



## Letters to the Editor

### Prop B offers safer benefits for pets

Most people in this country think of dogs as friends or even members of the family. Yet our state law considers them as agricultural commodities (like chickens, cows and pigs) to be bred and sold for profit. This is a significant disconnect and one that Prop B addresses.

Prop B limits the number of dogs that can be kept for breeding purposes to no more than fifty. Most people will agree that this is still a really large number, especially considering how prolific the species is (a single female dog can produce an average of two litters per year, with an average of five puppies per litter). More dogs might mean more money for breeders, but for the rest of us who understand that there is a dog overpopulation problem in this country, more dogs means more cruelty or neglect, more suffering and more death. Since millions of unwanted animals are euthanized in this country every year, surely a limit on breeding dogs is not only necessary, but in fact a moral imperative.

Prop B also improves current language in the Missouri Revised Statute, Chapter 273.329, where it states that "failure to provide adequate food, water, housing or sanitary facilities for animals" is a punishable offense. Although Chapter 273.325 includes some basic definitions of the term "adequate," Prop B includes many more details as it describes adequate care, specifying, for example, that breeding animals should have access to water that is not frozen, be kept within a comfortable temperature range (45 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit) and be allowed access to an outdoor exercise area. Most people will agree that these requirements for adequate care are quite reasonable.

If approved, this new language can be used as a guide for people who want to run ethical, mid-sized operations (they will have a year to update facilities in order to comply) and as a tool for law enforcement officials who need just cause to shut down

irresponsible breeding operations.

There is nothing to fear in Prop B. Contrary to what opponents are saying, Prop B will have no impact on other animal agriculture, because it deals specifically with the domestic dog (*canis lupus familiaris*). There is no way that this language could be twisted to mean cattle, hogs or poultry. (Any attempt to regulate other animal agriculture would require an entirely different proposition, which would almost certainly fail in Missouri.) Proposition B has nothing to do with animals that are raised for food and everything to do with animals that we keep as friends. Since they give us so much companionship, assistance and devotion, dogs deserve better.

The full text of this legislation is available online: <http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/2010petitions/2010-085.asp>. Please take the time to read the language, and then let information and compassion guide your vote on Nov. 2.

Bridget Thomas  
Professor of Classics

### Fundamentalist Christians negatively influence campus

With the new academic year, the fundamentalist Christians return to campus as faithfully as swallows to Capistrano. They peddle an intolerant brand of religion fully comparable to those most Americans find abhorrent in distant lands. They are content to ignore the intellectual achievements of our civilization over the past 500, 1000, 5000 years. They are proud of their ignorance of geology, cosmology, physics, chemistry, biology, our Constitution and the history of humanity recorded in rock and word. I suspect even I know more about the Bible than their collective knowledge of all this other stuff. It would be amusing except ...

Fundamentalists have acquired influence on our political institutions far beyond what is just and healthy

for a reasonably tolerant democratic country. (We certainly have had our bouts of intolerance, some quite horrid, and continue to exhibit this predilection. But by world standards, we seem to be doing pretty well. The fact that I can write this letter testifies to our above-average tolerance. Without this tradition, my immediate ancestors would never have made it out of Eastern Europe.) Witness, for example, the excessive influence that fundamentalists have had on the decision about whether embryos destined for destruction can be used as sources of stem cells. Stem cell technology offers great promise for alleviating some forms of human suffering.

Excessive influence by the intolerant reflects both apathy and naiveté on the part of the rest of us. We risk the establishment of a theocracy based on a narrow-minded interpretation of one set of texts sacred to some people, in fact just a minority of humans on earth. De facto theocracy would have disastrous consequences on education, health care, social welfare, conservation, etc. The list goes on and on. De facto theocracy already exists in some places in our country and already has had such consequences. Fundamentalists in Texas have had excessive influence on high school science texts and forced the inclusion of science fiction where it does not belong.

Fundamentalism has contorted a religion based on love into something far darker. A university is supposed to be Pirsig's "church of reason," not the "domain of demagoguery." They certainly have the right to be out there peddling their tracts — our Constitution guarantees that. But we all need to be alert to the appeal to irrationality and intolerance fundamental to their pursuit. Especially because intolerance, irrationality and anti-intellectualism seem to be sweeping the country. After all, we as a species have achieved some greater sophistication since our ancestors were pastoralists wandering in the desert 8000 years ago.

Peter Goldman  
Professor Emeritus of Biology

## INDEX

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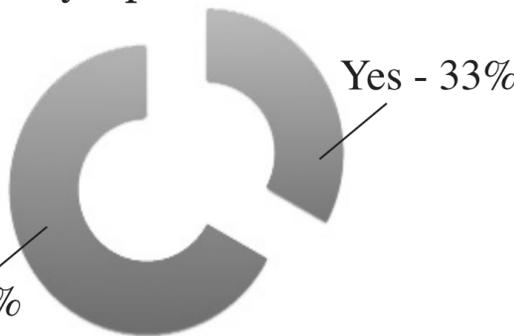
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