



Hanna Bilinski/Index

Freshmen Codi Caton and Hope Benefield work on their poems Tuesday in a Missouri Hall study room. Caton and Benefield are two of the students interested in starting a slam poetry club at Truman.

Slam poetry team comes to campus

BY EMILY BATTMER
Staff Reporter

Freshmen Codi Caton and Hope Benefield came to Truman with a mission.

They wanted to break the stereotype of flowery language, dramatic interpretations of love and death, and rigid rules associated with traditional poetry. They wanted to introduce students to something different: a slam poetry team.

Slam poetry, or spoken word, is defined as poetry that is meant to be heard, not just read, according to Poetry Slam, Inc. Poetry teams travel to competitive slams and perform original pieces in front of a panel of judges. Slam poetry is gaining recognition, but Benefield said the idea of a poetry team still is new to many Truman students.

Benefield said she was impressed with a slam poet SAB brought to campus previously this year and developed an interest in the slam poetry style. She began researching the genre more and writing slam pieces. She then met freshman Codi Caton, who shared a similar interest in poetry, and they began sharing work and exchanging advice. Benefield said the two took their pieces to Slamoween, a local poetry slam Oct. 26 at Dukum Inn. Benefield placed first and Caton placed third.

Their success encouraged them to try to form a team, Benefield said, but it's a long, daunting process. Benefield said they will have to host at least six poetry slams during the next year if they want to be officially recognized as a team by Poetry Slam, Incorporated and be eligible to compete in the National Poetry Slam. Poetry slams generally are hosted in bars and it would be up to the public to try to build the local scene. But first, to be chartered as an organization at Truman, they have to find at least 10 interested members.

"We're at the stage right now where we're trying to gain interest and momentum," she said.

The team has gained five potential members, but still is looking for more. Benefield said many Truman students probably aren't familiar with slam poetry, and many more are unsure if they'd be able to write and perform it. But poetry is broad, and she said there is something in it for everyone.

Caton agreed that slam poetry creates an unspoken union among all types of people, and isn't limited to any certain group, like English majors. But, he said, the genre does demand that poets are able to bring new ideas to their pieces — and perform them, which can be intimidating.

"People are terrified of performing," he said. "We're looking for a very bold market

out there."

He said the style is known for breaking boundaries and tackling brave and controversial concepts. Poetry slams are competitive, he said, and the crowds often are just as vocal with their opinions as the poets are — whether those opinions are positive or negative. Slam poetry topics can vary, but Caton said many of his poems are themed around relationships. He said many of Benefield's poems are written from the viewpoint of different characters.

Caton said he plans to continue writing poetry. Because it's incredibly beautiful and valuable to make communication into an art. Poetry allows people to communicate in ways they wouldn't be able to otherwise, he said. Caton and Benefield are determined to increase interest and awareness of the genre and the team. He said just going to readings and slams will help advertise to other students.

"If we just keep pushing ourselves and our careers in poetry I think that'll help," Caton said.

Caton and Benefield plan to meet more potential poets at their next slam at 9 p.m. Feb. 22, hosted by graduate student Kasey Perkins at Wrongdaddy's. Perkins said she is mentoring the students' quest to form a poetry team.

Perkins met the duo at a slam event she was hosting, and since then she's been encouraging the creation of a team, keeping them up-to-date about poetry slams and readings and spreading the word about the poetry team to other students who might be interested.

Perkins said she has hosted poetry slams for about three years, but their popularity has waned. She said she wants to help restart slam and hopes the new team will be able to keep the hype up after she graduates from Truman during May.

Perkins said the team would be a great compliment to the Creative Writing degree offered at Truman, and it would help build the writing community.

"It's one of the easiest ways for Truman writers to find other Truman writers," she said. "It's also a cultural phenomenon that Kirksville doesn't really have right now."

Perkins said there are countless individual benefits as well. It's a confidence booster, a break from schoolwork and something fun that can be done at an interdisciplinary level, across all major. It also would help students develop public speaking skills and overcome their stage fright, she said.

"It is a skill that is pretty invaluable," she said. "You have to be both a poet and a performer."

Students learn leadership

Truman state graduate students prepare for their future by earning a Masters in Leadership

BY ALEX CARLSON
Staff Reporter

Alumna and assistant softball coach, Cathy Monroe is learning skills that go beyond the classroom in graduate school — she is learning how to be a leader.

Designed during Spring 2011, the Master of Arts in Leadership program is for graduate students looking to work in administrative or directorial positions. Completing the program requires enlisted students to complete 39 credit hours. Fifteen of those credits are completed through core classes all participating students take, while 15 more come from the specialization component, which lets the students take leadership courses specifically designed for his or her field of interest.

The remaining nine credit hours can be completed with an applied project like an internship, or around a student's career aspirations. The program generally lasts a minimum of three semesters.

Monroe participates in the program to achieve her goal of becoming a head coach. Along with about 12 other students, Monroe learns about skills specialized to her goals and agenda, while also practically applying the skills to her profession of choice.

A head coach position usually requires a master's degree, and Monroe is working to complete her core requirement courses for the program. Monroe is taking classes designed for her interest in sports management. Monroe said she selected the Masters of Arts in Leadership program to learn and refine teaching skills necessary for a head coaching position. Classes selected for her field of interest include sports psychology and social problems in sports.

"The entire program caters toward your profession," Monroe said. "In my sports psychology class, I get to learn about coach-player communication and athlete feedback. These subjects use examples that apply to my field of interest."

Other participants have specific leadership goals.

Jill Graves, Associate Director of Recruitment, has lived and worked in Kirksville since her graduation from Truman during 2000, but stays in Kirksville to learn through the program about the leadership skills she needs at the Truman Admissions Office.

Graves said the program's benefit is the connections between the classroom and her job at the Admissions Office. Graves can draw on skills she's learned through her recruitment director position and implement them into her projects in the program. Graves said it also works the other way, when theories learned in the program are applicable to her job at Truman.

"It's really a two-way street," Graves said. "I can enrich classroom discussion with my experiences in the field, while also applying what I learn immediately. The program is very practical, not just theoretical."

Political science professor Candy Young, who directs the program said the current job market is a reason for students to increase their leadership skills because many positions like management and administrative roles demand increased proficiency in direction and leadership.

"It's a very difficult time to be in the job market," Young said. "I think this is something that, if someone has a strong view of what they want to do, this program is a good possibility to advance their potential. Students can jump in and make good progress towards a good job."

Young said the program is in the implementation stage, but she has gathered great feedback from students and professors alike.

A program application includes a résumé, three letters of recommendation, GRE test scores, transcripts, a list of career goals and a \$40 application fee. When selected, students take classes ranging from typical lecture courses to more applied scenarios. Graduate students already involved with a managerial position can continue to work while taking classes, which usually are evening courses during the beginning of the week.

More on the program can be found at <http://gradstudies.truman.edu/areasofstudy/Leadership.asp>.

Love Letter I've Been Meaning to Send

*Yes, I have my fingers in twenty pies
And toes to the sky, nickel for a
ticket to sunbathe
Yes, I am laid, back in grass, waiting
to be harassed by the city boys stepping
off at the
Bus stop to my life, yes, my life*

*Here
I am queen, honey suckle knees, honey
sidle up closer
I sting
Here let me tell you things I think I
need you to
Here, yes, here is my heart on a string
and a love letter I've been meaning to
send,
But here is the next best thing
And there? There are the hands their
Bare hands they're
counting down the hours in the life lines
Of their
palms*

*Well, there I go again, yes, I ask for
only recompense
Restitution of resoluteness
pouring off your bones and into mine
The divine unemployment line of your
tendons uncoiling
Twenty, twenty, twenty-seven bones in
your hand, use them
Use them for art more grand than
demand
has galleries
And the salaries serve adjunct mala-
dies*

*And all I wanted was another voice to
be spoken
Without broken vowels
A marriage of syntax meets action, the
body as words moving
Seamlessly seeming to weave
into muscles contracting
Aching raw, reacting*

*I describe you as a living monument,
the one you meant to send a postcard of
I lie here in the grass and you are there
and the boys look fine from here
Yes, the boys look fine, yes*

*You should know, by now I
am a girl
with her heart on a string
I can pull back at any
moment*

-by freshman Hope Benefield

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