

Rec hosts ping pong



Rose Sparks/Index

Sophomore David Lemon, left, returns the ping pong ball to senior Darlene Gollaher's side of the table during a Table Tennis Club tournament Saturday in the Student Recreation Center while seniors Rijosh Shrestha, left, and his brother Anup, right, volley in the background. Anup outscored Lemon during the final match to win the tournament. The club usually meets once a month to compete against each other and welcomes students of all playing levels.

Domestic benefits repel applicant

Candidate for professorship withdraws application because of lack of partner benefits

BY JACKIE KINEALY

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A candidate for anthropology professor withdrew his application Feb. 9 for the job after he learned Truman's employment benefits do not include domestic partners.

No Missouri state university currently offers domestic partner benefits. Schools throughout the state are reluctant to be the first, worried it could mean funding cuts from conservatives in Jefferson City.

Supporters of domestic partner benefits like freshman Aaron Malin, who wrote the Student Senate resolution supporting a change at Truman State, argue that the University might lose desirable faculty to schools that do extend benefits to domestic partners—an argument that seems to ring true in this instance.

But because no Missouri school has moved forward with the controversial issue, the amount of political backlash it would incite is unknown.

Todd White, an Indiana University of Pennsylvania anthropology professor, was one of two final candidates out of more than 100 for a position in the anthropology department. He visited campus Feb. 8 and 9 as part of the application process.

White said he was excited about the job prospect during his visit, but when he learned that his partner would not be eligible to receive benefits, the job no longer was an option.

"It was a gut reaction," he said. "It was not a deliberation. No matter how bad I want the job, I will not step back into the 1960s."

He said he took for granted the idea that benefits would be offered because he and his partner have received those benefits at other public universities on the east and west coasts.

It was uncomfortable when White realized he would not receive those benefits if he was offered a position at Truman, said Amber Johnson, society and the environment department chair.

She compared the domestic partnership issue to the civil rights movement, and said she thinks it's a matter of time before domestic partner benefits are taken for granted everywhere.

University President Troy Paino said he told the Academic and Student Affairs Committee during its February meeting that both faculty and students have expressed concern that Truman does not offer the benefits.

He said the subcommittee the Board seemed interested in letting faculty and students form a group to look into the issue and weighing the pros and cons of domestic partner benefits at future meetings.

Paino said he would review new developments surrounding the issue at the March 22 Faculty Senate meeting.

Students named as finalists for Fulbright

BY PHILIP ZAHND

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Six Truman students have been selected as finalists for the Fulbright Scholarship, which is awarded to about 1,600 U.S. students and 4,000 foreign students a year.

Each year, the Fulbright Program awards grants to students to help pay for travel and living expenses while they teach English or conduct research in another country as a way of improving the United States' international relationships, according to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Truman has been named a top producer of Fulbright recipients for each of the past three years with 30 total finalists.

"I feel if you are chosen as a finalist, that is something to put on your CV forever," said Marie Orton, Italian professor and Truman's Fulbright committee chair. "Being a finalist and actually going have the same academic status."

After serving on the national Fulbright committee for several years, Orton helped create the committee three

years ago.

She said board comprised of professors helps students see whether they are fit for the nationally competitive scholarship by making sure they have three things: credentials, application writing skills and knowledge about the program.

Senior Heather Slawson, who began the application process last September is applying to teach English in Armenia between September 2012 and May 2013. Slawson said the Fulbright Program is an example of Truman trying to increase the number of students receiving prestigious scholarships.

"The University is actually making a really big push right now to ask students to apply for competitive grants," she said.

Slawson is waiting to hear back by May 14 from a board composed of educators and government officials in Armenia to learn whether her application has been accepted.

Slawson said she is not familiar with the Armenian language, but doesn't think that it will be a problem.

"The cool thing is that you don't actually have to speak

the language for the majority of the countries you apply to," she said. "They don't expect you to speak Armenian or some really obscure language, which is beneficial to me because I know nothing."

Alumnus Grant Berry taught English in Rio Cuarto, Argentina through the program between March and November 2011.

He said his application process began during 2009 before learning he had been awarded the grant during March 2010 — the year he graduated. Berry said he had to wait a year before traveling to Argentina because the Argentinean school operates on a trimester schedule.

Berry said the grants are awarded to a variety of students because each country has different needs, including the level of the applicant's language proficiency.

"Each country does things a little bit differently," he said. "They ask for specific types of people. For example, in some programs you're teaching children English, in some programs you're teaching university students."

Berry, who graduated with

mathematics and Spanish degrees, said he was an assistant at an Argentinean university.

Berry said the first stage of the application process required him to talk to a Truman language professor to evaluate his Spanish proficiency, followed by a panel of Truman professors to determine whether his application had a chance of being accepted.

The application required him to submit one page about how the grant would be used and a one-page personal statement.

"Truman has its own sort of internal review process to see if you are a qualified candidate or not because they're not going to send out applications to the Fulbright committee that they don't have a good chance of doing well," he said.

If the panel approves, the application is sent to the Fulbright committee for further review. If the application passes, it is sent to the applicant's country for a final decision.

"The more people we have get Fulbrights the better because they are nationally competitive scholarships that reflect well upon the talent of Truman students," he said.

Board discusses non-discrimination policy

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Two Student Senate resolutions addressing Truman State policies about homosexual employees are under further review by administration.

Passed by Senate during October, one resolution encourages the Board of Governors — the University's highest decision-making body — to include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy. During an Academic and Student Affairs subcommittee meeting Feb. 4, the Board subcommittee asked University general counsel Warren Wells to draft a version of the policy that includes sexual orientation for discussion at its April meeting.

Wells said he will rewrite one draft of the current policy, adding sexual orientation to the

list of protected classes and another draft not including sexual orientation for the subcommittee to discuss.

Whether the subcommittee agrees to recommend the issue to go before the Board is up to its members, but Wells said he does not expect the Board to vote on the issue during its April meeting — it probably will remain a subcommittee discussion item.

The current non-discrimination clause does not include sexual orientation specifically as a protected group, but Wells said he understands the policy to mean the University will not make hiring and firing decisions based on anything other than job performance.

Freshman Aaron Malin, the author of the Senate resolution and the only student to attend the open meeting, said the committee members discussed

the topic longer than any other agenda item, and there was open disagreement about whether the non-discrimination policy should be changed.

He said Committee Chair Karen Haber spoke in favor of changing the non-discrimination policy and committee member John Hilton strongly was opposed.

"I wouldn't say it was overly heated but it was definitely somewhat tense," he said.

Both Board members said they thought it was premature to comment about the resolution.

Malin also wrote a second Senate resolution, which supports domestic partner benefits for Truman employees. Malin said he doesn't expect Truman to take action on the politically sensitive issue before the University of Missouri makes the first move.

"I hope that [the UM System]

is working on it right now and we could see it in a year or two," he said.

In the meantime, University President Troy Paino said the subcommittee discussed the concerns some students and faculty have raised surrounding domestic partner benefits at Truman, and [name] the human resources executive director reviewed information about domestic partner benefits at other universities throughout the country.

The committee was interested in learning more about the pros and cons of offering domestic partner benefits at Truman, he said.

The wheels are in motion about adding domestic partner benefits in the UM system, said Leona Rubin, executive committee member of the Faculty Council at UM. The UM System Board of Curators is scheduled to discuss, and possibly to vote

on, domestic partner benefits during April, she said.

"It was scheduled to be discussed in February at the February Board meeting, but as you know we got side-tracked by tuition and 12.5 percent cuts and those kinds of things so they postponed it right now at the April Board meeting," she said.

She said MU recently has received letters of support for domestic partner benefits from Missouri Association of Faculty Senates and Missouri State University.

Administrators at public colleges and universities in Missouri are cautious to be the first to offer domestic partner benefits because there could be political backlash in the form of funding cuts, according to a Nov. 10 Index article.

But Malin said there is potential for losing high-quality professors to schools that offer those benefits.

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