



Super Bowl acts as cultural religious event



Zach Vicars

As a people, Americans don't agree about much. They can't agree about a political ideology, because both sides have proven to be failures. They can't agree about a common religion because most of them have become a set of rules and regulations. But the culture can agree about the Super Bowl. Americans love the Super Bowl.

I would argue that American culture more than loves the Super Bowl — this culture worships it. Before you pick up a stone to cast at me, I'm not saying that Americans bow down to a graven image of the Lombardi trophy. Rather, Americans worship the cultural values of excess, entertainment and immediacy. The Super Bowl typifies those values and has become a Chief Holy Day in a broader cultural religion.

Many Americans, including myself, were raised to believe in a real hope that Jesus Christ died for our sins, providing meaning for our existence, a relationship with our Creator and a model of sacrificial love. However, some believers turned a vibrant relationship with God into a tight-fisted religion set on burdening its parishioners with rules. Today, America is undergoing another worldview transformation. Having rejected this institutionalized Christianity, the culture has begun to worship itself and its warped set of values.

The Super Bowl as a religious festival makes perfect sense in this paradigm of culture-worship. First of all, there is a communal sense of belonging. I would be willing to wager more people get together with friends for the Super Bowl than any other day of the year — including traditional holidays that seem to be fading from the culture. Second, the Super Bowl has a defined set of rituals — most Americans overeat hot wings and twice-baked potatoes and drink cheap beer.

Further, the ridiculously expensive commercials have become a sort of cultural scripture which gets passed down from year to year.

Lastly, the Super Bowl provides watchers with a supernatural hope that they can ascribe — an object of prayer and petition that their favorite team will win. This hope fits nicely because its reward is immediate and its obligation is nonexistent. Like ecstatic religious fanatics, most of the free world will party all of Sunday night if the Patriots lose, and come Monday morning their religion will ask nothing more of them.

But one celebration in a year is not enough to constitute a religion. In addition to the Big Game, American culture has created festivals throughout the year to observe this nascent religion, and even adapted existing holidays to foster their religious exuberance.

For example, Independence Day used to celebrate freedom from injustice and tyranny, but today the culture has forgotten about the importance of liberty and contented itself to become drunk and shoot off fireworks. Further, Christmas used to celebrate God humbly entering the world to redeem humanity. Today, we venerate a fat man who gives gifts to children who do more good things than bad. And during New Year's, Americans get together to play music, drop a ball and drink until they forget the past and have some hope for a better future.

All the holidays Americans have adopted fit well into their religious worldview, because Americans enjoy things that captivate their attention and leave them feeling good for a little while — like drinking, watching a football game, opening presents and seeing fireworks flash through the sky. The concepts of hope in God, humility and self-sacrifice offend this culture which is chiefly concerned with worshipping itself.

America's obsession with instant gratification is a problem that will continue plague us if we refuse to seek a lasting solution. The solution for this nation is not another religion but a meaningful relationship with the God who created us and Jesus Christ, his Son. It's clear now American culture can no longer redeem itself. Rather, we must return to God, our Savior. The cultural values our nation holds as sacred pose a serious problem for our future. Our worship needs to change.

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Tuition freeze won't solve budget issues



Connor Stangler

When students cry for help, President Barack Obama answers. To a screaming crowd at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor last Friday, the president uttered that magical mantra that never fails to excite every college student, from the cash-strapped to the loan-laden: make college more affordable. However, Obama's proposal might not be the cure-all universities need or want.

During his State of the Union address, Obama proposed legislation that would tie campus-based federal funding to tuition. In an effort to increase the affordability and value of a college education, universities could lose federal aid if they raise tuition.

Amid drastic budget cuts and, as in Truman State's case, decreased state funding for higher education, universities are in dire financial straits.

As Truman's Financial Aid Director Kathy Elsea said, Obama's plan has the potential to put universities "between a rock and a hard place."

Left without the option of raising tuition, universities are faced with

a tricky and perhaps impossible dilemma: how to drastically cut staff and services while improving the quality of a student's education.

Although the Obama administration has made it clear it values the quality of a student's education, there has been a distinct shift in focus and tone throughout the past few years. In an era of federal and state budget crises, affordability now is the first priority. To rescue students who drown beneath oppressive student loan debts and give more youth the opportunity to earn a degree, public officials seek ways to make reachable what might seem inaccessible to the average American.

In any sector, the most effective way to reduce production costs is to reduce the number of inputs. Fewer inputs often lead to a smoother production process — in our case, a college education — and a cheaper product for the consumer — lower tuition. However, lower costs sometimes come at the expense of the product's quality. Can we make education universally available without diluting it? Can we make the product cheaper without mass producing a less qualified student? These questions are as imperative and difficult now as they were a generation ago.

Colleges, however, are in a thornier situation than those questions imply. More so than a conventional supplier in a market economy, the public university is tied to the state government's well-being and financial stability. As the recent announcement by Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon demonstrated, university officials have to adjust to fluctuating

funding levels. Tying federal funding to tuition ties the hands of educators and forces them to, "absorb state budget cuts, increase enrollment and bolster financial aid" while still adhering to tuition price controls, according to a Jan. 27 New York Times article.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt public and private university tuition has skyrocketed throughout the past few decades. Since 1990, tuition increases throughout the nation have far outstripped increases in inflation, according to finaid.org.

A college education must be made more affordable to more students if they are to have the skills necessary to remain competitive in the labor market. However, as Elsea said, presidents often propose bold measures similar to Obama's because even eight years is not enough time to substantially alter the state of higher education before another replaces him or her in the Oval Office.

Any solution that freezes college tuition is not necessarily the best solution. A careful balance must be struck between quality and affordability. Forcing universities to choose affordability might result in unintended consequences for quality. As universities' fates are tied to state budgets, they should not be unfairly and severely chained to drastic federal demands.

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What are you doing for the Super Bowl?

"I will be at my ASG pledge meeting."

Peggy Ceresia
freshman



"I will be watching with my friends in Missouri Hall 3 North."

Ryan Gordon
freshman



"Probably rating commercials with friends."

Megan Pattee
sophomore



"I will probably be in my room doing anything but watching the Super Bowl."

Sarah Andrews-Weiss
sophomore



AROUND THE QUAD

Marijuana legalization could benefit economy, reduce debt



Lauren Kellett

America's largest cash crop brings in an average revenue of \$35.8 billion a year, according to drugscience.org. This is the same as the revenue of soybeans, hay and vegetables combined. The crop is not corn, nor is it wheat or cotton, and it certainly is not fruit. America's most valuable harvest is cannabis, or as it's more commonly known, marijuana.

Marijuana legalization is an issue considered controversial by many, but if America would look at the economic facts behind the sale and production of marijuana, we would understand marijuana legalization is not an irresponsible decision, but one that possibly could save our failing economy.

Marijuana first was illegalized in the United States during 1937 under the "Mari-

juana Tax Act." Since prohibition, a war on drugs has been rampant throughout Mexico and the U.S. The illegal import of drugs into the country is a multi-billion dollar a year industry, with all the profit going to criminals, killers and dangerous organizations, according to legalize.org.

If marijuana were legalized and regulated, this war on drugs would come to an end, and the funding could be put to much better use, such as paying off America's \$15 trillion debt. The death toll in Mexico from the effects of this war hit 50,000, according to a Jan. 11 National Post article. That's 50,000 lives that could have been spared if America simply would act sensibly.

What comes with this war is a rising rate in drug-related arrests and prisoners. The United States is one of the most "criminal" countries, with only 5 percent of the world's population, but 25 percent of its prisoners, according to a 2009 Time Magazine article. One-third of those prisoners are serving time for nonviolent drug crimes, 48 percent of which are strictly marijuana-related. If legalization passed, all this money and time spent on drug crimes could be spent focusing on gangs, violence, organized crime and the prosecution of dangerous, violent criminals.

To break it down, I'll explain the price of keeping just one man convicted of a marijuana

related drug time in jail, according to drug-policy.org. Arrest and conviction is \$150,000. An additional cell unit ranges from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Food and housing together make up about \$30,000 a year, and with the average sentence of five years for drug-related crimes, that adds up to another \$150,000. The total cost to keep a five-year-sentence drug dealer in jail is \$450,000. Multiply that by the Library of Congress's estimated 6,500 marijuana crime prisoners, and we've got a lot of money that could have been spent on something like funding Truman, which, after Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon's proposal of a 12.5 percent cut to higher education, most likely will face major cuts.

Now imagine a world in which marijuana was regulated in a way similar to tobacco and alcohol. Marijuana would be taxed and sold to those 18 and older. The regulation would completely eliminate its sales via the black market. The regulations virtually would end the violent crimes that come with illegal dealing. The industry would create hundreds of thousands of jobs in agriculture, packaging, marketing and advertising. Considering America's unemployment rate currently is at 8.5 percent, according to ncls.org, this industry could be extremely beneficial.

A taxation system seems to be the highest selling point for the idea.

"An examination of the external costs imposed by cannabis users on the rest of society suggests that a harmfulness tax of between \$.50 and \$1 per joint is appropriate. It can be estimated that excess taxes in this range would raise between \$2.2 billion and \$6.4 billion a year. Legalization would save the taxpayers around \$8 billion to \$16 billion, plus the economic benefits of hemp agriculture and other spinoff industries, according to canorml.org. Having a possible \$16 billion a year spent towards getting our nation out of debt would be ideal.

This is a lot of information to take in, but the only way to get the message across is by proving the facts about legalization. The decision to legalize would end the destructive and expensive war on drugs. Hundreds of thousands of dollars from the legal system would be saved, and there would be a greater opportunity for the police to focus on more violent crimes. Finally, the sales and regulations of marijuana would end the violence that comes with black market sales, and even contribute to raising enough money for the United States to make its way out of debt.

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