

EDITORIAL

Our View

Critical thinking rubric doesn't meet potential

The Pathways Critical Thinking Task Force's Proposed Rubric has the chance to clarify the critical thinking goals for faculty and students at Truman State, but we fear it might be missing the mark as the rubric stands.

Critical thinking skills are deeply embedded in the University's curriculum, beginning with classes such as Writing as Critical Thinking and evolving into the final senior portfolio. An attempt to define them is long overdue.

Critical thinking is one of the skills that can be developed, used and applied to any discipline and career. Consistent rhetoric can help students cross-apply the skill they're developing in other classes, but the language used throughout the rubric excessively is vague.

For example, the language used to describe what students should strive for when using supporting evidence, called the "mastering" category, suggests successful critical thinking should show "a sophisticated understanding of validated techniques for generating evidence, and deploys them insightfully," according to the proposed rubric draft as of Sept. 20.

This description seems to fail the rubric's definition for mastering the communication of critical thinking by not setting clear, understandable and more importantly, assessable goals for students. To use the rubric's own terms, this document, which describes the mastering of communication as the use of "nuanced and eloquent language" fails at clearly communicating the revision for students. Instead, to use the standards of the document to critique itself — "in many places, language, (word choice) obscures meaning."

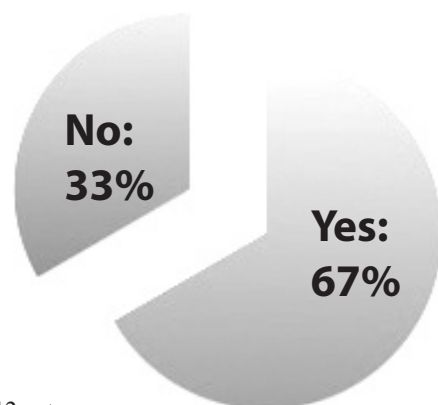
This project has potential but we worry the abstract nature of the rubric might leave students scratching their heads instead of reaching for the stars.

During the upcoming review and revision phases, we encourage those who have the chance to replace the ambiguity and abstract with clarity and certainty to do so. Incorporating specifics and examples when possible will be mutually beneficial to explain the expectations to students and faculty.

Endeavors such as this have to search for the middle ground between encouraging students to aim high and setting expectations out of their reach and this project still can achieve that.

Web Poll

Should Truman State change its mascot to a squirrel?



*out of 12 votes

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Corrections

On a page 1 photo caption in last week's Index, Mark Thompson was incorrectly identified in a photo as Adair County Public Administrator. Thompson actually was elected as Adair County Commissioner.

On page 11's "Library founder leaves behind legacy" story, Lanny Morley is referred to as a she, when he actually is a male.

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

Letter to the Editor

Clarify Truman State's non-discrimination policy

Board of Governors:

We are writing in support of adding "sexual orientation" to Truman State University's Statement of Non-discrimination.

As it reads now; "The University observes and complies fully with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex."

The federal law states: "Title VII prohibits not only intentional discrimination, but also practices that have the effect of discriminating against individuals because of their race, color, national origin, religion, or sex."

Truman State University's statement goes on to a second paragraph stating: "Discriminatory practices based on reasons not expressly stated in the policy, such as sexual orientation, veteran status, disability, marital status, and bankruptcy, which are not related to educational or job requirements, are prohibited by the University's non-discrimination policy even though such reasons

are not specifically named in the policy".

Compare this with the non-discrimination statement of the University of Missouri: "The University of Missouri does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or status as a protected veteran."

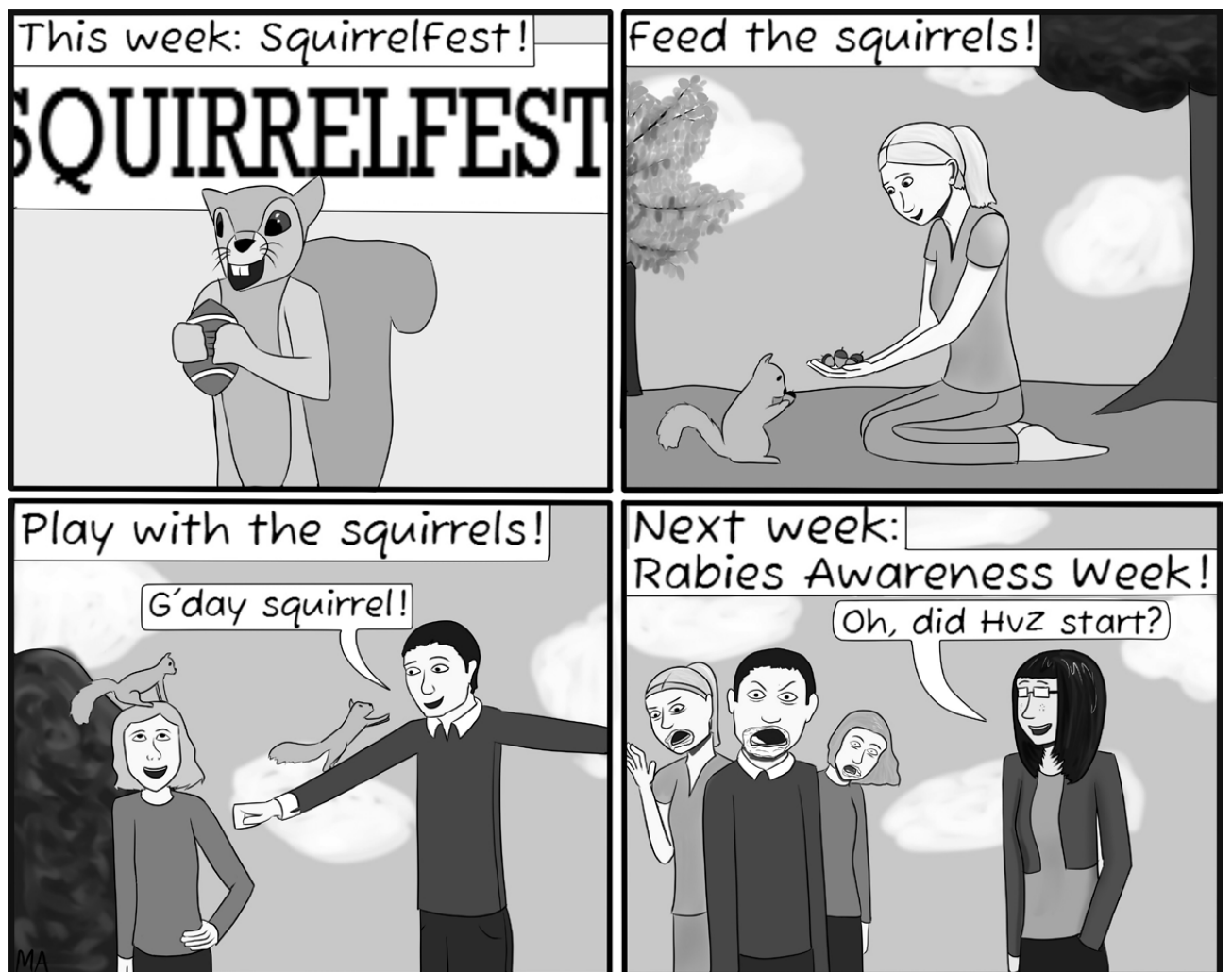
The most obvious difference between the Truman State University statement and the one by University of Missouri is the simplicity and clarity of the latter's. If Truman wants to make the declaration that we go further than the federal non-discrimination law by including sexual orientation, then we strongly support making that explicit in our main statement.

Let us stand with the University of Missouri (among others), and make a clear proclamation that we value ALL members of the Truman community. That anyone "coming out" openly to live an authentic life will know they are protected by our non-discrimination policy. Let us send an unambiguous message of this commitment.

Sherri A. Palmer
Psychology professor

Cartoon

By Megan Archer



Squirrels should be celebrated



Adam Rollins

Truman State should establish a new annual festival to celebrate one of the most charming aspects of our school — the only permanent resident on campus, the red squirrel.

These furry little guys are part of what defines the Truman experience. They're bold, friendly and fun to watch. They brighten up your day when you're feeling down. Each morning, when students sleepily troop out of their residence halls to begin their daily education, little red squirrels are outside every door, waiting to bestow upon them a fuzzy dose of energy and an encouraging chatter.

It's almost as if they're saying, "Perk up guys, it's a great day for gathering nuts."

When things are grim and it seems like you never will finish that 20-page essay by tomorrow, a compassionate squirrel will come by to cheer you up

by scaling the side of a brick building like a furry tree lizard.

"If he can climb the vertical face of a solid brick wall," one might think, "then I can do anything!"

We can all learn a lesson from the enthusiasm of the squirrel. This is why I think 'Squirrelfest' would be an appropriate addition to Truman's yearly activities. It would remind us all that no matter heat, cold or rain, every day is a good day to be collecting nuts and burying them in preparation for winter. If only we all were so enthused about collecting the nuts, grains and acorns of knowledge and burying them away in preparation for the harsh, barren winter that is post-college life.

Plus, Squirrelfest has so much potential as a community event. We could sell peanut, pecan and other legume-based cakes and pies. We could serve little red juice drinks that would be sweet to represent the squirrel's cute demeanor, but also a little bit tangy to capture the squirrel's sassy attitude. They would be called "squirrel-tinis."

We could have "The Running of the Squirrels." Participants would have a bag of assorted nuts tied around their waists and would then run from a horde of pursuing squirrels. The person with the most squirrel followers wins a take-home jar of Planters peanuts and a dozen fuzzy new friends.

We could even make the red squirrel the new, secondary mascot of Truman. I certainly have seen more squirrels on campus than I have bulldogs, even accounting for hats and T-shirts. During half-time at football games, mascot-Spike could run around chasing a little dog dressed up in a squirrel costume. Ironic? Yes. Hilarious? Yes. Huge draw to attend sports events? I think so.

The Truman bookstore could sell T-shirts with squirrel-based slogans like, "All nuts might look the same, but out there is the perfect nut for you," or "Bury acorns, grow a tree, get more acorns," or even just "I 'squee' what you did there."

I admit that last one was pretty niche Internet humor, but the idea stands.

There is no finer example of preparedness, enthusiasm and industry than Truman's outgoing community of red squirrels. Sometimes they might look like they are just fooling around, but really they are exercising and using up excess energy that might otherwise have gone to waste. We can all learn important life lessons from our friendly neighborhood squirrel-buddies, and I think Squirrelfest is just the party we've been looking for.

Adam Rollins is a sophomore communication major from St. Charles, Mo.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor in chief, managing editor, news editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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