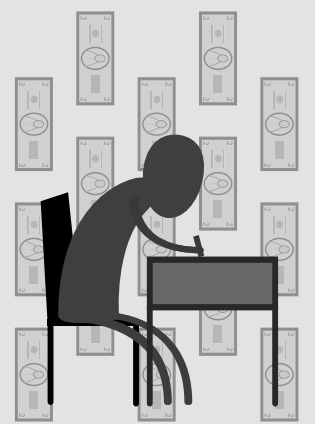


Missouri Performance-Based Funding

Criteria for Assessment



Student retention and progress
Graduation rate and degree of completion
Quality of student learning
Financial responsibility and efficiency
Institution-specific goal

According to governor.mo.gov.

Seminar courses should offer multiple options



Parker Moyer

Sitting in a circle with my fellow philosophy and religion majors, I soon realized after five people said they were going to graduate school that I was in the minority. It happens that I am not going to pursue a post-graduate degree and it got me thinking — could I be doing something better with my time than taking a class for pre-graduate school students?

As my time at Truman State comes to a close, I am moving deeper into the capstone of my philosophy and religion major. I realize every major has something different for their seniors. For example, I know psychology deals with conducting research. However, I think the variety for the philosophy and religion major is lacking.

To clarify, I am not disagreeing with a capstone class or project — I think it is important to gather all of your skills from your time at college and put them to one final test. However, I can't help but think a little variety might be useful to many students besides myself. The fact is, there are students, like me, who want to join the workforce directly after graduation, but are in a degree that traditionally is followed by a graduate degree. The philosophy and religion capstone focuses on cultivating a master's-thesis type paper and defending it from your peers and professors. It's great for the majority of my class that is going to graduate school, but not for me.

Knowing how to write is a necessary skill and being able to defend what you write is invaluable, but these are things I have accumulated through my studies here at Truman — I'd like to put them to test in the real world through something such as an internship. As I said before, the whole point of a capstone is to take the skills you have learned and show that you have mastered them. A thesis-based setting for an aspiring grad student is perfect, but for those that are joining the workforce post-graduation, give them an internship for credit option instead.

An article published in the May 2010 Chronicle of Higher Education states many employers would like to see students receive credit for their internships. Offering credit for these internships would give students an even greater incentive to pursue and gain experience that could help them with their post-graduate plans. Putting what you've learned in class to the test in the real world can help you determine if joining the work force straight out of college is something you want to do. Then again, you might change your mind and decide to continue your education.

Whatever your motives, offering students a variety of options to express what they have learned would be a great solution to a very one-sided capstone project.

Senior portfolio evaluations directly affect Truman's success



John Riti

Maybe we all should have paid more attention during ENG 190.

According to the Missouri governor's website, Gov. Jay Nixon's January State of the State Address detailed how an additional \$34 million for higher education funds would be given to Missouri schools through a performance formula agreed upon by Missouri's public university presidents, numerous boards, elected officials and the governor himself.

According to the same site, performances are evaluated through five categories, the last of which is selected by each university individually and approved by the state.

For our fifth measure, Truman State chose the improvement of students' critical thinking skills, measured by Collegiate Learning Assessment, or CLA, scores and senior portfolio submission evaluations.

This is where my reference to slacking during ENG 190 — Writing as Critical Thinking — comes up, as this fifth category was the only one Truman did not pass, according to a Feb. 6 Kirksville Daily Express article.

It's hard for me to wrap my head around. We hand-picked this goal with emphasis in critical thinking skills. We rightfully thought we were playing to our strengths, as it's a goal inherent to our mission as a University. Truman particularly stresses the importance of critical thinking the moment you arrive at your orientation, ENG 190 being an obvious example. Yet here we are, having missed the required mark.

This might not initially cause alarm for some, but it should. Because of this failure in the fifth category, Truman was automatically ineligible for 20 percent of the \$1.7 million our school could have gotten in performance-based funds, according to the Daily Express article.

In the same article, University President Troy Paino said he has no regrets pursuing the critical thinking goal, instead

saying it was a "wake-up call" that gives opportunity for University-wide self-reflection and improvement in areas of our mission.

I agree with Paino, and I have an idea of where we can start. The critical thinking performance was gauged by the CLA exam and the senior portfolio evaluations. If student attitudes toward these two assessments improve, then performance-based evaluations of critical thinking skills will as well.

Most students probably don't take these assessments seriously, and truthfully this attitude is understandable. I can't blame someone on the brink of graduation for not caring about a standardized test or a portfolio they don't technically get a grade for. As someone who is graduating this May, I won't lie to you and tell you I enjoyed taking the CLA exam on a Tuesday night this semester. For most students, as long as you complete something and turn it in, it doesn't matter.

However, being aware of the ramifications of this attitude might cause some people to change their minds. I know this news did just that for me. The recent happenings in Jefferson City should show all of us how important standardized tests and senior portfolios are to the reputation and financial well-being of our University, as they reflect upon all of us.

I'd encourage graduating seniors who haven't submitted their portfolio yet to really devote some time to it. My senior seminar professor was especially helpful in this area and I'd also encourage professors of senior students to communicate this importance as well.

I personally wasn't aware of this performance formula for potential boost in funds and I feel most of my peers weren't either. If the administration stressed the importance of these reflections and performance-based activities — especially the financial importance — and how they impact future state legislation, then maybe more students would take note.

Although this was unfortunate, I don't think Truman should be embarrassed that we failed the critical thinking mark in the category we chose. Rather, we should now be motivated to showcase how much we've learned and to demonstrate the skills we've gained here at Truman, at which point any sort of funding formula won't be able to overlook us.

John Riti is a senior English major from St. Louis, Mo.

Parker Moyer is a senior philosophy and religion major from Columbia, Mo.

How important is the senior portfolio as a method of assessment?

"It's important to show Truman how people have progressed from freshman year to senior year."

Emily Berry
Senior



"I think it's actually pretty good ... It should actually help to see if you got the skills you needed to get by the end of your graduation term."

Colleen Prendergast
Sophomore



"It gives [seniors] organization and would maybe help them down the road ... to look back and [say] 'Oh, this is all the stuff that I did.'"

Austin Alexander
Freshman



"The senior test ... you can easily cram for, but a portfolio is a lot harder to do in a night ... It's a better array of your growth."

Maren Eriksen-Russo
Freshman



AROUND THE QUAD

Use the Internet for discussion, not outrage



Sarah Muir

"I can't believe that! That's the most horrible thing I've ever heard! Those people should just die!"

That's an example of what usually happens when people on the Internet react to something — except usually it's in all caps. The "outrage" reaction our generation commonly uses online might feel like a great way to vent anger or earn the "social justice warrior" title, but it usually creates a bad environment for discussion and rarely does any good in terms of creating real change. Instead of just reacting, we need to learn to engage with a topic.

There are a lot of common problems with outrage reactions. Information spreads fast on the Internet, but that information isn't always accurate. Often people react to something before they even confirm whether what they're reacting to is true. Just because a website says it is reporting "The Truth About The War" or "The Truth About Obamacare" doesn't mean it really is — fact check that stuff. In my experience if the phrase "the truth about" is included in the title of an article, it probably is not the truth. Fact checking should include any statistics or information you post about an issue.

Outrage reactions usually involve a lot of exaggeration. If someone posts a link on Facebook and says, "This is the worst thing happening in America right now," it probably isn't. This sort of exaggeration tends to desensitize people. When everything is "the worst," it's hard to notice things that actually are bad. Eating meat doesn't make someone as bad as Hitler, and supporting Obama's policies doesn't make someone a socialist pig intent on destroying the fabric of America.

Outrage can become a form of bullying. Sometimes people say stupid things online. Sometimes people genuinely are ignorant of sensitive issues and say something they shouldn't. The response to this shouldn't be yelling at the person about how terrible they are. Instead, a more appropriate response would be gently correcting the person in a way that doesn't attack them personally. That way, ignorance isn't an excuse to say something bad or a reason to completely tear someone down. Education should be the first goal in these situations. Then, if the person continues to say horrible things, feel free to call them out on it — but you still should refrain from making personal attacks. For example, instead of saying, "You're a jerk and you're wrong," try "You're wrong in this instance because what you said was offensive and unsupported for a few reasons."

These three problems in no way are exclusive to Internet outrage, and Internet outrage doesn't have to include those three things. The problem is it usually does. This creates a difficult environment for people to have an informed and reasonable discussion

about real issues. It's hard to engage with someone who's writing in all caps and saying anyone who disagrees basically is Hitler. Seeing who can digitally "yell the loudest" about their side only causes closed minds.

I'm not saying outrage should stop altogether. Outrage is the first step to change, and if something matters to you, you have the right to get mad about it and share that anger with other people. However, outrage should be based on an informed opinion about an issue, should not be exaggerated to the point of making everything seem irrelevant and should not resort to bullying.

It's time we clean up Internet discourse and have informed discussions about the issues we face. Let's move beyond outrage and into understanding and discussion. Persuade instead of alienate. This will prove to be much more productive and more likely to cause change than becoming unreasonably mad and refusing to really discuss something.

Sarah Muir is a sophomore political science major from Lee's Summit, Mo.