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TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY INDEX

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EXCELLENCE SINCE 1909

THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT-PRODUCED NEWSPAPER

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Left, Student Senate sophomore President Matt Cooper talks about the gender identity resolution while Student Senator junior Erin Schroeder, right, listens in the SUB Feb. 23. The resolution passed with a vote of 17-0-2.

Applications to Truman decline

BY AUSTIN HORNBOSTEL
Staff Reporter

Freshman applicants to Truman State for next school year are declining because of demographic shifts around the state.

Regina Morin, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, said Truman is not alone with this decrease. Morin said the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, a research organization, released demographic data during 2003 that projected about 70,000 high school graduates would leave the Midwest between 2010 and 2014. She said a demographic shift of birth rates, migration patterns from the north to the southeast and southwest and economic shifts represent this trend.

"It isn't just Truman that has a lower number of applicants but for us, we also have other dynamics that are impacting the number of applications," Morin said. "[One is] we're one of the most highly-selective schools in the state."

Morin said the decrease of applicants could come from a career-focused mindset throughout the nation that is at odds with Truman's liberal arts curriculum because students here develop proficiency in a variety of different areas. However, Morin said the liberal arts and sciences is one of the most valuable backgrounds a graduate can have today, since this wide skill set is attractive to employers. She also said Truman's rural location could be a contributor to the decrease.

"I don't want to call it a battle, but on the other hand I feel like we almost have to work twice as hard as our counterparts to recruit that well-prepared, high ability student who understands the value of the liberal arts and sciences and is willing to do that in a small town," Morin said.

Morin said though it might seem the decrease of applicants is a major problem, Truman has a few different options to combat this trend. She said Truman implemented a brand development process that resulted in the "Don't Follow, Pursue" slogan that can resonate with applicants. Morin said at the end of the day, the number of applications will not be as important as the actual number of students who choose to come to school here next fall. She said the admissions department has implemented a focused strategy to target out-of-state high school students, including expanded travel and enhanced scholarships to help with out-of-state costs. The admissions department also has restructured one of its counselor positions to focus on multi-cultural students and growing diversity, Morin said.

David Rector, Vice President for Administration, Finance and Planning, said the financial impact is not clear now because there are not yet exact numbers. He said hypothetically, if enrollment for next year's freshman

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Senate passes gender identity resolution

BY CALIE HOLDEN
Staff Reporter

The "Transgender" in LGBT has been a topic of discussion for Student Senate, concluding with passing a resolution to protect students from discrimination because of gender identity.

The resolution, which passed 17-0-2, recommends Truman State's Board of Governors revise the nondiscrimination policy to include gender identity and expression.

Several members and supporters of the LGBT community attended Sunday's meeting. Some spoke to the Senate about discrimination within their community or to their loved ones.

Sophomore Ryan Wavada, who spoke on behalf of Prism, said "I feel like we should encourage all sorts of people to come to our University, and I think we should send the message to the region

that we are accepting of all people."

According to the resolution's text, seven other Missouri universities already have adopted similar non-discrimination policies. The resolution states more than 750 universities around the country have added gender identity to their policies.

It also states Truman's Board of Governors amended the non-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation during December 2013.

Gender identity is not dependent upon a person's physiological sex, the resolution states, but rather the gender they identify with psychologically.

The resolution first was presented at the Feb. 22 meeting, and was debated at that meeting and the one this Sunday. Freshman Jacob Buxton, chairman of the student affairs committee, opposed the resolution.

He said he opposes the resolution

because of problems that could arise. Buxton said the bill was written too broadly and did not address questions as to bathroom use or sports teams.

"There are these concerns and they are not being taken into consideration," Buxton said.

Buxton was one of the abstaining votes at Sunday's meeting.

Junior Laura Van Genderen, one of the authors of the bill and diversity committee chair, said she began working on the resolution shortly before the semester began. She said she became interested in writing the resolution because members of the transgender community approached her about their concerns about discrimination.

"There is such a prominent need," Van Genderen said. "Such a prominent demand for it right now."

Junior Jessica Poole, co-author of the

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Truman considering plus-minus grading system

BY PAIGE YUNGERMANN
Staff Reporter

The Truman State Undergraduate Council currently is considering a resolution that would implement a plus-minus grading system.

If the Undergraduate Council, which is composed of a faculty representative from each academic department, passes the resolution, it will go to Faculty Senate, and if it passes Faculty Senate, it will be presented to the Board of Governors by the Department of Statistics. The earliest it could go into effect is fall 2015.

Statistics Department Chair Jason Shaw wrote the resolution on behalf of the Department of Statistics. He said a plus-minus grading system would impact student grade point averages by making plus grades worth slightly more GPA points and minus grades worth slightly fewer GPA points. For example, a B+ would be equivalent to a 3.33 GPA, and B- would be equivalent to a 2.67 GPA.

Shaw said he presented the idea to the Department of Statistics during fall 2013.

The resolution was brought to the Undergraduate Council Jan. 16, Council Chair Debra Cartwright said. She said the

Council voted on the resolution Feb. 13, but the vote did not reach a quorum, because of the high number of abstentions, which do not count as votes according to the Council's by-laws.

"Most of the abstentions were people where their faculty [in their department] were split," Cartwright said. "They [felt they] couldn't vote one way or the other because their faculty were about half and half in terms of for and against."

Cartwright said the Council will vote again at the March 6 meeting. She said if the Council does not reach a quorum at the next vote, the Council either will vote about the resolution again at the April 10 meeting or the Department of Statistics can send the resolution directly to Faculty Senate. Registrar Margaret Herron said if a plus-minus system is implemented, it likely will affect all students instead of applying only to incoming students because applying it to all students is the easiest way to

program the transcript system. Herron said the system only will affect grades going into a student's GPA and will not retroactively change GPAs.

There are three advantages to a plus-minus system, Shaw said.

First, one advantage is students might take tests and proj-

ects more seriously because it will be easier for them to raise their GPAs than with the traditional grading system, Shaw said. He said one example is a student with an 86.5 percent in

a class near the end of the semester. If the student has a final project worth 20 percent of their grade, it is impossible for the student to raise his or her grade to an A, but the student could raise the grade to a B+.

A second advantage is this system distinguishes between students with the same letter grade but different scores, for example, an 89 percent and an 80 percent. Shaw said he considers this an advantage because the student with an 89 percent deserves more distinction than the student with the 80 percent.

The third advantage is a plus-minus grading system provides more distinction to valedictorians. Shaw said with the current grading system, there are sometimes as many as 30 valedictorians in a graduating class.

"What does it mean to be a valedictorian at Truman if there are 30 of them?" Shaw said.

However, Shaw said some people consider it a disadvan-

tage that some students who have a 4.0 GPA with the current system would not have a 4.0 GPA with a plus-minus system.

Shaw said he is not concerned about this because many other universities, including the University of Missouri-Columbia, Missouri State University and Washington University in St. Louis, use a plus-minus grading system.

"If somebody is not a 4.0 student at another institution, why should they be a 4.0 here?" Shaw said.

Shaw said he does not foresee any other adverse effects, such as making it more challenging for students to keep scholarships or putting more stress on the student body.

Cartwright said a disadvantage to a plus-minus system is there might be a lower retention and graduation rates of academic programs where students need a certain GPA to graduate, such as nursing, communication disorders and business.

She said another disadvantage is courses in which students receive a C- might not transfer as credit to other universities where a 2.0 is required.

Shaw said while a plus-minus system will affect GPAs, the students' overall GPAs should remain about the same.

NEW GRADING SCALE PROPOSAL			
proposed by Statistics Department			
A	4.00	C	2.00
A-	3.67	C-	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
B	3.00	D	1.00
B-	2.67	D-	0.67
C+	2.33	F	0.00