

Letter to the Editor

Rethinking the LSP

Lately I have been wondering if the Modes of Inquiry part of the Liberal Studies Program (LSP) of Truman truly meets the objective of producing graduates that possess “the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to become effective world citizens” (Truman by Design: A New Era of Opportunity, Truman State University Strategic Plan, 2011-2015). In the current system students take separate courses to explore different modes of inquiry. We then hope that a student can synthesize a coherent view of the world after being exposed to different subjects. However, only the Junior Interdisciplinary Seminar (JINS) helps students appreciate the unity of the intellectual enterprise.

The rapid pace of knowledge flow in the world, increased mobility of people, and enhanced interactions among individuals of different backgrounds make interdisciplinary thinking essential for effective citizens of the world. From this perspective, the LSP

system appears to be outdated, as it does not adequately recognize the interdisciplinarity required to understand and act in today’s world. The system itself derives from an antiquated conception of the seven classical liberal arts, consisting of the Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). Perhaps the time has come to rethink the LSP and build a fully interdisciplinary core curriculum that incorporates the traditional subjects in a more coherent manner.

Several universities are attempting to build a truly modern LSP that recognizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the core curriculum. For example, the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core (BIC) provides an alternative to the University’s traditional general education requirements. Scripps College has developed a Core Curriculum in Interdisciplinary Humanities which consists of a sequence of three courses with the common theme “Histories of the Present.” The Scripps Core aims “to encourage increas-

ingly sophisticated and focused interdisciplinary investigation of a broad range of historical and contemporary issues.” Quinnipiac University has introduced a sequence of three interdisciplinary seminars in their new core curriculum, which explore the identity of an individual successively as a member of the local community, a member of the nation, and a member of the world.

These are just a few examples—there is a general movement, still in its early stages, towards bringing more interdisciplinarity into the core curriculum. As a recognized leader in higher education innovation, Truman should be at the forefront of exploring a more modern core curriculum. Accordingly, we should redesign the LSP so that our core curriculum truly trains Truman students to become effective world citizens and leaders.

Mohammad Samiullah
Physics professor and department chair



Our View

Meth ordinance would be an appropriate measure

From its production to consumption, methamphetamine is a dangerous drug. Amateur chemists performing complex reactions in clandestine basement labs sometimes cause explosions. Users of methamphetamine commonly suffer from side-effects including severe depression, lethargy, hallucinations and fearfulness, according to drugpolicy.org.

Despite these serious risks, methamphetamine continues to be a problem throughout Missouri. According to KSMU Ozarks Public Radio, the state’s drug task forces responded to 21,000 “meth-related incidents,” made 9,000 arrests, and busted 1,700 meth labs during 2012.

To combat the epidemic, Kirksville City Council is discussing a city ordinance that would require a doctor’s prescription to purchase cold medicines in Kirksville that contain pseudoephedrine, a necessary ingredient for methamphetamine production in home laboratories.

We applaud this measure. Methamphetamine destroys lives and breaks up families, and Missouri leads the nation for “methamphetamine-related incidents,” according to a Sept. 25 Al-Jazeera America article.

However, if the Council decides to enact such an ordinance, it will not be without downsides for the Kirksville community. To receive a prescription for pseudoephedrine-containing medicines, residents must visit a doctor’s office. For uninsured or under-insured residents, a doctor visit can be quite expensive, not to mention difficult to schedule during flu season.

For those residents who have no desire to cook methamphetamine and are only seeking relief from a cold, this measure would be understandably frustrating.

We encourage Kirksville residents to do their part to combat the meth epidemic by reporting any suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

U.S. colleges have lower standards for student athletes



Emily Battmer
Editor-in-Chief

A student who can’t read probably can’t get into college. But if that student can dunk a basketball, illiteracy can be forgiven.

That’s the conclusion of CNN’s recent study of college athletes and their entrance exam scores. Of the basketball and football players at these schools, 7 to 18 percent are reading at an elementary level, according to CNN’s findings.

We’re not being especially hard on these guys — a “college-literate” score is only 400 on the SAT critical reading or writing test, or 16 on the ACT.

When asked about the questionable admission standards for athletes, college officials argued “excellent tutoring” and “extra attention” allow them to achieve high graduation rates, according to CNN. But an illiterate non-athlete wouldn’t even have the opportunity to receive these services, because they wouldn’t be admitted to the school in the first place.

Academic experts say it’s nearly impossible to advance from an elementary to college reading level during an NCAA career, according to CNN. High graduation rates can be attributed to flexible grading and too much academic support, i.e. cheating.

Awarding undeserving students with unearned admission, unearned degrees and absurd financial aid does a disservice to those who work hard to compete academically. But it also does a disservice to these athletes. They are not seen as students but rather revenue-generating machines.

By bending requirements for unprepared student athletes, these universities send the message that their priorities lie in making profits. They aren’t concerned with producing contributing members of society, bettering their student athletes or creating opportunities for these students post-graduation. And if they’re not concerned with helping their superstar money makers succeed, they’re probably not concerned with the rest of the student body, either.

It’s sad when universities are more willing to invest in sports programs than in their academically-minded students. Granted, some college football programs earn more than 100 million dollars annually, according to an August 2013 Forbes article. But the return on investment in academics is the future of our nation, and that is a much greater investment opportunity.

While we might not be known for our glamorous athletic program, I am proud to attend a university with a strong academic reputation. I would like to believe that Truman State, which preaches the importance of the liberal arts and holds its students to high academic standards, does not similarly give undeserving students an unfair advantage.

Emily Battmer is a senior communication major from Kansas City, Mo.

Corrections

In the December 5 front page story “Biology changes curriculum,” it was incorrectly stated the Truman State biology department would be implementing changes to its curriculum within the next four to five years. The biology curriculum changes are being considered, but biology faculty have not yet approved them. This approval process will take place during the Spring 2014 semester.

Contact

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please email index.editor@gmail.com, call us at 660-785-4449 or submit a letter via our website tmn.truman.edu/theindex.



C’s get degrees, A’s get jobs



Andrea Trierweiler

“C’s get degrees” is a phrase students frequently use around college campuses — often to justify not earning grades as high as they wanted. The saying often is paired with others such as, “My grades don’t define me” and “Grades don’t matter anyway.”

As we prepare for another semester of classes, it’s a good time to examine how much grades actually do matter. While it’s true a C average will earn the same diploma as the A student’s, it’s what happens after graduation that matters more. Grades are not the only factor employers and graduate schools consider, but they are important to the hiring or admittance process.

In fact, according to a December 2013 Forbes article titled “Do Employers Really Care About Your College Grades?” employers do tend to examine grades when deciding whether to hire someone. When the National Association of Colleges and Employers surveyed 200 employers, 67 percent said they looked at applicants’ GPAs, according to the article.

However, not all employers look at grades. Many small employers don’t, but most large employers do — investment banks, professional service firms and pharmaceutical companies care the most, according to Forbes. It’s crucial for students who are pursuing careers with large employers to maintain a high GPA, which will enhance their résumés and increase chances of getting hired in competitive job markets.

The article explains most employers want to see at least a 3.0 GPA. Some expect a 3.5 or higher, although many employers do not have a set GPA cutoff. Yet there are ways to make up for poor grades if this is the case. One recommendation is to attend a job fair, where students can meet face-to-face with recruiters and explain the circumstances behind their GPAs. Another is to include noteworthy activities on résumés such as internships and relevant real-world experience, according to the article.

Furthermore, good grades matter for those seeking admission to graduate school. According to Truman State’s website, 50.4 percent of Truman graduates immediately enter graduate school — thus, about half of the Truman population needs to be concerned with meeting the GPA standards required by the grad schools each student is pursuing.

Most graduate schools require at least a B minus average for admission, and grades are essential for admission into law school and Ph.D. programs, according to an April 2013 New York Times article, “Do Grades Matter?” However, there are circumstances in which grades

matter more than others. For many graduate programs, particularly those in the arts and humanities, grades don’t matter as much as real-world experience, according to the New York Times article.

How much grades matter to you should depend on your future plans. Each individual person must examine future goals and plan accordingly. C’s might get degrees, but B’s and A’s stand out more and increase an applicant’s chances of getting hired or accepted into graduate school.

Of course, by no means do grades define a person. A person’s value cannot be defined by letters and numbers, and a lot of factors make up a GPA. Some people get off to a rocky start as freshmen, while others work several hours per week during college and don’t have as much time to devote to classes. According to the Forbes article, many employers understand low grades do not necessarily mean a student is lazy and that other circumstances contribute to a GPA.

If your grades are bad, this could be the semester to improve them, especially for freshmen and sophomores who still have several semesters to increase their GPAs. Juniors and seniors who fear it might be too late to achieve a desired GPA would benefit from taking a different route to enhance their résumés, like finding experience in areas relating to future careers.

If your grades are low, it’s not the end. But grades do matter, so the “C’s get degrees” mentality is no excuse to slack off.

Andrea Trierweiler is a senior Romance language major from Columbia, 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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