

Greed can help explain tuition hikes



Will Cheney

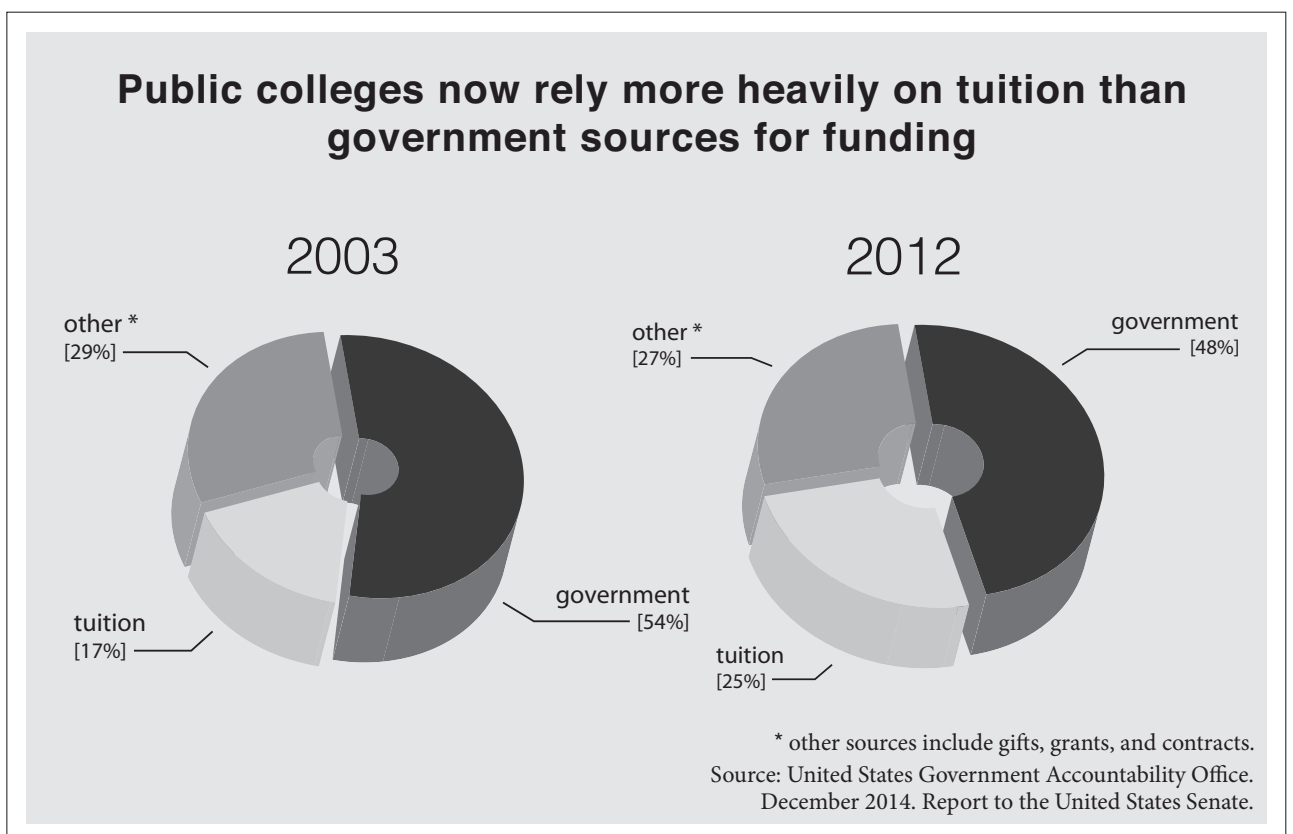
University President Troy Paino recently announced that without significant changes, Truman State's 2020 budget will run a \$3 million deficit, according to the page 1 Index article "Paino urges change" from Jan. 29, 2015. This might sound like pocket change in the grand scheme of higher education, but with revenues totaling only \$42 million according to Truman's Fiscal Year 2015 report, this deficit comes out to be more than 7 percent of Truman's entire budget. To sum up the situation, in five years, Truman will be in deep trouble. We should look below the surface to examine the motivations that run our capitalist economy to explain why it currently is mistreating higher education.

We are not alone. Many state universities are facing financial hardships, and analysts have given us a laundry list of people or things to blame. Time Magazine argues the rising cost of college should be attributed to the additional time most students spend at college, according to a September 2014 article.

Another argument is states are to blame for contributing less to the funding of public universities, according to an October 2011 NPR story. The rising cost of tuition has spawned numerous "Thanks Obama!" jokes. While accurate in their own ways, these are only partial explanations of a larger systemic problem.

Capitalism's logic is circular and vicious, using the motto "expansion for the sake of expansion." The people who make decisions in our economy, capitalists, use up any useful resource to increase the size of their bank accounts, but quickly discard it as soon as no more money-making potential exists. I propose higher education in the United States currently is being disinvested in because it is no longer a profitable investment for business leaders.

In general, your stay at Truman is paid for by two sources — the government and the students. The



amount of money the government contributes has decreased significantly over time. David Rector, Truman's Vice President for Administration, Finance and Planning, said during the 1970s, Missouri covered 75 percent of Truman's costs, according to a December 2014 The Monitor interview. Rector said this number now is 44 percent, with the remainder of the costs appearing on our tuition bills. What during the past 40 years has caused the government to back off its investment in our education?

The first factor to look at is the demand by industry for labor power in the United States. As transportation has become cheaper and global communication more developed, outsourcing jobs from the United States to other countries with lower wages has become a popular business strategy. The Federal Reserve reported during January 2011 the number of outsourced jobs went from 600,000 during 1992 to nearly 30 million during 2010. Business executives are satisfying their demand for labor by turning to other countries, and because of this they are less interested in how skilled the American labor force is.

The second factor to look at are the tax rates for citizens and corporations, which generate revenue to pay for higher education. Our highest income tax bracket went from 90 percent during the 1960s to under 40 percent today, according to an October 2013 IRS report. The corporate income tax was 40 percent during 1960, but only 18 percent during 2012, according to a January 2015 Federal Reserve report. These statistics show that America's richest citizens

and corporations are succeeding in the battle to lower taxes for themselves. Unfortunately, as any economics 101 course will teach you, there is no such thing as a free lunch.

In general, a cut in revenue must be followed by a cut in spending. Higher education has been one of the prime targets, since business leaders who once were invested in our education are looking to hire other equally skilled but lower cost employees elsewhere. Unlike CEOs, students typically do not have lobbyists in their contacts lists who would be willing to steer legislation in their favor. Students now shoulder a greater financial burden.

Truman has the best goal an educational institution can commit itself to — learning for the sake of learning. Unfortunately, the economic system that governs much of our society values a worker's productivity over their ability to think as an individual. These fundamentally conflicting motivations are the real reason behind rising tuition, trillion dollar student debts and Truman's rising deficit.

What is to be done? We can apply for more scholarships, hold angry meetings on campus and even wave pretty signs around Jefferson City. But we mustn't forget capitalism doesn't care how we define "liberal studies," what our favorite Shakespeare play is or how much we care about learning.

Will Cheney is a freshman economics major from Bridgeton, Mo.

Ginkgoes and students learn to adapt



Conor Gearin

We have something to learn from the story of the world's oldest species of tree — we don't need to change to adapt to new environments.

The ginkgo tree is known as a fossil species. It has hung onto the planet for 170 million years through major climatic events. The tree's reproductive parts have changed little the past 100 million years, according to a June 2003 study in the journal "Nature."

This veteran of Earth's history is represented by several trees growing on Truman's campus. Look for them in front of Ryle Hall, Blanton-Nason-Brewer Hall, and to the east of Kirk Memorial Building.

Though they are the only species of their entire phylum to survive to the present day, ginkgoes have proven themselves uniquely suited to surviving the dangers of modern life.

City planners often plant ginkgoes because of their ability to withstand disease and pollution, according to a November 2014 "Wall Street Journal" article. Six ginkgoes survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, during which most other life was destroyed, according to a November 2014 BBC article.

Because of their relatively primitive characteristics, ginkgoes do not produce true fruits. Instead, they bear a seed wrapped in a thick fleshy layer people sometimes mistake for a fruit, called a pericarp.

These seeds smell terrible to humans. They contain butyric acid, which is found in rancid butter and vomit, according to the "Wall Street Journal" article. People typically only plant male trees to avoid the stench caused by seed-bearing female trees.

But there once were animals that found this scent as appealing as a whiff of fresh-baked pastry is to me.

According to botanist Peter Crane, small, rodent-like mammals that lived with the dinosaurs ate the fleshy covering of the ginkgo seed. The pungent odor of the seeds attracted them like the smell of steak attracts Truman students to dining halls on premium nights.

The mammals would leave the tough center of the seed intact. This

interaction allowed the ginkgo to spread its seeds throughout the landscape, much like birds and bats do with fruits today.

This is an example of mutualism, a relationship between two species in which both benefit. Though the mammals which had the closest mutualistic relationship with the ginkgo became extinct long ago, living species such as squirrels and badgers sometimes eat ginkgo seeds, according to Crane.

However, the ginkgo has found a new mutualistic partner in humans. The ginkgoes exchange shade for city sidewalks in return for their continued existence. Now, its most important adaptation is not its stench but its delicate, fan-shaped leaves humans like.

What can we learn from the ginkgo's story? First of all, the products of evolution do not always look or smell the best — "survival of the fittest" does not mean "survival of the biggest and best-looking." Even though I like its leaves, I would not consider the ginkgo a great beauty. For millions of years, the ginkgo was quite successful peddling its rancid-butter-smelling seeds to small mammals.

I think this idea remains true for everyday problem solving as well. Many times I have tried to attack a

math or science problem with a complex solution, when a much simpler — but perhaps less impressive — method lay in front of me the whole time. There is elegance in simplicity.

The second lesson is even after 100 million years of success with one plan, you have to be ready to change to a radically different one. Without its mutualistic small mammals, the ginkgo apparently was doomed. However, working with the same set of traits evolution gave it, the species found a way to persist.

This idea has particular resonance for me as I consider my future in graduate school. After four years of serving on multiple executive boards at Truman, I soon will leave for a place where no one knows my name — let alone my fondness for mint ice cream and contemporary poetry. I might have to adapt radically to thrive in a new place.

Or, just possibly, my old ways will work just as well, the overbearing smell of too-strong coffee wafting out of my room just as it does at Truman. There are probably ginkgoes there, too.

Conor Gearin is a senior biology and English major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

How has college made you adapt?

It has taught me how to take on a lot of different projects.

Zac Clark
Junior



Living on my own and not having my parents there taught me how to do things.

Christina Naumann
Sophomore



It's made me more responsible and concerned about money.

Michael Frets
Junior



It's made me take things as they are.

Amy Oliver
Junior

