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Bethany Boyle/Index

Sen. Claire McCaskill spoke to Truman students, faculty and local law enforcement officials and attorneys Oct. 7 in the SUB conference room. She addressed sexual assault prevention for higher education institutions and encouraged dialogue about procedures and collaboration between Truman administration and law enforcement.

“Claire on Campus”

BY BETHANY BOYLE
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U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) spoke about Sexual Assault Prevention to Truman State administration heads, students, local attorneys and law enforcement in the Student Union Building last Tuesday as part of her “Claire on Campus” tour.

During the hour-long session, McCaskill talked about what she terms the “benign neglect of this problem” and discussed challenges universities face in trying to prevent sexual assault — confidentiality, victim support and the cumbersome process of reporting the incident to the proper authorities. While fielding questions from the crowd, McCaskill also spoke about issues raised by those in attendance, such as the difficulty of obtaining a concrete definition for ‘consent’ and some adverse effects of the University’s dry campus policy.

McCaskill talked through the standard procedure a victim might face when reporting a sexual assault, asking Truman representatives such as University President Troy Paino, Director of Residence Life John Gardner and Dean of Students Lou Ann Gilchrist to describe Truman’s approach for each facet of the process.

McCaskill led the discussion about defining consent, as raised in a question from Danielle Fritz, Director of the Women’s Resource Center on Truman’s campus. The issue was then addressed by local the lawmakers and attorneys in attendance. The consensus among the officials present was that, at the moment, it is hard to reach an agreement about a concrete defini-

tion of consent. A local attorney said this problem is not simply an issue of universities lacking a standard description, but the court systems as well.

McCaskill said she thinks the crucial asset lacking for many universities is an adequate number of faculty and staff with the training to conduct a forensic interview. She said this enables the interviewer to ask questions which could allow the victim to express their experience in a way that would preserve the evidence within the victim’s memories and aid further investigation and/or prosecution at the appropriate time.

The senator addressed Brenda Higgins, Director of the Student Health Center and University Counseling, one of the only staff members present who has completed this specific type of training, and spoke with the director briefly about how this preparation can make a difference for the outcome of an incident.

In a question posed near the conclusion of the meeting, a student asked for McCaskill’s input about the current campus policy to administer consequences in the event that a student is found to be intoxicated on the premises, and how this might discourage students from returning to the residence halls. The young woman said many students would rather spend the night at an off-campus location, such as a

fraternity house, than risk punishment for returning to their rooms.

In response, McCaskill said this implementation, if it truly discourages students from returning to a safe place, could be a serious problem. She said this could put many students at risk, if they opt not to return to their rooms, but remain off campus and in an intoxicated state.

“You’ve got to figure that out. Students aren’t going to want to come back if they’ve been drinking, which means they’re not going to ask for help. I applaud the dry campus part. Drinking culture is a huge part of the problem.”

Wrapping up the session, McCaskill said she hoped the candid discussion during her visit had helped open channels of communication between the University and local law enforcement, so they might find it easier to collaborate to address the issue of sexual assault in the future.

McCaskill said she will continue to visit universities and colleges as part of her “Claire on Campus” campaign, spreading awareness about the issue of sexual assault and learning what institutions are doing to confront the issue. She said the tour will help to inform her as she and fellow lawmakers further the Campus Security and Accountability Act with the goal of combating sexual assault.

“And all of your fraternities are off campus? Oh my gosh, you guys got a problem. Students aren’t gonna want to come back if they’ve been drinking, which means they’re not going to ask for help.”

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill

Truman State updates Student Conduct Code for Sexual Assault

BY ANDREW MANGRUM
Staff Reporter

Truman State changed its code of conduct regarding sexual assault during the summer.

During the summer, the Board of Governors and Dean of Student Affairs Lou Ann Gilchrist revised the Truman State Student Conduct Code referring to sexual assault. Because the federal government currently is considering legislation about Title IX violations, the University wanted to implement some changes on campus before it became mandatory. Changes usually take place every five years, but Gilchrist can go before the board at any time to make changes if something needs to be done.

The revisions include defining consent and listing out when confidentiality is voided in a student-teacher conversation. Another change allows the University to take immediate measures to help any victim continue with their education after an incident. This includes changing classes or living arrangements to make sure the victim is able to be as comfortable as possible.

Gilchrist said if a student is looking for confidentiality about a sexual assault, speaking with faculty will not be the place to go. Gilchrist said there are laws of confidentiality for counselors that trump school policy.

“Students can still go to the University Counseling Center for confidential conversations,” Gilchrist said.

Gilchrist said another important change is the addition of amnesty.

She said before the changes, students were told if they came forward with information about a sexual assault offense but were committing a minor offense such as underage drinking during the time of the incident, any consequences for the minor offense could be reduced for the reporting party. Gilchrist said with the new amnesty policy, it clearly states that if the party provides information, they will not be punished for underage drinking. She said the school also now refers to the “victim” and “accused” in a case as the “complainant” and “respondent,” to remove the biased words they previously used.

Gilchrist said Truman’s Student Government usually plays a role in University policy changes but this time they were unable to do so since these changes were made over the summer.

According to a Title IX pamphlet from the Student Affairs Office, Title IX is a federal law that mandates an educational environment free of sexual discrimination or harassment. According to the pamphlet, sexual misconduct is a form of sexual harassment.

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Kirksville citizens respond to new power line plans

BY KEATON ROBERTS
Staff Reporter

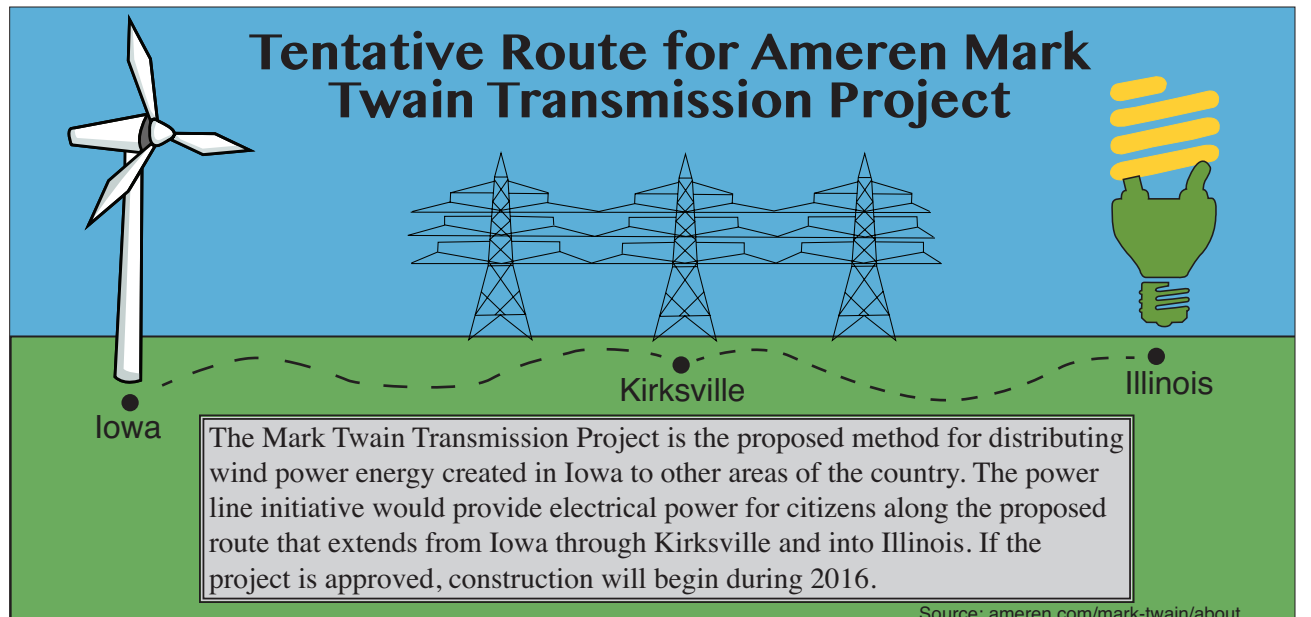
More than 100 Kirksville residents voiced concerns about Ameren’s proposed Mark Twain Transmission Project during open community forums throughout September and October.

Ameren will host an informal open house Oct. 27, where citizens can voice their concerns about the power line. The Ameren Mark Twain Transmission Project is a project with the goal of transporting renewable energy, mostly wind, from where it is generated to where it will be used.

The power line would go from Iowa to Illinois, crossing through northeast Missouri, including Kirksville. The Midcontinent Independent System Operator, an organization charged with the duty of managing and monitoring high-voltage transmission systems, has deemed this project necessary. However, the federal government has yet to give complete approval. Some citizens of Adair County have voiced views strongly opposing the power line.

Leigh Morris, Senior Communications Executive for Ameren Illinois, provided information in favor of the Mark Twain Transmission Project. Morris said Ameren Illinois has the job of carrying it and delivering this electricity to utility companies along the way. The Mark Twain Transmission Project is one of three of Ameren’s proposed transmission lines classified as a Multi-Value Project.

“MISO has determined that all these [MVP] transmission lines need to be built, because the



current lines are not large enough to handle this additional electricity,” Morris said.

Morris identified the positive effects of the transmission line to consumers. Though Ameren Illinois does not sell the electricity they transfer directly to consumers, Morris said there would be lower-cost energy reaching customers of utility companies. Morris said Ameren does not control whether the people of Kirksville will receive electricity from the transmission line, but he said it is an open-access

system, which means all generators and utility cooperatives have the ability to connect to the line.

Morris said there will be another round of public meetings. He said the proposed route for the transmission line will be announced for public comment during this meeting. Morris said this is an important time throughout the process when Ameren Illinois can gain citizen’s perspectives about the power line.

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