

From the *desk* of the *Editor*

Know the importance of Title IX

Remember the first time you stepped onto Truman State's campus? College felt like the ultimate haven, a place where any person could learn, pursue extracurricular interests, conduct research, work and live. College also should be a place where everyone has the right to do all those things without fear of harassment or violence based on their sex. That's what Title IX is for.

What is Title IX exactly? Title IX is a statute that provides protection for victims of sexual assault, rape, discrimination and more at any institution receiving federal funding, according to the online resource "Know your IX." Failure to comply with Title IX can mean sanctions for the institution involved, including the possible loss of federal funding. It is in the best interest of every school that falls under the jurisdiction of this statute to comply with it and ensure the necessary protocols for dealing with reported discrimination and violence are in place.

Truman has taken steps to comply with this statute. Our University has a Title IX coordinator, a non-discrimination notice published online and an online document detailing the procedures necessary for filing a complaint, among other available resources. The University is able to respond to reports, conduct investigations, prescribe consequences for perpetrators and do everything necessary to ensure the victim can continue to pursue higher education if they want.

We, the Index Editorial Board, would like to point out, however, that while the University might devise some of the best training tools, a killer response protocol and hire an amazing staff, it cannot have an impact on sexual harassment and assault victims in our community if students don't know how to access these resources.

During 2012, there were no reported incidents of forcible sexual violence on Truman's campus, according to the Annual Security and Fire Report issued September 2015. During 2013, there were three. During 2014, that number jumped to nine, with eight reported incidents of rape and one reported incident of fondling, according to the report.

Let's take a moment to think about what is happening here.

The number of reported incidents of sexual violence has spiked to near double digits during the last three years. The University is in compliance with Title IX. The proper procedures are in place. The Women's Resource Center, University Counseling Services and Department of Public Safety are working in tandem to provide support for victims of sexual harassment and violence.

Now consider this — the nine incidents were only the on-campus cases reported during 2014. It does not include the off-campus encounters. It does not encompass the unknown number of incidents that never were reported, and perhaps never will be. Frankly, for all we know, there might have been a greater number of unreported incidents during 2012 as compared to 2014. There is no way of knowing if Title IX is an effective policy if students are not reporting every incident.

It's common knowledge that reporting sexual harassment and violence is one of the most terrifying prospects a college student can face. What will people think? What if the person tries to retaliate? What if no one believes me? What if people think it's my fault? These questions and others like them are just the tip of the iceberg for what victims have to deal with. With students facing all these fears, we think Truman should educate students about Title IX and how to report a violation, whether it be rude comments or sexual assault.

As the Editorial Board, we would like to ask Truman to provide incoming freshmen with information about what sexual harassment really looks like and how to report it to the University. When a student is given that knowledge, they are empowered to take matters into their own hands and are less likely to stand by and passively spectate, or worse — validate, propagate or encourage sexual harassment. An individual can then go where Title IX cannot — an apartment, a friend's house, a parked car — and help stop situations and actions that promote sexual harassment before it starts.



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Guest

COLUMN



Céline Fuchs

Céline Fuchs is a sophomore Romance language major from St. Charles and a member of the Stargazers Club. She is currently working with Physics professor Vayujeet Gokhale to research the effects of light pollution on the environment.

Reducing light pollution has many advantages

Take a nighttime stroll through campus. What do you see? Probably quite a bit — there's a lot of light. So take a step back and ponder for a moment what you do not see. Quite a few things, as it would turn out. I'm here to tell you what those things are.

Let's start by talking about how wasted light drains our wallets. You might have noticed during your stroll how the light from the globes on campus escapes everywhere, including upward. This throws light into the sky, wasting energy and money. However, if you look at the lights positioned in surrounding parking lots, such as the ones on the west side of Franklin and Patterson streets, they do a much better job of simply shining downward. Here, light isn't escaping through a clear top — it's being reflected back and strengthening the downward illumination resulting in less light needed. If procedures were put in place to minimize wasted electricity and money spent on it, they could be put to more important uses.

Now let's peek at how these lights risk the safety of those on campus. Unfortunately, a common belief is the more light there is, the safer it is, but that's not the case. In fact, increasing light actually can make students unsafe.

"Glare from bright, unshielded lights actually decreases safety. It shines into our eyes, constricting our pupils. This diminishes the ability of our eyes to adapt to low-light conditions," according to the International Dark-Sky Association.

These bright lights also create deep shadows right next to them — with that glare in your eyes, your sight can't adapt to see what could be lurking very close to you. People whom you cannot see can easily see you. It also proves disastrous when driving — if light blinds the driver, they can't see oncoming cars or crossing pedestrians, which could result in a fatal accident. The globes on Truman's campus pose those risks. Unshielded light glares straight into our eyes, and because of its lack of direction, more is needed to illuminate everything, further decreasing our safety.

Something that may not initially come up as an issue with light problems is health problems — particularly, depression and obesity. Studies conducted at Ohio State University proved constant dim light at night can disrupt the production of melatonin, a hormone that acts as an antidepressant and an internal clock, according to an Oct. 12, 2010 article by The Jerusalem Post and a Nov.

17, 2010 article by Live Science. At Truman, even residents on higher floors of residence halls cannot escape the light that shines through the tops of the bright globes and leaks through blinds. This intrusion affects sleep patterns and rest, disrupting hormones and potentially causing depression. Furthermore, it can mess up internal clocks and throw off eating habits. As many students normally are on campus 24/7, there's no escape from the intense brightness of so many lights at night, not even in their dorm rooms, which results in some students requiring blackout curtains.

Finally, though by no means the least of these problems, these lights can be detrimental to the surrounding environment. Not only does it affect the night sky, increasing our carbon footprint, but it can prove deadly to wildlife.

"Migratory birds depend on cues from properly timed seasonal schedules. Artificial lights can cause them to migrate too early or too late and miss ideal climate conditions for nesting, foraging, and other behaviors," according to the International Dark-Sky Association.

Now that we have glimpsed light pollution's detrimental effects on money, safety, health and the environment, you might now be wondering what the next step is to address the problem. You can spread awareness about the issue, get people invested, and aim these efforts at those in a position to do something about it. There are several solutions readily available to us. The ideal would be to slowly replace campus lighting with more efficient models and improve their placement to minimize unnecessary light. For instance, if a globe needs to be replaced, it could be replaced with a more efficient model instead of with another globe. This is the real world, however, and it's not always full of ideal conditions. Thankfully, there is a temporary solution available that would solve part of the problem by keeping light from being thrown up into the night sky until the existing light fixtures can be replaced with friendlier ones — paint the top of the globes. This was done to similar globes and met with success in Wheaton, Maryland during 2011. This way, light would no longer be thrown up into the sky and against the sides of buildings, minimizing its detrimental effects on health, safety and the environment.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the academic year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. 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 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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