

From the
desk
of the *Editor*

Perpetuating rumors is irresponsible

At a small campus such as Truman State, one of the hottest commodities — second only to reliable Wi-Fi — is gossip. Our university is set in a small Midwestern town, amplifying the sense that you can't go anywhere without running into someone you know and consequently hearing all the latest "news." We trade stories with classmates, neighbors, other students in the dining halls, and even professors and advisors.

One result of this closeness and interconnectivity, however, is sometimes the truth becomes blurred as it travels through the grapevine. Exaggerated facts or foggy memories can be amusing when telling a friend the details of a late-night Taco Bell run or a trip to one of Kirksville's many train bridges. However, the fun stops abruptly when rumors begin to circulate about life-and-death situations, and as part of a community which has seen three student deaths during the past three semesters, we, the Editorial Board, ask that you fact check what you hear before you pass on potentially false information about sensitive situations.

One example dating back to October 2014 is the rumors which circulated after the death of Mackenzie McDermott, a junior English and creative writing double major who chose to study abroad during the fall 2014 semester. McDermott died in her apartment while abroad, and her family spoke with Truman Media Network saying the cause was a pre-existing health condition.

However, even after the details had been obtained, fact-checked and published, we continued to hear stories throughout the halls and walkways of campus which not only misconstrued the cause of death, but also the circumstances surrounding the discovery of McDermott's body in her apartment. We found this incredibly inappropriate.

Not long afterwards freshman Connor Cunningham died after being hit by a car. Rumors about the incident, which happened barely a week after McDermott's death, were hard to miss. Speculative stories began to circulate that shifted blame between the student and the driver. Cunningham's mental state was questioned, as were his activities and whereabouts during the night of the incident. It made a difficult situation worse, and did not honor the late student or his family.

In light of the recent passing of freshman William Batterson, we, the Editorial Board, implore members of the Truman community to become a rumor-stopping force. The authorities are working to complete the necessary investigations and reports, and the truth soon will become known. During the meantime, speculation about the conditions and situation of this young man's death will help absolutely no one. The best way to support one another and help those affected most by this loss is not to start or encourage rumors.

In all three of the aforementioned situations, a human life was lost. These students were part of Truman's community. And now because of established memorial scholarship funds, the names and legacies of William Batterson and Mackenzie McDermott might become a more permanent part of this university than any of us that walk across a stage to receive a diploma ever will be. In their names, future students will receive aid to pay for their education.

While speculating and gossiping about the latest scandal can seem fun, it also can have consequences. Imagine if Batterson's grieving parents were standing behind you as you speculated about their son's death, spreading potentially false information. Imagine how they must feel, hearing strangers discussing their late son, painting him in a negative light when there still is very little information about what happened.

The emotional impact of rumors — especially rumors about such a sensitive topic — is not the only reason you should avoid spreading them. Libel and slander can get a person into trouble, and it is unprofessional and uncouth. The Truman community considers itself the best of the best. We believe that shouldn't only apply to the realm of academics. Let's strive to be decent human beings as well and respect those who have died.

You have a choice. The rumors can either start or end with you. So the next time you bump into a friend on campus and the conversation turns, consider changing the subject or standing up for those who no longer can speak for themselves.

Kirksville's feral cats are part of the charm



Natalie Carbery

There is a strange sound coming from under the porch steps — should you be scared or nervous that something is living down there? No, it is probably just one of your friendly, neighborhood feral cats.

As a student who lives off campus, I have at least one encounter a day with the feral cats of Kirksville. If it is a good encounter, they run away or stand their ground as I walk past. A bad encounter involves hissing and unnecessary aggression.

Despite being wild, I find the feral cats becoming my outdoor pets. I name them and sometimes leave little offerings just off my porch. Mulaney, named after comedian John Mulaney, is my favorite. Sometimes I will come home to find him waiting for me outside my door. He even has attempted to get inside the apartment.

Two others, Salem and Jinx, are far less friendly. They are more comfortable lying on the sidewalk outside my door, but run away if I start to leave my porch.

Among Truman students, the topic of feral cats can become an incredibly heated debate. I have a

friend who used to bring the cats into West Campus Suites in his jacket during winter. He kept a bag of cat food under his bed to feed them and allowed them to cuddle up in a special drawer to sleep. Eventually, he would let them free only to pick them up again for the next snowstorm.

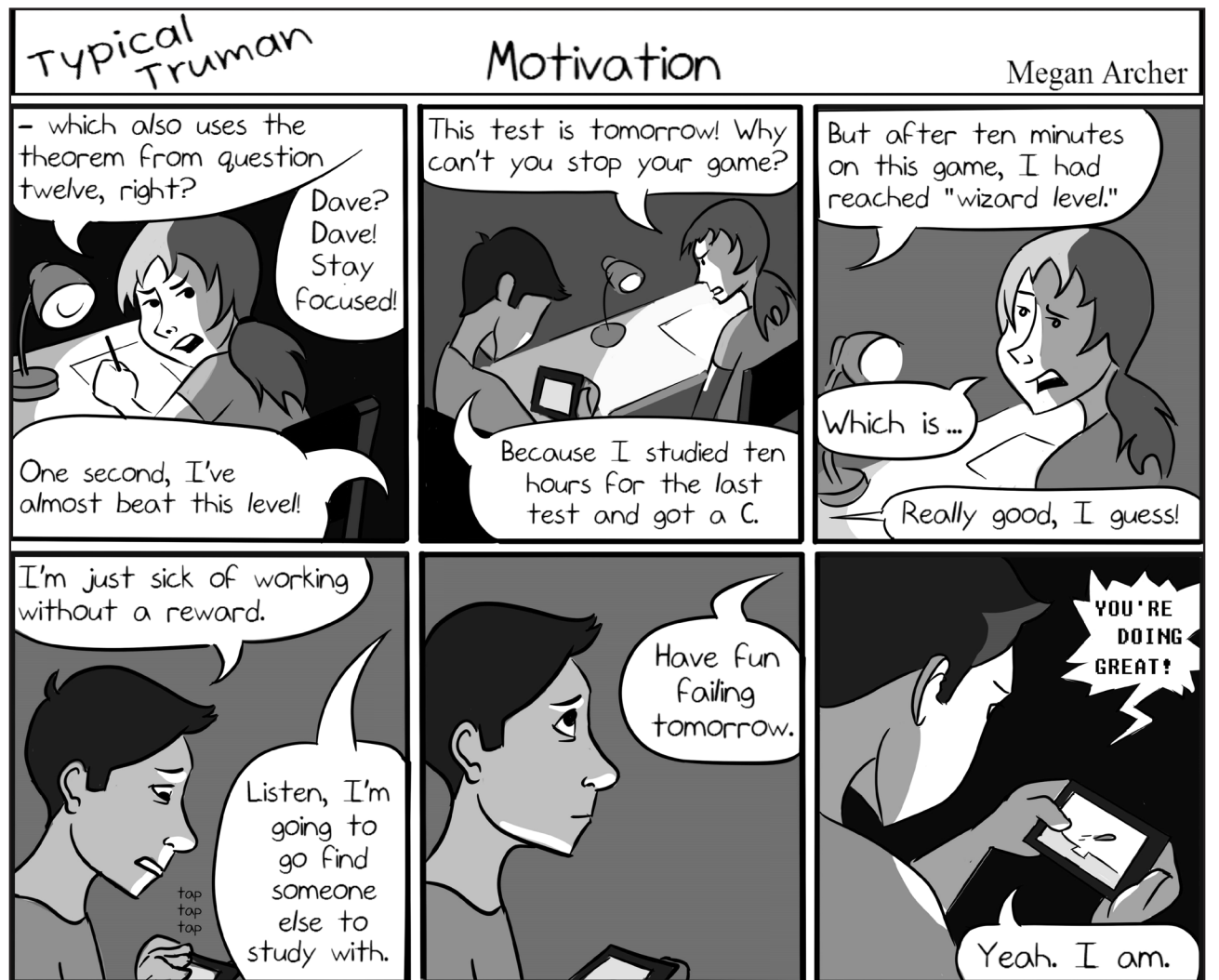
I have other friends who have not been so lucky. A group of friends, also living off campus, used to hear cats fighting under their floorboards. If that wasn't alarming enough, kittens were born under their home. Sometimes one of the girls would wake up to the mother cat angrily defending her kittens under her bedroom floor.

After a long battle with Animal Control and the Kirksville Police Department, the cats living under their house were caught in carriers only to be released near The Square.

While these feral cats can cause countless issues for off-campus residents, they are part of the odd charm of Kirksville. There is a joy in explaining to friends back home that gangs of cats run wild through the town where you go to school. For students on and off Truman's campus who are not allowed to have pets, these animals offer an alternative.

While I know I cannot cuddle Mulaney or bring him inside to watch videos of his namesake with me, my feral cat makes life in Kirksville just a little bit happier and more fun.

Natalie Carbery is a junior creative writing major from Chicago, Ill.



Letter to the Editor

Re: "Personal finance class should fulfill math requirement"

I was disappointed that an article that brought up several valid points began by alienating a significant group of people — namely, those who do not agree that "math sucks." While math majors are a relatively small portion of Truman's population, several more majors incorporate significant amounts of mathematics into their curriculum. When we take into account all of the math, physics, chemistry, computer science, and accounting majors, as well as students in disciplines such as biology and psychology that sometimes utilize math and statistics, it is more apparent how many people willingly engage and even enjoy aspects of mathematics. You may mean well when you tell math or accounting majors that "they are braver" than you are because you "cannot fathom handling the work involved in their classes," this may also come across as alienating. I am often told the same thing, and rather than feeling complimented I feel sad and slightly offended. It sounds as though you are treating my passion like something to be feared rather than appreciating our differing views, whether you mean this or not.

This is not to minimize the genuine frustration and struggle that many Truman students face during math courses with significant online components. As a math GTRA, I interact daily with frustrated students as I teach College Algebra lectures and work in the tutoring lab. While many students will never factor a quadratic equation outside of MATH 156, I believe that doing so

now provides a useful brain workout to exercise logical thinking and problem solving skills. Frustration or confusion in these situations is valid and understandable, and I am happy to provide assistance and clarification. However, I have less empathy for students who are frustrated yet do not take advantage of either the lecture sessions or the tutoring hours available for MATH 156, 157, and 186 (9am-6pm Monday-Friday, 5-8pm Sunday in VH 1200).

You make excellent points about the value of a personal finance course in college, especially given the prevalence of student loan debt. As of now, the mathematical components of BSAD 200 are not sufficient to fulfill the math mode of a liberal arts program. Perhaps if the course were restructured or augmented, it could provide a viable math mode option with the added benefit of higher applicability to students' lives. If you truly wish to encourage Truman's administration to consider this possibility, I believe that you have the beginnings of a good case. However, it took me additional time to appreciate this because of how frustrated I was at your assertion that most people can agree that math sucks. Truman's administration has plenty to deal with as it is, and would likely not take additional time to appreciate your case after such alienating remarks. In the future, I hope that you will continue to express your opinions while maintaining courtesy towards those who feel differently.

Sincerely,
Xandra Potter

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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