

Campus responds to election results

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Although the election concluded a month ago, the shock waves from the results are still resounding across the nation and on Truman State University's campus.

The 2016 national election results left many feeling unsettled because of the controversy surrounding the candidates and their policies, which prompted Truman to respond to students differently than how previous election results have prompted.

Institutional Compliance Officer Jamie Ball said she sent out an email containing resources available to students on campus after the election results because she thought the reactions from the students were more than disappointment.

"The reaction I saw was also one of tremendous anxiety and fear associated with what the election results would mean for things like immigration status," Ball said.

Ball said she thinks if anyone feels at risk, it's helpful to remind them they have an option of reporting those kinds of things, reaching out as a community for support and to be mindful of those resources.

Ball said she doesn't think there's a specific approach undertaken as a response to the election, but Truman is fortunate because there have not been reports of serious incidents where people feel threatened. She said she checked with the Department of Public Safety and the Kirksville Police Department to ensure everything that should be on her radar was, and they said they hadn't had reports of anybody saying they felt they were targeted or any harassment or assault related to the election.

In terms of developing specific programs as an ongoing effort, Ball said she didn't think that was going to be necessary, but the timing was good because Truman is at the point where it's trying to implement some of the strategies of the Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan.

"I think the results of the election — the campaign itself and the results of the election — call on us as educated people to really think about the dynamics of our populous," Ball said. "If there is a silver lining to all the difficulty and controversy that people have experienced over the last 18 months it's that we get to look more clearly [and] get out of our little bubbles."

Ball said she thinks Truman students are pretty tough on the whole. She said she thinks everyone copes differently with these kinds of stressors, but the community has weathered these issues well.

Ball said she also thinks it's interesting to think about how the community of higher education is a particularly different place in these kinds of moments.

"It's very interesting as an administrator to think of this work and the controversy that it does seem to engender, things like safe spaces and people seeking academic accommodations," Ball said. "There's definitely a balance to be struck, but I would hope that leaders within individual colleges and universities would be trusted to make decisions to strike that balance and identify what their students need and to do those things that respond effectively to their students needs."



Photo by Rachel Fechter/TMN

Junior Ian Pratt speaks out against Trump at Students for a Democratic Society's Dump Trump Rally during November.

College Republican chair senior Benjamin Terrell said his organization does not currently have any events planned to respond to events by other organizations, but would not be opposed to organizing forums to discuss issues in the future if a need arose.

Terrell said he thinks the role students play in elections is very important. He says during the Obama/Romney race, it was the youth vote that changed the election to be in favor of Obama, demonstrating the change they are capable of affecting.

"First, they changed an election," Terrell said. "Imagine if they were to start pitching in on campaigns [or] working with county officials and county problems — they could be a real force to be reckoned with."

Terrell said the College Republicans participated in events during the campaign on a local level, such as helping to staff events, walking in parades to support their candidates and demonstrating how students can be involved in elections. He said they expected Adair County to vote Republican because they knew Adair County was conservative, but they remained cautiously optimistic for local Republican wins during the election.

Terrell said his organization believes Truman's campus is handling the election results well, even though many were disappointed with the results.

"Of course, a small portion of campus is handling this extremely well — we did have those Trump supporters — but then I would say another small portion of campus is handling this with less grace and dignity," Terrell said. "They're protesting, but it's peaceful protests."

Terrell said he disagrees with the destructive actions those across the country who took the election results extremely poorly are taking, including rioting. He said he thinks causing physical damage to someone's property or person is awful, especially to do it in response to democracy taking place in America.

But Terrell said he wanted to bring attention to the good things going on in light of the election which have been overshadowed.

"When we had an overwhelming Republican win here [in Adair County], as well as on a federal level, these people said, 'Congratulations. We're here to work with you — let's make sure we work to make this country a better place,'" Terrell said. "As soon as the election was over, it stopped being a partisan issue and it became making America a better place to live, so that really warmed my heart. I know all these awful things are happening, but there's so much good in the world — that's what we like to focus on."

Senior Trista Sullivan, Students for a Democratic Society member — a multi-tendency, inclusive organization — said she thinks there was a very mixed response to the election results.

"Of course, it was really shocking at first for a lot of us to see Donald Trump be elected," Sullivan said. "A lot of people in general are really happy, and a lot of people are really excited, and a lot of people are really hurt and confused and fearful."

Sullivan said she thinks the fear stems from people who have already felt marginalized or as if their voices aren't equally heard or regarded in our society.

Sullivan said her organization arranged a "Dump Trump" rally during November as a chance for people to speak to each other and create a space of support for one another. She said during the rally students who supported Trump also counter protested, but it was an important display of students using their right to free speech.

"I think overall [the rally] was very productive, and regardless of which side you're from, I think it's important to recognize that the freedom of speech and the freedom to assemble is important to exercise," Sullivan said.

Sullivan said the Students for a Democratic Society have created new committees in an effort to respond to the implications of the election results. First, she said they have added a committee whose job is to keep up to date with Trump's policies, his nominees for Supreme Court and his Cabinet. She said the goal is to research those policies and people so they know the facts and don't get caught in a cycle of judging decisions and people without knowing the truth.

The Education and Recruitment committee was also added, Sullivan said, and will be hosting events

Throwback Thursday: Library hours changes

With finals coming and the library extending its hours on a trial basis to enable students to study more, it seems appropriate to cover how the hours have been extended during the past. According to an article in the March 25, 1964 issue, G.W. Hartje, former director of Pickler Memorial Library, made a decision to change the hours for students. The article read, "Due to the increase in student usage of the library and increased desire to use it during this period, Mr. Hartje director, changed the hours for the reading, periodical, and reserve rooms to remain open on [weekdays]."

The increase in hours allowed students to work through dinner hours. Can you imagine not being allowed to use the library from 5-6:30 p.m. because it was closed so students could eat? Even with the changes in hours, at the time the latest the library was ever open was 10 p.m.

During a time when most students are stressing about finals, we are thankful the library has extended its time throughout the years and look forward to the trial period results.

on different social issues that some people may feel will be affected under a Trump presidency while also recruiting members to join.

Last, Sullivan said the Community Outreach committee is working with people outside of the Truman and Kirksville community to organize events as well. For example, she said they are working with Truman alumnus Brendan O'Brien to create a call to reform the electoral system.

"I know a lot of people are upset that, even though Trump didn't win the popular vote, through the electoral college system he was able to be elected president," Sullivan said. "Some people believe that the electoral college is important for democracy and some people believe it's antiquated and needs to be reformed, so we'll be working on that and just educating ourselves and others on that reform under Brendan's guidance."

Sullivan said she thinks the administration at Truman could do more to address the issues being discussed in the future. She said she hopes the administration will promote discussion of issues without saying they have to be completely civil because, though it's important to be civil, sometimes to spare other people's feelings we get stuck in what's called respectability politics — where the focus is more on being polite and respectful than on getting to core problems of issues.

"The way I see it, I think people are hungry for something different."

— Alumnus Brendan O'Brien

O'Brien said he was a member of Alpha Phi Omega and reached out to Truman organizations that might have an interest in getting conversations going and connecting people in the community.

O'Brien said while he attended Truman, he wasn't very involved in politics, but he felt there were a lot of people who sat out during election time and didn't want to get into more conflict-oriented conversations. He said he's realizing how important those conversations are and that they don't have to be a divider between people.

"I realized that during the election season and after it, especially, there are a lot of people that just feel like they haven't been heard by their elected officials and the process doesn't reflect the candidates and policies that we would actually want as people in the country," O'Brien said. "So I think there are a lot of different conversations about, 'Where do we go from here?' but they've been pretty informal or divided. I was hoping by adding some structure to it that it could move forward more, getting people on the same page."

O'Brien said his future plans include being involved in civic engagement and getting conversations started. He said he thinks people spend so much time following campaigns, certain candidates and their policies that they don't get involved on an individual citizen level, so he thinks organizing conversations and getting people talking who wouldn't really find themselves in the same space will help resolve that issue.

O'Brien said his goal was to get organized conversations happening once a week in different communities with people he knew across the country to talk about election reform and how to move forward. He said he hopes to not have conversations so driven by politicians. If people are interested, he said there's a Facebook group called "Coalition of the People" where information about discussions going on in Kirksville or different areas will be posted.

"The way I see it, I think people are hungry for something different, and there's so much information and so much misinformation, skepticism [and] cynicism out there that a lot of people are left thinking, 'I don't want any part of this' or 'I can't realistically process all that's going on,' so we tune out," O'Brien said. "But I think most people do want to be involved in what's going on in their lives and [want to] really hear from other people and their perspectives."

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