

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH | Truman administration continues to search for a new university president with specific qualifications.

Continued from page 1

Dave Rector, Vice President of Finance and Planning, said he wants Truman students to be aware of the financial aspect of the presidential selection process. Rector said students will not have to pay a fee to cover applicants' airfare and hotel expenses during the interview process that started earlier this month.

"We had anticipated the costs associated with the presidential search when developing the budget for this fiscal year, so no extra costs would be passed on to students. It is being paid for by the Institutional Support Budget," Rector said.

Debra Kerby, Presidential Search Committee co-chair, said Truman students will not be getting a president identical to former University President Troy Paino.

"[Paino] had a special ability to connect with students, and it would be difficult to find a new president exactly like him," Kerby said.

Kerby said one of the first qualities Truman administration is focusing on in regards to choosing a new president is proven success as a president or provost at a former public liberal arts school.

Kerby said the search committee is also looking for someone who embraces a public liberal arts school's mission that focuses on academics.

Kerby said a candidate who has proven success as a provost or president is essential because Truman is known for emphasizing teaching and student learning rather than the major faculty research commonly found at other universities.

Kerby said besides having unquestionable character, the committee also wants a president with people skills.

Kerby said the Board of Governors wants someone who strives to make wise decisions by listening to all their constituents and all those who would be affected by the decision. Kerby said this includes all potential administrative, financial and academic affairs policy, as well as campus planning and public safety decisions that concern Truman faculty, staff and students.

Kerby said the new president will have to be able to communicate well with Truman alumni, legislators, student organizations, Faculty Senate, and faculty and staff within academic departments.

Kerby said the Board of Governors is searching for a president who makes student learning a priority and handles sensitive issues tactfully.

Kerby said the next Truman president will need to be able to discuss changes that Paino proposed during his presidency.

For example, Kerby said, the president would have to discuss the possibility of curriculum changes with the provost and other parties involved.

Paino was in the process of discussing and making possible changes concerning the LSP curriculum requirements. Paino was considering replacing the LSP curriculum with a more intense experiential learning format called High Impact Experience.

Kerby said, for example, students could choose to complete a High Impact Experience by participating in an internship, undergraduate student research project, a study abroad experience or a service learning project experience related to their major.

Kirksville counselors weigh in on recent deaths

BY KIRA HINTZ
Staff Writer

Editor's Note: This piece is part two of two in a series about families and mental health in Kirksville.

Members of the Kirksville community are still trying to process the suicide of Danny Welte Jr. that happened Nov. 13 and the murder of his mother, Echo Welte, which took place just days later. In reaction to these events, the community has continued an open conversation about mental health and family dynamics.

A family counselor from the Kirksville community and a Kirksville High School counselor added to the conversation about mental health.

Heather Crifo, associate counselor and behavioral technician at Preferred Family Healthcare, said poor communication skills are a problem in toxic families. Crifo said toxic families can have trouble identifying their issues and knowing what they lack, as well as being able to come together and communicate an issue and listen.

Family therapy can be helpful, Crifo said, if everybody in the family is open to the idea and willing to go through emotions and to talk through the struggles they've experienced. Crifo said if an individual has no desire to open up, it can hinder a successful therapy outcome.

Crifo said initially, having the family communicate with a mediator during therapy sessions is useful because they can help the other family members understand the depth of the problem without the worry of face-to-face aggression. Crifo said once families open their proverbial wounds and start working through them, then they can move forward without needing a mediator.

Crifo said a counselor or mediator should never try to influence a client's story, especially when it involves something traumatic or crime-based.

"I do not change the story," Crifo said. "I listen for key things that they say, and we keep going back and reviewing just to see what they remember and their feelings, just to bring those back out. And as far as the ethics of that, it never leaves. It stays between that person and my ears, but I'm only there to help them solve their own issues. My job is to help guide them to find their issue and help pull that out, so I only ask questions, I never influence anything."

"We're in this profession for a reason — because we care. Because we know that there are young people who need help ..."

-Katie Mendez, Kirksville High School counselor

Crifo said family dynamics can change dramatically when there's a death in the family. She said some people isolate themselves and act up because they don't know how to handle the feelings they're having. Good ways to deal with grief in families, Crifo said, are to care about others' emotions, listen, not shut people out and actively look to see if family members are purposely isolating themselves.

Crifo said finding mental health services can vary depending on the severity of the situation and the urgency. A person can start by talking to family, Crifo said, but can move to friends, possibly reach out to a church that can help, or decide to go seek help from a psychologist. Crifo said mental

health services in Kirksville include Preferred Family Healthcare and Mark Twain Behavioral Health, but there are online hotlines that can help in a crisis or guide a person in the right direction toward help.

Katie Mendez, Kirksville High School counselor, said it's important for young people — especially those in high school — to talk to a supportive adult about mental health and to realize it's okay to be vulnerable. Mendez said there is a stigma behind asking for help, and high school counselors don't see as many students because of that stigma.

"We're in this profession for a reason — because we care," Mendez said. "Because we know that there are young people who need help and I also would say to them — and I say it to my students often — some of the best counselors I know have been counseled themselves and have experienced a successful counseling relationship and situations that have been able to change in a positive way as a result of counseling. I also tell them that counselors need counselors. Everybody needs an unbiased, third-party person who is not a parent or a friend or who is not a family member or best friend or somebody who is emotionally invested."

Mendez said KHS counselors have different strategies for helping students, like giving them tasks each night to boost self-esteem, helping them to think differently about situations, implementing relaxation strategies and suggesting coping skills. Mendez said if students don't feel comfortable talking to counselors, they can talk to a teacher they feel comfortable with, and Mendez said she has no problem supervising the class so the student can talk to that teacher. Also,


Mendez said KHS counselors are trained and know when to refer a student to a trained medical professional if the situation is dire or not something counselors can necessarily take on.

The counseling department of the district, Mendez said, has created a crisis manual that helps guide faculty to help students cope with tragedies. Mendez said the manual gives an outline of responsibilities and lists where to go and what to do for support. Mendez said with situations of that nature, Preferred Family Healthcare and Mark Twain Behavioral Health are also called to provide support for students, faculty and staff.

Mendez said KHS takes mental health very seriously and the staff is well trained. Mendez said there are times when counselors or staff can be desensitized to mental health issues because they see so much of it or might not always know the right thing to say, but they are still there to provide support and not just to change schedules.

"As much as we say it, we really do mean that you're never in trouble when you come to the counselor's office," Mendez said. "And that's something we strive to advocate for ourselves and our community. We're not here to administer consequences. We're strictly here to be rapport. We have lots of jobs, and I'm not sure students are completely aware even after we have said, 'We're here for you,' and our door is always open. I think that's cliché, and students say, 'Oh, that's just what they have to say,' sort of thing, but we find that most students feel successful when they can step back and say, 'Wow, my counselor or somebody was real supportive of me in high school and helped me get through those tough times.'"

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