The University of Missouri—St. Louis community was alerted to the campus’ $15 million deficit two weeks ago. The deficit could cause layoffs for faculty and staff while the announcement caused an uproar for the lack of transparency from the administration to its students.

UMSL is one of four campuses in the University of Missouri System that receives a budget from the state of Missouri each year. Interim UM System President Mike Middleton met with legislators of the House Appropriations Higher Education Committee Wednesday to discuss next year’s budget for the UM System as a whole.

The student protests, resignation of University of Missouri—Columbia Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and UM System President Tim Wolfe, and the open letter from Tim Wolfe have caused tensions to rise between the legislators and UM officials.

Middleton sought to defend their current budget and managerial skills despite the extra scrutiny the Columbia campus has been under since November. Middleton also asked the board to approve the budget increases proposed by Governor Jay Nixon.

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State Representative Joshua Peters, D-St. Louis, is one of the members on the House Appropriations Higher Education Committee that Middleton presented to this week. While Middleton was defending the UM System, saying it has cut the budget down to the bone, Peters pointed to large expenses at the Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons hotels in St. Louis. These expenses were in 2014 for the selection of two deans for the Missouri Science & Technology campus in Rolla. The university rented meeting space and held interviews with prospective deans for $19,857 of their budget. Peters questioned why the university could not hold the meetings for the position at the campus already in St. Louis: UMSL.

“Why are we using taxpayer dollars for individuals who are supposed to be serving the state to spend nights at the Ritz-Carlton?” Peters asked.

Homecoming Dance Builds on Tradition

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UM System Audit Amid Budget Crisis

KAT RIDDLER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Continued on Page 3
Tweet @ Your Tweetie

@bean soft kitty warm kitty little ball of fur happy kitty sleepy kitty prr prr prr #gottafeedbean #havenotforgotten #ilikesquirtles -Hax

@UMSLTheCurrent thanks for letting me crash production days! You guys are my valentine. #distractions #magic #netflix -Michael

@UMSLTheCurrent Happy Birthday! We have more fun at #theCurrent <(:*:)<(:*:)>#UMSLFamous #5Onfabulous #LotsofLove -anime-kat13

@TheVoid learnin a lot at #theCurrent pizza is life #dietofpizza pokemon n Mozart can be played back2back n kat can write a whole issue herself #rad -UMSLTheCurrent

@themassesinthehallsofWashU oh @UMSL Sorry I use humor to deflect my insecurities. I'm hilarious so don't hate #hatersgonnahate #seemymovie -Dapper Deadpool

The UMSL MATH CLUB Presents: Problem of the Week

Submit your solution to the problem below by Friday, February 12. Solvers will be eligible for our pi day drawing on March 14. Submit solutions to R. Dotzel 329 ESH (dotzelr@umsl.edu)

There was a fine scholar from London
Whose wistful mien you would pardon
For when this problem he read
He foresaw only dread
And so his hopes for an A were undone.

Problem: Find the sum of all prime numbers between 1 and 100 that are simultaneously 1 greater than a multiple of 4 and 1 less than a multiple of 5.

Math Club meeting on Wednesday 2/10 at 1:00pm in ESH304. A 30 minute film, “The Joy of Pi” will be shown. Refreshments too. All are welcome.

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THE UNDERCURRENT

By Lori Dresner

What are you planning to do for Mardi Gras?

CARLY BUSH,
Freshman, Nursing
“I don’t even know when Mardi Gras is.”

AUTUMN EBERLIN,
Junior, Accounting
“I’ll probably go down to Soulard.”

GEDDY TREBUS,
Senior, Biology
“I’m going down to the Bud Light tent down in Soulard.”

GAME CORNER

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UM System Audit Amid Budget Crisis

KAT RIDDLER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Continued from Page 1

Middleton, who was not president of the UM System at that time, did not know why the hotel expenses were necessary. Representative Peters says he is a strong supporter of more funding for higher education, but he wants to make sure that the money is going to benefit the students. “Students are struggling under ever increasing school loan debt. Hiring freezes at the University of Missouri—St. Louis have reduced the classes available. Maintenance and other necessities are being cut to the bone. So to see the office of the President of the UM System have such a large discretionary fund, and not see money going where it is needed most, demands answer,” Peters said.

The UM System President has a large discretionary fund as does each chancellor. “It is customary for certain presidents to have some discretionary money, but the thing of it is that the University of Missouri Board of Curators has not set up a system to account for how the money is being spent,” Peters said.

Peters also said there are great discrepancies in how different parts of the state are treated when it comes to how funding levels are determined. “The Board of Curators aren’t doing justice to students in St. Louis by assuring that the University of Missouri—St. Louis receives its fair share and is equally funded across the board. All of the universities need to be funded across the board equally,” Peters said.

Representative Peters’ press release went out Thursday asking for an audit of the UM System. This was the same day that State Auditor Nichole Galloway said that her office will audit the Board of Curator’s and the UM System President’s spending records.

“I applaud the State Auditor in her efforts in attempting to reassure the public that taxpayer dollars are spent in the most effective way. It appears that over the past four years there was some misuse of funds at the highest level of the University of Missouri System,” Peters said.

If the budget is approved, the money is given to the UM System Board of Curators. The Board of Curators is made up of eight congressional districts that send representatives. UMSL is in the First Congressional District.

State Representative Joshua Peters (top left), State Auditor Nichole Galloway (top right), UM System President Michael Middleton (bottom left), Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard (bottom right)

COURTESY OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI AND UM SYSTEM

State law requires that each district have at least one representative on the nine-member board and also limits that no more than five can be of the same political party.

The UM System Board of Curators recently lost its only two African American members: Yvonne Sparks, an executive with the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, and David Steward, chairman of World Wide Technology. Both were representatives of the St. Louis area. Sparks representing the First Congressional District.

With their resignations, there are only six of the nine seats filled. The board needs to have five members agree on a motion for it to pass, which could cause problems with their current total members. All of the current members are white attorneys. The board currently has representation from Cassville, Clayton, Jefferson City, and Rolla, and two representatives from Kansas City.

Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard, R-Joplin, said on February 2 that he wants to wait until next January before considering any appointees to be confirmed, leaving the three seats empty on the Board of Curators and St. Louis only having one voice from Clayton.

Next January is also when current governor Jay Nixon will term limited out of office. If the Senate does not appoint curators, then the incoming governor will have to fill the seats. Governor Nixon released a statement on February 4 saying that he will appoint interim curators after the end of the legislative session if curators cannot be confirmed by then. The session ends May 13. Until a curator is appointed, the First Congressional District that represents 17,055 students from St. Louis city and county will not be represented on the Board of Curators.

Besides dividing up the budget among the four campuses, the Board of Curators also will be given the deciding vote on the President of the UM System once the search has been narrowed.

Before Sparks was appointed two months ago, St. Louis lawyer Mary Nelson appeared before the Missouri Senate’s gubernatorial appointments committee for the position representing the UMSL district. She was the only African American representative of the three applying for the appointment. The other two white lawyers were appointed (Kansas City and Clayton), but Nelson did not receive a single Republican vote and was not granted the position.

February 1:
January 25: Two reports of lost property—at 10:45 a.m., a student reported that her purse went missing in Lucas Hall 211; at 4:58 p.m. in Clark Hall, a student reported that their phone went missing from room 409, but a classmate returned it to the student the following day. At 3:56 p.m. in Lot JJ, a staff member turned in a found set of keys.

January 26: A woman not affiliated with UMSL was taken to a hospital for treatment after falling and injuring herself on rock salt set out by the Express Scripts building off campus. At 9:30 a.m., a report of larceny was filed after two computer speakers were stolen from a Social Sciences and Business (SSB) classroom by an unknown person or persons. A crash on Natural Bridge Road at 3:18 p.m. involved the UMSL PD as they assisted Bel-Nor police on scene. At 7:10 p.m., UMSL PD worked with Normandy police on a report of broken glass above the Mansion Hill Clubhouse.

January 27: At 8:35 a.m., a non-UMSL woman reported the loss of a pearl necklace, either in Lot K or N. At 7 p.m., a cell phone was found and brought to the police by a staff member in the SSB building. The owner of the phone was contacted by UMSLPD to pick the phone up.

January 28: Two reports of found property on campus—a purse found in the Clark Hall lounge by a student at 11:50 a.m. and a guitar found in Lot KK by a student at 6:30 p.m. Both items were turned in to the police station. At 11:50 a.m., a vehicle was towed out of the West Drive Garage and taken to Airport Towing; the vehicle had been blocking traffic.

January 29: Three reports of found property on campus—at 11:24 a.m., multiple IDs and a Visa card were turned in to the Oak Hall reception desk; at 5:30 p.m., an UMSL student ID was found in SSB and turned in, and the student owner was contacted by UMSL PD. At 11 a.m. in the South Campus Garage, a travel kit was stolen from a student’s unlocked vehicle.

January 30: At 2:15 a.m. in Mansion Hill, a peace disturbance report was filed after complaints of a student playing their music too loudly as well as several of the student’s friends yelling at each other. After UMSL PD was called in, the music was turned down and the other individuals went home.

January 31: At 8:35 a.m., a vehicle in the South Campus Garage was broken into and items were stolen. At 1:50 p.m., a Normanby police officer was reportedly struck by a golf ball on campus. At 9:05 p.m., a student’s credit card was found in SSB and turned in to room 103.
Homecoming Dance Builds on Tradition

KAT RIDDLER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Continued from Page 1

Bub and Johnson both talked about being able to do something social outside of school and work. Bub said, “Homecoming is great. It’s nice to go out and enjoy a night full of fun and be able to be social.”

After dinner, the program started, led by SGA Vice President Kristin Wyninegar, senior, communications, and Natalie Smith, senior, liberal studies. There were a variety of events during the week; Wyninegar said there were more than 2000 participants that came out to show their Triton pride.

Construction was held on Thursday from 12 to 2 p.m. in the Fireside Lounge. This charity event’s goal was to collect can goods and non-perishables and create a structure that reflects the Homecoming theme. All of the 10,086 canned goods collected went to the Pagedale Family Support Center.

The Chili Feed that took place on Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Century Rooms A and B let the campus carrier will go out the same day, but departments that miss the scheduled pick up can drop off mail until 4 p.m. for deliveries per day.

The UMSL community purchase tickets for $5 to sample chili recipes and pick a crowd favorite. Tom’s Traditional Chili from the College of Arts and Sciences won the Golden Spoon at the dance. All $350 raised at the event was donated to the Pagedale Family Support Center in the form of a $5 to sample chili recipes and pick a crowd favorite. Tom’s Traditional Chili from the College of Arts and Sciences won the Golden Spoon at the dance. All $350 raised at the event was donated to the Pagedale Family Support Center in the form of a spoon.

The Homecoming Queen candidates were Andrea Bryant, senior, business administration; Erica Range, senior, educational studies; Melissa Roth, senior, criminology and criminal justice; Rian Riakd, junior, Nursing; and Samantha Risius, sophomore, psychology.

The Homecoming King candidates were Braxton Perry, junior, pk-12 physical education, Geddy Trebus, senior, biology; LaVell Monger, senior, anthropology; and Matthew McCoy, senior, biology.

The Homecoming King and Queen were crowned after the program, before the christening of the dancefloor by their King and Queen Dance. The 2016 King was Perry and Queen was Riakd. Both Perry and Riakd talked about the Homecoming competition throughout the week. Perry said, “It was definitely exciting going to all those events at UMSL. Everything about homecoming was so much fun.”

Riakd said, “I had a lot of fun with Lip Sync and Canstruction.” She continued to talk about winning the Homecoming Queen position just minutes before, “This is great. I didn’t expect to win. So many emotions right now.”

The rest of the night was open dance. The photo booths and bar were open for patrons to visit throughout the night as well.

UML Scales Back in Three Areas Amid Budget Crisis

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

The Office of the Chancellor announced on February 2 that three immediate cost reduction measures are being taken at the University of Missouri—St. Louis in response to the university’s budget crisis.

The announcement came nearly two weeks after Chancellor Thomas George notified the UMSL community in a campus wide email that the university is facing a $15 million deficit and will need to cut expenditures.

An immediate cut being made will affect students who planned to participate in the summer commencement ceremony. UMSL is discontinuing summer commencement and opting to focus its resources on the winter and spring commencement ceremonies, which are typically larger. Students graduating with bachelor’s or master’s degrees in the summer can choose to participate in either the winter or spring ceremonies, and can still receive their degree in either May or August.

“It leaves people like me who graduate in August in a kind of limbo. I know we’re allowed to pick the winter or spring ceremonies, but it feels dishonest to join the May one and I don’t know if I will be here in December,” said Jesse Eikmann, senior, English.

According to the commencement website, students who apply to graduate before April 1 will be listed in the May commencement program as August graduates. Those who apply after April 1 will be listed in the December program. Furthermore, doctoral candidates must be completely finished to participate in the ceremony.

A second cut will affect UMSL Postal Services, who will be scaling back mail delivery to once a day and courier service delivery to Columbia to once a week. The change will become effective February 8. Mail that is picked up by a campus carrier will go out the same day, but departments that miss the scheduled pick up can drop off their mail at the Postal Services Office by 4 p.m. for same day processing. UMSL was the only UM campus that had two mail deliveries per day.

UMSL Postal Services Manager Jim Christopher said, “The entire campus is undergoing a review of its operations to see how they can operate more efficiently and/or eliminate services—particularly in areas that do not directly affect students. The changes we’re implementing Monday will have a minimal effect on employees and almost no effect on students. Please note also that the changes implemented Monday will be consistent with the level of services provided on the other UM campuses.”

The third immediate cut will result in the elimination of the Chancellor’s Report to the Community, an annual event that has gathered around 800 people to the America’s Center and was usually held in May.

“Some consistent themes are emerging from your various suggestions—such as focusing on the student classroom experience, cutting back on events and streamlining operations,” the Chancellor’s Office said in the announcement. They said that these suggestions will be considered in the ultimate budget plan, which will be announced later this spring, as well as efforts to cut costs immediately.

The Chancellor’s Office also started an online survey on February 3 that has received over 200 responses from the UMSL Sustainable Budget Realignment website, and that there is no deadline for suggestions.
Century Room C was a bustling place at 2 p.m. on February 3. Every seat at the table, as well as several extra chairs, were filled with students and faculty eager to learn about and discuss this month’s What’s Current Wednesday topic: West Lake Landfill and Coldwater Creek – What’s Going On Here? The University of Missouri—St. Louis emeritus professor in chemistry Hal Harris presented the subject, providing background and basic information to those assembled.

Harris pointed out that, “I don’t have a dog in this fight… I really don’t work for anybody,” and therefore, “I feel free to say whatever I think.” Harris went on to explain that St. Louis had an important role to play in the manufacturing of the atomic bomb; specifically, they produced purified uranium, though they were without the safety regulations of the modern Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The nuclear waste from the manufacturing process was dumped in the West Lake landfill illegally, as the landfill was never designed to hold such dangerous materials and is technically still in the floodplain for the Missouri River.

The conversation opened to include the other two guests in attendance: Mark Diedrich, director of the St. Louis County office of emergency management and Ed Smith, safe energy director at Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE). Together, they fleshed out the rest of the story. West Lake is located next to another perfectly normal landfill, Bridgeton. The problems here are that the two landfills are actually connected and there is an underground fire burning in the Bridgeton landfill. Normally, this would not be cause for any particular alarm but if the fire should reach the radioactive material and come to the surface it could severely poison the atmosphere. Diedrich said that if, and it is a big if, this should happen, the best course of action is to stay inside, away from the poison, and to wait further instructions by way of television, radio, weather radio, or the free emergency app Nixle, available for download for iOS and Android.

A big point of contention is the question of who is responsible for fixing the problem as well as how to fix the problem. Smith said that the MCE wants the Corps of Engineers to take the power to move the material from the EPA because the Corps has had success in situations like these while the EPA “has dropped the ball” on seeking out dangerous radioactive material. The MCE also advocate for the removal of the radioactive waste as a moral obligation. While leaving the material is cheaper in the short term, and the current plan of action, it has more potential for disastrous long-term consequences. Even now would cost between $500 million and $1 billion. Smith said that while that seems expensive, the cost will only rise as time goes on.

When the floor was opened for questions a student asked what the average citizen could do. The presenters agreed that the best thing for any concerned students to do was to contact their state representatives. The presenters added that most state officials do not receive a lot of feedback from their constituents and so tend to pay attention when people take the time to talk to them. After some small debate it was agreed that handwritten or personally composed letters will get the most attention.

The discussion ended with a short update on the Coldwater Creek situation. The creek, located near the landfill, has been tainted by the radioactive material seeping through the ground. The people in the surrounding neighborhoods, many of whom played in the creek as children, have contracted rare diseases and studies are being done to determine whether these diseases are due to the radioactive material in the landfills.

What’s Current Wednesdays is a monthly forum for faculty and student discussions about current events, co-sponsored by The Current and the New York Times, with support from Community Outreach & Engagement at UMSL. The next What’s Current Wednesdays will cover the topic of the Mars Expedition and will be at the same time and place on March 2nd.
With all of the modern dependence on machines, it is not difficult to imagine that the world is headed toward the futuristic scenario envisioned by science fiction writers, one where robots are as ubiquitous as humans. University of Missouri—St. Louis alumnus Landon Ruan, in his new exhibit at Gallery Visions, extends his vision even farther than the futuristic.

The title of Ruan’s collection tells that he has created a “New St. Louis.” He explained his concept in this way: “Before this world was happening there was what I would call the futuristic St. Louis, with everything created by powered machine and mechanical things, and there was almost no nature. Everything was robots and cyborgs. Then 1000 years later something happened and people tired of that, so they wanted to bring the nature back.”

His new version of St. Louis is a vibrant, diverse world where humans, animals, and robots all live together. This future society also brings back traditions and clothing that are reminiscent of the European Renaissance, lending a fascinating blend of old and new culture to his collection.

Ruan cites 2-D animation as an influence on his art. “My credits are Studio Ghibli, the Japanese animation company … and I also have a lot of references and inspiration from Disney films as well.” It is clear from the many character sketches in the collection that he takes after these studios’ ability to populate worlds with colorful characters.

Two walls of the exhibit are devoted to sketches of a single character in a variety of facial expressions. True to his idea about the harmony of “New St. Louis,” the characters are a mixture of people, animals, and anthropomorphic machines. Some of the characters are animal athletes that inhabit pictures like the football scene “Intense Match.” The comparable athletes in the character sketches have playful monikers like The Boss, Featherless Giant, Bursting Meteor, and Lucky Buddy. Other athletes are robots with nicknames like Metal and Iron Mask.

Several of the human characters pay homage to the Renaissance aspect of Ruan’s world, including “Sir Murdock, Sir Ernisher, and the jester Jake Prat.”

Ruan’s concept is unusual, but he manages to tie it together in an imaginative way. In addition to his sketches, Ruan includes story arcs and pictures of the different creatures interacting seamlessly. In a short series, he depicts preparations for a Disney-style ball, culminating in the piece “At the Banquet,” an intricate pen-and-ink sketch that features a human girl and her wolf-like dance partner.
With thrilling victories on both February 4 and February 6, both the men’s and women’s basketball teams showed their home crowd that they intended to right the ship and string some w’s together in their final home games of the 2015-2016 season. The University of Missouri—St. Louis teams started it off by winning their homecoming games back-to-back on February 4 for their “Pack the Stands” event in stunning fashion.

The Triton women started the evening off by stamping McKendree’s offense with a terrific defense that limited the Bearcats to just six points in the second quarter and three in the fourth. The strong defensive effort allowed McKendree only one field goal in the final 18 minutes, and the UMSL offense capitalized to win 56-40, bringing their five-game losing streak to a grateful halt.

The Triton women started the game with four players posting 12 or more points. UMSL was not quite as top-heavy, but still matched up similarly for most of the afternoon, winning 86-82 victory, their second in a row.

The Tritons and Bearcats fought an amazing close matchup. Down most of the game and by as much as 15 points several minutes into the second half, UMSL maintained their composure and fought back. A costly foul in the final seconds allowed Tre Ogles, senior, clinical psychology, both scored 13 points in the final home game of their careers. They were honored before the contest.

The men won soon after in another amazingly close matchup. Down most of the game and by as much as 15 points several minutes into the second half, UMSL maintained their composure and fought back. A costly foul in the final seconds allowed Tre Ogles, senior, clinical psychology, both scored 13 points in the final home game of their careers. They were honored before the contest.
OPEN DOORS WITH A DEGREE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

For information on UMSL’s BA in Anthropology, Minor in Anthropology, Archaeology Certificate, or Certificate in Greek Studies, please call 314-516-6020.

I am Patrillie Hernandez. I graduated with a BA in Anthropology in 2012. Today I am using my degree to develop policies, promote food justice, and advocate for a hunger-free community while improving the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income families in our nation’s capital. Upon graduating from UMSL with my BA in Anthropology, I completed a year of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Bay Area Food Bank in Alabama, where I embraced the opportunity to see feeding programs at work and became even more passionate about eradicating hunger in underserved communities. Then I become the Child Nutrition Program Associate at DC Hunger Solutions. Currently, I am pursuing a Masters in Science in Nutrition Education at American University and anticipates the completion of my degree in 2016. My background in anthropology gives me a unique understanding of food not only as nutrition, but also as a key part of culture and human connection.

My name is Jason N. Vasser and I earned a degree in anthropology in the spring of 2012. My field is cultural anthropology and my area of interest is African Diaspora Studies. I have an immense sense of pride and as an alumni, I have given time, resources, and energy to current students and the members of the Association of Student Anthropologists, of which I served as president. College days swiftly pass imbued with memories fond, and since graduating I have earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing. My work has appeared in Blast Furnace, The Sphinx, and Prairie Gold: An anthology of America’s Heartland, UMSL’s Belterive and others. Currently, I teach English at Harris-Stowe State University, write poetry, and am committed to service within the community.
It Is Time to Bring Back The Art of The Duel

SARAH HAYES
A&E EDITOR

Duel or Republican, everyone knows Donald Trump as the lord of juvenile insults and malicious slander, both of which he throws against anyone who crosses his path. There is no insult too sexist, racist, transphobic, xenophobic, or any other kind of boorish and bigoted for Trump to use. He seems awfully fond, for example, of calling Bernie Sanders, with all the venom he can muster, a “socialist,” further proving that people who bandy that word around as an insult do not actually understand its meaning.

Let us imagine: one Sunday morning on “Meet The Press,” Sanders decides to respond to Trump’s continued accusations that he is a socialist, not with a similar insult, but with a proposal. You see, Trump has insulted Sanders’ honor and public name for the last time with the baseless rumor of being a socialist, and now Sanders has no choice but to demand satisfaction. He calls upon Trump to rectify his continued insults or else they will have to decide a place and meeting time to end the argument once and for all—with a duel.

Sanders picks his second: Elizabeth Warren. Trump, in turn, seeing no honest way for him to settle the disagreement with his words, picks Marco Rubio as his second. They meet before dawn a week later at a secluded spot in uptown New York City after several days of tense negotiations between their seconds goes nowhere. Pistols are drawn. Doctor Ben Carson stands to the side, awaiting the results of the first shot.

This, of course, will never happen. America has long since left behind one of the last vestiges of the European code of gentlemanly conduct—the art of the duel—and its accompanying set of rules and regulations, the code duello. In one way, it makes sense to leave the duel in the dustbin of history with powdered wigs, single-shot muskets, and Thomas Jefferson’s second term as president. Men put their lives on the line with every insult they dared to venture against their fellows, and many died in the duels that ensued from a poorly thought out remark in the eyes of their families and the general public. Imagine if every politician on the national stage had that burden of accountability weighing on their shoulders every time they opened their mouths to throw out another careless word or phrase. Perhaps CNN would look less like TMZ and more like an actual news station if it no longer had to report the latest verbal garbage on a daily basis. Perhaps we would have a more honest, open dialogue about issues minus the pandering to the lowest common denominator.

I am not advocating we bring back the duel. Duels were an outlawish and irreversible response with both parties having rightfully passed from practical use. However, they also meant that the people involved had the strength (whether well thought out or not) to stand by their words and were willing to die for them to protect their own honor in the eyes of their families and the general public. Imagine if every politician on the national stage had that burden of accountability weighing on their shoulders every time they opened their mouths to throw out another careless word or phrase. Perhaps CNN would look less like TMZ and more like an actual news station if it no longer had to report the latest verbal garbage on a daily basis. Perhaps we would have a more honest, open dialogue about issues minus the pandering to the lowest common denominator.

Peter Rollins’s Experiment in Atheism for Lent

NATHAN WATSON
OPINIONS EDITOR

What do chocolate, social media, and belief in God have in common? If we are to believe the Irish writer, speaker, and author of the radical theology Peter Rollins, the uniting factor between these three seemingly benign pleasures is their potential to distance us from God. That is why, this Lent season, he is making a challenge to churches: for forty days, rather than (or in addition to) giving up the traditional admissions that fill our lives, granting us a complacent but illusory sense of happiness, he is challenging them to give up their belief in God.

By diving into an intensive reading list and discussion of some of the greatest critiques of religion—from Nietzsche to Dawkins—Rollins believes contemporary Christians can clear away the false, dangerous, and idolatrous notions of God that have rightfully driven away an increasingly secular and postmodern Western populace.

This project, provocatively coined “Atheism for Lent,” is a natural outgrowth of Rollins’s “pyrotheology.” A portmanteau formed from the traditionally understood word “theology” (the study of God), and the Greek word for “fire,” pyrotheology represents Rollin’s attempt to “[set] fire to the layers of belief we put over reality to protect ourselves from reality.”

As a prominent figure in the camp of theologians that make up Radical Orthodoxy, Rollins thinks and philosophizes in a tradition that has taken seriously the claim of Nietzsche’s madman that “God is dead.” Heretical? Possibly. Blasphemous? Definitely not.

For Rollins, as well as a line of thinkers stretching arguably as far back as the apostle Paul, religion is far more than an affirmation of claims regarding the existence of a transcendent Being. Indeed, Rollins would argue, many Christians’ ideas of God more closely resemble idolatized versions of themselves than anything else. As Feuerbach—who said, “The Essence of Christianity” is included on the Atheism for Lent reading list—argued, much of religion has revealed not man made in God’s image, but a God made in man’s.

Continued online at thecurrent-online.com

TRUMP GETS BURNT, IOWA FEELS THE BERN

RACHEL DICKY
STAFF WRITER

It was the tie heard ‘round the country: the Iowa caucuses. As much as people like to say they know about politics, the importance of this specific caucus is enigmatic. Even so, with this being the first major election in which I—and many more of my fellow millennials—will be legally able to vote, Monday was an exciting, unexpected evening. Trump, the man who proudly proclaimed he could shoot someone in the head and not lose a single vote, was presumably the Republican favorite. As much as Ted Cruz did his best to stand ground against the multi-billionaire, there was little hope that a Canadian-born Cuban would be more appealing to the Republican voter base than a homegrown, sometimes racist businessman.

But Cruz won, and with his victory I realized that I do not know a thing. While the results of the Iowa caucus did not by any means define who will go on to be the nominee, turn to Mike Huckabee—this does add a bit of momentum to Cruz’s campaign, and makes some Trump supporters question if maybe proposing to ban all Muslims is not the best idea. However, if I had to make my best guess, I still believe Trump will be the nominee—at the end of all of this, Americans seem to be done with politicians and the Washington machine, and if there is one thing Donald Trump is not, it is politically correct.

Although the results of the caucus on the Democrat side seemed just as surprising, in reality Sanders’ success was indeed predictable. Look at any internet poll asking which Democrat which Democrat is best for the future of our country and Bernie makes a clean sweep. Yet, watch any news media outlet and Hillary comes out on top. Clinton likely expected an easy win, not least because of the Internet’s stigma as a less serious forum for political discourse. Granted, she technically won by 0.3 percent, but in the world of politics, that is too close to call.

We further consider that some precincts resorted to a coin toss to determine the winner, Hillary did not have much to be happy about. She was expecting this campaign to be an easy one until a 74-year-old hippie came out of nowhere and gave her a serious run for her money—for that I could not be happier. While so much of this election is about reform the Obama administration has already made, whether it be Obamacare or marriage equality, one of the biggest and most popular topics is wealth inequality and the pitfalls of capitalism—something Hillary likes to sweep under the rug, even with little room left after Benghazi and the email controversies. Overall, Sanders and Cruz should be the most excited, and likely hopeful that these results and their momentum carries on to other states, especially New Hampshire. Sure, a regular old primary would be just as effective; but I am talking about the American political system here, so I cannot expect too much common sense to come into play.
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Other pieces show the harmony in Ruan’s universe. “Jake Prat and Chickens” is a scene with Prat the jester playing with a large robotic chicken and several smaller chickens. “In the Park” intimates a similar harmony, as the robot floating in the water under the bridge seems content and a natural part of the scene.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Ruan’s concept is the way that the machines are portrayed. Many of them have eyes or animalistic features, even the ones that are not designed to be imitations of animals. He does this because, as he said, “I want to give life for everything, even the machines. An eye is something to observe the world around it. Even though they are just machines or not human, they can have a life.”

One example of this is in the piece “Riverhorse Ship,” where the seahorse attributes of an eye and orange “skin” are mixed with pipes, jets, and an elaborate propulsion and rigging system. The airships look both futuristic and classical. One of the ships hovering over the St. Louis cityscape in the “River-Landon” sketch looks like a mix of a fighter jet and a ship, meshing well with the old-fashioned ships floating in the water toward the St. Louis shoreline. With these details, Ruan expertly straddles the lines between animated and mechanical and traditional and futuristic.

“New St. Louis” will be on display at Gallery Visio until February 26. The collection is open for viewing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To contact Gallery Visio, email galvisio@umsl.edu or call 314-516-7922.