



Student Government Resolution 120.025

A Resolution to Offer the Initiation of the *New York Times* Digital Readership Program as a Ballot Measure for the Spring 2021 Student Government Elections

Sponsored by Katie Alexander, President of the Student Association; Nicholas Blum, Chair of the Organizational Activities Fee (OAF) Review Committee; Grace Cochran, SAB representative; Braden Leuthauser, FAC representative; Rachel Holt, Student Government Representative; Peyton Hornberger, Student at Large; Madi Teuscher, Student at Large; and Korey Canada, Student at Large; OAF Review Committee Members

WHEREAS,

- The Student Government is the official governing body of the Student Association and exists to represent the present and long-term best interests of the Student Association in the formulation of the University policy and in the fulfillment of the University mission; and
- The Truman State University student body voted in the spring of 2020 to cease funding of the Collegiate Readership Program, which provided printed newspapers to students on campus; and
- The student body further voted that the 2020-2021 Organizational Activities Fee (OAF) Review Committee should find a replacement service for the CRP, prioritizing an online option; and
- The University continued to collect the Collegiate Readership Fee as a portion of the Activities Fee during the 2020-2021 school year, allocating the funding from this year to a savings account for a future news service; and
- After researching options throughout the spring semester, the OAF Review Committee has recommended subscription to the *New York Times* Digital Readership Program; and
- Offering the initiation of this service as a ballot measure will be the most clear and accountable way to begin a significant, new use of student funds and will ensure that the majority of students approve of the program which their fees will fund;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT

- Will create a ballot measure in the Spring 2021 Student Government elections to enroll in the *New York Times* Digital Readership Program; and
- Submits the ballot language: “Currently, \$1.50 per student per semester is collected to support the Collegiate Readership Program. I support using this money to fund the *New York Times* Digital Readership Program for all Truman students. A vote yes will use the fee money to subscribe to the *New York Times* Digital Readership Program. A vote no will mean the fee money is collected for the 2021-2022 school year, and the 2021-2022 Organizational Activities Fee Review Committee will consider alternative uses for the fee money or the closing of the account.
- Submits Appendix 1, prepared by the OAF Review Committee, as rationale for the ballot measure.
- Submits Appendix 2, as summary of the survey results conducted from March 9th through March 23rd, 2021.
- The content in the Appendix is largely excerpted from the Organizational Activities Fee (OAF) Review Committee Report for the 2020-2021 academic year.

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT DIRECTS THAT

Additional copies of this resolution will be disseminated to President Sue Thomas; Janet Gooch, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Janna Stoskopf, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dave Rector, Vice President for Administration, Finance and Planning; Arletta Nelson, Assistant to the Vice President for Administration, Finance and Planning; Mike Garzanelli, Truman State University Comptroller; Angela Carron, Truman State University Grant Supervisor; Donna Liss, Chief Information Officer; Truman Media Network; and the University Archives.

Passed by unanimous consent, April 18, 2021.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Alexander". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Katie Alexander, President of the Student Association

Appendix 1

- On March 1st, the Committee Chair met with a New York Times (NYT) regional representative. During this meeting, the representative presented the digital program and provided informative materials;
- Several aspects of the presentation stood out. The program has profound functionality and versatility; each student can tailor their subscription to their interests, and customize their experience. This level of individualization was not possible with print media;
- Another practical benefit of an online subscription is the campus-wide unlimited access and an easy authentication process. Once logged on, the student can access the account from anywhere; the student would no longer have to be on campus to access the CRP, much less have to pick up a physical copy;
- The program provides intuitive research and educational functions. In particular, the program includes the “TimesMachine,” which has every NYT article from 1851 to 2002. This provides an invaluable research tool for historical analyses, and the ability for students to examine primary sources directly. Other useful features include the curated curricular tool, instructional strategies, and data solutions to analyze rates of usage;
- Finally, upon purchasing the subscription, the NYT provides a launch packet, which has informative materials and prepared graphics to raise awareness of the program;
- In sum, the utility and practicality of the NYT digital readership program would provide an opportunity for students to significantly benefit both in and out of the classroom.
- Apart from the immense utility provided by the NYT digital program, the price of the annual subscription is attractive. The proposed **annual cost is \$6,926.40**. Without this group discount, a digital subscription would cost a student \$48.00 per year. This program offers a significant discount.

Appendix 2

- In order to identify interest in an online readership program, the Committee created and issued a survey. The population sampled consisted of 1000 randomly selected students. The survey was issued from *March 9th to March 23rd*, and received 243 responses. While it is probable that more responses could have been obtained by having organizational representatives send out the survey to their organizations, the Committee decided that the findings would be more representative of the student body, and therefore more substantive, if respondents were restricted to those who were randomly selected. The Committee incentivized the completion of the survey by extending the opportunity for respondents to enter a raffle to receive one of four Hydro Flask Water Bottles.
- Findings from several items in the survey provided support for an online readership program:

- *“If there were online news services available, how likely would you be to use them?”*
 - 37.9% answered “somewhat likely,” 21.8% answered “likely,” and 17.3% answered “very likely.” In total, 77% of respondents would be likely to use an online news readership program. This is a significant majority.
- *“How important is it to you to be informed?”*
 - Respondents were asked to answer this question on a scale of 1 to 5. The mean response was 3.9. This displays that generally, students believe that it is important to be informed.
- *“Where do you mainly get your news?”*
 - 53.9% of respondents mainly get their news from social media. 32.5% of respondents mainly get their news from free media sources or apps. These provide support for a digital subscription that is compatible with social media sharing, and that can be easily accessed on a mobile device.
- *“Do you currently pay for any subscription news?”*
 - Of the 95.5% of respondents who do not currently have a news subscription, 56.2% answered that the reason is cost-related. The Committee holds that many respondents would be willing to pay for subscription media if it was offered at a more reasonable price.
- *“What news subscription would you most like to have access to?”*
 - A clear majority of respondents, 62.2%, answered that they would most like to have access to the New York Times. The next highest response was the Washington Post at 13.6%. Less than half of the respondents identified as a Democrat, which shows that students of different political affiliations would find content offered by the NYT to be useful.
- *“In all your time at Truman, approximately how many classes have made you utilize a news source for an assignment(s)?”*
 - 25.5% of respondents have not had a single class utilize a news source for an assignment. The Committee believes it is reasonable to assume that greater utilization of the readership program in the liberal arts curriculum would lead to a greater awareness of the program, and therefore a greater rate of usage.
- *“In addition to accessing a daily newspaper, what other functions would you find useful?”*
 - Responses showed an interest in capabilities aside from the daily newspaper. 83.6% would find “research and search options” useful. 52.6% would find “newsletters and alerts” useful. 40.5% would find “article recommendations” useful. 23.3% would find “financial market data” useful. Based on these responses, the Committee understands that an

online readership program offering broad functionality would provide greater utility to students relative to traditional print media.

- *“How often do you check your Truman email for newsletters, emails, assignments, etc.?”*
 - 80.6% of respondents check their Truman email multiple times a day. And, 8.7% check their Truman email at least once a day. An online readership program that frequently emails newsletters, tailored to the interest of the reader, would likely lead to a greater awareness of the program’s existence.