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All Eyes on Lizz Esfeld

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From nationally debating to making policy changes, senior Lizz Esfeld is on the high road to success. A biology major with a communications minor, Esfeld is the president of Truman's Student Senate.

Joining Senate was not her plan when she arrived at Truman from Bishop Miege High School in Lenexa, Kan. In high school, she was ranked ninth and 16th in the national forensics team for her junior and senior years in public policy debate and congress debate, respectively.

Esfeld now has three years on Senate under her belt, and still can pinpoint the moment she decided to join the organization.

"In my freshman year I came to the [Student Union Building] and got caught up in a tour, which ended up in the Senate's office," Esfeld said.

She said she talked to the current president for more than an hour and that was when she knew she wanted to join Senate. She said she thought about joining the debate team but did not want to commit as much time to it as she did in high school and decided to dedicate herself to a different focus instead. Esfeld said she still does not have her Saturdays off but doesn't mind because she actually is making policy changes rather than just talking about them, which is exciting.

She said it is hard to keep up with all the information, to be in charge of so many people and to be well-versed in all five committees (academic affairs, student affairs, external affairs, environmental and diversity group) and their projects, but that she loves every minute of it. She said that to be familiar and focused in all the committees was a challenge.

"I knew academic in and out," Esfeld said. "I had to learn about all the other affairs and work with all of them and not [being] biased on academic affairs was a hard transition."

Along with the responsibilities of the students' initiated projects and overseeing the Senate committees comes the responsibility of making crucial and tough decisions, she said.

"When a new president comes in the office, she or he will have about a week to fill out the big positions, which is [an] unbelievable time crunch considering that I have to advertise for it and make sure I get the right people for the position," Esfeld said. "Even when I have shortlisted to two to four people, it is hard to fill out the position and tell someone that they did not get the position they applied for."

Aside from that, Esfeld said she also thinks that it is difficult to be her friends' boss, especially when she has to confront them and talk to them as an employee. She said it was especially difficult as president when she was told about the budget crisis in confidence at the end of last semester.

"I was sick for [a] day thinking about it, and I could not talk to anybody about it," Esfeld said. "Even then I felt confident that I was the best person to handle this, and that I will have to be the one to get the information to every student."

Starting this semester her focus has been on the budget and where Truman is going with it, she said. She has been in Jefferson City several times talking with legislators and advocating for Truman's policies.

"By the end of my term, I hope that Truman is well set for the fixed level of funding for at least two years, or we know enough so we can at least advocate for a fee," she said.

In addition to dealing with the budget crisis, Esfeld was integral in the creation of a technology committee and a textbook committee this year. She said that if the proposal from the technology committee is implemented fully, technology could be one of Truman's defining attributes along with its strong academics, clubs, organizations and social life.

The textbook committee was formed to revolutionize the way students use textbooks at Truman. Esfeld said a rental process or Internet-based books have been suggested, along with having departments write their own books through this committee. This could offset any possible student fees in the future because students already spend about \$500 per semester on textbooks.

Esfeld's involvement at Truman extends far beyond Senate. She is the vice president of Omicron Delta Kappa, National Leadership Honor Society, and is a member of Beta Beta Beta, National Biological Honor Society.

Esfeld said she has many ongoing projects right now but that she knows she might not be able to complete them all during her presidency. If anything, she said she hopes to leave Senate with a friendly and cooperative environment. "I love how we all get along this year," Esfeld said. "Since I have been in Senate, I don't remember us all getting along [this] well, and I would like for that to keep going. I like to talk straight and people who play around the issue upset me."