



Contact: Kevin Minch  
(660) 785-5384  
[kminch@truman.edu](mailto:kminch@truman.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Truman State University to Encourage Awareness of Disaster Preparedness Needs, Critical Thinking Skills Through “Zombie Scholars Academy”**

An office at Truman State University is taking the threat of a “zombie apocalypse” seriously – if only long enough to elevate public awareness of the need to prepare for natural and human-made disasters. The University’s Truman Institute is teaming-up with a veritable “Who’s Who” of health professionals, researchers, and literary figures to launch “The Zombie Scholars Academy: A Problem-Based Exploration of Science, Literature, and Leadership.”

The one-week residential camp experience for rising 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders will take place on Truman’s campus June 22-29, 2014, and feature topics in both the sciences and the humanities using the fictional zombie threat as a thematic framework. “There are many fascinating topics that connect to disaster awareness as diverse as anatomy and physiology, epidemiology, neurobiology, mathematics, literature, film, psychology, and human relations,” explains Dr. Kevin Minch, Professor of Communication and Director of the Truman Institute.

Minch’s conclusion seems supported by recent actions in government. In May, 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched its own zombie preparedness initiative, garnering significant public attention. The initiative spawned a graphic novel, posters, awareness kits, and numerous references to disaster preparedness objectives. In September, 2012, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and elements of the U.S. military adopted similar zombie training programs.

Max Brooks, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Zombie Survival Guide* and *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*, and a Senior Advisor to the Academy, observed, “Zombies are a ‘safe’ way of exploring our worst fears. We all have an ego defense mechanism, a mental barrier that keeps our fears and anxieties from driving us insane. Discussing something as horrific as a natural disaster or a terrorist attack triggers many people’s ego defense mechanisms. They shut down. They tune out. They don’t want to talk about [the] worst-case scenario. However, if the catalyst for that ‘worst case’ is fictional, it circumvents our ego defenses and allows us to talk about the gritty details of preparedness.”

Students at the Academy will participate in common coursework in biology, epidemiology, psychology, and ethics, as well as focused study in critical problem solving and applications of the zombie genre in the humanities (writing, literature, media). Coursework will be punctuated by recreational activities that build upon the idea of fending-off the fictional gnarling zombie horde while acquiring practical life and leadership skills.

Advisory Board member, Dr. Steve Schlozman, Co-Director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry for Harvard Medical School, who uses zombies as a discussion vehicle in the classroom, commented on the value of the fictional walking dead as an educational tool, “You’re going to pay more attention to the literal walking dead than you are to the threat of say global warming or global conflict. That’s in part because zombies aren’t real, so we can contemplate the global crises that ARE real in the displacement that zombie stories afford. It also turns out that we learn what we might do to AVERT global crises by watching where humans appear to screw up in zombie movies. Every good zombie movie emphasizes multi-cultural relationships, overcoming differences, and creative problem solving. When the protagonists just start firing guns, things almost never go well. We have these GREAT BIG BRAINS. Studying a zombie apocalypse helps us to get comfortable using our brains in more real-life scenarios.”

Students and parents interested in the Zombie Scholars Academy can learn how to register by visiting <http://zombie.truman.edu>, sending an inquiry to [jmorton@truman.edu](mailto:jmorton@truman.edu), or calling (660) 785-5406.

###



# Media Contact Information

**Zombie Scholars Academy: A Problem-Based Exploration of Science, Literature, and Leadership**

## **The Truman Institute**

Kevin Minch, Director  
Truman State University  
100 E. Normal  
Kirksville, MO 63501  
(660) 785-5384  
[kminch@truman.edu](mailto:kminch@truman.edu)

## **Truman State University Public Relations**

Heidi Templeton, Director  
Truman State University  
100 E. Normal  
Kirksville, MO 63501  
(660) 785-4016  
[pr@truman.edu](mailto:pr@truman.edu)



## FAQ

**Q: Can you really expect students to take learning seriously when talking about zombies?**

A: The objective of using zombies as a vehicle for discussing serious academic topics, and issues of societal importance – such as disaster preparedness – is to make it easier for students to learn. While fictional, zombies raise provocative questions about medicine, psychology, the environment, public policy, sentience, and a host of other topics. They also allow students to exercise those faculties that help them solve problems in everyday life.

**Q: Are zombies and disasters too “dark” or gruesome a subject to be discussing with teenagers?**

A: We believe part of the reason zombies have become so popular is that they are seen by many people as “camp.” While some zombie films can be utterly terrifying, some are also thoroughly hilarious – either because they were deliberately produced as comedies (*Shaun of the Dead*, *Zombieland*) or because of poor production value. While there is no question that some films in the zombie genre are too dark to be viewed by young people, we believe the target age group for this program is already quite familiar with the genre. Moreover, our focus on zombies as a subject for academic study places them in a more appropriate context for discussion. The linkage to disaster preparedness is highly appropriate. Advisory Board member, Dr. Steve Schlozman of Harvard, has observed:

I can maybe bring a unique perspective to [this question] as a child and adolescent psychiatrist, as well as someone who writes and thinks about functional neurobiology. These are by definition scary times. It's not that times weren't scary when I was a kid – I was pretty sure we'd nuke the Soviets and/or they'd nuke us by the time I was 30. The difference, though, is the combination of rapid media communication and more palpably felt, direct threats. Buildings blowing up, over 10 years of war, near constant news about all sorts of awful things, and an increasingly polarized national dialogue have taken their toll on our national psyche. Kids see and hear really scary stuff every day. This has led to an increased rate of low level near constant anxiety in our kids, and this anxiety permeates every aspect of their culture (look at the explosion of dystopian young adult fiction.). So, what to do? Well, on both individual and public health measures, you meet kids where they're at developmentally. That means you give them agency. As they enter late school-age and early adolescence, their brains are just starting to appreciate how uncertain things can be. So, kids thrive on mastery and abstract thinking at exactly the time that they realize that they'll need to in order to both stay and feel safe. Knowing how to prepare and what to do in case of a disaster actually doesn't scare kids more. Think of tornado drills. If done well and correctly (and there's research to show this) kids get more relaxed when they understand the risks in developmentally appropriate ways. This makes them less jumpy and better able to focus on the tasks of growing up.

**Q: Why should we be teaching young people about disaster preparedness?**

A: If recent natural and human-made disasters have taught us anything, it is that we are insufficiently prepared for them. While we would like to believe these issues are topics that adults should worry about and children should be protected from, the reality is that young people have been asked to consider preparing for disasters for generations – from the “duck and cover” drills of the Cold War, to the tornado preparedness of schools in the Midwest and South. Dr. Schlozman further argues:

There's the concrete stuff – the stuff the CDC was getting at in their now famous blog. Preparing for fictional zombies is a whole lot like preparing for real disasters. Do you have enough water? What's your food supply like? If this is a contagion-based disaster, what mechanisms are in place so that you can understand how to assess reasonable risks? If you're a physician or a health care worker (paramedic, etc.) you'll also be given formulas to follow in triage settings in order to tease out with reasonable certainty who has the zombie bug and who has a cold. All of this follows naturally from zombie tropes, but the point of zombie movies is almost exactly the opposite of this:

Zombie movies show us what NOT to do. Don't go shooting everything that moves. Don't horde your supplies – your strength is in the number of humans, not stuff. In short, DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD. Without that

fundamental issue, no zombie movies would work. They'd just be movies about people rounding up giant snails or something. But in zombie flicks the people screw up and the zombies get the better of them much of the time. That's because it is easy enough to remind us to keep our cool when times are cool, but in heated emotional times, thinking carefully is by definition harder. There's literally thousands of years of hard wiring to make that kind of careful thinking – the stuff that the CDC wrote about – hard to near-impossible under stress. There's also very well worked out neurobiological circuitry that can explain this kind of behavior.

Advisory Board member, Max Brooks, notes:

If we learn nothing else from Hurricane Katrina, it's that our government may not always respond swiftly and efficiently to a crisis. Just like private citizens have to pitch in to help out their government, children have to pitch in to help their parents. In a crisis, everyone can do their part.

**Q: What skills can we expect kids to come away with from the Academy?**

A: The most important benefits young people will leave the Academy with are improved problem solving and leadership skills. Thinking about a hypothetical disaster scenario provokes students to think about how they would work in teams, how they would navigate a world with limited resources, how they would go about seeking solutions to the broader crisis. Students will also benefit from subject-specific learning in their particular areas of interest – whether they are biology, creative writing, psychology, leadership, filmmaking, or survival skills.

**Q: Why do you have authors of fiction and zombie enthusiasts on your Advisory Board?**

A: While we like to believe we know a lot about zombies, we are academics from a broad range of backgrounds. Those who have written successful books, film scripts, or blogs about zombies have given critical thought to questions ranging from how the digestive tract of a zombie would function, to whether a zombie's jaws could crack a victim's skull to access the tasty brains therein, or whether a zombie could survive in conditions below freezing. While such questions seem frivolous, they reflect the kinds of logical problems – involving real questions of anatomy, physiology, neurobiology, animal behavior, and so forth – that would feed exploration of the hypothetical scenarios in Academy coursework. In that sense, such discussions aren't much different than the debates fans of the popular *Twilight* series might have over the relative strength of werewolves or vampires. The important difference, however, is that the theoretical zombie threat is complex and global, and the incumbent societal breakdown is far more plausible than the dilemmas posed by a *Harry Potter* novel or a sparkling vampire. Max Brooks explains the practical value in the writing of authors in the genre:

There is nothing “zombie-specific” in a zombie crisis. There are no crosses, garlic, or silver bullets....The contents of a zombie survival kit are the exact contents of a standard disaster “bug out” kit. A large majority of my research for *The Zombie Survival Guide* comes from living in Southern California and preparing for “The Big One.”

**Q: What's behind the enthusiasm of the public for zombies?**

A: Interest in zombies seems enduring. Ever since George Romero introduced us to the modern zombie in *Night of the Living Dead*, there has been a steady interest in the undead. While there are numerous theories one can offer for the enduring popularity of the genre, we would argue that zombies entertain the intellect as much as they provide shock value. AMC's *Walking Dead* was so successful in its first season that the network added a talk show after the program in the second season, *Talking Dead*, just to extend the conversation fans were having about the story. Max Brooks reflects on the popularity of the genre, saying:

Zombies are a “safe” way of exploring our worst fears. We all have an ego defense mechanism, a mental barrier that keeps our fears and anxieties from driving us insane. Discussing something as horrific as a natural disaster or a terrorist attack triggers many people's ego defense mechanisms. They shut down. They tune out. They don't want to talk about [the] worst-case scenario. However, if the catalyst for that “worst case” is fictional, it circumvents our ego defenses and allows us to talk about the gritty details of preparedness. If [you ask] at your next cocktail party, “How would you prepare for a zombie apocalypse?” you stand a very good chance of having a very spirited, practical, and ultimately helpful discussion about preparedness. If, on the other hand you ask, “How would you prepare for a swine flu quarantine?” you stand a very good chance of clearing the room.

Dr. Schlozman further notes:

Lots of folks ask this, and everyone has a theory. To me, zombies are the perfect metaphor for disconnection, and I think disconnection is emblematic of modernity. I think zombies lend themselves to thinking about super-scary and extremely tricky stuff in the comfort of campy displacement. I can address how we define the human condition, or why via mirror neurons people fight, or how the brain tells you to run, and so forth, using the zombie trope. That's so cool. Kids and adults learn. I've had kids write to me about the novel I wrote and cite major medical journals. These are 12 to 14 year old kids! They're citing journals that I am sometimes struggling to get the medical students I teach to read.

**Q: Are you concerned that students will take the idea of “fighting off” zombies too literally?**

A: All students who apply to Zombie Scholars Academy will be asked to submit an essay discussing their reasons for applying to the Academy and will be required to obtain a letter of recommendation from a teacher or counselor at their school. These two tools are designed to screen for students whose reasons for attending the program are focused on fictional combat to the exclusion of academic concerns and good clean fun. Students will be routinely reminded during the Academy about the objectives of coursework. Where “zombie games” are employed as recreational activity during free time, these games will be conducted using safe tools such as Nerf™ products.

**Q: Where is the academic merit in a program about zombies?**

A: Numerous serious scholars have explored zombies. A very real zombie-like phenomenon associated with Haiti has been studied in medical journals (though very different than that covered in zombie fiction). Mathematicians have used zombie movies as a tool for theorizing about the spread of a real contagion – leading to possible conclusions about actual communicable diseases. Philosophers, psychologists, political scientists, and writers have used zombies to explore very serious academic topics through discussion and debate. Max Brooks notes his experience in the application of concepts learned from zombie preparedness fiction:

Critics [of using zombies to teach about disaster preparedness] should speak to a young man I met last year who told me that the contents of his zombie survival kit actually kept himself and his parents alive during a real life natural disaster.

Dr. Schlozman adds:

Zombies are just the back door. You're going to pay more attention to the literal walking dead than you are to the threat of say global warming or global conflict. That's in part because zombies aren't real, so we can contemplate the global crises that ARE real in the displacement that zombie stories afford. It also turns out that we learn what we might do to AVERT global crises by watching where humans appear to screw up in zombie movies. Every good zombie movie emphasizes multi-cultural relationships, overcoming differences, and creative problem solving. When the protagonists just start firing guns, things almost never go well, or have recently not gone well. Similarly, if we ignore or think concretely about things as complicated as global warming, or water crises, or economic disasters, or pandemics, then we give up the one thing we have going for us when things get scary. We have these GREAT BIG BRAINS. Studying a zombie apocalypse helps us to get comfortable using our brains in more real-life scenarios.

**Q: Who will handle the instruction at this Academy?**

A: All instruction will be conducted by Truman State University faculty and select field-specific experts from outside of the University. We anticipate some participation from members of the Advisory Board, and K-12 teachers, as their schedules permit.

**Q: Is this Academy some kind of a joke?**

A: No, we are (un)deadly serious.



# Advisory Board and Management Biographies

## Zombie Scholars Academy: A Problem-Based Exploration of Science, Literature, and Leadership

At first blush, a summer program about zombies will naturally evoke some giggles or a scratched head. For this reason the Truman Institute has devoted significant attention to consulting credible figures in science, medicine, literature, and education to develop its program.

### The Advisory Board

The Zombie Scholars Academy Advisory Board began its work in 2011, discussing the curriculum and logistics of a summer program at Truman. The Board has focused attention on not only content, but how to convey the core message of disaster preparedness to a young audience. Their work is supported by a larger consulting group of faculty at Truman. The Board includes:

#### Dr. Peter Cummings, MD

Dr. Peter Cummings is a forensic pathologist working with the office of the Massachusetts Chief Medical Examiner. There he works as the Director of Neuropathology. Cummings is board certified in Anatomic, Forensic, and Neuropathology and has a career filled with truly fascinating experiences. He served on the identification teams for the World Trade Center disaster and the Swiss Air plane crash. In 2009 he was a NASA astronaut candidate finalist and he maintains an active research agenda exploring the effects of cosmic radiation on retinal glial cells in space flight. He has served on the faculties of the University of Virginia School of Medicine, the Royal College of Surgeons (Ireland), and the University of Maine. He is the author of *The Atlas of Forensic Histopathology*. Dr. Cummings ties these interests to the exploration of zombies in his recent work of fiction, the *Neuropathology of Zombies*, perhaps the only work of fiction to feature a neuropathologist as protagonist.

#### Dr. Maria Evans, MD

Dr. Maria Evans is Board Certified in clinical and anatomic pathology and practices these for Chariton Labs and Northeast Regional Medical Center in Kirksville, Missouri. She is an Associate Professor at A.T. Still University's, Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine – the founding school of Osteopathic Medicine. A graduate of Truman State University, she previously served on the Truman Board of Governors. She received her medical degree from the University of Missouri School of Medicine. In addition to her experience as a physician, Evans is currently involved in the ministerial discernment process for the Episcopal Church, bringing an ethical and philosophical component to the development of the Zombie Scholars Academy curriculum. She freely embraces all aspects of her “nerdiness.”

#### Nick McCracken, MBA

Nick McCracken is a Product Innovation Research Manager, at Ford Motor Company and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Marketing at Michigan's Walsh College. Professor McCracken conducts research to gain insight into customer wants and needs for future Ford and Lincoln products in North America, Europe, South

America, Asia, and other markets. Before joining Ford, he was a senior vice president for consumer insights and strategy at Young & Rubicam Advertising. Professor McCracken's experience also includes launching the Visteon corporate brand identity across seven countries and directing the communication launch strategy for the MGM Grand Casino in Detroit. McCracken joins the advisory committee both as a film and fiction enthusiast and an expert in human behavior and marketing.

### **Dr. Jason Miller**

Dr. Jason Miller is an Associate Professor of Mathematics at Truman State University. Dr. Miller has played a leadership role in a number of Truman's summer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) initiatives, serving as Director of the NSF-funded SPECTRA program, as a leader in Truman's Mathematical Biology Program, and as the organizer for Truman's Kauffman Scholars Collegiate Residential Institute. Miller has a particular interest in the relationship between mathematics and biology, which makes him a great fit for exploring how mathematical modeling can tell us about the spread of contagions – such as a zombie plague. Dr. Miller has a strong commitment to interdisciplinary learning.

### **Matt Mogk**

Inspired by a lifelong interest in the undead, Matt created the Zombie Research Society in 2007 and continues to serve as its Head Researcher. Since its inception the Society has spawned chapters all over the world and throughout the United States – including in high schools. He has a broad base of knowledge in zombie science, survival, and pop culture, and even received advanced combat and survival training in the French Foreign Legion. He holds a Master's degree from the New York University Film School, where he received a Sloan Foundation National Fellowship for science in screenwriting. He later served as an adjunct faculty member at NYU. His successful publishing career includes *That's Not Your Mommy Anymore: A Zombie Tale*, perhaps the only children's book to take-up the zombie topic. His *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Zombies*, stands as a virtual encyclopedia of every concept scholars of zombies have explored, as well as a highly credible manual of advice for survival in any disaster scenario. Mogk has appeared in documentaries about the zombie phenomenon, as a speaker at conventions, and as a participant on Spike TV's *Zombies vs. Vampires* episode of "The Deadliest Warrior."

### **Aaron Sagers**

Aaron Sagers is a journalist/TV personality and zombie expert who has covered the walking dead genre on CNN and on his Travel Channel show "Paranormal Paparazzi," where he serves hosts and co-Executive Producer. Sagers has traveled the country talking about the re-animated corpse menace at numerous pop culture conventions such as San Diego Comic-Con, New York Comic-Con, Dragon Con and more. He is also the founder of Paranormal Pop Culture ([www.ParanormalPopCulture.com](http://www.ParanormalPopCulture.com)), an entertainment site that explores horror, supernatural and all elements of the paranormal – as seen on Entertainment Weekly, The Hollywood Reporter and BBC. Sagers is also a contributor to CNN.com, MTV Geek and Sirius/XM radio. He is the author of "Paranormal Pop Culture: Rambling and Shambling Through the Entertainment of the Unexplained," and is a part-time professor of Journalism at NYU.

### **Dr. Steve Schlozman**

Dr. Steve Schlozman, MD, is currently the Associate Director of Training for the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Residency Program at the Massachusetts General Hospital/McLean Program in Child Psychiatry, and Co-Director of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry for Harvard Medical School. He is Board Certified in General Psychiatry and Child Psychiatry. He is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard and Lecturer in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He earned his Medical Degree at the Brown-Dartmouth

Program in Medicine, and completed his training in general psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and his Child Psychiatry Residency at the MGH/McLean Program in Child Psychiatry. His academic work focuses on curriculum reform and educational endeavors at the medical student and post-graduate levels, as well as on the psychiatric treatment of medically ill children. His first novel, the *Zombie Autopsies*, was published in March 2011 and he is currently collaborating with George Romero on a film adaptation of the novel. Previously he gained recognition among scholars of the zombie phenomenon for his journal article that theorized the existence of Ataxic Neurodegenerative Satiety Deficiency Syndrome.

## **Advisors and Consultants**

### **Max Brooks, Senior Advisor**

Max Brooks is best known for his significant contributions to the Zombie literary genre. His books *The Zombie Survival Guide* and *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* are both *New York Times* bestsellers. Brooks has been referred to as “the Studs Terkel of zombie journalism,” and his *World War Z* applies the oral history methodology, challenging the reader to think seriously about what individuals and governments would do in a scenario in which controversial ethical choices are required for the survival of humanity. Brooks’ book is due to be released as a film in June 2013, starring Brad Pitt and Matthew Fox.

## **The Management**

### **Dr. Kevin Minch**

Dr. Kevin Minch is the Director of the Truman Institute and Dean of two summer academies at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri. He is also a Professor of Communication and the former director of the University’s speech and debate team – the Forensic Union. He has worked with summer programs at Truman, Yale, and the University of Kansas almost continuously since 1997. As Truman Institute Director, he has primary responsibility for the development of the Zombie Scholars Academy and its curriculum. He has been at Truman since 1999.

### **Jared Young**

Jared is currently a 6th Grade Teacher at Schuyler County R-I schools in Missouri and serves as Coordinator of Summer Academies for the Truman Institute. Prior to his current assignment, however, he served on the Residence Life staff at Truman and as a member of the staff of the Joseph Baldwin Academy. He has immersed himself in all things zombie in preparation for the Academy and is eagerly looking forward to his new role. Jared’s primary responsibility will be to tend to the needs of students throughout the Academy, respond to parent concerns, and address any emergency or disciplinary matters that might arise. He will also supervise the professional staff and preceptors that work to support the program



# Quick Fact Sheet

## Zombie Scholars Academy

- Intended size of class = 50 students
- Duration of program = 8 days, 7 nights
- Target student/residence staff supervisory ratio = 8:1
- Target student/faculty ratio 9:1
- Housing located on the Truman State University campus
- Academy Tuition = \$800
- Grades eligible: Rising 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders
- Application requirements: Application form, short essay, transcripts, teacher/counselor recommendation

## All About Zombies and the Zombie Genre

- Number of Zombie films indexed in the Internet Movie Database = 775
- Number of Zombie-themed books returned on an Amazon.com books search = 11,307
- Recent *New York Times* Bestsellers in the Zombie Genre = *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith), *The Zombie Survival Guide* (Max Brooks), *World War Z* (Max Brooks)
- Show with the highest ratings for a cable drama this past season = AMC's *The Walking Dead*<sup>1</sup>
- The only cable drama to consistently pass *The Walking Dead* in ratings = HBO's *The Sopranos*<sup>2</sup>
- The name for the condition associated with being a Zombie = Ataxic Neurodegenerative Satiety Deficiency Syndrome<sup>3</sup>
- When is Zombie Awareness Month? = May or October<sup>4</sup>

## Hard Research and Thought About Zombies

- Davis, Wade. "Zombification." *Science* 240 (June 1988): 1715-1716.
- Drezner, Daniel W. *Theories of International Politics and Zombies*. Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Littlewood, R. and Douyon, C. "Clinical findings in three cases of zombification." *The Lancet* 350 (1997): 1094-1096.
- Lycan, William G. "Review: Stalnaker on Zombies" Reviewed work(s): *Ways a World Might Be* by Robert Stalnaker, *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 133 (April 2007): 473-479.
- Munz, Philip, Ioan Hudea, Joe Imad and Robert J. Smith. "When Zombies Attack!: Mathematical Modelling of an Outbreak of Zombie Infection," [pdf] in "Infectious Disease Modelling Research Progress," eds. J.M. Tchuente and C. Chiyaka, Nova Science Publishers, Inc. pp. 133-150, 2009.
- Scriber, Brad. "What can Zombies teach us about swine flu?" August 12, 2009. National Geographic Weblog. [http://blogs.ngm.com/blog\\_central/2009/08/what-can-zombies-teach-us-about-swine-flu.html](http://blogs.ngm.com/blog_central/2009/08/what-can-zombies-teach-us-about-swine-flu.html)
- Tanney, Julia. "On the Conceptual, Psychological, and Moral Status of Zombies, Swamp-Beings, and Other 'Behaviourally Indistinguishable' Creatures." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69 (July, 2004): 173-186.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carter, Bill. "Walking Dead Finale Caps Record Season." *New York Times*. 19 March 2012.

<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/19/walking-dead-finale-caps-record-season/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> "A Harvard Scientist Explains Zombie Neurobiology" 10 June 2009. <http://io9.com/5286145/a-harvard-psychiatrist-explains-zombie-neurobiology>

<sup>4</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared October to be "Zombie Awareness Month." However, the Zombie Research Society maintains that it is May <http://zombieresearchsociety.com/zombie-awareness>. Why not celebrate twice?



# The Truman Institute

## Truman State University Academic Academies

The Truman Institute is Truman State University's incubator for innovative and entrepreneurial educational initiatives. Providing unique educational experiences to students of all ages is central to its mission. Toward the continued fulfillment of that goal, the Truman Institute has introduced **Zombie Scholars Academy** as the next in a line of academically-focused summer academies for young people.

Truman State University first rose to national prominence in K-12 outreach with its **Joseph Baldwin Academy for Eminent Young Scholars (JBA)**. Founded in 1985, the Joseph Baldwin Academy was created in order to provide the benefits of a liberal arts education to students beyond undergraduates. Since then the Academy has grown in size from 4 classes with 60 students to 21 classes with over 400 students. The Academy provides courses in all areas of the liberal arts, including the humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, and social sciences. All of the Academy's classes are challenging, designed to be the approximate equivalent of a semester-long university course. The faculty members of the Academy's classes structure their courses to suit the interests and abilities of the talented students who make up our student body. The talented 7<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> graders who attend the Academy are at the top of their classes, qualifying by scoring at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on a standardized exam, and completing the ACT before acceptance.

In 2011 the Truman Institute expanded its program for gifted students with the addition of the **Summer Talent Academy for Professions in Health (STAPH)**, offered jointly with **AT Still University of Health Sciences**. This pre-health professions program adopted a problem-based curriculum designed to help rising high school juniors and seniors explore health professions through themes. The 2011 theme of Bioterrorism exposed students to issues in psychology, epidemiology, anatomy and physiology, health communication, and first response. The 2012 theme of the **Mind-Body Connection** exposed students to a range of topics addressing the linkages between mental and physical well-being. The 2013 theme was **Crisis Response and Emergency Medicine**.

After 30 years of collective experience with these two Academies (and a number of smaller programs run by Academy faculty and staff) the Truman Institute conceived of its latest academic experience – **Zombie Scholars Academy** – after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response launched its public relations campaign on disaster preparedness in May 2011. The campaign employed a theme of Zombie Apocalypse Preparedness as a vehicle to heighten public consciousness about preparing for the unexpected (<http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/zombies.htm>). "We realized there was a lot of science, math, reading, and critical thinking involved in the literature, television, and film of the zombie genre," observed Dr. Kevin Minch, Truman Institute Director and Professor of Communication. "It took the CDC's campaign to turn the light bulb on in our heads that there might be something much bigger here for student learning."

Truman State University is Missouri's only highly selective public liberal arts and sciences university. Located in Kirksville, Missouri, Truman was founded in 1867. Truman has held the top ranking among public colleges and universities in the Midwest (Master's Level) for the last 16 years in *US News and World Report's* "America's Best Colleges" edition. In 2011 *Consumer's Digest* ranked Truman the #1 value among America's public colleges and universities. These values of high quality teaching and affordability permeate Truman's summer programs for youth as well, with competitively low tuition rates, scholarship opportunities, and direct exposure to Truman's most honored and talented faculty.