

Chapter XVIII: MASTER PLAN AND ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

July 16, 2002

Summary Overview

The 2002 Master Plan and Assessment Summer Workshop was held on Tuesday, July 16, in the Activities Room of the Student Union Building. Faculty divisional representatives received academic year 2001-2002 assessment data for their divisions and were requested to review the data with their colleagues when the fall semester started.

Following a welcome and introductions by President Jack Magruder, Michael A. McManis, University Dean for Planning and Institutional Development, provided a PowerPoint presentation which summarized the process and findings of the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC). The full presentation is attached to this report; however, some of the key points in the presentation included the following.

- ❖ The SPAC itself and the planning process used by the committee were broad-based and inclusive, used a variety of data sources, and resulted in the refinement of the existing plan rather than the development of an entirely new plan.
- ❖ The vision for Truman's future is to be a "nationally recognized community of learners" which is characterized by the following elements: to be nationally recognized as a leading liberal arts college regardless of public/private status; to provide Missouri citizens financial access to excellent educational opportunities; to foster nationally competitive learning outcomes; and to establish a community that supports the personal and professional development of all its members.
- ❖ The planning review process identified numerous institutional strengths, a partial listing of which would include: well-prepared students and a strong faculty; high academic quality and academic reputation; favorable student/faculty ratio and very good opportunities for close student/faculty interactions; excellent student learning outcomes and high post-graduation placements; the quality and quantity of out-of-classroom experiences; and strong material support for the teaching/learning process.
- ❖ The planning review process also identified the following institutional concerns requiring attention: student recruitment and retention; declining student satisfaction with certain aspects of the Truman experience; implementation and operation of the Liberal Studies Program; need to refine the assessment program; better integration of out-of-classroom/off-campus experiences with the formal curriculum; improved communication and trust at all levels; improved support for faculty and staff professional development and compensation; and enhanced diversity among faculty, students, and staff.

- ❖ In terms of Truman’s long-term competitive advantages, the following were identified: national recognition for academics, athletics, and other co-curricular programs; only highly selective public in Missouri; tradition of assessment and accountability; “Best of Class” in terms of performance in Missouri public higher education; very low debt; strong support for its liberal arts mission both internally and externally; growing support from alumni and friends; and a good relationship with the City of Kirksville.
- ❖ Major external challenges facing Truman in the next few years are the following: rapidly deteriorating state support; declining support for higher education as a “public good”; declining support for the CBHE and public policies supporting Truman’s “highly selective” mission; implementation of term limits with a concomitant loss of institutional memory in the General Assembly regarding Truman’s mission and role in the public higher education system; continuing development of competing universities; remote location; and limited public engagement in the region.
- ❖ Based on an analysis of all the data, Truman’s Principal Planning Themes for 2002-2007 are the following, in priority order: (1) recruiting and supporting outstanding students, faculty, and staff; (2) deepening an enhanced, self-reflective liberal arts culture; (3) nurturing viable relationships with external constituencies; and (4) providing excellent support for the teaching/learning process.
- ❖ Based on all of the foregoing information, the SPAC has established the following primary action priorities for Truman in the period 2002-2007: student recruitment and retention, including continuing diversification of the student body; continued development of the liberal arts culture, especially refinement of the Liberal Studies Program and appropriate integration of out-of classroom learning experiences; review and refinement of the assessment program; enhanced attention to shaping and influencing the external environment, particularly among the political leadership and policy makers in Jefferson City; continued attention to effective resource use and maintenance of affordability consistent with Truman’s mission; continued strong support for faculty and staff, including compensation and professional development; and improved physical facilities.

Vice President Garry L. Gordon followed with a PowerPoint presentation that featured an in-depth review of assessment data related to selected planning issues, especially the results of the newly received triennial faculty survey data completed in the Fall 2001 semester. His main topics were Student Recruitment and Retention, Community Issues, Fostering Continuous Improvement – Review and Evaluation of Assessment, the Liberal Studies Program and Majors, Out-of-Class Experiences, and Teaching/Learning Support. Included among his major points were the following.

- The quality of Truman’s students is outstanding – one of the best public sector profiles for undergraduates in the nation with an average ACT composite score for fall 2002 anticipated to be 27.4 – but the number of both undergraduate and graduate students has declined marginally and is below projections for the institution.

- In order for Truman to attain its enrollment goals and to meet its graduation rate projections, student retention must be improved not only at the freshman/ sophomore transition but also the sophomore/junior transition.
- Truman's students are comparable in preparation levels to the students at highly selective private institutions, and most Truman faculty recognize this fact by reporting satisfaction levels with student preparation at more than twice the levels of other public four-year university faculty members.
- Truman's faculty are committed to teaching: more than 80 percent report that teaching is their primary interest, while Truman faculty spend more time preparing to teach than their public four-year counterparts and are more likely than their peers to believe that good teaching is rewarded by their university.
- Notwithstanding perceptions of some Truman faculty that committee assignments and related expectations are too extensive, our faculty report slightly less committee service involvement than their public four-year peers.
- Truman faculty are 57 percent more likely than their public four-year peers to report that "developing a sense of community among students and faculty" is a high university priority.
- Although Truman is committed to the continuing refinement of its assessment program, it is important to note that several major steps have been taken in the past year concerning its review and renewal: value-added freshman testing has been suspended; the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) has replaced the locally developed Institutional Student Survey; the Sophomore Writing Experience has been suspended pending the development of a new writing assessment, the Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment has been restructured to include a major analysis group, and a consultant who trains North Central Association evaluators has been on-campus to evaluate the program.
- Both faculty and students indicate through a variety of measures (*e.g.*, level of challenge, mastery of material, and faculty enthusiasm) higher levels of satisfaction with courses in the major in comparison to courses in the Liberal Studies Program.
- Out-of-classroom/co-curricular experiences are a distinctive component of the collegiate experience at a residential university like Truman, and nearly two-thirds of Truman's students report that they participate in these activities either "very often" or "often." Furthermore, approximately 157 faculty and staff support these activities by serving as advisors. Yet, Truman faculty seem somewhat less enthusiastic about these activities than many students and staff while nearly 10 percent of the faculty report that they believe these activities are overemphasized at Truman.
- Truman maintains a strong commitment to the support of the teaching and learning process, including offering an extensive schedule of workshops to improve teaching,

supporting the Faculty Development Luncheon Series, providing occasional special purpose on-campus institutes on topics like diversity, and fostering attendance at regional and national conferences.

- Truman faculty are more likely than their public four-year counterparts to have worked with undergraduates on research, participated in a teaching enhancement workshop, or used the Internet in the administration of a course although they were less likely to have developed a new course in the last two years.
- More than two-thirds of Truman's faculty reported that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their overall job satisfaction – a rate somewhat higher than their public four-year peers.

Following these planning related presentations, the conference participants had the opportunity to discuss critical issues of interest with colleagues in two clusters of concurrent breakout sessions. These focused sessions included the following:

- ☛ Student Recruitment and Retention;
- ☛ Faculty Community Issues;
- ☛ Fostering Continuous Improvement, Review, and Evaluation of the Assessment Program;
- ☛ Liberal Studies Program and Majors;
- ☛ Integration of Out-of-classroom Experiences;
- ☛ Staff/Community Issues;
- ☛ External Constituencies; and
- ☛ Teaching/Learning Support.

The 2002 Summer Workshop concluded with a PowerPoint presentation by the Project Team on Teaching and Evaluation which was led by Debra Kerby, chair of the Project Team, and team members Carol Hoferkamp and Keri Bodensteiner. The presentation and subsequent panel discussion was intended to provide an overview of the Project Team's report which was developed following a full year of review, research, and discussion. The full report can be found on Truman's Web page at <http://academics.truman.edu/projectteam>. The following points were made during the Summer Workshop presentation.

- ◆ One of Truman's core institutional values is to maintain an institutional focus on students and student learning; yet, Truman's faculty – like all faculty across the nation – must navigate a paradigm shift in teaching from focusing on instruction per se to focusing on student learning.
- ◆ Faculty Senate Bill #1400, adopted on January 25, 2001, supported the adoption of practices outlined by the Vice President for Academic Affairs regarding tenure review and evaluation of teaching; the establishment of a formative third-year review by a committee of discipline peers; the establishment of disciplinary "committees of the whole" for tenure and promotion decisions; establishment of divisional appeals committees; and the appointment of a task force to formulate guidelines for assessing teaching.

- ◆ The Project Team was established in response to Senate Bill #1400 to support and encourage quality teaching and professional development by researching and identifying feedback and evaluation processes for teaching and instruction that would be appropriate for Truman. The Project Team’s charge included the following elements:
 - Identify best practices for teaching and advising;
 - Produce a template for the formative third-year review;
 - Produce a template for a campus-wide “core” summative assessment approach that allows for divisional autonomy; and
 - Research and report on evaluation philosophies and approaches.

- ◆ Qualities of effective teaching, as identified by the Project Team, include the following characteristics: passion and commitment; preparation for the teaching role; planning of instructional activities; effective presentation skills; professionalism; and performance of students.

- ◆ The committee of peers who will conduct the third-year review for a tenure-track faculty member should be governed by the following considerations, as recommended by the Project Team: the committee should consist of at least three discipline peers whenever possible; the faculty member being reviewed should have input into the composition of the committee; the peer committee should be appointed in the fall semester of the third year; and the process should culminate in a written report to the faculty member and the division head.

- ◆ The Project Team recommends that documentation for a third-year review should, at the faculty member’s option, consist of a portfolio that outlines teaching goals, a reflective statement on teaching and teaching effectiveness, documentation of teaching practices, results of student evaluations, and such other evidence as the faculty member deems appropriate.

- ◆ With respect to student ratings of teaching, the Project Team noted that students can reliably evaluate only those attributes that they directly experience, such as clarity of presentation, teacher preparedness, fairness, availability of instructor, and assessment of learning. The Team also thought that student evaluations should be administered for all courses taught, that the instruments used should be determined by the faculty member’s division or discipline, and that administration procedures should be consistent across campus – ensuring student anonymity and no opportunities for retribution. Additional methods of evaluation could include peer review, classroom assessment techniques, and student learning.

- ◆ In addressing the tenure and promotion process, the Project Team again recommended that a portfolio could be a useful vehicle at the option of the faculty member under review and should include the following types of information: statement of teaching goals and action plan for achieving goals; a reflective statement; documentation of

current teaching practices; results of student evaluations; and other information as determined by the division and/or the faculty member.

Following the formal Project Team presentation, the workshop attendees had the opportunity to participate in breakout sessions to discuss the report and ask questions of team members.

The 2002 Summer Workshop concluded with comments from President Magruder who reviewed the current budget situation and assured the attendees that while the current situation was significant and required the cooperation of everyone, it was not unprecedented. State support has always been cyclical, and tight funding has occurred in the past and will occur in the future. He encouraged the faculty and staff in attendance to keep their focus on the students they are serving and to be kind and understanding with each other in this stressful period.