

Chapter VII: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROJECT

Student Interview Project

Who takes it?

A random sample from the class that is selected by the University Assessment Committee. For the first three years of the program, juniors were selected; for the last two, freshmen were selected.

When is it administered?

At the beginning of the Spring Semester.

How long does it take for the student to complete the interview?

About 20 minutes.

What office administers it?

University Assessment Committee plus additional volunteers from students, faculty, and administrators. Each student interviewee is typically questioned by a pair (one of whom is a student and one of whom is a faculty or administrator).

Who originates the questions?

The University Assessment Committee. .

When are results typically available?

At the end of the summer.

What type of information is sought?

The University Assessment Committee selects questions based on current curricular or co-curricular topics of interest to the university. For example, for this year the information included how the students spent their time, how much writing they did, how many times they discussed significant issues outside of class, experience with different types of computer skills, attendance at on-campus cultural events, non-class reading, knowledge of the honors program, AP and non-AP courses for college credit taken in high school, information on advising, description of the best learning experience in class and out of class, the most challenging academic and social challenges in coming to the university, what the university could do to help, considerations about leaving the university, general satisfaction with the university, knowledge of the assessment program, and finally anything else the student would like to tell us.

From whom are the results available?

From the University Assessment Committee or the Chair of the Interview Project (currently Dr. Ruthie Dare of Math and Computer Science).

Are the results available by division or discipline?

Currently, no. The sample size for the whole freshman class (around a 100) is too small.

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

No.

Interview Project Report

Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment

Executive Summary

During the Spring Semester of 1997, the Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment, assisted by additional faculty, staff, administrators, and students conducted an interview project for the fifth consecutive year. This year was the second consecutive year the interview project assessors interviewed second semester freshmen. A computer-generated random sample of 133 second semester freshmen were invited to be interviewed. An additional 20 students who participated in the Fall 1996 College Success Workshop were also invited as were 15 additional students who were part of the extended Freshman Week classes; five students from each of the three extended Freshman Week courses were invited. A total of 105 students completed the interview process which occurred in February and early March 1997. Sixty-two percent were female; thirty-two percent were male. Approximately 27 percent of the students interviewed participated in extended Freshman Week courses and 18 percent were College Success Workshop participants.

Consistent with the last four years, each student was interviewed by a faculty-student, staff-student, or administrator-student pair. Each interviewer independently coded the student's responses and compared coding decisions. If discrepancies arose, the two interviewers arrived at consensus or referred the decision to the committee. Note that in the reporting of responses, where percentages are given, they have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Summary of Question One:

Describe the specific assignment or classroom experience that has been your best learning experience so far at Truman. Why?

The most common response for this question, given by 36 percent of the students, was an assignment involving a written paper. Practicum/lab experiences were mentioned by 10 percent of the students, followed by presentations (9%) and projects (8%). Approximately 2 percent of the students gave no response to this question. The remaining 36 percent gave a variety of other learning experiences. Most of these experiences occurred in general education courses (73%). Approximately 18 percent occurred in major courses, four percent occurred in courses pertaining to an elective, and the remaining 6 percent was evenly split between minor courses and no response being given.

Fifty-nine percent indicated that their best learning experience/assignment was an individual assignment. Thirty-two percent indicated it occurred in a group setting and 9 percent gave no response as to whether it was a group or individual assignment.

Many reasons were given as to why the assignment/experience was their best so far. Seventeen percent gave skill development as the reason. Fifteen percent said it was their best because it was challenging. Other responses were real world relevance (12%); personal development and building

self-confidence (11%); the chance to express an opinion (8%); the chance to work with peers (6%); the chance to choose the topic (6%); project magnitude, quality of feedback, and help in future courses each received 3 percent; one student did not give a reason; and the remaining 17 percent gave various other reasons.

Summary of Question Two:

Describe your best out-of-class experience so far at Truman. Why?

Twenty percent of the students indicated Greek life was their best out-of-class experience. Residence hall life was cited by 17 percent. An additional 17 percent cited socializing. Other reasons given included other (non-Greek) campus organizations (11%); competitive athletics (9%); cultural opportunities (5%); Freshman Week and travel (3% each); volunteer work (2%); work on campus, work off campus, and community activities (1 % each). Five percent gave no response. Three percent gave various other responses.

When indicating why they chose the experience they chose as their best out-of-class experience, fifty-three percent said it was due to student-to-student interaction. Other frequently cited responses included the development of interpersonal skills (8%); relevance and application to the real world (5%); developing time management skills (4%); gaining a sense of independence (3%); and developing leadership (1%). Twenty-four percent gave various additional reasons and one percent gave no response.

Summary of Question Three:

Many students find the transition from high school to university life challenging. What has been the most challenging academic adjustment that you have had to make? What could the university do to facilitate this transition?

Thirty-six percent indicated improving study skills was most challenging academic adjustment. Other responses included time management (29%); they were required to know the subject much better (6%); and saying no to social opportunities (1%). Four percent gave no response. Twenty-five percent gave various additional responses.

When identifying the university's role in facilitating the transition, forty-three percent said there was nothing the university should do, rather this was the student's responsibility. Other responses were to provide a study skills class (9%); keep Freshman Week (7%); provide more study areas (3%); provide a clearer expectation from faculty (3%); and provide better access to tutors (1%). Six percent did not respond. Twenty-nine percent gave various additional responses.

Summary of Question Four:

What has been the most challenging social adjustment that you have had to make? What could the university do to facilitate this transition?

The most prevalent response was getting to know people (26%). Other responses included sharing a room with another person (17%); living in a residence hall (11%); homesickness and leaving home (9%); living in a small town (8%); pledging a fraternity/sorority (2%); and peer pressure (1%). Six percent gave no response. Twenty-one percent gave various additional responses.

Many students (38%) felt the university should have no significant role here. Other responses included self-responsibility (14%); keep Freshman Week (13%); more entertainment opportunities (2%); have an extended Freshman Week (2%); enhance counseling support services (1%); and the Recreation Center (1%). Twenty-nine percent gave various additional responses. Eleven percent gave no response.

Summary of Question Five:

Have you ever seriously considered leaving the university? If so, why and why did you stay? If not, how satisfied are you with your experience?

Thirty-five percent said they had considered leaving. Sixty-five percent said they had never considered leaving.

Those who considered leaving gave many reasons why they stayed: friends (15%); parents (11%); boyfriend/girlfriend (9%); town (6%); cost (6%); faculty member (4%). Four percent did not respond. Forty-six percent gave various additional responses.

They stayed because of friends (25%); parents (10%); sorority/fraternity (10%); perseverance (5%); faculty (3%); smaller classes (2%); and campus activities (3%). Forty percent gave various additional responses. Five percent did not respond.

Of those who had never considered leaving, sixty-six percent were very satisfied with their experience here. Thirty-two percent were somewhat satisfied. The remaining 2 percent were evenly split between being neutral and giving no response.

Summary of Question Six:

How much do you know about why the university assesses student learning? Which of the following assessments are you aware of? What would you like to know about the university's assessment program?

Forty-eight percent responded that they did not know much about why the university assesses student learning. Thirty-two percent reported that they knew some about this. Fourteen percent said they knew nothing about why assessment is done. Six percent indicated they knew a lot about why assessment occurs.

Ninety-seven percent were aware of freshman testing; three percent were not. Seventy percent were aware of surveys; thirty percent were not. Seventy-seven percent were aware of sophomore/junior testing; twenty-three percent were not. Ninety-three percent were aware of the sophomore writing experience; seven percent were not. Eighty-one percent were aware of the interview project; nineteen percent were not. Seventeen percent were aware of capstone courses;

eighty-three percent were not. Thirty-eight percent were aware of the senior exam in the major; sixty-two percent were not. Ninety-one percent were aware of portfolios; nine percent were not.

Many varied responses were given when asked what they would like to know about the assessment program. Many asked about specific assessment instruments currently unknown to them. See the corresponding data on page 45 for these responses.

Summary of Question Seven:

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

The students commented on many diverse topics. Many indicated extreme satisfaction with their first year as Truman community members. Several others chose not to comment. Some commented on scholarships; residence hall room size, noise, heating/cooling systems, and living in such close proximity with others; scheduling issues; crosswalk safety; Freshman Week and the extended Freshman Week sections; delaying rush for freshmen; advising issues; SUB meal transfer hours; Recreation Center; food quality; increased accessibility for computer labs; timing of Freshman testing; student advisors; portfolios; specific professors; IB credit; meal plans; back-to-back classes in Ophelia and Barnett; student activities; admissions office; perceived "red tape" in adding a class; Division Day; specific courses; and the need for classes on computer technology.

1997 Freshman Interview Time Questionnaire

A component of the interview period was a set of several additional questions administered to the students in an anonymous questionnaire format, prior to their interview. The questions dealt with how students used their time in the past 24 hours. This was done last year as well; however, the committee members decided to significantly expand the number of questions asked this year. All interviews occurred on a Thursday during the middle of the day; thus, all responses reflect time allocation for mid-Wednesday to mid-Thursday. The interviews began on February 13 and continued the following six weeks, with the obvious exception of the week occurring during midterm break. A few students noted that the time allocation they were reporting was not typical since they were working on midterm exams.

Summary of pre-interview question One:

*Approximately how much time did you spend in the last 24 hours on each of the following?
Classes, studying, sleeping socializing, organized co-curricular/extra-curricular activities*

Students report spending an average of 4 hours, during the 24 hour period, in class. The maximum response was 9 hours and the minimum was 50 minutes. They spent an average of 4 hours studying, with the maximum response being 13 hours. Some students reported that no studying occurred in the past 24 hours. They slept an average of 7 hours; the maximum and minimum time responses were 12 and 2, respectively. They socialized an average of 4 hours with 13 and 0 being the respective maximum and minimum time responses. Organized co-curricular/extra-curricular activities took an average of 1 hour with the maximum and minimum time responses being 6 and 0, respectively.

Summary of pre-interview question Two:

*Please list your most time-consuming co-curricular/extra curricular activity last semester.
Which co-curricular/extra-curricular activities and organizations have you been involved in?*

Here, responses varied drastically and included none, organized sports, fraternity/sorority activities, and other campus organization's activities. See the corresponding data table on page 65 in Volume III for exact responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Three:

*In the last week, how much time did you spend on each of the following?
Working on campus, working off campus*

When asked how much time was spent working both on and off campus, their response for both on and off campus work was an average of half an hour. Most students reported that they did not work beyond their academic duties.

Summary of pre-interview question Four:

Did you take Eng 100 (Comp I)?

Over half the students (62%) reported taking the course; thirty-seven percent reported they had not taken it; one percent did not respond.

About how many writing assignments (other than Comp I) did you do last semester?

Five percent completed no writing assignments last semester. Nine percent completed one or two writing assignments. Twenty-three percent reported completing three or four writing assignments. An additional twenty-three percent reported completing five or six writing assignments. Thirty-five percent reported completing seven or more writing assignments. Six percent did not respond.

Summary of pre-interview question Five:

In the last week, how often did you discuss issues of social, cultural, or academic significance with others outside of class?

Sixty-five percent reported they did this several times. Twenty-three percent said they did it twice. Seven percent said they had a discussion of this type once and six percent reported having no such conversation.

If you did, what was the topic of discussion and where were you?

The responses here were extremely varied. The conversation topics ranged from course work to university procedures, religion, cloning, aids, the O.J. Simpson case, politics, racial issues, sorority involvement, future life goals, professors, abortion, friends' personality traits, media and society, social life, partying, and literature. See the corresponding data table on page 76 in Volume III for exact responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Six:

Do you have or plan to have more than one major?

Fifteen percent responded yes, eighty-three percent responded no, and 2 percent gave a non-yes/no answer.

Summary of pre-interview question Seven:

Are you satisfied with your Spring course schedule? If not, why?

Eighty-four percent said they were satisfied. Thirteen percent reported they were not satisfied. Two percent answered both yes and no. One percent did not respond. Those students unsatisfied with their schedule were asked to indicate why. Responses included finding desired classes already closed, frustration with the registration process, disliking night classes, having to take core classes

rather than classes in the major, and professor dissatisfaction. See the corresponding data table for exact responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Eight:

Describe your experience with each of the following: spreadsheets, word processing, databases, e-mail, world wide web, and computerized library resources (other than the card catalog).

The response categories describing experience levels were *no experience, experienced, and proficient*. Fifty percent of the students said they had no experience with spreadsheets; forty-four percent said they were experienced with spreadsheets; seven percent said they were proficient with spreadsheets. Almost all the students reported being either experienced or proficient with word processing. Over half the students reported having no experience with databases but being experienced with e-mail and the world wide web. Approximately forty percent of the students reported no experience with computerized library resources.

Specific results follow. Two percent said they had no experience with word processing; fifty-one percent were experienced with word processing; forty-seven percent said they were proficient with word processing tasks. Fifty-three percent reported no experiences with databases; thirty-nine percent were experienced; and eight percent were proficient with databases. Concerning e-mail, four percent said they had no experience; fifty-three percent said they were experienced; and forty-three percent said they were proficient with e-mail. The world wide web had thirteen percent no experience responses; sixty-two percent with experience; and twenty-four percent of the students reported web proficiency. Only 8 percent reported being proficient with computerized library resources; fifty-one percent said they were experienced; and forty-one percent of the students reported no experience with computerized library resources.

Summary of pre-interview question Nine:

Have you attended an on-campus cultural event such as the ones listed below? If so, indicate how many. Plays, concerts, forums/conferences/symposia, lectures, residence hall, art exhibits, lyceum

Ninety-three percent of the students said they had attended such an event. Seven percent said they had not. The most cited category was the concert category with twenty-four percent. Sixteen percent had attended plays. Fourteen percent had gone to art exhibits. Another fourteen percent had attended lectures. Thirteen percent had attended residence hall sponsored events. Ten percent had attended a lyceum event. Five percent had gone to a forum, conference or symposium. Four percent specified various other cultural events. See the corresponding data table on page 84 in Volume III for specific responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Ten:

How many hours per week, on average last semester, were you able to read for pleasure? Provide an example.

The students reported spending an average of 2 hours a week reading for pleasure. The maximum number of hours reported was 12, the minimum was zero. They gave many different examples of their pleasure reading including popular magazines, newspapers, and both classic and modern books. See the corresponding data table on page 80 for the exact responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Eleven:

Do you know about Truman's Honors program?

Only a third of the students knew about the Honors program. The remaining two-thirds did not.

Summary of pre-interview question Twelve:

Did you take any AP(Advanced Placement) courses? If so, did you receive college credit for these courses?

Forty-nine percent said they had taken AP courses. Fifty-one percent said they had not. One student left the question blank. If an AP course had been taken the students were asked if they received college credit for the course(s). Thirty-eight percent said they did receive college credit for these courses. Sixteen percent had taken AP courses but not received credit for them. One student did not respond. The question did not apply to forty-five percent of the students.

Other than AP, did you take any courses at your high school where you received both high school and college credit? If so, how many hours? How did these courses compare with courses at Truman?

Forty-eight percent responded yes. Fifty-one responded no. Two students did not respond. Those students responding yes were asked to indicate the number of hours for which they had received credit. The average number of credit hours received per yes response was 12 hours. They were then asked to describe how these courses compare with courses at Truman. Some said they were easier, some harder, and some said they were comparable. See the corresponding data table on page 92 in Volume III for their responses.

Have you completed any related/more advanced courses at Truman? If so, do you think you were adequately prepared for this more advanced class?

Almost a third of the students said they had, a short two-thirds said they had not. Approximately 7 percent did not answer the question. Approximately a fourth of the students said they did feel adequately prepared for the more advanced class. A little over two-thirds said the question did not apply. Six percent said they did not feel adequately prepared for the advanced class.

Other than AP, did you take any courses on a college campus where you received both high school and college credit? If so, how many hours? How did they compare with your courses at Truman?

Almost five percent said they had. Ninety percent said they had not. Almost six percent did not respond. The average number of hours per yes response was almost six and a half hours. When comparing the courses, the responses varied from the courses being easier, harder, and about the same. See the corresponding data table, page 93 in Volume III for exact responses.

Summary of pre-interview question Thirteen:

Are you getting the advising help you need?

Eighty-three percent said they were getting appropriate advising assistance. Seventeen percent said they were not.

Who has been your main source of academic advice?

A third of the students reported that other students were their main source of academic advice. Twenty-eight percent said they got most of their academic advice from academic planning advisors. Other sources included student advisors (SAs) (15%), faculty members (8%), and parents (8%). The remaining five percent specified various additional main sources for academic advice.

What has been your main source of personal advice?

The students' main source of personal advice was overwhelmingly their friends (71%). Nineteen percent got this advice from parents. Other responses included student advisors (4%) and academic planning advisors (2%). Approximately three percent of the students used other sources.

What types of information have you sought?

The two most popular responses were information involving the curriculum (22%) and course problems (20%). Other responses included career information (17%), personal/social information (13%), information about finances (11%), university procedures (11%), and study skills (5%).