

Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

Assessment is an important part of the culture of academia. Assessments can tell an institution how well their students are performing, whether learning outcomes are being met, how satisfied or dissatisfied community members are, why students are successful or unsuccessful, and much more. In this regard, assessment instruments are reliable tools that are catalysts for improvement and can be used to measure progress toward an institution's goals. Nationwide, assessment is increasingly becoming an essential aspect of accreditation processes and demonstrations of accountability to outside stakeholders.

Truman State University is a firm believer in the power of assessment. For thirty years now, Truman has implemented several different instruments in successful efforts to refine and improve our curriculum, campus environment, and student learning. We use methods such as tests, surveys of current and former students, interviews, and portfolios of student work to view the University from different perspectives. Often the use of several instruments can make up for the limitations of one and Truman practices this use of "multiple measures" to obtain more accurate pictures of the campus.

There are several purposes to assessment at Truman:

1. Improving student learning
2. Improving the campus environment, including satisfaction levels
3. Ensuring the integrity of the degree
4. Demonstrating accountability

Each of these purposes is an ongoing endeavor. Moreover, these purposes involve all members of the campus community. Chief among the proponents of assessment on campus is the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). The VPAA heads a committee with representation from the student body, the faculty, staff, and administration. This Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment is split into two groups, the larger of which is the Design and Implementation Group and the other is called the Analysis and Reporting Group. (For more information on the assessment committees, please read the "Future Directions" chapter in Volume II of this *Almanac*.) Assessment reports are shared through this *Almanac*, online at the assessment website, at two annual campus-wide conferences (the January Conference and summer Master Plan and Assessment Workshop), at weekly faculty luncheons, through division meetings and consultations, and many other venues.

The *Assessment Almanac*'s first issue was a three-volume set in Fall 1997. Since then, the *Almanac* has been published annually in paper form and online. **Volume I** gives a broad overview of assessment at Truman, how it started, and how it has progressed. This volume also includes a brief overview of the different assessment instruments used at the University. **Volume II** contains current results of Truman's assessment instruments; each chapter is devoted to a different instrument. To accommodate how the third volume has been used in the past, this year, **Volume III** will only be printed online. Volume III contains aggregate data and frequency

distributions for many of Truman's surveys. Visit <http://www.truman.edu/pages/160.asp> to view current and past issues of the *Almanac*.

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Visit the University assessment website at <http://www.truman.edu/pages/150.asp>.