

Chapter VIII: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROJECT

Student Interview Project

Who takes it?

A random sample from the class that is selected by the University Assessment Committee. Juniors were selected from 1992-93 to 1994-95 and from 1997-98 to 1999-2000. Freshmen were interviewed from 1995-96, 1996-97, and 2000-01.

When is it administered?

At the beginning of the Spring Semester.

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

About 30 minutes.

What office administers it?

The University Assessment Committee plus additional volunteers from students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Each student interviewee is typically questioned by a pair (one of whom is a student and one of whom is a faculty member 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, in 2000 we were interested in answering questions about students' reading practices and their experiences with diversity while attending Truman. In 2001, we focused on retention.

From whom are the results available?

From the University Assessment Committee or the Chair of the Interview Project (currently Dr. David Gillette from the Division of Social Science).

Are the results available by division or discipline?

No. The sample size for the group interviewed (around 100) is too small.

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?

No.

INTERVIEW PROJECT REPORT 2001
VICE PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2001 Spring Semester, the Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment, assisted by members of the Truman State University community, including faculty, staff, and students, conducted the ninth annual interview project. Of the 175 randomly drawn first year students, 160 had valid addresses and telephone numbers, of which 100 students were interviewed, for a response rate of sixty-three percent. They entered Truman with an average ACT score of 27, were carrying 14 credit hours, and had a cumulative high school GPA of 3.8 on a 4-point scale. Their fall, spring, and cumulative GPAs were 3.04, 3.28, and 3.22, respectively. Sixty-two percent of those interviewed were female.

Each student was interviewed by a faculty-student interview team. Each interviewer took notes on the student's responses. Immediately following the interview both interviewers compared notes and arrived at a consensus regarding the accuracy and completeness of the notes they had taken. The interviewers notes were coded by the chair of the interview project and his assistants. Forty-three faculty, three administrators and staff who serve on the Assessment Committee, and twenty-eight students participated in this year's interview project.

One component of the interview project consisted of 10 questions administered in a written format, prior to the oral interview. All interviews were completed prior to Spring Break 2001 primarily on Thursdays between the hours of 11 AM and 2 PM; students unable to come in on Thursdays were interviewed Monday evenings.

Note that the convention followed throughout this report is to round percentages to the nearest whole number.

ORAL SURVEY RESPONSES

Summary of Question 1:

a) As you were searching for a university to attend, what goals did you have for a college education?

Eleven different categories arose: academics/quality of education (39%); preparation for graduate school/career (37%); programs/majors offered (32%); school size (31%); reputation (31%); financial/affordability (19%); class size/faculty attention (18%); location/distance from home (17%); social life/meet people (12%); LAS/LSP/well-rounded activities (9%); and scholarships (2%). In order of frequency, specific programs mentioned were the Masters of Education, Business and Accountancy, Biology, Math and Computer Science, Spanish, Nursing, and history.

b) Have those goals changed at all as a result of your college experience so far? Explain.

Seventy-seven percent of the students surveyed indicated that their goals had not changed as a result of their experience in college thus far. Of those indicating a change of goals, fourteen percent had changed their major, four percent desired more social involvement, three percent wanted more academic involvement, and two percent mentioned new experiences.

Summary of Question 2:

How has Truman lived up to your expectations and how has Truman let you down?

In describing how Truman lived up to their expectations, thirty-one percent mentioned professorial quality/availability. Other categories mentioned were quality of education and reputation (28%); sufficiently challenging (27%); residence hall/campus environment (19%); small class size (14%); and sufficient activities (10%).

In describing how Truman let them down, eleven percent indicated that it was harder/more difficult than expected and ten percent mentioned insufficient social outlets. Other categories mentioned were faculty not living up to expectations (7%); campus environment (6%); Kirksville (5%); scholarship renewal requirements (5%); academic program frustrations (5%); don't like LSP requirements (4%); too easy (4%); campus communications (3%); lack of diversity (2%); and registration process (2%).

Summary of Question 3:

What aspects/features of Truman would you tell friends and family about back home?

Of the features students talked about, forty-seven percent mentioned some aspect of faculty quality and/or availability. Thirty percent indicated Truman's quality of education and good academic reputation. Other features pointed out were friendly people (26%); small class size (24%); campus activities (23%); pretty campus (23%); dorm atmosphere (21%); small campus/good size (14%); university facilities (11%); Kirksville small (6%); Kirksville good (5%); financial/affordability (5%); good students (5%); and don't like Kirksville/bored socially (2%).

Summary of Question 4:

Please tell us about your experience with coursework here at Truman.

a) What have been your most rewarding learning experiences so far?

In responding to this question, many students mentioned specific courses in disciplines across campus: Language and Literature (28%), Math or Science (20%), Social Science (16%), and Fine Arts (4%). Other rewarding experiences included an enthusiastic faculty member (22%); a challenging course (16%); interpersonal relationships/living away from home with other people (9%); lab work (8%); opening up to new ideas (7%); freshman week (6%); group projects (5%); activities and social events (5%); class discussion (5%); writing experience (4%); and applying course work to hands-on practical experience (2%).

b) What have been your most frustrating learning experiences so far?

In responding to this question, students again mentioned specific courses across campus: Math or Science (29%), Language and Literature (18%), Social Science (4%), and Fine Arts (1%). Other experiences included too much work/time management or study skills concerns (32%); professor shortcomings, including: unclear expectations, delivery style, boring, belittling, sexist (19%); class too difficult (19%); LSP/Core classes undesired (12%); grade disappointment (11%); class too easy (3%); and foreign language placement (3%).

Summary of Question 5:

a) If in the written questions you indicated joining any campus organizations, how did you find out about them?

Fifty-seven percent indicated that they had heard about the organization from other people (e.g., SAs, hall meetings). Others mentioned email/mailings (18%); activities fair (15%); posters (15%); sidewalk chalkings (13%); freshman week (5%); and web site (2%).

b) What role did Freshman Week play in making you aware of campus organizations?

Forty-nine percent indicated that Freshman Week played no role in making them aware of campus organizations. Thirty-five percent indicated that there was some mention of organizations. Eleven percent mentioned non-Freshman Week organizations. Eight percent indicated that Freshman Week was a major influence.

c) What role should it play?

Forty-one percent indicated that it should provide a brief overview of campus organizations. Twenty-nine percent thought it should emphasize adjustment into the campus and community. Twenty-one percent suggested the role should stay the same. Six percent suggested having the Activities Fair during Freshman Week. Three percent indicated that it should emphasize preparation for course work.

Summary of Question 6:

a) Please describe your experience with residence hall programming.

Of those surveyed, forty-seven percent indicated some experience, forty percent indicated no experience, and seven percent indicated many experiences.

b) Do you know who sponsored the event, RCP (Residential College Program) or Residential Living?

Fifty percent indicated that they did not know who sponsored the events they took part in. Others identified the residential colleges (12%); SAs (10%); residential life (8%); on an advisor (6%). Fourteen percent did not respond to the question due to a lack of experience.

c) Why did you attend these programs or why did you chose not to?

Of those who indicated attending a program, twenty-four percent mentioned social interaction as a reason for attending. Other reasons included personal interest (21%); mandatory (13%); location (in house) (4%); and as a personal favor (3%).

Of those who did not attend a program, fifty-three percent indicated that it was because they were too busy or had a conflict. Other reasons for not attending included no interest (26%) and no knowledge about the event (15%).

d) What additional programming should be offered?

Sixty-six percent had no suggestions for additional programming. Suggestions offered included entertainment/socials (18%); academic programs (10%); group discussions or forums (4%); multi-cultural events (4%); and student generated ideas (3%).

Summary of Question 7:

If you have a Truman scholarship, what role does its continuation play in your staying at Truman?

Thirty-nine percent indicated that the continuation of their scholarship plays a major role in their staying at Truman. Thirty-seven percent indicated that it would have an impact, but would not cause them to leave. Fifteen percent mentioned that the scholarship played a role in their deciding to come to Truman. Thirteen percent indicated they did not have a university scholarship. Ten percent indicated that the continuation of the scholarship played some role.

Summary of Question 8:

a) What are your perceptions of the Kirksville community?

Forty-eight percent indicated they thought Kirksville was small. Other perceptions included boring/nothing to do (25%); nice, like the small town feel (19%); just like home (18%); friendly (9%); intolerant of college students (3%); and lack of diversity (2%).

b) Do you like the size?

Forty-eight percent indicated that they liked the size of Kirksville, twenty-seven percent stated that it was okay, and twenty-three percent indicated that they did not like the size.

c) Do you feel safe?

Ninety-eight percent of those surveyed indicated that they felt safe in Kirksville. One percent indicated they felt relatively safe and another one percent mentioned they felt safe sometimes.

d) Is the community friendly and welcoming?

Sixty-five percent indicated yes, twenty percent indicated mostly, and seven percent indicated no. Seven percent of those surveyed indicated they had had no interaction with the community.

e) What would you change about the community if you could? (Provide specific suggestions.)

Ten different categories arose: more movies/entertainment (44%); more businesses (28%); a mall (17%); nothing/don't know (9%); more restaurants (7%); more campus/community interaction (6%); needs to be cleaner (5%); greater diversity (4%); better housing (3%); and nicer people (3%). From the more entertainment category, specific suggestions included: ice skating, mini golf, a dance club, a zoo, a concert hall, a Circus, a symphony, pool tables, roller skating & pool without smoke.

Summary of Question 9:

a) Who was/were the first person(s) who made you feel comfortable at the University?

Nine categories arose: SA (32%); Freshman Week teacher/class (30%); previous friends or siblings (22%); roommates/suitemates (20%); dorm residents (18%); professor, staff, or coach (17%); student ambassador/admissions (8%); new friends (7%); and organizations/clubs (4%).

b) When/where did it occur?

Eighty-four percent indicated that it occurred during the first week, twelve percent mentioned it occurred during high school or before coming, and six percent indicated it occurred during their first semester at Truman.

Summary of Question 10:

a) How satisfied are you with your experience?

Forty-seven percent stated they were very satisfied with their experience, twenty-three percent stated they were satisfied, thirty percent indicated they were somewhat satisfied, and three percent stated they were socially unsatisfied.

b) Have you ever seriously considered leaving the University?

Sixty percent indicated that they had never seriously considered leaving the University; forty percent indicated they had. The reasons given were as follows: academic major (11%); distance from home/missing old friends (6%); social (5%); grades, scholarship, financial concerns (5%); and town too small (4%). Seven percent indicated that they were transferring.

c) If yes, why did you decide to stay?

Seven reasons arose: academics/programs (13%); money (8%); friends/relatives (5%); likes it here (5%); size (3%); school reputation (2%); and organizations (2%). Thirteen percent indicated they either were transferring for sure, or were still considering it at the time of the interview.

Written Survey Responses

Summary of Question 1:

Indicate the degree to which each of the following attributes influenced your decision to attend Truman State University:

Students were asked to circle the appropriate answer on the following scale:

- didn't know about it (received no numerical score),
- negative role (1), minor negative role (2), played no role (3),
- minor positive role (4), positive role(5).

Numbers were assigned later during the scoring process, thus a "3" should be interpreted as a neutral influence. Scores less than three represent negative influences; scores above three represent positive influences. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of students not knowing about that particular attribute.

<i>professor accessibility</i> (12).....	4.2
<i>academic reputation</i> (0).....	4.9
<i>affordability</i> (0).....	4.7
<i>assessment culture</i> (24).....	3.2
<i>caliber of student</i> (7).....	4.3
<i>student diversity</i> (11).....	3.0

<i>tutoring availability</i> (31).....	3.5
<i>caliber of faculty</i> (9).....	4.1
<i>campus organizations</i> (2).....	4.0
<i>parental pressure</i> (0).....	3.5
<i>male/female student ratio</i> (10).....	3.2
<i>flexibility for pursuing diverse majors</i> (6).....	3.8
<i>merit-based scholarship program</i> (5).....	4.1
<i>financial aid opportunities</i> (1).....	4.1
<i>small class sizes</i> (0).....	4.8
<i>undergraduate research opportunities</i> (21).....	3.7
<i>success of the Truman graduate (placement rate and graduate opportunities)</i> (19).....	4.4
<i>study abroad or internship opportunities</i> (8).....	3.9
<i>campus activities</i> (8).....	3.7
<i>major degree program</i> (9).....	4.3
<i>liberal arts and sciences core</i> (7).....	3.7
<i>athletic programs</i> (1).....	3.3
<i>campus buildings/facilities</i> (7).....	3.9
<i>academic facilities (labs, computing labs, studios, etc.)</i> (6).....	4.0
<i>residence hall facilities</i> (2).....	3.8
<i>campus safety</i> (12).....	3.9
<i>library & library resources</i> (9).....	4.0
<i>greek organizations</i> (6).....	3.3
<i>social life</i> (12).....	3.6
<i>Residential College Program</i> (42).....	3.3
<i>Kirksville (small town) community</i> (0).....	2.7

Summary of Question 2:

Indicate the degree to which each of the following individuals influenced your decision to attend Truman State University: (Students were asked to circle the appropriate number on the following scale: no role (1), minor role (2), some role (3), major role (4), deciding factor (5).)

<i>siblings</i>	1.75
<i>parents</i>	3.11
<i>significant others</i>	1.43
<i>other family members</i>	1.54
<i>friends</i>	1.97
<i>guidance counselor</i>	1.83
<i>admissions counselor</i>	1.93
<i>Truman students</i>	2.16
<i>Truman web page</i>	1.48

Summary of Question 3:

a) How many campus organizations are you involved with here at Truman?

The maximum number of campus organizations reported was 6, the minimum was zero, and the average was 1.4 organizations.

b) How much time do you commit to each of them?

The average number of hours spent in various organizations was: Recreational/Sports (8.4), Greek (5.4), Religious (3.5), Special Interest (3.4), Service (3.0), Student Government/Political (2.6), Departmental/Professional (2.0), Honorary (1.8), Residential Living (1.3), and Cultural (1.0). The maximum hours for the first four categories were 25, 15, 10, and 10 respectively.

Summary of Question 4:

a) Have you established a group of close friends that you are comfortable with as a support system?

Ninety-seven percent reported that they had established a close group of friends.

b) Where did you find these friends?

Seventy-eight percent indicated finding friends in the dorm, thirty percent in class, twenty-nine percent in organizations, seventeen percent were friends already, and nine percent were found in athletics. Twelve percent fell into an “other” category which included: social activities, rec center, Freshman Week, and off campus activities.

Summary of Question 5:

a) How well does the residential hall experience meet your social needs? (please circle the appropriate response)

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely well), students rated their residential hall experience as meeting their social needs at 3.6.

b) How well does the residential hall experience meet your intellectual/cultural needs? (please circle the appropriate response)

On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely well), students rated their residential hall experience as meeting their intellectual/cultural needs at 3.0.

Summary of Question 6:

Please list any programs or activities offered in the residence halls in which you have participated.

Twenty percent listed a discussion group or forum, seventeen percent indicated attending an entertainment or social event, seventeen percent attended an activity or game, seven percent listed class, four percent listed residence hall governance, and two percent indicated intramurals. Fifty-five percent reported they had no experience.

Summary of Question 7:

How does the level of course difficulty you expected to encounter at Truman compare with your experience during your first semester? (please check the appropriate response)

Students checked the following categories as indicated:

- not at all what I expected, much easier (2%)
- a little easier than I expected (13%)
- about what I expected (39%)
- a little harder than I expected (37%)
- not at all what I expected, much harder (8%).

Summary of Question 8:

How satisfied are you with your current social life?

Students checked the following categories as indicated:

- not at all satisfied, I'd like to be a lot busier than I am (1%)
- somewhat satisfied, I'd like to be a little busier than I am (31%)
- very satisfied, I'm as busy as I'd like to be (45%)
- somewhat satisfied, I'm a little busier than I'd like to be (18%)
- not at all satisfied, I'm a lot busier than I'd like to be (2%).

Summary of Question 9:

How satisfied are you with your involvement in campus activities?

Students checked the following categories as indicated:

- not at all what I expected, much less (7%)
- a little less than I expected (36%)
- about what I expected (48%)
- a little more than I expected (6%)

not at all what I expected, much more (0%).

Summary of Question 10:

a) Are you getting the advising help you need?

Of the ninety-six students who responded to this question, eighty-nine percent indicated yes.

b) Who has been your main source of academic advice? (Check only one.)

Students checked the following categories as indicated: student advisor (9%), faculty member (16%), residential college advisor (43%), business advisor (4%), students (23%), tutors (0%), parents (7%), other (5%); specify: items mentioned here included self, sibling, academic advisor, and friends.

c) Who has been your main source of personal advice? (Check only one.)

Students checked the following categories as indicated: student advisor (3%), faculty member (0%), residential college advisor (1%), business advisor (0%), friends (80%), parents (16%), university staff member (0%), other (4%); specify: items mentioned here included family friends, ISO advisors, and siblings.