

Chapter XV: YEAR-END UPDATE

The Assessment committee's priorities for academic year 2009-2010 focused on understanding how student moods and emotions impacted learning. The concern originated both from national trends suggesting that mental health of students is a significant concern, and partly in data from the Truman Student Interview project which showed moods and emotions as a negative issue in student quality of life. The assessment committee reviewed internal evidence from the interview project, as well as evidence from University Counseling Services, GSQ, CSXQ. External evidence from the National Survey of Counseling Center Directors and NSSE was also considered. After investigating commercially available surveys, it was decided to make this a continued focus of the Student Interview project. In 2011, the interview project will primarily focus on student stress, and how Truman can maintain challenge while helping student avoid and cope with unproductive or overwhelming stress.

Assessment of advising was also a priority for both AY 2009 and 2010. Again, the first step was to review existing data, which show mixed opinions about the quality of advising. The assessment committee recommended that a university-wide instrument be made available, which advisors could give to advisees. As the Deans were also creating a similar instrument, the assessment committee moved other projects to a higher priority until the results of their efforts were available.

In early summer 2010, Truman State University applied to become part of the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, coordinated by the Center for Inquiry at Wabash College. Thirty institutions will collaborate in the study, which is designed to strengthen the achievement of student outcomes through effective use assessment. As part of participation, representatives from the assessment committee attended a kickoff weekend in September 2010. Another team of students and faculty also attended a workshop in November designed to increase the level of student participation in making meaning of assessment data.

Our institutional project for the study will focus on the links between transformative experiences and the desired characteristics of graduates identified in the 2008-2010 strategic plan. Three characteristics appeared to have the best potential for evidence-driven decision-making, including those that state Truman graduates will

- Demonstrate courageous, visionary, and service-oriented leadership;
- Understand and articulate well-reasoned arguments;
- Live emotionally and physically healthy lives

To understand these links, we will primarily consider data we already collect. The goal is to determine how we might structure opportunities for these transformative experiences and thereby foster increased attainment of those desired characteristics. The Missouri Department of Higher Education has also recently asked for data collection on high-impact educational experiences. Our focus on transformative experiences meshes well with this interest.

One significant change to university-wide assessments was the suspension of junior testing, starting in Fall 2010. Though the junior tests had been a long-standing part of the assessment program, there was little evidence that they continued to be used for curricular improvement. Other university-level assessments continued as before, including administration of the CIRP,

CLA , interview project, senior tests, LAS portfolio, Graduating Senior questionnaire, alumni survey. Discipline-level is primarily conducted at the department level, and is typically collated as part of program reviews. . The College Portrait for Truman as part of the Voluntary System of Accountability continued under the direction of Dr. Martin Eisenberg, Associate Provost. Similarly, we began participation in the President's Alliance for Excellence in Student Learning and Accountability, and organization designed to promote assessment of student outcomes, and better dissemination of results.

As in previous years, the University Conference in February and the Strategic Planning and Assessment Workshop on August 18 and 19 provided opportunities to examine and discuss assessment data. The University conference was held February 18, and centered on the following themes

- 1)Creating Coherence in the Truman Experience;
- 2) Developing Excellence in Transformative Learning in the Truman Experience;
- 3) Building a Sense of Belonging as a Part of the Truman Experience; and,
- 4) Developing Higher Order Thinking Skills as Part of the Truman Experience

Drs. Jeffrey Vittengl and Elaine McDuff served on a panel discussing the 2009 interview results. The University Conference also included breakout sessions such as: *What Our Research Data Tell Us About Transformative Learning Experiences* – facilitated by Scott Alberts and *Co-Curriculum Tools to a Build a Coherent Truman Experience* – facilitated by Lou Ann Gilchrist. The Strategic Planning and Assessment Workshop included review of core values. There was also a summary of portfolio and interview project data, and an overview of other assessment data.

Several students were instrumental in contributing to this assessment almanac and to the functioning of the Assessment Committee. Allyssa Dummerth served as recording secretary of the committee in Fall 2010. Students working with the Student Interview Project ran focus groups to prepare the list of students stressors for the spring. Dylan Salata, Michael McIntire, Keith Bartels, and Dwuana Bradley served as focus group facilitators while Adam Speak and Zak Palmer served as recorders. The spring 2011 interview project team is co- led by Susan Leshner and Molly Beuke . It also includes Kiera Hulsey, Katherine Olsen-Flaate, Ashley Tucker, and Rachael Kisse. Jordan Stevens co-authored the portfolio chapter.

Finally, there are three important changes to the Assessment Almanac itself this year. First, as the "History of Assessment at Truman" is updated infrequently, it was not republished as part of this year's volumes. Information on the history and structure of Truman's assessment program is available in the 2009 almanac. Second, a discipline assessment spotlight has replaced a chapter on the organization of the capstone experience. Information on capstone experiences is available in the university course catalog. The discipline assessment spotlight may provide useful examples of "best practice" in program-level assessment. Finally, information about student affairs assessment was notably absent from several of the prior almanacs. Therefore, a chapter summarizing the information most directly related to student learning was included this year.