

Chapter XVIII: YEAR-END UPDATE 2003

Last year we described the evolution of Truman's assessment program as the pursuit of five major initiatives: 1) program refinement to address university core learning outcomes including a cyclical review of the various elements/instruments that make up the assessment program; 2) universal discipline-based assessment plans and evidence of their use for enhancing student learning; 3) refinement of our current institutional effectiveness assessment plan for campus environment and campus services with an increased focus on learning outcomes identified in the mission statement, integrating effectiveness measures efficiently with discipline-level assessment plans; 4) enhanced student motivation and participation in the assessment program; and 5) providing meaningful analysis of assessment data that is timely, focused, and communicates effectively to the University community. Our progress during 2003 on each of these initiatives will now be described.

Initiative 1: Assessing University Core Learning Outcomes

The CIRP, CSEQ, GSQ, and NSSE surveys have all been mapped to university core learning outcomes. The university-wide LAS Portfolio, Academic Profile, and CAAP exams have been mapped to university core learning outcomes as well. The Undergraduate Council is currently evaluating the LSP Modes of Inquiry outcomes based on this mapping. The Writing Assessment committee currently has a proposal for a new writing assessment being considered by the Undergraduate Council; the proposal involves evaluating writing the students have previously created, using existing assessment tools (such as the LAS Portfolio) to streamline writing assessment procedures, and assessing the reliability of writing assessment tools and data accuracy using multiple measures.

Truman and 15 other Missouri institutions are participating in an exam sponsored by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE); this exam is a general education/higher order thinking skills test. Work toward locating an appropriate exam for critical thinking has been halted pending the outcome of our participation in the CBHE exam. Our on-going search for a suitable computing literacy assessment has culminated in a recommendation that Truman purchase a commercially developed computing literacy assessment instrument that also provides numerous on-line learning modules for students, faculty, and staff. Investigation is on-going regarding the feasibility of such a purchase given current budget constraints.

Initiative 2: Universal Discipline-based Assessment Plans

Several workshops for assessment in the disciplines have been presented, including presentations at the January Conference and the Summer Master Plan and Assessment Workshop, tailored to faculty in disciplines preparing a Five-Year Review to be submitted Fall 2003. A discipline-based assessment website is currently under

construction; knowledge, skills, and attitudes matrices have been developed and are being integrated into the website. Each discipline will complete its knowledge/skills/attitudes matrix. Faculty members with expertise in assessment to support the development of discipline-based assessment plans have been identified to serve as resources for discipline-based assessment plans. The Graduate Council has been refining outcomes for each graduate program. After outcomes and corresponding matrices are finalized, the Council will develop a Graduate Student Exit Questionnaire so that its fit is maximized with the outcomes.

Initiative 3: Refinement of our Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan

The Assessment Committee is currently reviewing a proposal putting forth 10 university-wide dashboard performance indicators that align nicely with Truman's Master Plan Update. The indicators can be grouped into four subgroups: nationally competitive outcomes; overall Truman experience; recruitment of a diverse, highly qualified student body; and affordability. Also under review by the committee is a larger set of approximately 44 university-wide core performance indicators. These too are closely aligned with Truman's Master Plan Update. They can be grouped into the following four subgroups: nationally competitive outcomes; curriculum, out-of-classroom experiences, and the overall Truman experience; recruitment of a diverse, highly qualified faculty, staff, and student body; and affordability.

In addition to developing the above institutional effectiveness outcomes for the campus environment and services, the committee reviewed the Graduating Student Questionnaire (GSQ). Minor revisions have been made to the GSQ and the GSQ has been placed online; December 2003 graduates had the option of completing the survey online. The committee also began work to identify an instrument that might provide additional insight into student satisfaction. It considered administering the Noel-Levitz student satisfaction survey; however, with current resource constraints and the quantity of data we've already collected on student satisfaction, the final recommendation was to utilize data already available instead of looking to another instrument.

The roles of both the CSEQ and NSSE were reviewed. The committee recommends continuation of the administration of both the CSEQ and NSSE. During the past several years, the committee has been developing a Staff Survey. This survey was administered for the first time in May 2003.

Initiative 4: Enhanced Student Motivation and Participation in Assessment

Student motivation toward the senior tests was assessed by implementing the Post-Assessment Survey. Several findings were noted. Contrary to what was expected, no significant difference arose between students' responses to the effort and importance indicators of the survey. Students placed highest importance on receiving feedback from the senior tests. It was suggested that an additional question be added to the Survey asking how students plan to use the test results. A preliminary content analysis of past

LAS portfolio cover letters with respect to motivation has been completed. Data have been examined from relevant questions on a past Interview Project regarding student assessment motivation.

Several motivation initiatives regarding junior tests were implemented during the Spring 2003 semester. Students were given the opportunity to register for two additional exam timeslots, morning and late afternoon, during the January Conference. Students completing the junior test during one of the January Conference time slots received a coupon for a pizza from Sodexo. Students assigned to take the CAAP exam were required to complete only three of the five sections; previously, students were asked to complete four sections. Students performing well on the junior test receive specific acknowledgement on their transcript, either “distinction” or “high distinction.”

A formal motivation study using the junior tests was begun. Initial findings include the self-reported effort score on the exam being the best predictor of the resulting score. The above motivation strategies generally led to greater effort and higher test scores at statistically significant levels. It is beneficial to include more daytime options for taking the exam; daytime examinees received higher exam scores also at a statistically significant level. Faculty proctors correlated with higher self-reported effort and higher test scores at a statistically significant level.

Several implications result from the junior test study in addition to the obvious ones mentioned above. These include educating faculty about the benefits of the junior test for the students and for the university and about using junior test data for advising and letters of recommendation.

The subcommittee investigating suggestions of the past Motivation subcommittee gave a final report to the Assessment Committee. Some of the recommendations from that final report include sending a letter to incoming students and parents regarding our assessment program; talking about assessment at parent and student welcome events; having an “assessment corner” in *Truman Today*; placing a story in *Truman Review*; explaining the assessment program to student organizations; and providing various incentives for participation in assessment activities.

Initiative 5: Improved Data Analysis

The Analysis and Reporting Group is identifying questions of importance to faculty and students and is beginning to conduct its own analysis of the data. In addition to establishing a process for offering Scholarship of Assessment Grants to individuals on campus interested in conducting assessment studies, the group designed a rubric it then used to evaluate grant proposals. It recommended six proposals be funded. The Analysis Group also helped to identify faculty and staff who can act as assessment resources for those on campus conducting assessment analysis. The group then began to identify research questions for a study of student success and retention; the freshman 2000 cohort of CSEQ and CIRP survey data were used.

The Analysis and Reporting Group made several presentations both on and off campus, including a presentation at Truman's Summer Master Plan and Assessment Workshop, and presentations at the American Association of Higher Education Assessment Forum and the Indianapolis Assessment Institute.

Most recently, a joint project has begun between the Analysis and Reporting Group and the Center for Teaching and Learning to create Assessment Colloquia as a means to disseminate assessment results throughout the campus community. The goal of the colloquia is to close the loop between the assessment data that has been collected and put what we've learned into practice as a means of enhancing student learning.