

Chapter XIX: SCHOLARSHIP OF ASSESSMENT GRANTS

Last year the *Assessment Almanac* chapter on the Assessment Grants reported on the number of approved grant proposals from Summer 2005. This year's chapter includes an update on the 2005 Grants as well as a preview of what the Summer 2006 Grant recipients will finish in December 2006.

UPDATE: Summer 2005 Assessment Grants:

There were two Assessment Grants awarded in 2005 to one Truman faculty, three staff, and two graduate teaching/research assistants. Funded projects were:

1. Assessment of JINS Outcomes: The JINS Effect
2. Promoting Student Success: Development and Assessment of an Effective Intervention System

Results from the two grants were presented at a campus-wide forum, and both final reports were posted online for the campus community to read. The full reports can be viewed online through the assessment website.

At Truman, a JINS (Junior Interdisciplinary Seminar) class is required of all students and serves as a capstone experience in the Liberal Studies Program. The first grant, Assessment of JINS Outcomes, set out to investigate whether taking a JINS course has measurable effects on students' ability to recognize interdisciplinarity. This effect, dubbed "the JINS effect," was studied by conducting surveys of JINS students who read student papers and then answered questions about them. In this investigation, students were split into two groups: one for students who have completed a JINS course and the other for students who were just beginning their JINS course. The researcher hypothesized that the students who have completed a JINS course would be better able to identify and judge interdisciplinarity than those students who have not. After the results were in, the researcher realized that this "JINS effect" is NOT supported by the data. Rather, there was a different, unanticipated, observable effect: students who have completed a JINS course tend to be more critical of claims for competence in interdisciplinarity than students who have not. According to the report, "Completing a JINS class correlates with readiness to recognize the need for interdisciplinary approaches to intellectual questions and problems, as well as with an increasing disposition to be critical of what is forwarded as successful interdisciplinary inquiry, and even an increase in modesty concerning one's own ability to do interdisciplinary work." For other findings related to this report, go to <http://assessment.truman.edu/grants/2005/Davis.pdf>.

The second grant awarded in Summer 2005 was a follow-up to a 2004 grant. Both grants explored the issue of student success, specifically for students in academic trouble who are at risk of failing. This year, the researchers used the CSFI, an instrument intended to help students focus on self-assessment of their skills and attitudes. The CSFI was administered in half of the INDV 110 Academic Planning and Development courses. The research group hypothesized that students who completed the CSFI would have a higher increase in GPA compared to students who did not take the instrument. First, the group found that students who were enrolled in an INDV 110 course DID have a significantly higher increase in their GPA as compared to similar students who were not enrolled in the course. However, the group also found that the data did NOT prove their hypothesis. Instead, there was no statistical significance between the two sets of student GPAs for those who participated in a CSFI course than those who had a non-CSFI course. The group indicated plans for further research, including revising the CSFI. For complete information on this study, see http://assessment.truman.edu/grants/2005/Di_Stefano.pdf.

Summer 2006 Assessment Grants:

The fourth round of Truman's Scholarship of Assessment Grants was awarded in Spring 2006 for projects to be conducted during that summer. The grants provide an opportunity for faculty and staff to conduct research using institutional, divisional, or discipline assessment data. The grants are directed toward two basic goals: 1) to improve the quality of student learning and development at Truman, and 2) to enhance the culture of assessment through faculty and staff participation in assessment research and scholarship.

As in the past, the 2006 grant recipients were required to turn in a preliminary report and a final report to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Preliminary reports were due on September 1, 2006, and the final reports are due on December 1, 2006. The goal is for each of the 2006 grant recipients to present their findings at a campus-wide forum.

Funding in 2006 was unchanged. Faculty and staff proposing the grants could request up to \$1,000 for a single-investigator project, \$1,500 for two investigators, and \$2,000 for three or more investigators. The proposals were rated for clarity of purpose, appropriateness to the grant purposes, project description, timeline feasibility, application of results, intended communication of results, and benefits to student learning. In 2006, two Scholarship of Assessment Grants were awarded to a total of four faculty. Funded projects were:

1. Utilization of an Online Database to Increase Effectiveness of Clinical Assessment in the Athletic Training Program
2. Development of a Knowledge Survey as a Hierarchical Assessment Vehicle

The Athletic Training grant is focused on creating an online database where students and advisors will be able to reference students' proficiencies on the many requirements in the athletic training program. The database will include assessments of students' performances on all the learning and skills objectives in the various aspects of the training program. The goal is to create easy access for students to know how they are performing and what will need improving. Students' advisors will have access to the same information. Ultimately, the advisors and supervisors will be able to input data from anywhere on campus using PDAs *as the students perform their proficiencies*. The assessment process will be quick and informative: a marked improvement to the current paper- and time-intensive process.

Two biology faculty are conducting the second 2006 assessment grant. They hope to be able to use a knowledge survey to assess the achievement of goals set at the course, curriculum, and university level. An assessment will be administered at the beginning of BIOL 100 and BIOL 107 course sections and then again at the end of the semester to the same students. If successful, the researchers' methods could be applied to other disciplines on campus.

The results of these two grants will be printed in the Fall 2007 *Assessment Almanac*. The grant recipients will also be expected to present their results at a campus-wide forum. After December 1, 2006, the final reports will be posted online.