

Chapter XXI: A YEAR IN REVIEW

Both assessment committees, the Design and Implementation Group and the Analysis and Reporting Group, continued meeting and working during the 2005 calendar year. Below is a summary of each committee's activities.

Design and Implementation Group (DIG)

A major task for the DIG during this year of funding reductions was the review of the assessment budget. The committee quickly discovered that it could find very little discretionary room in the budget. This process is still ongoing and the committee faces some tough decisions. The deliberations this year narrowed the focus to the use of the GRE for senior tests by a few disciplines and the timing and administration of the CSEQ and CXEQ. The use of the GRE is an expensive, unfair practice, especially for those graduate school hopefuls in other disciplines who must pay for their own graduate school admission tests. It is also counterproductive for those students not currently planning on attending graduate school, but who may later decide to do so. The issues surrounding the CSEQ and CSXQ involve appropriate timing when administered and administration frequency. These issues will be decided in spring 2006.

The CLA administration also proved interesting. Seniors did well in comparison to others, but not as well as they should have done based on their ACT scores. DIG pursued some discussion about the appropriateness of the CLA versus the Growth as a Thinker prompt from the Portfolio in satisfying the State's requirement for some kind of value-added testing and decided the CLA would be more appropriate for now because it provided the ability for comparison with other institutions.

The DIG decided that this was the year for the NSSE, the Portfolio, and the *Assessment Almanac* to all move entirely to digital format. It also decided to administer the Junior Tests after 75 rather than just 60 hours and to continue offering opportunities for students to take the exam during the University Conference Day.

The Interview Project continued in its second year of surveying about student leadership and service learning opportunities. DIG also formed a subcommittee again this year to examine potential projects for the 2007 interviews. The committee consisted both of faculty and a student representative. Their report will be made in the spring of 2006.

The ARG committee reported findings primarily regarding retention from its student engagement project (briefly detailed later in this summary).

In order to better publicize our assessment efforts, the DIG and Faculty Development cosponsored six Assessment Colloquia during the 2005 calendar year. Attendance improved over the past year.

The Alumni Surveys suffered a setback when a postal truck carrying them caught on fire and a meager 6.5% were returned. DIG decided to review these surveys again for content and length. This activity still needs to be undertaken.

UGC took on the assessment of computer literacy again and determined that some of the original outcomes are now outdated and need revision. A member of DIG served on that committee and we expect a report back in the spring of 2006.

The Internship Program continued with three successful internships during the spring of 2005. One student worked with the Interview Project, another with the VPAA's Office on upgrading the assessment website, and a third on a History of Assessment at Truman State University. The third project involved oral interviews with almost thirty of Truman's past assessment leaders and is still ongoing with completion anticipated during the spring of 2006.

Analysis and Reporting Group (ARG)

ARG completed its work on the Student Engagement Project requested by the VPAA and submitted its report accordingly. The emphasis was on retention, particularly of first generation college students. The strongest finding was a positive relationship between in-class faculty interactions and students' return to Truman for a second year. The most puzzling finding was that contrary to expectations, out-of-class interactions with faculty and first generation students returning to Truman for a second year was negative.

The ARG also discussed directions for new research but stalled over issues of data warehousing and usage. ARG was concerned about the Herculean efforts required in order to complete the last project and by the accompanying lack of access to combined data sets that make such analysis feasible. ARG did determine, however, that an upcoming component of Banner, an Operational Data Store that will see implementation during summer 2006, will be very useful toward assessment research.

ARG expressed concern over "closing the loop" once answers to assessment questions were generated.

ARG also worked on improving the Assessment Grant Guidelines and the continued administration of the CSEQ and expressed its desire to the DIG to see the CSEQ once again administered to first-year students.