

## 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. For the first three years of the program and in 1998, 1999 and 2000, juniors were selected; for 1996 and 1997, freshmen were selected.

*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?*

University Assessment Committee plus additional volunteers which are primarily students and faculty along with some administrators. Each student interviewee is typically questioned by a pair (one of whom is a student and one of whom is a faculty 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.

*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?*

Currently, no. The sample size, around a 100, is too small.

*Are the results comparable to data of other universities?*

No.

**INTERVIEW PROJECT REPORT 2000**  
**VICE PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

During the Spring Semester of 2000, the Vice President's Advisory Committee on Assessment, assisted by additional members of the Truman State University community, including faculty members, staff members, and students, conducted the eighth annual interview project. Of the 200 randomly drawn students 157 had valid addresses and telephone numbers, of which 107 students were interviewed, for a response rate of sixty-eight percent. Fifty-five percent were female. On average they had an entering ACT score of 27, carried 14 credit hours this semester, and had a cumulative GPA of 3.2 on a 4-point scale.

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. Thirty-five faculty, three staff or administrators who serve on the Assessment Committee, and twenty-eight students participated in this year's interview project.

Prior to arriving at the interview, students were mailed the following definitions of deep reading and diversity. They were also available during both the written and oral portions of the survey.

*Deep reading* goes beyond reading only to recite facts from the material. Deep readers will identify assumptions built into the reading, think about the consequences of those assumptions, and try to understand the reasoning behind and development of the author's argument(s). Deep readers will often go back and reread difficult passages in order to critically engage the material and will often argue against it by bringing in their own relevant information or by connecting ideas to previous reading and to other issues.

*Diversity* goes beyond a focus on differences in race, ethnicity, class, religion, ability, gender, or sexual orientation. Diversity encompasses both differences and similarities. While race and ethnic origin often receive most of the attention in discussions of diversity, accounting for the context in which issues of diversity occur provides a more complete understanding. Real diversity discussions will consider not only the differences among groups, but also the fact that people within groups also vary tremendously along all facets of human interaction.

One component of the interview project consisted of 16 questions administered in a written format, prior to the oral interview. All interviews were completed prior to Spring Break 2000 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:

*Of those courses involving significant reading, think of the ones you've taken that demanded deep reading to be successful and those that have not. What distinguishes the two types of classes?*

Seventy-five percent of the students reported that courses requiring deep reading were distinguishable largely according to some aspect of course discipline and along the following other dimensions. The Humanities were mentioned 52% of the time, 45% indicating the Humanities required deep reading and 7% that it did not; Sciences came up 34% of the time, 13% indicating deep reading was required and 21% that it was not; conceptual topics required deep reading whereas factual assignments did not (22%); professors who utilized discussion settings elicited deep reading, lectures did not (22%). Other minor dimensions requiring deep reading included: major classes (15%); course level (14%); lack of previous knowledge (11%); level of difficulty (9%); Core/Intro/JINS (9%); types of testing (7%); textbooks require it (5%); and other (4%).

### Summary of Question 2:

*a) In courses where deep reading seems necessary, what strategies do you find most successful for maximizing learning in the course?*

Students pointed to the following techniques as helpful in maximizing course learning: re-reading (40%); taking notes (36%); highlighting (27%); minimizing distractions (21%); finding a quiet environment (18%); making connections between reading and class/lecture (13%); questioning by professor/self/book (11%); reading before class (10%); reading slowly/thoroughly (9%); and reviewing with someone (7%). Ten percent of the students also mentioned other factors such as time of day, location, and the use of outside sources to reinforce textbook reading.

*b) Do you use writing in any way as you read? Please explain.*

A clear majority of the students interviewed (74%) indicated making some use of writing as they read; however, the writing techniques they used varied quite a bit. Thirty-nine percent used paper notes; twenty-five percent wrote in the margins; and twenty-eight percent highlighted as they read. Other techniques included outlines (7%), questions (5%), and note cards (3%). Four percent said it depended on the class.

*c) Do you typically read the material before, after, or before and after, it's discussed in class?*

Sixty-two percent of the students interviewed said they read the material before attending class. Thirty-six percent said they read the material after class. Nineteen percent indicated reading the material both before and after class. Of those interviewed, seven percent said it depended on the professor and another seven percent said it depended on the class. Fourteen percent of the

students read the material right before the test. Only one student indicated skimming the material before class and then rereading it thoroughly after class.

*d) What role did the professor play in influencing the reading practices you're describing?*

Twenty-eight percent of the students interviewed indicated that in-class usage of the reading material influenced their reading practices in the direction of more deep reading. Twenty-six percent said the professor had no influence on their reading practices. Students also mentioned the following other influences on their reading practices: testing techniques (15%); suggested reading techniques (15%); professor's expectations (10%); homework assignments (9%); and pop reading quizzes (6%).

### **Summary of Question 3:**

*a) Do you use different reading strategies when reading material from different disciplines?*

Sixty-five percent of students indicated they used different reading strategies across disciplines while thirty-five percent used the same techniques regardless of discipline.

*b) Do your Truman professors ever work with the class on developing reading strategies?*

Sixty-six percent said they had never had a Truman professor work with the class on developing reading strategies. Of the thirty-four percent who had, fourteen percent indicated having had a professor who shared a reading technique. Eight percent spoke of a Comp I class and five percent of Comp II. Other individual examples included: bringing in outside material, use of notecards, and syllabus advice. Two percent said that a journal requirement forced them to deep read.

*c) What should your professors do to encourage deep reading?*

Twenty-two percent of the students indicated class discussion over the reading would encourage them to deep read. Quizzes would motivate twenty-one percent while nineteen percent pointed directly to tests over the reading material. Other suggestions included: professor expectations (12%); not lecturing over the reading material (10%); assigning reading homework (10%); handing out reading guides (8%); and assigning reading journals (2%). Three percent indicated reading practices should be covered in Freshman Week. Other individual suggestions (collectively from 7% of students) included projects, group work, using primary sources, and scaring the students.

### **Summary of Question 4:**

*Describe an in-class experience at Truman that has influenced your understanding of people from diverse backgrounds.*

Forty-six percent of the students described experiences involving students from a different background or culture. Forty-four percent indicated the experience derived directly from course

work. Eleven percent indicated the experience occurred in the context of group work or projects. Nine percent told of an experience in an Exploring Religions class and seven percent told of a speech class experience. Eight percent stated the experience involved a professor with a different background or culture. Seventeen percent said they had not had any such in-class experience.

### **Summary of Question 5:**

*Describe an out-of-class experience since coming to Truman that has influenced your understanding of people from diverse backgrounds.*

Responses to this question varied across several categories: living arrangements (30%); exchange student interaction (22%); social setting (22%); campus activities (11%); Greek life (9%); work (8%); general exposure (7%); campus organizations (7%); economic differences (3%); and sports (2%). Thirteen percent of students indicated they had not had an out-of-class experience with people from diverse backgrounds.

### **Summary of Question 6:**

*a) What additional things could Truman do inside the classroom to enhance your understanding of people from diverse backgrounds?*

Thirty-one percent of the students interviewed suggested incorporating such information into existing classes in part through increased discussion. Twenty-one percent indicated incorporating minorities and encouraging them to express new viewpoints, but five percent also cautioned against singling out minority students. Eleven percent proposed recruiting a more diverse student body. Another eleven percent felt that trying to incorporate diversity issues was not relevant to all classes. Other suggestions included: group work (9%); offering diversity classes (7%); bringing in guest speakers (6%); and rearranging the core (3%). A few (5%) noted the influence of the professor, both positively and negatively. Twenty-two percent of the students felt that nothing could be done.

*b) Outside the classroom?*

Twenty-one percent of the students suggested bringing in more speakers and events. Fifteen percent mentioned more international student interaction. (Splitting up Grim Hall received specific mention on several occasions.) Eleven percent identified increasing or improving the publicity for existing events. Other suggestions included: support/utilize clubs and other groups (8%); utilize multicultural affairs events more (8%); Lyceum (7%); and recruit more diverse students (7%). Thirty-four percent indicated there was nothing Truman could do outside the classroom to enhance students' understanding of people from diverse backgrounds. Some students suggested involving the community in campus events and/or offering students extra credit for participation in such events.

### **Summary of Question 7:**

*a) Describe an experience at Truman with people from diverse backgrounds that has influenced your comfort level either in a positive or negative way.*

Of those students who indicated having such an experience, nineteen percent credited the experience to their roommate or living arrangements. Sixteen percent described an experience with foreign exchange students. Twelve percent indicated an in-class experience. Other experiences included: Greek life (10%); friendships (7%); organizations (7%); outside activities (6%); SAB (3%); and sports or the recreation center (3%). Five percent indicated other isolated experiences and eleven percent had not had any experience, one way or another.

*b) Was the experience ultimately a positive or negative one?*

The majority of students (78%) indicated the experience had ultimately been positive. Ten percent identified it as negative while two percent described it as both positive and negative. Ten percent of the answers were not applicable.

### **Summary of Question 8:**

*How has your foreign language experience, either at Truman or while studying abroad, enhanced your understanding of other nationalities and cultures? Please explain.*

Thirty-six percent indicated that their foreign language experience helped them to understand other nationalities and cultures. Eight percent said the experience focused only on grammar rather than culture. Other students indicated varying degrees of influence: a lot (6%); some (2%); a little (10%); and no effect (14%). Twenty-seven percent of those surveyed had no foreign language or study abroad experience.

### **Summary of Question 9:**

*Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about any aspect of your Truman experience?*

This question elicited a mixture of responses. Positive replies included: overall experience (32%); professors (9%); class size (7%); challenging (5%); diversity (4%); social (2%); and scholarships (1%). Negative responses included: diversity (12%); core classes (7%); parking (6%); technology (5%); social (4%); registration (4%); assessment (3%); challenging (2%); scholarships (2%); teacher evaluations (2%); and SWE (1%). Fourteen percent had nothing to say. Eighteen percent offered other suggestions including: revise grading system (need +/-), lack of support for sports teams, standards too high, some neglected programs (i.e. equipment for TV and camera class, exercise science lab), and SA compensation.

## Written Survey Responses

### Summary of Question 1:

a) *What percentage of the time do you read textbook/reading assignments in this fashion?*

Students reported deep reading an average of 51 percent of the time (min. 5, max. 100).

b) *Describe your preferred deep reading environment.*

*Location:* Thirty-nine percent gave their bedroom as their preferred location, twenty-seven percent their home, and fourteen percent their living room. Twenty-five percent preferred the library and seven percent the quiet/study lounge. Seven percent felt they could read anywhere.

*Usual noise (or sound) level:* Forty-four percent of students surveyed prefer no noise when studying. Sixty-two percent indicated they like a low noise level, five percent prefer a medium noise level and two percent like a high level of noise.

*Noise (or sound) source:* Forty-five percent liked listening to music while reading. Thirty-one percent preferred no noise. Eighteen percent indicated people were the source of the noise while they read, and twelve percent simply noted background noise. Only five percent mentioned TV.

*Times of day or night:* Fifty-four percent preferred reading between 6 PM and 10 PM, forty percent between 10 PM and 1 AM, and twenty-three percent between 12 PM and 6 PM. Eleven percent preferred the morning hours between 7 AM and 12 PM, but only one percent preferred reading between 3 AM and 7AM. Seven percent said they could read anytime.

*Other:* Students mentioned factors such as temperature, lighting, and setting.

c) *In a typical week, what percentage of the time are you able to achieve your preferred deep reading environment?*

Students reported achieving their preferred environment 53 percent of the time (min. 0, max. 100).

d) *What prevents you from achieving it?*

Twenty-eight percent felt roommates kept them from achieving their preferred environment, fourteen percent listed friends, and thirteen percent mentioned other people. Twenty-three percent indicated other activities and twenty-one percent noted time constraints. Other distractions included: other homework (17%); telephone (14%); outside noise (13%); TV (10%); work (9%); too tired (6%); lack of interest (6%); too much reading (5%); class (2%); and the Internet (1%). Five percent said nothing kept them from achieving their preferred environment.

### **Summary of Question 2:**

*In approximately what percent of your classes at Truman do your teachers' lectures simply repeat the material in the reading?*

Students reported that, on average, 45 percent of their classes repeated reading material in lecture (0 min., 95 max.).

### **Summary of Question 3:**

*In approximately what percent of your classes at Truman are you held accountable for material from reading assignments that are not covered in class discussions?*

Students reported that, on average, 51 percent of their classes held them accountable for material not covered in class (5 min., 100 max.).

### **Summary of Question 4:**

*How often do you re-read particularly difficult passages?*

*rarely or never (2%), once in a while (10%), sometimes (33%), frequently (45%), always (10%)*

### **Summary of Question 5:**

*How much do you read in addition to course assignments?*

*rarely or never (37%), once a week (6%), several times a week (36%), almost every day (14%), every day (8%)*

*When you do, what kinds of readings do you choose?*

Students reported the following types of reading: fiction/novels (58%); magazines (41%); newspapers (29%); non-fiction (11%); interesting things (9%); religious (7%); school related (6%); sports (4%); textbooks (4%); and biographies (2%).

### **Summary of Question 6:**

*Regarding your academic book purchases this semester,*

*a) For how many classes this semester did you not buy the required book?*

Ninety-two percent of the students surveyed bought all of the required books for their classes this semester. The maximum number of classes for which the required books were not purchased was 3, the minimum was 0.



*Why?*

For those not purchasing at least one required text the reasons given were: shared or borrowed (44%); felt it wasn't needed (33%); and cost (22%).

*b) For what percent of your classes this semester that had a recommended book, did you not buy it?*

Fifty-one percent of students said they purchased the recommended books for their classes this semester. The maximum percentage of classes for which the recommended books were not purchased was 100, the minimum was 0.

*Why?*

For those not purchasing the recommended books the reasons given were: no need for the book (57%); cost of the books (37%); teachers don't use the recommended books (13%); shared or borrowed (6%); and the books were unavailable (4%).

#### **Summary of Question 7:**

*How often do you read a newspaper, news magazine, or news web site?*

*rarely or never (19%), once a week (32%), several times a week (21%), almost every day (13%), every day (15%)*

#### **Summary of Question 8:**

*How often do you read a novel not required by a class?*

*rarely or never (23%), only when classes aren't in session (29%), one or two per semester (35%), more than two per semester (13%)*

#### **Summary of Question 9:**

*How often do you read a book of non-fiction not required by a class?*

*rarely or never (39%), only when classes aren't in session (34%), one or two per semester (24%), more than two per semester (3%)*

#### **Summary of Question 10:**

*Since coming to Truman, how has your level of interaction with people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (7%), decreased a little (7%), no change (18%), increased a little (49%), increased (19%)*

*Instructions to students filling out the survey: We're interested in your experience in five levels of encountering diversity: knowledge, understanding, tolerance, comfort, and appreciation.*

**Summary of Question 11:**

*a) Since coming to Truman, how has your knowledge of people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (1%), decreased a little (2%), no change (27%), increased a little (53%), increased a lot (17%)*

*b) Since coming to Truman, how has your understanding of people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (1%), decreased a little (0%), no change (27%), increased a little (54%), increased a lot (18%)*

**Summary of Question 12:**

*a) Since coming to Truman, how has your tolerance of people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (0%), decreased a little (2%), no change (63%), increased a little (25%), increased a lot (10%)*

*b) Since coming to Truman, how has your comfort level with people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (0%), decreased a little (3%), no change (48%), increased a little (36%), increased a lot (14%)*

*c) Since coming to Truman, how has your appreciation of people from diverse backgrounds changed?*

*decreased a lot (0%), decreased a little (2%), no change (41%), increased a little (34%), increased a lot (23%)*

**Summary of Question 13:**

*Do you have any close friends who come from a different background or culture than your own?*

*a) Please describe:*

Seventy-nine percent of students said they have close friends with a background or culture different from their own. They described those differences as follows: racial/ethnic (50%); cultural (24%); religious (12%); rural/urban (7%); upbringing (6%); class/income (5%); and

sexual orientation (1%). Five percent indicated yes without an explanation. Twenty-one percent indicated they had no close friends from a different background or culture.

*b) What brought you together?*

Those indicating yes in part a gave the following explanations: class (22%); social (18%); common interests (14%); living arrangements (13%); mutual friends (12%); school activities (10%); roommates (10%); work (6%); family (5%) sports (5%); and religion (2%).

### **Summary of Question 14:**

*Describe your experience with each of the following areas of computer literacy:*

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>a) using a computer to create a document in an appropriate format<br/>(word processing acceptable for a class assignment)</i>                                       | 3.5 |
| <i>b) retrieving and citing appropriately information from the World Wide Web<br/>(Web Browser: Netscape, Internet Explorer, etc.)</i>                                 | 3.0 |
| <i>c) utilizing electronic means of communication<br/>(E-mail, chat/discussion groups, etc.)</i>   | 3.1 |
| <i>d) retrieving information from a bibliographic database<br/>(besides LUIS; e.g., WorldCat, Lexis-Nexis, First Search)</i>   | 2.4 |
| <i>e) organizing, manipulating, and presenting numeric data in a document<br/>(spreadsheet (Excel, Lotus, etc.), statistical software (Mystat, SPSS, Shazam), etc)</i> | 2.3 |
| <i>f) saving, retrieving, copying, printing, and deleting files</i>  | 3.3 |
| <i>g) recognizing unethical use of technology including copyright and privacy issues</i>   | 2.5 |
| <i>h) use of presentation software (PowerPoint, HyperStudio, Web Browser)</i>  | 2.1 |

Overall, the average student self-rating of computer proficiency was 2.8 on a 4-point scale.

### **Summary of Question 15:**

*In how many courses this semester does your professor make use of the Course Info facility for managing some or all of the course's out-of-class communication needs?*

Seventy-two percent of students indicated using the Course Info facility in one or more of their classes.

*How much do you feel this contributes to the learning experience provided in those courses?*

*detracts (3%), not at all (15%), contributes (35%), contributes significantly (12%)*

(Percentages will not add to seventy-two due to several students not marking this part of the survey because they felt too inexperienced to evaluate Course Info's contribution to their learning.)

*Please explain briefly.*

Students offered the following positive remarks about the Course Info facility: assignments and notes (22%); convenient (17%); Q&A or other communication with professor (14%); class

(14%); discussion boards (10%); additional resources (8%); grades (4%); and internet links (3%). Students also had negative remarks: inconvenient (17%); too much work, just one more thing to do (10%); and no chance to ask questions (3%). Five percent indicated they did not use the Course Info facility.

**Summary of Question 16:**

*How many computers are in your house, dorm room or apartment? Yours? Roommate's?*

The average number of computers reported was 1.8 per household. Sixty-four percent of the students surveyed said they had a computer. Sixty-eight percent of their roommate(s) had a computer.