

## Chapter 11: YEAR-END UPDATE

In 2011, Truman State University agreed to be in the second pioneer cohort for the new Pathways to accreditation program of the Higher Learning Commission. For the entire second cohort of pioneer institutions, the quality initiative consists of participation in HLC's Assessment Academy. The assessment committee had already undertaken a major project as part of the Wabash study, and the campus chose to extend it to fit the Assessment Academy requirements as well.

The institutional project focuses on the links between transformative experiences and the desired characteristics of graduates identified in the 2008-2010 strategic plan. Three characteristics were chosen on the basis of 1) relevance to the core mission of the university, 2) breadth of ownership across campus, 3) measurability and 4) potential for improvement. Transformation in the following three characteristics thus was investigated.

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

To kick off the project, seven Truman Faculty and Staff attended the HLC Assessment Academy Roundtable. At the roundtable, we created action plans, timelines, communication priorities, etc. This planning positioned us well to begin work during the summer of 2011. Four task forces were created, one for each of the designated characteristics, and one focusing on transformational experiences. The leadership task force is chaired by Dr. Adrien Presley, Associate Professor of Business. The critical thinking (understand and articulate well-reasoned arguments) task force is chaired by Dr. Royce Kallerud, Professor of English. The healthy lives task force was chaired by Evonne Bird, Instructor of Health and Exercise Sciences, and the transformative experiences task force was chaired by Dr. Lou Ann Gilchrist, Dean of Student Affairs.

The first charge of each task force was to review existing assessment data and nationwide best practices. From this, they synthesized a brief, usable summary of what was known. Instead of white papers, these were labeled "Purple Papers" for the campus community. These documents are also available in Chapter 17 of this almanac. Each purple paper was presented to the campus community at the 2010 Strategic Planning and Assessment Workshop. The Workshop also involved breakout sessions around each characteristic, generating good ideas about producing positive change.

Also during the university conference, the office of Student Affairs sponsored several focus groups. The groups were both populated and led by students. Students who had participated in a high-impact experience (study abroad, undergraduate research, internship, etc), were recruited to discuss what had facilitated their participation in these experiences, what obstacles they faced, and if or how the experience had been transformative. A comparison group of students who had not participated in those high-impact experience was also invited to discuss barriers to participation. The focus groups were so successful that they were extended to the fall 2010 semester, and the leaders were invited to present at a workshop at the Wabash College Center for Inquiry.

The next step in the pathways project involved a request for proposals for pilot projects. A good pilot project would be one that increased students' transformation in leadership, critical thinking, wellness, or some combination of these. The projects are relatively small themselves, but needed to be assessable and scalable. The intent is that projects that can be shown to be successful in improving student outcomes are implemented on a larger scale. Funded projects will begin in Spring or Fall 2012.

Undergraduate Council began another round of review of general education components. Individual disciplines also continued the cycle of five-year program reviews. Though the assessment committee is not directly tied to either of these processes, we provide some data and consulting for each.

Because the university had been exploring a major curricular change, there were no significant changes made to regular data collection. One smaller change replaced the CIRP with a shorter, less expensive, survey created in house to measure demographic characteristics of incoming students. The portfolio continues to expand: the pilot inclusion of Critical Thinking and Speaking continued, and a new prompt investigated Creativity. The portfolio system also now allows students to upload submissions beginning in their first year. Therefore, the portfolio is now the Truman portfolio rather than the senior portfolio. Administration of senior tests, CLA, the student interview project, the Graduating Senior questionnaire, and the alumni survey.

The College Portrait for Truman as part of the Voluntary System of Accountability. Similarly, we continued participation in the President's Alliance for Excellence in Student Learning and Accountability. The assessment committee continues to work on a database to facilitate understanding of the student experience across different assessment instruments.

This Assessment Almanac itself also continues to grow to reflect ongoing efforts to coordinate assessment information across the curriculum and co-curriculum. We have continued, for a second year, the discipline assessment spotlight and the student affairs assessment summary. Next year, we hope to add a new chapter on Graduate Assessment.

Students contributed directly to this assessment almanac and to the functioning of the Assessment Committee. Allyssa Dummerth served as recording secretary of the committee in Spring 2011. Daniel Wolz, Lindsay Vo, and Akmal Hasanov collaborated on the minutes for Fall 2011. Daniel Wolz also co-authored some of the Wabash study reports, while Lindsay Vo co-authored the discipline assessment spotlight and the student affairs assessment summary. Akmal Hasanov also worked to update the Truman Assessment Website. The spring 2011 interview project team was co-led by Susan Leshner and Molly Beuke. It also includes Kiera Hulsey, Katherine Olsen-Flaate, Ashley Tucker, and Rachael Kisse. Alex Kaiser co-authored the portfolio chapter.