

Truman State  
University  
Nov/Dec 2000

# SPOTLIGHT

## Assessment Agenda Missing Its Marks

Optimistic Program Heads Towards 2002 Projections Short of Goals

A review of Truman's assessment program underscored numerous quantitative and qualitative indicators on which the University is falling substantially short of its Master Plan goals.

The current University Master Plan (titled *Affirming the Promise*) was published in 1997 and contains projections on a wide variety of annual assessment indicators through 2002. The assessment program itself has at least 14 components (sidebar, p. 3), only a small sampling of which are presented in the Master Plan ("Indicators of Progress" and Appendix E) and reported in the annual *Assessment Almanac*. However, many of those selected measures reported are falling considerably short of University goals.

### Enhanced Liberal Arts Culture

For example, under Principle Planning Theme I ("Deepening An Enhanced, Self-Reflective Liberal Arts Culture") of the University Master Plan there are 31 measures selected from the annual Graduating Senior Questionnaire. These questions concern student opinions of the liberal studies courses, major courses, overall liberal arts culture, and the assessment program itself. Of those 31 indicators, 24 fell substantially below 1999 projections. Based on data trends it appears unlikely that any of those lagging indicators will approach Master Plan projections by 2002.

More serious is the poor achievement exhibited by freshman-junior testing scores. According to the 1999 *Assessment Almanac* half Truman's students take the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), the other half take the Academic Profile test.

These two tests measure student per-

formance in math, reading, writing, science reasoning and critical thinking.

Longitudinal cohort comparisons suggest students consistently score lower as juniors than they did on the same test as freshmen, although it is difficult to tell where these differences reach statistical significance. Over time, post-test percentile rank scores have been dropping in four of the five areas measured. In the category of reading for example, post-test percentile rank dropped from 75.1 in Fiscal Year 1991 to 48.8 in FY99. The University Master Plan goal for 1999 was 70.0, and that goal increases to 80.0 in 2002.

The other half of Truman's freshmen take an assessment test called the Academic Profile, published by the Educational Testing Service. This test measures performance in seven areas, essentially those listed above plus humanities and social science.

Although Master Plan projections for this assessment measure are not published, a straightforward comparison of student performance between FY96 and FY99 in all areas shows that freshmen and junior scores declined in every category (14 of 14 measures). Here again statistical significance is not reported, but the trends are downward. Comparing student scores as juniors (FY99) to those the same students attained as freshmen, performance declined on six of the seven measures. Both within years and across years, then, scores declined on the great majority of assessment measures.

In addition to GSQ and Freshman/Junior testing results, a third area of note under Principle Planning Theme I is

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## Capstone Experience, SWE, and Portfolios Selected Indicators

### SOPHOMORE WRITING EXPERIENCE

(0-6 pt scale, 6 is high; see AA, VII, p. IX-25)

SWE	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
	N=481	426	517
Percent scoring '4' or higher	38.8%	34.3%	41.7%

Where 4 = "Reasonably consistent competence" ("although it may have lapses in quality and occasional errors").

And where 3 = "Adequate competence" (which as described sounds like marginal competence).

And where a score of '2' is labeled "some competence" (which as described might otherwise be called *total incompetence*).

A '2.5' satisfies SWE requirements.

*Spotlight Conclusion:* Approximately 60% of Truman students over the past three years have graduated with demonstrated writing skills of less than "reasonably consistent competence."



### PORTFOLIOS

Twelve measures reported (see AA, Ch. XIII)

Given Truman's quality of students measured by high school GPA and ACT scores, all 12 measures appear to reflect poor to abysmal performance; 11 of the 12 showed a decline in the quality of student thinking or attitude in 1999 compared with 1996. Seven of these selected measures are shown in Table at right.

### CAPSTONE EXPERIENCES

Exactly the same 16 pages were reprinted, verbatim, in Volume II of the Assessment Almanacs of 1997, 1998, 1999.

- Key *Assessment Almanac* descriptors (1999, Vol. I, p. III-11): "Capstone experiences continue to evolve as faculty initiate new experiences and continually review existing ones." [wording that was itself excerpted from a 1994 document]

*Spotlight conclusion:* Capstone experiences are not evolving, but static; in any case they—or the reporting of them—are apparently not receiving Assessment Committee, division head or VPAA oversight.

Cost-saving suggestion: Capstone Experience chapters in future assessment almanacs could simply state "See 1997."

### STATS FROM THE GRADUATING SENIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Approximately how many hours per week do you spend out of class on course-related work?			
21 hours or more:	<b>Actual 1999:</b> 29.70%	Projected 1999: 41.70%	Projected 2002: 50.0%
Approximately how many hours per week do you spend reading beyond course assignments?			
6 hours or more:	<b>Actual 1999:</b> 13.40%	Projected 1999: 23.00%	Projected 2002: 35.0%

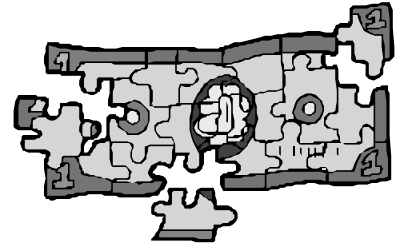
### PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT-SELECTED MEASURES

	1996	1997	1998	1999
(Total N; varies somewhat by question)	(661)	(712)	(800)	(890)
<i>Accuracy of Student Self-Assessment</i> (Percent judged "None" or "Weak")	32%	41%	47%	<b>53%</b>
<i>Interdisciplinary Thinking</i> ("Competent" or "Strong" Evidence) *	13%	13%	6%	<b>6%</b>
<i>Quantitative Reasoning, Application of</i> (Percent Judged "Not Adequate")	42%	41%	59%	<b>52%</b>
<i>Scientific Reasoning, Application of</i> (Percent Judged "Not Adequate")	29%	10%	55%	<b>63%</b>
<i>Aesthetic Analysis</i> (Percent Judged "No Evidence" or "Weak")	45%	33%	57%	<b>50%</b>
<i>Aesthetic Evaluation</i> (Percent Judged "No Evidence" or "Weak")	60%	76%	72%	<b>68%</b>
<i>Attitude Toward Portfolio Process</i> (Percent "Positive" -- in cover letters) *	55%	51%	45%	<b>47%</b>

\* Indicator measured in positive direction

# University Assessment Program: Selected Measures and Projections from the Assessment Almanac, 1999, and University Master Plan

***“Deepening An Enhanced, Self-Reflective Liberal Arts Culture”***



## Freshman-Junior testing (see front-page article for more details)

### A. Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)

Master Plan p. 84; Assessment Almanac, 1999, Vo. II, pp. X-1–X-5

Areas: Critical Thinking, Mathematics, Reading, Science Reasoning, Writing Skills

Key measures: Pre-test (freshmen) and post-test (juniors) percentile ranks

Cautions: Statistical significance not reported; test cohort norms can change over time; post-test group was changed from sophomores to juniors in FY94

### CAAP Summary Table

Actual, Across years:	Actual, Within years:	Actual against Projections:
Substantial decline in 4 of 5 areas (post-test) from FY91 to FY99	Decline in pre-test to post-test performance in 31 of 45 cohort comparisons	Substantial and widening gap between post-test projections and actual scores in 4 of 5 areas

### B. Academic Profile (AP)

Areas: Humanities, Social Science, Natural Science, Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, Mathematics

Cautions: Statistical significance not reported

### AP Summary Table

Actual, Across years:	Actual, Within year, FY99:	Actual against Projections:
Slight decline in 7 of 7 areas from FY96 to FY99	Slight decline in freshman-to-junior test performance in 6 of 7 area cohort comparisons	Not Reported

- Key *Assessment Almanac* descriptor of Freshman-Junior testing results: “Discouraging.”

Spotlight conclusion: Beyond discouraging.

## Senior Tests: Percent Scoring Above The 50th Percentile

University Projection: It was projected that 75.4% of seniors would score above 50th percentile on senior test in 1999. The actual figure was 67.5%.

Division Actual Percentages to University Projected Average: Only the Business and Accountancy Division (85.4%) and the Social Science Division (75.5%) majors averaged above the University projection. Other division student averages ranged from 70.5% (Science) to 48.4% (HPP).

Division Actual Percentages to Division Projected: Both Business (85.4%) and Fine Arts (66.7%) exceeded 1999 division-level projections (82.0% and 65.9%, respectively); HPP, L&L (54.1%) and M&CS (68.0%) all fell more than 12 percentage points short of division projections

- Key *Assessment Almanac* descriptor of results: “Major concern.”

Spotlight conclusion: Major concern. But still profitable.

(Continued on page 4)

## Assessment Program Components And Associated Costs

(Source: Office of the VPAA)

First Year Student Survey (Coop Institutional Research Project)	\$2,025
Freshmen Week Survey	\$105
Student Interview Project	\$5,900
Sophomore Writing Experience	\$48,375
Freshman-Junior Testing	\$50,500
Institutional Student Survey / Graduating Student Questionnaire	\$2,050
Capstone Experiences	
Portfolio Assessment	\$36,160
Senior Test in the Major	\$58,500
Alumni/Employer Surveys	\$4,800
Faculty Survey	\$5,000
Master Plan and Assessment Workshop	\$1,500
Related Uncompensated Faculty Time, Not calculated	

College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CESQ)  
(Not yet implemented; plan calls for eliminating ISS and replacing with CESQ, to be administered in JINS courses)

Funding for Results (Please see below)

## Truman's (State) Funding For Results Income

FY 2001 Budget Allocation

(Source: VPAA)

Assessment of graduates	\$106,700
Performance of graduates (\$500 for each above 50th %tile)	\$920,000
Success of underrepresented groups	\$127,200
Quality of prospective teachers	\$102,042
Quality of new graduate students (\$500 for each above 50th %tile)	\$43,500
Graduation rates	\$55,173
Quality of new undergraduates	\$58,125
Freshmen completion rate (Analysis of full-time freshmen completing 24 hours with 2.0 GPA)	\$56,843
Successful transfers	\$1,625

## Potential Benefits of Assessment

- Fosters program review and improvement against established and measurable goals (discipline, division and university)
- Provision of supporting evidence for education that is "value-added"
- Provision of quantitative measures of student learning and development (other than grades)
- Provision of qualitative indicators that measure the teaching-learning process as well as outcomes
- Provision of information concerning qualities and characteristics of students and faculty not otherwise readily available
- Can foster inculcation of self-reflective liberal arts culture in students, faculty and staff
- Some components can indirectly nurture faculty development
- Engenders institutional accountability

## Join AAUP

### TENTATIVE AAUP AGENDA 2000-2001

SEPT:	WEB PRESENCE
OCT:	FACULTY COMPENSATION
NOV/DEC:	ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
JAN:	FACULTY ATTRITION
FEB:	FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
MAR:	UNIVERSITY BUDGETS
APR:	TBA

Web: [http://www2.truman.edu/aaup/AAUP\\_TSU\\_news.html](http://www2.truman.edu/aaup/AAUP_TSU_news.html)

## Baccalaureate Employed Full Time/Enrolled in Graduate or Professional School Full Time

University goal: 46.8% by 2002; Actual (1998): 37.5%. As with senior test statistics, actual division-level numbers vary widely, from a low in FY98 of 14.5% (Business and Accountancy) to a high of 60.7% (Science).

- Key *Assessment Almanac* descriptor: A large percentage of graduates going on the graduate or professional school is "the mark of a good liberal arts college." Truman's goal is 46.8%.

Spotlight question: Why? And why?

## Graduating Senior Questionnaire, Student Satisfaction

Twenty-nine measures reported in the Master Plan (appendix, various tables); see also *Assessment Almanac*, 1999, Chapter XI.

Satisfaction, Core Courses: Example: "How often do you find your core courses challenging." Projected 1999 response of "very often" was 25%. The 2002 projected figure is 40%. The actual percentage (1999) was 13.6%.	Substantially below projections on 4 of 6 measures
Satisfaction, Major Courses:	Substantially below projections on 7 of 11 measures
Satisfaction, Co-curricular Activities:	Below or substantially below projections on 3 of 4 measures.
Satisfaction, Overall Liberal Arts Culture:	Below or substantially below projections on 5 of 5 measures.
Satisfaction, Assessment Program: Example: "The assessment program fosters curriculum improvement." Projected 1999 response of "strongly agree" was 14%. The 2002 projection is 20%. The actual figure (1999) was 10.2%.	Substantially below projections on 3 of 3 reported measures.

- *Assessment Almanac* conclusion: "Promotion of the liberal arts and sciences (beyond the major) continues to be a significant task for the University."

Spotlight observation: The future isn't what it used to be.

## Principal Planning Themes, Selected Measures of Success

(Summary table, Master Plan pp. 54-55; projections made in 1996)

The University Master Plan is centered around four principal planning themes: "Deepening an Enhanced, Self-reflective Liberal Arts Culture," "Recruiting and Supporting Outstanding Students, Faculty, and Staff," "Providing Excellent Support to the Teaching/Learning Process," and "Nurturing Viable Relationships with External Constituencies."

Of 35 measurements in the Master Plan summary table, 22 remain when excluding enrollment projections, databases still under development and "various." Of those 22, as of 1999 Truman was far short of its 2002 goals on 6 measures, substantially short on 9, close to goal on 7, and exceeded goal on one (total gifts). Note that these reported measures represent a small sampling of all indicators. An example of a category on a trajectory to fall well short of goals is annual research symposium involvement. On this measure the projected number of students involved by 2002 is 450, the actual number involved in 1999 was 274. Note also that some measures reported in this Master Plan table do overlap with measures reported in more detail elsewhere.

# Heisenberg, Assessment, and You...

Commentary by Gary Jones

It's true Werner Heisenberg, renowned physicist and father of the uncertainty principle in quantum theory, was just looking at the (very) little picture—but conclusions since, that the observer may somehow affect the observed, have come to have much larger application. And this often in uncertain ways.

Moving up a quantum or two, it can be stipulated that a viable program of institutional assessment is not only beneficial but also, given the current climate of tight public money, necessary. Students and faculty are evaluated and held accountable—presumably with the goal of improvement; so be it with educational organizations.

This institution's recognition of the importance of assessment back in the 1970s was indeed remarkable; Truman (then Northeast) received national recognition for the innovativeness and excellence of its assessment program in 1984—a source of well-deserved institutional pride. And this amid the halcyon days of the legendary mission change.

Much of the glow of Truman's 1980s assessment achievements still infuses late 1990s reports—but the vitality and innovativeness do not. The program evolved, but then merely accreted: data are collected, but then not utilized. There is much that remains impressive and potentially valuable, but there hovers an aura of faded glory.

For example, about three-fourths of the 20-page narrative opening the 1999 *Assessment Almanac I*, is excerpted from a self-study accreditation document written five years before, in 1994. The historical account of the program holds up, but some description is simply out of date. One 1999 passage states, "... disciplines can point out to [sic] more writing and increased library use by students, improved performance by students on senior exams, and greater satisfaction in many curricular and co-curricular areas." No longer true.

References are made to a 1992 AAHE forum, a complimentary 1991 statement by Peter Ewell, a 1987 *USA Today* article, and the award for innovativeness that Northeast earned in 1984. The selected *Assessment Almanac* bibliography cites works largely from the early 1990s. A tremendous volume of current information on assessment and the teaching/learning process is simply not referenced or acknowledged (see for example AAHE, Stanford, UFla, UPenn, UNC-Chapel Hill).

Space here does not allow a detailing of examples illustrating problems from the bulleted list on this page, but such detail could be readily provided. Or open your own copy of *Assessment Almanac II*. And if you have not read it yet, you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution—you are simply an illustration of the fourth bullet down on the list.

As the *Almanac* states, "Clearly, qualitative measures call for a new kind of commitment from the faculty who participate in them: time... The price paid for the information is more effort on the part of the faculty" (Vol. I, III-II). But even with a 4/4-equivalent load, most faculty do not have time to dedicate to this assessment program. Further, it is a bit disingenuous to suggest that faculty are somehow generally responsible for recent disappointing assessment numbers (Vol. II, XX,1-XX, 4). Faculty are responsible for evaluating student performance in courses they teach—a fairly time consuming effort in itself, and the reason they are hired.

It is, after all, about teaching and learning. This is acknowledged in *Assessment Almanac I* where it is plainly stated: "Not surprisingly, both the best and worst [student] experiences hinged greatly on teacher quality" (p. III-11).

So that's it!

Then here's a radical proposal. First, phase out the portfolio project and use that \$36,000 to subsidize faculty membership in an academic professional organization of choice up to \$100 each. Second, eliminate the Sophomore Writing Experience by embedding SWE requirements into the new JINS mandate. Then take the \$48,000 saved and put it on top of the \$50-to-\$60k we are planning to offer the new Faculty Development Director when finally hired, making him or her the third highest paid administrator on campus upon arrival.

Under this plan, Truman attracts a faculty development leader of prominence and puts itself back in the national teaching/learning spotlight. It also saves thousands of hours of faculty time, loses no income from state FFR sources, and saves tens of thousands of dollars on two programs yielding marginal returns that probably reveal more about subject fatigue resulting from over-ambitious observation than true qualities inherent in the observed.

## AAUP Newsletter

Editor: Gary Jones

EDITORIAL CONTENT REFLECTS THE OPINION OF THE EDITOR, NOT NECESSARILY THE AAUP CHAPTER.

### Truman AAUP Chapter officers for 2000-2001

Gary Jones, LL, , President

Janice Grow, ED, Vice President

Marc Becker, SS, Secretary

James Harmon, FA, Treasurer

Members-at-large: Judi Misale, SS; John

Ramsbottom, SS; David Gruber, SS, (State)

### Debilitating Bullets:

- ◆ Low scores; raw scores on various measures that are stagnant or declining instead of improving
- ◆ Scores and numbers that are improving only slightly, and falling increasingly short of over-optimistic Master Plan projections
- ◆ Apparent lack of student motivation, and lack of 1999 program follow-up on this issue
- ◆ A model of shared program responsibility that is not critically examined, does not seem to be working, and which may no longer be viable
- ◆ Lack of clarity in the *Assessment Almanac* reporting of *results* (especially the lack of chapter executive summaries and comparisons of results over time)
- ◆ Lack of methodological rigor (including issues of sampling, validity, reliability, inter-coder reliability and statistical significance)
- ◆ Failure to establish mechanisms that ensure subsequent sharing and meaningful use of data collected (to improve teaching/learning and strengthen academic programs)
- ◆ Absence of budgetary information and lack of clear benefit-to-cost explanation
- ◆ Apparent failure to monitor, and incorporate, the best of other schools' noteworthy institutional programs in assessment
- ◆ Absence of mechanisms to assess the administration
- ◆ Relative neglect of two of the institution's core values deriving from the liberal arts and sciences: "the capacity to grasp moral and ethical challenges" and "preparation for effective living as a citizen in a democratic society."

## Keep *Spotlight* Shining



Thank you to those several of you who have sent a contribution to this effort. If you would like to help keep *Spotlight* shining **please send a contribution** to our honorable local chapter treasurer, Dr. James Harmon, Fine Arts.

### AAUP Half-Price Dues

Special one-half dues rate for new members. See your copy of the Fall 2000 *Footnotes* or visit the Truman AAUP Web page:

<http://www2.truman.edu/aaup/>

For links related to this pub, see

[www2.truman.edu/aaup/AAUP\\_TSU\\_news.html](http://www2.truman.edu/aaup/AAUP_TSU_news.html)

## Did You Know

*Just to keep things in perspective:*

### The Good,

Faculty development luncheons; sabbatical policy; academic conference travel allotment; internal grant opportunities; the faculty mentor program; 4/4 equivalent teaching load; and... The VPAA-sponsored University Planning and Assessment Conference scheduled for Wednesday, January 24, 2001—a day all should support and attend. Bring your *Spotlight*.

### The Bad,

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education issued a national 'report card' grading the 50 states on five categories: Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Completion and Benefit. As reported in the Dec. 8 *Chronicle*, Missouri was awarded a C+, C-, D+, B- and C, respectively (with private schools skewing the 'affordability' category).

### And the Ugly...

A circuit judge has ruled that the state of Missouri owes taxpayers \$244 million in refunds because officials miscalculated the state's revenue limit over the past five years. State officials said they would appeal to the Supreme Court. Capital improvement funds are frozen while the case is pending. The outcome could affect Truman's planned improvements in FY02.

## Agenda *(continued from p. 1)*

senior testing. It was projected that 75.4% of seniors would score above 50th percentile on discipline-respective senior tests in 1999. The actual figure of 67.5% fell about eight percentage points short of that goal.

Only the Business and Accountancy Division and the Social Science Division majors averaged the University projection. Division-level projections were wide-ranging. Both Business and Fine Arts exceeded 1999 division-level projections; HPP, L&L and M&CS all fell more than 12 percentage points short of division-level projections (details, page 4).

### Recruitment and Support

The second of the four principal planning themes is titled "Recruiting and Supporting Outstanding Students, Faculty, and Staff." Related projections are again recapped in the Master Plan, and various indicators on selected measures are also summarized in the annual assessment almanacs. By standard measures, Truman continues to recruit excellent students. And although student enrollment figures for 2000/01, are substantially below projections, student enrollment generally has been near projections in recent years. The freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate from 1999 to 2000, 82.6%, slipped about two percent from last year's rate and was about seven percentage points short of the projection. The six-year graduation rate from Truman of 61% is close to the projection.

The third and fourth planning themes, "Providing excellent support to the teaching/learning process" and "Nurturing viable relationships with external constituencies" are described in the University Master Plan. Their indicators were not examined as part of this review.

Various indicators relating to graduate school programs and students were also not reviewed.

## Great Expectations

### A Chronology of Quotations

1984: "Value-added' means that education should make a difference. Value-added assessment shows that it does." (AA, Vol. I, III-5, quoting *Degrees With Integrity*, 1984)

1987: "The key is whether the numbers shake you out of your complacency" (a Truman professor, AA, Vol. I, III-6, original quote in *USA Today*)

1987: "Symbolically, the leaders of Truman have used assessment to draw increased attention and vitality to the dominant focus of the institution: student learning. To quote former President McClain, 'At Northeast, the assessment program has become a rallying point for addressing qualitative issues. The entire university community has been spurred toward excellence. An ethos of quality has manifested itself breathing life into otherwise catatonic planning documents, accreditation self-studies, and institutional annual reports.'" (Vol. I, III-13 quoting the Self-Study Rpt, quoting *Educational Record*)

1994: "Truman believes it should be held accountable to all those who depend upon it to provide the best possible educational experience: its students, the state of Missouri, the nation and the larger global society." (AA, Vol. I, III-7, quoting Self-Study Rpt)

1994: "Over the past two decades, Truman has discovered that extensive faculty involvement and role-modeling of use by the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other University administrators are the keys to successful use of assessment data." (Vol. I, III-12, quoting the Self-Study Rpt)

1994: "In many cases, assessment has become routine rather than participatory, resulting in a feeling among some that it is a chore rather than something meaningful." (Self Study Report, p. 229)

1999: "Still, it needs to be recognized that the number of assessment instruments cannot be increased significantly without meeting substantial resistance from faculty and students." (AA, Vol. II, XX-4)

## AAUP CHAPTER MEETING

Friday, Jan. 12, 4:30

The Wooden Nickel

*Followed by a social hour from  
5:30 - 6:30*