

# Truman by Design: A New Era of Opportunity

## Truman State University Strategic Plan, 2011-2015

### Introduction

University President Troy Paino appointed the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) to develop a strategic plan to guide the university as it moves forward. This document presents the culmination of the committee's work, which is further detailed in Appendix A. To be effective, it is imperative that our plan envisions a future path that is bold, true to our mission, and built upon the vast array of strengths we possess. The themes and associated goals that follow are designed to provide direction in light of the turbulent realities facing Truman State University in the next five years, including fiscal challenges as well as a changing student population.

### Theme One: Preparing Students for Tomorrow and Beyond

*We will provide engaging, effective and adaptive learning environments with multiple opportunities for transformation, ensuring that graduates are globally competitive and prepared to make significant contributions to their communities and our world.*

**Rationale** Members and friends of the Truman community suggested and strongly supported the importance of focusing our next strategic plan on our students' experience while at Truman as well as their preparation for life after graduation. Theme One calls upon us to strengthen and refine the "Truman Experience" in order to increase our graduates' achievement of the desired characteristics articulated in our previous strategic plan (see Appendix B). This theme is founded upon our primary institutional value, which states that we are: *"focusing on students and their personal, social, and intellectual growth within a supportive and challenging environment...in order to prepare citizens for the intellectual and ethical challenges of the global community."*

Demographic shifts will have profound and lasting effects upon our future student populations. These shifts will require strategies that will help provide a successful educational experience for all qualified students regardless of their unique backgrounds. Furthermore, it is clear that the liberal arts and sciences university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must continue to emphasize the intrinsic value of gaining knowledge for its own sake while also emphasizing the ability to apply that knowledge for the betterment of humanity.

Higher education contributes most to society and is most faithful to its own deepest purposes when it seeks to use its considerable intellectual and cultural resources to prepare students for lives of significance and responsibility. College is, indeed, concerned centrally with developing in students a 'life of the mind.' Students should become enabled and disposed to join others respectfully to explore, probe, and engage our increasingly global culture and intellectual heritage. This is the long-standing ideal of liberal

education. We affirm this ideal here, but we assert that students also need to develop a life of the mind *for practice* (Sullivan & Rosin 2008, p. XV).

In order to provide learning experiences and support services that will accomplish this preparation, we offer the following goals from which the campus community will create strategies and action plans.

By 2015, Truman State University will:

- 1.1. *Ensure that all students have classroom and experiential learning opportunities so that each graduate possesses the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to become effective world citizens.*

**Rationale** The Truman Experience must be a global education, and will involve immersing students in activities that sensitize them to the interdependence that exists among cultures, countries, economies, and biospheres. As Nussbaum (1997, p. 9) notes, world citizens “recognize the worth of human life wherever it occurs and see ourselves as bound by common human abilities and problems to people who lie at a great distance from us.” Students will also need the specific knowledge and skills offered in the majors to ensure professional competency in this global context. It is incumbent upon Truman State University to ensure that students understand this reality and are prepared to create positive change wherever they go and whatever they do.

- 1.2. *Increase the proportion of graduating students who report having transformative learning experiences.*

**Rationale** “Transformation,” says Mezirow (1991), “is a deep and structural shift in the basic premises of our thoughts, feelings, and actions; it represents a permanent evolution in the way we filter, engage in, and interpret the world around us” (as cited in Hunter, 2008, p. 94). Although we cannot force all students to be transformed by their experiences at Truman, we can encourage participation in those learning opportunities that tend to produce transformative experiences. We can also utilize the science of learning to help us improve the likelihood that a learning activity will become or begin a transformation within a student. Strategies and action plans that are developed to support this goal will help us to define, identify, increase, and enhance students’ opportunities for deep learning as well as change perception and behavior.

- 1.3. *Target support services and programming to enhance student success and well-being.*

**Rationale** Research indicates that students’ need for a wide array of support services will increase (Michigan State University News, 2011; Gallagher Higher Education Practice, 2011), along with expectations for amenities (Inside Higher Ed,

2011). In describing this generation of college students, Howe and Strauss (2007) conclude “the nature of every college function from admissions to campus life to the classroom to career counseling will change dramatically” (p. 3) in response to the demands of a new generation of students and their parents.

Furthermore, data suggest that health and recreational services, academic support, and opportunities to connect in meaningful ways with peers are critical to recruiting and retaining students (Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot & Associates, 2005). These experiences and services also contribute to learning and satisfaction with the institution (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Strategies and action plans associated with this goal will help to build new and enhance existing support structures. These strategies and actions should also serve to prepare our institution for the needs of students who may be substantially different in terms of demographics than our current student population.

- 1.4. *Enhance achievement of student learning outcomes by supporting increased use of pedagogical approaches fostering deep learning, student engagement, and application of knowledge to solve real world problems.*

**Rationale** In order to better engage this generation of students in the learning process while preparing them to contribute significantly to society after graduation, pedagogical approaches that integrate classroom learning with authentic life experiences are critical. Strategies and action plans associated with goal 1.4 will increase the number and enhance the quality of these types of experiences within our curriculum.

Students use deep approaches to learning when they view the material as personally meaningful and relevant, “integrating and synthesizing information with prior learning in ways that become part of one’s thinking” (Laird, Shoup & Kuh, 2005, p. 4). Deep learning is essential if graduates are to effectively solve problems and think critically (Tagg 2003).

Innovation of this degree cannot be accomplished without support for the individuals that will envision and implement it. It is vital that we provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff related to this goal.

- 1.5. *Attract and retain students based on our strong curricular and cocurricular programs, as well as affordability.*

**Rationale** Radford and Tasoff (2009) report that most students (66.4%) list “affordable” as a major reason for enrolling in an institution of higher education. CIRP

data (Truman State University, 2010) indicate that 70.2% of students cite financial assistance as a reason for selecting Truman. However, research also points out that students and parents are willing to pay more for institutions they think offer certain qualities or characteristics they believe cannot be found at other colleges or universities. This underscores the importance that institutions explore, understand, and communicate the substantive qualities that truly differentiate them from competitors in ways that matter to prospective students and parents in their choice of a college (College Board and Art & Science Group LLC, 2010). Strategies and action plans associated with this goal will ensure that the quality of our curricular and co-curricular programs will attract students irrespective of financial assistance.

## **Theme 2: Securing Financial Stability and Growth**

*We will ensure a sound financial future through two interrelated approaches. First and foremost, we will develop creative approaches to conscientious stewardship of the diminishing resources entrusted to us. Second, we will generate additional sources of revenue in order to secure the University mission.*

**Rationale** Stewardship of resources is a fiduciary responsibility that is foundational to our status as a public institution. This is even more important when faced with significant financial difficulties. Additionally, every constituency with whom we spoke during our stakeholder conversations recognized that we will continue to face these challenges throughout the next five years. Clearly, stewardship is critical in everything we do.

It is important to understand that the people we employ are the most vital resources we have. In the midst of current challenges, we must not lose sight of our obligation to support and fairly compensate our faculty and staff. Thus, stewardship of human resources is an important aspect of our efforts on this front.

Levels of state funding may fluctuate over the next few years but it is unlikely that we will ever return to the levels of state support that we enjoyed five years ago. In addition, we will be held more accountable for the support we do receive. The purpose of the goals associated with this theme is to diversify the sources of funding on which Truman depends in order to create a secure financial future and generate the financial resources necessary to sustain the Truman Experience.

By 2015, Truman State University will:

- 2.1. *Diversify funding sources and ensure the revenue necessary to deliver high quality programs and services and to provide student financial assistance by enhancing private sector support.*

**Rationale** Continued competition for precious resources in higher education along with the simultaneous increasing expectations of parents, students and other stakeholders, has forced institution administrators to look for significant alternatives for funding. . . Consequently, institutions that in past decades did not have complex and sophisticated fundraising operations are now turning to fundraising to procure revenue (Armino, Clinton & Harpster, 2010, p. 31).

Truman has now concluded its first major fundraising campaign and we are pleased that it surpassed the stated goal. It is important that we build upon this success with fundraising in order to ensure continued growth in the future. Strategies and action plans resulting from this goal will prepare us for our next comprehensive campaign and ensure consistent and substantial growth in our endowment far into the future.

- 2.2. *Build our overall enrollment with an appropriate mix of ethnic, economic and geographic diversity in undergraduate and graduate enrollment, consistent with our highly selective admissions category.*

**Rationale** The environmental scanning process reaffirmed our understanding that competition and a shrinking pool of students could compromise our ability to recruit students in the future. This fact notwithstanding, it is critical that we continue to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of qualified students over the next five years and beyond.

Strong enrollment numbers and qualified applicants are not only important to us financially but also to ensure a quality educational experience for our students. Strategies and action plans associated with this goal will result in a steady stream of first year, transfer, graduate, international, and even part-time and nontraditional students who possess qualifications consistent with our admissions status.

- 2.3. *Support the efforts of the Truman Institute to increase institutional revenue, such that the Institute provides a net annual financial contribution in the amount of \$500,000 to University revenue by 2015.*

**Rationale** As described on its website, “the Truman Institute was conceived in early 2009 as an initiative to address a range of University needs, including development of programs and partnerships to generate revenue and support Truman’s mission” (<http://institute.truman.edu>). The success of the Truman Institute will require the support of the entire campus community and will be critical to our diversified financial model. Strategies and action plans developed in support of goal 2.3 should involve a wide variety of entrepreneurial collaborations among departments, offices, individuals

and the Truman Institute that result in increased revenues, enhanced opportunities for our campus community and off-campus partners, and new connections with alumni and friends.

2.4. *Make campus more sustainable by reducing consumption of resources.*

**Rationale** “Sustainability is about balance. Ecological sustainability will occur when humanity consumes elements of the biosphere at a rate that does not exceed their regeneration and emits only as much waste as can be absorbed by biological systems. Economic sustainability is achieved when our expenditures are commensurate with our income in the long run and our use of economic resources is fair. . . . Social sustainability requires general well-being, justice, and peace; inequities are not sustainable” (Merkel and Litten, 2007, p. 9).

The purpose of goal 2.4 is to emphasize to our community the importance of considering the sustainability of our various practices. Whether the resources consumed are financial, environmental, or human capital, we need to ensure that our practices are in balance for the long haul. Strategies and action plans supporting the triple bottom line (finances, planet, and people) should result from this goal.

2.5. *Increase organizational effectiveness and enhance student learning through innovative and appropriate use of technologies.*

**Rationale** Wise use of technology can save resources. However, this goal goes beyond saving and utilizing resources more efficiently. It also includes understanding and managing the impact of information technology on the institution, thus preparing Truman to harness information technology that will serve us well and to address technologies that can be disruptive.

Innovative application of technology, such as data mining and analytics, can assist us in making sound decisions while strengthening our efforts in assessment. It can also improve the learning experience of our students by supporting an educational environment that reflects their lives now and into the future. This must be done through strategic, targeted implementations of software and hardware in ways that clearly support the learning of students.

While recognizing that technology is increasingly changing the education ecosystem (that is, the interrelationship of the student, teacher, researcher, administrator and individuals beyond the institution), strategies and action plans associated with goal 2.5 should focus on applications of technology that directly or indirectly improve the Truman Experience for students and increase organizational effectiveness.

### **Theme 3: Building Community and Collaboration**

*We will foster institutional commitment through shared purposes, sustained by a supportive and caring Truman community, and strengthened through collaborative partnerships with those beyond the campus.*

**Rationale** When an organization goes through periods of financial challenges and uncertainty, it may become fragmented and alienated or it may draw together in mutual support. The importance of community was noted by John Winthrop, who asserted “...we must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes...our community as members of the same body” (Winthrop, 1972, p. 143-4).

As we engaged in conversations with the various stakeholders during our preparation for this strategic plan, the importance of reaching out to our extended community of friends and potential friends as well as our colleagues and students in order to strengthen relationships was mentioned in all of the groups. A renewed emphasis on building communities will not only ensure that we emerge from these challenging times stronger and more unified, but will also create a more collegial and collaborative work environment, increase opportunities to share resources, enhance student learning, and generate external support and commitment for what we do. The goals offered in support of this planning theme will help direct our efforts to these ends. This theme is designed to encourage us to share the Truman Experience with internal and external constituencies.

By 2015, Truman State University will:

*3.1. Expand the number of off-campus partnerships that contribute to student learning.*

**Rationale** Goal 1.2 addresses the need to provide more transformational learning opportunities for our students. Many of these transformational activities, such as internships, study abroad, and service learning, require off-campus partnerships. A joint task force of the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2010) tasked with looking at the future of higher education concluded: “Meeting the needs of our students and institutions also demand creating partnerships beyond local, state, and national boundaries” (p. 9). Strategies and action plans associated with this goal will help us focus on those relationships with off-campus partners that will help our students learn, develop, and embrace multiple experiences.

*3.2. Increase the opportunities for students, faculty and staff to network with alumni.*

**Rationale** Relationships with alumni are critically important to for our students. This was verified in the most recent version of the Student Senate Vision Document (2010): “Alumni should give their time to the university in ways beyond serving on

the Alumni Board. The alumni should be examples to the students in terms of possibilities beyond Truman” (p. 24). Engaging alumni in presentations, mentoring, social gatherings, service on advisory boards, and recruitment activities will benefit students and strengthen alumni relationships with the University.

Connecting alumni and students begins by building even stronger connections between alumni and faculty, and between alumni and staff. Considered collectively, these relationships will benefit the University in many ways - from establishing employment networks to cultivating potential donors to the university. Strategies and action plans developed to address this goal will cultivate and enhance mutually beneficial relationships among the students, alumni, and the University.

3.3. *Increase opportunities for interaction among students and the local community through events and activities on and off campus.*

**Rationale** Kirksville is Truman’s home and the University has an interdependent relationship with this city. As Truman prospers, Kirksville will prosper and as Kirksville develops, Truman will benefit. Our students said it best:

Truman’s future is intertwined with the future of Kirksville. As the largest employer in the city, Truman is an integral part of Kirksville’s economy and many businesses depend on Truman students’ patronage. There are several great programs that bring the two communities together, such as the Truman Lyceum series, SERVE Center and the Big Event. However, to many people in Kirksville, Truman seems isolated from the community. Similarly, many Truman students do not share a strong identity with Kirksville. To some degree, each community feels a lack of ownership of the other. . . Rather than viewing Kirksville’s size as a roadblock, we must see it as a unique opportunity to develop a close and rewarding relationship (Student Senate, 2010, p. 16).

We need to engage in a concerted effort to ensure that the relationships between the University and the community are strong and positive. Our students can be our best ambassadors in doing so. The purpose of this goal is to generate strategies and action plans aimed at strengthening Truman’s relationships with the Kirksville community and their relationships with us.

3.4. *Promote a sense of community, enhance the quality of life, and increase satisfaction among faculty, staff and students by creating opportunities for collaboration and interaction.*

**Rationale** A supportive and caring faculty and staff that is passionate about Truman results in better recruitment and retention rates for faculty, staff, *and* students. A strong community creates a positive and stimulating environment in which to learn and work. Productive and innovative collaborations will result from such a community. Collaboration will help us better meet all of the goals outlined in this plan.

“Higher education institutions are realizing the importance of enabling internal collaboration to create a better learning environment” (Kezar and Lester, 2009, p. 160). Kezar and Lester go on to articulate the many advantages of a collaborative environment within institutions of higher education including improved innovation and learning, improved problem-solving, better service, employee motivation, and cost efficiency. Strategies and action plans related to this goal should ultimately increase faculty, staff, and student satisfaction with our campus community.

- 3.5. *Expand the public profile of Truman by strengthening our image and communicating our unique learning opportunities across the state, nation, and world.*

**Rationale** Although it is prudent to diversify our sources of financial support, Truman State University will always be a public institution committed to the goal of access to a quality liberal arts and sciences education in a residential setting for high ability students. Therefore, we must tell our story to policy makers and the public in ways that demonstrate even more powerfully the importance of such an education. Our efforts will be most effective as alumni and current students add their voices, sharing the vast range of benefits that have accrued to them personally. It also means communicating more effectively the economic and civic impacts made by liberally educated citizens. Most importantly, it means helping the public see that a Truman education produces individuals who can think independently, conceptually and creatively about themselves and their world and who will be prepared to lead regardless of the issues facing our communities, our nation, and our world.

Telling our story is philosophically and practically the right thing to do. As we advocate to policy makers regarding the value of publicly funded education and the unique role played by Truman, we are also telling our story to potential donors, employers and students. Our Brand Plan created by the Office of Admissions (2010) articulates, in part, this unique story:

In all of their efforts, our students, faculty, staff, and alumni are focused on personal integrity and making positive contributions as well as achieving success and fulfillment in their own lives. Their efforts help to forge lasting

relationships and reflect the University's commitment to the value of higher education (p. 3).

We must take responsibility for understanding, articulating, and sharing the Truman story ourselves. Strategies and action plans associated with this goal should encourage every member of our community in spreading the word about the Truman Experience. As each individual member of our community learns about, contributes to, and shares the Truman story, we can improve our public profile.

## **Conclusion**

No decision is made in isolation and future directions can only echo the context in which they are charted. As stated in the introduction, this plan will guide the decisions and actions of Truman constituents to achieve the University's Mission. The themes and goals described in this document will serve as the foundation for the strategies and action plans that will follow.

If Truman is to be true to our mission, and public purpose these themes and goals will provide the course for making that responsibility a reality. While it is true this journey is fraught with uncertainty, our destination is unmovable--to offer an exemplary and affordable public, residential education to well-prepared students that is grounded in the liberal arts. To this end, by implementing this strategic plan collectively, we will become one in voice and action.

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## Appendix A

### Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Activities

The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee was charged to produce a working document by the end of the 2010 academic year. While the timeline was short, the committee intended the process to be as thorough and transparent as possible - creating the strategic planning document through a three phase approach: 1) Fact-finding Phase, 2) Refining Phase, and 3) Presentation Phase. The activities for each of these phases are outlined below. Two remaining phases of the strategic planning process are also outlined below.

<b>Phase and Timeline</b>	<b>Representative Activities</b>
<p>1) Fact-finding Phase</p> <p><b><i>Sept 9, 2010 – Dec 10, 2010</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Gather information regarding the organizational context in order to prepare planning themes.</i></b></p> <p>During the Fact-finding Phase the committee outlined its goals, developed a communication plan and sought input through numerous environmental scans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated a discussion about Truman priorities, environmental impacts, and what a successful strategic plan would look like. The committee reviewed reports from 36 separate campus conversations. The conversations were held with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 11 Student Sessions</li> <li>○ 11 Staff Sessions</li> <li>○ 10 Faculty Sessions</li> <li>○ Utilized a survey instrument for those individuals who could not attend a session.</li> <li>○ Parent’s Advisory Council, Deans Group, Faculty Senate, and the Board of Governors</li> <li>○ Distributed a survey to the Alumni Board.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 15 Environmental Scanning reports were presented to the committee. These reports presented trends and other impacts that could affect Truman in the next five years and beyond.</li> <li>• Created a liaison structure to work with existing campus groups and committees to ensure a continuous feedback loop was in place.</li> <li>• Set up a website to share committee activities and reports, and utilized email and the <i>Truman Today</i> to keep the Truman community aware of the committee’s activities.</li> <li>• Began drafting the initial planning themes.</li> </ul> <p>The fact-finding phase culminated in a summary report of the findings from the environmental scan, and this information was shared with the Board of Governors.</p>
<p>2) Refining Phase</p> <p><b><i>Jan 1, 2011 – Apr 15, 2011</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Gather input from the Truman Community regarding the draft of the themes, goals and indicators, and create a draft strategic plan.</i></b></p> <p>The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee carefully reviewed the feedback it</p>

received from stakeholders throughout the Fall term and constructed an initial draft of three broad *Planning Themes*. In the process of developing the themes, the committee:

1. emphasized that, even though every comment from the environmental scan could not be included, all comments were carefully considered in drafting the theme narratives,
2. developed goal targets that could be supported by measureable indicators, and
3. reviewed the charge that the plan would be an active tool in guiding institutional decision making.

#### *Developing the Goals/Objectives and Indicators*

A draft of the planning themes was presented to faculty and staff during University Conference Day, and groups were invited to identify goals/objectives and corresponding indicators for each theme. Each group outlined their discussion on chart-paper which was collected and later reviewed by the committee.

- The committee reviewed the feedback, identified areas of similarity, repetitions, and outliers, and developed a consistent and representative set of objectives for each theme.
- A sample set of indicators was then crafted for each goal/objective.
- Held forums with faculty, staff and student groups to get feedback on the goals/objectives and indicators developed.
- Utilized an online survey to gather feedback on the goals/objectives and indicators from those who could not attend one of the forums.
- Utilized the liaison structure to gather feedback on the goals/objectives and indicators.

#### *Confirming the Direction of the Planning Document*

- Utilized an online survey to gather feedback on the planning document, focusing on a review of the planning themes.
- Presented the planning document to the Foundation Board and the Board of Governors.
- External Marketing Study - Developed a survey instrument to gather feedback from targeted groups/individuals external to Truman.

#### *Mission Statement Review*

As a result of some of the new directions established for the University, the committee was asked to review the University mission statement and recommend changes as appropriate.

The refining phase resulted in an initial draft of the Strategic Plan, which consists of planning themes along with their corresponding goals and representative sample indicators. A revised mission statement was also developed for further campus review.

<p>3) Presentation Phase</p> <p><i>Apr 15, 2011 - Aug 11, 2011</i></p>	<p><i>Gather input from the Truman Community regarding the draft document and make appropriate adjustments. Conduct a “market study” seeking input from various external stakeholder groups. Present the final document to the Board of Governors.</i></p>
<p><b>Remaining Phases in Implementation of the Strategic Plan</b></p>	
<p>4. Detail Phase</p> <p><b>Aug 11, 2011- Dec. 15, 2011</b></p>	<p>Develop strategies, action plans and select indicators.</p>
<p>5. Implementation and Assessment Phase</p> <p><b>Dec. 15, 2011 - Dec 15, 2015</b></p>	<p>Implementation of plan and assessment of progress toward goals. Annual reports submitted. Adjustments and refinements will be made as appropriate.</p>

## Appendix B

### Vision for Truman State University Graduates

*(Affirming the Promise, 2007, p. 2)*

Truman graduates are creative, socially responsible leaders and engaged world citizens. They are responsible, informed, and compassionate. Upon graduation, they will have the tools and characteristics that will enable them to be active, successful participants in their worlds. They will be known to:

- Ask questions and passionately seek knowledge;
- Strive for personal integrity and professional excellence;
- Demonstrate courageous, visionary, and service-oriented leadership;
- Act ethically, responsibly, and with reflective judgment;
- Appreciate ambiguity and thrive in unfamiliar, rapidly changing situations;
- Understand and articulate well-reasoned arguments;
- Welcome and value new and diverse perspectives;
- Live emotionally and physically healthy lives; and
- Give generously of their time, talents, and financial resources to causes in which they believe.