

Library Staff

Discussion of University Strategic Planning

On November 9, faculty and staff of Pickler Memorial Library met to discuss the questions raised by the University's strategic planning team. The following is a summary of our discussion.

1. *Is becoming "the premier public liberal arts and sciences institution in the nation" a compelling vision statement for you? Why or why not?*

Library faculty and staff generally felt that this was not a compelling vision statement.

We are not certain what it means. Some feel that this implies stronger support for programs such as study abroad and the Distinguished Visiting Scholars series. Others feel that it implies student services such as including laptops and textbooks in the cost of tuition. Without expected funding for programs or services such as these, the vision statement is unrealistic as it is worded.

Our budget outlook suggests that we will need more collaboration with other individuals and other institutions to achieve "premier" liberal arts education.

Some feel that the phrase "in the nation" should be dropped or replaced with "in the Midwest" or "in the region."

It was pointed out that since the mission change we have built our reputation as a very good school, and any change in the vision statement should be consistent with this reputation.

2. *What is the most important priority for Truman over the next five years?*

The following suggestions were made:

Money. Particularly to attract and maintain faculty and staff.

Build relationships to increase funding and opportunities.

Student recruitment and retention.

Don't lose ground.

- Don't become less selective.
- Don't drive faculty and staff away through overwork and underpay.
- Develop sources of funding other than the state.

3. *What assumptions about the next five years are reasonable for us to make regarding budget, staffing, technology, political realities, student needs and expectations, and practices in higher education?*

- Budget

Funding will increasingly come from outside the state.

Scholarships should decrease, and should come from outside sources rather than general funds.

- Staffing

Staffing will not be growing.

We do not know whether staff will be cut further; we do not know whether it *can* be.

- Technology

Technology will change, with increases in mobile technology.

Greater need for technology training for faculty and staff.

- Political Realities

Political support for higher education is uncertain.

Term limits decrease the importance of relationships with specific legislators, and increase the importance of Truman's own efforts to maintain political currency and persuasiveness, including the use of lobbyists.

- Student Needs and Expectations

Students expect to find academic materials in the library, including journals, and library funding is still necessary to achieve that.

Students expect, demand, and depend on technological support and personal service.

As support for K-12 education is also cut, students may be increasingly underprepared in key subjects.

- Practices in Higher Education

Online courses will be increasingly prevalent. Truman may want to use online for some core courses in order to emphasize the classroom "Truman experience" more effectively in others.

Professional education and certification programs for nontraditional students will increase.

Economic conditions mean that practical experiences will be valued, including more internships, vocational guidance, assistance with applying to grad schools, and undergraduate research. Truman is in a position to ramp up unique experiences.

4. *In your opinion, what would be the characteristics of a successful strategic plan for Truman for 2011-15?*

A successful strategic plan would attend to assumptions discussed in #3, be realistic and measurable, short enough that everybody knows what it says, and keep the University's mission in mind.