

SPAC Staff Forum

October 21, 2010

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

- Eventually, aren't you done “becoming”. Sounds fine but why not strive for being at the top? How do you define “premier”? Is it the same or different than what we do now? There is no clear picture of what “premier” means.
- Not compelling because comparing to others. Talk about the Truman Experience and being different. We want to be very good at what we do. Don't want to be best of many but unique. How do we define “premier”? It's not necessarily what U.S. News tells us. Needs to be something we define by ourselves.
- Serious discomfort with “premier”.
- Punctuate our student focus – communicate they are the number one priority.
- Still questions about definition. When are we done “becoming”?
- Comparing to others but see a unique mission.
- Student focused.
- Not as concerned with being premier but best that we can be. If we believe what we're doing is best for students, we can be different. It's OK if being true to our core is happening. Perhaps the most important indicator we've achieved is if our students say they have had a quality experience. Student opinion is the litmus test. More important than comparing to others.
- I didn't say right after graduation that I had the best experience at Truman but realized how great it was once I got in the work force. What is the instrument to get at that question? Alumni? May need multiple measures to define.

Flip Chart Notes:

1. Definition

- When are we finished ‘becoming?’
- How is premier defined?
- We're comparing ourselves to others. If we want to be a unique institution, isn't this a conflict? We need to define ourselves.

2. Comparison to others – want us to be the best **we** can be.

- We need to strive to be the best, but how is this defined? How is this different than what we are?
- We're comparing ourselves to others. If we want to be a unique institution, isn't this a conflict? We need to define ourselves.

3. Student-focused

- We need to punctuate our student focus in our vision
- We're comparing ourselves to others. If we want to be a unique institution, isn't this a conflict? We need to define ourselves.

Other Notes:

- You want something that you strive for in your vision statement, does our current vision statement compel you to 'strive' for this?
- The vision may not be compelling to some because it is not well-defined

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

- Institutional survival. As an institution, whole goal is education of students; continuing to turn out best possible critical thinkers through the liberal arts. Best way to get a job or into a good graduate school is to be a critical thinker. Feels resistance from students about becoming a critical thinker. They want structured learning – what's on the test, etc. Professors have to push to make them think critically.
- Not to lose the Truman Experience. Make changes but protect the experience (however that is defined).
- Becoming financially stable. One of the things we'll struggle with is to find out a budget piece; we revamp and then have to change again because the budget changes. Hard to define overall experience when financially unstable. Hard to do as much programmatically as we would like. Hard to think about much other than budget-caused cuts.
- Willing to adapt to change. Five years ago the student population was different. Need to be understanding and go with whatever is. Budget cuts and need to change but provide best possible experience.
- Openness to change/adaptability is most important because of budget shifts. Need to be agile and not sacrifice the Truman Experience the best we can. Both finances and education side need consideration.
- Keeping integrity of excellence in the learning environment (online reference).
- Focus on efficiency; protecting people; streamlining processes.
- Growing our reputation on a more national level.
- Look at financial sustainability. Might not feel we're doing the best job but can sustain the experience for students.
- Certain core things we do as Truman need to make sense to students. Not so much what we offer as much as how it's offered. Can meet them halfway. Important to adapt to the changes but not sacrifice integrity. Goes along with efficiencies as well. Focus on what's important to make easier for us or maintain processes but make it easier for the students without sacrificing the integrity of the educational experience.

Flip Chart Notes:

1. Integrity of Learning Environment

- Keep integrity of the learning environment
- Need to grow our national reputation
- Sustain experience for our students
- The whole goal is education of students (including some of the things they might not appreciate right now, we need to ensure we keep critical thinking and other core outcomes as part of their education)

- Don't lose focus on the Truman Experience

2. Financial Stability

- Need to grow our national reputation
- Consistency is difficult to maintain in times of budget cuts

3. Adaptive to change

- Efficiency – Protect people and streamline processes
- Need to grow our national reputation
- Be willing to adapt to change. Our students are changing, we need to adapt our processes to be more in line with what they might be expecting.
- This may take more than 5 years.

Other Notes: Meeting students where they are may conflict with Learning Environment integrity (in other words, we can adapt to meet some of their needs, but we need to be careful that they don't define the learning environment).

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?

- For a staff member, asked to do the same or more with fewer resources.
- Less staff in general.
- With technology, our students will more and more expect us to be technologically current.
- Students in general will have higher expectations (and parents); more services for essentially less money, immediacy, opportunity, personal attention, convenience, accountability, meaningful activities. Less patience for trivial busywork.
- Need to do more for transition to adulthood – roommate, financial accountability (many students out of money; can't manage personal resources; worsening trend), haven't made decisions for themselves/parents make the decisions.
- Greater proportion of Hispanic and lower socio-economic; will have more need.
- Budget/support challenges.
- With all of education being cut severely, including K-12, a less staff, and higher national expectations – students could be coming with different levels of preparation and expectations. As programs are cut will students assume they are also not available at Truman. (ex. Music is being cut in some high school so will those students assume the music program here is also cut.)
- Changing demographics. Level of preparation is varying. We've already had to establish the CHEM 129 course to help bring some up to speed. Found many coming in unprepared for college level chemistry. We can assume there will be a need to adjust other areas but can't compromise the integrity of programs.
- Will be more transfer students.
- Nontraditional student numbers will grow. Biggest growth in higher education will be in non-profits (attract both traditional and non-traditional). Assume will need to look further out geographically for recruits.

Flip Chart Notes:

1. Budget challenges

- Do more with less
- We will have fewer staff in general
- We may lose traditional students to for-profit institutions

2. Higher expectations and needs

- Student expect technology currency
- Students need help adjusting to adulthood (in budgeting, decision-making, etc.)
- We're not serving non-traditional students well
- There will be more transfer students (economics and preparedness will be factors)
- Higher expectations from students and parents

More services

More immediacy

More personal attention

More convenience

More opportunities

More accountability

More meaning (don't want to do trivial work in their classes)

3. Preparedness

- Students may not have experiences in high school that we expected them to due to budget cuts, which could lead to students who are less prepared than in the past. We may need more preparatory courses.

4. Recruitment

- There will be more transfer students (economics and preparedness will be factors)
- We're not serving non-traditional students well
- We may lose traditional students to for-profit institutions
- We may have to find students from further afield

5. Stay connected to Alumni

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

- Direction.
- Feels stuff coming out is too word heavy. Need to be able to summarize in few words. Needs to have clarity, concise, be able to be understood easily. Staff and students both need to be able to see where what they do fits into the plan. Awareness of language. No student uses the word "premier". Summarize in a few words (background document can be deeper).
- Clear vision/direction. If we have vision statement needs to be easily understood how get to it. Something that can find support, be achievable.
- Accountable (can't be well written and forgotten).
- Retain affordability.

- Recognizing this is a five year plan – needs short term goals and then long term goals that extend beyond five years.
- Everyone is a part of it. Sometimes there is a strategic plan and areas decide it doesn't apply to them. Needs to be everyone's plan – grounds, math department, students, etc.
- Incorporate community; foster community in the plan.

Additional comments:

What is compelling? Where it's not compelling is that it's not defined. Makes direction impossible. Must define who we actually are or are striving to become. Needs to be a document that reflects a student-focused community that prepares students for life. Current is more of a mission statement, not a vision. Vision needs to be something you strive for every day.

What is bold? Trying something new and innovative that could be seen by public. If could be doing something bold "we're worth it". Would be very valuable. Purposefully accepting change and taking risks.

Side note: Need to do a better job staying connected to alums.

Flip Chart Notes:

1. Direction

- Provides direction for where we want to go
- Clear vision, with achievability
- Has both short- and long-term goals

2. Accountability

- The plan makes us accountable
- Retains affordability
- Has both short- and long-term goals

3. Pervasive and Practical

- Clear vision, with achievability
- Everyone is a part of it (fosters community)