

Student Affairs Directors

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

- Pessimistic about our ability to change to the degree necessary based on the results of the Curriculum Commission
- This vision appears to be out of our control – who declares that we have achieved it.
- The “premier” part is very difficult to achieve outside of academic areas. In other higher education professional circles (such as Student Affairs) we are unknown – we do not have the resources in these other areas to achieve a “premier” status
- Too ambitious based on our resources
- Need more evidence that we can achieve it such as a path and target criteria before it will be compelling.
- Everyone needs to know what it means.
- Should we define ourselves by others?
- To be truly “premier” we must be innovative and we aren’t.

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

- That we are still employed.
- Define ourselves better
- More collaborative; a spirit of collegiality
- Enrollment
- Stabilize financial support
- Focus on the best interest of the students rather than on maintaining existing systems
- Everything we do needs to be intentional – with a student learning purpose
- Doing things as we have always done them will no longer work
- Need to articulate who we are and what we do; need to be unique
- Communicate the importance of the residential experience
- We need to focus on assessment to demonstrate the quality of what we do
- Balancing finances with student experience – make sure these goals work together rather than in opposition
- The entire campus has to have the same vision of what the Truman Experience should be – now there are very different ideas.
- We must maximize the power of the residential environment to contribute to the benefit of the students.

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: Not going to be great; we will never get more from the State; lack of stability makes it difficult to plan – very unpredictable; it will also be very difficult to maintain quality.

- Staffing: It may be difficult to keep the people that we currently have and not overwork the staff that we do keep; how will we maintain quality with turn over; good pools of applicants are a realistic option given recent experience and with the sluggish job market in higher education; morale will be a challenge and there will be increased pressure to perform; everyone wants more from us – government; administration, faculty, students, parents, etc.
- Technology: demands are higher (bandwidth); we are very dependent upon it; we are behind the times in technology and are likely to stay that way; there is a reluctance to use technology such as on-line courses; demands on IT leads to unresponsiveness (took a month to get a phone) this is likely to continue; students are not very nice people when it comes to their use of technology
- Student Needs and Expectations: Asking for more and more; every student comes with parents who are just as demanding; we have become more of a marketplace – everyone wants to know what they are getting for the fees they pay and it is never good enough; even small fees lead to more and unrealistic expectations; reactions to events are exaggerated, situations become critical very quickly; not just providing education, we are expected to anticipate and meet all kinds of needs; mental health problems, disabilities, all of the issues that are a major drain on our resources are on the rise; students at Truman seem to be more needy than students at other institutions where staff has worked; all of the demands make us better; we need to work towards a more “the customer is always right” philosophy; expectations are not realistic

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

- People will actually follow it
- Work on it as an institution
- It will be simple; appeal to external constituencies
- Everyone must own it
- Students have to feel heard
- We have little faith in committees – decisions are often done to me rather than with me
- Staff distrust of administration needs to be overcome
- Accountability and transparency
- All areas must be held accountable; Student Affairs has paid attention to strategic plans but not true of other areas
- Focus on the future; don't focus on the past. Value added means nothing to new people
- The strategic plan must be followed; deadlines must be established and met
- The document must be easy to understand without fifteen years of institutional history
- Some people at Truman are “historical bullies”. They will not allow any new ideas.
- Committee make ups never change – there needs to be a good mix of people – it is hard to be a new person at Truman
- Keep it simple stupid.