

Student Government Resolution xxx
A Resolution Recommending The Incorporation of Student Feedback in the Development
of the New Liberal Studies Program

Sponsored by Deanna Schmidt, Academic Affairs Chair; Adam Barker, Katie Alexander,
and Maura Shimmens, Academic Affairs Committee Members

WHEREAS,

- The Student Government is the official governing body of the Student Association and exists to represent the present and long term best interests of the Student Association in the formulation of the University policy and in the fulfillment of the University mission; and
- In following through with the goals set forth by Student Government Resolution 117.002¹, the Truman State University Student Government organized two student forums in October 2017 to receive student feedback on proposed curriculum changes; and
- These forums provided students with the opportunity to learn, discuss, and ask questions about two proposed curriculums, Dialogues (“Plan A”) and Revised Dialogues (“Plan B”), from faculty members involved in the formation of the two plans: Dr. Bridget Thomas and Dr. Debra Cartwright, respectively; and
- The forum held on Tuesday, October 10 recorded 12 students in attendance, and the forum held on Wednesday, October 11 recorded over 30 students; and
- The faculty presentations at the forum on October 11 were recorded and posted on the Student Government Facebook page, allowing students who were unable to physically attend the forum to watch the videos; and
- A survey was developed through the cooperation of the Student Government Academic Affairs Committee with Dr. Thomas and Dr. Cartwright, aiming to collect concrete feedback from students to better understand and compare students’ opinions on the matter; and
- The survey was distributed to all students who attended at least one of the forums and was also posted on the Student Government Facebook page to receive input from students who viewed the recorded videos; and
- The survey was closed one week after the forums, and received a total of 46 responses from students, with 24 students indicating they attended a forum, 14 indicating they watched the available presentation videos, and 8 students failing to indicate their experience; and
- The following data from the survey responses were analyzed, compiled, and published by Student Government in hopes to better communicate student opinions in the matter²; and
- In reference to the current Liberal Studies Program, multiple students responded with praise of the breadth, ability to explore various interests, formation of “well-rounded” students, the junior interdisciplinary seminar (JINS), and the available test-out options for some required courses; and

¹ A Resolution Encouraging Faculty Senate to Postpone Voting on Curriculum Changes (Cooper)

² <http://wp-internal.truman.edu/provost/files/2015/01/LSP-Survey-Student-Government-Summary.pdf>

- Multiple students communicated their dislike of the current state of the required health courses, the constraining options and lack of clarity within the Modes, the difficulties of testing out of COMM 170, and the disjointed feeling among different parts of the current Liberal Studies Program; and
- Many students indicated disapproval of the idea of a common seminar requiring night components for all students; and
- Multiple students expressed concerns that Plan A's proposed Identity/Ideas & Inquiry Seminars will count for too many credit hours and will seem excessive to students; and
- A majority of students (33 of 46) supported the idea of distributing required classes into four "Worlds" (Natural, Social, Creative, and Symbolic), but some expressed concerns that it will give students too much freedom to choose classes entirely in one discipline; and
- A majority of students (35 of 46) supported the idea of requiring each student to partake in at least one "High Impact Experience" as a graduation requirement; and
- A majority of students (35 of 46) also supported the incorporation of an optional fulfillment of Essential Skills (speech and writing) into the Identity/Ideas & Inquiry Seminars without additional coursework; and
- Students appeared divided in terms of splitting the common experience into two parts (the Self and Society Seminar and the Truman Symposium), sharing comments in support of the less strenuous scheduling commitment but expressing concerns about the required evening meeting times and potential burdens placed on Residence Life; and
- Students also had moderate responses regarding the distribution of classes into "Perspectives," communicating confusion about how it would be different from the current curriculum; and
- Many students indicated a desire to see a compromise between the structure of the Perspectives and the flexibility of the Worlds; and
- A significant majority of students (32 of 46) supported the incorporation of a required Wellness Activity into the new curriculum; and
- The few students who were not in support of the requirement of a Wellness Activity indicated concerns about the vagueness of the proposal, suggesting the implementation of accountability standards to ensure students actually fulfill this requirement; and
- A vast majority of students (34 of 45) were in support of the incorporation of learning outcomes of Essential Skills courses such as speech, writing, and critical thinking into the Self and Society Seminar; and
- Most students indicated a desire to see the development of a stronger, more unifying common experience shared by all Truman students, suggesting the incorporation of more opportunities to build community, aid with the transition to college life, and exposure to the liberal arts and expectations in Truman classrooms over an extended amount of time as opposed to a few days before the first day of the academic year; and
- When asked about the overarching ideals of Truman's Liberal Studies Program, most students indicated strong support of the concepts of distinctiveness among other universities, achieving clearly defined learning outcomes and skill sets, and breadth; and

- Nearly half of the students who completed the survey (21 of 46) indicated that flexibility is the most important ideal of Truman's Liberal Studies Program; and
- Although the number of responses received in proportion to the total student body is relatively low, Student Government members have been very engaged and active in this discussion over the course of the past few months.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT,

- Recommends the inclusion of the requirement of a High Impact Experience in the new Liberal Studies Program; and
- Recommends the inclusion of a Wellness Activity, but encourages the enforcement of clearly defined guidelines so that students are held accountable; and
- Recommends maintaining opportunities for opting out of Essential Skills courses; and
- Recommends reconsidering requiring common experiences in the evenings; and
- Recommends further discussion of the possibility of a compromise between the Worlds and Perspectives models of class distributions; and
- Requests that faculty and administration continue to include students in further discussion of this core curriculum.

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT DIRECTS THAT,

Additional copies of this resolution be disseminated to President Sue Thomas; Truman State University Board of Governors, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Janet Gooch; Executive Secretary to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, DeeDee Moore; Vice President of Student Affairs, Lou Ann Gilchrist; Faculty Senate Executive Committee; each current member of the Truman State University Faculty Senate, with specific attention to Dr. Debra Cartwright, Dr. Bridget Thomas, and Dr. Candy Young; Truman Media Network; and the University Archives.