

End of the Year Report: President and Vice President of the Student Association
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2020-2021

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Leading and Working Together as President and Vice President

You don't have to work together, but you definitely should. In our experience, having a partnership between the President & VP resulted in more effective leadership for our body and a more fun and easier time for both of us in our positions. We had pretty different styles of leadership and came from different backgrounds. We would sometimes do things in different ways or voice different opinions, but we think that having those differences while still being friends and working together helped present an example of respect and collaboration to the body. Our partnership was also so helpful for us as we knew we had someone we could go to about problems and someone who had our back. This made the challenges of our positions far less isolating, and we had someone to ask for help if we had a stressful week and couldn't do everything we need to do. Here are some key tips for working together that we learned this year:

- Spend time together in the beginning of the year identifying and discussing your different communication styles and needs in your position. For example, do you need in person communication, or are Slack messages okay? How quickly do you expect responses? Would one of you prefer not to get messages after work hours? What is the best way to handle conflict?
- Set up a weekly meeting time at the beginning of the week to plan everything you need to do for that week, such as topics of discussion for your meetings or how you need to help chairs.
- Designate specific responsibilities. Assigning the small administrative tasks to one person for the entire year makes processes smoother for the entire body and can save you a lot of needless stress.
 - For example, Josh was always in charge of scheduling interviews and putting people in the Slack channel.

Experience of the President

Hi Shania and future presidents! I'm excited to be able to share some of my thoughts on this position with you. It has been a difficult year with a lot of unexpected challenges, but I've loved serving as President, and I'm grateful for the time I spent in this position. Being President is a responsibility that will constantly pull you in different ways: your desire to help younger members and chairs, your commitment to your own projects, the need to communicate well with the student body, the representation you provide through meetings with faculty and administration, the task of taking the bigger picture on what will improve the organization. Knowing that you are just one person of many members, the president is an important leader, and if there's any one person most responsible for setting the tone and making sure things run smoothly, it's you.

That said, my advice is two-fold. First, spend some time thinking over what grounds you in this position. What is your mission? Can you break that down? What does living out your mission like look from an overarching perspective down to your everyday interactions with members? Over time, maybe every few months, spend some time reflecting on how that's going. I did this in a spontaneous, casual way, and I really wish that I came into this position with a clearer focus and that I continued to reflect on my job. It is a big responsibility, and things move quickly. It's easy to lose track of what grounds you when many things demand your attention. And while this has been hard, I think I'll always look back and be so grateful for how I got to serve this body and the Truman community. It's definitely a worthwhile thing on which to reflect!

Second, while you have a lot of responsibilities, it's okay if you realize you can't do everything, or that you need to ask for help, or if something slips through the cracks. I had a mantra for myself -- "You can't be everything to everyone all the time." You have to set those boundaries or else they won't exist. Let yourself know it's okay to forget to tell someone something. Maybe don't check Slack at night. Allow yourself to wait to respond to an email. Be good to yourself. You are also just a student trying his or her best, and what you're trying to do for others is such an amazing thing!

I wanted to do something to really help the next people in this position live well. I was in a bit of a different situation with COVID-19 stress, but I found that I was quickly overwhelmed in this position with everything that the president officially and unofficially does. Here's my best attempt at a list, so that you can plan out deadlines better than I did and delegate to your VP or others in advance!

Responsibilities for the first spring/summer

1. Write your applications for positions, begin advertising, and possibly appoint a few positions you think are relevant for summer work or obvious choices.
2. Plan Truman Days -- take note of how many students will volunteer, plan volunteer events, plan a bonding event or two.

- a. You can connect with the Truman Days Committee for events. My advice is not to book up for whole days because that's pretty exhausting.
3. Order giveaways -- we typically do a combination of fun and practical with items that will get a lot of use either way.
4. Plan elections advertising for the fall as much as you can.
5. Get a head start on projects, but only if you want to!

Responsibilities throughout the year

1. Interview and appoint positions -- this includes chairs, associates, PR Director, IT Director, student representatives to organizations, Constitutional Review Board, ESFAC, AFAC, OAF, Sexual Assault Prevention, a conference chair if you choose, among others.
 - a. OAF is selected in conjunction with the other fee based presidents.
 - b. Start ESFAC, AFAC, and OAF as soon as you can in the fall. These committees take a while because they have more administrative constraints, and a harder learning curve for the chair.
2. Develop a system to check in with chairs on how their committees are going and what their plans are for the next few months. Josh and I did meetings once a semester, which went okay.
3. Try to connect with other MO presidents. We had a group chat this year, and that was a pretty cool opportunity for facilitating collaboration on issues that affect universities across the state.
4. Document your work in discussions with resolutions. A lot of what you get done will simply be representing students well in meetings, such as your meetings with Dr. Thomas. I wish that I had written resolutions to make our progress and future concerns more available to future members.
5. Get AFAC and ESFAC off the ground and advertise proposals. This will mean staffing a committee and helping the chair get started.
6. Regularly scheduled responsibilities:
 - a. Send **monthly** emails to the student body. These contain applications, important information items, etc. They now also have to contain resolutions passed, per a resolution this semester.
 - i. I recommend setting deadlines for these far in advance. They snuck up on me a lot.
 - b. Attend **monthly** Faculty Senate meetings and report on Student Government business and offer the student perspective on discussion.
 - i. The curricular things can be really boring, but what I didn't realize is that every class form really does make a difference for the student experience, either adding a great opportunity for coursework or potentially watering down the curriculum. I wish I had invested more in this.
 - c. Attend **weekly or every-other-week** meetings for AFAC and ESFAC. The President is supposed to attend all meetings or appoint a designee. Honestly, I didn't have time to do that, and I tried to check in via Slack every so often. That was fine for our ESFAC committee, but AFAC had more challenges. Do the best you can.

- d. Attend **weekly** meetings for Faculty Senate Executive Committee. This group sets the agenda for Faculty Senate and discusses big issues before other bodies.
- e. Attend **weekly** meetings with our advisors. In my experience, they should know as many small things as big things. You never know what small problem is a big problem under the surface, and they can really help.
- f. Attend **weekly** meetings with Dr. Thomas. My advice is to pick two or three big topics because discussion is usually long. Also, not everything needs to go directly to Dr. Thomas. Ask people below her first if that's relevant to your question to make sure we're respectful of her time.
- g. Attend and run **weekly** meetings with your Executive Committee. These are my favorite part of being president! You can turn this into a super helpful discussion environment. I stressed that Excomm was for helping each other, and I set a policy against working on your own homework during the meeting. We were a great working group and a lot of progress came from those meetings. We also had fun together :)

Responsibilities for the fall

1. Plan fall retreat!
 - a. We typically do a speaker and a bonding activity.
 - b. This is your time to get committee preferences from your members and staff the committees. We normally do this during the activity.
2. Plan a roundtable event for student feedback, if you'd like to continue with those (strongly recommend)!

Responsibilities for the Spring

1. Present to the Board of Governors. You will be invited to share the work of the organization through the year.
2. Plan Spring elections.
3. Plan Spring retreat -- we typically do an activity and we take time to read end of the year reports. You can do a speaker if you want to.
4. Write your end of the year report!
5. This is so fun -- do superlatives and serious awards at transition meeting!

Finally, just some practical advice:

- Keep a notes page on your phone with different subheadings, like "Reminders," "Dr. Thomas Questions," "Report Items," etc., and write down everything as soon as you think of it.
- Also, takes notes of meetings on paper. First of all, paper notes are just my personal preference in general because I think I can listen better. But second, it was helpful to me to have a little notebook that had all my Student Government discussions in it. That was a great resource for me when I started doing it. Also, take notes even though your secretary takes minutes if you're talking about important things. You'll remember better.
- Take times of pause where you put away your phone. Take times of reflection every so often.

- Spend time getting to know people in the office, but it's also okay if you need some alone time or time with other friends!
- Don't let small-potato problems get you down!
- Keep doing what you love and reflecting on all the good surrounding you :) I am so excited for you and everything that you can do in this position!

Experience of the Vice President

Hello! I'm Josh German, the VP alongside Katie Alexander's President. I came into Student Government just a year before I was elected Vice President, as I transferred from a community college before this, so I probably had a different experience than most who serve in this position. I didn't really know Truman all that well at the point I was elected, but I had plenty of experience leading others and working with people to be successful. My lack of Truman knowledge sometimes made me ineffective at providing advice for the members who need it, but it is important to keep in mind the many different resources available and the people you can reach out to at any time for guidance.

For some general tips I learned throughout my time as VP, I would start by figuring out what the communication will be like between the President and VP. There were times, mostly at the beginning of the term and fall semester, where I felt out of the loop and had a lot of questions. It was very beneficial for both of us to have our weekly meetings discussing our plans, delegation, concerns, questions and anything else that came up. We also disagreed on various issues, but managed to keep it civil enough for us to be friendly with one another, so I would encourage you to think about how you'll act when you disagree with your right-hand person.

One of the most important parts of the position for me was to have relationships with the members of the body and to best guide them in a helpful way. I tried my best to learn about each of our members (voting, appointed, and associate if I am able to), see what they were doing and what they were working on. I think that asking that question, "what projects are you working on in StuGov," is a very beneficial one, because it gets people talking about their work, you can hopefully address any concerns you wouldn't have known about, and it keeps people engaged. Celebrate people for their success. I think this is incredibly important in maintaining morale, and especially retention of members.

However, know that you won't be able to keep tabs on everyone, and that's okay. There are over 60 members of our body right now and you would have to devote almost all of your time in order to know each member in depth, so prioritize if you can. The office is an easy way to regularly see members and talk about projects going on. Chairs are the first priority, you need to have regular communication with them, and make sure to take the initiative and reach out. There were many times where I made myself clearly available to chairs only to have no idea what they were doing and finding out secondhand, which is an easy way for them to make major mistakes or to let things fall through. You can also prioritize which chairs you communicate with, there was a reason I didn't communicate as much with Ethan or Shania, both of them were doing amazing jobs and I trusted them to reach out to me if they needed help. Check on your young leaders, those with less experience, talk through their plans with them and help them see what they could be doing better.

Some other general tips; keep a to do list for assignments and Calendar for meetings/events (or whatever organizational method works best for you, but you do need one), try to check to make sure the associate senators are going to meetings and are doing projects (either ask the chairs directly what each person is doing, or reach out to individual associates if you have the time), sit in on different chair meetings if you have time throughout the semester (can offer advice on how to run meetings, engage members, answer questions as they come, and know what the committee is working on), and do your best in finding fun bonding events (hopefully you won't have to deal with COVID safety precautions and you can do some fun stuff).

Administrative Suggestions

Find your balance with your eboard

- A regret of ours was that we didn't include the majority of Eboard in conversations until close to the end of our term. They can be very helpful in terms of helping make decisions and delegating assignments. It also keeps your Eboard engaged in our work and be involved. I would suggest meeting up with your Eboard at more regular times to discuss projects, questions, or concerns.

Chair Training

- This was something our advisors suggested to us this semester. In the fall retreat, there is a ton of information pushed out onto our new members, some of which needs repetition or just isn't relevant to all members. To counteract this you should set priorities for what you want your new members to learn. Focus on how to run committee meetings (delegating and documenting progress), how to properly make purchases with plenty of time without making financial promises, how to reserve rooms and equipment, and a general chain of command (who should you first go to with questions).

Interview Times

- Interviews might have been the most time consuming part of any given week, especially in the fall semester. We were having four to six interviews a week for the majority of the semester, each of which would last about 20 minutes. If you spread these throughout the day it can really mess up your schedule. To manage this, we quickly worked to figure out a permanent time slot in our weekly schedule in which we would have all of the interviews. We had them 6-8pm every thursday, and offered that time frame to the interviewees first, which worked a majority of the time. It kept our schedules consistent and a lot more manageable.

Representative Positions

- Organizational Representatives - We spent a lot of time this year trying to be more representative of the student body, and organizational representatives were a part of that. Our representatives from the CIS, ResLife, and SAB especially were important in filling gaps of knowledge and information. They served as helpful liaisons between us and their organizations and were easy reaching out points for collaborations or questions. This position needs to be looked at critically, but it still provides another avenue for more people to become involved with StuGov and provides a student perspective not already offered by our members.
 - We started talking to SAB in particular about how we could improve communication and collaboration between our organizations. We think this is important to continue. SAB and Student Government has traditionally had a rivalry, which limits our ability to work together when we need to and hurts our recruitment efforts. The SAB External Affairs Rep can be an awesome resource for Stu Gov. We recommend discussing with that candidate different issues on Student Government and how we could program around those things together. We would also recommend inviting him or her to present at a meeting once or twice a semester on the budget and organizational process for SAB, so that everyone on Stu Gov is informed on what SAB does and how they work. This could help prevent rumors or gossip from happening.
- The Black Student Representative was a great success in our opinion, and should be continued in the next administrations for as long as it is still needed. Azeeza did a

phenomenal job working on multiple projects and staying involved in discussions with our chairs and Eboard. She was an incredible worker and I'm sure has suggestions for how to improve her position in her End of the Year Report.

- The Disability Rights Advocate did not achieve that same success. This could be from a lack of concrete direction from us or Hayden not quite fitting into the brand new role. The work outlined for the position is important and I would suggest having a specific member working on these issues and continuing this position into future administrations as well.

Chair Meetings

- We decided early that we would want to meet with all of our chairs at least once per a semester. This was our direct way to offer up some project ideas, talk through the chair's future plans, and provide feedback.

Apparel

- Start apparel early. The process for getting new apparel is very time consuming and it takes many weeks to get all of the information and for the order to come in.

Excomm

- First off, keep Excomm to Wednesday or Thursday or they will not be effective. Second, know that Excomm is important to have more in-depth conversations about everyone's specific projects. Lastly, most people seem to not like traditional Excomm, so any ways you can think of making it more meaningful or fun would probably go a long way.

Project and Policy Suggestions

Athletic Fee

- After consulting with Jerry (Athletic Director) and Dr. Thomas, we believe we might need to expand the use of the fee to cover operational budget expenses in the

Athletic Department. Future cuts mean that individual sports programs are at risk. It's important to consider what expenditures are a good use of fee money; for example, is it worth it to buy a \$400,000 baseball field if what the team really needs is funds to travel to tournaments?

- Spending on operational expenses may not be outside the existing ballot language for the fee, as the fee is meant to go towards general maintenance of the athletics programs. However, the AFAC Operating Procedures only use the language "projects," which may conflict with this idea.
- Providing for operational expenses would require a certain amount of planning, and it may be best to reimagine the process for individual line items so that teams don't risk a loss of funding from year to year.
- One way we could see this happening is if a certain amount of money was automatically allocated to something like championship tournament play, or any other expense that allows teams to compete.
- Also, Dr. Thomas suggested that it may be best to move up the timeline for the AFAC slate. If the Student Government approved a slate in December, that would allow the department more time to get projects started and would make it easier on the department to plan their own budget. It would also make it easier on the Student Government President, so that he or she is not handling last-minute crises in the final few weeks of the term.
- **Key Suggestion: discuss funding issues and potential solutions with Jerry over the summer/early fall; consider any changes via a resolution of the Student Government in September; convene committee ASAP so that a decision could come earlier.**

OAF Procedures

- From my experience facilitating OAF this year, I think we need major changes to this process. The presidents of Student Government, FAC, and SAB all advertise the committee positions, interview candidates, and select committee members. This is a major conflict of interest and is not accountable to the student body.
- I began initial discussions on this issue with Dr. Thomas, Janna Stoskopf, and the Governing Documents Review Board Committee.
- One suggestion, from Janna, was to get the faculty advisor from the Accounting Department more involved with the committee. This faculty member could recruit candidates who are experienced in accounting and could oversee the progress and actions of the committee.
- Another suggestion, from the GDRB, was to create an elected Auditor position. This student would be responsible for managing OAF and would be directly accountable to the students. This would increase knowledge of the process to the student body as well.
 - The students-at-large on the committee could also be elected positions, or their appointments could be the responsibility of the fee-based organizations.
 - In the lack of candidates for elected office, the fee-based presidents could assume all responsibilities with staffing committees as they do now.

- This is my favorite option, as I think it solves the problem of conflict-of-interest and gets the student body more integrated into the audit process.
- **Key Suggestion: Immediately convene the Governing Documents Review Board to develop an elected Student Fee Auditor position for the 2022-2023 school year. For this year, proceed as usual but attempt increased participation from the accounting department on the committee.**

Planning a Major Conference

- We hope that future administrations will consider planning major conferences as the Student Government recommended in our Spring 2020 resolution.
- Previous conferences (TEDx and Women's Leadership) have successfully provided engaging and professional educational opportunities for students, which is in line with our mission statement, have increased our collaboration with campus entities such as the Career Center, and have increased the presence of the Student Government on campus.
- Each conference has improved from the last since we began hosting conferences in 2017.
- Attendance is routinely an issue. One of the most successful ways to guarantee student attendance is to ask professors to offer attendance as extra credit or to build the conference into a class assignment. Another way is to reach out to organizations and get their members involved ahead of time, whether that's a presentation sponsored by that organization, or member points for attendance (sororities will do this for different programs).
- **Key Suggestion: Release the date for the conference well in advance. Begin contacting professors and organizations ahead of time so that they can integrate our conference into their classes and programming.**

Course Threads as a Project for Academic Affairs

- I started a proposal for a program called Course Threads my sophomore year as Academic Affairs Chair. This program would be a distinct interdisciplinary experience that would give students professional credibility in their area of interest, and the program would be accessible to students without the time commitment of a minor.
- In a nutshell, a student would take three courses of their choice that are united around a shared theme. We have some "threads" already devised, but students would also have the option to create their own. The student would submit a basic proposal for their thread to the Interdisciplinary Office, which would explain how their classes come together, and would suggest a major project to illustrate and expand on those connections. The student would spend the spring semester working on that project and a short reflection for presentation in the SRC. Projects could include anything from a PowerPoint presentation to a musical composition -- anything creative, whatever best serves that student.
- Course Threads would further set Truman apart as a distinct university in the entire country and would be a prominent example of the liberal arts at work.
- Faculty governance routinely accepted my proposals with interest, and I led a team of eight faculty members in developing the program. There is one major stumbling block: whether the capstone experience in the program should or should not be taken for credit.

- At first, I thought this program should happen entirely without the structure of a for-credit class. Making classes with credits subject them to syllabi requirements, which seemed at the time to a pretty onerous burden.
- However, we've realized that it would be the best thing for the student to have some level of guidance as they complete a major project. We hoped to do a volunteer faculty-mentorship structure, but faculty are not willing to participate in volunteer opportunities in basically anything on campus right now.
- Also, taking a capstone for one-credit would likely incentivize enrollment by giving students recognition for the program on their transcripts and helping a student get to full-time status if they need extra hours in a semester.
- **Creating this capstone class is the only obstacle standing in the way of this program.**
- **Key Suggestion: Provide my final report on Course Threads to the Academic Affairs Committee Chair and make completing the project one of his or her goals for the year.**

Engage in Enrollment Issues

- After serving on the Student Government for four years, two as the Vice President and then President, it's becoming clear to me that enrollment is not just a critical issue for the university, but for the Student Government as well. We can do all the work across campus we want (and that's good! and important! and ultimately helps with enrollment and retention!), but if we can't get students to Kirksville, we won't have a university anymore. It is a rapidly downhill slope as we've started losing tuition money.
- First of all, the town of Kirksville is a major obstacle to attracting students. As I graduate, I wonder what role the Student Government could play in exploring business-friendly policies and beautification programs for the town. We started communicating with City Council a lot this year; we could further develop this relationship by talking about the business wants of students.
- Second, I think Truman needs to be able to advertise more opportunities for students that set us apart from other universities. There needs to be some kind of draw besides just saying "the liberal arts." Students don't know what that is, and a lot of them don't care.
 - How could we better showcase the liberal arts to prospective students? Any concrete examples that alumni could provide of how the liberal arts enriched their education or prepped them for the professional world?
 - What truly distinct opportunities could we provide? I think my Course Threads program has a lot of potential. We could also explore programs like internship grants for students so that finances aren't a barrier to building professional experience.
- **Key Suggestion: Think about how the Student Government could substantially engage with issues surrounding enrollment.**

Continue Roundtables to Gather Student Feedback

- In the last three years, the Student Government has held events called roundtables to have conversations with students-at-large.

- The most successful events have been our “Presidents’ Roundtable,” where we invited the presidents of all campus organizations. Presidents often have a wider perspective on campus issues and the viewpoints of many students.
- We simply assign presidents to tables, and Student Government members lead conversations on a variety of campus issues. We then use the feedback from those events to guide some of our policy work in the year.
- We’ve received incredibly positive reviews from these events, with several students requesting that they could happen more than once per year.
- **Key Suggestion: Plan a Presidents’ Roundtable for the fall semester, and consider ways to expand roundtable events into the spring.**

Continue Topical Discussions in General Body

- This year, Josh and I held topical discussions in General Body meetings on racial justice at Truman. We invited chairs to share the work of their committees on these issues, and we opened up a space for other members to ask questions and share concerns from across campus. For our first meeting, we required reading the Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence and a few other materials, such as the petition from ABC.
- Our members were very engaged in these discussions and we received a lot of great direction for the year.
- Future bodies could continue this practice with all kinds of topics. We think this is a way to bring more purpose and intention to our meetings and work as a Student Government.
- **Key Suggestion: Continue and expand these topical discussions on a wide range of issues throughout the year.**

Inclement Weather Policy

- We spent several weeks out of this winter workshopping concerns with the new University Inclement Weather Policy. The University ended the practice of delayed start and also designed snow days as “Alternative Assignment Days,” where courses are expected to either meet virtually or provide work for students to do at home. If a student cannot travel to campus due to inclement weather, but the university does not move classes online, students are entitled to ask for reasonable adjustments.
- The main concerns with the policy were that the administration did not move online with enough frequency, that student workers were unsure whether they still had to report during alternative assignment days, and that professors would not make reasonable accommodations for students who couldn’t travel to campus when classes are still held.
- We provided substantial feedback for how the policy could more clearly articulate the expectations for student workers and the guidelines for reasonable course adjustments.
- Dr. Gooch is editing the policy for next fall.
- **Key Suggestion: Check in on the revisions of the inclement weather policy in the fall and consider writing a resolution of support.**

Elections Planning

- We pushed more than ever this year to publicize elections and recruit candidates.

- The Student Government purchased yard signs and banners to place around campus for voting information.
- In the spring, we had three main goals: recruit candidates diverse in identity, recruit candidates diverse in academic interest, and reach the entire campus more effectively.
- To meet these goals, we created a PowerPoint presentation to give to diverse identity and academic groups. However, due to time constraints, we were unable to reach out to distinct groups, and we used the PowerPoint in our general advertising.
- Two things that worked really well for us were early information sessions and creating a recruitment list.
 - We held two early info sessions a few weeks before petitions opened. We had several students attend, who all later ran for office. We think advertising and holding these info sessions is a great way to get students thinking about elections ahead of time.
 - We also asked all Student Government members to submit a few names of people they think would be assets to the body, and we emailed those students with a special invitation to run for office. We think this is effective recruiting because students will feel that others believe in them and that they can succeed.
- We held a very competitive election (17 senators for 12 seats; 4 senior senators for 3 seats) and 759 students voted. We'd like to see the voting percentage of the student body become much higher.
- **Key Suggestion: Continue all of these general advertising initiatives, and consider ways to reach out to student organizations.**

Engage with the Strategic Plan

- The University released a new strategic plan this year, as well as a new plan for diversity and inclusion.
- The Student Government had several critiques for how data would be collected and assessed in the monitoring of individual metrics.
- Since next year will be the first full year with the new plan, Student Government has a great opportunity to be a leader in implementation.
- **Key Suggestion: Review the Strategic Plan and stay on top of its implementation.**

The Vision Document

- The Student Government released our latest Vision Document in Fall 2020. This contains our goals and key areas of concern related to all topics of university policy.
- Previous Student Governments have not revisited the Vision Document each year, resulting in inconsistent goals and policy efforts.
- Working from the Vision Document would allow the Student Government to implement long-term project and policy initiatives and to stay active in important conversations.
- **Key Suggestion: Review the Vision Document and assign certain projects and policy goals to committees.**