

End of the Year Report: President and Vice President of the Student Association
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Kennedy and Esther (and future President and Vice-President teams),

Congratulations! Your strong leadership and vision for the Student Government have led you to these positions. Your bravery and willingness to continue the legacy of the Student Government is so very important and appreciated. Please know that there is a long line of Student Government alums, peers, and advisors prepared to support you in this journey. We are rooting for you! We hope that this report prepares you to jumpstart your term with confidence. While your one-year term may sound long, it goes by in the blink of an eye! Use your time wisely, and do not be afraid to reach out if you need additional support.

1) Reflection on leading together as President and Vice President

The President and Vice President's ability to work together effectively is essential to the successful function of the body! Both roles are tasked with overseeing administrative tasks, policy priorities, social cohesion, and beyond. Ethan and I largely took a "divide and conquer" approach, where we split up a majority of our work to ensure that neither person felt especially burnt out. We met weekly after our Tuesday meeting with President Sue Thomas to ensure that we were on track for the upcoming week. Like any relationship, the President and Vice President relationship is dependent on open and frequent *communication, friendship, and compromise*. In a broad sense, the President and Vice President are the primary beacons of support for one another in their roles. If one person is feeling especially busy or tired one week, the other person should expect to take a more active role (and vice versa). Ideally, this relationship should be balanced!

One challenge to our ability to work together was time! The President and Vice President of Student Government are generally very involved students. In this sense, it can be a bit difficult to find blocks of time to meet. This was resolved on a case by case basis, but we also worked early in the semester to create weekly blocks of time to work together. Ethan and I also shared our Google Calendars with each other, so that setting meeting times could be easier throughout the semester.

2) Experience of the President

Admittedly, my role as Student Government President was perhaps the most challenging leadership role I have ever taken on. The role requires a tremendous amount of work-life balance, communication, advocacy, kindness, and strictness. Your ability to succeed in this role is innately tied to self-care and balance. Before the role starts to pick up pace, I would encourage you to think about the next few questions. What is your support system (family, friends, etc.) outside of Student Government? What does "self-care" look like to you? How will you make time for self-care when you are busier?

Along with the idea of self-care and preservation throughout the year, create and maintain boundaries that work for you. The following were a few boundaries that I created for myself: turning off email and Slack notifications (but checking 3x per day), only meeting in designated blocks of time for non-emergencies, and only providing my phone number to chairs and other members that may need me at a moment's notice. The reality is that the role of the President could be a 40/hour per week job. It is up to you to create boundaries that keep the role from consuming your time, life, and wellbeing.

Outside of managing your own work-life balance, you will also be asked to oversee the work of the body as a whole. This means meeting with senators, workshopping ideas/projects, and supporting senators as *people*. I would encourage you to create a regular schedule to check in with your team. This could include grabbing lunch or meeting 1-1 in some other way.

The final, and perhaps most important, part of the Presidency role is that of meeting with university administration. As the “face” of Student Government, you will need to be privy to the primary priorities of the body. Be prepared to concisely explain your policy goals to a variety of university administrators. In the first semester of my role, I aimed to meet with as many university administrators as possible to chat about policy priorities for the year. In reality, there is a limited amount of advocacy you can do. Determine advocacy priorities early in the year and stick to those (with some flexibility, of course)!

When you attend events, meet new people, or otherwise navigate campus, people may first see you as “the Student Government President.” Personally, as I am a relatively private person, I had some trouble with this. In this sense, be mindful of what you disclose, how you talk about university efforts, and of the “image” you bring to the body.

Finally, remember that you are a full person who deserves peace, joy, and kindness. The Student Government as a whole tends to attract students who are willing to pour work into their communities. Of course, this is important and incredibly valuable. However, you should also remember that it is totally OK to put yourself first, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed.

Take breaks, have fun, and try to leave campus every once in a while to come back with a clear mind. I believe in you! You are in this role for a reason.

3) Experience of the Vice President

Serving as Vice President was a great opportunity for me as it gave me access to all kinds of useful connections and experiences. I definitely felt burned out at times and I ended up devoting most of my time outside of academic work to Student Government which meant I couldn't really participate in other organizations. I found a balance by keeping my calendar organized and setting aside time for myself on the weekends so that I could spend time with friends and my

significant other. There will always be something you could be working on, so prioritize your projects and communicate with other leaders in Student Government so that you aren't taking on too much.

In general, I see the Vice President position as a sort of swiss army knife, able to take on any role that needs filled. I ended up filling in for several committee chairs at different times in the semester and I often got questions about a wide variety of things that I usually had to look up answers to. I relied on the committee chair guidebook we made at the start of the year to answer questions about things like ordering food, reserving table space, and other things new chairs might have questions about. Also, in advising members and chairs on projects, make sure they have checked previous resolutions and reports for what has been done in the past. It is rare that we pursue a completely new and original project, so try and build off of work that was done in the past!

I found that the best way to connect with members was to sit in the office for a couple of hours each day, usually in between my classes, and let people come to me with questions or things they wanted to discuss. Just being available to people and getting to know them outside of what they do in Student Government was my favorite part of this year. Once people felt comfortable approaching me, I knew they would let me know when they were running into problems.

Overall, just be prepared to take on a lot of roles and jobs, and don't be afraid to say no sometimes. You don't need to go to every meeting, you and your President both need breaks sometimes and sharing the responsibilities openly will help ensure both of you can rely on one another. I'll be in Finland in the Fall, but I am still happy to help whenever you want advice or need help locating some information!

4) Responsibilities and Timeline

(parts of this are recycled from the 20-21 report - thanks Katie and Josh!)

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, and try to plan a bonding event or two.
 - a. Connect with the Truman Days committee to ensure that you are only doing work you are equipped to do. Consider how you can recruit students this week!
3. Order giveaways -- we typically do a combination of fun and practical with items that will get a lot of use either way. We also try to collaborate with FAC and SAB to order paper merchandise (sticky notes, notepads, etc.) for Truman Week.

4. Plan elections advertising for the fall as much as you can.
5. Use summer and early fall to connect with committee chairs to help them develop a timeline and platform for their committee.
6. Host a few “get to know you” or bonding exercises for the body. We mostly had to do these online, unfortunately, but hopefully you get the chance to host these in person!

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.
3. Try to connect with other MO presidents. We didn’t have much of this in 2021, but it can be 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. It might feel silly writing a resolution for every project you work on, but finding some way to record the work you accomplish is important.
5. 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.
 - i. Try and appoint a delegate if you can't attend! Katie had a lot of experience with Academic Affairs, so maybe someone from that committee.
- 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. Make these meetings fit your leadership style and do your best to make them worth attending, I know a lot of members can end up feeling burnt out from attending meetings.

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.
 - c. You should also provide food, people are always happier after they've eaten.
- 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, usually in February.
- 2. Plan Spring elections.
- 3. Plan Spring retreat -- we typically do an activity and we take time to read end of the year reports.
- 4. Write your end of the year report!
- 5. This is so fun -- do superlatives and serious awards at retreat.

5) Administrative Suggestions

Chair Selection

We interviewed and selected most of our committee chairs at the end of the Spring semester. This timeline worked well for us, given that we had chairs for each committee by Fall semester. I would like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of chair selections. While the President and VP are tasked with overseeing the work of the body, you cannot be everywhere at all times. This means that committee chairs will be asked to help create policy priorities for the body, host programming, and oversee voting senators/associate senators on their committees.

We had a lot of trouble with chair turnover this year due to a variety of personal reasons. Here are a few broad considerations when making chair selections:

1. Does the applicant have a clear direction or vision for the committee?
2. Is the applicant capable of contributing around 5 hours/week of work to the Student Government?
3. Is the applicant equipped to recruit and maintain members for their committee?

If you have any hesitation that a candidate may not be able to complete those tasks, they may not be a good fit for the position. Importantly, the best candidate may not be someone who only has a great position on campus-issues, but instead someone who is able to direct and manage a group of students for an entire academic year.

The Role of Student Government at Truman State University

Student Governments nationwide are critiqued for their [“inability to actually create change.”](#)

There is some truth in the fact that the Student Government has limitations to its power- our resolutions do not bind any agents to action. Despite this, the role of bettering Truman, uplifting student voices, and banding together a diverse group of passionate students is important. The position of the Student Government is in a period of transition. Coming out of the peak of the ongoing pandemic, the Truman community (like most college campuses) has fundamentally changed. Student engagement and enrollment are much lower than usual, Americans are quitting their jobs at higher rates than usual, and the nation as a whole feels fractionalized. While it is not our role to resolve those issues, we do, indirectly, engage with them.

In this sense, one of the first conversations that needs to happen with the Student Government is one about its very purpose. How does the Student Government differ from the Funds Allocation Committee or Student Activities Board? How does the Student Government function when student engagement is low? How can involvement in the Student Government be incentivized? If consolidation of the Student Government must happen, which roles are less essential? Has the Student Government bound itself to too many non-legislative endeavors (Truman Week, annual programming, and appropriations)? How (or should) the Student Government gather regular feedback from students? Should senators be understood as delegates or representatives of the student body?

All of these questions should be somewhat resolved in order to ensure that the Student Government's work is effective, important, and targeted. These discussions should happen with the Student Government body, faculty/staff advisors, university administrators, and current students.

6) *Project and Policy Suggestions*

While the policy priorities of the body will be primarily determined by the senators themselves, you serve in an advisory capacity for all legislation. At times, senators may not know what "effective legislation" at a given time looks like. Provide targeted suggestions early in the fall semester and help senators develop their own advocacy platforms.

The Student Government does not yet have a great mechanism to develop legislative ideas or projects. Perhaps introducing a few events or working groups aimed to help senators develop ideas could be an important addition to the body!

As far as policy efforts that we were directly involved with this year, the following two points represent our greatest priorities.

- 1) Developing gender neutral housing options and starting up an LGBTQ+ Resource Center
- 2) Working toward fossil fuel divestment in the university endowment and advocating for sustainable practices in university decision making.

Student Fees

Shania issued an executive order in the Spring of 2022 that summarizes a majority of the discussion surrounding student-initiated fees. In sum, there have been serious challenges in convening our AFAC, ESFAC, and OAF committees. This is, in part, because of a gap in institutional support. We, in conjunction with Owen Smith (21-22 Speaker), Dave Rector, and Mike Garzanelli worked to create a series of recommendations for these student fees. Please review both the executive order and OAF resolution to learn more about our suggestions. It would be best to review this quickly as many of the changes would require changes to operating procedures or the creation of operating procedures and could be pursued in conjunction with the work of the Speaker.

7) *Organizational Suggestions*

Calendly!

We purchased a Calendly membership early in the fall semester. This allowed us to create shared blocks of time for position interviews, chair meetings, administrative meetings, and beyond.

Using Calendly allowed us to cut down on the amount of back-and-forth emailing needed to coordinate meetings. We would highly recommend using a similar system to schedule meetings.

Note Taking and Emails

Staying organized is one of the biggest challenges that Student Government faces. Its roster is constantly changing, it works on complex issues that require years of work, and not all of its members are equally adept at managing their responsibilities. Ethan followed in the footsteps of Josh German and kept a little notebook with me for most of the year that I used at meetings with President Thomas, with advisors, and at general body and excomm. I prefer paper notes over taking them on a laptop or phone and it helps me stay engaged and keep all my notes in one place. As leaders of this organization, you will also receive **a lot** of emails. Not all of them will be worthy of a response, and plenty of them will only take 5 minutes to respond to, but it is important to keep track of all your communications. I recommend using email folders in Gmail to keep your academic and Student Government emails separate. You may also want to use a shared to-do list as a working document, we used **Asana** as our app of choice for this.

Meeting Agendas and Reports

You will be asked to present a substantial amount of information to the general body, advisors, the university President, and other stakeholders. Be as organized as possible in this process. Ideally, you would create a targeted agenda/report before your meetings and leave time questions/discussion. It is easy to let this level of organization slip through the cracks throughout the semester, but do your best to stay diligent. It will make your life much easier in the long run!

Excomm

As you likely know, Excomm is the weekly meeting between chairs and executive members. Traditionally, this block of time has occurred around 8-9pm on a weekday. Chairs largely share the same/similar information to their weekly, general body meeting report. In this sense, Excomm is largely redundant. There should be some consideration given to how Excomm could serve as a better, collaborative period for chairs to work through their priorities. This may mean pairing chairs up 1-1 to talk through their ideas in more detail, having a pertinent discussion prompt each week, or just having a “work session” to allow chairs to get some work done.

Office Hours

All voting and executive members are asked to serve a 1-hour/week “office hour” with the intent to engage with students. While senators are still expected to serve this hour, it largely does not achieve its goal of student engagement. In a recent discussion with the executive and general body, the following points were determined:

- 1) Senators have various understandings of the purpose of office hours. Some feel that is a social time period, productive time period, or time to engage 1-1 with students.
- 2) Many senators visit the office several times per week for social reasons.
- 3) Other organizations have attempted “traveling office hours,” with limited success.

Office hours should be reworked to better achieve 1) social cohesion for senators 2) regular engagement with students.

Preparing for Challenging Discussion

As stated earlier, Student Government business largely depends on the social and political context of the city, state, and nation. This means that the Student Government is often tasked with discussing difficult, contemporary issues. In my time on the body, this has included anti-racism efforts (especially during nation-wide protests in 2020-21), contraception and sexual health on campus, COVID-19 mitigation (vaccination or mask mandate conversations), and discussion surrounding the role of the university in supporting LGBTQ+ students.

While these discussions are important, they also elicit more divisive debate than our usual business. I anticipate that future bodies will similarly reckon with these challenging conversations. While the Speaker largely oversees discussion, you may be interested in developing protocol for challenging conversations. More information about the protocols we attempted can likely be found in our Speaker (Owen Smith)’s end of year report.

In conversation with President Sue Thomas, we determined that taking a more active mediation role in discussion may be helpful. This could mean inviting a faculty member/advisor, or tasking the Speaker with a more active mediation role in difficult conversations. Instead of only objectively working through our speakers list in discussion, some conversations may need more hands-on mediation. This conversation should be continued with the Speaker, advisors, and potentially members of the university’s communication department.

Shared Google Drive - Finding Examples & Additional References

As a final note, please know that all of our materials from our term can be found in the “Truman State University Student Government” shared drive. Don’t try to reinvent the wheel - use our forms and presentations as a guide for similar work.