University Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence Truman State University Spring 2016

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Introduction and Context

In the fall of 2015, campuses around the country, and within our state of Missouri, started some challenging conversations about the topics of race, equality, and inclusion within higher education. These conversations have created an opportunity for dialogue and reflection on these important issues.

Recognizing the need for more thought, more questions, and more plans for action focused on the topics of diversity and inclusion, University President Troy Paino appointed the Committee to Develop a University Plan for Inclusive Excellence. This committee brought together faculty, staff and students reflecting a broad range of perspectives from throughout Truman State University.

Over the course of the spring 2016 semester, the committee conducted research, administered campus surveys, and engaged in critical conversations focused on the goal of developing a Strategic Plan which identifies the goals, strategies, and tactics which will promote and facilitate progress in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

Guiding Principles

In developing this plan, it is important to consider the fundamental principles of our task. In creating this group, President Paino established the objective of achieving inclusive excellence through this strategic plan. Throughout our discussions as a committee, we have continually returned to the concepts of diversity, inclusion and excellence. These are our guiding principles.

Diversity

We recognize there is inherent value in building a community of individuals with diverse life experience. Multiple perspectives help us learn to understand the world around us in richer ways, promote more robust problem solving, and help us prepare our students to be successful in a globalized world. We also recognize that with our relatively isolated location in the rural Midwest, it is not likely Truman State University will ever achieve particularly high levels of cultural or social diversity. Nevertheless, we can show that we value the diversity of perspectives represented on our campus by making sure everyone feels not only welcome to our campus, but also equally included in all dimensions of our campus community.

Inclusion

Truman State University welcomes a student body, faculty and staff population, and guests who represent a wide range of identities and backgrounds; and at the core of who we are as an institution is the commitment to ensuring that all feel valued and respected on our campus. Each year, as we welcome new members to our community, it is incumbent on us to ensure that people

of different beliefs, identities, and abilities are able to find a sense of belonging and are provided an opportunity to grow and thrive on our campus. It is the goal of this report to identify Truman's strengths and limitations in this area and to provide recommendations for building on these strengths as well as addressing the limitations directly and solving the problems that arise from them.

Excellence

In order for Truman State University to continue to move forward as a premier public liberal arts institution, the principle of excellence must be embedded in each of our efforts. As we consider the global 21st century student, that excellence must include a multifaceted understanding of difference, diversity, and self. In order to be successful, the student who goes forth from our institution and moves on to serve their community must be able to actively engage and navigate a world inhabited by people who represent many different races, ethnicities, religions, and various other identities in order to be successful. It is our job as an institution to ensure that the education we provide includes an opportunity and a requirement to learn these skills that are so vital in our world today.

Data

As part of the process of understanding the needs of the Truman community, several factfinding methods were developed. The committee made an effort to gather information from faculty, staff and students utilizing ways that fit with both the timeline and allowed for maximum ability for all members of the community to participate.

Faculty/Staff

Faculty and staff had two separate opportunities to participate. One focused on departmental or office responses to questions about diversity and inclusion in their professional environment while the other focused on individual perceptions of the degree of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our community as a whole.

Five distinct staff offices and fifteen distinct academic departments responded to our questions about conversations, policies, procedures, successes, and challenges related to diversity and inclusion in their areas. These responses helped us identify many of the successful programs already in place and highlighted areas where faculty and staff identified specific needs. Many of the ideas shared in these responses found their way into the strategies and tactics developed here. Their responses are summarized in an appendix to this report [see Appendix B].

In addition to the department/ office responses, faculty and staff were asked to participate in an anonymous online survey which measured their perceptions of the campus environment in terms of their own feelings of being welcome and respected at Truman [see Appendix C]. The survey

was sent out to all faculty and staff members and 184 responses were received, for a response rate of approximately 22%.

The responses reflected that faculty and staff members generally feel welcome and respected at Truman. However, 15% of those responding disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement, "I feel included as part of the community." We clearly have room to improve. Responses consistently reflected a need for more and better resources and support in order to improve skills and to provide adequate staffing for initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. Among both faculty and staff, there are multiple individuals who point out ways in which some of our diverse perspectives are not being sufficiently respected in campus conversations. A strong theme across these responses is that we should focus on who we are as individuals, not which demographic boxes a person might check.

Students-Campus Climate Survey

Students were provided the opportunity to provide feedback through Skyfactor's Campus Climate Survey. The survey analyzes the campus climate through 14 factors focused on the Truman experience and satisfaction with Truman, including perceptions of the institution as an inclusive place, visibility of campus diversity, personal attitudes and behaviors regarding diversity, and the integration of diversity issues in the learning environment. The survey was completed by 968 out of a 5100 student list of full time enrolled students provided by Information Technology Services, resulting in a return rate of just under 20%. [See Appendix D for respondent demographic information.]

The survey results indicated that Truman has some particular strengths regarding diversity. Approximately 98.5% of all survey respondents reported feeling that they belong at Truman, and 99.6% indicated that they perceived Truman to be a safe place for students. In addition, between 96.3% (N=933) and 99.1% (N=959) of survey participants indicated that they perceived Truman as a welcoming place where students are respected and treated fairly regardless of age, gender, (dis)abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, race, and religion/faith. In addition, 97.8% (N=947) and 98.6% (N=954) of respondents reported that their experience at Truman enabled them to communicate effectively with others different from themselves, to recognize their own biases, to be challenged to think more broadly about diversity-related issues, to critically evaluate their position on diverse issues, and to make the effort to connect with others from diverse backgrounds.

However, the results also indicated significant limitations. In particular, across demographic groups, clear differences in campus experiences for majority and minority populations raised concern about (1) visibility of diversity on campus and (2) satisfaction with the institution expressed by students from underrepresented populations. For example, four questions asked respondents to rate Truman on a scale of 1 (less satisfied) to 7 (more satisfied) in the area of

diversity visibility on campus. All of the responses scored less than a mean goal of 5.5 out of 7, indicating that the visibility of diverse students, faculty, staff, and senior leadership is an area in need of improvement. Moreover, respondents who indicated the lowest level of satisfaction with the institution overall were those who identified as African-American; as bisexual, gay or lesbian, or other; and as transgender and gender nonconforming students [See Appendix E].

The Plan

Based on the data collected, the expertise of the committee members, and research on diversity and inclusion strategies on other campuses, the committee was able to develop a structure for implementation of the strategic plan, which will include six areas of focus: Campus Environment, Dialogue & Conversation, Transitions, Policies & Procedures, Curriculum, and Unifying Resources & Opportunities.

Areas of Focus

<u>**Campus Environment:**</u> Improve visual evidence of the campus as an environment that represents the values of diversity and inclusiveness through physical space, actions, and online presence.

- 1. STRATEGY: Improve physical spaces to welcome all members of the community to campus.
 - a. **TACTIC:** Improve ADA access throughout campus.
 - b. **TACTIC:** Improve signage to be effective and inclusive.
 - c. TACTIC: Create dialogue and conversation spaces.
- 2. STRATEGY: Create common sense centers for student experiences that promote cross functional work, support student success, embed diversity and foster inclusiveness.
 - a. TACTIC: Group offices and services by common purpose.
 - i. Cultural and Inclusion Offices (WRC, MAC, LBGTQ+, Interfaith, Title IX, etc.)
 - ii. Academic support services space (CAE, Writing Center, McNair, Disability Services)
 - iii. Health Services (UCS, Health Center, Wellness Zone)
 - b. **TACTIC:** Create a central support center and clearinghouse for High Impact Experiences (Internships, Study Abroad, Service Learning, Career Services, etc.).
- 3. STRATEGY: Display the values of diversity and inclusiveness throughout campus in acknowledgement and support of all the communities of Truman.

- a. TACTIC: Create a prominent permanent International Flag Display.
- b. **TACTIC:** Create a LGBTQ+ Resource Center.
- c. **TACTIC:** Create both permanent physical and digital representation of the "I am Truman" stories by continually rotating the display through campus.
- d. **TACTIC:** Adjust food policies to require a greater cultural diversity in food offerings in the SUB and campus dining rooms and to allow more flexibility in allowing students to prepare and serve foods on campus that are unique to their culture (e.g. for Chinese New Year, Himalayan Night, Sights and Sounds of Africa).

4. STRATEGY: Display a consistent university-wide commitment to inclusiveness in all printed materials and in the university's digital presence.

- a. **TACTIC:** Maps, created as the primary purpose of a publication or included in a publication for other purposes, should always be representational of the university's place in the larger surroundings of the U.S. and never limited to a smaller view of Missouri alone or Missouri in relationship to contiguous states only.
- b. **TACTIC:** Campus maps should provide information about offices and services located inside a physical building and be created with the idea of making the building inviting to those using the map and assist those reading the map to understand the building's accessibility.
- c. **TACTIC:** Demonstrate that Truman values inclusive excellence on every web page and on all forms of social media created by or related to the university.
- d. **TACTIC:** Take convenience and differences into account by providing various methods of access to information and services at the university through the use of QR codes, translations, and short instructional videos, and to always consider the difference in audiences and access in other parts of the world.

5. STRATEGY: Strengthen and inform the relationship with the greater community to ensure the safety, security and comfort of all Truman students in the Kirksville community.

- a. **TACTIC:** Partner with community services (KPD, KFD, NRMC, etc.) to ensure a safe environment for ALL students in the community and to implement a zero tolerance policy for all hate crimes including verbal abuse.
- b. **TACTIC:** Connect with community members through service groups and media to share the university's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness and to strengthen relationships between individual and groups of students and community members.

c. **TACTIC:** Work to enhance the university's image and that of its students with the larger community and to remind the community of the importance of Truman's students to the community.

Dialogue & Conversations: Develop and promote a culture of engagement focusing on the topics of diversity, inclusion, discrimination, and related issues.

1. STRATEGY: Identify, promote, support, and facilitate coordination among all existing efforts:

- a. **TACTIC:** Courageous Conversations Series-In development by student government
- b. TACTIC: Social Justice Summit
- c. TACTIC: Diversity Leadership Conference
- d. **TACTIC:** MLK Day
- e. TACTIC: Global Issues Colloquium
- f. **TACTIC:** Faculty Forum
- g. **TACTIC:** Lyceum—Focus on bringing more culturally diverse groups to campus
- h. **TACTIC:** University Art Gallery—Highlight cultural background of artists or artistic style
- i. TACTIC: LGBTQ speaker every semester
- j. **TACTIC:** Interfaith Center Events
- k. TACTIC: Let's Talk—Class about discrimination, prejudice, and inclusion

2. STRATEGY: Increase the number and types of activities on campus that emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusiveness.

- a. **TACTIC:** Strategic Planning and Assessment Workshop —Sharing the university's commitment to inclusive excellence in a forum that involves the entire institution would raise its value at the institution.
- b. **TACTIC:** All University Meeting and State of the University Address Include campus climate results or assessments of progress toward diversity and inclusion at these important annual presentations to remind employees of progress towards our goals and work yet to be done.
- c. **TACTIC:** Opening Convocation—Introduce the topics of diversity and inclusiveness to students and emphasize their value as important aspects of building community to support an excellent liberal arts and sciences education.
- d. **TACTIC:** Commencement—Remind students of this value as they exit the institution.
- e. TACTIC: Continue to exhibit and recommend these values to alumni.

f. **TACTIC**: Develop a plan to reach out to and support alumni from diverse backgrounds, including international alumni.

3. STRATEGY: Seek ways to increase attendance at events focused on inclusiveness.

- a. **TACTIC:** Develop a user friendly calendar system to highlight diverse and inclusive events.
- b. **TACTIC:** Encourage faculty to offer credit in courses for student attendance of events.
- c. TACTIC: Provide incentives for faculty and staff to attend.

4. STRATEGY: Reimagine University Conference Day to focus on Inclusive Excellence.

- a. **TACTIC:** Encourage Calendar Committee to return University Conference Day in future calendars.
- b. TACTIC: Develop meaningful programs for building inclusive community.

5. STRATEGY: Promote faculty and student research on the topics of diversity and inclusion.

- a. **TACTIC:** Seek grant funding to support research on diversity and inclusion.
- b. **TACTIC:** Add one or more sessions on diversity and inclusion to the Truman annual Student Research Conference
- c. **TACTIC**: Host a diversity and inclusion conference at Truman and solicit research presentations as well as speakers on that topic
- d. **TACTIC**: Provide an annual grant to one or more students and faculty members to present original research at an inclusion- or diversity-related conference

<u>**Transitions:**</u> Create an emphasis on diversity and inclusion from the earliest stages of outreach to prospective students, faculty and staff, and continue that emphasis to all points of transition in the Truman Experience.

1. STRATEGY: Include diversity and inclusion as part of the Truman brand.

- a. **TACTIC**: Convey that Truman has an expectation of inclusive thought and behavior from its students during recruitment and orientation activities.
- b. **TACTIC**: Introduce the definition of inclusiveness, the goal of excellence in inclusiveness, the importance of inclusiveness in a liberal arts and sciences education and strategies to be inclusive during Truman Transformation.
- c. TACTIC: Increase the use of videos/media featuring inclusive messages.
- d. TACTIC: Launch social media campaigns which reinforce inclusive messages.
- e. **TACTIC:** Include themes of diversity and inclusion in Truman merchandise designs.

2. STRATEGY: Include a greater orientation to Kirksville as part of new student orientation.

- a. TACTIC: Include a cultural calendar for the community.
- b. **TACTIC:** Provide an orientation to the history and demographics of Kirksville and surrounding areas.
- c. TACTIC: Identify opportunities for greater community involvement for students.
- d. **TACTIC:** Identify resources within the greater community that meet needs of diverse populations.
- 3. STRATEGY: Provide resources for training and continuing education for faculty and staff in the areas of diversity and inclusion.
 - a. TACTIC: Develop resources for new faculty orientation.
 - b. TACTIC: Develop resources for new staff orientation.
 - c. **TACTIC:** Identify faculty and staff members who have natural talents for facilitating discussions and enlist their help with additional training efforts.
 - d. **TACTIC:** Develop resources for continuing education and training for faculty and staff.
 - e. TACTIC: Increase the availability of Safe Zone training.
 - f. TACTIC: Make additional training opportunities available to staff.

Policies & Procedures: There is a need to amend current campus policies and procedures, as well as to develop new policies and procedures, to reflect inclusive practices and to promote diversity.

1. STRATEGY: Prioritize diversity in hiring policies and practices.

- a. TACTIC: Revise job descriptions to attract more diverse applicants.
- b. **TACTIC:** Identify and implement specialized strategies for the recruitment of multicultural candidates for faculty and staff positions.
- c. **TACTIC:** Incorporate themes of diversity and inclusion in interviewing process for faculty and staff candidates.
- d. **TACTIC:** Intentionally select more students to participate in the hiring processes of faculty and staff to reflect broader and more inclusive perspectives.

2. STRATEGY: Ensure academic policies reflect needs of students of historically underserved identities.

- a. **TACTIC:** Incorporate withdrawal policies that specifically acknowledge mental health needs and concerns.
- b. TACTIC: Revise policy documents to reflect gender inclusive pronouns.
- c. **TACTIC:** Transition to policy and procedure systems that allow students to more easily use preferred name and pronouns.

3. STRATEGY: Revisit and revise the Non-Discrimination Policy of Truman State University.

- a. TACTIC: Provide protection for trans* and non-binary gender identities.
- b. **TACTIC:** Increase mediation services for members of the community affected by issues arising under the Non-Discrimination Policy.
- c. **TACTIC:** Increase general awareness and understanding of the Non-Discrimination Policy of Truman State University for faculty, staff, and students.

4. STRATEGY: Develop more inclusive housing policies.

- a. TACTIC: Develop an open housing policy.
- b. **TACTIC:** Make housing options available over breaks.

Curricular: Incorporate special and infectious efforts and competency goals related to global learning and global competency in multiple instances throughout the student's curricular experience.

1. STRATEGY: Create faculty training and professional development workshops.

- a. **TACTIC:** Workshops should prepare faculty to lead difficult conversations related to diversity, inclusion, and discrimination with students.
- b. **TACTIC:** The professional development opportunities should focus on making coursework relating to diversity and inclusion more active and engaging for students.

2. STRATEGY: Expand on coursework that emphasizes that understanding and appreciating diversity are competencies our students are expected to develop.

- a. **TACTIC:** Develop an Identities Seminar that includes a focus on unpacking systemic influences and exclusive practices.
- b. **TACTIC:** Create a campus-wide, one credit conversation series experience.
- c. **TACTIC:** Offer templates of language for learning outcomes related to understanding and working well with a broad range of people.
- d. **TACTIC:** Introduce grade-bearing group projects related to working together with difference to courses where this theme may be appropriate.
- e. **TACTIC:** Work to update course descriptions to reflect how our curriculum may encourage growth and development.
- f. **TACTIC:** Ensure that course curricula encourages learning which helps students to develop a lens through which to see the world and a tool box through which to approach and understand diversity and inclusion.
- g. **TACTIC:** Include an inclusion and diversity reflection in the portfolio.

3. STRATEGY: Support new academic program developments that encourage diversity and inclusion.

- a. **TACTIC:** Develop a certificate or a minor that confirms a student's competency in regards to diversity and inclusion.
- b. **TACTIC:** Revisit and clarify the intercultural requirement in the Liberal Studies Program.
- c. **TACTIC:** Set a curricular requirement for diversity and inclusion that brings both students and faculty in, rather than creating more hoops for both parties to jump through.
- d. **TACTIC:** Explore following Oregon State Model by adding a new attribute to existing courses.
- e. **TACTIC:** Connect themed courses that student can select on these topics using course attribute model.
- f. **TACTIC:** Revise study abroad curriculum to include more in regards to cultural competency.
- g. **TACTIC:** Create a Study Away designation for interim and summer courses, in which faculty and students go somewhere in the United States to work towards cultural competency.
- h. **TACTIC:** Encourage major academic programs to consider how best to incorporate themes of diversity and inclusion in their program.

<u>Unifying Resources & Opportunities:</u> Bring together the various current efforts and future efforts related to inclusion to provide coordinated resources and experiences for students, faculty, and staff.

- 1. **STRATEGY: Develop a plan to coordinate the efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.**
 - a. **TACTIC:** Coordinate the schedule of all academic, social, and professional events relating to diversity and inclusion ahead of time for each academic year.
 - b. **TACTIC:** Give ample consideration and recognition to annual events that happen around diversity and inclusion.
 - c. TACTIC: Utilize interns to coordinate academic events.
 - d. **TACTIC:** Publicize events that already happen in regards to diversity and inclusion on our campus.
 - e. **TACTIC:** Utilize Public Relation interns to handle coordination of social and professional events.
- 2. STRATEGY: Create a comprehensive calendar for events relating to diversity and inclusion.
 - a. **TACTIC:** Insure the functionality of this calendar by making it searchable.

- b. **TACTIC:** Allow students, staff, faculty, or community members to opt into notifications of certain types of events (email, text message, etc.).
- c. TACTIC: Create branding for inclusion events.
- d. **TACTIC:** Coordinate easy access to events through the main university web page.

3. STRATEGY: Create professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

- a. **TACTIC:** Provide required training needed for faculty and staff.
- b. **TACTIC:** Engage faculty and staff in diversity and inclusion training by providing adequate incentives.
- c. **TACTIC:** Require training for new staff & faculty with recurring opportunities to set precedent of the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Moving Forward

The committee has worked hard to develop this plan and believes there is a path forward through several large scale and small scale efforts that can make inclusive excellence ubiquitous throughout Truman's campus. This effort will not move forward on its own and will need champions, both informal and formal, to continue this effort. Perhaps most importantly, it will need support and backing continually from the highest levels of the administration. As a committee, we recognize that change and growth in organizations such as ours comes about in the smoothest fashion if it is heralded from the top down. For this reason, we see a need to use the keys aspects of this report in considering candidates for the next President of Truman State University. Successful candidates should demonstrate an appreciation for and dedication to the guiding principles outlined in this document: diversity, inclusion, and excellence.

We wish to convey a sense of urgency for the campus community to act on the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan. An environmental scan of diversity and inclusion issues across the higher education landscape reveals immediate risks. Awareness of social and diversity issues is very high among students, faculty, and staff. And yet, we don't have the coping mechanisms and skills - either as individuals or as institutions -- to engage in an effective dialogue on these sensitive issues. In the absence of dialogue and constructive cultures of understanding, people turn to actions. We witnessed the damaging effects of hunger protests, rallies, and bullying at the University of Missouri in fall 2015. It is unclear how the University of Missouri will fare in its attempts to return to a state of normalcy following those events. We do not want Truman to be thrust into the national spotlight as it copes with issues of equality and inclusion. Enrollment decreases, reputation damage, and the unfolding of scandalous interactions among members of the leadership would be difficult circumstances for our campus to overcome. The strategies in this plan may not completely protect against the occurrence of such events, but our hope is that they will lead to proactive behaviors that will help mitigate against such outbreaks of misunderstanding.

Institutional well-being is but one immediate risk. Residential colleges and universities also face high expectations for safeguarding and providing high-quality services for their individual students. Our recommendations take the necessary steps to show that we care for individual students and take seriously our obligation to ensure their safety and emotional and physical well-being. Further, we must demonstrate that we do these things equally well for all students, regardless of their country of origin, their sexual orientation, their socioeconomic status, or other factors that lead to discrimination or unfair treatment. A real or perceived failure on our behalf to provide these protections for our students should qualify as another reason for urgency.

While fear is a poor long-term source of motivation, our balanced environmental screening also uncovered many positive reasons to adopt a sense of urgency. One minimalist interpretation is this: we are acting, right now, to address matters of inclusive excellence. We suspect that not all schools have taken this initial step. This is an opportunity for us to lead, at least regionally, if not nationally. Second - and perhaps more promising in an actionable sense -- is that our interactions with the broader University revealed both cooperation and the will to act. We heard from academic departments and units as they tried to articulate their roles in supporting a positive mission for inclusive excellence. We heard from faculty members who had careerchanging experiences with diversity, and students who found their clearest personal insights after learning about privilege and power. These are reassuring indicators of our collective desire to improve. Finally, some of us were also motivated by authors such as Daryl G. Smith (2015; Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making it Work), who challenged universities to work towards creating 'pluralistic societies that work'. This ideal might lack short-term clarity for implementation, but it challenges us to a level of thought and engagement that is consistent with our institutional expectations. It is a worthy partner -- perhaps even an inseparable partner -- for our public liberal arts mission. We hope that both the immediate fears and the higher ideals will serve as compelling reasons to act immediately and relentlessly on our proposed strategies.

Recommendations for implementation

The committee would recommend the formation of a Presidential Committee for Inclusive Excellence to be formed with the structure of an organizing body and several subcommittees. Efforts to make changes in policy and curriculum will need specific champions with skill sets and knowledge to succeed. It is likewise in many different areas. The structure of the committee should be as such:

Executive committee

Curriculum subcommittee Policy and procedure subcommittee Campus environment subcommittee

Recommendations for additional information

It is recommended that ongoing data collection and analysis related to this topic be conducted by the Presidential Committee for Inclusive Excellence. Continued evaluation is vital to success.