INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICE

University Trend of Distinguished Recognition Continues

In January, Truman was acknowledged as one of the nation’s best values in higher education for the second time. After Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine named Truman one of the “Best Values in Public Colleges”, the Princeton Review, teaming with USA TODAY, included Truman on its list, “The Princeton Review Best Value Colleges for 2010.”

On USA TODAY’s website, the editors at The Princeton Review commend Truman for being “thoroughly committed to providing a strong, broad-based, liberal education to its small undergraduate student body”. To see more of why the editors of the Princeton Review praise Truman as a “Best Value College,” please visit: http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/best-value-colleges.htm

The Student Success Society Helps Students Achieve Success!

The Student Success Society (SSS) is a new academic mentoring program organized by the International Student Affairs Office (ISAO), aimed at helping new and continuing international students develop stronger study skills, adjust to the different academic environment, and perform their best academically. The SSS consists of mentors and international students paired together to work towards the students’ academic success. Come learn more about this amazing academic aid for Truman international students through this interview with an SSS mentor.

International Student Profile

Omar Sheira is an Egyptian senior political science major at Truman State University. Let us hear what he says about Truman!

What attracted you to Truman State University? Truman is the Harvard of the Midwest, moreover, it's affordable.

How is Truman preparing you for the future? Classes at Truman are quite challenging and this has helped me manage time and school while also having enough time to go out and have fun on weekends.

What would you like to say to new Truman international students? It’s a long way from home, but it’s also a great place with a lot of really nice people. Make the right choice and apply soon!

Exciting Things Going on in Kirksville:

- Truman has again been acknowledged by the Peace Corps as one of the top universities in the nation for producing Peace Corps volunteers. Since the Peace Corps was founded in 1961, a total of 174 Truman alumni have served as volunteers.
- The Department of Music is hosting the 27th Annual Truman Piano Festival Feb. 19-20, featuring a guest artist.
- One hundred Truman students used the Martin Luther King Jr. Day break on January 18th to donate “a day of service to remember a life of service.” As part of the MLK Challenge, students volunteered at one of 10 project sites.
- Nearly 30 Truman undergraduates and seven faculty members of the Psychology department have had their research accepted for presentation at the 2010 annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA) in Chicago this April.

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Q: How are mentees selected?
A: At the beginning of the semester, we target students based on overall GPA and general academic performance, and then send out invitation e-mails. The mentoring is not mandatory but is highly recommended. After the students sign up, they are matched with mentors based on personality and schedules.

Q: How are the students mentored?
A: In the first session, we try to figure out their biggest obstacles to academic success. Often, this includes time management issues, fear of tests, or anxiety about communicating with professors. We also help them with communication skills. After the first meeting, sessions will be tailored to individual mentee’s needs.

Q: How often do you meet with your mentees?
A: The meetings are usually 20 minutes long and once a week. We don’t want to take up a lot of the students’ time, and this brief meeting is the perfect amount of time to track their progress and help them solve any problems they are facing.

Q: Does the mentoring focus mainly on improving grades? Do you use other criteria to judge the mentee’s progress as well?
A: A mentee’s grades are certainly an important criterion, but we are also concerned about other indications of progress including the students’ emotional wellbeing and integration into the Truman community.

Q: How is the mentoring different from tutoring or counseling?
A: Our major focus is to help the student determine the right strategy for being successful and to help them find the resources they need rather than tutoring them on specific courses. Compared with the University Counseling Service, our mentors are peers who have gone through many of the same difficulties. The mentoring is also specifically designed for international students.

Q: If a student has decent grades but still feels he/she has problems with studying, can this student be mentored?
A: Definitely. We engage in helping students at any level, especially as they begin to take upper level classes. The mentoring can also be used as an emotional outlet for students or to fulfill other needs.

Q: How are mentors selected?
A: The mentors are mostly former or current International Hall Hosts*. They are selected by the International Student Affairs Office professional staff based on maturity, communication skills across cultures, and academic performance.

Q: How does the experience of having been an International Hall Host help you with mentoring international students?
A: During our first year with the International Student Affairs Office as an International Hall Host, we have met new international students on their first day at Truman. We have lived and worked with these new students daily in the Residence Halls and have been able to see and feel many of their challenges both in classes and adapting to the culture. This experience gives us more appreciation and empathy for their situations as well as better communication skills across cultures.

Q: Can you list some of the major achievements of SSS?
A: We worked with 9 students last semester and 6 of the 9 experienced a significant improvement in their grades. One of the students even went from a 2.5 GPA to a 4.0 semester Grade Point Average! The other 3 had bigger issues and are coming back to participate this semester because they want to continue to improve their study skills, and we expect to see a big difference in their outcome this semester.

“I like the mentoring a lot not only because my mentor really helps me solve my major problems effectively, but also because the meetings are quite relaxing. My mentor speaks like a friend to me and offers advice from her own experience of overcoming similar problems. In addition to respecting and caring about my voice, she also encourages me to think creatively about ways to solve my problem. With her help, I began tackling my problems in efficient new ways that not only had I never thought of before, but also that are perfectly tailored to my specific situation. I would love to go on with the mentoring and I have the confidence that I will continue to improve my grades!”

— A Student in SSS

*See more about International Hall Hosts at Truman in the next newsletter!

SSS Mentors

Q: Is the student’s privacy protected?
A: Yes. However, we meet weekly with International Student Affairs Office staff to report the progress and discuss better strategies.

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ISAO is now officially on Facebook!

Come chat with us during the following hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:00am-10:00am central time.