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Organizational Theory

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Case Study Part I

Truman State University Marketing Conglomerate

There is currently a group of individuals within the university who constitute the Truman State University Marketing Conglomerate. They have become associated with the conglomerate because of job duties, departmental responsibilities, interest, or delegated tasks. In a broad sense, the conglomerate has been charged with promoting the university and providing communication to prospective students, current students, alumni, and international students. The organization faces unique challenges specific to operating within the university system and the larger university market. In addition, there are limitations that the conglomerate faces regarding resources and financing primarily related to staffing. The conglomerate is lacking designated leadership and a solid marketing strategy which causes a piecemeal approach to their efforts and contributes to its decentralization and lack of unification. The conglomerate is characterized by a group of enthusiastic individuals who are working diligently to enhance the Truman marketing efforts in the best way they know how. They have made significant progress over the past few years, but find themselves at a plateau with uncertainty on prioritizing and implementing the next steps. The college climate and changing perceptions on higher education have precipitated the need for the University to make a conscious effort to establish itself within the market. The conglomerate necessitates a formalized approach to enabling their progress through unification of their efforts university wide.

The current committee or group of individuals who have been identified as sharing a bulk of the responsibility for Truman's marketing efforts only amount to roughly 9 individuals that represent their respective departments. This is a particularly difficult quantity to identify as the marketing efforts for the university are so decentralized. However, there are several individuals

who have positions that frequently produce content and share information in an effort to promote the university. These individuals include:

- Regina Morin
 - AVP for Enrollment Management
 - President's Office
- Heidi Templeton
 - Director of Public Relations
- Teresa Wheeler
 - Manager of Publications/Senior Graphic Designer
- Melody Chambers
 - Director of Admissions
- Todd Kuhns
 - Videography and Social Media
- Kevin White
 - Assistant Director of Athletics for Communications & Operations
- Greg Marshall
 - Web Services Manager
- Melanie Crist
 - Director of the Center for International Students
- Denise Smith
 - Director of Alumni Relations

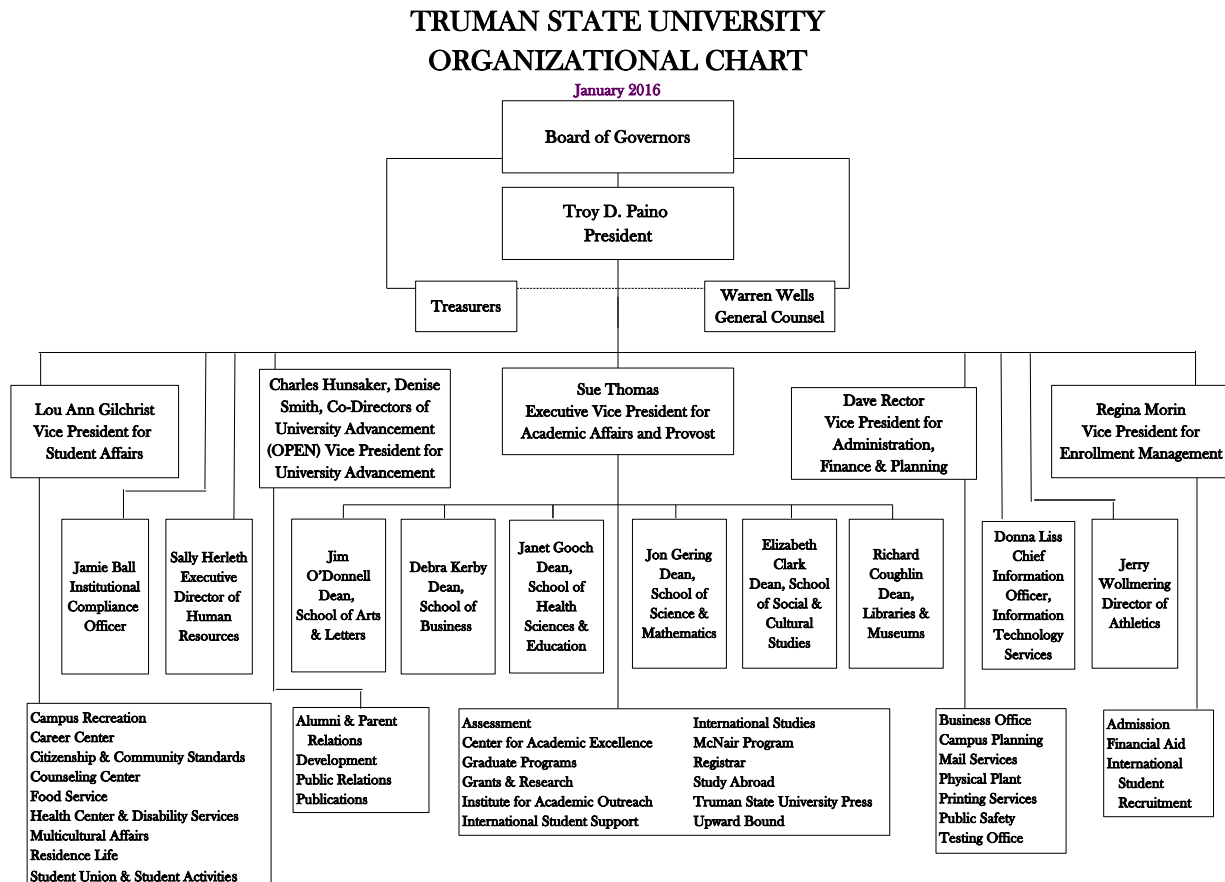
In addition to the 9 individuals listed above, there is a secondary group that meets monthly from a social media perspective that is made of of additional campus departments which have a share in the responsibility of communicating information to the internal and external campus community as well as prospective students. The departments regularly represented in this committee are as follows:

- Todd Kuhns
- Amanda Shreves- Admissions
- Travis Miles - PR
- Tim Barcus - Campus Photographer
- Center for Student Involvement
- Center for International Students
- Athletics
- Institute for Academic Outreach
- Advancement
- Career Center
- Registrar
- Res-Life
- Recreation
- ITS

The conglomerate lacks official leadership. This obviously creates several problems related to a unified vision, concentrated efforts, and implementation. While president Paino sits

at the helm of the university, his primary energy doesn't encompass the detailed actions specifically relating to the marketing efforts of the university. Out of necessity, the bulk of the marketing responsibility has shifted to Regina Morin from an admissions perspective for promoting the university to prospective students and ensuring continued enrollment as well as the Advancement office with publication, PR, and alumni and parents. Yet, marketing is not their primary responsibility, and they don't have an authoritative position to direct other campus departments in their own individual efforts. According to Ms. Morin, everyone has a role to play in the marketing efforts for the university.

Below is an organizational chart the the university uses to establish hierarchical order among campus leadership. Note that there is currently an open position for the VP for University Advancement and marketing is not specifically included as a responsibility or department.



The conglomerate faces multiple challenges and strains that influence its day to day operation. The primary challenge is the lack of organizational structure specific to the marketing duties that the individuals who belong to the conglomerate have assumed. In addition to the decentralized approach with which the team operates to accomplish its tasks, there is not currently a formal strategy that the university has adopted in relation to their specific marketing efforts. This causes each department in the conglomerate to provide direction based on their own interests and doesn't contribute to the polished continuity that must be present when building and communicating a brand. This inconsistency is the main challenge that overshadows the conglomerate's operation.

Creativity isn't a primary concern for the conglomerate as far as ideation goes. However, implementation is severely strained due to a lack of resources, primarily financial resources for employment. The tasks that the conglomerate have been charged with far outweigh the staffing resources available to them. This includes professional and student staffing. A good example of this issue can be found in the Athletic department. Kevin White noted that they are severely lacking in funding compared to the competition. He says that half the schools in our market have a dedicated athletic marketing director who's primary responsibility is obtaining business and corporate sponsorship. Whereas, at Truman, this area remains an untapped potential resource simply because there is not enough staffing resources to cover those responsibilities.

Stemming from the decentralization and lack of resources, there is no dedicated marketing staff who's primary or secondary responsibility is specifically marketing related. However, there has been an effort to redefine current job descriptions to encompass tacit

marketing responsibilities such as social media, technology, or the online presence within admissions.

There are several factors that have prompted action from the university and created the sense of urgency regarding Truman State University's standing in the market and their need to create a unified marketing effort. These factors stem from the changing environment and primary demand of higher education institutions. Some factors more specific to Truman include increased diversity, a declining interest in liberal arts, excessive institutional aid, and the disaggregation of the college experience. These factors also include financial threats stemming from decreased state support and decreasing quantity of high school graduates.

In terms of state funding, the university has received far less support over the last few decades. This presents a serious problem for the university. According to Dr. Paino, the university was engineered for the 80's-90's under the assumption of continued state support. The fixed costs associated with university operation are still increasing although the funding from the state is decreasing. According to Regina Morin, only about 40% of the university budget comes from state funding whereas, in the 70's, it was 75%. Tuition is the next revenue generator for the university after state funding. However, the tuition caps placed on the university have limited that revenue stream as well. In the 2016-2017 academic year, the university may see a roughly \$50 in tuition increase. According to Dr. Paino, considering these constraints, the university budget has become privatized in a very large way as a result. This is not a sustainable revenue model and the university thus requires greater marketing efforts in order to guarantee steady enrollment numbers and take advantage of advancement opportunities. Dr. Paino suggests that, in a best case scenario, the university will see flat funding for the coming school year.

According to Regina Morin, citing the 2003 Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education Report, there was a projected high school graduation drop in the midwest. It was projected that from 2010-2014, 70,000 high school graduates would be lost. Around 2008, a very noticeable drop became evident. This is one of the factors that contributes to a decreasing quantity of college applicants. This poses a significant threat to the university as the vast majority of students who attend Truman come from the midwest. Truman recently started accepting the common application and has seen more students in the application funnel as a result. The quantity of applications, according to Dr. Paino was up 25%. This doesn't necessarily mean that they are qualified students, however. This is especially true due to the fact that the university doesn't want to diminish its reputation for its high selectivity. Yet, ideally, the university would be able to better target qualified applicants. In addition, current resources available may prevent the university from accepting additional students. Regardless, according to Dr. Paino, the goal is for stability in enrollment and maintaining the yield rate, not in radically increasing the student population.

Because the organization lacks official structure and is not consistent, it is difficult to evaluate based on structural analysis. One can look to the environment in which it exists for hints about different influences that affect the conglomerate. There are bureaucratic influences because of the system with which it operates in. Comparatively to the official business of the university, its rather organic. However, there is a natural hierarchy that is dictated by the ranking of the individuals that make up the conglomerate and the power they hold within the university structure. Although, those who seem to take the initiative on projects and movements seem to gain a little clout and receive support from the team on their efforts because of the potential for

common benefit. An obstacle that this conglomerate faces is trying to operate within the confines of the traditional university structure where individuals are truly strapped for time and resources and all possess differing interests and power with which to accomplish their objectives.