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THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT-PRODUCED NEWSPAPER

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University establishes agreement with ECPD

Truman administration travels
abroad to establish relations
and opportunities for higher
education in the Balkans

BY AUSTIN HORNBOSTEL

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A group of delegates from Truman State traveled to Serbia last week and returned with connections that could allow the University to offer an online graduate course to students in the Balkans.

University President Troy Paino, Patrick Lecaque, President of the Center for International Education at Truman, and Kevin Minch, Director of the Truman Institute, traveled to Europe and entered into an agreement of academic cooperation between Truman and the European Center for Peace and Development.

According to the agreement, both institutions will cooperate to facilitate future joint educational and research activities. This includes the potential for joint graduate studies programs, workshops and study abroad trips between Truman and universities in countries such as Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, as well as other opportunities for collaboration.

Lecaque said while an agreement has been signed, no plans have been made yet for concrete action. He said the group did not want to give the impression that any decision had been made and would be implemented yet, since many Truman faculty members would need to be consulted before moving forward with any plans. He said the next step is to build support for the Master's in Leadership program that can be expanded and offered overseas.



University President Troy Paino attends a conference with the European Center for Peace and Development. Paino signed an agreement following the conference that establishes Truman's future collaboration with the ECPD.

"The agreement is a very standard agreement," Lecaque said. "It's a memorandum of understanding, so it's [written in] very general terms. Basically, we agree that we will agree. Right now, we have not signed in blood that we will do this or that but we intend to, of course, and there's a lot of work that needs to be done."

Lecaque said the trip was made possible because of his involvement with the ECPD. He said his involvement occurred because of a connection with Don Wallace, Georgetown University professor and Chair of the ECPD Academic Council, who asked Lecaque to attend their annual peace conference six years ago. Lecaque said he continued to attend each year and eventually presented at the conference.

"It's a long story, but that's how the connection was made," Lecaque said. "I became involved just by participating at my own very humble level."

Lecaque said the ECPD is an entity associated with the United Nations, and he was able to meet many experienced individuals who had served as ambassadors. He said Negoslav P. Ostojic, the Executive Director of the ECPD, recommended two years ago that Lecaque get involved and develop a proposal to collaborate with the ECPD. Lecaque said this eventually resulted in the agreement brought back to Truman.

Paino said the United Nations recommended that the ECPD implement a program that would promote peace in the Balkans because of the history of ethnic conflict in that region of the world. He said the ECPD sought to further the U.N.'s goal and presented the opportunity to collaborate with Truman to offer Truman's Master's in Leadership program through online classes.

"It's not something that is explicit in setting out timetables and what exactly we'll be doing — it's more of an

agreement to collaborate," Paino said. "They're interested in offering Truman courses and hopefully Truman degrees to students in that part of the world."

Paino said the agreement would allow Truman to explore exchange program opportunities with universities in the Balkans during the future. He said faculty exchanges and additional programming are future possibilities. Paino said he hopes the agreement is the beginning of a long-term relationship that will allow Truman to be involved in a part of the world that has experienced its share of struggles.

Minch said his office and the Graduate Studies office would handle the Master's in Leadership program. He said his office handles online learning and would help facilitate that facet of the program along with international partnerships in conjunction with Lecaque's office.

See ECPD, page 3



University President Troy Paino sits down for a television interview while he and other Truman staff were in Europe. Paino signed an agreement with the ECPD that could lead to various future collaborations.



A Croatian newspaper shows Patrick Lecaque, President of the Center for International Education, and Kevin Minch, Director of the Truman Institute. Minch and Lecaque observed various sites in Europe during their visit.

Truman prepares for HLC accreditation process

BY LUCAS MEYERER

Staff Reporter

Truman State's Higher Learning Commission Committee released their Quality Assurance report to the Truman community, which is submitted every 10 years to the Higher Learning Commission to determine whether the University will retain accreditation.

The purpose of the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation process is to determine whether a university can receive federally subsidized loans, such as Perkins and Stafford loans, to give to students.

The HLC uses an evaluation called Pathways to determine accreditation. The program has two components, Quality Initiative and Quality Assurance. Quality Initiatives include transformative experiences, critical thinking, leadership and wellness, and Truman passed the Quality Initiative review during the summer. Currently, the Quality Assurance component is being prepared for submission.

Karen Vittengl, psychology professor and chair of Truman's HLC Leadership Team, said the committee has been gathering information and preparing the 35,000 page report for more than three years.

Vittengl said the first thing she and her committee did was talk about the criteria and brainstorm ways they could demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses to the HLC. After this, she said the com-

mittee asked for different documents from across campus, which can be included in the electronically submitted report as links that provide data about Truman's performance as a place of higher learning. Finally, Vittengl said she tied the report together in an outline.

Vittengl said the most significant challenge Truman has faced has been decreased and unpredictable state funding. She said the next step in the process is to submit the fully reviewed report to the HLC during late January 2015.

"There are many ways in which we've done incredibly well," Vittengl said. "The HLC doesn't expect institutions to have clear, easy sailing all the time, so a big part of the report is to talk about what challenges we've had and how we've addressed those challenges."

From there, she said five peer reviewers from other institutions of higher learning will visit on-campus March 2-3 to ask questions they might have from their review of the Assurance Argument submitted by Truman. A decision will be handed down by the HLC during late summer 2015.

Vittengl said the best possible outcome from the HLC review would be immediate full accreditation. She said if no large problems are found from the report, a check-up by the HLC wouldn't occur until 2019. She said the HLC requires electronic reports

to be submitted by universities every four years, but visits by HLC representatives are only conducted every 10 years. She said she thought public opinion might have specified that 10 years is too long of a time span between visits, so the electronic submissions recently were implemented.

If the HLC and its peer reviewers find there are issues with the report, Vittengl said the HLC could conduct scheduled focus visits to specifically look at the areas of the report that have been deemed inadequate. She said 80 percent of universities who have submitted reports during 2012 received follow-up focus visits.

Vittengl said if there are larger problems with the University's report, the HLC could ask for a full resubmission of the report or, in a worst possible case scenario, accreditation could be withheld from the University.

Vittengl said based on her research, she has been pleased with Truman's performance during the past 10 years. She said the last time Truman submitted a full report, during 2004, the University maintained full accreditation and the HLC did not conduct focus visits. However, she said HLC made suggestions, such as a more uniform tenure policy among faculty, which the University focused on improving for their next report submission.

See ACCREDITATION, page 3



Submitted photo
University President Troy Paino and Don Wallace, President of the ECPD Academic Council, shake hands after signing an agreement of academic cooperation between Truman and the ECPD. The agreement could lead to Truman offering an online Master's in Leadership program to students overseas.

ECPD | President Paino and Truman administration heads journeyed to the Balkans to sign ECPD agreement

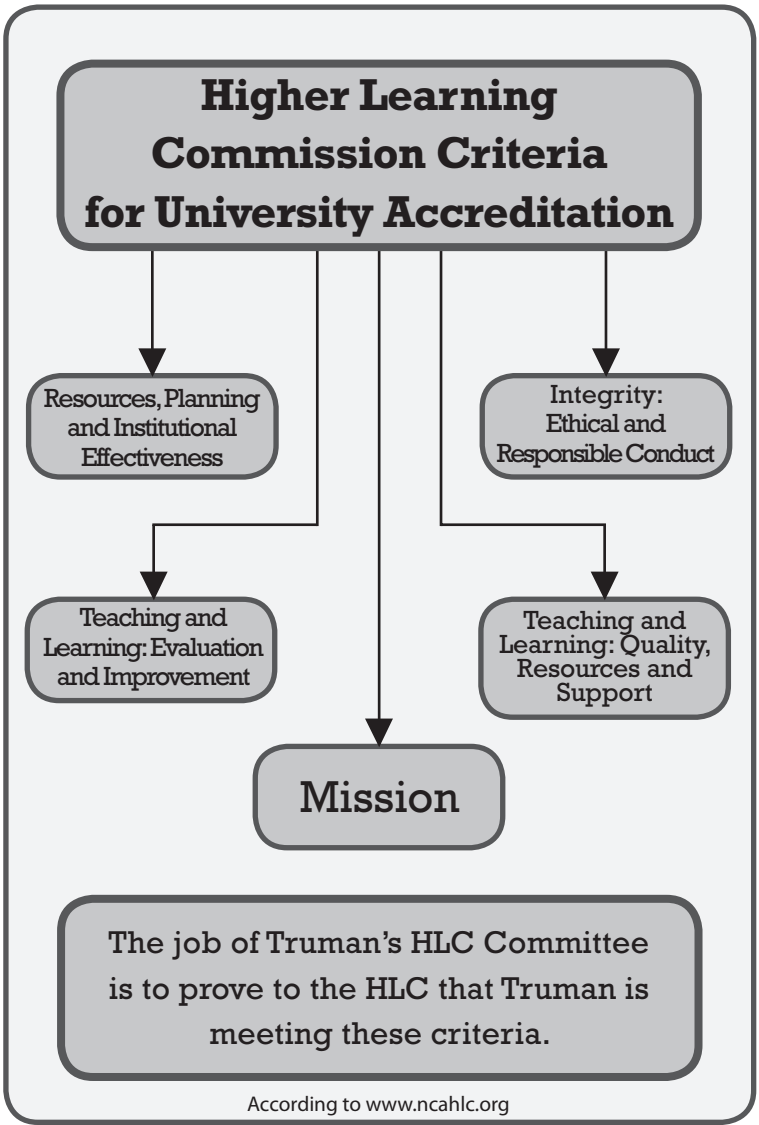
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He said he doesn't expect coordination between the offices to be challenging since they work together often already.
"Our three offices work very well together," Minch said. "Honestly, this is the way the market is trending nationally ... requiring people in those different offices to work together, and we've got a great relationship so it's very easy to do."
After Paino returned to Truman, Minch said he and Lecaue visited areas in the Balkans the ECPD thought would produce significant student interest for the program and possibly a liaison to work with those students. He said online education is a much more blended experience in the Balkans, so they needed to determine if there were any physical spaces available for students to meet with a representative and whether Truman would have the necessary facilities if

they ever were to send a faculty member to Europe for a week-end seminar.
Minch said they visited Belgrade, Serbia, then traveled to Pula, Croatia, and Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as a couple other cities in Serbia.
He said students in the region still are learning things such as how a government can run ethically or how economic development can occur effectively — so many existing educational programs in the area as well as the program Truman is considering focuses on addressing those needs.
Minch said he thinks Truman could benefit from increased graduate enrollment in the Master's in Leadership program, as well as the increased revenue. He said the cross-cultural experience could provide advantages to students taking the program at Truman who would be in the same section as students taking the program in Bosnia or Croatia.
"One of the cool things is the time difference is only seven hours," Minch said. "Unlike other parts of the world, if you wanted to do a video link you could have students here meeting on a common Saturday morning or something and [the students overseas] could meet during the evening, and they have a class together."
Minch said it's always good for the University to have international ties, since it benefits Truman students and improves Truman's reputation. He said the University should be distinguished from other schools in Missouri by its connection with higher education in the Balkans, which he said was evidenced by high media coverage during their time in Europe, including television appearances from Paino and newspaper articles detailing the Truman administrators' trip.

ACCREDITATION | Truman prepares report for HLC review

Truman administration and faculty discuss preparations of the 35,000 page report, which must be submitted to the HLC during the accreditation process every 10 years. During the past, the University has demonstrated a level of excellence that merits accreditation and members of Truman's HLC Committee say they think this year will be no different.

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Vittengl said the accreditation process highlights Truman's goals as an institution of higher education.
"While accreditation is super important, what [the HLC] really want to know is whether we're doing what we say we're going to do," Vittengl said. "What we say we're going to do is our mission, and it's Truman's mission I want people to focus on."
Physics professor Ian Lindevald is another member of the HLC Leadership Team who worked to compile and create the Assurance Argument. Lindevald said several of the 12 members of the committee formed pairs, and each group focused on breaking down one of the five criteria of the HLC.
Lindevald said he and Vittengl were tasked with brainstorming about criterion no. 4, Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement. Lindevald said after all the pairs returned with their ideas, Vittengl combined the different documents into a larger, cohesive narrative.
To further their knowledge of the process to maintain accreditation and how to best compile their HLC report, Lindevald said the Leadership Team attended two HLC Conferences in Chicago, during April 2013 and April 2014.
Susan Thomas, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, reaffirmed how important feedback from University faculty and students is to the report.
"To ensure that the report is as strong as it can be, it is imperative that the Truman community reads the Assurance Argument for accuracy and up-to-date information," Thomas said. "If there is inaccurate or outdated information, or if there is evidence that is more compelling than the evidence that is currently presented in the document, it is important that Dr. Vittengl is made aware of this."
Thomas, who joined the HLC Leadership team upon her arrival at Truman last summer, expects the University to maintain full accreditation from the HLC. She said the HLC committee has done a good job preparing the Assurance Argument.
"The HLC Leadership Team has done a terrific job," Thomas said. "The team is on schedule to meet the deadline for submission, and it will have the campus well-prepared for the site visit in March."
The Academic Affairs Office emailed the report in its entirety to the Truman community Nov. 6. Information sessions about the report will take place Nov. 12, Nov. 13 and Nov. 18 in Violette Hall 1000.



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