

The Importance of Engaged Citizenship

*A student initiative to add a focus on active global citizenship to UF's Mission Statement
Inspired by former Senator and Governor Bob Graham*

Overview

As the University of Florida leads the forefront of higher education, there is a need to modify our institution's mission statement to reflect the times. In order to prepare students for an increasingly globalized community, we propose a minor amendment to the current mission to incorporate a focus on active citizenship.

Current Mission Statement

The University of Florida is a public land-grant, sea-grant and space-grant research university, one of the most comprehensive in the United States. The university encompasses virtually all academic and professional disciplines. It is the largest and oldest of Florida's eleven universities, a member of the Association of American Universities and has high national rankings by academic assessment institutions. Its faculty and staff are dedicated to the common pursuit of the university's threefold mission: teaching, research and service.

The University of Florida belongs to a tradition of great universities. Together with its undergraduate and graduate students, UF faculty participate in an educational process that links the history of Western Europe with the traditions and cultures of all societies, explores the physical and biological universes and nurtures generations of young people from diverse backgrounds to address the needs of the world's societies.

The university welcomes the full exploration of its intellectual boundaries and supports its faculty and students in the creation of new knowledge and the pursuit of new ideas.

- **Teaching** is a fundamental purpose of this university at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- **Research and scholarship** are integral to the educational process and to the expansion of our understanding of the natural world, the intellect and the senses.
- **Service** reflects the university's obligation to share the benefits of its research and knowledge for the public good. The university serves the nation's and the state's critical needs by contributing to a well-qualified and broadly diverse citizenry, leadership and workforce.

The University of Florida must create the broadly diverse environment necessary to foster multi-cultural skills and perspectives in its teaching and research for its students to contribute and succeed in the world of the 21st century.

These three interlocking elements — teaching, research and scholarship, and service — span all the university's academic disciplines and represent the university's commitment to lead and serve the state of Florida, the nation and the world by pursuing and disseminating new knowledge while building upon the experiences of the past. The university aspires to advance by strengthening the human condition and improving the quality of life.

Amended Mission Statement

The University of Florida is a public land-grant, sea-grant and space-grant research university, one of the most comprehensive in the United States. The university encompasses virtually all academic and professional disciplines. It is the largest and oldest of Florida's eleven universities, a member of the Association of American Universities and has high national rankings by academic assessment institutions. Its faculty and staff are dedicated to the common pursuit of the university's threefold mission: teaching, research and service.

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- **Teaching** is a fundamental purpose of this university at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.
- **Research and scholarship** are integral to the educational process and to the expansion of our understanding of the natural world, the intellect and the senses. **The university has an obligation to share the benefits of its research and knowledge for the public good.**
- **Service to the university and to society is critical to the cultivation of an educated and engaged public. By developing a profound appreciation for the rewards and responsibilities of active global citizenship,** the university serves the nation's and the state's critical needs by contributing to a well-qualified and broadly diverse citizenry, leadership and workforce **that regularly engage in responsible civic life.**

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Reasoning

What are the most important values to the University of Florida, and the tax-payers who fund it? When a student earns a degree from UF, what skills do the tax-payers want the graduates to bring back to their community? What are the needs and desires for the citizens of Florida and beyond?

UF's current mission statement includes a goal of pursuing and disseminating new knowledge. Since UF is a land-grant institution, the University is obligated to ensure that its students are not only prepared for

the intellectual rigors of being a successful professional, but also the social responsibilities of effective citizenship.

According to a January 2011 Nielsen poll, 69 percent of Floridians believe community business leaders do what is right for the state only "some of the time" or "never." Meanwhile, 71 percent, 77 percent and 77 percent say the same thing about their local, state and federal government leaders respectively. <http://www.tampabay.com/news/business/floridians-pessimistic-about-future-says-leadership-florida-poll/1151559>

The public has little confidence in its leaders, both formal public servants and business leaders. The University of Florida has an opportunity to reverse public sentiment, and give the people what they want: competent, ethical leaders in the public and private sector.

Amending the mission statement to include the importance of engaged citizenship is an initiative led by students. Inspired by former Florida Senator and Governor and UF alumnus Bob Graham's campaign to increase civic engagement, students' desire to see the mission statement amended in the discussed fashion reflects their generation's changing value system, which places greater emphasis on civic responsibility and engagement.

Many other top public and private universities across the nation, reference in their mission statements the importance of instilling the values of citizenship in its students. If UF is intent on improving the quality of its higher education, it is imperative that the university places an equal or greater emphasis on civic engagement and citizenship as other top universities and colleges currently do.

Other State University's Mission Statements that Incorporate Active Citizenship:

- **Florida Gulf Coast University (Ft. Myers)**

"Florida Gulf Coast University continuously pursues academic excellence, practices and promotes environmental sustainability, embraces diversity, nurtures community partnerships, values public service, **encourages civic responsibility**, cultivates habits of lifelong learning, and keeps the advancement of knowledge and pursuit of truth as noble ideals at the heart of the university's purpose."

"Informed and engaged citizens are essential to the creation of a civil and sustainable society. The University values the development of the responsible self grounded in honesty, courage, and compassion, and **committed to advancing democratic ideals**. Through service learning requirements, the University engages students in community involvement with time for formal reflection on their experiences. Integral to the University's philosophy is instilling in students an environmental consciousness that balances their economic and social aspirations with the imperative for ecological sustainability."

- **Florida International University (Miami)**

"Florida International University is an urban, multi-campus, public research university serving its students and the diverse population of South Florida. We are committed to high-quality teaching, state-of-the-art research and creative activity, and collaborative engagement with our **local and global communities**."

- **University of Central Florida (Orlando)**

"The University of Central Florida is a public multi-campus, metropolitan research university that stands for opportunity. The university anchors the Central Florida city-state in meeting its economic, cultural, intellectual, environmental and societal needs by providing high-quality, broad-based education and experienced-based learning; pioneering scholarship and impactful research; enriched student development and leadership growth; and highly relevant continuing education and **public service initiatives that address pressing local, state, national, and international issues in support of the global community.**"

- **University of North Florida (Jacksonville)**

"The University of North Florida fosters the intellectual and cultural growth and **civic awareness of its students**, preparing them to make significant contributions to their communities in the region and beyond. At UNF, students and faculty engage together and individually in the discovery and application of knowledge. UNF faculty and staff maintain an unreserved commitment to student success within a diverse, supportive campus culture."

- **University of Miami (Coral Gables)**

"We are absolutely committed to freedom of inquiry—the freedom to think, to question, to criticize, and to dissent. We will pursue the value of excellence in our research and educational missions with the single-mindedness that only great commitments deserve. We will provide our students with the foundations for **ethical citizenship and service to others**, a respect for differences among people, and a commitment to high standards of thought and communication. We also will prepare them for rewarding lifelong careers and will imbue in them a continued and permanent desire for the study of knowledge and the search for truth."

Goals & Strategy

- Agree upon standard language for amendment
- Seek guidance from Graham Center
- Meet with Dr. Schoberg (Faculty Senator sponsor)
- Gather support from Faculty Senators
- Propose to Student Senate/Student Organizations if necessary
- Propose to Faculty Senate/Propose to College Deans
- Board of Trustees
- Board of Governors
- Approval, Amendment Added, Marketing Campaign for Engaged Citizenship

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