

Mission Statement Task Force Meeting
Minutes
September 10, 2012
4 – 6 pm
Tigert 226

Those attending: Jennifer Curtis, Karen Whalen, Brijesh Thapa, John Parady, Betty Smocovitis, Andrea Gregg (by phone), Nawari Nawari, Nuri Yeralan, Tim Brophy, Maria Rogal, Tracy Reid, Sue Alvers, Scott Nygren, Richard Romano, Jon Morris, Janet Yamamoto, Linda Cottler, Jodi Gentry, and Bob Parker.

Scott Nygren called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm

Minutes from the August meeting were approved.

Jodi Gentry was invited to help the task force facilitate what it thinks is important to include in a mission statement. She broke the task force into small groups for discussion and later brought them back together to continue the discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 6 pm

Mission/Strategic Purpose

September 10 Meeting Summary



On September 10, the university's mission statement taskforce met to discuss strategic purpose as a beginning step in its efforts to rewrite UF's mission statement. Facilitated by Jodi Gentry and Bob Parks from UF Training and Organizational Development, the September 10 discussion involved small group discussion and large group debrief.

Key Questions

The meeting began with the participants answering the following four questions:

- About what are we passionate?
- At what are we really good?
- Who are our most important stakeholders?
- What are they "hiring" us to do?

Designed to help explore elements associated with strategic purpose or mission, these questions prompted good discussion. Working in three small groups, the task force members answered this way:

- About what are we passionate?

Group 1

- Make, create, discover knowledge
- Make, create, or disseminate and preserve knowledge
- Free inquiry
- Tradition
- Enrichment

Group 2

- Imparting knowledge to others
- Passion for learning – students, faculty, staff
- Skills
- Critical thinking
- Application
- Openness
- Creativity and innovation
- Research
- Connections

- Internationalization, globalization
- Diversity in the broadest sense
 - People
 - Ideas/fields
 - People – whole human being
- Ethics
- Morals
- Values
- Research, education, outreach
- Making an impact on the world
- Making world a better place

Group 3

- Research
- Innovation – discovery
- Benefit society
- Global citizenship
- Teaching (not grading)
- Scholarship
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Prestige
- Visibility

- At what are we really good?

Group 1

- Comprehensiveness
- Excellence (in sports)
- Learning-centered institution

Group 2

- Traditional education – throughout university
- Comprehensive – so many fields, disciplines
- Graduating students, excellent quality
 - Grads, undergrads
- Leadership
- Quality education
- Innovation and creativity – trying new things
- Being interdisciplinary
- Engaged student body – Student Affairs

- Encouraging development (education)
- Student involvement
- Research – attention, diversity
- Athletics – brand awareness

Group 3

- Attracting high quality students
- High quality at good price
- Collaborations, connectivity
- Values of UF – open-mindedness
- Technology transfer/commercialization
- Resources

- Who are our most important stakeholders?

Group 1

- Students
- Industry
- Alumni
- Profession
- Florida, nation and world citizens

Group 2

- Students and parents
- Faculty and staff
- Alumni
- Citizens/public (of Florida)
- Local community, economy
- State, region, nation, global
- Past/present/future
- Legacy
- Industry
- Funding agencies
- Who do we not benefit?

Group 3

- Floridians
- US
- The world
- The next generation
- Gainesville citizens, Alachua (patients)

- Funding agencies, corporations
 - Students
 - Parents
- What are they “hiring” us to do?

Group 1

- Educate research and serve
- To enhance the quality of life

Group 2

- How to live in the world
- Make this world a better place
- Improve quality of life – intellectual, physical, biological, cultural
- Prepare future leaders
- Educated citizens and workforce
- Create and share new knowledge
- Growth of the person/student
- To be visionary – stimulate economic growth, create jobs
 - Creative
 - Forward thinking
 - Avant-garde
 - Innovative
 - Teach critical thinking

Group 3

- Innovative, creative research
- Contribute and convey knowledge
- Discover new knowledge
- Be the best at what you do
- Put UF on the map
 - Increased visibility, prestige

Strategic Purpose Statements

After discussing these questions, again working in small groups, the mission statement taskforce participants then proposed strategic purpose statements to consider.

A strategic purpose ultimately determines what an organization can achieve because it helps identify and clarify why the organization exists and why that matters. In *Retreats That Work*, Sheila Campbell and Merianne Liteman describe strategic purpose as the “heart of blueprints for the future.”

“No organization will be as effective as it might be until its people understand and support the organization’s strategic purpose. A muddled sense of purpose leads to confusion and allows people to decide individually what’s important, without any context to guide them. A clear and galvanizing purpose, on the other hand, focuses everyone’s efforts and moves the organization forward in an unambiguous direction.”

– Campbell and Liteman, *Retreats That Work*

A clear purpose statement answers: Why are we here? What is our unifying direction? Given this, proposed purpose statements from the taskforce members are below:

Group 1

- The University of Florida is a comprehensive learning environment committed to excellence in the creation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Florida and the global community.

Group 2

- UF is a public land, sea, and space grant learning-centered institution devoted to making the world better

Group 3

- The purpose of UF is to be a leader in the creation, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge that fosters lifelong learning, creativity, innovation, and global awareness
- The purpose of UF is to become an institution of excellence that educates, discovers, and serves people in order to improve the quality of life of people locally, nationally, and internationally
- UF’s central purpose is to create, preserve, and convey knowledge to foster the well being of human kind
- UF seeks to be a leader of excellence in fostering lifelong commitments to learning, innovation, and global awareness

Some themes emerged somewhat consistently throughout the meeting’s conversations: emphasis on the creation, preservation, and sharing of knowledge; discovery, innovation, and creativity; global citizenship and diversity; making a positive impact on the world and on

quality of life. Additional elements included the high quality nature of students and programs as well as comprehensive programs and research that provide opportunities for collaboration and connection.

Given this, a proposed strategic purpose statement to consider might be:

The University of Florida is a uniquely comprehensive learning institution committed to excellence in the creation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Florida and the global community.

A recommended next step for the taskforce members is to edit the above purpose statement until they believe it captures the essence of what the university is about – keeping in mind what distinguishes UF from other higher education institutions and what we value most.

This statement then can “stand alone” or also can be used as a foundation (perhaps the first statement?) for a lengthier mission statement as the taskforce moves forward in its efforts.

Submitted by Jodi Gentry and Bob Parks
UF Training and Organizational Development
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jodi-gentry@ufl.edu, bob-parks@ufl.edu