Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to "Our Mission Statement is Boring" by Newton Smith, 9/1/04

I just read your article in the Faculty Forum concerning Mission Statements. I once worked for an institution whose mission was printed on the back of my business card. You talk about a sense of community--everyone at that institution KNEW in a succinct way what we were about. In addition, we all felt a part of a vital community. We were all a small part of the greater good. Furthermore, each time we gave someone a card, the opportunity arose to reiterate and dialogue concerning the mission. I've always kept an old, stained and tattered version of that business card, just to remind me how powerful a simple mission statement can be. Rare is the mission statement that can fit on the back of a business card. Powerful is one that can. Thanks for encouraging our community to converse on this issue.

Brett Woods, Director, Annual and Special Gifts

Since an organization's mission sets the stage for its corporate culture, when writing the new statement, please do not forget to include the business administrative support side to it. In today's university setting, competition is fierce. Quality education and the accompanying services provided to students are distinct; however, one without the other does nothing to advance and "complete" our organization. Quality and expedient services are very important pieces to the student/faculty retention and attraction puzzle—e.g. administrative computing. . .our current mission only hints at such; thus there is no "cultural" emphasis placed on it. We know it should be emphasized, yet if we don't write it down for all the world to see, how much easier does it become to push it into the background? Without administrative computing services receiving priority attention and focus, the service/maintenance/business side of the equation grinds to a halt. . .resultantly bringing irate and dissatisfied students, faculty, and staff out of the woodwork.

Administrative computing is just the tip of the iceberg. Nonetheless, without our mission also giving adequate attention to the support side/infrastructure of the university, we will still be culturally challenged to achieve a balanced and "complete" organization.

Mike Stewart, Facilities Management

Our mission statement is staid but not unworthy--it's just hard to find. At least on our university Website. Perhaps Western could begin this (re)visionary quest by moving our existing mission and vision statements from the "Potpourri" category (see University Planning) and on to a more prominent and dignified location. Once (re)discovered, the statement seems to read pretty well. Together, the mission and aspiration statements declare a commitment to scholarship, service, and creative endeavor. There is an emphasis on regional contribution. Critical thinking, integrity, sensitivity to diversity, lifelong learning, and "commitment to stewardship of the natural and cultural environment" are all duly and appropriately highlighted. And more. I think we could go forth and examine the Websites of AAC&U, AAHE, AASCU, CIC, NASULGC, Rotary, Carnegie, Ford and Pew and then (re)evaluate our own guiding principles without embarrassment. That said, it is true that some (re)formatting is in order. And perhaps we could include a notion of interdisciplinary inquiry; maybe a nod to healthy lifestyles (somebody's got to be around to pay our

Medicare). Tangentially but along these lines, Kent State's program of coherent visual identity is certainly worth a gander. And finally, if Chancellor Bardo is willing to risk a summons to the O'Reilly Factor, we could look at the Jesuit schools' humanistic ideal of social justice. But otherwise, perhaps we can use what we have as a solid and respectable foundation and not run around in circles this year (re)inventing the wheel.

Gary H. Jones, Business Computer Information Systems and Economics