

Mission Statement Survey

Review of Responses

Respondents were asked to review the mission statement and identify the three most essential elements. In addition, they had an opportunity to add additional comments. In looking at the responses, there are points of strong convergence and some interesting points of divergence that are summarized below.

Essential Elements of the Mission Statement

Within all of the strongest essential elements there is a focus on students and on the outcomes or goals that we have for our students. It was clear that some people cut and pasted or typed longer verbatim sections and that others simply identified elements with short phrases. The following three categories identify the elements that were most frequently and most elaborately noted as essential for our mission statement:

Strongest Support (based on frequency and amount of detail)

- Citizens with a sense of personal responsibility
- Quality teaching
- Make a difference
- Think critically

Strong Support

- Diversity
- Teacher Education
- Comprehensive curriculum
- Desire to learn

Some Support

- Gain skills and knowledge
- Personal excellence
- Teaching, scholarship, research, service

Additional items were mentioned with much less frequency or detail. These will eventually be listed in an appendix.

Additional Perspectives

In addition to identifying essential elements of the provided mission statement, respondents also discussed what a mission statement should be, offered opinions on the current statement, provided suggestions for expansion and additions to the mission statement, and commented on the mission, campus, the work of the committee.

Evaluative Comments on the Mission Statement

Respondents made evaluative comments on the mission statement and feedback centered on the clarity and length of the mission statement. People felt that the mission statement was too vague and too long.

“It is both too broad and too specific try to name everything..Consequently, it says everything and says nothing. ... So much is covered, and covered so briefly, that nothing is really essential in the mission statement.”

“The entire mission statement is too long—any College could claim it as its own.”
P3/line24

“It is a bit cumbersome—could be shortened and the same amount said.”

“It expresses lofty ideals and values, however we are lost in a fog of many words.”

A divergent sentiment was that the mission was not inclusive enough and people suggested adding statements, or even paragraphs to make the statement more complete.

In some instances, recommendations were to elaborate on what is in the statement or clarify what we mean. This was most true in looking at the ideas of diversity, globalization, and the environment.

Please emphasize the importance of gender equity. That isn't accounted for under “diversity”

Several people noted that the elements of the mission statement are not measurable or we cannot operationalize them, thus making it hard to know “if we are achieving our mission or not” page 15 line 30

Mission versus Mission Statement: Recommendations for addition

Other recommendations extended beyond the scope of the stated mission. In the same way that the working group has had to remind ourselves to focus on the mission statement, not the mission, some respondents ventured into changing the mission. “Students graduate in four years.”

Teaching and liberal arts

Teacher education was identified as an important part of the mission statement because of the college's history, the size of education programs, and the recognition of our teaching programs. There was a range in the vehemence of this including "we are a TEACHER college." There was also, although much less prevalent thought that "It may be time to drop the "in teacher education and physical education".

There was also a sense that we could strengthen the emphasis on the liberal arts foundation for all degrees and that teacher education is built upon liberal arts.

Finally, there were requests to strengthen the emphasis on the arts, sciences, and humanities majors:

"Section two reflects a lack of commitment to "our high quality programs in the arts, humanities and sciences." Many of these programs suffer a lack of enrollment and interest and this statement give students/parents every reason to look elsewhere."

Comments on the initiative and process

Across the responses, there were comments on the work of the committee, intentions, process, and the survey itself.

"I think it [mission statement] is well written and well conceived. It should not be the starting point for whatever you are attempting to do, which is unclear."

While some felt that the statement was fine, a much stronger sentiment was that the mission statement needs to be revised. Criticisms of the exercise included the timing of the survey, limited time to respond, the activity as a whole, and specific information requested.

"this essentialist approach is an anathema to academia"

"the position of the person completing [survey] is not only irrelevant, but implies that depending upon the position of the employee, you will dismiss the opinions and ideas of professional and classified staff."

Comments on Campus

There were also comments on the campus values, cultures and behaviors. People challenged whether the institution was enacting certain values around teaching and learning:

-utilization and treatment of adjunct faculty

-too much focus on research:

"More and more, they [faculty] are forced to cut corners in their teaching in order to perform more service and scholarship."

"I am afraid we are losing sight of quality teaching in the rush to make us a bastardized form of a Research1."

“Keep the focus on teaching; there has been too much emphasis lately on scholarship. We are not an R-1 and cannot compete with them. We can and should emphasize and be proud of our teaching commitment.”

-Service: view of community service as “punishment is an attitude that must change.”

There were also several pointed comments on our students in relation to the mission:

-too many students cheat and we need to increase emphasis on academic integrity

-“students at Cortland are not known for their desire to learn.”

-“the ability to think critically and to become a lifelong learner are essential to receiving a full education. I don’t always see these in our students.” 4/25

What a Mission Statement Should Be

Several respondents offered working definitions of what a mission statement should be to provide context for their answers. This included that the statement should be short, powerful, easily recalled and shared widely.

“A mission statement should be powerful and SHORT...not paragraphs long...It should be short enough that people can recite it.”

“Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire Cat best described the purpose for developing a concise and clearly articulated mission statement, “If you don’t know where you’re going, it doesn’t matter which way you go.” The mission statement must reflect the activities and values administration is willing to support and defend. “

“Mission statements need to be short statements. Then , the statement is broadened with longer goals, a vision, objectives.”

“Keep the statement short and flush out details in vision, value statements, long range plan, goals, etc.”

“What is our basic purpose, what basic characteristics makes us unique and who do we serve.”

“It needs to reveal the most reliable about us.”

Revision Recommendations and Requests

There were specific recommendations and requests for revision. The following is a list (in no order of import or weight) of those specific recommendations:

1. I would like to see the words accountability and leadership/character included in the statement
2. that teaching and learning happen in and outside of the classroom
3. Please emphasize the importance of gender equity. That isn't accounted for under "diversity"
4. We should specifically mention our primary purpose of serving the residents of NY state
5. -The title "Educating for the Common Good" could be pulled into the mission statement, not just the title
6. I think the last paragraph should appear as the fourth paragraph because it clearly indicates that SUNY Cortland faculty, staff, and administration, together with dedicated alumni, all work toward preparing our graduates to make a difference in the lives of others.
7. I like the following sentence best, and would add "inside and outside of the classroom" after "independent learners" and leave off "living enriched lives. SUNY Cortland fosters personal excellence and seeks to develop students who are independent learners living enriched lives.
8. The term "sense of responsibility" is vapid and meaningless. I would reword somewhat, make a difference is slightly hollow and I would use some term like "civic contribution". Para #7 We strive to instill within students a sense of responsibility, an eagerness to make a difference in their community and an

- awareness of the important positive role they must play in an increasingly global society.
9. Enhancing our high-quality programs in the arts, humanities and sciences. That paragraph should be followed by paragraphs that give specific examples of how the students gain a sense of personal responsibility, become eager to make a difference in their community, and an awareness of the role they play in the global community. This may be accomplished by making the sixth paragraph about personal excellence the fifth paragraph.
 10. Paragraph 3 second in importance: "Quality teaching. . .teacher education, physical education and . . .arts, humanities and sciences."
 11. The seventh paragraph should be about community spirit, and an eighth paragraph should be written about global responsibility.
 12. "We strive to instill within students a sense of responsibility, an eagerness to make a difference in their community and an awareness of the important positive role they must play in an increasingly global society." I would add "social" to responsibility or I might add "a sense of personal and social responsibility".
 13. Here is my suggestion for a new (20 word) mission statement: Our mission is to teach our students well and to see that they graduate on-time, with a strong social conscience.
 14. Paragraphs 1,2,3 and 5 could be eliminate. The final sentence could also be eliminated as it is redundant.
 15. Paragraphs 4-6 are not well written because none of them focus on one idea. For example: Some of the ideas expressed in the fourth paragraph belong in the fifth

paragraph about personal excellence. Some of the ideas expressed in the fifth paragraph about the general education program should be either be part of the third paragraph or immediately follow it because it provides examples of what is taught at the college.

16. It is much too long and needs to be re written. Could be something like: "By instilling in its students a strong social conscience with an appreciation of the environment, diversity, and the importance of physical and emotional well being, SUNY Cortland prepares our graduates to make a difference in the lives of others around the world."

17. This sentence is not balanced, "We are committed to a comprehensive curriculum, building on our traditional strengths in teacher education and physical education and enhancing our high-quality programs in the arts, humanities and sciences." - (3rd paragraph). This statement is not balanced, it should read "We are committed to (add: maintaining) a comprehensive curriculum, building on our traditional strengths in teacher education (remove and physical education) and enhancing our high-quality ..."

18. (A revised draft of the SUNY Cortland Faculty Senate 1998 Mission Statement, prepared and submitted by Syed Pasha, Associate Professor, Communication Studies, to the Provost on December 22, 2008, in response to his mail to the Campus community of December 11, 2008) Making a Difference: Quality Higher Education at an Affordable Price At State University of New York Cortland, we are committed to excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and service to the community, offering a 125-year record of a comprehensive curriculum and quality teaching in teacher and physical education as well as in the arts, humanities and the sciences. SUNY Cortland students train in theory, research and practice in their disciplines and develop conceptual and intellectual insights as well as fundamental life skills and values not only in a classroom environment but also

through our active program of career orientation, onsite internships and study abroad. Among these are love of learning, critical thinking, excitement of discovery, appreciation of diversity and respect for the physical and emotional well-being of all. Our students are grounded in a broad-based general education program and trained to develop strong oral and written communication skills as well as acquire a keen aesthetic sensibility. Students are provided opportunities and challenged to develop and utilize a growing range of new technologies in their studies while also assessing the impact of technology on individuals, society and the world. SUNY Cortland fosters all-round personal excellence and seeks to develop students who are independent learners living full and enriched lives. We also focus on helping students become good citizens with a strong social conscience as well as an appreciation of our environment and our society's diverse and rich intellectual and cultural heritage. We strive to instill in our students a sense of personal responsibility, an eagerness to make a difference in the community and an awareness of the important positive role they must play in an increasingly global society. SUNY Cortland faculty, staff and administration, together with a highly supportive pool of our alumni, all work to prepare our graduates to make a difference in the lives of others.