

## CHAPTER 3

### DEFINING PROGRAM MISSION (PURPOSE) AND GOALS

#### Purpose of this Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to assist you in defining the program's mission and identifying program goals. Understanding and clearly stating what your program is trying to accomplish serves as a foundation for a successful assessment plan. It is important to define and obtain a consensus on program goals. Although goals are not currently required in UCF's assessment plan collection system, it is recommended that you develop program goals as a step prior to developing program outcomes. This chapter presents some guidelines that your program can follow to help you do this.

KEY TOPICS	<b>The key topics presented in this chapter are:</b>
	• Chapter learning outcomes
	• Defining the program mission statement
	• Format and examples of program mission statements
	• Defining the program vision statement
	• Example of a program vision statement
	• Defining the program's values and guiding principles
	• Examples of value statements and guiding principles
	• Defining program goals
	• Getting started
	• Writing and reviewing program goals
	• Format and examples of program goal statements
	• Sources and additional references
	Appendix 3A: Guidelines for writing an effective mission statement
	Appendix 3B: Checklist for reviewing a mission statement
	Appendix 3C: Checklist on writing and reviewing a vision statement
	Appendix 3D: Worksheet for identifying and defining program goals or learning outcomes
	Appendix 3E: Checklist for reviewing goal statements

#### Chapter learning outcomes

Readers of this chapter will have the ability to:

- define program mission, vision, values and guiding principles and goals
- differentiate between goals and student learning outcomes
- recognize the difference between goals and learning outcomes is in their scope
- participate in activities to define program goals
- develop program mission, vision, values and guiding principles and goals that are specific and distinctive to a program
- write effective program mission, vision, values and guiding principles and goals
- identify and construct program mission, vision, values and guiding principles and goals statements that adhere to the correct format
- review and revise program mission, vision, values and guiding principles and goals statements

## Defining the program mission statement

Stating the mission or purpose of the program is a required element of assessment plans at UCF. The program mission is a **broad statement of what the program is, what it does, and for whom it does it**. It should provide a clear description of the **purpose of the program** and the **learning environment**. For a given program, the mission statement should, in specific terms, reflect **how the program contributes to the education and careers of students** graduating from the program. Mission statements for academic programs should reflect how the teaching and research efforts of the department are used to enhance student learning. The mission should be **aligned with the Department, College, and University missions**. In addition, the mission should be **distinctive** for your program.

This section details the various elements and attributes of a well-defined mission statement. It is important that the program's mission statement support and endorse UCF's institutional mission. Refer to the [Mission and Goals](#) web page to view UCF's official mission statement.

- **Briefly, state the purpose of the academic program.**  
State the primary purpose of your program - the primary reason(s) why you perform your major activities or operations (e.g. teaching, research, and service). For example, this might include, educating students to prepare them for particular jobs and/or to prepare them for graduate school. Explain why you do what you do.
- **Indicate the primary functions or activities of the program.**  
Highlight the most important functions, operations, outcomes, and/or offerings of your program.
- **Indicate who the stakeholders are.**  
Include the primary groups of individuals for whom you are providing your program and those who will benefit from the program and its graduates (e.g., students, faculty, staff, parents, employers, etc.).
- **Ensure that the mission statement clearly supports the institution's mission.**  
Make sure that your mission is aligned with the mission of the University, the college, and the department.
- **The mission should be distinctive.**  
Does your statement distinguish you from other programs or units? If the name was removed, it should not be applicable to another program or unit.

## Of Note

Refer to Appendices 3A for guidelines for writing an effective mission statement and 3B for a checklist on reviewing mission statements.

## Format of a mission statement

The following is a general format that can be used when developing a mission statement:

"The mission of (name of your program or unit) is to (your primary purpose) by providing (your primary functions or activities) to (your stakeholders)." (Additional clarifying statements)

Note that the order in which the statements are made may vary from this format, but the content should be easily identified.

## Examples of program mission statements

**Poor:** The mission of Hypothetical Engineering is to provide a broad engineering education.

The statement is very vague and does not distinguish this particular program from other engineering programs. It lacks information about the primary functions of the program and does not identify the stakeholders. Additionally, there is no indication that the program's mission is aligned with UCF's mission.

**Better:** The mission of Hypothetical Engineering is to educate students from diverse backgrounds in the principles of Hypothetical Engineering that will prepare them for both current and future professional challenges in Hypothetical Engineering.

This statement is better because it identifies the stakeholders as well as a primary function of the program. However, it still is not a distinctive statement.

**Best:** The mission of Hypothetical Engineering bachelor's degree program is to educate students from diverse backgrounds in the fundamental skills, knowledge, and practice of Hypothetical Engineering (through courses and an internship) in order to (1) prepare them for Hypothetical Engineering positions in service or manufacturing industries and (2) prepare them for continuing for advanced degrees in Hypothetical Engineering or related disciplines. The program promotes a commitment to continued scholarship and service among graduates and will foster a spirit of innovation. Also, it promotes an environment that is inclusive and diverse.

This is a very effective mission statement. The mission of the program is very clearly defined.

## Defining the program vision statement

A vision statement is a **short and memorable** description of what a program will look like if it succeeds in implementing its strategies and if it achieves its full potential. Stating a vision for a program is not a required step in the UCF assessment documentation system; however, it can be very useful in helping guide the department in setting goals for its program.

The program vision attempts to answer the following types of questions:

- What would you like the program to become?
- In what direction(s) would you like the program to move?
- What program outcomes would you like to see in the future?

## Example of a program vision statement

The vision for Hypothetical Engineering is to become one of the top ten programs nationally that is able to attract quality students and place graduates at top engineering firms.

### Of Note

Refer to Appendix 3C for a checklist on writing and reviewing a vision statement.

## Defining the program's values and guiding principles (Optional)

Values and guiding principles are short statements describing the code of behavior to which an organization or program adheres or aspires. **Value statements** indicate what your program holds and represents. Guiding principles indicate how you would like your program to operate. Stating values and guiding principles for a program is not a required step in the UCF assessment documentation system; however, it can be very useful in helping guide the department in setting goals for its program.

Some examples of values include:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Community
- Excellence
- Trust
- Inclusiveness

## Example of a value statement

Integrity, respect, community, and excellence are the core values that hold together our program and guide our conduct, performance, and decisions.

Some examples of guiding principles include:

- Teamwork
- Innovate for excellence
- Plan
- Partner for more effective operations
- Seize the future
- Build community among students

## Example of a guiding principle

Our program strives to develop partnerships and work in teams to achieve our mission, build community among our students, and innovate to achieve excellence.

### Of Note

When developing your values and guiding principles, answer the following questions: What values would you like your program or students to uphold? How would you like your program or students to operate or behave?

### Of Note

UCF Policy does not currently require that you define the goals of your program. However, it is *recommended* that you do so after stating your mission. The process of thinking about and articulating what your program is trying to accomplish in terms of clearly stated goals greatly enhances the success of program assessment and the development of outcomes.

## Defining program goals

### Definition

Goals are broad statements that describe the long-term program targets or directions of development. They state in broad terms what the program wants to accomplish (in terms of student outcomes) or to become over the next several years.

Goals provide the basis for decisions about the nature, scope, and relative priorities of various activities in a program. They are used in planning and should help move the program to attain its vision.

In order for program assessment to be successful, the department must reach a consensus on the goals of the program and have an understanding of what the program is trying to accomplish, as well as how the goals are addressed in the curriculum. The goals of a program or unit must be consistent with those of the school or college, and



ultimately with the goals of the institution. It is necessary to ensure that agreement is reached on the mission statement before developing program goals.

## Getting started

The general process for writing goals should start with the vision statement for the program (e.g., become the best in the nation). Think about what that program would look like and how it should operate (refer to your mission) to reach that vision and write down these characteristics. This may require improving student outcomes, maximizing employment rates, and minimizing time to degree. Generate a list of potential “goals” and then prioritize them. Write these more formally as goal statements.

Outlined below are some activities that you can do before writing the program goals that can help you articulate and shape goal statements. These guidelines can also be used when developing student learning outcomes, which are the focus of **Chapter 4**. It is not necessary to perform all of these suggested activities. Two or three may be sufficient in helping you to start identifying and defining the program’s goals and intended outcomes.

### Approach based on the “ideal” student or graduate

Conduct discussions and brainstorming sessions with the faculty. The discussions can focus on topics such as:

- Describe an “ideal” student at various phases in your program, focusing on the abilities, knowledge, values and attitudes that you feel that this student has either acquired or have been supported as a result of your program. Then ask:
  - **Cognitive skills:** What does the student know?
  - **Performance skills:** What can the student do?
  - **Affective skills:** What does the student care about?
- Describe how the students’ experiences in the program have contributed to their abilities, knowledge, values and attitudes.
- List the skills and achievements expected of graduates of the program.
- Describe the program alumni in terms of their achievements, such as career accomplishments, lifestyles, and community involvement.

*(Adapted from Harding, Dickerson, and Kehoe, 1999; Palomba et. al., 2000; Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, 2001; and Troy and Lowe, 2003)*

### Collect and review current program goals

Review any existing goal or outcome statements such as those from:

- Catalog descriptions
- Program review reports
- Mission and vision statements
- External agencies (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges [[SACS - COC](#)], National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [[NCATE](#)], Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of business [[AACSB](#)], and Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology [[ABET](#)])

List five to seven of the most important goals identified in the sources listed above. Prioritize the goals depending on their importance to your department and their universality (i.e., how well they apply to different program tracks, if applicable). Next, determine whether the goal is best described as knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values, or a combination of these. A goal can be described by more than one term. See the following illustration.

Goal	Knowledge	Abilities	Attitudes	Values
1	X	X		
2		X		X
3			X	X

(Adapted from *Assessment Handbook*, 2003)

### **Have faculty complete a goals inventory of their courses**

Faculty can complete a goals inventory for the courses they teach. The results of the goals inventory may provide a starting point for defining your program's goals.

(Refer to Angelo and Cross, 1993, for a self-scorable version of a *Teaching Goals Inventory*)

The Center for Teaching at The University of Iowa describes it as:

"The Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI) is a self-assessment of instructional goals. Its purpose is threefold: (1) to help college teachers become more aware of what they want to accomplish in individual courses; (2) to help faculty locate Classroom Assessment Techniques they can adapt and use to assess how well they are achieving their teaching and learning goals; and (3) to provide a starting point for discussion of teaching and learning goals among colleagues."

(From University of Iowa's website on TGI - <http://www.uiowa.edu/~centeach/tgi/index.html>)

### **Collect and review instructional material**

Review course syllabi, assignments, tests and any additional materials. Categorize the instructional materials into several groupings such as:

- Recall or recognition of factual information.
- Application and comprehension.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving.

### **Review other programs' goals**

- Review program goals and intended outcomes of other departments at your university.
- Review program goals and intended outcomes of similar departments at other universities.

#### **Of Note**

You can review the program missions, goals and outcomes of other programs at UCF by accessing the visitor page at the [Operational Excellence and Assessment Support](#) website.

### Use a Delphi technique

Conduct a panel discussion about program goals or outcomes using a facilitator. Each member of the panel can be asked to identify and list criteria that they believe are important for program goals or outcomes. Combine all criteria into one list and have each member anonymously rank the criteria as being very, somewhat or not important. Tabulate the results and show them to the panel. Discuss the results and repeat the process until consensus is reached before writing the goal and outcome statements.

*(Adapted from Harding, Dickerson and Kehoe, 2002; Palomba et. al., 2000; and Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, 2001; and Guidelines for Assessment, 1993)*

### Writing program goals

Once you have reached an understanding of the mission of the program and the faculty members are in agreement on what the program is trying to accomplish, you can start writing the program goals. The following are some guidelines for writing program goals:

- Identify **three or more goals** that are important (i.e., strongly related to the mission and that will help to achieve the vision).
- Goal statements should describe the expected performance of the student or specific behaviors expected from graduates of the program.
- Don't identify too many goals, particularly when first starting out.

### Format of a goal statement

The general format of a goal statement is: "To (action verb) (object) (modifiers)."

#### Example

To improve the success of graduates in finding employment in the field.

*(Adapted from Stassen, Doherty, and Poe, 2001)*

### Examples of program goals

**Poor:** To teach students engineering principles.

This is an inadequate goal statement because the focus is on the teaching rather than on the expected behavior of graduates of the program.

**Better:** To prepare students adequately.

This is better than the first example. Although this statement does not specifically explain the expectations of graduates, the focus is on student learning and not the teaching activity.



- Best:**
- a. To prepare students for graduate school.
  - b. To have students graduate from the program with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in Hypothetical industry.
  - c. To prepare students to be successful in Hypothetical industry careers.
- These are good examples of program goal statements that include a brief description of the expected actions of students of the program.

**Of Note**

Refer to Appendix 3D for a worksheet on identifying and defining goals.

## **Reviewing your program goals**

After generating a list of program goals, the following questions can help to determine whether the list is complete and will be of value to your program:

- Do your goals describe desired aspects of a successful program?
- Are your goals consistent with your mission?
- If you achieve your goals, have you reached your vision?
- Are your goals aligned with your values?

**Of Note**

Refer to Appendix 3E for a checklist for reviewing a list of program goals.

## Sources and additional references

Angelo, T., & Cross, P. K. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2 ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*Assessment Handbook*. (2003). Retrieved February 11, 2008, from <http://www.cord.edu/dept/assessment/guidelines.htm>

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Palomba, C., & Banta, T. (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Troy, M., & Lowe, P. (2003). *University Assessment Manual*. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from [www.tamu.edu/marshome/assess/purpose.html](http://www.tamu.edu/marshome/assess/purpose.html)

## APPENDIX 3A

### Guidelines for Writing an Effective Mission Statement

College / School: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Prepared: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this checklist is to help you develop your mission statement.

**What do you do? What are your primary functions and activities?**

- ☐ Educate students
- ☐ Conduct research
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Why do you do these activities? What is your purpose?**

- ☐ To enable students to get jobs or go to graduate school
- ☐ Advance the state of knowledge
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**For whom do you do them?**

- ☐ Students
- ☐ Prospective Employers
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Write your Mission Statement:** "The mission of (your office name) is to (your primary purpose) by providing (your primary functions or activities) to (your stakeholders)."  
(Additional clarifying statements)

**APPENDIX 3B**  
**Checklist for Reviewing a Mission Statement**

**College / School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Prepared:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The purpose of this checklist is to help you determine if the mission statement is effective and clearly defines the current mission of the department/program.**

- ☐ **Is your mission statement brief and memorable?**
  
  
  
- ☐ **Is it distinctive?**
  
  
  
- ☐ **Does it clearly state the purpose of the program or unit?**
  
  
  
- ☐ **Does it indicate the primary functions or activities of the program?**
  
  
  
- ☐ **Does it indicate who the stakeholders are?**
  
  
  
- ☐ **Does it clearly support the department's, college's, and institution's missions?**

## APPENDIX 3C

### Checklist for Writing and Reviewing a Vision Statement

College / School: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Prepared: \_\_\_\_\_

**The purpose of this checklist is to help you develop your vision statement.**

**What would you like to become?**

- ☐ The best
- ☐ A leader
- ☐ Regionally or nationally recognized
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What would you like to strive for?**

- ☐ Reputation
- ☐ Excellence
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What would you like your program to look like in the future?**

**Write your Vision Statement:**

**The purpose of this checklist is to help you review your vision statement.**

- ☐ Does it indicate what you would like your program to become or strive for?
- ☐ Does it indicate what your program will look like in the future?
- ☐ Is your vision inspirational?
- ☐ Will it pull you in a desired direction?



### **APPENDIX 3D**

#### **Worksheet for Identifying and Defining Program Goals**

**College / School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Prepared:** \_\_\_\_\_

After each faculty member has completed this worksheet, arrange a meeting at which you can compare notes and discuss the results. The reason for this exercise is to summarize and articulate 3 – 5 goals that the faculty can agree on.

1. **Identify and list all the department goals of which you are aware. Refer to catalog descriptions, program review reports, mission statements, and external agencies (e.g., SACS).**

2. **Describe “the perfect student” in your program in terms of his or her knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes. Which of these characteristics do you think can be directly attributed to the program experience?**

- 3. Ask what this “ideal” student:**  
**a. Knows**

**b. Can do**

**c. Values**

- 4. Identify program experiences that contributed to producing and supporting the “ideal” student in your program.**

- 5. What should a graduate of your program know, do, and value?**

- 6. List the desired achievements of your alumni.**

## **APPENDIX 3E**

### **Checklist for Reviewing Goal Statements**

**College / School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Prepared:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The purpose of this checklist is to help you determine if the goal statements are appropriate.**

☐ **Do your goals describe desired performance?**

☐ **Are your goals consistent with your mission?**

☐ **If you achieve your goals, have you reached or moved toward your vision?**

☐ **Are your goals aligned with your values?**