Academic Program Mission Statement

Sources:
https://louisville.edu/philosophy/about/mission-statement
https://assessment.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1804/2016/06/HowToWriteMission.pdf
https://aie.vt.edu/content/dam/aie_vt_edu/institutional-effectiveness/academic-program-assessment/office-handout-series-creating-a-mission-statement.pdf
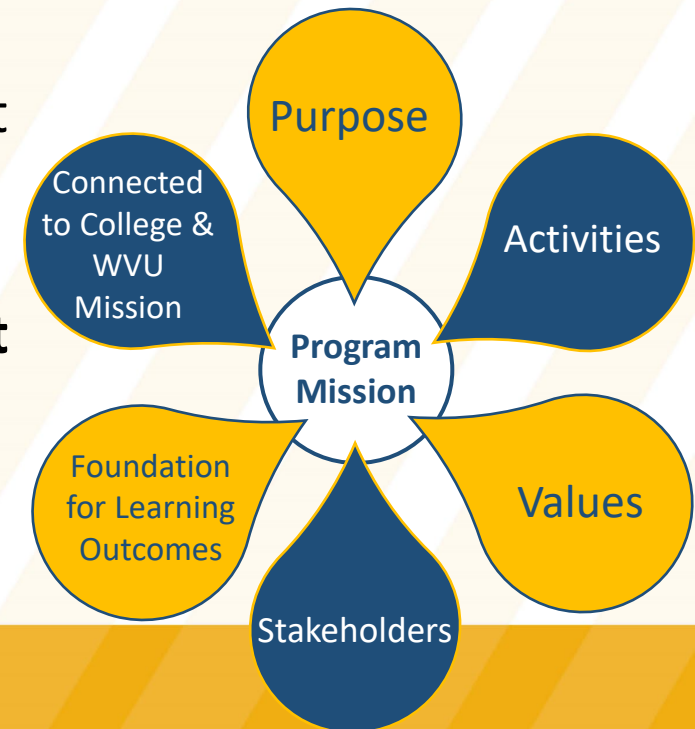https://www.unco.edu/center-enhancement-teaching-learning/pdf/assessment/mission-statement-indepth.pdf
https://provost.utsa.edu/cia/assessment/academic/mission.html

Program Mission Statement (*MS*)..

..includes a description of the:

- broad **purposes** the program is aiming to achieve
- general **activities** the program engages in related to those purposes
- community and **stakeholders** the program is designed to serve
- **values** and principles that guide the program purposes and activities

The *MS* also serves as a foundation for program **goals** and student **learning outcomes**.

Should **distinguish** the program from other units and should be **consistent** with the principles in both the college's mission and WVU's mission.

Purpose

Connected to College & WVU Mission

Activities

Program Mission

Foundation for Learning Outcomes

Values

Stakeholders

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY.

Eberly College of Arts and Sciences

Why?

MS are important for several reasons.

- Process of creating and revising *MS* lets people see the program as something they helped shape.

- Provides a shared language for staff, faculty, and other stakeholders.

- Transforms a broad vision for the program into specific, action-oriented terms.

- Easy to lose sight of program's purposes when dealing with day-to-day issues. A *MS* keeps focus on purpose.

- Prevents "mission creep" by creating the foundation for developing priorities, program goals, student learning outcomes, and decisions about program changes.

- When a *MS* is easily visible (i.e., on website, recruitment flyers, etc.), it communicates a program's purpose and values to others (e.g., students, parents, other faculty and units, employers), and it communicates what is important to program faculty.

Purpose

Explains why the unit does the activities it does. Why does the program exist? What are its general goals? What are its unique or signature features?
e.g. an academic program might deliver an undergraduate program, conduct research, and engage in service.

Here are some examples -

- Philosophy: "to foster investigation and understanding of fundamental philosophical issues."

- Biology: "advances understanding of living organisms and their interactions with the environment."

- Political Science: "advances the knowledge and scientific study of politics, relates this knowledge to the real world, and encourages interest in politics."

Purpose

Program Mission

Activities

Describe the primary activities a program does related to meeting its purposes.

       e.g. an academic program may conduct scholarly endeavors, educating students, and engaging in service.

Examples -

- Philosophy: "strives first to teach its students the basic skills and practices of philosophical inquiry: careful and sympathetic understanding of others' ideas, thoughtful philosophical writing and conversation, analysis and questioning of key concepts, articulation of premises and conclusions, critical response to arguments, and development and support of one's own philosophical positions. Second,…."
- Biology: "advances understanding of living organisms through research, provides high-quality biology education with an emphasis on experiential learning, and builds public understanding of the living world through educational outreach activities for learners of all ages."
- Political Science: "educates undergraduate and graduate students in the fundamentals of political science principles, develops new knowledge through critical research, and applies the knowledge of political science to serve the needs of the state."

Purpose

Activities

Program Mission

Values

Describe the values and beliefs that guide how a program operates. How a unit approaches research, teaching, service, and outreach. The mission can draw on values and principles derived from the discipline, university, college, and department.

Examples -

- Philosophy: "recognizes the value and importance of diversity; is committed to creating inclusive and equitable spaces wherever students, staff, and faculty gather to interact, and seeks to decolonize the discipline and practice of philosophy."

- Biology: "We have the following values: 1) We value being curious and asking big questions. 2) Our faculty share their experiences, lead by example, and encourage imagination. 3) We value educators' wisdom to empower students. 4) We value diversity. Like any ecosystem, diversity within the department brings vivacity, strength, and resilience."

- Political Science: "We value and emphasize discussion and engagement with primary sources in all levels of our curriculum. From general education courses through advanced seminars, regular opportunities for small-group discussion are a prominent feature of our courses."

Purpose

Activities

Program Mission

Values

WestVirginiaUniversity.

Stakeholders

For whom are we doing the activities we describe? Who is the mission written for? What groups or individuals benefit from our activities?

> e.g. for most programs students (undergraduate and/or graduate), staff and faculty are the main stakeholders. Other stakeholders include local/regional community members, internship supervisors and organizations, donors, employers, alumni, etc.

Examples -

- [*weave stakeholders into description of activities*] Our faculty 1) conduct research to strengthen public health knowledge and interventions, 2) educate undergraduate/graduate students who will become the next generation of public health practitioners, and 3) collaborate with clinicians, researchers, other professionals, local and regional communities.
- Our department is a scholarly community formed by students, staff, and faculty that creates an environment of learning for all.

Purpose

Activities

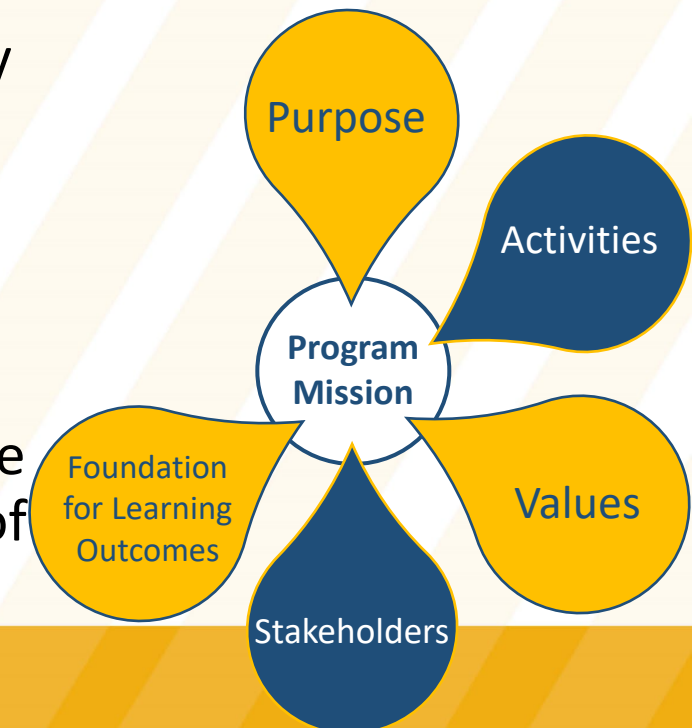Program Mission

Values

Stakeholders

Program Learning Outcomes

- A *MS* should include a general description of what students will learn if they earn a degree in the program.
- Communicates to stakeholders what general knowledge, skills, and dispositions the program curricula focuses on.
- Can help differentiate your program from other similar disciplinary programs.

Examples from http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/ -

- Anthropology: Critically analyze anthropological questions and issues by retrieving and synthesizing appropriate information and evidence and identifying implications for research and practice/policy.
- Biology: Students will be able to synthesize knowledge and skills from across the curriculum and apply them to societal issues and problems.
- Political Science: A knowledge of major policy issues in state, national, and international affairs and an appreciation of the complexity reflective of the uncertainties, trade-offs, and institutional/bureaucratic context of problems confronting governments.

Purpose

Activities

Program Mission

Values

Foundation for Learning Outcomes

Stakeholders

Connected to broader mission

Ensure that there is alignment between those broader missions and the program mission or explicitly state the support of the college/university mission.

e.g. In keeping with our university's broader mission...

We value the university's commitment to...

The mission of the department is intertwined with the mission of the college with regard.....

The primary mission of the **Eberly College of Arts and Sciences** is to promote the full development of the student as an individual and as a member of society. Students earning degrees in the College fulfill certain broad basic-education requirements and study at least one subject in some depth. The degree requirements are intended to carry forward what is usually termed "a general education," thus providing a foundation for continued growth and development after graduation.

As a land-grant institution, the faculty, staff and students at **West Virginia University** commit to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity; by advancing high-impact research; and by leading transformation in West Virginia and the world through local, state and global engagement.

Purpose

Activities

Connected to College & WVU Mission

Program Mission

Foundation for Learning Outcomes

Values

Stakeholders

WestVirginiaUniversity.

Eberly College of Arts and Sciences

Other considerations

MS should be:

- **Distinctive -** distinguish your program from other programs at WVU and other universities.

- **Broad enough, yet specific enough -** realistic and not too broad that almost any activity or topic could fit under the mission. Should also avoid being too narrow so that it cannot accommodate the changes to programming that might occur year-to-year.

- **Clear and understandable -** well-written using language that is easily understood by a range of stakeholders. Prospective and current students, parents, employers, alumni, and prospective faculty hires should all be able to understand what is communicated in the mission.

- **Reflects stakeholder input.** Stakeholders with a vested interest in the purpose and activities of the program should have a role in developing and revising a program *MS*.

Questions?

How do you get started?

1. Form writing committee to complete the core activities to write a *MS*. Gather staff/faculty feedback. Re-evaluate *MS* draft and staff/faculty feedback. Final review by stakeholders.

2. Gather feedback from staff/faculty using open-ended questions – i.e. purpose: What purposes/goals should be added? Why?. Have writing team review all elements to compile and draft a *MS*. Final review by stakeholders.

3. Gather existing *MS* from similar programs. Review/revise. Gather staff/faculty feedback. Have writing team review all elements to compile and draft a *MS*. Final review by stakeholders.

Purpose

Activities

Connected to College & WVU Mission

Program Mission

Values

Foundation for Learning Outcomes

Stakeholders