Program Mission Statement: An In-depth Look

Contents

What is a Mission Statement?

A program (program refers to a department, school, or program) mission statement includes a description of the broad purposes the program is aiming to achieve, the general activities the program engages in related to those purposes, the community and stakeholders the program is designed to serve, and the values and principles that guide the program purposes and activities. A mission statement serves as a foundation for program goals and student learning outcomes. A program mission statement should distinguish the program from other units and should be consistent with the principles in both the college's mission and UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals). Key elements of mission statements are in the diagram:
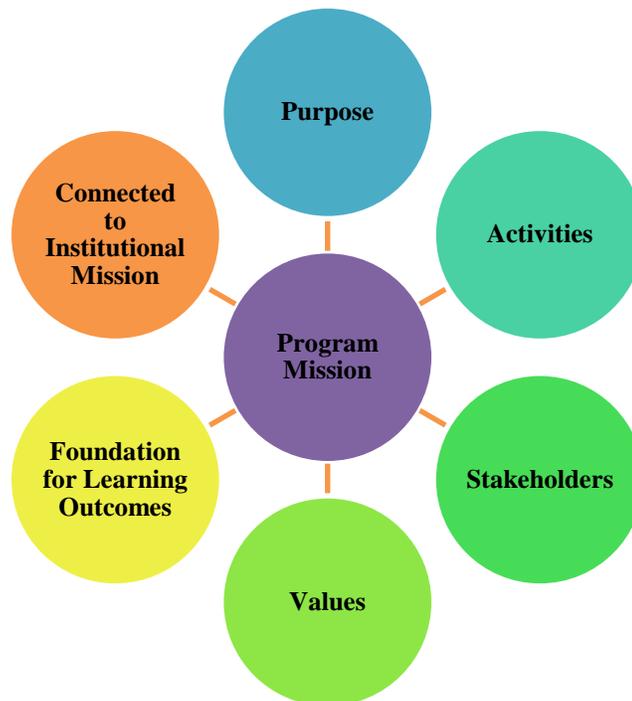
A program mission should be reviewed periodically to ensure that there is alignment between the mission and current program purposes and activities. If the mission statement, purpose, and activities of the program are misaligned then this is a signal to the program that either 1) the mission is no longer reflective of the program and needs to be modified or 2) the program purpose and activities have drifted and need to be modified to align with the intended mission. Either scenario is possible; reflection by the program is needed to determine which is the case.

Mission statements are sometimes confused with vision statements. A vision statement is a short, aspirational and inspirational statement describing your program's image of the future you seek to create; whereas, a mission statement describes what your program is going to do and why it's going to do it. Mission statements are more concrete and action-oriented than vision statements. One way of thinking about mission and vision statements is: "Your vision statement should inspire people to dream; your mission statement should inspire them to action" (Network of STEM Education Centers, 2016).

Why Mission Statements are Important

Mission statements are important for several reasons.

- The process of creating and revising a mission can bring people together to create shared focus for the work they do.
- The process of creating and revising a mission statement enables people to see the unit/program as something they helped shape.
- A mission statement provides a shared language for faculty, staff, and other key stakeholders.
- Mission statements convert the broad dreams of your vision for the program into specific, action-oriented terms.
- It is easy to lose sight of your program's purposes when dealing with day-to-day issues. A mission statement provides a good reminder of the program's purpose as you do your daily work.
- Having a well-developed mission statement can also help prevent "mission creep" by providing a basis for developing priorities, goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, and for making decisions about program changes.
- When your mission statement is easily visible and accessible (e.g., on unit website), it communicates your purpose and values to others (e.g., students, parents, other faculty and units, employers), and it communicates what is important to program faculty.

Who Should Develop Mission Statements

It is critical to be as inclusive as possible when developing mission statements to ensure that the statement fully represents a range of stakeholder voices and perspectives. Stakeholders with a vested interest in the purpose and activities of the program should have a role in developing the mission statement. Stakeholders can be broken into two groups: key stakeholders and auxiliary stakeholders.

Key stakeholders are responsible for implementing and overseeing the mission. In academic programs, key stakeholders are faculty. Units are encouraged to include all program faculty in the mission writing/revision process. Key stakeholders (or a subset of key stakeholders) will oversee the mission statement development process. If there is a large number of faculty, some units may want to create a subgroup of faculty who will be the writing team and who will do the main work of synthesizing stakeholder feedback, writing the draft statement, and revising the draft statement. Also, units may place some faculty into the key stakeholder group and some faculty into the auxiliary group. For example, some programs place full-time faculty into the key stakeholder group and part-time faculty in the auxiliary group. When determining placement of part-time faculty consider how many courses part-time faculty teach in the program; if part-time faculty are teaching a significant number of courses they will have an important perspective in the key stakeholder group.

Auxiliary stakeholders are those individuals directly influenced by the unit's mission and activities. In academic programs, the main auxiliary stakeholders are students. Auxiliary stakeholders can also include faculty (generally part-time or adjunct), researchers, staff, community members, employers, advisory boards, and the like who have a vested interest in the

program. Some units have auxiliary stakeholders provide input in the initial round of feedback gathered in preparation to create a draft mission statement. Other units have auxiliary stakeholders provide input once the draft mission statement is created.

Who Should Know About the Mission Statement

All stakeholders should be aware of the program mission. At a minimum, this includes full and part-time faculty, students, fieldwork and internship supervisors, and student support personnel who work with the program. Other stakeholders could include parents, employers, and alumni/ae of the program. Programs can post their program mission on their UNC websites and in program brochures. Often programs are also asked to include their mission statement in academic program review reports.

Guidelines for Writing a Mission Statement

Effective mission statements describe a shared message of what a program does and why it does it. Below are guidelines to use when developing a new or revising an existing mission statement.

1. **Describes the program purpose.** A mission statement should describe the purposes the program is aiming to achieve. The purpose explains why the unit does the activities it does. For example, an academic program might deliver an undergraduate program, conduct research, and engage in service. Those are the program's activities and are often easier for a program to identify than the reason the program is doing these activities. When developing the purpose aspect of the mission statement, it is important to determine why a program is doing its activities (e.g., research, teaching, etc.). Below are examples of purposes for various programs. Program purposes are often connected to the values and interests of the program discipline (as in the anthropology department example below) and/or of the institution (as in the public health department example below).
   - Anthropology: The Anthropology Department promotes the study of the human species from an integrative and interdisciplinary approach focusing on the biology, evolutionary history, sociocultural and linguistic diversity of humans.
   - Biology: The Biology Department advances understanding of living organisms and their interactions with the environment.
   - Economics: The Economics Department strives to apply economic theory to understand real-world social phenomena.
   - Music: The Music Department is dedicated to sustaining and advancing musical culture in the academy and in society at large.
   - Political Science: The Political Science Department advances the knowledge and scientific study of politics, relates this knowledge to the real world, and encourages interest in politics.
   - Public Health: The Public Health Department promotes the physical, mental, social and environmental health of people and communities in the Rocky Mountain Region and globally.
2. **Describes program activities.** A mission statement describes the primary activities a program does related to meeting its purposes. The activities should include all main activities that a program does to achieve its main purpose. For most academic units, the main activities

are conducting scholarly and creative endeavors, educating students, and engaging in service. Other activities could include community and civic engagement, providing leadership, and providing advocacy. Here are examples of activities for various programs:

- Anthropology: The Anthropology Department will accomplish its mission by engaging in innovative anthropological research and teaching.
- Biology: The Biology Department 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.
- Economics: The Economics Department trains students at undergraduate and graduate levels in the methods and ideas of modern economics, conducts basic and applied research in economics; and conducts service activities for the university, the public, and private constituents at the local, state and national levels.
- Music: The Music Department educates students for professional careers in musical composition, performance, scholarship and teaching; offers music instruction through community and continuing education programs; and engages in research and creative endeavors in music.
- Political Science: The Political Science Department 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.
- Public Health: The Public Health Department will achieve its mission through collaborations with colleagues, communities, organizations, academic institutions, professionals and citizens; building the capacity of health professionals through consultation, skill development and education; and pursuing high-quality research.

3. **Describes program values.** A mission statement should include information about the values and principles that guide the program purposes and activities. The mission can draw on values and principles derived from the discipline, university, college, and department. Programs generally describe the values and beliefs that guide how they operate as a unit and how they approach research, teaching, service, and outreach. Some programs integrate descriptions of their values into one overall mission statement and some programs describe their values in a subsection of their mission statement that they label "values." Some programs list their values and some programs provide short explanations of how the values are integrated into their work. Examples of values and principles are below.

- Anthropology: We believe that research should be intrinsically connected to our activity as teachers. The research and teaching activities of anthropology faculty members should resonate with and complement each other. We also encourage team-teaching and experimentation with new teaching methods.
- Biology: We have the following values: 1) We value being curious and asking big questions. 2) We value a mentor's wisdom. Our faculty share their experiences, lead by example, and encourage imagination. 3) We value educators' wisdom to empower students. Great students can grow and develop through patience and encouragement. 4) We value diversity. Like any ecosystem, diversity within the department brings vivacity, strength, and resilience. Differences in experiences, perspectives, and approaches stimulate cross-fertilization and adaptation. Embracing diversity promotes fertile ground for new ideas to germinate and grow.

- Economics: Our values include excellence in all programs, responsive to needs and requests of stakeholders, integrity and ethics above reproach, collegiality and collaboration envied by all, commitment to diversity and creating opportunity for everyone, and accountable to all stakeholders.
- Music: The Music Department values music's ability to improve the human condition; diversity of perspectives; and a close-knit learning and performance environment with extensive faculty-student interaction.
- 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.
- Public Health: We have four core values that guide our decisions and operations: 1) Equity. All people should have an environment that optimizes health, access to affordable and high-quality health care, awareness of personal choices for improving health, and opportunities to help improve the health of our communities. 2) Ethics. We conduct research that protects the rights and welfare of all study participants and create an inclusive environment that supports our faculty, staff, students and constituents. 3) Excellence. We pursue innovative research that is rigorous and provides a high-quality learning experience for students. 4) Diversity. We work to create a welcoming culture that respects all forms of diversity. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our students, faculty, and staff and to equipping all our graduates to contribute effectively to a diverse public health workforce.

4. **Identifies stakeholders.** A mission statement should identify the community and stakeholders the program serves and works with. When trying to identify stakeholders, ask the following questions:

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

For most programs students (undergraduate and/or graduate) are one of the main stakeholders. Other stakeholders include faculty, staff, local/regional community members, internship supervisors and organizations, employers, alumni, and so on.

In example 1 below, the program weaves the stakeholders into their description of the activities they do. In example 2, the program describes the groups they view as important for creating their community. Both examples communicate who the unit views as critical to their mission.

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

5. **Serves as foundation for program learning outcomes.** Mission statements should include a general description of what students will learn if they earn a degree in the program. This

description provides a guide for the program's student learning outcomes and communicates to stakeholders what general knowledge, skills, and dispositions the program curricula focuses on. The description can help differentiate your program from other programs at UNC and from similar disciplinary departments at other universities by communicating your program strengths and unique characteristics.

Below are examples of general student learning outcome descriptions in mission statements for three different biology departments. Example 1 is generic and provides almost no information about what knowledge and skills the program offers. Example 2 is better than example 1 as it provides more information about what students will get out of the program. Example 2, also explains that students can select an emphasis area, thus communicating something potentially unique about the program. Example 3 provides the strongest foundation for student learning outcomes by describing what students will study. Example 3 also better communicates to potential students and other stakeholders what is unique about the program: the program integrates aspects of the local biogeographical setting, emphasizes environmental questions, and develops students' research skills.

- Biology department example 1 (weak foundation for learning outcomes): Our department offers a broad-based curriculum designed to provide biology majors with a strong foundation in classical and modern biology.
- Biology department example 2 (better foundation for learning outcomes): Our curriculum provides a solid and broad foundation of knowledge while offering an opportunity to choose an area of emphasis within life sciences that is related to individual career goals. Majors in our department study the structure and function of cells, organ systems and tissues in animals and plants; ecology; and evolution.
- Biology department example 3 (strongest foundation for learning outcomes): In keeping with the increasing integration of biological science, students will learn about the unity of life processes at all levels of organization, from molecules and cells, to whole organisms, to ecological systems and evolutionary lineages. Our curriculum also engages students in examining environmental questions related to biological sciences, taking advantage of our unique biogeographic setting. Also, we integrate laboratory work using molecular and biochemical techniques throughout coursework and in undergraduate research so that students gain a foundation in biological research.

6. **Connected to broader mission.** A program mission should be consistent with the principles in both the college's mission and UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals). It is critical to review the college's and university's missions to ensure that there is alignment between those broader missions and the program mission. Some programs explicitly state that they support the university or college mission as in the examples below. Other programs do not have explicit statements; instead, they evaluate their program mission against the college and university mission to ensure that there is alignment. Below are a range of ways programs link their mission to the larger institutional mission.
   - Example 1: In keeping with our state university's broader mission, the department is committed to nurturing the best of our state's students, while maintaining excellence and diversity by recruiting nationally and internationally.

- Example 2: In line with the university's mission as an urban, public institution committed to community engagement, our department supports partnerships with the local and regional museums, archives, and historical societies and offers community internships with those organizations.
- Example 3: We value the university's commitment to Respect, Responsibility, Discovery, and Excellence.
- Example 4: The mission of the department is intertwined with the mission of the university, particularly with regard to challenging students "to think independently and critically, develop lifelong learning habits, acquire career skills, embrace diversity and become citizens and leaders in the regional and global community."

7. **Distinctive.** Your mission statement should distinguish your program from other programs at the university and from similar programs at other universities. For example, a student or other stakeholder should be able to read a sociology mission statement and determine how the program differs from an economics program, communications program, and geography program at the same university. Similarly, a stakeholder should be able to read a sociology mission statement and know how that program is different from other sociology departments at other universities. A mission statement should list the name of the program as a first step to being distinctive. Additionally, the mission should be situated in the discipline of the program and should include descriptions of the unit values and activities that differentiate the program from other programs.

Review the psychology department mission statement examples below. In Example 1, it is likely that you are unable to determine what the program is until the last sentence because the department name is not identified and the description is so generic that it could describe any number of disciplines and programs. Alternatively, the mission statement in Example 2 identifies the program (Department of Psychology) and describes how the department is unique (e.g., follows the American Psychological Association's practices and has a strong commitment to undergraduate research).

- Example 1 (weaker description of how program is distinctive): Our department strives to meaningfully address the betterment of the human condition. To achieve this goal, we conduct research, teach undergraduates, and engage in service. In our undergraduate program, we teach critical thinking, attention to detail, creativity, complex reasoning, principles of statistics and research methods, effective written communication, and effective oral communication. We believe that the future of research and teaching will be interdisciplinary and collaborative; therefore, we place a strong emphasis on collaboration across our work. Our faculty engage in cutting edge and collaborative research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, while maintaining a firm footing in psychology.
- Example 2 (stronger description of how program is distinctive): The Department of Psychology seeks to advance the science and professional practice of psychology by researching innovative solutions to emerging areas for psychology and training our students to be research collaborators. Our faculty engage in research, teaching, and service. Our undergraduate program incorporates best practices put forth in the American Psychological Association's Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology. In the program, students gain an understanding of human behavior, cognition, and emotion. Students also develop critical thinking, communication, and

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quantitative skills related to psychology concepts. Our faculty engage in basic and applied research in a range of areas including clinical, cognitive, developmental, neurological, organizational, and social perspectives. Our faculty are committed to undergraduate research and collaborate with undergraduate students on a wide variety of psychology topics. We value a commitment to ethical conduct; the importance of a collaborative scholarly environment; and inclusivity and diversity.

8. **Broad enough, yet specific enough.** A mission statement should be realistic and not too broad that almost any activity or topic could fit under the mission. But a mission should also avoid being too narrow so that it cannot accommodate the organic, natural changes to programming that might occur year-to-year.

   Review the examples below. In example 1, the description of the program is so broad that it could apply to almost any discipline and program. This makes it difficult for students and stakeholders to understand what the value is of the program. Example 2 is a modification of example 1. However, example 2 is too narrow. It has too much detail regarding the program courses. This level of detail makes it too specific and does not allow for a program to make changes to its curriculum without also changing its mission statement. Program missions tend to fall more on the "too broad" side of the spectrum rather than on the "too specific" side of the spectrum. Yet as example 1 shows, being too broad serves as a disservice to the program because it does not communicate the value of the program. It can also lead the program to become too expansive because the mission is so broad.
   - Example 1: Our department strives to meaningfully address the betterment of the human condition. To achieve this goal, we conduct research, teach undergraduates, and engage in service. In our undergraduate program, we teach critical thinking, attention to detail, creativity, complex reasoning, effective written communication, and effective oral communication. Our faculty engage in cutting edge and collaborative research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, while maintaining a firm footing in the discipline.
   - Example 2: Our Department of Psychology strives to meaningfully address the betterment of the human condition. To achieve this goal, we conduct research, teach undergraduates, and engage in service. In our undergraduate program, our Psych 101 and 400 classes teach critical thinking and our Psych 200 class teaches attention to detail and creativity. The Program also teaches complex reasoning, effective written communication, and effective oral communication. Our faculty engage in cutting edge and collaborative research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, while maintaining a firm footing in psychology.

9. **Clear and understandable.** A mission statement should be well-written and use language that is easily understood by a range of stakeholders. Prospective and current students, parents, employers, alumni, and prospective facultyhires should all be able to understand what is communicated in the mission. This may mean changing the terminology and language so that the mission is accessible to a range of stakeholders. Writing a clear and understandable mission can be difficult when a small number of people are involved in its development. One of the best ways to ensure the mission is clear and understandable is to have a wide range of stakeholders review it and provide feedback on it.

10. **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 mission statement. It

is critical to be as inclusive as possible when developing mission statements to ensure that the statement fully represents a range of stakeholder voices and perspectives. Also, many of the guidelines above can be addressed by involving stakeholders when developing or revising a mission.

Checklist for Evaluating a Mission Statement

This checklist is a summary of the guidelines for creating mission statements. Use the checklist to create, evaluate, and revise a mission statement.

Checklist Question	Does the mission meet the guideline?	
	Yes	No
1. **Describes the program purpose.** Does the mission describe the purposes of the unit (i.e., why the unit does what it does)?		
2. **Describes program activities.** Does the mission describe the primary activities a program does related to meeting its purposes?		
3. **Describes program values.** Does the mission identify the values of the program?		
4. **Identifies stakeholders.** Does the mission identify the major stakeholders the program serves and works with?		
5. **Serves as foundation for program learning outcomes.** Does the mission include a general description of what students will learn if they get a degree in the program?		
6. **Connected to broader mission.** Is the mission consistent with the principles in the college's mission and UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals)?		
7. **Distinctive.** Does the mission distinguish your program from other programs at UNC and from similar programs at other universities?		
8. **Broad enough, yet specific enough.** Is the mission statement realistic and not too broad or too specific?		
9. **Clear and understandable.** Is the mission clear and understandable to a wide range of stakeholders?		
10. **Reflects stakeholder input.** Does the mission reflect input from stakeholders with a vested interest in the purpose and activities of the program?		

Process for Developing (or Revising) a Mission Statement

A process to develop (or revise) a mission statement is below. The process uses language focused on writing a mission statement. However, the process can also be used to revise an existing mission statement. If revising a mission statement, some activities in the process may take less time or could be eliminated. The activities in the process are described sequentially; however, several activities may occur simultaneously. For example, a program may develop a writing plan and timeline, identify stakeholders, and identify a writing team all at the same time.

1. **Develop a writing plan and timeline.**
   a. Develop a set of activities that are needed to develop or revise your mission statement. You can use the list of activities provided here and below and supplement or modify them to accommodate your program needs.
   b. Develop a timeline. Create an overall deadline for when you want to have the final mission statement completed and add deadlines for the interim steps.

  c. Develop guiding principles and values for the writing work. There are several sources for the principles and values that can guide the process of writing a mission statement. Some programs have internal values that guide their work. For example, some programs include students in making programmatic decisions. UNC has adopted guiding principles for assessment (see Appendix) that programs can integrate into their process. Some programs may belong to professional disciplines that promote values and guiding principles that can be adopted. The guiding principles and values that are adopted should be shared with all stakeholders who participate in the writing process.

2. **Identify stakeholders.** As described above, stakeholders with a vested interest in the purpose and activities of the program should have a role in developing the mission statement. Identify the key and auxiliary stakeholders for the program and how they will be involved in the mission statement writing process. Key stakeholders usually have the primary role of writing the mission statement. Auxiliary stakeholders usually provide feedback to mission statement drafts. However, each program will need to determine the specific roles. In some cases, a group may be identified as a stakeholder and the program will need to decide if the entire group or a representative will have a role in the mission statement process. For example, some programs have advisory boards. The program may seek participation from all members of the advisory board or identify one representative from the advisory board to participate.

3. **Identify writing committee.** Once stakeholders are identified, a subset of those stakeholders should be identified to complete the core activities to write the mission statement. In most cases, the writing committee is made up of individuals who are key stakeholders. In academic programs, that means that a few faculty members would be identified to be the writing committee. The writing committee will be responsible for implementing the process to write the mission statement and will be responsible for meeting deadlines.

4. **Gather and review mission statement examples.** A good starting place for a writing team is to gather and review mission statement examples following the steps below.

  a. Gather mission statements from other units/programs at UNC and mission statements from similar units at other universities. For example, a UNC anthropology department could gather statements from UNC geography, sociology, economics, history, and earth science programs. Additionally, the anthropology department could gather statements from anthropology departments at other universities. Mission statements for other programs are generally found on department website main pages or on the "About" website page for a program. The search terms "mission + program name (e.g., anthropology), department, university" can be used in a web browser to find mission statements.

  b. Evaluate the example mission statements using the mission statement checklist provided above. Using the checklist will help you think about the various elements in a mission statement and how they are included (or not included) and how they are described.

  c. In addition to evaluating the statements with the mission statement checklist, the following questions can be used to evaluate the mission statement examples.

    • What purposes, activities, stakeholders, and values are described?

    • How does the mission serve as a foundation for learning outcomes?

    • How does the mission connect to broader institutional missions?

    • What do you like and dislike about the mission statement examples?

    • What elements could be adapted and used for your mission?

5. **Gather and summarize initial feedback from stakeholders.** Develop a plan for gathering information from stakeholders then gather and summarize the information.
    a. Who are the stakeholders from whom you will gather feedback? If you have not previously identified the stakeholders, determine from whom you will gather information. This list should be very specific with names of individuals and their contact information.
    b. When will you contact them? Determine when you will contact stakeholders. If you are holding meetings, determine how long those meetings will last.
    c. What format will you use to gather feedback? There are many formats for the feedback. You can send stakeholders a questionnaire in a Word document or in Qualtrics, you can have individual or group meetings with stakeholders, or you could conduct focus group interviews. Regardless of the format, you want to get feedback from stakeholders on the various elements of a mission statement. Below are general questions you might ask stakeholders. You can adapt these questions for your program.
        - What are the purposes/goals of the program?
        - What do you hope our program achieves in 5 years?
        - What makes our program unique?
        - What are the general activities the program does or should do?
        - Who are the groups our program serves? How do we serve those groups?
        - Who are the individuals and groups the program collaborates with?
        - What do you hope our students will know and be able to do by the time they graduate?
        - What values currently or should guide our work in the program?
        - How does our program help the college/university meets its larger mission?
    d. How will you analyze and summarize feedback? Develop a plan for how you will summarize the feedback you receive from stakeholders. One way to organize the feedback is to group feedback according to the elements of a mission statement (e.g., purpose, activities, stakeholders, values, foundation for learning outcomes). Organizing the feedback according to those elements will help the writing team convert the feedback into a mission statement.
6. **Develop a draft.** Develop a draft mission statement based on feedback from stakeholders and mission statement examples.
    a. The writing team can use the following mission statement template as a starting place to begin the writing process: "The Department of [add department or program name] strives to [add purpose]. We will accomplish this purpose by [add activities]. In conducting these activities, we work with [add list of stakeholders]. Our academic program prepares students to develop the following knowledge and skills [add general knowledge and skills]. Aligned with the institutional mission, we [add how the program aligns with the institutional mission]. We approach our work with [add the program values]."
    b. Here is an example of a mission that generally follows the template

       The Department of Public Health aims to better understand and improve public health problems particularly of urban and underserved communities. We strive to improve public health by 1) conducting research to strengthen public health knowledge and interventions, 2) educating undergraduate and graduate students who will become the next generation of public health practitioners, and 3) collaborating with clinicians, researchers, other professionals, and communities.

We believe that public health professionals must understand the ways in which social, cultural, economic, and political values and systems influence public health policy. We are strongly connected to local and regional communities through community and civic engagement activities. We engage our undergraduate and graduate students throughout their academic programs in community projects. We educate our students to have a strong foundation in the fundamental principles of cultural competence and social justice and public health policies related to urban and underserved populations. Aligned with the institution's commitment to community and civic engagement, we are strongly connected to local and regional communities through community and civic engagement activities.

c. The example mission is repeated below in the table with each sentence in a separate row (left column) and what the sentence communicates as related to the elements of a mission (right column). As the example below shows, a sentence can provide information related to more than one element of a program.

Mission Statement Sentence	What the Sentence Communicates
The Department of Public Health aims to better understand and improve public health problems particularly of urban and underserved communities.	Purpose and Values (i.e., serve underserved communities)
We strive to improve public health by 1) conducting research to strengthen public health knowledge and interventions, 2) educating undergraduate and graduate students who will become the next generation of public health practitioners, and 3) collaborating with clinicians, researchers, other professionals, and communities.	Activities and Stakeholders
We believe that public health professionals must understand the ways in which social, cultural, economic, and political values and systems influence public health policy.	Values and Foundation for Learning Outcomes
We are strongly connected to local and regional communities through community and civic engagement activities.	Values and Stakeholders
We engage our undergraduate and graduate students throughout their academic programs in community projects.	Element that Makes the Program Unique
We educate our students to have a strong foundation in the fundamental principles of cultural competence and social justice and public health policies related to urban and underserved populations.	Values and Foundation for Learning Outcomes
Aligned with the institution's commitment to community and civic engagement, we are strongly connected to local and regional communities through community and civic engagement activities.	Connection to Institutional Mission and Values

7. **Evaluate the draft against the mission statement checklist.** The writing team can use the mission statement checklist to evaluate the draft mission, making modifications to the draft based on the evaluation.
8. **Share draft mission with stakeholders and gather feedback.** The key and auxiliary stakeholders should review the draft mission and provide feedback about the draft that the writing team can use in subsequent draft modifications. The same types of methods described for gathering preliminary feedback can be used (e.g., individual meeting, questionnaire, focus group). Here are a couple of ways stakeholders can provide feedback on the draft.

    a. Option 1. The stakeholders can use the mission statement checklist to evaluate the draft mission. The writing team can look for elements that are perceived as missing from the draft mission and focus revisions on those elements.

    b. Option 2. Gather open-ended feedback from stakeholders to help the writing team improve the draft. Below are example questions that can be used to gather feedback from stakeholders about the draft mission. You may need to adjust the terminology based on the stakeholder group. For example, you might need different terms for elements of the mission for a faculty group, a student group, and an employer group.

       i. **Purpose:** Do the purposes align with what you think the purposes are/should be for the program?
         a) What purposes or goals should be added? Why?
         b) What purposes or goals should be removed? Why?
         c) What purposes or goals should be clarified?

      ii. **Activity:** Do the activities align with what you think the program does/should do?
         a) Are there any activities that should be added? Why?
         b) Are there any activities that should be removed? Why?
         c) Are there any activities that need to be clarified?

     iii. **Stakeholders:** Do the stakeholders included in the mission align with who you think the program serves or should serve?
         a) Which stakeholders should be added? Why?
         b) Which stakeholders should be removed? Why?
         c) Which stakeholders should be clarified?

     iv. **Values:** Does the mission include the main values that guide the program's work?
         a) What values should be added? Why?
         b) What values should be removed? Why?
         c) What values should be clarified?

      v. **Foundation for learning outcomes:** Does the mission describe the general knowledge and skills students will gain by the time they graduate?
         a) What other skills or knowledge should be added? Why?
         b) What other skills or knowledge should be removed? Why?
         c) Which skills or knowledge need to be clarified?

     vi. **Connection to mission:** Does the program mission demonstrate how the program helps the college/university meets its larger mission?

    vii. **Other:** What other aspects of the mission need modification or clarification?

9. **Revise based on feedback.** The writing team next revises the draft mission based on feedback gathered from stakeholders.

10. **Evaluate the draft against the mission statement checklist.** The writing team can use the mission statement checklist to evaluate the revised mission, making modifications to the draft based on the evaluation.

11. **Share final mission with stakeholders.** The final mission statement should be shared broadly. This includes sharing the mission with stakeholders involved in the development of the mission, stakeholders not involved in the development process, on the program website, and so on.

Need help?

Need help creating/revising SLOs? Contact the UNC Assessment Office at Assessment@unco.edu.

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Mission Statements Used to Create Example Mission Statements

Elements of the mission statements at the following sites were used to create this resource. However, the mission statements were modified to emphasize the content of this resource.

- http://music.case.edu/mission-statement/
- http://pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2017-2018/Bulletin/College-of-Liberal-Arts-and-Sciences/History/Undergraduate-Program/History-Pre-Education-Program
- http://www.biology.colostate.edu/about/

- http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/anthropology/mission-statement/
- http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/psychology/mission-statement/
- http://www.lasalle.edu/politicalscience/mission-statement/
- http://www.memphis.edu/anthropology/
- http://www.nmu.edu/aqip/dept-mission-statements
- http://www.truman.edu/majors-programs/academic-departments/about-biology-department/mission-goals/
- http://www.txstate.edu/anthropology/about/mission.html
- http://www.unco.edu/nhs/colorado-school-public-health/about-us/
- https://anthropology.columbian.gwu.edu/anthropology-department-mission-statement
- https://biology.olemiss.edu/mission-statement/
- https://bsc.ua.edu/about-us/mission-vision-goals/
- https://cph.osu.edu/about/mission-vision-values
- https://economics.stanford.edu/about/our-mission
- https://history.georgetown.edu/about-the-department/mission-statement
- https://inside.sou.edu/biology/mvg.html
- https://med.virginia.edu/phs/office-of-the-chair/about-public-health-sciences/
- https://music.missouri.edu/mission-values-and-facilities
- https://music.osu.edu/about/mission
- https://phhp.ufl.edu/about-phhp/mission-statement/
- https://polisci.as.uky.edu/polisci-mission-values
- https://psychology.unc.edu/mission-values/
- https://uncw.edu/psy/about/mission.html
- https://uwaterloo.ca/psychology/about/our-mission-vision
- https://www.colorado.edu/psych-neuro/departmental-vision-and-mission
- https://www.cwu.edu/political-science/mission-statement
- https://www.esm.rochester.edu/about/mission/
- https://www.morgan.edu/schp/publichealth
- https://www.northeastern.edu/cssh/economics/about/mission-statement/
- https://www.sdstate.edu/economics/missionvisionvalues
- https://www.wku.edu/economics/mission-statement.php

Appendix: Guiding Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning

The Guiding Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning were created by the UNC Assessment Council and vetted by various groups on campus. The Statement communicates to faculty, staff, administrators, and students the values, purposes, and application of assessment of student learning at UNC. The principles can be applied to the assessment of student learning at the course, program, department, college, and institutional levels in institutional, academic, co-curricular, and student support units.

Purpose of Assessment at UNC

UNC faculty, staff, and administrators collect assessment data to understand what and how students learn. They use assessment results to improve teaching and learning by modifying course instruction, program curriculum, and program activities. UNC faculty, staff, and administrators also conduct assessment to respond to institutional accreditation recommendations and to align with program accreditation requirements. However, the primary purpose for continuous, deliberate, and meaningful assessment efforts at UNC is to improve teaching and learning.

Guiding Principles

1. **Guided by mission.** Assessment of student learning is guided by UNC's mission (including UNC's vision, values, purposes, and goals) and the missions of individual programs.
2. **Institutionally supported**. Assessment is most effective when the university provides resources for assessment activities, such as professional development, financial support, technology, and mechanisms for sharing assessment data.
3. **Improve teaching and learning.** The primary goal of assessment of student learning is for faculty and staff to improve teaching and learning at the course and program levels.
4. **Use of results.** Assessment of student learning results are valuable for highlighting excellence; improving teaching and learning; making evidence-based decisions; and informing planning, policy, and resource decisions.
5. **Faculty/staff driven.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it is owned and driven by the faculty and staff in a program/unit.
6. **Student involvement.** Students serve as a primary stakeholder in assessment of student learning. As a student-centered institution, UNC strives to find opportunities to involve students in assessment of student learning efforts.
7. **Collaborative effort.** Assessment is most effective as a community effort involving faculty, staff, students, administrators, and the community. Assessment fosters more systemic improvement of teaching and learning when representatives from across the educational community are involved in assessment activities.
8. **Useful and meaningful.** Assessment of student learning is most effective when it focuses on issues that faculty, staff, and students find meaningful and when it produces evidence that faculty, staff, and students find useful.
9. **Manageable and sustainable.** Effective assessment is manageable and sustainable when it is designed to align with available human and financial resources.
10. **Assessment is ongoing.** Assessment is most effective when it is an ongoing activity that is part of the regular operations of a program/unit, rather than a sporadic endeavor.
11. **Use of best practices.** Assessment is most effective when best practices for assessing student learning guide the work.
12. **Transparent.** The UNC community is committed to being transparent to internal and external stakeholders about how assessment of student learning is conducted and how the results are used.