

Developing a Department Identity

Foundations of Quality Student
Learning in Post-Secondary Education

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Outline

Introduction

Summary

Who Creates?

How Long to Create?

Components to Develop?

1. Vision Statement
2. Goal Statements
3. Mission or Purpose Statement
4. Value Statements

Who Benefits?

Where to Start?

- Inventories to Start Work:
 - [Teaching Perspectives](#)
 - [Teaching Goals](#)
 - [Teaching Practices](#)
- Scan Internet for Examples
- Discussion with Department



Introduction

- Many Departments Develop Identity Statements - Common Activity
 - Newly Created and Existing Departments
 - Academic and Vocational Programs
 - Colleges, Institutes and Universities
- Focus is on Custom or Unique Components
- Supports Program Review, Accreditation or Audits
- Develops a Functioning and Cohesive Unit
- Enhances Quality Student Learning
- Shared with Interest Groups and Students
- Everyone is on the Same Page!



Summary

A department identity consists of statements crafted into a few paragraphs about what the department (including courses and credentials) is all about, how it is aligned with the institution's mission and vision and how the department does the work to contribute to the education and careers of students. It is the **guiding compass** for the department.

Vision Statement

~ provides insight into what is the future direction or hopes to become

Goals + Objectives

~ outlines milestones for the department to reach the vision with specific objectives

Mission or Purpose Statement

~ communicates purpose - what the department is, what it does, why it does it and for whom it does it

Values Statements

~ reflects the department's core principles, ethics and how the department works to achieve its vision and mission



Who Creates?

All the instructors in a department with feedback from key interest groups such as: students, dean, College supports and services, Program Advisory Committee (PAC) and employers



How Long to Create?

It takes **several gatherings** of the department members to discuss, review and revise.

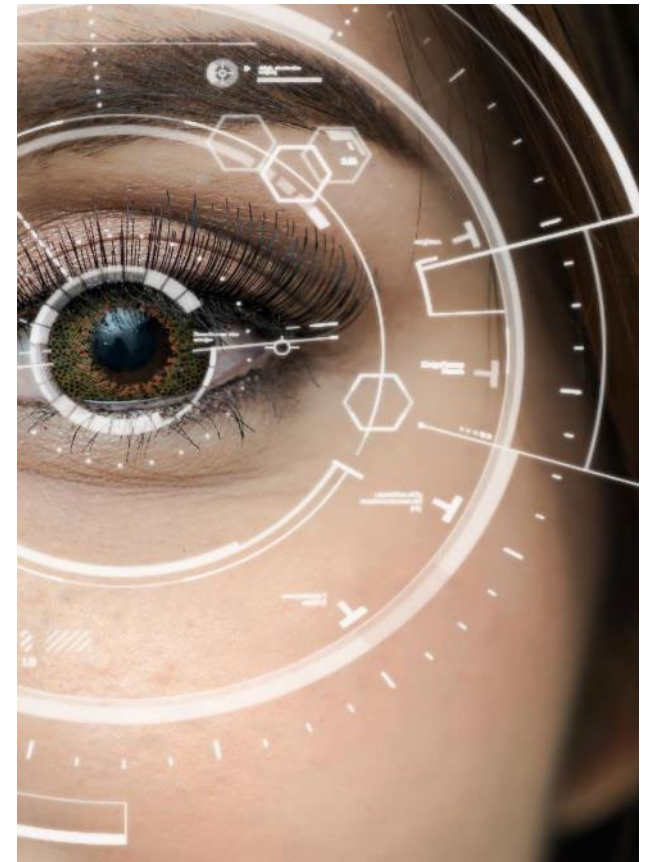
Once created, the identity (including mission, vision, goals and values) is **updated every few years**.



What is a Vision Statement?



- Destination, big picture of what you want to achieve in **5-10 years**
- **Future direction** or set of objectives of the department or program area
- A “**north star**” that can guide instructors in the work ahead
- A guide that helps department **make decisions** aligned with vision
- **Short and memorable** description of what the department and / or related programs will look like if it **succeeds** in implementing the **goals**

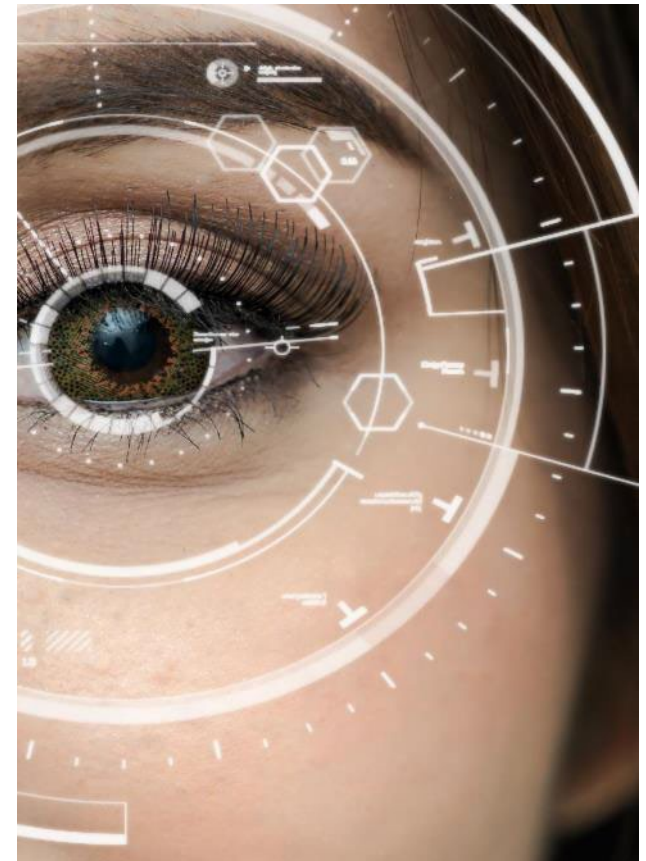


Good Vision Statements

Answer These Questions



1. What would you like the department and its offerings to become?
2. In what direction would you like the department to move?
3. What would you like to achieve in the future?
4. What kind of future department, future learning experience, future teaching practices do we envision?
5. What inspires you about teaching and learning?
6. What is the research from your discipline/subject area saying about the changes forthcoming in knowledge, teaching practices, and student learning?



Vision Example: Business



<https://www.ferris.edu/business/mission-statement.htm>

The College of Business will be distinctive for its provision of highly regarded career-oriented business education, adding value to our students through innovative teaching and learning processes, ensuring that they are well-prepared to make immediate contributions to their employers and society upon graduation. Our graduates will be sought because their competencies are of high quality and are consistent with current and future workplace needs.

<https://biz.colostate.edu/about/mission-vision>

Supporting our bold mission is a vision centered on access, excellence, and impact. We are dedicated to building a nationally recognized College of Business that:

- Provides access to an exceptional business education.
- Pursues excellence in publishing research that contributes to our understanding of business and its role in society.
- Leverages the power of business to make the world a better place.

Vision Example: Science

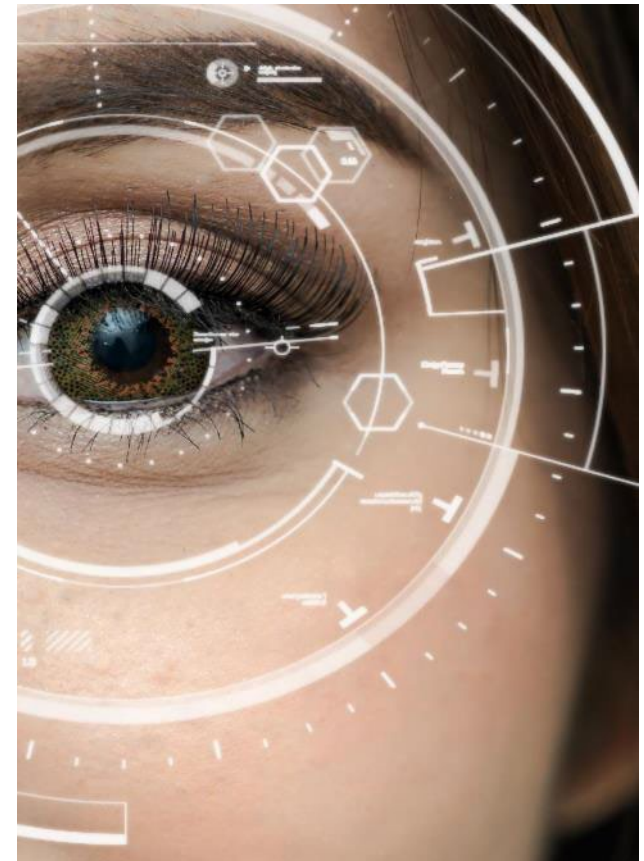


<https://biology.ucdavis.edu/undergraduate/advising/basc/about/mission>

We aspire to lead the way in innovative student support, envisioning a future where our team sets the standard for dynamic and forward-thinking academic advising practices that continually adapt to meet the evolving needs of our diverse student body, thereby serving as a catalyst for academic success.

<https://science.oregonstate.edu/diversity-plan/mission-and-values>

We envision a collaborative and innovative community in which ALL students, faculty and staff have equitable opportunities to enable success in their endeavors at OSU. We envision shared governance through dialogue that is inclusive of all voices that aim to achieve inclusive excellence.



Vision Example: Mathematics



<https://www.xavier.edu/mathematics-department/vision-statement>

Our vision is to create a community of mathematical learning in which we promote outstanding teaching, deep understanding, and active scholarship in mathematics for all who seek to learn.

<https://www.utep.edu/science/math/about/vision-and-mission.html>

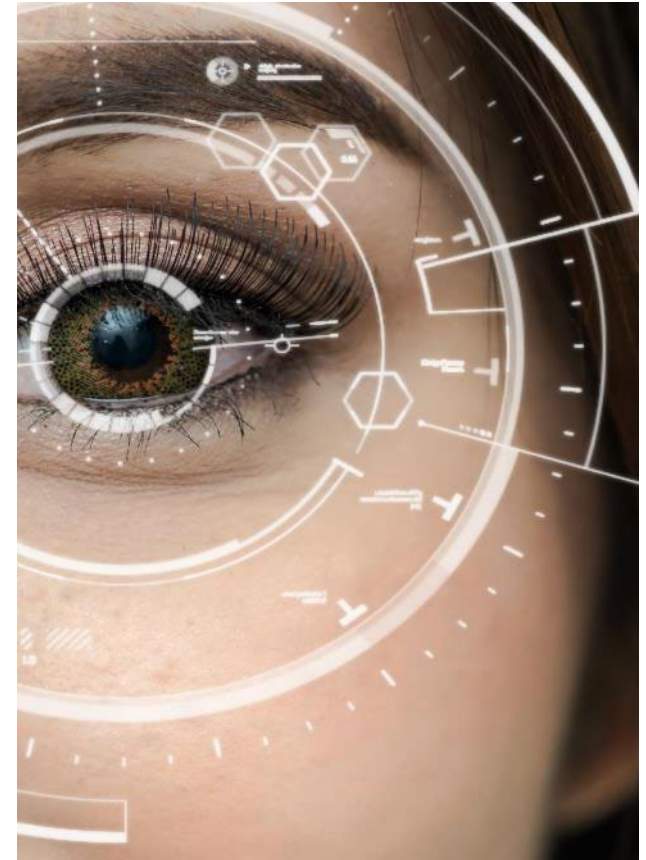
We share the vision of developing our intellectually vigorous community of students and faculty, together engaging in research, teaching, and learning that advance knowledge in diverse areas of mathematics and support current progress in science.

Vision Example: Social Work



<https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/home/home/about-us/index.php>

Our vision is that “who and how” we are as a School will contribute to socially-just practices by confronting barriers and transforming dominant systems to create opportunities for access and meaningful participation in our communities and society. Our vision is that when students complete their studies with us, that their learning of social justice and decolonial equity practices will strengthen and enhance lives of children, families, and communities.



Vision Example: Nursing

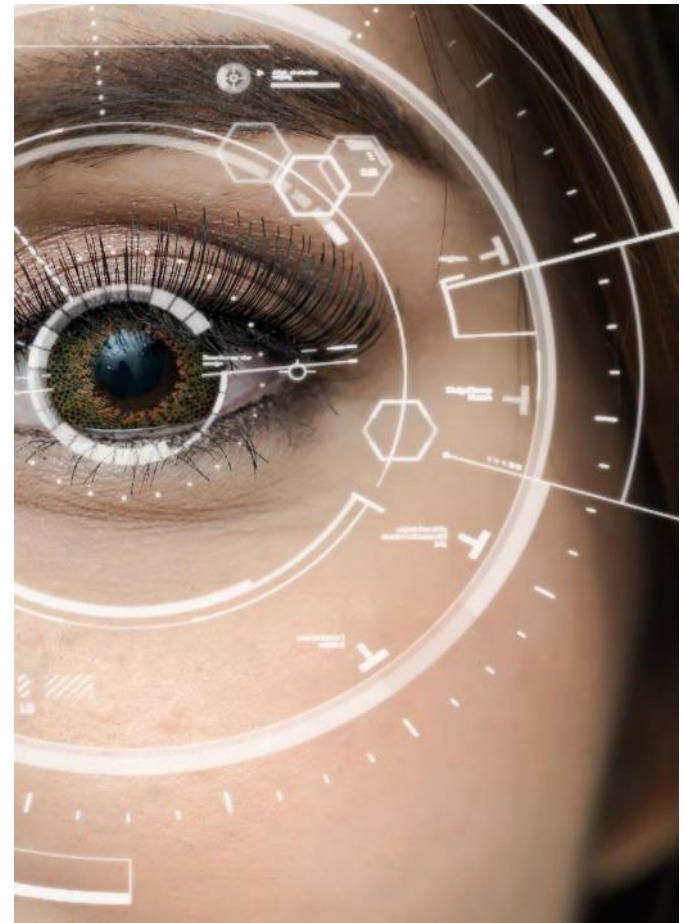


<https://nursing.gmu.edu/about/mission-vision-values>

Our vision is to produce the next generation of nursing leaders empowered and focused on addressing the challenges of a complex and diverse healthcare environment.

<https://www.csusm.edu/nursing/aboutus/mission-vision.html>

By fostering research, evidence-based practice, and innovative teaching strategies, the SON at CSUSM seeks to expand the nursing profession in our community by empowering our faculty, staff, and students to be collaborative members of interprofessional teams and leaders in promoting the four spheres of care: health and well-being/disease prevention, chronic disease care, regenerative or restorative care and hospice/palliative/supportive care for diverse populations across the lifespan in a variety of settings. Faculty, staff, and students will reflect the diversity of our region and will champion equitable access to higher education and across systems of care.



Vision Example: Humanities



<https://chs.vcu.edu/about/mission-vision-and-core-values/>

As the intellectual lifeblood of VCU and our community, the College of Humanities and Sciences seeks to inspire our students to explore their passions and dreams as individuals and provide the context to understand their place in the world and connections with others—locally, globally and throughout time. Most importantly, our educational and research environment addresses an array of technological, health-related and societal problems, as well as providing profound insights and reflections of what it means to be human and humane.

<https://pah.arizona.edu/about/vision-mission-and-values>

The Department of Public & Applied Humanities will cultivate people who can imagine a wide range of critical and creative interests and skills dedicated to the development and application of humanistic inquiry for the betterment of the human condition.

Vision Example: Social Sciences

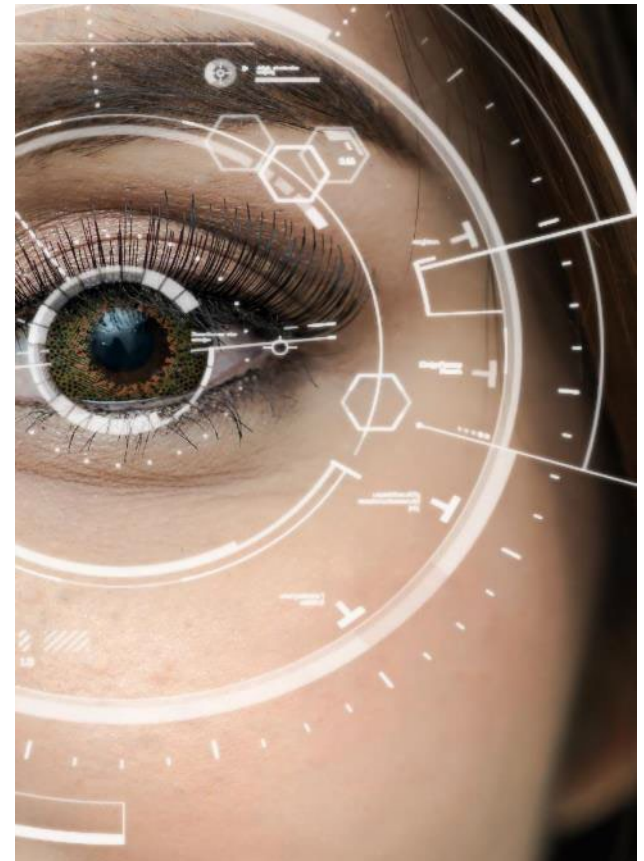


<https://socialsciences.manoa.hawaii.edu/about-the-college/vision-and-mission>

CSS aspires to be the destination of choice for students who look at science with an eye toward social change and responsibility. The College's vision is to be the gathering place for those who want to break down barriers, touch lives and study in an innovative, transformative place among like-minded individuals. Guided by competent faculty, graduates will become tomorrow's innovators and agents of change.

<https://www.uhd.edu/academics/humanities/humanities-mission.aspx>

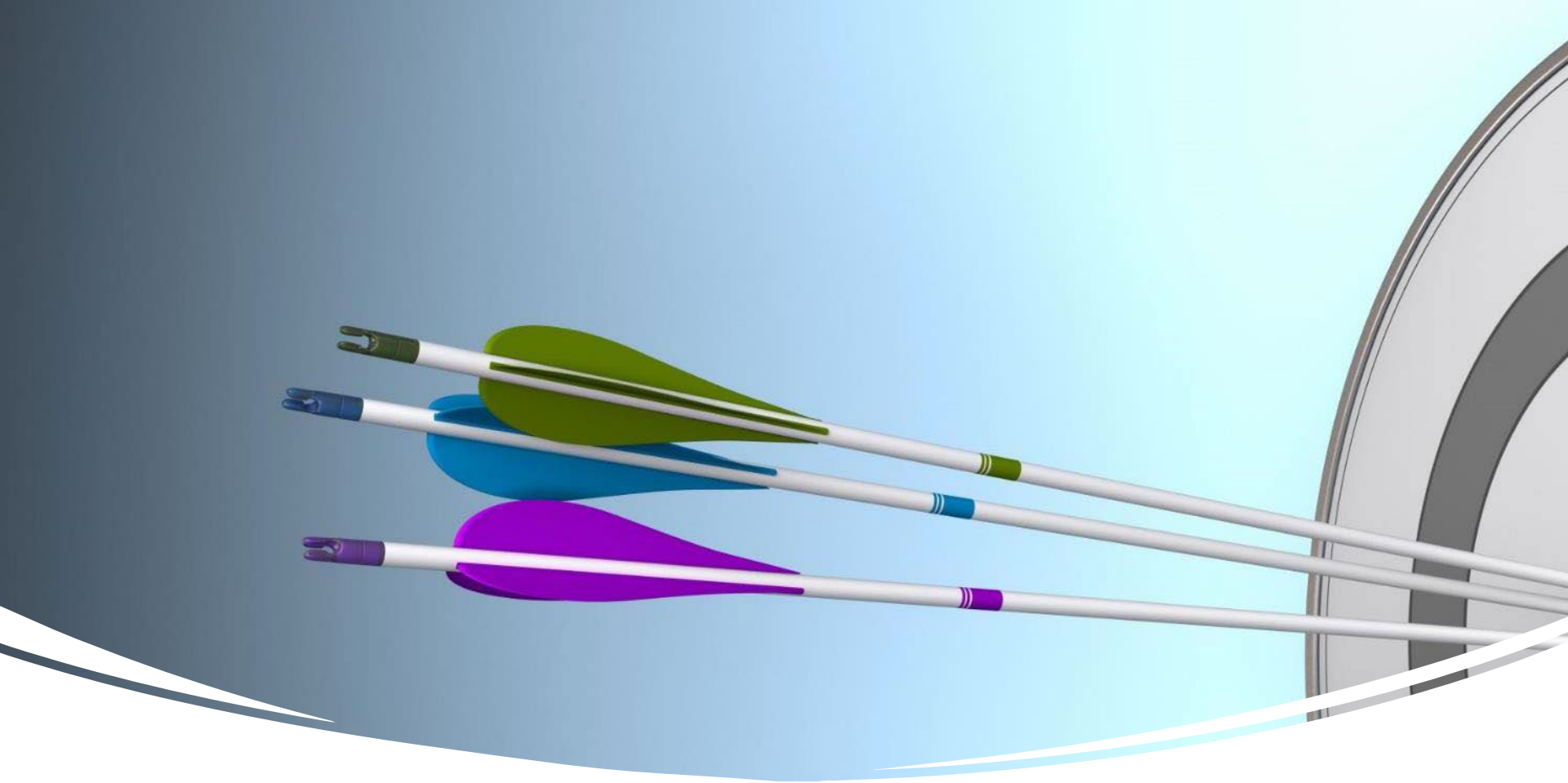
CHSS will be a leader in fostering inclusive excellence that prepares students to make meaningful intellectual, creative, and social impacts in our increasingly global society.



Vision: Checklist

- ✓ Is your vision doable?
- ✓ Is your vision realistic?
- ✓ Is the vision written so that all interest groups will understand?
- ✓ Does your vision have a specific deliverable, action or accomplishment to work towards?
- ✓ Is your vision inspiring to those in the department and to others?





What are Goals + Objectives?

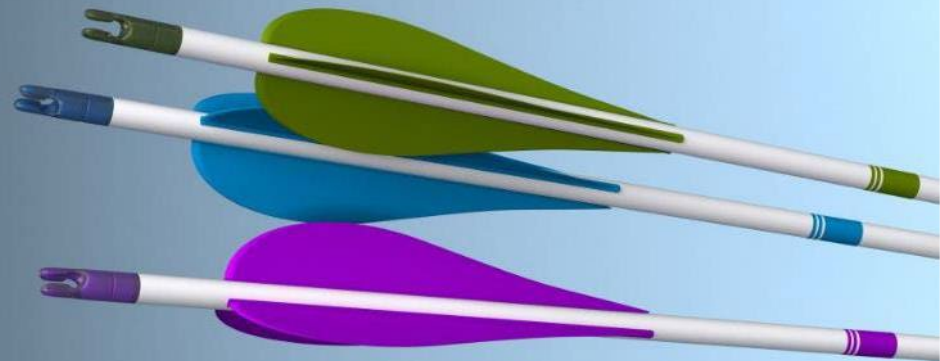
Goals are the milestones along the way for the department to reach the vision with specific objectives (quantifiable, time-related, etc.)



Goals: Examples



-
- add one 2-month required work-integrated learning/hands-on experience to the credential by 2026
 - incorporate one authentic assessment into courses by 2026
 - increase efficiency in teaching practices to increase at least one hour a week devoted to individual professional development time
 - create a set of resources for better preparing students with digital literacies for Fall 2025 entry



Goals: Checklist



- ✓ Do your goals describe your desired performance?
- ✓ Are the goals specific, measurable, observable, time appropriate etc.?
- ✓ Are your goals consistent with your mission and vision?
- ✓ If you achieve your goals, will you have reached or moved towards your vision?
- ✓ Are your goals aligned with your values?
- ✓ Are your goals realistic?





What is a Mission or Purpose Statement?

- A statement about what the department is, what it does, why it does it and for whom it does it
- It is a clear description of the purpose of the department and its offerings and learning environment
- Reflects upon how the department contributes to the education and future learning of students
- May reflect the teaching and research efforts employed to enhance student learning



Mission: Answers These Questions

What do we do?

What are we trying to accomplish?

What are the most important functions / operations / outcomes of the department?

What is the purpose of the department?

Who do we serve? – Who are the people who benefit from the offerings and work of the department?

What are our signature feature(s)?

How is the department in alignment with other areas (Faculty, College, Accrediting Bodies)?


What impact do we want to achieve?

Mission: Structure



The mission of the [department /program area name] is to [primary purpose] by providing [primary functions and activities] to [key audience]. Additional statements.

The mission of the **sample department/program area** is to **educate students from diverse backgrounds** in the **foundational concepts, knowledge, and skills of sample program area** (through courses, work-integrated learning) to **1) prepare them for program area employment and 2) prepare them for continuing learning in program area**. The program promotes a commitment to authentic and student-centered learning through accessible and flexible learning experiences.




Mission Example: >>> Business

<https://uca.edu/business/about/mission-statement/>

We educate a diverse population of current and future business professionals to successfully and ethically meet the challenges of the global business environment. Through active engagement with the local, regional, national, and global communities, our faculty strive to deliver a high-quality business education via experiential education, a relevant curriculum, and scholarly contributions. We pursue continuous improvement opportunities to add value for our College and its stakeholders.

<https://www.uwindsor.ca/business/445/odette-school-business-mission-vision-and-strategic-plan>

The Odette School of Business develops innovative and socially responsible business leaders who thrive in a changing world. As scholars, we produce meaningful research that benefits our regional and global communities.



Mission Example: >>> Humanities

<https://www.sjsu.edu/hum/about-us/mission-statement.php>

The mission of the Humanities Department is to cultivate global citizens who are sensitive to difference, complication, change, conflict, and injustice. Students in the department learn to practice and integrate multiple approaches to creating and critiquing knowledge as they seek to understand what people value and why. They continue to shape their own intentional engagement with the world, and are prepared to work across many professional fields.

<https://www.uvic.ca/humanities/about/index.php>

The Faculty of Humanities asks complex questions about what it means to be human, what our relationships with each other and our environments require of us, what responsibilities we hold to the world and its future. We study products of human thought and creativity: languages, literatures, media, material cultures, histories and beliefs across peoples, places and times. We uphold justice and diversity. We promote global knowledges and cultivate intercultural acumen. We confront how humanity engages with natural and constructed environments, both real and imagined.

Mission Example: Biology



<https://scitech.viu.ca/biology/biology-mission-statement>

The Vancouver Island University Biology Department offers its students a comprehensive education in the biological sciences. We recognize the breadth and diversity in the life sciences and offer students an opportunity to pursue a BSc degree with an emphasis in at least one of three major areas of study:

- organismal biology and ecology,
- molecular and cellular biology, or
- microbiology

Our goal is to graduate students who have acquired not only a broad knowledge of their subject area, but also excellent critical-thinking, problem-solving and oral and written communication skills.

The hallmark of our program is our fourth-year independent research project, which all students intending to graduate with a BSc Major in Biology from VIU must complete under the mentorship of a faculty member. This research experience, in combination with the theoretical knowledge and laboratory experiences gained in their other courses, prepares students to pursue a range of careers in the biological sciences, including continuation to graduate and professional schools and employment in government or industry.






Mission Example: Nursing

<https://nursing.ubc.ca/about/mission-vision-and-values>

The UBC School of Nursing provides leadership and innovation in integrated nursing education, research, knowledge exchange, and practice to advance individual, family, community, and population health.

<https://healthsciences.ontariotechu.ca/undergraduate/programs/bachelor-of-science-in-nursing/vision-and-mission-statements.php>

To envision, innovate, and embrace opportunities to deliver caring dynamic nursing education



Mission Example: >>> Social Work

<https://www.uvic.ca/hsd/socialwork/about/index.php>

We recognize the impact of ongoing colonialism in lands currently known as Canada and the ongoing commitment to advancing practices of racial equity and decolonization within our School, the university, and with our community partners more broadly. We utilize an intersectional, decolonial equity, and anti-racist approach to advancing teaching, learning, scholarship, research, service, and community activism. In this, our mission is that our School leadership will reflect decolonial-equity values in all that we do as scholars and learners.

Mission Example: Social Work



<https://carleton.ca/socialwork/our-mission/>

At the School of Social Work, we are committed to academic excellence and to promoting equity and social justice. Students are actively engaged in academic, practical and professional skill and knowledge development in preparation for their future roles as competent and accountable social workers and advocates of progressive social change. We continue to build relationships and alliances with the larger social work/welfare community in the Ottawa area.

The social work programs at Carleton University are based on the structural approach to social work. This approach provides a framework for critically engaging with, and analyzing, social work knowledge, social work practice and social policy development. It is based on an understanding of how economic, social, political and legislative contexts shape individual, community and societal problems. At the School of Social Work, we promote the development of innovative social work practices directed toward advancing equity and social justice as well as individual and societal change. Through this approach, students are being prepared to address injustices and inequities in a range of roles. This may be working directly with individuals, families and communities. It may also be working indirectly on addressing social justice in, and through, government and civil society organizations.



Mission: Checklist



- ✓ Is the statement clear and concise? (why the unit does what it does?)
- ✓ Is it understandable?
- ✓ Is it distinctive? (sets you apart from other programs)
- ✓ Does it clearly state the purpose of the department?
- ✓ Does it indicate the primary function or activities of the department?
- ✓ Does it indicate the students as the primary interest group?
- ✓ Does it support and align with the mission of the decanal area and College?
- ✓ Does it reflect the department's priorities and values?
- ✓ Is it distinctive (from other programs at NIC and other institutions?)
- ✓ Does it reflect interest group input and feedback?

What Are Values Statements?



- Statements about the principles, behaviours and practices you value as you conduct the work.
- Statements about how the department goes about its work.
- Values come out of department's reflective activities and critical self-examination

Values: Answers These Questions



1. What do we stand for? What do we believe in as a department?
2. What behaviours do we value over all else?
3. How will we conduct our activities to achieve our mission and vision?
4. How do we treat department members and our community in our work?
5. What core values do we hold to be so fundamental in how we do our work?
6. What values might be still useful years from now?
7. If we were to start a new program or credential tomorrow, what values would we want to build into that new offering?
8. How would we describe ourselves to a new employee?

Values: Examples



<https://science.oregonstate.edu/our-college/mission-vision-and-values>

Fostering a safe, open, equitable and inclusive environment in which to learn and work.

Promoting academic freedom through scientific discourse, freedom of expression, constructive criticism, and the use of objective evidence in reasoned arguments.

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/our-values-and-mission>

A distinctive education in the arts and humanities prepares our students for a future of personal growth and professional success

We share core responsibilities for fulfilling the vision of a learner-centred university and for encouraging experiential learning and student/faculty interaction

Values: Examples



<https://csahs.uoguelph.ca/about-college/college-strategic-plan/vision-mission-values>

We take responsibility for working towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples of Canada.

We value our local and global communities, and the planet on which we live. We seek to find ways of working and living that sustain ecological, social, physical, and economic health.

<https://www.colorado.edu/asfacultystaff/personnel/missions-statement-values>

Integrity

Respect

Excellence- Efficiency and Effectiveness

Inclusion

Values: Examples



<https://uca.edu/business/about/mission-statement/>

In carrying out this mission, the College of Business is guided by the following core values and expects the following outcomes:

Scholarship: We believe that faculty and students should engage in professional development and scholarly endeavors that promote and impact the application, creation and dissemination of knowledge through contributions to business practice, learning and pedagogical research, and discipline-based scholarship.

Cultural competence: We maintain and develop current and responsive curriculum that prepares students for the global business environment through broad exposure to key business disciplines.

Collegiality: We encourage transparency in our decision-making practice through a process of shared governance based on interactions among faculty, staff, and students.

Diversity: We value the opportunity to work, learn, and develop in a community that embraces the diversity of individuals and ideas.

Ethics: We are committed to ethical and responsible behavior in our own actions and to developing the same commitment in our students by promoting the awareness of professional ethical responsibilities.

Responsibility: We commit to being responsible and accountable in our operations at all levels, including assessment and continuous improvement of our academic programs and transparency in our fiscal and operational proceedings.



Values: Checklist

- ✓ What do we stand for?
- ✓ What behaviours do we value above all else?
- ✓ How will we conduct our activities to achieve our mission and vision?
- ✓ How do we treat members of our department and community?
- ✓ What principles will we all abide by in our pursuit of quality learning?



What are the Benefits?

- Benefits to Students (Current and Future)?
- Benefits to Instructors (Current and Future)?
- Benefits to the Community (Employers, PACs, Agencies)?
- Benefits to Administration (Dean, VPA, Leadership)?
- Benefits to Support Departments (Advisors, Recruiters, Marketing, Library)?
- Benefits to External Reviewers (Program Review, Accreditation)?





What are the Benefits?

- Helps **build cohesion** and shared understanding of their work and the language they use
- Enables instructors to see department as **something they shaped**
- Builds a **foundation** for creating **program learning outcomes**
- Can help **prevent 'mission creep'** by providing a basis for developing priorities, goals and objectives, learning outcomes etc.
- Helps **make decisions** about program/credential changes
- Serves as a foundation for **building courses**
- Clarifies **student learning journey**
- Provides **external bodies a snapshot** of who the department is, what they do and where they are heading
- **Assists other departments** in understanding more about you



Where Do You Start?

- Start with **department conversation** about envisioning the future – where does the department want to go? what do they want to enhance, add, fix, develop? Start with the vision.
- Think about the **quality of the course learning outcomes** across the credential(s) and courses, how well you are meeting and aligning your work with student, employer and institutional needs.
- Generate **a list of goals** (milestones) you'd like to do and them **prioritize them** (write these as goal statements).
- Think about the **ideal graduate / student** completing your courses – what do they need to know, what do they need to do and how do they conduct themselves?
- **Review previous goals, mission, vision** and values statements. Update and revise OR create new.
- Do a **scan of other institutions' statements** to use as a jumping off point for discussion etc.





Where Do You Start?

Have instructors complete one or all inventories of their courses, examine reports and bring results to a department discussion.

Angelo and Cross designed the **Teaching Goals Inventory** to help instructors articulate teaching values or the goals for a specific course. This is a self-scoring online tool. There are 52 goals you assess to what you deliberately aim to have your students accomplish (not what you feel is a worthy goal). No right or wrong answers.

- [Teaching **Goals** Inventory](#)

Carl Wieman designed **Teaching Practices Inventory** ([paper version](#)) - | [Instructions](#) or online via Stanford University. Was design to characterize the teaching practices most used in undergraduate studies. 10-15 minutes to fill out and provides detailed characterization of your practices. Tested with 100's of instructors at UBC over 6 years.

- [Teaching **Practices** Inventory](#)

Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) is 45 item inventory that will assess your orientation to teaching. Two decades of research in Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and US. Five different perspectives to better understand your own views and how you express them through your beliefs, intentions and actions.

- [Teaching **Perspectives** Inventory](#)

References

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Developing a Department Identity

What are your next
steps and actions?

