

*Institutional
Purpose*



Aerospace Engineering Building

Institutional Purpose

Auburn University is in partial compliance with the criteria in **Section II**. Although the University has Vision and Mission Statements approved by the Board of Trustees, the current version of the Mission Statement does not fully represent what the University does. In addition, although the Vision and Mission Statements are published in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin* and can be found on the University's website, they do not appear in the *Faculty Handbook* or *Tiger Cub*. Finally, although periodic reviews of the Vision and Mission Statements have been conducted, these reviews need to be more open and inclusive of University stakeholders.

An institution **must** have a clearly defined purpose or mission statement appropriate to collegiate education as well as its own specific educational role. This statement **must** describe the institution and its characteristics and address the components of the institution and its operations. The official posture and practice of the institution **must** be consistent with its purpose statement.

Auburn University is in partial compliance.

It has clearly defined Vision and Mission Statements; however, those Statements are not appropriate to the University's educational role. The University's Vision and Mission Statements appear at the end of this **Section**.

Excessive emphasis is placed on undergraduate education; therefore, the present Statements are not appropriate to the "specific educational role" of Auburn University. In addition, the Statements contradict other descriptions of the University's purpose. This disproportionate emphasis on undergraduate education, included in revisions of the Mission Statement approved in 1997, provides a skewed picture of the University and places the Mission Statement at odds with the practice of the institution.

The present Vision and Mission Statements, which were drafted in 1996 and formally approved by the Board of Trustees in 1997, constitute substantial revisions of the Purpose Statement that had appeared in University publications for more than a decade. The revisions were based largely on a major strategic planning study approved by the 21st Century Commission during the presidency of William V. Muse. The differences in the earlier and later documents are striking. The emphasis on undergraduate education in the Mission Statement and, at least seemingly, the contraction of the role of graduate education and research constitute a significant restatement of the purpose of Auburn University. We believe that this tilt toward undergraduate education does not have broad support among the faculty or any other current University constituency. Indeed, the tone of the Mission Statement seems at odds with the instructional, research, and outreach goals stated in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin* (6-7) as well as the goals stated by Departments and other units in the Auburn University Comprehensive University Planning System (AUCUPS). Thus, we recommend that the Vision and Mission Statements be redrafted so that they will be more consistent and accurate descriptions of the aspirations and present practices of Auburn University.

Recommendation 2-1:

The Steering Committee recommends that the Vision and Mission Statements be rewritten to make them clearer, more internally consistent, and more representative of Auburn University's self-understanding.

Suggestion 2-1:

The Steering Committee suggests the following rewordings (in bold) to the current Vision and Mission Statements.

Vision Statement

First sentence: “Auburn University will emerge as one of the nation’s preeminent comprehensive land-grant universities...”

Third sentence: “The University will be widely recognized for the quality of its undergraduate and graduate and professional educational programs;...”

Mission Statement

2nd paragraph: The Institutional Purpose Committee found this paragraph to be particularly inappropriate because its emphasis on undergraduate education, and the resulting depreciation of graduate education, does not reflect the current practice at Auburn University or the prevailing sentiment of University leaders. The Steering Committee suggests the following rewording of this paragraph.

As a comprehensive university, Auburn University is committed to offering high-quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional education to its students. The University will give highest priority for resource allocation for the future development of those areas that represent the traditional strengths, quality, reputation, and uniqueness of the institution and that continue to effectively respond to the needs of students and other constituents. Consistent with this commitment, the University will emphasize a broad and superior undergraduate education that imparts the knowledge, skills, and values so essential to educated and responsible citizens. At the same time, the University will provide high-quality graduate and professional programs in areas of need and importance to the state and beyond. To accomplish these educational goals, Auburn University will continue to compete nationally to attract a faculty distinguished by its commitment to teaching and by its achievements in research, both pure and applied. The University will strive to attract a faculty that will bring distinction and stature to the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs offered by the University.

Sources of Information

Documents

Brunner, Cindy. *Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University*

—. *History of Publication of Auburn University Mission/Purpose Statements*

—. *Online Locations of the Auburn University Mission Statement*

Interviews

Drew Clark, Director of Assessment, April 12, 2001

John Heilman, Senior Assistant to the President, November 7, 2001

Stephen L. McFarland, Interim Dean, Graduate School, November 13, 2001

John C. H. Miller, Jr., Trustee, December 4, 2001

C. Michael Moriarty, Vice President for Research, November 13, 2001

Telephone Conference with William V. Muse, former President, November 7, 2001

John F. Pritchett, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,
September 7, 2001; November 20, 2001

William F. Walker, Interim President, November 7, 2001

Websites

Auburn University Comprehensive Planning System

http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/AUCUPSv2/

Faculty Handbook, iii Vision and iv Role

<http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/handbook.html>

SACS Reaffirmation and Accreditation, Surveys and Results, Faculty Survey

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/sacs/2002_sacs/survey.htm

Tiger Cub

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/tiger_cub/rules/index.html

Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 6-7

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin

Vision and Mission Statements

http://frontpage.duc.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/AUCUPSv2/mission.asp

Appropriate publications **must** accurately cite the current statement of purpose.

Auburn University is not in compliance.

However, a recommendation to include the Vision and Mission Statements in appropriate publications is included in this **Section**.

The Vision and Mission Statements of Auburn University appear in several publications, and they are available on the University website. However, a number of important University publications do not include the Statements and outdated versions are found in other places.

Recommendation 2-2:

The Steering Committee recommends that the Vision and Mission Statements be published in the Faculty Handbook and in the Tiger Cub and that the Statements be prominently featured on the University website. Any changes in the Statements should be promptly inserted in all appropriate University publications.

Sources of Information

Documents

Brunner, Cindy. *Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University*

—. *History of Publication of Auburn University Mission/Purpose Statements*

—. *Online Locations of the Auburn University Mission Statement*

Interview

Stephen L. McFarland, Interim Dean, Graduate School, November 13, 2001

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Tiger Cub

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/tiger_cub/rules/index.html

Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 6-7

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin

Vision and Mission Statements

http://frontpage.auburn.edu/gradschl/public_html/AUCUPSv2/mission.asp

The formulation of a statement of purpose represents a major education decision. It **should** be developed through the efforts of the institution's faculty, administration, and governing board. It **must** be approved by the governing board.

Auburn University is in compliance.

The Vision and Mission Statements have been approved by the Board of Trustees.

Even though the University has Vision and Mission Statements that have been approved by the governing board and is thus in compliance with this **must** statement, the Committee is not certain that the present Statements can be said to have been “developed through the efforts of the institution’s faculty, administration, and governing board.” While the Committee does not find anything inappropriate about the formulation of the present Statements, they were not crafted in an entirely open environment. The source of the final wording of the present Statements is not clear. The following suggestion proposes a strategy for periodic review of the Statements that would make the process more representative of the entire University community.

Suggestion 2-2:

The Steering Committee suggests that the Vision and Mission Statements be reviewed triennially by a committee broadly representative of the University’s constituencies and that appropriate revisions be approved by the Board of Trustees and promptly published.

Sources of Information

Documents

Brunner, Cindy. *Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University*

—. *History of Publication of Auburn University Mission/Purpose Statements*

—. *Online Locations of the Auburn University Mission Statement*

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John C. H. Miller, Jr., Trustee, December 4, 2001

John F. Pritchett, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,
September 7, 2001; November 20, 2001

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http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/sacs/2002_sacs/survey.htm

Tiger Cub

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/tiger_cub/rules/index.html

Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 6-7

http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin

Vision and Mission Statements

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An institution **must** study periodically its statement of purpose, considering internal changes as well as the changing responsibilities of the institution to its constituencies.

Auburn University is in compliance.

It has studied its statement of purpose, resulting in the changes adopted in 1997.

Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University, included in the Committee’s files, outlines the multiple reviews of the statement. **Suggestion 2-2** proposes a strategy for periodic review of the purpose statement that would make the process more inclusive of the entire University community.

Sources of Information

Documents

- Brunner, Cindy. *Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University*
— . *History of Publication of Auburn University Mission/Purpose Statements*
— . *Online Locations of the Auburn University Mission Statement*

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- Drew Clark, Director of Assessment, April 12, 2001
Stephen L. McFarland, Interim Dean, Graduate School, November 13, 2001
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Tiger Cub
http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/tiger_cub/rules/index.html
Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 6-7
http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin

The statement of purpose serves as the foundation for all institutional operations, programs and activities. Consequently, the institution **must** demonstrate that its planning and evaluation processes, educational programs, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes are adequate and appropriate to fulfill its stated purpose.

Auburn University is in compliance.

As discussed in subsequent sections of this Self Study, the University, on the whole, has adequate and appropriate planning and evaluation processes, educational programs, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes to fulfill its stated purposes.

Sources of Information

Documents

- Brunner, Cindy. *Timeline of Institutional Planning at Auburn University*
— . *History of Publication of Auburn University Mission/Purpose Statements*
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Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 6-7

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Vision and Mission Statements

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Current Vision and Mission Statements

Vision Statement

Auburn University will emerge as one of the nation's preeminent land-grant universities in the 21st century. Central to all its functions will be the University's historic commitment of service to all Alabamians as the State becomes a part of a global society with all of its challenges and opportunities. The University will be widely recognized for the quality of its undergraduate educational programs, the effectiveness of its research and outreach programs and the broad access to the University provided through the innovative use of information technology. The University will ensure the quality of its programs through the careful focusing of its resources in areas of institutional strengths. One constant will remain unchanged at the University—that intangible quality Auburn men and women call the “Auburn Spirit.”

Mission Statement

Auburn University's mission is defined by its land-grant traditions of service and access. The University will serve the citizens of the State through its instructional, research and outreach programs and prepare Alabamians to respond successfully to the challenges of a global economy. The University will provide traditional and non-traditional students broad access to the institution's educational resources. In the delivery of educational programs on campus and beyond, the University will draw heavily upon the new instructional and outreach technologies available in the emerging information age.

The University will give highest priority for resource allocation to undergraduate education and for future development of those areas that represent the traditional strengths, quality, reputation, and uniqueness of the institution and that continue to effectively respond to the needs of students and other constituents. Consistent with this commitment, the University will emphasize high-quality undergraduate education including a comprehensive general education that imparts the broad knowledge, skills, and values so essential to educated and responsible citizens, as well as specialized career preparation for students. In establishing the primacy of undergraduate education to the institutional mission, the University will assure the continued strength of its faculty with the realization that the quality of instruction is directly related to the quality of the University's faculty and the commitment of the faculty to excellence in undergraduate education. The University will provide graduate programs in areas of need and importance to the state and beyond. Graduate programs offer students opportunities for specialized advanced education in their chosen field and are important components of the services the University provides.

Because research is essential to the mission of a land-grant university, Auburn University will continue development of its research programs. The primary focus of this research will be directed to

the solution of problems and the development of knowledge and technology important to the state and nation and to the quality of life of Alabama citizens. The University's research programs will make important contributions to instructional programs through the involvement of graduate and undergraduate students and the renewal of the faculty. Research will also provide the knowledge base for outreach programs. In carrying out its research mission, the University will emphasize established areas of strength and will focus available resources in those areas of research and doctoral study that are, or have the potential to develop into nationally and internationally recognized centers of excellence.

Extension and outreach programs are fundamental to the land-grant mission because these programs directly affect the lives of all citizens in the state. The University will maintain the strengths of its traditional outreach programs and will increasingly involve the broader University in outreach programs that respond to the changing needs of the society in which we live. The University will continue to seek new and innovative ways to reach out to the people it serves.