

## **Primer on Developing Effective Statements of Purpose**

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### **Effective Planning Begins with a Clear Understanding of Purpose. An Effective Statement of Purpose Does Several Things:**

1. It inspires people!
2. It tells the world what makes an organization distinct from other organizations or what makes an organizational unit distinct from other units within the same organization.
3. It clearly articulates a focus for all activity that takes place within an organization or an organizational unit.
4. It is held up as a frequent and vivid reminder to everyone within the organization of what the organization is about.
5. If the mission statement is that of a subunit within a larger organization, it must clearly support the broader mission and goals for the organization.

Effective planning must begin with and be grounded in an effective statement of purpose. It doesn't matter if the mission statement is short or long, detailed or general, formal or colloquial. So long as it does the things listed above, it is an effective mission statement. Insofar as it fails to do the things listed above, it is an ineffective mission statement. The first four qualities must be built into the statement itself. The latter quality depends on effective leadership after the mission statement has been developed.

### **Some Examples of Effective Statements of Purpose**

#### **The Constitution of the United States of America**

[The U.S. Constitution is a lengthy mission statement that has provided a focus of activity for hundreds of millions of people for over 200 years. It has inspired to the point that people have willingly laid down their lives to protect the principles it embodies. When we teach our children at an early age to pledge allegiance to the flag or when we sing the national anthem at the beginning of a sporting event, we are reminded of the values the constitution represents. Because it is so lengthy, I include only the preamble.]

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. . . .

### **The Boy Scout Oath**

[Regardless of how one feels about the Boy Scouts as an organization, the Boy Scout Oath is a brief statement that has effectively provided focus for the activities of millions of boys and men for roughly a hundred years. The fact that men continue to be involved in Scouting many years after their boyhood and even after their own sons are grown attests to the qualities embodied in the oath and activities it inspires. At the beginning of each Scout meeting, boys and their leaders raise their arms to the square, make the Scout sign, and repeat the oath as a regular reminder of their purpose.]

On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

### **Whole Foods Market's Declaration Of Interdependence**

[Whole Foods Market's Declaration of Interdependence is quite a lengthy statement. Each emboldened heading followed by ellipses, below, contains a narrative supporting the particular assertive heading under which it falls. The Declaration of Interdependence was originally created in 1985 by 60 "team members" who volunteered their time. It was been updated in 1988, 1992 and 1997. The entire Whole Foods Market Declaration of Interdependence can be viewed at <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/company/declaration.html>.]

Whole Foods Market is a dynamic leader in the quality food business. We are a mission-driven company that aims to set the standards of excellence for food retailers. We are building a business in which high standards permeate all aspects of our company. Quality is a state of mind at Whole Foods Market.

Our motto—Whole Foods, Whole People, Whole Planet—emphasizes that our vision reaches far beyond just being a food retailer. Our success in fulfilling our vision is measured by customer satisfaction, Team Member excellence and happiness, return on capital investment, improvement in the state of the environment, and local and larger community support.

Our ability to instill a clear sense of interdependence among our various stakeholders (the people who are interested and benefit from the success of our company) is contingent upon our efforts to communicate more often, more openly, and more compassionately. Better communication equals better understanding and more trust.

**We Sell the Highest Quality Foods . . .**

**We Satisfy and Delight Our Customers . . .**

**We Support Team Member Excellence and Happiness . . .**

**We Create Wealth Through Profits and Growth . . .**

**We Support Our Communities and Encourage Local Involvement . . .**

**We Promote Environmental Stewardship . . .**

**Our Business Associates . . .**

**Balance and Integration . . .**

### **Final Thoughts**

Our Vision Statement reflects the hopes and intentions of many people. We do not believe it always accurately portrays the way things currently are at Whole Foods Market so much as the way we would like things to be. It is our dissatisfaction with the current reality, when compared with what is possible, that spurs us toward excellence and toward creating a better person, company, and world. When Whole Foods Market fails to measure up to its stated Vision, as it inevitably will at times, we should not despair. Rather let us take up the challenge together to bring our reality closer to our vision. The future we will experience tomorrow is created one step at a time today.

### **Ben & Jerry's Statement of Mission**

[Ben & Jerry's is widely recognized as an effective organization. Its employees demonstrate a remarkable degree of commitment to its purpose. This statement of mission can be found on the Ben and Jerry's Web site: <http://www.benjerry.com/mission.html>.]

Ben & Jerry's is dedicated to the creation & demonstration of a new corporate concept of linked prosperity. Our mission consists of three interrelated parts:

#### **Product**

To make, distribute and sell the finest quality all natural ice cream and related products in a wide variety of innovative flavors made from Vermont dairy products.

#### **Economic**

To operate the Company on a sound financial basis of profitable growth, increasing value for our shareholders, and creating career opportunities and financial rewards for our employees.

#### **Social**

To operate the Company in a way that actively recognizes the central role that business plays in the structure of society by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of life of a broad community—local, national, and international.

**Underlying Mission:** Underlying the mission of Ben & Jerry's is the determination to seek new & creative ways of addressing all three parts, while holding a deep respect for individuals inside and outside the Company and for the communities of which they are a part.

### **An Anonymous Community College**

[I came across this mission statement and found myself thinking, "Hey, this inspires me! I could commit myself to this organization." I don't know what makes some work and others not, but this one really worked for me.]

\_\_\_\_\_ Community College will be an exemplar of the 21st century community college: a learner-centered, comprehensive, culturally rich, and technologically advanced learning and teaching institution which emphasizes student achievement and educational excellence, seamlessly linked with the community, area enterprise, and other educational institutions.

### **CCCCD Institutional Research Office**

[When my staff and I came up with this statement, we felt inspired. It embodies everything we do and describes our relationship to the District and its mission. It works for us. Along with this mission statement, we developed an imagery-rich vision statement to metaphorically express what we are about. Finally, we designed a visual image to portray our vision. We include our mission statement and the visual image on all our memos.]

We use the tools of planning, research, and evaluation to help people achieve the District's mission.

### **CCCCD Student Development Division**

[Student Development administrative staff generated this statement of purpose during a two-hour luncheon meeting. As it reached its final form, the group had an "ah-hah moment" when the statement just felt right for everyone in attendance.]

We enrich students' lives and support their success, serving everyone with dignity and respect.

### **Tulane University's Department of Housing and Residence Life**

[A former Tulane University employee enthusiastically shared this mission statement from memory. She found it so inspiring that it remained with her after she left Tulane.]

We create respectful, involved, and dynamic residential communities that enrich the educational environment.

## Useful Questions to Your Frame Discussion About Statements of Purpose

1. How do you want to identify yourselves as an organization or organizational unit?
  1. Who should be encompassed in your statement of purpose? “We?” (First person plural is preferable because it reflects commitment and ownership.) Who are “we?”
  2. Do you want to include an objective description of the organization or unit, such as its title?
2. What is your organization (or organizational unit) all about?
  1. What do you do?
  2. What should you be doing?
  3. What distinguishes you from other similar organizations (or organizational units)?
  4. Avoid passive-sounding verbs.
  5. Steer completely clear of words like “continue” or “maintain.” While this exclusion is even more important in the formulation of goals, inclusion of words like these tend to make purpose statement uninspiring.
3. How do you do whatever it is you do?
  1. Use strong words that inspire.
  2. Don’t be afraid to use modifiers, but don’t overdo them. However, avoid the use of intensifiers like “very” or “so.” Rather, when “emphasis is necessary, select words strong in themselves.” (William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Third Edition, 1979, p.63.) For example, rather than “very good,” use something like “exceptional,” “superb,” or “exemplary.” Rather than “so different,” use something like “unique” or “singular.”
  3. Use the active voice (“We will do this.”) rather than the passive voice (“This will be done.”). Active voice conveys the sense of positive action that is crucial if you want to inspire. Passive voice is universally regarded as a weaker representation of things being done to someone or something.
4. What is most important to your organization (or organizational unit)?
  1. What values do you share?
  2. What standards do you share?
  3. What outcomes do you expect to result from your efforts?

## Some Useful Nouns for Formulating Statements of Purpose

ability	enterprise	residents
activity	environment	resource
aspiration	excellence	respect
awareness	exemplar	reward
belief	faculty	role
business	future	satisfaction
certificate	goal	service
challenge	growth	shareholders
character	hope	society
client	individual	stakeholders
climate	intellect	standard
college	intent	state
community	leader	stewardship
completion	life/lives	student
concept	mission	success
county	nation	system
culture	need	team
customers	opportunity	technology
degree	organization	trust
department	person/people	value
dignity	program	vision
district	purpose	world
division	reality	

## Some Useful Verbs for Formulating Statements of Purpose

achieve	establish	personalize
act	evolve	promise
adapt	excel	promote
allow	exhibit	provide
appreciate	expand	pursue
aspire	experience	raise
assist	form	reach
be/is	foster	reap
begin	fulfill	recognize
bridge	grow	reflect
bring	help	relate
broaden	hold	represent
build	honor	respect
cause	improve	respond
challenge	initiate	satisfy
collaborate	inspire	seek
commit	instill	serve
consider	integrate	solve
create	involve	span
dedicate	keep	spur
delight	lead	step
demonstrate	link	stretch
develop	maintain	stride
do	make	support
dream	meet	teach
educate	mentor	treat
endow	offer	understand
enhance	operate	use
engage	partner	value
enrich	permeate	work
ensure/insure		

## **Some Useful Modifiers for Formulating Statements of Purpose**

active	dynamic	multi-faceted
advanced	educational	new
committed	excellent	passionate
compassionate	exemplary	personalize
comprehensive	fine/finest	quality
concerned	heroic	resourceful
confident	high/highest	respectful
courteous	independent	rich
creative	innovative	sensitive
dignified	interdependent	strong
diverse	meaningful	supportive

## **Important Considerations for any CCCCD Division's or Department's Statement of Purpose**

### **CCCCD Mission Statement**

Collin County Community College District is a student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect.

### **CCCCD Core Values**

We have a passion for:

Learning  
Service and Involvement  
Creativity and Innovation  
Academic Excellence  
Dignity and Respect  
Integrity

### **CCCCD Purpose Statement**

Through its campuses, centers and programs Collin County Community College District fulfills its statutory charge to provide:

- Academic courses in the arts and sciences to transfer to senior institution;
- Technical programs, leading to associate degrees or certificates designed to develop marketable skills and promote economic development;
- Continuing adult education programs for academic, professional, occupational, and cultural enhancement;
- Developmental education and literacy programs designed to improve the basic skills of students;
- A program of student development services and learning resources designed to assist individuals in achieving their educational and career goals;
- Workforce, economic, and community development initiatives designed to meet local and statewide needs;
- Other purposes as may be directed by the CCCCD Board of Trustees and/or the laws of the State of Texas.

### **CCCCD 2003 to 2006 Strategic Goals**

Goal 1: Exhibit visionary leadership to provide educational experiences that enable students to excel academically and to be civically engaged.

Goal 2: Develop a systematic process that integrates academic, student development, technology, facilities, administrative services, and budget planning.

Goal 3: Meet the State challenge of broadening access to educational opportunities and support services for all student populations.

Goal 4: Elevate the community's awareness of CCCCD's academic, economic, cultural, and social impact to the community.

Goal 5: Maximize the development and use of CCCCD's human, technological, and capital resources to sustain and strengthen academic and financial vitality.