

SECTION II: INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSE**Introduction**

The Mission Statement of the University of South Alabama (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 3) is a summary of the institutional purpose, educational role, and character of the University. In addition to providing a portrait of USA, the Mission Statement is fundamental to institutional planning and to assessing institutional effectiveness.

The current Mission Statement was written in 1984 in response to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education's statewide planning initiative. In 1987, the University revised the Mission Statement to include the purpose of the recently established USA Baldwin County Campus. Another revision occurred in 1993 to clarify the commitment of USA to health care services and education and to its nontraditional student constituency. In both cases, the changes were clarifying amendments and did not substantially alter the character of the original Mission Statement.

The Statement is an accurate reflection of the academic programs offered at the University and is central to institutional planning and assessment. This conclusion is supported by the Institutional Purpose Committee's research as well as the findings of the department self-studies, the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*, and various principal committees participating in the self-study.

2.0 INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSE

#1 of 8

Clear and Appropriate Mission Statement

*(Page 15, Line 1): An institution **must** have a clearly defined purpose or mission statement appropriate to collegiate education as well as to its own specific role.*

USA has a clearly defined Mission Statement (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, p. 3). The Statement is also comprehensive, combining descriptions of history, mission, role, and goals. A statement of goals and purposes follows the Mission Statement in the *Bulletin* and amplifies the statement of mission.

There are several ways of affirming the clarity of the Statement. It was originally written in 1984 following guidelines set forth in *Mission Review: Foundation for Strategic Planning* (pp. 25-33). An amendment in 1987 reflected the addition of the Baldwin County Campus, and another in 1993 clarified aspects of the University's role and program. In neither case did the amendments substantially alter the character of the original Statement. Many accreditation studies reviewed the Statement (e.g., SACS, the International Association for Management Education, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc., Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, National Association of Clinical Nurses, Liaison Committee on Medical Education) (*USA Statistical Profiles, 2000-2001*, pp. 77-78). In a faculty survey conducted as part of this self-study, 90% of the respondents indicated they either strongly agreed (21%) or agreed (69%) that the Mission Statement "aptly describes the purpose for which the University exists" (see Document 2.0, *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*, Item #84).

The Statement is also appropriate to collegiate education. In a survey conducted for this self-study by the Institutional Purpose Committee, 94.6% of the respondents indicated that the mission statement of their department, college, or school was either excellent (73.2%) or good (21.4%) in terms of being consistent with the USA's Mission Statement (*Institutional Purpose Survey, 2000*, Item #13; see Document 2.0: 1 of 8). That same percentage (94.6%) rated their unit's mission statement as an accurate reflection of their mission (excellent 69.6%, good 25%) (Item #12). The standards referred to in the previous paragraph--comparability to peer institutions, approval of various accreditation review teams, and the endorsement of the "aptness" of the University's statement of mission by 90% of the respondents to the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*--affirm the appropriateness of the USA's Mission Statement. A review of the departmental mission statements collected in the department self-studies further illustrates the appropriateness of the USA's Mission Statement because of the consistency between the University's Mission Statement and those of the departments (also, see *Institutional Purpose Survey, 2000*).

The Mission Statement clearly states USA's specific educational role. That role is defined, in part, by geography: "The University serves as a major center of high quality and accessible undergraduate, graduate and professional education for metropolitan Mobile, the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast region, and the southeastern United States." Further role delineation follows from the Statement's description of undergraduate and graduate education and USA's commitment to education in the field of health care and the provision of health care services. Another aspect of USA's role is its dedication to "lifelong learning and to the enhancement of access to education for a variety of individuals and communities." USA's Mission Statement,

along with the subsequent statement of goals and purposes, makes clear the unique educational role of the University.

The Statement is clear, appropriate to collegiate education, consistent with SACS standards, and comparable to peer institutions. However, USA might be better served by a reorganized approach to mission and purpose statements. Several comments submitted in the *Institutional Purpose Survey, 2000* described USA's Mission Statement as lengthy and suggested that this length undermined its effectiveness. Another model for a university mission statement has parallels in the business world. Interestingly, all colleges and departments at USA use this model, which begins with a succinct and universal mission statement followed by statements of goals, role, values, and/or operational philosophy.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

Although the Mission Statement is in compliance, the Principal Committee suggests that USA enhance the efficacy of its statement of mission through a process of revision and reorganization. The reorganized statement might include the following: a brief and universal mission statement accompanied by statements of institutional history, goals, values, vision, role, and/or operational philosophy.

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Describe the Institution

*(Page 15, Line 3): This statement **must** describe the institution and its characteristics and address the components of the institution and its operation.*

USA's Mission Statement describes USA as a "comprehensive, coeducational institution of higher education" established to serve "metropolitan Mobile, the State of Alabama, the Gulf Coast region, and the southeastern United States." USA is dedicated to teaching, research, public service, and health care. Undergraduate and graduate programs serve traditional and nontraditional students through USA's curriculum. Curriculum extensions include evening, weekend, online, and special courses (both for credit and noncredit) at its main campus, at the USA Brookley Center, and at the USA Baldwin County Campus. The Mission Statement reflects the importance of global engagement, as seen through a variety of international programs and the presence of nearly one thousand international students on the campus (*Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002, p. 3*).

Health care is a significant component of the University. The Mission Statement acknowledges that the "University's academic health center is an important resource for accomplishing its mission." Programs exist for the education of physicians, health scientists, allied health professionals, and professional nurses; all such programs are intended to provide improved health care to the USA's service region.

The Statement describes the educational philosophy and goals that guide its undergraduate, graduate, health care, and nontraditional programs. The Statement clearly sets forth the

importance of scholarship as a responsibility of the faculty and, concurrently, the responsibility of the institution to support scholarly activity.

In addition, 96.6% of those responding to the Institutional Purpose Committee's survey of departments, colleges, centers, and schools rated their mission statements as either excellent (73.2%) or good (21.4%) "when it comes to being consistent with the University's mission" (*Institutional Purpose Survey, 2000*, Item #13). Although one respondent to the survey recommended that the Mission Statement be amended to show the addition of the online programs, the overwhelming sentiment expressed by those who recommended change was to make the statement more concise. The majority of respondents made no recommendations at all. An analysis of the content of the Mission Statement leads to the conclusion that it adequately describes the institution and its characteristics. The responses to the survey distributed by the Institutional Purpose Committee and by the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* (Item #84) support this conclusion.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

#3 of 8

Official Posture and Practice

(Page 15, Line 6): *The official posture and practice of the institution **must** be consistent with its purpose statement.*

To determine if the official posture and practice of USA are consistent with its Mission Statement, the Institutional Purpose Committee distributed a survey to the colleges, schools and departments within the University (Document 2.0: 1 of 8). The evidence provided by the respondents demonstrates that the posture and practice are consistent.

In response to the question, “How would you rate your mission/purpose statement as an accurate reflection of the mission/purpose of your unit?”, 69.6% of the respondents answered “excellent” and 25% answered “good.” In response to the question, “How would you rate your mission/purpose statement when it comes to being consistent with the University’s mission?”, 73.2% answered “excellent” and 21.4% answered “good.” Finally, when asked, “Are there any educational programs or activities undertaken by your unit that are not consistent with your mission/purpose statement?,” 94.6% replied “no” while 3.6% replied “don’t know/not applicable.” These responses demonstrate consistency (*Institutional Purpose Survey, 2000*, Items #12, #13, #14).

Other aspects of the USA self-study reinforce the impression of consistency of posture and practice. Sections I and II of the department self-studies asked departments to provide the following: (1) a brief history of the department and any significant changes in its mission statement, and (2) the departmental mission statement. Item #6 of the *Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001* states: “The curriculum in my department is appropriate to the degree(s) awarded.” For this item, 94% of the respondents either agreed (49%) or strongly agreed (47%). When presented the same statement for graduate programs, 95% either agreed (50%) or strongly agreed

(45%) (*Self-Study Faculty Survey, 2001*, Items #6, #26). Another clear source of evidence for consistency can be found in the Institutional Effectiveness section (Section III) of this *Self-Study Report*.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

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Publications

(Page 15, Line 8): *Appropriate publications **must** accurately cite the current statement of purpose.*

USA publishes its Mission Statement in the *Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002*, (p. 3), in the *USA Faculty Handbook, 2001* (Chapter 1, pp. 1-2), in the *Lowdown: A Student Handbook, 2001-2002* (pp. 16-17), and at the University's website. USA uses the word "mission" in the way that the SACS *Criteria for Accreditation* uses the word "purpose." Hence, USA's Mission Statement is its statement of institutional purpose. However, USA also publishes a statement of goals and purposes in the *Bulletin* and within the official website after the Mission Statement. The statement of goals and purposes has the character of a statement of institutional values and operational philosophy in addition to being a statement of goals.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

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Formulation of Statement

(Page 15, Line 11): It should be developed through the efforts of the institution's faculty, administration and governing board.

USA's current Mission Statement dates from 1984. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning drafted the first statement with input from the Faculty Senate and the academic deans. The Faculty Senate, the Dean's Council, The Joint Planning Council, and the Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the final statement.

While it is clear that USA developed its Statement through the collaborative efforts of the faculty, administration, and governing board, there is no established policy and practice that prescribes the process for Mission Statement development. It seems that USA revises the Statement when needed and that USA follows SACS policies as they apply to this process.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

Proposal for Excellence

The Principal Committee suggests that the spirit and efficiency of the collaborative development of the Mission Statement might be achieved more effectively if USA established and followed a written policy that assured that the Mission Statement would be reviewed at regular intervals more frequently than every ten years. The Committee further suggests that this task be assigned to a group that includes representatives of the faculty, administration, and governing board.

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Board Approval

*(Page 15, Line 13): It **must** be approved by the governing board.*

According to the minutes of the Board of Trustees, the Board approved the University's current Mission Statement on June 7, 1993. In a memorandum dated July 9, 1993, the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs informed the Academic Deans that the Board of Trustees approved the revision of the USA's Statement and instructed the Deans to use the new Mission Statement in preparing their respective mission statements. (All of these documents are available in the Self-Study Office.)

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

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Periodic Study

*(Page 15, Line 14): An institution **must** study periodically its statement of purpose, considering internal changes as well as the changing responsibilities of the institution to its constituencies.*

Every ten years, USA formally reviews its statement of purpose to consider internal changes as well as the changing responsibilities of the institution to its constituencies. This review occurs as part of its decennial self-study. After the Board of Trustees approved the current Mission Statement on June 7, 1993, USA established a Joint Planning Council with two subordinate planning committees (one for the University as a whole and the other for the College of Medicine). After doing preliminary work, these committees became inactive. On November 10, 1999, the Board of Trustees and the new President of the University convened a Long Range Planning Committee. This committee is representative of the USA community, including members of the Board, faculty, administration, student body, and alumni; this committee has reviewed the current Statement.

Units within the institution study USA's Mission Statement more frequently than every ten years. In response to a survey sent by the Institutional Purpose Committee to all colleges, departments, and centers, 94.6% of the respondents rated their mission statements as good to excellent when it comes to being consistent with USA's mission, while 3.6% (two respondents) rated their statement as "only fair" and 1.8% (one respondent) checked "don't know/not applicable." In response to another question, 71.9% of respondents indicated they reviewed their mission/purpose statement at least every five years, 14% reviewed their statement every five to ten years, and another 14% did not know how often their mission statement was reviewed.

These responses demonstrate (1) that colleges, departments, and centers within the University

regularly and systematically study USA's Mission Statement and (2) that the ten-year review cycle at the University level is adequate.

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

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Planning and Evaluation

*(Page 15, Line 17): The statement of purpose serves as the foundation of all institutional operations, programs and activities. Consequently, the institution **must** demonstrate that its planning and evaluation process, educational programs, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes are adequate and appropriate to fulfill its stated purpose.*

Following the appointment of the current President, the Board of Trustees appointed a Long Range Planning Committee which convened for the first time on November 10, 1999. This committee includes members of the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees. The new President of the University charged the Committee with instituting a "university-wide planning process with the goal of developing a collective long-term vision for the University...." The Committee began its work with a review of the University's statement of mission and with a commitment to strategic planning based on that statement. The Board of Trustees discussed the work of the Long Range Planning Committee at its meeting on February 24, 2000, and noted that

the charge of each subcommittee of the Long Range Planning Committee was to develop five to ten objectives and to describe the relationship of each objective to USA's Mission Statement. This committee worked throughout the year and presented its first full report to the Board of Trustees at its December 7, 2000 meeting .

The survey distributed by the Institutional Purpose Committee illustrates the use of the statement of mission in the planning process. All the departments, colleges, and schools have a mission statement, 83.9% said that they use it for planning, and 86% said that they reviewed this mission statement regularly for appropriateness. Finally, 94% of the respondents rated the unit's mission statement as reflecting its mission and, in reply to a separate question, 94% rated the unit's mission statement as being consistent with USA's mission. The self-studies done by each department also demonstrate the use of mission statements in planning. Overall, evidence indicates that Mission Statement is used for planning at the university level as well as at the department and college levels.

USA and its constituent elements assess the adequacy and appropriateness of the efforts to fulfill the mission in formal and informal ways. This *Self-Study Report* assesses the effectiveness of these efforts in the following sections: Institutional Effectiveness (Section III), Educational Programs (Section IV), Educational Support Services (Section V), and Administrative Processes (Section VI).

Conclusion

Compliance.

Recommendation

None.

