

MISSION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, PLANS

Consider this guide for writing a mission statement, a goal statement and a strategic or long-range plan:

A mission statement should explain why your program does what it does; it should identify your beliefs and values.

A goal statement should define what you intend to do to fulfill the beliefs and values expressed in your mission statement.

Objectives are more precise than goals; they should define how you expect to reach your goals (a strategic or long-range plan).

A Mission Statement

In presenting your beliefs and values, decide who is the main audience of your mission statement. Prospective students? Current majors? Colleagues in other disciplines? The College dean? The University president and provost? ACEJMC? Your main audience should be prospective and current majors. Why should they study and seek employment in journalism and mass communications? What role do journalism and mass communications play in a society in which people mean to govern themselves? What role do journalism and mass communications play in your state or service area? How is your program distinctive in comparison with peer or competitive programs?

A Goal Statement: Curricular and Instructional Purpose

Decide whether the goal of your curriculum is learning for learning's sake, learning for earning's sake, or learning for serving's sake. Decide whether you seek to teach and mentor students for journalism and mass communications as a:

Discipline – a branch of instruction or learning inherently worthy of study and scholarship

Job -- an occupation requiring the performance of certain tasks and duties, for which they are accountable to an employer in exchange for a wage/salary and benefits

Craft -- an occupation requiring mastery of certain skills and competencies for which they are accountable to the craft as well as to an employer

Profession -- a vocation requiring, in addition to specialized skills and competencies, mastery of a body of knowledge and adherence to a code of conduct and ethics for which they are accountable to citizens or clients and the profession as well as to an employer

Career -- an occupation, profession, or vocation that requires continued learning and development through life, or an extended phase of life

Calling -- a vocation arousing a strong impulse to serve some principle or purpose, such as the public interest, an informed electorate, a community, an institution or clients, a vocation that transcends the personal rewards of salary and professional success.

You may prepare students for all of these goals but emphasize one or more of them in particular. You surely prepare graduates for more than entry-level jobs. For example, freshmen in fall 2012 will enter the field in 2016 and 2017 and will build careers through the next 40 years of their lives. Digital communication technologies in an interconnected, interactive world, people's information-seeking behaviors, advertisers' responses and other and new sources of economic support require informed imagining of the professions of journalism and mass communications ten or more years ahead.

A Strategic or Long-Range Plan

Eloquent aspiration and intent may be appropriate in mission and goal statements. A strategic or long-range plan (typically for no more than five years) for achieving your goals and objectives should be more earthbound. To encourage the realistic and attainable, ACEJMC states in Indicator (a), Standard 7, Resources, Facilities and Equipment:

The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.

Wherever possible, define a time line and a cost estimate for each objective.

A Diversity and Inclusiveness Plan

Your university may have a diversity statement that defines certain principles, policies and practices and a diversity plan with targets and timelines. It may also have an administrator and office of diversity and/or affirmative action. By all means draw on these resources, but ACEJMC requires that you have your own diversity plan.

Note ACEJMC's expectations for Standard 3, Diversity and Inclusiveness:

- a curriculum that fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society
- a curriculum that fosters understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
- a faculty and professional staff diverse in gender, race and ethnicity and an environment that supports their retention, progress and success
- a student population that reflects the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population the program serves
- a supportive climate for working and learning, free of harassment and discrimination

Your plan should originate in analysis of the extent to which your program meets each of ACEJMC's expectations. As context and introduction to your plan, you may wish to identify where the program falls short and explain why and what the challenges are. These may include location, history, culture, and resources. ACEJMC seeks to understand special circumstances but will not excuse paralysis in face of them. Your plan, then, should define measurable goals and actions, with realistic timelines and resources, to address areas in which your program does not yet meet your goals and ACEJMC's expectations.

A helpful resource is "Diversity Revisited: Good Ideas for Your Diversity Plan," published by the ASJMC Diversity Committee in 2008.

An Assessment Plan

To comply with the requirements for Standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, you will have reviewed core and required courses to ensure they cover ACEJMC's 12 values and competencies. You will also have reviewed syllabi to ensure they define learning objectives, including, as appropriate, ACEJMC's values and competencies.

Your plan should explain how you will assess graduates' mastery of ACEJMC's 12 values and competencies, how you will analyze the results from your assessment, and how you will address weaknesses in learning outcomes that assessment reveals. To achieve compliance with this standard, you will have to show evidence that you have executed all phases of your plan.

Your plan should describe

- your direct and indirect measures of assessment and where in the curriculum you will administer them
- your process for analyzing findings from the measures and for deciding on actions to address any weaknesses in graduates' mastery of the learning objectives
- your timeline for administering, analyzing and acting (e.g., every course every semester, annually, and/or every four or five years as cohorts graduate)

Adoption of Statements and Plans

Prepare, adopt and date – or update – mission and goal statements and strategic, diversity and assessment plans at least three or four years before preparing the self-study. Site teams are skeptical of statements and plans adopted in the year of the self-study. Because plans should include measurable objectives and actions, showing annual progress and achievement over three or four years will strengthen the case for compliance with individual standards and for accreditation. Nevertheless, statements and plans should not be immutable. Conditions and resources in the university, technologies and practices in the professions and people's information-seeking behaviors change with alarming frequency. Plans have to adapt in response.