

Ad-Hoc Exploratory Mission Statement Sub-Committee
Faculty Council Academic Year 2020-2021

Committee Members:

Elizabeth L. Sweet (Assistant Professor, Africana Studies and Urban Planning and Community Development); Andrew Perumal (Associate Professor, Economics), Jessie M. Quintero Johnson (Associate Professor, Communication)

Description:

The Ad-Hoc Exploratory Mission Statement Sub-Committee was convened by the Faculty Council in September, 2020. Per Provost Emily McDermott's request, the committee charge was to provide recommendations about how the current UMB mission statement might be amended to better reflect the university mission and identity. The Committee developed a working draft of a revised mission statement, based on our investigation of other urban public institutions. The revised mission statement was submitted to the Faculty Council in October of 2020, at which time faculty were invited to submit feedback about the revised statement. This committee provided a summary of these findings to the Faculty Council in May, 2021, during which time Provost Berger invited the committee to share our findings with him. The current and revised statements, the rationale for the amendments we made to the current mission statement, and the community feedback, are detailed in the remainder of this document.

Current UMB Mission Statement:

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a public research university with a dynamic culture of teaching and learning, and a special commitment to urban and global engagement. Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment encourages our broadly diverse campus community to thrive and succeed. Our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge while serving the public good of our city, our commonwealth, our nation, and our world.

Rationale for Suggested Changes:

- Campus-wide commitment to becoming an anti-racist institution
- Opportunity to engage in self-reflection
- Desire to have an inspiring mission statement
- Desire to focus on our identity as an urban-serving institution
 - Address of Chancellor John W. Ryan, at the Founding Convocation, December 10, 1966: <https://openarchives.umb.edu/digital/collection/p15774coll22/id/28/>
 - Why Public Urban Research Universities? (<https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/urban-serving-universities/why.html>)
 - 68 percent of colleges and universities in the United States and serve 20 million students, making their campuses essential for implementing transformative change. Notably, these institutions advance innovations that

align with their community-based missions and their students' entire environment – recognizing that barriers to academic success are intimately linked with financial, geographic, and other socioeconomic challenges. Public urban research universities serve an outsized share of historically underserved populations such as low-income, minority, and first generation students. USU places particular emphasis on narrowing and ultimately eliminating achievement gaps by addressing challenges facing these students.

- By working both within and across institutions, USU provides a forum for schools to collaborate on addressing hurdles facing their students by employing pioneering approaches. And crucially, collaboration across universities allows institutions to collectively examine challenges, exchange best practices, and share lessons learned. In essence, USU functions as a venture capital organization for student success and community transformation – funding, studying, and promulgating the most promising emerging practices. Instead of maximizing return on investment to the venture organization, however, USU aims to accelerate reforms that fundamentally change the way higher education institutions operate to ensure they best serve their student populations.

Revised Mission Statement:

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a deliberate and responsive place of inquiry respecting, embracing, and fostering local knowledge and global engagement. Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment is proud to serve and engage with historically underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized communities. As Boston's public research university, our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge that contributes to transformative social and environmental justice in our city, commonwealth, nation, and world.

Revised Mission Statement with Changes Tracked:

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a [deliberate](#) and [responsive place of inquiry respecting, embracing,](#) and [fostering local knowledge](#) and global engagement. Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment [is proud to serve](#) and [engage with historically underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized communities.](#) As Boston's public research university, [our](#) distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge [that contributes to transformative social and environmental justice in](#) our city, commonwealth, nation, and world.

Comments about Revised Mission Statement (from UMB Community):

1/5

First I think it would be good to include a focus on our students.

Second, as a publicly funded institution I think it is good to declare that we are giving back to the commonwealth. I see this as not just our teaching, scholarship and service, but also the students we graduate.

Maybe something like -- we prepare to students to provide the commonwealth, (nation, world) with engaged citizens who contribute to the local and global community.

Thanks for considering
Priscilla

2/5

From Keith Jones, Restorative Justice Initiative, Oct 19, 2020

We live in a world deeply structured by domination and historical inequalities. As an institution of higher learning, we are committed to acknowledging the damage and harm that has been done to all our humanity as a result of the various hierarchies which impose false notions of racial superiority and inferiority, class distinctions, and sexual and gendered norms. As an institution of higher learning, we affirm the fact that all people share a common ancestry, and we honor the humanity and the cultural values of all peoples whatever their origins or places of destination. We understand and respect the production of knowledge from various peoples and their various communities, and we strive to cultivate a learning community rooted in the values of equity, ecological sustainability, justice, and inclusion. We understand that we are educating future global and local citizens committed to honoring and building a diverse, just, and equitable world.

3/5

Revised Mission Statement:

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a deliberate and responsive place of inquiry respecting, embracing, and fostering local knowledge and global engagement. Isn't every place deliberate? What are we responsive to? I don't think that our mission is to respect, embrace, and foster local knowledge... I think that leaving out "research" from the first sentence is a mistake. And "global engagement" makes it sound as if we're employed like NGO's rather than doing scholarship. We do research and we teach in a way that connects locally and globally.

Our vibrant, multi-cultural [multicultural seems to be going out of fashion so how about "diverse"] educational environment is proud to serve and engage with historically underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized communities.

As Boston's public research university, our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge that contributes to transformative social and environmental justice in our city, commonwealth, nation, and world

Love the final statement.

Sharon Lamb, Ed.D., Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Counseling and School Psychology
UMass Boston, Boston, MA 02125

4/5

Dear all,

thank you for the hard work on revising the mission of UMass Boston. I think that this a very needed work and worthwhile endeavor.

As a marketing professor, I have already for a longer time the impression that our current mission is not fulfilling the high standards of a compelling and inspiring statement. Further, it also seems that some FC members are not aware of the critical and significant role a mission statement plays for the development and perception of an institution like ours (Quote from the FC meeting on October 5th, "Mission is just a PR tool").

Maintaining control over the public opinion (i.e., PR) is crucial for every organization. I think we all have personally experienced how hurtful it is if the public opinion about our institution is out of our control.

Yes, the mission statement is important for PR, but it is essential in many other ways. For instance,

- If you don't know a University, it is the first thing you find on the about section of our website. It's the first thing a journalist would look up if they want to write about us.
- As a student, If you want to compare our institution with competitors, you would also look into the mission.
- The mission is what the donors give money for.
- The mission is what the citizen of Massachusetts pay taxes for.
- In personal faculty reviews, it is advised to align the own work to the mission of the university.
- And even in our college's current accreditation procedure (i.e., CM), we are measured based on how much we follow our mission.
- And I guess the mission statement will be the most mentioned sentences in talks of our Chancellor.

Thus, the mission is a significant and critical statement for many stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, staff, faculty, donors, government, public, etc.) that is used in different ways and **should be chosen or changed wisely.**

In the management literature exists some guidelines, what a good mission statement characterizes. A mission should

1. describe the purpose (why & goal) and guidelines of operation (e.g. values, strategy) of the organization
2. be clearly understandable by people internal and external to the organization
3. be simple & short & memorable & distinct
4. be inspiring and achievable for employees

Here are examples from mission statements that are widely perceived as very effective.

- Microsoft (at its founding): A computer on every desk and in every home.
- LinkedIn: Create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce.
- Alzheimer's Association: A world without Alzheimer's disease.
- Facebook: Connect with friends and the world around you
- Sweetgreen: To inspire healthier communities by connecting people to real food.
- IKEA: To create a better everyday life for the many people.
- JetBlue: To inspire humanity – both in the air and on the ground.
- TED: Ideas worth Spreading
- Tesla: To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.

Here are some distinct University missions:

University of California, Berkeley: To explore, ask questions, and improve the world.

Aalto University, Finland: Shaping the future: science and art together with technology and business.

University of Rochester: Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—and Make the World Ever Better

University of Minnesota: We are Minnesota's research university. We change lives-through research, education, and outreach.

University of Exeter: We make the exceptional happen by challenging traditional thinking and defying conventional boundaries.

University of Heidelberg: Future since 1386!

Sorry for the long e-mail. In summary, it comes down to the elevator pitch of an entire organization.

Our current mission is not optimal, but I fear that the suggested Revised Mission Statement is even harder to understand and memorize (see four criteria above). Further, it shifts the focus away from the term "university" and might not resonate with all critical stakeholder groups.

I hope these elaborated comments are helpful for UMass Boston to find its new mission statement. I'm happy that this endeavor has started now.

All the best from the home office

Werner Kunz

P.S.: I found this article that is quite helpful to see different approaches towards mission statement by 338 universities worldwide

<https://repository.urosario.edu.co/handle/10336/13807>

5/5

Link from Tim Sieber

<http://fsublog.org/uncategorized/owning-our-past-learning-from-the-turbulent-history-of-umass-boston-and-columbia-point/>

Report to Faculty Council May 2021

Original

The University of Massachusetts Boston is a public research university with a dynamic culture of teaching and learning, and a special commitment to urban and global engagement. Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment encourages our broadly diverse campus community to thrive and succeed. Our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge while serving the public good of our city, our commonwealth, our nation, and our world.

Feedback:

- Focus on students
- Giving back to the commonwealth
- deliberate and responsive place of inquiry respecting, embracing, and fostering local knowledge and global engagement.
- Our vibrant, multi-cultural educational environment is proud to serve and engage with historically underserved, underrepresented, and marginalized communities.
- As Boston's public research university, our distinguished scholarship, dedicated teaching, and engaged public service are mutually reinforcing, creating new knowledge that contributes to transformative social and environmental justice in our city, commonwealth, nation, and world.
- We do research and we teach in a way that connects locally and globally.
- A mission should
 1. describe the purpose (why & goal) and guidelines of operation (e.g. values, strategy) of the organization
 2. be clearly understandable by people internal and external to the organization
 3. be simple & short & memorable & distinct
 4. be inspiring and achievable for employees

History of UMB <http://fsublog.org/uncategorized/owning-our-past-learning-from-the-turbulent-history-of-umass-boston-and-columbia-point/>