

Standard 1: Mission and Purpose

“Education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself.” — John Dewey, educator, philosopher, UVM Class of 1879

Overview

The University of Vermont’s mission statement sets forth the ideals that guide the institution, and that are realized through the President’s Strategic Action Plan and in its vision statement. The dual emphasis on excellence in research and education reflects the university’s commitment to achieving a balance that offers students the best qualities of a smaller college experience and the power of a research-intensive institution, one of many reasons it continues to be included in lists of “public Ivy” universities. Through the [President’s Strategic Action Plan](#) and the [Move Mountains Campaign](#), the University of Vermont has moved closer to achieving this ideal balance.

Description

The mission statement is framed by the production, evaluation and sharing of knowledge, that is, by research and scholarship. The university’s vision statement brings this emphasis into greater focus, foregrounding not only excellence in research, but also a commitment to liberal education. As befits the alma mater of education pioneer John Dewey, the mission also foregrounds the university’s role in fostering a lifelong commitment to learning, ethical conduct, and leadership in its students. President Sullivan has further recognized engagement—with faculty, with local and global communities, with opportunities for research and active learning—as an enduring feature of a UVM “[public Ivy](#)” education.

This balance is also visible in the contemporary translation of the university’s [motto](#), *Studiis et Rebus Honestis*, “Integrity in Theoretical and Practical Pursuits.” The mission statement carries forward this original motto into the present and future of UVM as the state’s public flagship and only land grant university. Morrill Hall, named after Justin Smith Morrill, Vermont senator and author of the acts that established the land grant system, still houses UVM’s [College of Agriculture and Life Sciences](#). In 2017, this college became the administrative home of [UVM Extension](#), which for over 100 years has been the unit primarily responsible for the fulfilment of the university’s land grant mission. The mission’s strong emphasis on public service, lifelong learning, and the application of knowledge is evident in both its degree programs and its non-degree offerings through Extension and Continuing and Distance Education.

The mission, vision, and institutional goals appear on the [Office of the President website](#) and in the [Board Policy Manual](#), and the mission and [Our Common Ground](#) statements are included as part of the overview of the University in the [university catalogue](#). While the mission, vision, and strategic goals guide university planning and activities, [Our Common Ground](#) offers a statement of community ideals in the daily conduct of university business (see Standard 9).

Mission

To create, evaluate, share, and apply knowledge and to prepare students to be accountable leaders who will bring to their work dedication to the global community, a grasp of complexity, effective problem-solving and communication skills, and an enduring commitment to learning and ethical conduct.

Vision

To be among the nation’s premier small research universities, preeminent in our comprehensive commitment to liberal education, environment, health, and public service.

The president's [four-point strategic action plan](#) sets forth specific steps that enhance the institution's capacity to fulfill its mission, live by community ideals, and promote its vision of dedication to world-class research and liberal education. The elements of the strategic action plan are:

- Promoting affordability, financial access, and academic support
- Promoting academic excellence and cultivating talent
- Identifying necessary investments to ensure a bright future
- Instilling an institutional commitment to efficiency and effectiveness

Each component of the strategic action plan invites the UVM community to consider questions that are at the core of institutional identity: How can we increase access for all students? How can we foster quality and promote academic excellence? How do we balance good financial stewardship with institutional growth and vitality? And how can we improve the institution itself, to better serve in the fulfillment of the mission?

Appraisal

The mission statement, which was last revised and approved by the Faculty Senate and Board of Trustees in 2008, continues to serve as the guiding star for the university's administrative units and key institutional processes, and ensures that the research, educational, and public service purposes of the institution remain the core of its activities. The ideals embraced by the mission statement permeate the institution's activities, and are also reflected in the university's vision, and in the Our Common Ground values statement. In establishing four key avenues for improving the University of Vermont, the [President's Strategic Action Plan](#) (covered more extensively in Standard 2) draws on all of these sources as facets of what UVM is, and aspires to be, as an institution of higher learning.

The University of Vermont's vision statement is clearly reflected in UVM's well-deserved reputation as an "environmental university," boasting not only the [Gund Institute for the Environment](#) and the innovative curriculum of the [Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources](#), but also an undergraduate [Sustainability General Education Requirement](#), cross-college programs in Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies, the [GreenHouse](#) residential learning community, the [Sustainability Faculty Fellows Program](#), and an [AASHE STARS Gold certification](#) (placing it among the top 12 percent of rated institutions). Health-related fields are also a hallmark of the university, embodied not only in the Larner College of Medicine and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, but also in thriving programs such as the fully online [Master of Public Health](#) degree, new majors in [Biomedical Engineering](#), [Health Sciences](#), and [Health and Society](#), and the extremely successful [Wellness Environment](#) residential community. Commitment to public service both through UVM Extension and through [service learning](#), [community-based research](#), and a [strong culture of volunteerism](#) are also closely tied to UVM's fulfillment of its mission.

The President's Strategic Action Plan has informed UVM priorities and planning processes in a wide range of areas, touching all aspects of the institution. Results stemming from the priorities outlined in the action plan can be seen in dedication of significant resources to student financial aid (see Standard 5), development of a far-reaching enrollment management plan (Standard 2, Standard 5, Standard 8), emphasis on increasing retention and four-year graduation rates (Standard 5, Standard 8), creation of new residential learning communities (Standard 4, Standard 5), establishment of the Career Center (Standard 5), development of distance-learning courses and programs (Standard 4), investment in new academic and residential infrastructure (Standard 7), implementation of the incentive-based budget model (Standard 2,

Standard 7), initiation of a major—and very successful—capital campaign (Standard 7), creation of the Alumni House (Standard 3), and developing plans for a new campus athletic center (Standard 7).

The importance of shared community ideals, as articulated in Our Common Ground, has also been reflected in many areas of university practice. From the creation of the Our Common Ground Staff Award, to the establishment of the President’s Commission for Inclusive Excellence, which coordinates and directs activities to further diversity and inclusion on the UVM campus, Our Common Ground ideals have been foregrounded in a number of ways in recent years. In 2017, the Faculty Senate formally adopted a resolution affirming the values articulated in Our Common Ground, underscoring the importance of these guiding principles in all areas of campus life.



The framework laid out by these key documents and plans connects campus units at all levels through the provost’s [Academic Excellence Goals](#), unit-level mission statements, and strategic plans throughout the institution. Along with the vision, Strategic Action Plan, and Our Common Ground statement, the mission also informs the work of all campus units, and is reflected in unit-level mission and vision statements, including, for example [University Libraries](#), the [Larner College of Medicine](#), the [Grossman School of Business](#), and the [Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources](#). At the program level, processes for the proposal and review of academic programs (see Standard 4, Standard 8) require explicit discussion of how the program aligns with and contributes to the fulfillment of university’s mission. The [Move Mountains campaign](#), which exceeded its \$500,000,000 goal nearly a year ahead of schedule, supports key strategic goals of increasing access, cultivating talent, and promoting fiscal responsibility and long-term viability of the institution.

While the mission permeates the administration of the university, it is less frequently invoked in the day-to-day workings of the institution than other key statements, such as the vision and Our Common Ground. In forums held as part of preparation for the UVM Self-Study, faculty, staff, and students initially expressed little familiarity with the specifics of the mission statement, but more familiarity with the vision statement and Our Common Ground ideals. However, after reading the mission statement, most participants confirmed that they saw a strong alignment of the mission statement and the university’s purposes, goals, and practices. Targeted efforts to increase familiarity with the mission statement in all areas of the university, particularly among faculty and students, will increase the salience of the mission statement in the day-to-day life of the university.

Projection

- In FY 2020, the University’s Creative Communications Office will design a campaign to raise the profile of the university mission as written. The goal of this campaign will be to increase awareness of how the mission permeates institutional activities at all levels.

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Attach a copy of the current mission statement.

Document	Website location	Date Approved by the Governing Board
Institutional Mission Statement	https://www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html	5/17/03

Mission Statement published	Website location	Print Publication
Jul-11	http://www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=strategicplan.html	http://www.uvm.edu/president/Strategic%20Action%20Plan%202010.07.13.pdf

Related statements	Website location	Print Publication
Vision Statement	https://www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html	See document room 'Mission Vision Resolution.docx'
Goal Statement	https://www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html	

Please enter any explanatory notes in the box below

The UVM mission, vision, and goal statements were approved by the Board of Trustees. The current vision and mission were endorsed by the UVM Board of Trustees on May 17, 2003. It also endorsed five broad goals for the University. Both the vision and the mission have not changed since May 2003.

On October 26, 2013, the Board of Trustees approved the current strategic action plan that contain four new goals for the University that are still in place.

The vision, mission and strategic plan and goals are in the University Manual that is on line and can be downloaded as a pdf (see Part 100, section 101 page 9).