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Mission & Purposes  
University of Central Arkansas

Mission Index, 1997

**Note:** The following links are archival, documenting one stage in the university's expression of itself. For a more current view, see the [Strategic Thinking Initiative](#) site (2004) and its links.

In the 1997 Mission & Purposes pages . . .

### [Statement of Mission and Purposes](#)

The UCA Statement of Mission and Purposes, adopted by the university's Board of Trustees, 1997-09-26

### [Developing the Statement](#)

The development of the 1997 statement and its review by the campus community

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## University of Central Arkansas: Statement of Mission and Purposes

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The University of Central Arkansas (UCA), a statewide comprehensive university, seeks to deliver the best undergraduate education in Arkansas as well as excellent graduate programs in selected disciplines. The University offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal and fine arts, in the basic sciences, and in technical and professional fields in addition to its historical emphasis in the field of education. UCA strives to maintain the highest academic quality and to ensure that its curriculum remains current and responsive to the needs of those it serves. The University's mission is expressed in its commitment to the personal, social, and intellectual growth of its students; its support for the advancement of knowledge; and its service to the community as a public institution.

The University implements its mission through its emphasis on certain central purposes:

- To deliver excellent curricula in general education, in degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in continuing education.
- To support its programs with personnel of the highest quality and with optimal resources and facilities.
- To create a campus community that supports students in their personal, social, and intellectual growth.
- To enhance interaction and understanding among diverse groups and to cultivate global perspectives.
- To foster learning and the advancement of knowledge through research and other scholarly and creative activities.
- To serve the public in ways appropriate to the mission and resources of the University.

--Adopted by the UCA Board of Trustees, 1997-09-26

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## Developing a UCA Statement of Mission and Purposes

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The UCA Statement of Mission and Purposes, drafted and revised by the Planning Subcommittee of the Planning and Assessment Committee, underwent two campus reviews between April 1997 and July 1997. The campus community was generous in its advice and most helpful in its questions and commentary. The Second Draft Statement of Mission and Purposes then moved on to other kinds of review. The Faculty Senate voted to support the document on 9 September 1997, the Staff Senate did the same on 10 September 1997, and the UCA Board of Trustees voted its approval on 26 September 1997. The links below will allow you to review the process of drafting the new statement and some of the discussion it generated.

### Links to Mission

- [Introductory Notes to the First Draft](#)
- [First Draft](#)
- [Digest of Responses to the First Draft](#)
- [Second Draft](#)
- [Responses to the Second Draft](#)

We thank the campus community for helping us think clearly about our university and its reasons to be.

--Jonathan A. Glenn, Director of Academic Planning and Assessment, Chair of the Planning and Assessment Committee

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## UCA Mission & Purposes Statement: Introductory Notes

[These notes introduced a series of discussions on the UCA campus as it developed a new statement of mission and purposes in 1997.]

### Introduction

A statement of mission and purposes serves a variety of functions, and it is usually the first document a team of NCA Consultant-Evaluators will examine. For that reason, it behoves the University community to examine its mission and purposes periodically, to ask how it wishes to regard itself internally and to present itself to the public, and to ask where its uniqueness lies. The following notes suggest some of the ways a statement of this kind may function, offer of list of the draft statement's strengths, and suggest a context within which to view it.

### Some Functions of a Statement of Mission and Purposes

#### *Communication with external bodies*

Our statement of mission and purposes is one of the ways in which we communicate with entities outside the University--not only the public in general, with whom our dialogue is complex and vital, but also with entities such as the North Central Association and the Department of Higher Education. For such communication, a statement of mission and purposes must be lucid and readily intelligible, and it will ideally be simple enough to allow part-by-part explication and revision. For NCA, our statement needs to be formulated in a way that makes connecting our actual activities with our statements of purpose as straightforward and documentable as possible. For the Department of Higher Education, of course, our statement of mission and purposes must be consistent with our published statement of Role and Scope.

#### *Communication and decision-making within the University*

In this role, our statement of mission and purposes must reflect the on-going evolution of the University, and here, as with external communications, simplicity is to be prized. Within the University, the statement becomes the general guideline for program development at all levels and,

in a University as diverse as ours, provides an "umbrella" under which we may unify our disparate programs and activities. The statement of mission and purposes may appropriately become a focal point for both debate and concensus, a function particularly relevant during a time of intensive self-study and evaluation. The statement may also be an aid to more focused self-study, strategic planning, and decision-making.

## Strengths of the Draft Statement of Mission and Purposes

- It is simple, a characteristic that may facilitate communication.
- It is evolutionary, not revolutionary. The draft statement is based primarily on two existing documents, the University's Statement of Role and Scope and the similarly titled document published in the 1996 *Faculty Handbook* (1-2). The draft statement remains consistent with our current Statement of Role and Scope but is flexible enough to allow for normal institutional growth.
- The draft statement can easily be expanded to become an instrument for a campus survey, a way to document campus attitudes toward the parts of our mission and to collect information about how we are carrying out that mission.

## A Context for the Draft Statement of Mission and Purposes

The draft statement appears to have one glaring weakness--it does little to define the uniqueness of UCA. I would argue, however, that a university's uniqueness lies most importantly (1) in the ways in which it carries out its mission and purposes and (2) in the more specific purposes of its programs and activities. Thus the University statement takes its place within a context of other documents. (We might think of the University statement and these others collectively as the University's "Mission Documents," rather than putting all the burden of definition on a single statement.)

Within the academic area alone (and connecting especially to the first purpose listed in the draft statement), we have or are developing a number of such documents: a General Education Purpose Statement (published on the UCA web site by the General Education Task Force in February 1997), a Statement of Mission and Purposes for Undergraduate Education (yet to be developed), a Graduate School Mission and Purposes Statement (currently in revision), and a Continuing Education Statement of Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals. Even more specifically, all academic programs in the University have or are developing Statements of Program Purpose that identify their particular roles within the university community and beyond.

It is documents like these, an evolving body of definition and commitment--and, even more importantly, the people that give these definitions and commitments life--that embody UCA's mission and purposes and make our university unique.

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## Statement of Mission & Purposes: Draft 1

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### University of Central Arkansas: Statement of Mission and Purposes

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#### A First Draft for Review and Comment, 1997

The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) is a comprehensive university offering students a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. UCA's curriculum has expanded in recent years to include numerous academic disciplines in addition to its historical emphasis upon the field of education. Strength has been developed in technical and professional fields, in the liberal and fine arts, and in basic sciences. The central mission of the University is to provide an instructional program based upon the goals of maintaining the highest academic quality and of assuring that the curriculum remains current, dynamic, and responsive to curricular trends and to the needs of those it serves.

The University implements its mission by emphasizing its commitment to certain central purposes:

1. To deliver excellent programs of instruction in general education, in degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in continuing education.
  2. To support its programs with excellent personnel and with optimum resources and facilities.
  3. To enhance student development outside the classroom.
  4. To foster learning through research and other scholarly and creative activities.
  5. To serve the public in ways appropriate to the mission and resources of the University.
  6. To enhance interaction and understanding among diverse groups and to cultivate global perspectives.
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## UCA Mission & Purposes Statement: Response to First Draft

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### Response Digest (4/26/1997 through 6/3/1997)

#### *General*

"I think that it is great that we are taking a team approach to developing OUR mission statement. I do have one suggestion. If we agree that the mission statement is consistent with our customers' satisfaction, then it seems to follow that before we release the final statement, we should have several representative business leaders and possibly students give us their input. In recent years, I have found that this not only gives two primary stakeholders a 'voice' but also validates the statement." Further: "If we define our customers as those organizations that employ our students (or for that matter, our students), then our mission should reflect the requirements that are consistent with achieving the objectives/goals that are consistent with customer satisfaction. While I understand that we have an accreditation reality, we must also include the folks that pay the bills."

#### *Regarding the Mission Statement*

"I am basically in agreement with the content, but believe something should be in the statement about serving the State of Arkansas." Here is this respondent's tentatively offered revision of the first sentence: "The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) is a comprehensive university which serves the educational and cultural needs of the people of Arkansas by offering students a variety of undergraduate and graduate degree programs in numerous academic disciplines, technical and professional fields, the liberal and fine arts, and basic sciences, in addition to a historical emphasis in the field of education."

"My first observation has to do with 'serving Arkansas' and 'global perspectives.' No doubt, UCA must serve the state. But the responder's comment seems insular. I would argue that we serve the state by preparing our graduates to compete regionally, nationally, and internationally. If we focus on our narrower function, then we remain a small Arkansas college; if we advertise our role in the larger world, then we live up to our role as a comprehensive university. And while we might not actually

'cultivate global perspectives,' we will certainly fall very short of the mark if we do not even acknowledge the need to think through problems from a global perspective, no matter how imperfectly realized."

"In recent years" is misleading: UCA has been a comprehensive university for some time now.

"In the mission part, I can understand a current curriculum and one responsive to curricular trends and to the needs of those it serves. Yet if a curriculum remains current, it clearly has to be responsive to trends, and if it is responsive to trends, it will remain current. So I claim you have redundancy here. But I do not understand what a 'dynamic' curriculum is. Do we have redundancy here? I would think 'dynamic' should mean responsive to trends etc. Or do we have gratuitous use of a fashionable buzzword?"

"I have to agree with the critics of the mission statement. It reads like something produced by a committee eager to strike a public pose. The 'central mission' sentence itself is strangely fractured and disturbingly hollow. The subtext seems to be, 'We will jump on any bandwagon coming down the pike because we really don't know who we are or what we should be doing.' Such a statement cannot anchor any document of substance."

"The proposed mission statement seems too narrow in focus. In particular, I do not think that the central mission 'is to provide an instructional program based upon the goals of maintaining the highest academic quality and of assuring that the curriculum remains current, dynamic, and responsive to curricular trends and to the needs of those it serves.' This statement is more a strategy to achieve the central mission. The central mission, in my opinion, is to develop citizens that contribute meaningfully to society; produce leaders in industry, education, etc.; teach students to think; and equip students with lifelong learning skills (strategies)."

"I agree with the comment that the mission statement seems rather narrowly defined. I suppose it is thus worded to simplify and to avoid definitional problems, but surely we want to make some sort of general claim to be educating students in a broad and liberal sense that allows them to analyze critically the ever increasing amount of information they need to process in order to vote, work, and live in the modern world. The last bit implies, I think, remaining up to date as a university."

A respondent offered the following comment in the context of his experience in the military: "I always argued that we should focus our mission on giving students the technical, critical, interpretive, and communicative skills necessary for their roles as officers, citizens, and individuals. So, I guess I'd agree with the responder who suggested something like 'UCA's mission is to develop citizens and professionals and to give students lifelong learning strategies.' Then add, 'by providing a quality instructional program responsive to curricular trends and to the needs of those it serves.'"

And this longer comment:

1. We may approach uniqueness by using more evocative, clear, and simple language, instead of the

predigested buzzwords which make all higher education mission statements sound alike. We might mention something about preparing students to be competent in tomorrow's world as well as today's.

2. It is misleading to say "Strength has been developed in technical and professional fields, in the liberal and fine arts, and in basic sciences." How about specifying "undergraduate programs are strong in the liberal arts, fine arts and basic sciences, and graduate programs are strong in the technical and professional fields." This institution is definitely not strong in liberal arts when it comes to graduate degree programs. History and English are the only Master of Arts programs, now that Sociology has been eliminated.

3. Might we dump the word "instruction" from our mission statement introductory paragraph, last sentence, or tone it down, giving it not as much of the center stage, by combining it with a statement which pays homage to the importance of the ongoing development of critical thinking skills? (Warning: this might be too "revolutionary.")

"Instructional programs" and the word "instruction" itself implies the one-way dumping of knowledge instead of interactive critical thinking. Dictionaries define "instruction" as "a direction calling for compliance," "an outline or manual of technical procedure," "a code that tells a computer to perform a particular operation," and, most unfortunately, "the action, practice, or profession of a teacher." Additionally, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* refers to "academic" as "of or relating to literary or art rather than technical or professional studies."

Robots and computers take "instructions"; they cannot apply concepts learned in one area of their lives to others, or utilize "intuition," because we don't understand it enough ourselves to teach robots how to intuit. Though it is a critical factor in gaining technical skills for immediate post-graduation employment (which is a big selling point in this age when the trend is to persuade everyone that a college education is right for them), "instruction" should bear a clearly subservient relation to attaining "highest academic quality," a phrase which appears in the last sentence of the introductory paragraph of UCA's draft mission statement in dangerously close proximity to "instructional programs."

What about replacing "instructional programs" with "interactive educational programs" or something that communicates more participation and effort on the part of students to think, not memorize and regurgitate?

As we "discover" more and more areas ripe for "specialization" in the workforce, higher education has taken over and cashed in on the wonderful and ancient art of apprenticeship, and, also, small, specialized nursing, business, and technical schools, where a successful student learned a useful balance of technical skills, critical thinking and human interaction skills customized to their vocations of choice.

Modern health care professionals are discouraged from making decisions based on intuitive experience that do not follow the guidelines of the business operation (e.g. the HMO, the hospital, etc.). Consequently, the schools which train these health care professionals for the workforce are no longer pressured to stress liberal, innovative, and intuitive thinking in their students, because it is not

demanded in the workplace.

In order to keep alive the liberal art aspects of health care, computer science, and good business practices, we should, in addition to instruction in technical skills, be providing students with the thinking skills to anticipate and prepare themselves for meaningful vocations and professions in tomorrow's world as well as today's.

### ***Regarding Specific Purpose Statements***

**Statement 3:** The rewording--"To enhance student development inside and outside the classroom."--was suggested because #s 1 and 2 mention neither student development nor classrooms.

**Statement 4:** Additional wording suggested--"To foster learning and advance knowledge through research . . ."

**Statement 5:** "I don't find it clear what public service you have in mind here. I assume, but perhaps I am wrong, that 'instructional program' in the mission means more than direct faculty-student instruction, and also means enlightening the general public or certain non-student parts of the general public. If that is the case, perhaps that should be clarified. No. 1 is serving the public, so no. 5 seems redundant unless it is pointed out how 'the public' in 5 differs from the recipients of the programs of instruction in 1."

#### **Statement 6:**

"It is not clear to me what no. 6 is all about beyond a collection of fashionable buzzwords. Where are these groups? In what ways are they diverse? Why should UCA be involved in their interaction and their mutual understanding? Why is it worthy that these groups, whatever they are, interact and understand each other? In what ways should UCA be involved? And global perspectives on what? Why global and not local or regional or national? What's wrong with the latter? Whose perspectives should be cultivated? And how at all does no. 6 contribute to the implementation of UCA's mission as stated in the mission statement? I see no connection at all. Frankly seems like hot air to me. Am I missing something? If you are referring to campus groups, isn't this subsumed under no. 3? If you are not referring to campus groups, why should UCA be involved?"

"On the global perspective clause and the response from a colleague: I believe the response suggests that 'global perspectives' needs more definition. Something like: To challenge students to see their own culture in a global context."

Another colleague spoke with me about this statement, suggesting that it really makes two claims. This colleague thinks that the first part--"To enhance interaction and understanding among diverse groups"--is an appropriate "social" agenda for the University but that the second part--"to cultivate global perspectives"--is a false curricular claim (he doesn't believe we actually do that).

Yet another response: "On the diversity issue: Why not spell out that 'the university will enhance interaction and understanding among the diverse racial, religious, and ethnic groups attending UCA

and cultivate global perspectives to prepare UCA students to solve problems in a very diverse and complicated multi-cultural world.' This way no one will get confused about the Chess Club and the Fraternities."

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## Statement of Mission & Purposes: Draft 2

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The following revision has been undertaken in response to campus comment on the first draft of the new statement of mission and purposes received between 4/26/1997 and 6/3/1997. (Use the appropriate link to review the [first draft](#) or the [commentary](#) on it or to view the response to this [second draft](#).) [Omitted here is the original invitation for further responses.]

### University of Central Arkansas: Statement of Mission and Purposes

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#### A Second Draft for Review and Comment, 1997

The University of Central Arkansas (UCA), a comprehensive university, seeks to deliver the best undergraduate education in Arkansas as well as excellent graduate programs in selected disciplines. The University offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal and fine arts, in the basic sciences, and in technical and professional fields in addition to its historical emphasis in the field of education. UCA strives to maintain the highest academic quality and to assure that its curriculum remains current and responsive to the needs of those it serves. The University's mission is expressed in its commitment to the personal, social, and intellectual growth of its students; its support for the advancement of knowledge; and its service to the community as a public institution.

The University implements its mission through its emphasis on certain central purposes:

1. To deliver excellent curricula in general education, in degree programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in continuing education.
2. To support its programs with personnel of the highest quality and with optimum resources and facilities.
3. To create a campus community that supports students in their personal, social, and intellectual growth.

4. To enhance interaction and understanding among diverse groups and to cultivate global perspectives.
  5. To foster learning and the advancement of knowledge through research and other scholarly and creative activities.
  6. To serve the public in ways appropriate to the mission and resources of the University.
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## UCA Mission & Purposes Statement: Response to Second Draft

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### Response Digest (6/4/97 through 6/23/97)

Most of the responses received this time have been general or have referred in one response to several different parts of the draft statement. For that reason, I have not actually "digested" the responses but offer them here more or less intact and in the order in which we have received them.

[Omitted here are the original instructions for submitting further responses to the draft statement.]

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"The new draft is right on target....Thanks to you and the committee for a job well done."

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This response was detailed and more extensive than others:

"I'm afraid I still don't see a very meaningful mission statement here.

"Let's consider the 1st paragraph.

"Sentence 1 is indeed a statement of mission: UCA seeks to .... I would ask why the best education in ARKANSAS? If you're being comparative, why limit to Arkansas? On the other hand, why be comparative? How about stating the absolute quality UCA seeks to attain? In any case, however you state it, this sentence says that UCA's mission is to deliver a damn good education. (One might and should argue whether education is *delivered*. And even more importantly, what education is. I'll leave that to others more eloquent than I.)

"Sentence 2 is a statement of what UCA offers. It is not a contribution to a statement of mission.

"Sentence 3 is again a statement of mission: In brief UCA strives to maintain academic quality and

assure a current and responsive curriculum.

"Taking sentences 1 and 3, then, what we have so far for mission is in essence to give a good education and and to maintain academic quality and assure a current and responsive curriculum. That's all that is stated. Is that what we want UCA's mission to be? Is that clear and well defined?"

"Sentence 4 is a statement of how UCA's mission is expressed in UCA's commitment to certain things. It itself is not a statement of mission. Let's see what UCA is committed to as an expression of its mission. Take personal, social, and intellectual growth of the students. I do not see how personal growth (whatever that is--does it include becoming taller?) or social growth have anything to do with the mission. On the other hand, intellectual growth and support for advancement of knowledge are indeed up the right alley. And service to the community? Referring to the mission again, it seems necessary to qualify 'service,' if it is to be included at all. Presumably it is an expression of the mission of giving a good education. So service would have to be educational service. Should service be part of the mission rather than an expression of it?"

"The six central purposes through which UCA implements its mission must be considered in light of what the mission is."

"1. OK.

"2. OK.

"3. What do personal and social growth have to do with the mission?"

"4. Not very clear to me what these have to do with education, since the mission statement doesn't define just what it means by education. There's still the issue of which groups and in what ways are they diverse. And there's still the question of why global and perspectives on what. This still seems like a collection of buzzwords.

"5. OK.

"6. Needs more thought. Anything UCA does in ways appropriate to the mission might be construed as implementing the mission. Should service be part of the mission rather than an implementation of it?"

"In general: Rethink just what is the mission, what expresses the mission, and what implements the mission. Be clear. Avoid empty buzzwords."

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"This second draft seems closer to the truth, more in line with previously published statements of mission and life as we know it at UCA. If I were an outsider, I might be concerned with the order of

purpose statements. The final sentence of the mission statement seems to reflect the traditional triad of faculty responsibilities (teaching, research, public service); in this context, 'advancement of knowledge' (a participatory activity involving both faculty and students?) seems to end up playing second fiddle to the personal and social growth of the students. That is, it winds up as a fifth purpose out of six. Or does the 'advancement of knowledge' clause pertain mainly to the faculty (showing that student development comes first)?

"The need for parallel structure between mission statement and purpose statements does get a bit sticky here, it seems."

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"I think the second draft of the mission statement looks good, clearly a quantum improvement over the first edition. My congratulations. The only issue which is not clear is who our 'customers' are; i.e. for whom do we toil? Maybe it is clear by implication, but it is always better to specify who your customer is or who you want them to be. Remember the three central questions: Who are we? What do we do? Who do we do it for?"

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"Overall I am very pleased with this version. I believe it is more clearly written than the first draft but also wider in scope.

"My only question is: do we need to say anything about how UCA will ensure that we are meeting our mission--how we will measure our progress?"

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"Must we use Arkansas institutions as the comparative standard for our undergraduate programs? Except for a loss of words, ('How many pages are required for this paper?'), why not just say excellent undergraduate and graduate programs?"

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"I like the format of the Mission Statement; that is, a very general and succinct statement of goals followed by a more specific list of implementation strategies. There does seem to be some darting back and forth between general and specific throughout the document. I agree that the 'best education in Arkansas' statement is too provincial, jingoistic, and it sets the wrong tone for the generalities to follow.

"I agree that 'research, scholarly and creative activities' needs to be higher on the list than #5. These activities involve faculty AND students.

"If to 'cultivate global perspectives' (now in #4) is a serious part of the Mission Statement, it needs to

be defined and explained more, in its own item, rather than being tacked onto another point.

"Thanks for requesting faculty input."

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[This is Jonathan Glenn's reply to part of an earlier comment.] "I wanted to say something about 'best undergraduate education in Arkansas.' I think it unfair to call the phrase 'jingoistic,' since it neither asserts a belligerent foreign policy nor expresses chauvinistic patriotism (not even metaphorically). Rather it indicates the immediate sphere in which we compete for 'bestness.' As such, the phrase intends, I suspect, to do a couple of things--to acknowledge UCA's role as a university supported by Arkansas state tax dollars and to be at once ambitious and realistic about the comparisons we set for ourselves. Whether or not we want to make comparisons at all may be another question entirely."

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