

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE

General University Policy  
(Final; Information)

GP.11.05 Proposed Statement on Unit Mission Statements

**BACKGROUND**

While advocacy for particular views, supported by evidence and argument, is a hallmark of academic freedom in research and teaching, this is a right of individuals. Academic units at public universities (colleges, departments, centers, programs, institutes, and so on) have a broader and more encompassing responsibility: while they might “advocate” for some issue or topic in the broad sense that by identifying it as a focus of study they consider it important, these units, as such, should not be organized around advancing specific views about those issues or topics. To do so would be inconsistent with the fundamental concept of free inquiry and institutional intellectual integrity.

**PROPOSED POLICY**

The purpose of a mission statement is twofold: for external purposes, to provide a concise description of an academic unit’s (college, department, center, program, institute, and so on) priorities and goals, and how they constitute a coherent and distinctive academic purpose that justifies the need for that unit (i.e., “Why do we exist?”).

For internal purposes, a mission statement should provide current or prospective members of that unit with a clear sense of how their work relates to the scope of issues and approaches suitable to that mission. There is a balance here between sufficient specificity to give the mission statement a distinctive character, and sufficient breadth to provide scholars within it a range of autonomy consistent with their individual academic freedom and the principles of free inquiry and intellectual integrity.

To this end, an academic unit mission statement should respect open-ended inquiry, debate, and diversity of views. Mission statements presupposing the unquestioned superiority of particular theories, doctrines, or “isms,” or based on assertions that prejudice or restrict the outcomes of free academic inquiry, are inconsistent with the above-mentioned principles, to which the University of Illinois is committed.

**GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICY**

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