

Mission, Vision, Values

Strategic plans – those that are meaningful, in any case – are grounded by an institution's guiding, foundational mission. Mission statements describe in clear, concise terms the institution's purpose and those it serves.

Often an institution will have other documents or guiding statements to complement or articulate aspects of its mission in greater detail.

There are a lot of examples and definitions out there. Let's look at each kind of statement in more detail, as we will consider them as part of our planning process at The University of Scranton:

- **Mission:** the institution's fundamental purpose and scope. A mission statement describes why the institution exists, those it serves, and what makes it unique.
- **Vision:** a compelling statement of an institution's intended direction, what it would like to achieve, and its hopes for the future. A vision statement is more changeable than a mission statement, often adapted, refreshed, or rewritten to coincide with each new strategic plan.
- **Values** – articulate core attributes of the institution, including expectations for how the institution behaves, interacts with those it serves, and the engagement of its members with one another.
- **Guiding Principles** – similar to statements of values, guiding principles may exist for the institution as a whole, or may be developed to outline expectations and ways of proceeding for particular aspects of its work. For example, an institution may have guiding principles for its planning or assessment processes, which outline expectations and standards for how related activities will be pursued. Such statements can then provide a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of that process.
- **Goals:** An institution's stated goals, usually articulated within its strategic plan, specify how the institution plans to accomplish this mission and achieve its vision for a particular period of time. Goals are specific, directional, and concrete – they describe specific things the institution wishes to do or achieve, often supported by more operational and measurable action steps for how it will be done.

Mission, vision, values and principles are often informed by broader commitments or traditions that the institution may be part of or called to support. For example,

- As a Catholic, Jesuit university, The University of Scranton's core purpose and ways of proceeding are guided by its commitment to the foundational principles of the

Society of Jesus. These include the Association of Jesuit Colleges and University's *Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities* and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.

- As an institution accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), the University must demonstrate that it meets all MSCHE Standards and requirements, which MSCHE expects to be done in a “mission-centric” manner – that the institution’s mission and goals remain the context through which the accreditation Standards are applied.
 - In addition, MSCHE has outlined four additional guiding principles for institutions to consider when describing how they meet MSCHE Standards: the centrality of the student experience; reflection on diversity, equity, and inclusion; emphasis on data and evidence-based decision making; and innovation as an essential part of continuous improvement.