

Final Report – Governing Ideas Task Force

SUNY Oneonta

Task Force Charge and Membership

The Governing Ideas Task Force was charged by SUNY Oneonta’s Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC) to draft the College’s Core Values, Mission, Vision, and Strategic Directions statements based on comments gathered from stakeholders meetings, open forums, and any comments submitted to it by members of the College community, and to prepare final drafts and report to SPARC.

Members of the Governing Ideas Task Force were as follows: Tracy Allen, Co-Chair, Associate Professor, Geography; Walter Wagor, Co-Chair, Dean of Behavioral and Applied Science; Joshua Frye, Assistant Professor, Communication Arts; Sunil Labroo, Associate Professor, Physics and Astronomy; Jeanne Miller, Associate Vice President for Student Development; Kim Muller, Director of Sponsored Programs; Ibram Rogers, Assistant Professor, History; Danielle Valenchis, Junior, Communication Studies major.

Defining Mission and Core Values

Mission: The Mission Statement explains the College’s purpose. A mission describes in broad terms our fundamental reasons for existence by describing who we are and what we do or seek to accomplish.

Core Values: Core values are foundational to the Mission. Core values are the fundamental principles that guide the College in accomplishing its mission, defining the common values of the College that provide the foundation for all activities.

Methodology

The mission statement and core values were drafted based upon feedback from the College community. The well thought-out suggestions and comments of approximately 300 of members of the campus community are manifest in these drafts. Comments were provided to the Task Force email site, to individual members, and at the forum facilitated by David McFarland. It was often the case that feedback from one person wholly opposed the feedback from another. To overcome contradictory statements, the Task Force favored feedback supported by the majority. To minimize controversial statements, the Task Force favored brevity

Mission: 30% of all feedback favored keeping the current College mission statement as written or with minor changes. 70% of all feedback favored creating a new mission statement. 78% of those that wanted a new mission statement liked the following draft, with changes: *The SUNY College at Oneonta is a community of learners and scholars that excels in educating students for successful careers, civic engagement, and well-rounded and fulfilling personal lives.* Some of the respondents felt that “scholars” was too exclusive; that “careers” diminished the broader intellectual values of higher education; and, that “well-rounded and fulfilling personal lives” was beyond the College’s control. There

were 24 popular key words or phrases that the campus felt should be in the newly revised mission statement. They were: scholarly, academic excellence, global, civic engagement, intellectual development, scholarship, stewardship, intellectual community, service, public good, learning community, community of learners, serves the public good, diversity, excels in educating students, international, professional, community, excellence in academics, global focus, engaged, dedicated to excellence, civic commitment, and learning. The new mission statement draft integrates these views.

Core Values: After receiving much feedback from the campus community on core values, the Governing Ideas Task Force created a list of 10 values with definitions. Fifteen additional core values were considered, but dismissed, based on lack of consensus and support. The early draft core values were:

- 1) **Inclusiveness:** Recruiting, welcoming, and supporting diverse peoples, ideas, identities, and cultures.
- 2) **Engagement:** Demonstrating and encouraging active citizenship, and college-community partnerships and learning through service and volunteerism.
- 3) **Teaching and Learning:** Maintaining a learning centered environment that facilitates collaboration and rigorous scholarship both in and out of the classroom; pursuing learning through discovery and interaction.
- 4) **Stewardship:** Tending and advancing campus fiscal, social, and physical resources; conserving and preserving natural resources by promoting sustainable development.
- 5) **Liberal Arts:** Honoring and facilitating the tradition of a well-rounded and transformational undergraduate education.
- 6) **Innovation:** Advancing knowledge through exploration, nurturing ideas, creativity and research; initiating new programs.
- 7) **Personal Attention:** Encouraging the development of students through mentoring and advising.
- 8) **Empowerment:** Providing opportunities for individual and community agency.
- 9) **Recognition:** Acknowledging the presence of and recognizing the contributions of all members of the campus community.
- 10) **Global Awareness:** Enriching the campus through interactions with our international students and encouraging and supporting international education.

The Governing Task Force led a college-wide open forum to discuss the 10 suggested core values and to identify any additional core values important to the campus community. Five additional values were identified: scholarship, community, connectedness, technology, and interdisciplinary. Forum participants voted on the core values that they would like to see institutionalized. Each participant cast two votes. The results were as follows, expressed in percent votes received: teaching and learning 16.5%, liberal arts 13.6%, global perspective 13.6%, scholarship 10.7%, inclusiveness 10.7%, stewardship 9.2%, community 9.2%, engagement 6.3%, innovation 2.9%, connectedness 2.4%, personal attention 1.9%, interdisciplinary 1.9%, empowerment .4%, recognition 0.0%, technology 0.0%.

By incorporating new feedback and combining values (i.e. teaching, learning, and scholarship) six principal core values emerged.

Final Draft Mission Statement from the Governing Ideas Task Force:

The SUNY College at Oneonta is an inclusive learning community, cultivating excellence in scholarship, civic engagement and global stewardship.

Final Draft Core Values Statement from the Governing Ideas Task Force:

Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship: Fostering a learning-centered environment that advances knowledge and facilitates collaboration and rigorous scholarship both in and out of the classroom.

Student Engagement: Encouraging active citizenship, service, and learning through curricular and co-curricular opportunities, college-community involvement, and volunteerism; promoting the development of students through support, mentoring, advising, and programming.

Liberal Arts Foundation: Honoring and facilitating the tradition of a well rounded and transformational undergraduate and pre-professional education.

Inclusive Community: Recruiting, welcoming, recognizing, and empowering diverse peoples, cultures, identities, perspectives, and ideas.

Global Connectedness: Promoting the development of global citizens.

Stewardship: Conserving and preserving natural resources by promoting sustainable development; nurturing and developing campus fiscal, social, and physical resources.