



# Mission Vision Values

A SHORT WORKBOOK  
TO HELP YOU LAY THE  
FOUNDATION FOR  
A PURPOSEFUL  
GROUP

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN METAPHOR

A strong foundation for your group is like...

THE STEERING WHEEL  
OF A PORSCHE 911

THE RUDDER OF A  
WOODEN SAILBOAT

THE HANDLEBARS OF A  
SCHWINN BANANA-  
SEAT BICYCLE WITH  
STREAMER HANDLES

Without it, no matter how much momentum or style you have,  
you'll eventually end up...

IN A WRECK

SUNK

IN A SMALLER BUT STILL  
SERIOUS WRECK  
INVOLVING  
RECONSTRUCTIVE  
DENTAL WORK

A strong foundation for your group includes a clear mission, a long-term vision, and a set of core values. Taken together, this “steering apparatus” guides the movement of your group, infusing events, group culture, and shared goals with its purposefully directed energy.

## Mission

describes the purpose of your group, and what your group does to achieve it.

## Vision

paints a motivational picture of the future, conveying what good things will be achieved by your group over time, and why it matters.

## Core Values

are the common principals which guide your group as it executes the mission. If a mission describes what you do, core values describe how you do it.

THIS NOTEBOOK WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY YOUR STEERING APPARATUS. QUITE OBVIOUSLY, YOU WILL NEED TO ACTUALLY USE THIS STEERING APPARATUS, TO AVOID THE DISASTROUS ENDS LISTED ABOVE

# three

REASONS TO  
DEVELOP  
YOUR

# Mission Vision

and

# Core Values

ON THE  
FRONTEND

## 1 Build common ground.

A strong foundation gives leaders and members common ground to build on.

The more specific the mission, the more

people will tailor their actions to support it. Communicating this foundation to all members is essential to a strong group; everyone involved should understand what the group is trying to accomplish, so they can find their own role in helping to achieve that larger purpose.

## 2

**Remind your group of the big picture.** Eventually, your group will have problems. Maybe not in the first semester, when all the founding leaders are bursting with shared ideas and enthusiasm, but over time visions fade against the reality of the hard work it takes to achieve them, and passion cools in the pull of competing interests like semesters abroad and Greek initiation.

In the hard times, when work is piling up or your grander purpose seems to be getting lost in the details, a strong foundation will remind you of the big picture, the larger goal your group is trying to achieve, and what inspired you to achieve it in the first place. When you're asking, "What are we doing here, and why?" a quick review of the foundations should set you back on track. A strong foundation, in writing, is a gift to your group's next generation of leaders. This foundation is a guiding light, pointing out the direction in which hard decisions should be made, resources allocated, and goals prioritized. The Constitution is a great example - it's over 200 years old, but still impacting the direction of a nation.

## 3

**Attract new members.** People want to belong to a group that stands for something. That's why people join the outdoor or drama club, and not just "club". By clarifying who you are and what you stand for, and enthusiastically communicating these points to potential members, you'll grow your membership with people who are excited about your mission and ready to participate



Genius is the  
ability to put  
into effect what  
is in your mind.



F. Scott Fitzgerald

# MUCH ADO ABOUT *Missions*

Match the following missions to the organizations that promote them, and then discuss the questions below with your group.

A mission is not something that's written once and abandoned to the shadowy footnote of your emails, never to be spoken of again.

A strong mission permeates your group. It's explicitly taught to new members, given center-stage as the intention of your events and strategic planning, and reviewed every year, at least. Strong, well-communicated missions unite the energies of your members around a common goal; weak or poorly communicated missions do little more than sound great while your members drift aimlessly.

Bringing sweet moments of \_\_\_\_\_ happiness to the world every day.

\_\_\_\_\_ is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. \_\_\_\_\_ also endeavors to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

TWITTER

IKEA

APPLE

HERSHEY'S

THE INTERNATIONAL  
RED CROSS

\_\_\_\_\_ is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?

To produce high-quality, low cost, easy to use products that incorporate high technology for the individual. We are proving that high technology does not have to be intimidating for noncomputer experts.

\_\_\_\_\_ mission is to offer a wide range of home furnishing items of good design and function, excellent quality and durability, at prices so low that the majority of people can afford to buy them

*one* Share one of your own experiences with one of these organizations. Was its mission conveyed at the ground level? How?

*two* Choose an organization that all your members are acquainted with and excited about (not necessarily from this list...) and look up its mission. What experiences have you had with this group that reflect the mission in action? How does it "walk the talk?"

*three* As a member or outsider of the organization you discussed in #2 (not a founder or employee), what about the mission and the way it's lived out excites you so much? How were you first introduced to the mission? What makes you want to go back to the organization for more?

# Ideas

## FOR WRITING A ROCK SOLID AND COMPELLING MISSION

The process of writing a mission is as valuable as the mission itself; it helps you clarify the reason for starting a new group, or reinvigorate the purpose of an older one.

If your group is just getting started, go through this process with your founding team. You'll be able to build the framework for your group together and get on exactly the same page about your purpose. If your group has been around awhile, working either without a mission (aaah!) or with an outdated one, then assemble a team of active members to participate. Typically, enthusiasm and support for a mission is increased when the members actively participate in creating it.

**As you go through the mission-writing process, keep the points to the right in mind to make sure you are staying on track. There isn't One Best Way to write a mission, but the following activities have been helpful for others, and can be adapted to the size of your group and needs of your situation.**

### ONE

Create a verbal image of your mission by brainstorming the following questions with your group:

Why are we founding this group? Or, why do we exist?  
What role does this group play in our community, and in regard to our greater purpose?  
How does this group enrich lives, contribute to success, and benefit the world by our existence?

### TWO

Turn this verbal picture into written statements. Ask each member or brainstorming team to write a draft or two of a mission independently. This can be done in 10 minutes in a group meeting if you're short on time, or between meetings. Share these ideas. Look for common points, and combine the favorite parts of each mission into a few comprehensive drafts.

### THREE

Get feedback. Share your mission with people outside of your group, to make sure it's clear, memorable, and inspiring. Revise as necessary, until you have a mission that you'd be proud to see on the first page of a newspaper (just a way to make sure you have a winner!).

## GREAT MISSION STATEMENTS SHARE THREE QUALITIES

- 1 They explain the organization's reason for existing.
- 2 They're short and memorable. A mission summarizes the essence of an organization in a statement that's free of jargon.
- 3 They resonate with the members of your group, generating motivation, inspiration, and commitment.

### FOUR

If you are truly desperate, you can use the fill-in method to at least get something down on paper. It goes like this: The mission of (Organization Name) is to (verb) the (population served) of (location) through (core services).\*

\*<http://www.suite101.com/content/writing-a-mission-statement-a9238>

Here's an example from Amazon:

Our vision is to be earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

The Amazon vision statement doesn't dictate strategy, or how to achieve that vision; that's up to the individual departments. What it does do is point out a common goal, empowering group members to develop the best strategies for achieving the same common purpose.

Here's an example from WISER, the Women's Institute for Secondary Education and Research, a non-profit NGO building the first girls' boarding school and research center in Muhuru Bay, Kenya:

WISER's vision is to create a replicable model for ending the cycle of gender disparity in education, health and community leadership in the global south.

In the Muhuru Bay community, only 5% of girls finish high school. The district in which this community is situated has the highest AIDS prevalence rate in Kenya. Despite inconsistent conditions, the vision of WISER stays the same, painting a picture of the future they're working towards.

When there are significant changes or challenges in your own group, a common vision is the "ultimate goal" that remains consistent. This vision helps your group stay focused on the big picture, regardless of organizational shifts, unanticipated external events, or the surprises life brings.

Good vision statements can describe a future picture of your group itself, or of the community in which your group operates. Many service groups write visions about the way their community will look when the group's mission has been fulfilled. For example, an early childhood education center may write:

Our vision is a community in which every child enters school with a foundation of skills for classroom success.

# DO YOU HAVE A Vision?

A vision is your group's picture of the future you plan to create together. It describes what you hope to become, or the "destination of your journey," pointing out the direction for your group to move and grow in.

“

A Vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more.

”

**Rosabeth Moss Kanter**

## Effective Vision Statements:

- ★ Challenge the group, without being overwhelming
- ★ Describe the shared goal of participating members
- ★ Explain how individuals, the community, or the world is better off for your existence.
- ★ Inspire, motivate, and excite.

# PUT ON YOUR *rose-colored* GLASSES

Set aside some time for a creative “dream-storming” session. While vision statements are based in reality, they are not describing reality as you know it. Your vision is the picture of the world you’re co-creating; encourage imagination and confidence in the creative power of what your group can accomplish by working together.

Prompts for dream-storming include:

- ❁ What would a world that no longer needed your group look like? (particularly useful for service-oriented groups)
- ❁ In five years, what accomplishment would you be most happy to hear that this group achieved?
- ❁ Turn up the heat—what will your group accomplish in the next five years?
- ❁ What unique contribution is your group providing the campus and community, beyond events?

Matching the imaginative energy of a vision statement, these questions can be answered in the form of a creative project. Members can work together in small teams, to design a prototype of one of the following vision-inducing projects. (Just a reminder...a prototype is supposed to be messy. Short timelines, such as twenty minutes to complete the project, encourage people to think fast, get their ideas down on paper, and avoid stressing out about perfection.)

Have each team present their prototype, looking for the common points in the imagined futures of your group. Does a picture of your vision emerge? Are there divergent points of view to discuss?

Write down a skeleton of your vision, and play with various combinations of ideas and words. When you have a draft that feels right, ask, Does this vision inspire, motivate, and excite us?

If the answer is yes, congratulations, you’ve found your vision!

❁ Write a feature article for the Whitman alumni magazine about a special accomplishment of your group. What is the accomplishment? Who was involved? What was its impact? How does the reporter describe your group?


❁ Create an award for your group. What is the award? Who gave it to your group? What is it in honor of? The award ceremony keynote lists three reasons why your group was the recipient of this honor—what are they?

❁ Create a scrapbook of images from five years of your group’s history. What significant events are in this book? Why do they best represent what your group is, does, and contributes?

WHAT  
ARE  
YOUR

# Core Values?

A shared set of core values encourages group members to be proactive by norming a standard of what's acceptable and expected. Group members are empowered to make decisions based on these shared understandings, knowing that their decisions are guided by common principles.



You tune all pianos to the same tuning fork and they are tuned to each other. You don't tune one piano from another.

**Paul Hawkins**

Core values are a group's guiding principles of behavior through time. Very much the "soul" of a group, core values are doable ideals which influence the actions of group members, provide a compass for decision making, and define the culture that permeates a group.

## Case Study

The core values of Patagonia, the well-known outdoor company, include:

- ❁ Quality: Pursuit of ever-greater quality in everything we do.
- ❁ Integrity: Relationships built on integrity and respect.
- ❁ Environmentalism: Serve as a catalyst for personal and corporate action.
- ❁ Not Bound by Convention: Our success – and much of the fun – lies in developing innovative ways to do things.

In 1970, they discovered that pitons, their best-selling rock-climbing hardware, were damaging the rock face in several popular climbs. Looking to their values for guidance, they opted to phase out the product, even asking customers to discontinue their use. Since Patagonia also values not being "bound by convention," they quickly refocused their energies to invent a new product to replace the pitons, starting the trend for "clean" climbing.

These core values guide the spirit in which the work at Patagonia is done, and are expressed through every branch of their company. After hiring an outside company to research the environmental impact of their materials, they committed to using 100% organic cotton over a period of several years. In an effort to keep relationships open and non-hierarchical, there are no private offices. Employees have flex-time which allows for surfing or other personal pursuits, workers in off-shore factories are paid a living wage and given access to education opportunities, and on occasion, Patagonia will even post bail for employees who were jailed for non-violent civil disobedience in environmental activism.

## *your turn...*

For core values to be truly “core,” they need to represent the shared standards of your group members. Like at Patagonia, these core values determine the way that you “walk,” not just “talk,” both when it’s convenient and when it’s not. So, it’s important to choose values you can commit to fully.

### To Write Core Values:

Ideally, the founding members of a new club will generate a first version of core values before establishing a new group, so the values can help guide the formation of the group from day one. If an established group has been operating without core values, this process can be done in partnership with the members.

- 1 Ensure that all participants understand the purpose of core values. Perhaps discuss the example above, or look into the core values of other organizations that members admire. Depending on the size of your participant group, each person could bring in one example of core values to discuss.
- 2 Ask each member to independently generate a list of five to eight possible core values to use as a starting place.
- 3 In a workshop setting, ask members to share their values. Look for common ground. What values seem to be the most “core”?

**A** Generate a list of possible core values for your group from this pool of ideas. If the group is small enough, you may be able to do this together. If not, ask each participant to post their independently-generated lists on a wall, so they can be used as inspiration, and then delegate each small team one value to craft relating to one of the common themes that emerged in the discussion.

**B** After a predetermined time, review the proposed core values. Does this list represent all the key functions of your group? Does it give enough specific guidance on how your members will relate to each other, make decisions, and guide their actions?

When you think your list is looking good, take it up a step. Review your ideas for core values in light of these challenging questions.

They’re intentionally provocative, to help you weed out values that are superfluous, or aren’t truly core to your group:

- 1 If someone did not share this value, should they not belong to your group?
- 2 Would you leave this group before giving up this core value?
- 3 Is this a value you’d like the group to be holding in ten years, regardless of whatever changes happen on campus?\*

\* Adapted from

<http://www.jimcollins.com/tools/vision-framework.pdf>

At this point, the remaining list should be comprised of core values. Take some time to think it over, and make revisions as they come up.

As the final step of the Mission-Vision-Values process, every participant is required to go to the Reid café for ice cream, as a group. Research shows that this final step is the most significant. The goodwill and shared experience of a communal sugar-high basically guarantees you a smashing group success.



# A Concise List of Resources

FOR YOUR RESEARCH INTO WRITING

## Amazing and Inspirational

MISSION, VISION & VALUES STATEMENTS

### RESIDENT EXPERTS

Leann Adams,  
Assistant Director of Student Activities  
adamsle@whitman.edu

Leann facilitates workshops on designing effective missions, visions, and values, and is happy to consult with student groups that are interested in revising or updating their existing foundation as well.

### Just in case you're curious, here's the mission for Whitman College:

Whitman College is committed to providing an excellent, well-rounded liberal arts and sciences undergraduate education. It is an independent, nonsectarian, and residential college. Whitman offers an ideal setting for rigorous learning and scholarship and encourages creativity, character, and responsibility.

Through the study of humanities, arts, and social and natural sciences, Whitman's students develop capacities to analyze, interpret, criticize, communicate, and engage. A concentration on basic disciplines, in combination with a supportive residential life program that encourages personal and social development, is intended to foster intellectual vitality, confidence, leadership, and the flexibility to succeed in a changing technological, multicultural world.

### CREATIVE INSPIRATION

#### *Zappos*

Zappos places such high value on their core values that they dedicate a month-long training, required for every single new employee, to it. You can read about it in the following blog post: <http://blogs.zappos.com/blogs/ceo-and-coo-blog/2009/01/03/your-culture-is-your-brand>

#### *Pike Place Fish*

The founding story is located under the "about" tab, and describes how the core values and mission of the company were designed. This small retail outlet is worth a visit, if you end up passing through Seattle. You'll be quite entertained by seeing their mission and values in action.  
[www.pikeplacefish.com](http://www.pikeplacefish.com)

*Whole Foods Market*  
[www.wholefoodsmarket.com/company/corevalues.php](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/company/corevalues.php)