

## Standard One: Mission and Purposes

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### **Description:**

#### ***Institutional Mission, Vision and Purposes***

The Urban College of Boston (UCB) fulfills a unique mission among the many fine educational institutions of greater Boston. The vision of the Urban College founders was to provide affordable access to higher education and paths toward professional advancement to individuals for whom these life-changing opportunities would not otherwise normally be available. Urban College's roots are firmly planted in the ideas and reality of social and economic justice. The College evolved from the vision of President Johnson's War on Poverty program in 1964 and continues to help people realize their dreams in 2006.

#### **Urban College of Boston Mission Statement**

*The Urban College of Boston was established to provide post-secondary education and professional mobility to members of the urban community who have been traditionally under-served by higher education.*

*The Urban College of Boston is committed to the belief that access to career-related and quality liberal arts education, and to an accompanying system of comprehensive student support, results in the professional and personal success of those who might otherwise remain unemployed, under-employed and unfulfilled.*

*Programs of study at the Urban College enrich lives through an integrated and individualized approach to the acquisition of learning and career skills, and to knowledge of today's world and workplace. Students are asked to apply acquired skills and knowledge in "hands-on" situations, with internship and study opportunities furnished by the diverse cultural, educational, and business resources of the city of Boston and the organizations of the Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. network.*

*The Urban College of Boston faculty understands the collective and individual needs of post-secondary learners of all ages, drawing upon the life experiences of their students to make education relevant and timely. A supportive environment and the availability of helpful services unique to the Urban College assist students to move forward on the path to personal fulfillment, while empowering them to manage responsibly their own progress and achievement.*

*The purposes of the Urban College of Boston are far-reaching, extending well beyond the threshold of the Urban College campus. Our graduates, newly empowered as educated citizens, will enjoy more satisfying and productive lives. Equally significant, they will be prepared for the responsibility of contributing to the betterment of their communities and the well-being of their neighbors. Thus, the Urban College mission purposefully addresses the spectrum of urban issues and needs by ensuring the educational advancement and personal growth of its students.*

**Adopted by UCB Board of Trustees, December 12, 1994**

This mission statement is published in the *Urban College of Boston Catalog* and on the College website, as well as in the student, faculty and staff handbooks.

The mission expands the corporation charter, which states as its purposes:

- *To operate an institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with the authority to grant to students properly accredited and recommended by its faculty, the following degrees – Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education, Associate of Arts in Human Services Administration, and Associate of Arts in General Studies and to offer any and all courses relating or incidental thereto;*
- *To identify, encourage and support persons whose access to higher education opportunities have been limited by poverty and other barriers; and*
- *To develop and provide academic programs and support services which increase an individual's access to higher education.*

Urban College's mission and purposes address the needs of society through its programs of study which were realistically designed to provide opportunity for *...the professional and personal success of those who might otherwise remain unemployed, under-employed and unfulfilled...* and to extend the mission beyond the classroom by expecting that students *...be prepared for the responsibility of contributing to the betterment of their communities and the well-being of their neighbors.* The College is mindful of its public duty while maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. This is not surprising since the Urban College of Boston was founded by the largest antipoverty agency in the nation, Action for Boston Community Development, Inc., one of the original local organizations designated to implement the War on Poverty.

The mission of the College informs UCB's planning and resource allocations. The clarity of Urban College's mission and purposes readily guides the institution in making choices among alternatives in program development. For example, the College has made conscious decisions:

- To offer Certificates of Achievement designed to help students reach their career goals while pursuing their degrees;
- To provide significant support services to its students (e.g. Learning-Styles assessment, courses offered in Cantonese and Spanish, Learning Resource Center) at the expense of some traditional college amenities;
- To remain in its original downtown location, at a transportation hub and recruit students from Boston's inner-city neighborhoods;

- To maintain the strong partnership with ABCD's Head Start agencies (See Standard Four: Academic Programs.); and
- To continue to serve working adults by scheduling classes and services in the evening hours.

## **Appraisal**

The Urban College of Boston's mission is the institution's guiding strength. Its distinctive mission permeates every aspect of college life; it attracts students, motivates faculty, informs all planning, operation and evaluation and unites all members of the College community.

Urban College advances its mission through its programs and activities by:

- Designing curricular offerings based on community needs;
- Guiding expectations for student learning; and
- Informing specific objectives for each division.

Over the years, outside observers have repeatedly recognized the unique mission and character of Urban College:

- Urban College of Boston was cited as a *...nationally important model in providing educational opportunities for low income minority residents...* (Arthur L. Levine, President, Teachers College – Columbia University.)
- *Urban College is unique in its substantial increase in enrollment and development of programs for culturally diverse newcomer populations.* (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services Study, 2001)
- *Urban College has established itself as a new alternative – The People's College of urban Boston. With its recently achieved regional accreditation, Urban is well positioned to act as a racially and ethnically diverse feeder school to major four-year colleges and universities across Boston.* (Martin James and James E. Samels. "Enrollments Winners, Losers, Turnarounds and New Players." *Connection*. New England Board of Higher Education, Spring 2002).

## ***Institutional Effectiveness***

The Urban College of Boston reviews its mission and purposes on a regular basis to assure that they evolve as the institution changes. During the most recent Strategic Planning Retreat on September 16, 2005, all participants (trustees, administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community leaders) discussed the mission. The consensus was that the original mission continues to be as relevant today as it was in 1993 and is one of the institution's greatest strengths.

All participants at the retreat agreed that there is no need to change the character and substance of the College's mission and purposes at this time. Based on parameters such as institutional growth, retention rate, student and alumni feedback, the College has determined that the stated mission and purposes are meaningful and effective in providing overall direction in planning and resource allocation.

In 2005, Urban College conducted a *Standards Audit* and *Community Survey* to evaluate institutional effectiveness. (See Exhibit 12.04: *Community Research Data*.) Both the *Audit* and the *Community Survey* results strongly support the College's mission and purposes. Eighty-eight (88) percent of the total *Community Survey* sample (N=169), including alumni, current students, administration, staff and faculty members, felt that *UCB is effective in providing a college education to members of the urban community who have been traditionally underserved by higher education*; 91 percent responded that the *Urban College of Boston's academic programs help students advance in their careers*.

Specific elements of UCB's mission and purposes were rated by the college community as being effective: 86 percent responded that *Urban College provides comprehensive student support*; 81 percent agreed that *UCB addresses a spectrum of urban issues and needs by ensuring the educational advancement and personal growth of its students*.

Most indicative, 90 percent of the total sample reported that *Urban College demonstrates great strength in its mission*, one of the strongest responses of all the standards queried for institutional effectiveness.

Urban College is committed to the systematic assessment of the institution's effectiveness in carrying out its mission and purposes and does so by developing strategic plans and the implementation of the goals and objectives set forth in the *2005 Strategic Plan*. In addition, the College assesses program and course offerings routinely through the Curriculum Advisory Committee.

The Urban College of Boston's mission and purposes are well understood and regarded, both internally and in the wider Boston and education community. Standard One is an area of solid strength for the institution.

## **Projection**

- The College will continue to review its mission on a regular basis. As one of the areas of greatest strength for the institution, there are no current plans to change the substance of the Urban College of Boston mission and purposes. The strength and distinctiveness of the original mission, captured very well in the initial mission statement are still as valid in 2005 as they were in 1993.
- The College will continue to respond to changes in the socio-demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods it serves. In response to these changes, the College has and will continue to develop:

- New programs based on community needs;
  - New course offerings (e.g. English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) and developmental English);
  - Expanded student support (e.g. advising, tutoring, counseling); and
  - Expanded career services.
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- Consistent with the mission, Urban College will continue to strengthen its partnerships with community, regional and state organizations that can contribute to achieving the purposes of the College.
  
  - The College will strengthen institutional research that allows the College to better assess the quality of its academic offerings and service to the student population. The results will be disseminated to the Board and other planning bodies in order to determine the institution's effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.
  
  - The College will continue its commitment to a diverse student body that reflects Boston's diverse urban population.
  
  - The College will continue to assess its physical plant and educational facilities to ensure that as growth; location will continue to be major consideration.

