

***Mission Statement Creation and Dissemination in Service Organizations:
Reaching All Employees to Provide Unified Organizational Direction***

Julie L. G. Walker

[*julie.louceil.walker@gmail.com*](mailto:julie.louceil.walker@gmail.com)

Adjunct Instructor

Georgia Northwestern Technical College

Rome, GA

ABSTRACT

Scholars extol the virtues of crafting effective mission statements and the importance of its frequent communication. Especially in nonprofit business settings, mission statements can be an important way to provide goals and purpose for an organization's staff. Creating and conveying mission statements to unify a staff whose tasks span a broad range is a difficult but important part of visionary leadership. This study explored mission statement dissemination at a university to understand its impact on staff whose tasks included limited academic work with students. Analysis of questionnaires found nonacademic staff members were not exposed to the mission statement often and were not able to connect the statement to their daily tasks. .

Nearly every large organization and business has some type of mission statement available on its website or in some part of its publications. Nonprofit organizations are required by the Internal Revenue Service to create mission statements to complete their applications for their 501(c)(3) tax status. Whether in for-profit or nonprofit business settings, scholars extol the virtues of crafting a well written mission statement (Bart, and Baetz, 1997; Blair-Loy, Wharton, and Goodstein, 2011; Williams, 2008). Mission statements are utilized for a variety of reasons in a variety of organizations, but mission statements are highlighted by scholars as being management tools. Leaders can use mission statements to guide the overall direction of an organization toward common goals.

A mission statement can be a powerful leadership tool, but its usefulness depends on a number of factors. Falsey (1989) described a mission statement as telling "two things about a company: who [the company] is and what [the company] does" (p. 3). Williams (2008) suggested the intended audience of a mission statement should move beyond individuals within the organization to focus also on external stakeholders such as clients and the community in which the organization is located. She went on to assert that a mission statement should indicate the direction for future progress and how to get there, an organization's "priorities, values, and beliefs" (p. 96), as well as what makes an organization complete. Moore (2000) suggested mission statements in nonprofit organizations took the place of what he considered the overarching purpose of for-profit organizations. Moore argued for-profit organizations ultimately seek to maximize profits for stakeholders. He went on to point out that nonprofit organizations

do not seek profits and therefore do not have the same clarity in organizational purpose without a well-crafted mission statement. For a mission statement to be a guiding principle, it must be communicated frequently to employees and stakeholders in a way that meaningfully integrates the vision of organizational leaders to the actual daily activities of the employees.

Mission statements can potentially impact organizational effectiveness, but research suggested the mission statements' wordings, content, and dissemination impact their overall ability to reach employees (Bart, 2001; Blair-Loy, Wharton, and Goodstein, 2011; Sattari, Pitt, and Caruana, 2011). For organizations like hospitals and universities, where employees' tasks span a large range of duties, mission statements can be difficult to craft in a way that communicates organizational goal relevance to all staff members. The remainder of this article will explore mission statement dissemination within a nonprofit service organization to explore how segments of employees interact with the seemingly important leadership tool. The study was designed to understand how mission statement wording and dissemination effects employees' ability incorporate the content of the mission statement into their daily tasks.

The organization in which the study was conducted is a midsized, four-year state university located in the Midwest. The mission statement, posted on the university's website, was crafted by a group of university administrators which included the university president, the divisional vice presidents, the college deans, the program directors, and the executive committee of the faculty association. To maintain the university's anonymity, the full mission statement will not be included in this article. However, major themes of the university's mission statement included encouraging learning, engaging in research, and connections outside the university. Further justification for the organizational choice will be explored in the method section. Before delving into the analysis, it is important to explore the current base of research regarding mission statement components and communication.

Literature Review

Mission statements require consideration and care to fully reach their potential value. Though seemingly simple and often short, mission statements often are the product of great deliberation. Research from communication, management, leadership, and nonprofit organization scholars highlighted important considerations for mission statement creation and dissemination. The following sections provide overviews of research relevant to the concepts focused upon for the present study. These areas include explanation of the mission statement as a means of visionary leadership, mission statement dissemination, and specific mission statement considerations in the university setting.

Mission Statements as Management and Leadership Tools

Many definitions of mission statements have been offered by scholars, and from those definitions a number of themes emerged. Management scholar Sidhu (2003) compiled definitions

of what mission statements are or should be. Definitions included concepts such as defining the beliefs, principles, and fundamental character of the organization; what made the organization unique; the organization's position in the market; employee behavioral standards; and the long term vision of the organization. In essence, he found a mission statement should be seen as a communicative management tool. Desmidt and Prinzie (2008) described mission statements as ideally encompassing both a statement of organizational character and a goal guiding the daily activities of those within the organization. They suggested it was also a statement to those outside the organization about what the organization values. As Morphey and Hartley (2006) pointed out, the "mission statement...is rightly understood as an artifact of a broader institutional discussion about its purpose" (p. 457). Thus, a mission statement should be defined as describing to internal and external stakeholders the organization's current character while providing a unifying direction for the future of the organization.

Creating and communicating a unifying goal is vitally important to acting as a visionary leader. Eisenberg, Goodall Jr., and Trethewey (2010) described vision as "a credible and compelling view of the future" (p. 256). They went on to explain that leaders create a visionary statement "to communicate that future clearly and creatively to disparate others" (p. 256). Zenger, Folkman, and Edinger (2009) described how a well written visionary statement "enables all individuals to be engaged in day-to-day activities with a clear sense of direction and purpose, knowing how what they do fits into the big picture" (p. 20). Visionary leaders picture a future for the organization and work to achieve that goal, at least in part, through carefully crafting messages. Zenger, Folkman, and Edinger argued crafting a clear a mission statement is not enough. Consistent communication of the mission statement must take place "because in the whirlwind of daily activities, things are said and done that appear at worst to contradict or at best to be disconnected from the avowed strategy" (p. 20). Gow (2009) argued a mission statement should be able to link "actions and thoughts, practices and policies, back to [the organization's] essential purpose" (para. 9). Thus, to realize the benefits of a mission statement, the mission statement must be carefully crafted by visionary leaders and must be communicated frequently to remain central to the daily tasks of organization members.

Mission Statement Dissemination

When considering how to communicate the mission statement to internal and external constituents, administrators should consider potential communication channels and the implications of using specific channels. Trevino, Lengel, and Daft (1987) described how choosing a medium correctly for a message requires recognizing "a) the ambiguity of the message, b) the symbolic cues conveyed by the medium itself, and c) situational constraints on symbol processing" (p. 556). Mission statement content should be carefully crafted so as to not require a great deal of explanation. Clear mission statement composition allows greater freedom for which channels administrators choose to communicate the mission statement to stakeholders.

The cues conveyed by the media themselves, however, should be considered when deciding how to communicate the mission statement to employees.

Mission statement dissemination, or the communication of the mission statement to organization members, could take place through a variety of channels, but the symbolic cues conveyed by the medium should be considered. While channel choice may seem like common sense, Trevino, Lengel, and Daft (1987) pointed out “lower performing managers select media for communications without considering the requirements of the message” (p. 554). Posting a mission statement on a bulletin board, for instance, most likely would not indicate a specific recipient. Doing so could convey the message that the mission statement was not directed specifically at any given employee, therefore conveying less individual importance. Email, and more specifically the email signature, may be a better way to communicate the mission statement as Abernathy (1999) described how an email signature can reinforce an organization’s identity with minimal effort on the part of those who include it. The email signature, a message included for many individuals in daily communication, could be a simple way to frequently communicate the importance of the mission statement. Additionally, face-to-face communication media such as individual conversations or staff meetings indicated more importance than departmental memos.

Modaff, DeWine, and Butler (2008) explored many types of communication technology in the workplace in an effort to create criteria for selecting mediated communication. “Word processing, email, Internet, voice mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, instant messaging, online training, videoconferencing, and virtual reality” (p. 281) were all included as potential mediated communication channels to disperse communication throughout an organization. Their criteria for selecting mediated types of communication include social presence and media richness. Modaff, DeWine, and Butler defined social presence as the ability to convey “characteristics such as warmth, personalness, and sensitivity” (p. 289). They described media richness as feedback ability and speed, language formality, structure, and variety, and vocal and facial expression abilities. These types of considerations should be made when considering how to convey the mission statement’s importance during day-to-day operations.

Before daily mission statement communication can occur and make sense, the mission statement must be introduced to the organization member. This initial introduction can take place before even entering the organization. Miller (2006) described the phases of organizational socialization as anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis. The anticipatory stage takes place before even entering the organization, so dissemination of the mission statement in the anticipatory stage would be through advertisements, public announcements, and the organization’s website. Deliberately communicating the messages about the mission statement to the public can be an effective recruitment tool. The encounter stage begins during the hiring process when the individual has direct contact with organization members and begins comparing expectations created during the anticipatory stage with actual experiences. These experiences include the interview process and initial training experiences, leading to understanding the organization’s direction and the organizational culture, both of which should be contained in the

mission statement. Mission statement communication during assimilation is important to informing employees about how their daily tasks tie into the overall character and direction of the organization. Doing so sets the tone from the beginning that their daily tasks are valuable and necessary, while at the same time showing them how they fit into the overall organizational structure.

Mission Statements in Universities

While the definitions and explanations were thus far primarily drawn from for-profit organization research, nonprofit organizations such as universities also utilize mission statements. Scholars differ on the value of mission statements, but even the most cynical scholars agree that mission statements serve at the very least a normative purpose. Education scholars Morphey and Hartley (2006) suggested every postsecondary educational institution should have a mission statement to take advantage of two benefits: instructing employees and creating a sense of shared purpose. They argued the mission statement conveyed acceptable work behaviors, but that it should also “communicate [the organization’s] characteristics, values, and history to key external constituents” (p. 457). Focusing a mission statement on external constituents was found to be one way students and parents evaluated the potential educational institutions. However, Taylor and Morphey (2010) found that “the communicative patterns of baccalaureate colleges are both vague and idiosyncratic” (p. 499). In 2010, Taylor and Morphey compared the mission statements featured on the *U.S. News and World Report’s* website describing the top colleges in the United States to those found in the colleges’ literature. They found mission statements were often changed or completely rewritten for the *U.S. News and World Report* by college administrators in an effort to market to prospective students. University officials re-focused the mission statements primarily for recruitment possibilities.

Focusing mission statements on academic goals for recruitment purposes was a phenomenon found not only in the *U. S. News and World Report*, but one occurring as a trend in university mission statements in general. A quick perusal of post-secondary educational institution mission statements showed how college and university mission statements focus on student related learning outcomes and producing academic research. For example, Harvard University Dean Harry Lewis (1997) proclaimed the university’s undergraduate college mission statement: “Harvard strives to create knowledge, to open the minds of students to that knowledge, and to enable students to take best advantage of their educational opportunities” (para. 3). The University of Alabama’s website (n.d.) hosted its mission statement, “to advance the intellectual and social condition of the people of the State through quality programs of teaching, research, and service” (para. 1). Mission statements focusing solely on the work done on the academic side of universities may draw in potential students; they may also alienate employees whose academic contact with students is limited or nonexistent.

How is a member of the janitorial, food service, grounds keeping, or dormitory staff, each of whom play a vital role in maintaining the infrastructure necessary for a university to function,

affected by a student-outcome centered mission statement? Recruitment practices are important for universities, but the mission statement's content should direct and unify all members of university staff work together toward a common goal. This leads to the research question:

RQ: Does an academically focused mission statement impact the daily tasks of university employees whose work does not include direct academic student contact?

Careful methodology is necessary to thoroughly answer a research question. Only through deliberate data collection can analysis take place. Therefore the methodology utilized for the study will be explained in the following section.

Method

Organizational selection was the first step toward answering the research question. Important criteria for organizational selection included a clearly declared mission statement and some method for contacting groups of employees who shared related job tasks. The organization selected was a midsized Midwestern state university. It was selected because its mission statement was easily found on the organization's website and because the organization hosted several union and bargaining groups which divided employees by task responsibilities.

Upon receiving permission to contact employees regarding the study, the researcher informally analyzed the organization's mission statement. Three major themes emerged from the brief statement: encouraging learning, engaging in research, and connections outside the university. The mission statement wording established clear direction for members of the teaching staff working academically with students because at least the very least "encouraging learning" is a part of daily teaching duties. However the mission statement's language did not directly include the work of operations staff such as grounds keepers, food service workers, janitorial staff, or administrative staff, such as administrative assistants. All employees are needed for the university to function, but nonacademic staff members play a vital role in maintaining daily university operations. Tenuous connections could be drawn between the mission statement and the daily activities of nonacademic staff, but on its face the language did not seem to include all staff members.

To determine mission statement dissemination trends at the organization, an online questionnaire was created and distributed. The questionnaire explored initial as well as mundane exposure to the mission statement, sought to discover the channels through which the mission statement was disseminated, and questioned employees' perceptions about the mission statement's applicability to their daily tasks. A 13 question survey combining quantitative and qualitative inquiries was created and distributed via Google Documents to university employees in two employee groups. The questions have been included in Appendix A, though they have been altered slightly to protect the anonymity of the organization being analyzed. The groups will be called A and B for the remainder of the report. Group A was comprised of clerical,

maintenance, and technical support employees. Group B was comprised of service and administrative faculty. Data was gathered from 42 participants using an online survey combining qualitative and quantitative questions. Participants were evenly split between groups A and B (21 participants from each group).

Results

Survey results revealed three major categories important to answering the research question: employee knowledge of the mission statement, connection of the mission statement to daily tasks, and mission statement dissemination. The following sections disclose subjects' responses to the survey questions. Because subjects were not required to answer all questions, some results will include the percentages of subjects who chose to not respond.

Knowledge of the University Mission Statement

Knowledge of the university mission statement is a necessary first step to understanding how it applies to daily tasks. When asked to record the mission statement in their own words, 69 percent of employees shared some version of the mission statement, 10 percent admitted not knowing the mission statement, and 21 percent did not answer the question. Of those who did not answer the question, 78 percent were from group A and only 12 percent were from group B. One response repeated verbatim the university's mission statement, indicating either strong awareness of the mission statement or that the subject located the mission statement rather than putting it into his or her own words. Analysis of the subjects' responses whose answers put forward their own version of the mission statement revealed several major themes. Major themes included learning in general or specifically learning done by students, connections outside the university, and preparing students for the future. Table 1 illustrates the full list of themes prevalent in employee answers.

Connection of Mission Statement to Daily Task Completion

Recognizing how much importance the mission statement has to employees' daily tasks was another important data category. When rating how important they personally found the mission statement to be regarding completing their daily tasks, 21 percent of employees indicated it did not affect completion of their daily tasks, while 31 percent found it somewhat important, 36 percent found it important, and 10 percent said it affected almost all daily tasks (2 percent of subjects did not respond to the question). Subjects were also asked how often they considered the mission statement and its importance on their work; almost two thirds responded they rarely considered its importance (29 percent never considered it and 33 percent considered it only once per year). The remaining responses indicated 14 percent considered it monthly, 10

percent considered it weekly, and 12 percent considered it daily (2 percent did not respond to the question).

Perspective on a factor possibly impacting the evaluations of personal importance may be given by considering subjects' perceptions of the importance their supervisors placed on the mission statement. Only 7 percent of subjects perceived their supervisor to view the mission statement as affecting almost all daily tasks; 10 percent perceived the supervisor didn't have an opinion on the mission statement, 5 percent perceived it did not impact daily tasks, 31 percent said it was somewhat important, and 45 percent said it was important (2 percent did not respond to the question). Table 2 compares employees' personal importance responses to their perceptions of the importance their supervisors placed on the mission statement.

A final qualitative question probed subjects' connection between the mission statement and the way daily tasks were completed. For the qualitative question, almost one third (29 percent) of responses reported the mission statement affected the way they completed daily tasks; 21 percent of responses said it did not, 7 percent did not know the mission statement, 16 percent included other themes, and 26 percent did not answer the question. Table 4 shows the full responses of several research subjects. Subjects' responses were not altered, and grammatical and spelling mistakes were not corrected. Subject numbers were assigned by when subjects submitted their survey responses.

Mission Statement Dissemination

Three main questions sought to understand mission statement dissemination to the research subjects: how often is the mission statement referenced, who references it, and through what channels is it communicated. Nearly 90 percent of subjects indicated the mission statement was rarely referenced, with 38 percent saying it was never referenced and 50 percent saying it was referenced only once per year. The remaining reported they experienced either monthly (10 percent) or daily (two percent) references to the mission statement. Responses indicated references to the mission statement were made by a variety of sources, including the university's president (78 percent), the subject's immediate supervisor (30 percent), colleagues (24 percent), or other sources (10%) such as in committee meetings and from high level staff members.¹ Channels through which the mission statement was referenced included in-person staff meetings such as convocation (53 percent), work group meetings (nine percent), and annual meetings (14 percent). Written university publications accounted for 67 percent of mission statement communication, and email accounted for 21 percent. Other channels through which the mission statement was referenced included supervisor and co-worker actions, the university website, and an online human resources orientation video viewed during the hiring and training process.

Additional questions sought to understand subjects' first exposure to the mission statement. Over 90 percent of subjects indicated the mission statement was not explained or connected to their place in the university when they were hired, with 76 percent never even hearing the mission statement in the hiring process. Of those who heard it, 17 percent reportedly

did not hear how the mission statement was tied to daily tasks. Only seven percent of subjects indicated the mission statement was both stated and related to the work they would be doing. Another question probing initial exposure to the mission statement asked subjects to state when they first remembered a reference to the mission statement. Responses found 16 percent reported being first exposed to the mission statement during the interview or training process, 14 percent reported being exposed sometime after the first month of employment, 14 percent reported being exposed during a convocation, and 12 percent reported reading it on the university website. The remaining respondents were unsure (12 percent), could not remember (10 percent), did not answer the question (10 percent), or offered other initial sources (10 percent). Two percent said they had never been exposed to the mission statement. The results illustrated in the previous three sections lead to several important suggestions for mission statement crafting and dissemination in the university setting.

Discussion

Guided by the research question “does an academically focused mission statement impact the daily tasks of university employees whose tasks do not include direct academic student contact,” the researcher surveyed support and administrative staff members of a midsized Midwestern state university. Almost one third of those surveyed either admitted to not knowing the mission statement or did not answer the question. Major themes present in the remaining mission statement answers included learning and student learning, connections outside the university, and preparing students for their futures. Learning and connecting university actions to outside entities resonated with the university’s actual mission statement; however preparing students for their futures was not a part of the university mission statement. Few subjects (11 percent) mentioned anything about research. Many employees were aware of the basic concepts of the mission statement, but the number of employees who did not know or did not answer the question indicated communication of the mission statement could be improved.

Nearly 90 percent of subjects indicated they rarely if ever heard the mission statement, and when they did it was most often communicated by the university president or a supervisor. Channels most often cited as referring to the mission statement included face-to-face employee meetings, in written publications, and via email. Almost two thirds of subjects rarely, if ever, considered how the mission statement impacted their work, though some employees articulated its importance in tasks involved with planning. Only about 10 percent of employees felt the mission statement impacted almost all daily tasks. Over 90 percent of subjects never received an explanation during their initial training regarding how the mission statement connected to the tasks they would be completing; 76 percent said the mission statement was never even mentioned during training. Based on the results it is clear university leaders should ask themselves four questions; each question is highlighted in the following sections.

Should the Mission Statement Be the Overall Visionary Statement for the Organization?

Educational organizations should decide if the mission statement is to be the focal point, guiding the daily tasks for staff members, or if the mission statement will be used as a recruitment tool aimed toward students. If the mission statement focuses primarily on academic tasks with students, it may ignore many staff members who make up the organizational infrastructure. A mission statement is not the only venue for creating a visionary statement to direct all organizational members. Another statement may serve the unification purpose of the mission statement (such as a 'strategic goal' or 'motto'). Therefore educational organizations should take care to consciously choose a statement to unite a diverse group of staff functions to the common goal of the university.

Is the Mission Statement's Language Inclusive to All Staff Members?

Assuming an organization decides the mission statement will be the statement designed to guide daily tasks of employees, the organization needs to consider the inclusivity of the mission statement wording. While in no way fully representative of employees, the data highlighted the seeming inapplicability of the mission statement to the daily tasks of some employees. Inclusive language crafting is a daunting task, but administrators must consciously and purposefully compose the mission statement to ensure the visionary goals are clearly set in a way all employees are incorporated. Surveying employees using questions similar to those utilized in this study could be one possible way for university administrators to gauge how well the mission statement is being connected to the daily tasks of employees. If survey data reflects the data found in here, such as over half of employees perceiving the mission statement is at most only somewhat important to their daily tasks, administrators should redraft the statement to avoid excluding support and administrative staff. Even slight alterations could greatly impact the value nonacademic staff members feel the university places on their work. For instance, Harvard's undergraduate college could change its statement to "Harvard's faculty and staff strive to create knowledge, to open the minds of students to that knowledge, and to enable students to take best advantage of their educational opportunities by creating a supportive learning environment." By specifically including the word "staff" and by highlighting the necessity of the "supportive learning environment" non-faculty members are recognized in their roles and their tasks. Some tasks may not seem to fit within the scope of the mission statement, so administrators must ask themselves how they can help all staff feel connected to the overall goal of the university.

In addition to mission statement content, administrators should consider the overall comprehensibility of the actual mission statement language. Sattari, Pitt, and Caruana (2011) studied the readability of mission statements of *Fortune 500* companies. They found most mission statements were difficult to read, and some mission statement wordings required the reading skills of a university graduate. If mission statements are written at reading levels exceeding the comprehension abilities of nonacademic staff, the likelihood nonacademic staff

will be able to connect the content of the mission statement to their daily tasks is very low. Therefore, in addition to considering mission statement content, administrators should consider the overall readability level of the statement.

Do All Staff Members Understand How Their Work Accomplishes University Goals?

Administrators must make clear how the mission statement applies to the daily tasks of every employee. The initial analysis of the university's mission statement found a tenuous connection between the current mission statement themes and wording and the tasks completed by university operations staff members. Employees said they found the current statement to be important, however when asked qualitatively to describe how it affected their daily tasks, the amount of participants describing its importance decreased by 50 percent. It appeared organization members knew they were supposed to find mission statements important, but were not trained to understand how their mission statement applied to their daily tasks. Especially when the mission statement is more focused on academic endeavors, non-academically involved staff members must see how their work applies to the overall direction of the university. Understanding comes from the way the mission statement is framed by university leaders.

Supervisors, university officials, and human resource representatives play a vital part in communicating (both in action and word) how the mission statement is and should be incorporated into the daily tasks of all employees. Over 80 percent of subjects placed either less or the same amount of importance on the mission statement as they perceived their supervisors to place on the mission statement. This may indicate that how supervisors communicate about the mission statement sets the example for employees regarding how much importance they should personally place on the mission statement. Supervisors should receive training regarding how they can demonstrate the mission statement's applicability to everyday tasks and why such demonstrations are important.

Human resources members and staff trainers should include an overview of the mission statement and how it applies to each employee's work during every employee orientation. Data from the survey showed one person remembered hearing the mission statement referenced in an online training video, meaning the human resources staff has perhaps included the statement but has not placed enough emphasis to highlight the mission statement's importance. After the initial explanation, supervisors and university leaders should reiterate the mission of the university and how each employee's work is vital to completing the mission. For instance, janitorial staff trainers should highlight the importance of clean classrooms on academic success to cleaning crews. Food service and dormitory staff directors could emphasize at weekly or monthly staff meetings the importance of restful environments and nourishment as the first steps toward students being able to produce quality research and scholarship. Frequent communication of the mission statement, specifically regarding how it directs daily tasks, is important to employees recognizing how the visionary statement can direct all daily functions of the organizations, especially when mission statement language lacks inclusivity.

How Frequently and Through What Channels is the Mission Statement Being Shared?

The underlying conclusion present throughout the results of the study is that administrators need to consider how frequently they are communicating the mission statement and through what channels it is communicated to employees. Data suggested the mission statement was communicated infrequently through impersonal communications, such as large all-staff meetings, written publications, and in emails. These channel choices cue staff members about the apparent minimal significance university leaders place on the mission statement. For employees whose tasks do not relate to teaching, research, or direct student interaction, simply stating the mission statement without explanation could yield a high ambiguity for the overall message leaders are trying to convey. Very few employees reported receiving formal communication during the training process regarding how the mission statement applied specifically to their daily tasks, so infrequent and impersonal communication messages were not enough to stress the underlying messages it could innately express. Thus, even with its current wording, the mission statement failed to serve as the visionary statement it could have for the university staff. Impersonal channels, such as including the mission statement in all email signatures, can be used as reminders of the mission statement, but they must also be accompanied by clear and unambiguous explanations of its application to daily tasks.

University leaders such as presidents or provosts may benefit from knowing their inclusions of mission statements in major speeches (such as convocation) are one of the major ways by which nonacademic staff heard the mission statement referenced. Data showed that it was during meetings such as convocation that over half of employees remembered hearing the mission statement. References made by the university president were cited by almost 80 percent of respondents as a time they'd heard the mission statement. Major university leaders should be advised to utilize the mission statement as a strategic visionary leadership tool, and they should take advantage of opportunities through which they can unite the complex university staff. Leaders should also be made aware that when staff members primarily hear about the mission statement from them on infrequent intervals, the employees' able to connect the mission statement to their daily tasks is low. Administrators, supervisors, and human resources staff should communicate the mission statement frequently through a variety of personal and impersonal channels, specifically communicating how each job's task plays a vital role in completing the university's goals.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations to the study impact how far its results may extend to other situations. First, the total number of employees who took the survey was a small percentage of the total university staff. In part, the numbers limitation is due to who was invited to partake of the survey. The researcher sent the survey to staff group leaders who then forwarded the survey to the group

members, thus the total number of group members is unknown to the researcher. Additionally, the survey did not ask how long each subject worked for the organization. Long-term employees may have experienced multiple mission statements, and thus could feel less connected. Finally, the survey did not question what communication channels the staff members used most frequently. Knowing how communication flowed through the university may have illuminated additional possibilities for how the mission statement could or should be communicated. Future research could repeat the study with a larger pool of subjects. Comparisons could also be done between the staff members of public and private schools or schools of differing staff sizes to determine if those factors influence employees' understanding of how the mission statement applies to their daily tasks. Additional research could ascertain how staff members themselves feel they fit within the larger university's goals with the objective of crafting a mission statement to which nonacademic staff members can more easily relate.

Individuals often know actions they should take to make a situation better, but following through with suggested actions does not always occur. Researchers have suggested the potential benefits associated with effective mission statement crafting and dissemination for many years. The results of the present study could be used to remind university administrators of the importance of applying mission statement suggestions to real life situations.

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Appendix A

Tables

Table 1

Major Themes Present in Subjects' Record of Mission Statement in Their Own Words

| Theme | Number of Responses Including Theme | Percentage of Responses Including Theme* |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Student learning | 13 | 31% |
| Learning (general) | 9 | 21% |
| Preparing students for the future | 8 | 19% |
| Worldwide focus | 7 | 16% |
| Support services | 7 | 16% |
| City/community | 6 | 14% |
| Research | 5 | 11% |
| Undergraduate students | 4 | 9% |
| Graduate students | 4 | 9% |
| Personal growth | 4 | 9% |
| Teaching | 4 | 9% |
| University benefiting from work done | 4 | 9% |
| Creating an environment for learning | 4 | 9% |

Note: *Percentages in this column do not sum to 100 because they refer to prevalence of themes within employee responses. Some responses included several of the major themes listed here.

Table 2

Mission Statement Importance to Completion of Daily Tasks

| Importance Level | Personal | Perceived Importance Placed by Supervisor |
|--|----------|--|
| Extremely Important-Affects Almost All Daily Tasks | 10% | 7% |
| Important | 36% | 45% |
| Somewhat Important | 31% | 31% |
| Not Important | 21% | 5% |
| No Opinion | NA* | 10% |
| Did Not Answer | 2% | 2% |

Note: *This was not an available option for the personal importance question. how much importance their supervisors place on the mission statement. Over 80 percent of subjects placed the same or less importance on the mission statement as compared to their supervisors. Only 14 percent placed more personal importance on the mission statement than what they perceived their supervisor to believe. Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the reported individual importance and perceived supervisorial importance.

Table 3

*Individual Mission Statement Importance Compared to Perceived Supervisor Importance**

| Importance Level | Percentage of Subjects |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Less Important | 36% |
| Same Importance | 45% |
| More Important | 14% |
| Did Not Answer the Question | 5% |

*Note:**The relationship was determined by comparing the individual importance to the perceived supervisor's importance. For instance, if the perceived supervisor importance was "Extremely Important" and the individual rated the mission statement as "Not Important," the relationship was recorded as "Less Important."

Table 4

Qualitative Evaluations of Mission Statement Impact on Daily Tasks

| Subject Number | Subject's Employee Group | Qualitative Response* |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|
| 6 | A | Absolutely. Daily tasks become pretty dull if there is no purpose behind them. The mission statement gives purpose and helps me realize that because I effectively complete my daily tasks, students are learning. This makes those sometimes dull tasks suddenly seem very important and it motivates me in my work. |
| 12 | A | I really couldn't tell you what the mission says. I do my job as efficiently as I can to serve others. I assume that's somewhere in the mission, but I didn't need Vice presidents to get together and approve how that was conveyed to me. |
| 16 | A | My own work ethic and values are the main effects on my daily tasks. The mission statement would affect it if it didn't agree with my work ethic. |
| 35 | A | NO, i DON'T THINK YOU NEED A MISSION STATEMENT IF YOU ARE DOING YOUR JOB CORRECTLY, I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHY WE ARE HERE: THE STUDENTS! |
| 22 | B | No... I feel like our mission and goals change a lot and that we're never sure what our "strategic priorities" are. I'm not even sure if the mission statement aligns with the strategic priorities or if the various task forces that are out there are working with the mission statement in mind. I try to think in terms of what the current ideas are and try to align my program and work to that, but it's difficult when it feels like things change often. I end up just "staying the course" and just trying to do my best. |
| 32 | B | No. Pretty broad and general. I am not faculty; the mission statement talks about learning but puts an academic focus on it rather than including student engagement or out-of-class learning. |
| 33 | B | Typically, I've used the mission statement in terms of thinking about securing funding. For instance, we were looking to do something with global initiatives in our office. I thought a lot about how this feeds into the mission statement/core values and if this could impact the services we offer. I don't think the mission statement drives me, but it helps validate why I might be doing something. Right now, it seems more of a reactive approach on my end. |
| 42 | B | The mission statement stays central to my focus on a daily basis. It is what drives the direction of my projects with university clients. |

Appendix B

Questionnaire Questions

1. Please indicate the staff union/bargaining group of which you are a member:
[Group names were removed to protect the university's anonymity]
2. When were you first exposed to the university mission statement?
3. When you were hired by the university, how much explanation did you receive regarding the mission statement and how it relates to your position? (Indicate by clicking the most accurate statement)
 - None
 - Mission statement was stated, but never explained
 - Mission statement was stated and explanation regarding how it tied into my work was provided
 - Mission statement was stated, explained regarding how it tied into my work, and was reinforced by my co-workers
4. How often is the mission statement referenced during work meetings, daily tasks, and/or other work related events?
 - Never
 - Once a year
 - Once a month
 - Once a week
 - Daily
5. How is the mission statement communicated to you (click all that apply)?
 - Email
 - Stated during work meetings
 - Written in publications from the university
 - Through the actions of my supervisor(s)
 - Through the actions of my co-workers
 - Written in daily correspondence
 - Explained during annual meetings
 - Explained during convocation
 - Other [open dialogue box]
6. In the past year who has made references to the mission statement (check all that apply)?
 - My immediate supervisor
 - My colleagues
 - The University President
 - Other (please state position title) [open dialogue box]
7. How important do you think your immediate supervisor views [your organization's] mission statement to be?
 - Not important-doesn't affect daily tasks
 - Some importance
 - Important
 - Extremely important-affects almost all daily tasks
 - Doesn't have an opinion

8. How much importance do you, personally, place on the mission statement?
 - Not important-doesn't affect my daily tasks
 - Some importance
 - Important
 - Extremely important-affects almost all my daily tasks
9. How often do you consider the mission statement in regards to its importance to your work?
 - Never
 - Once a year
 - Once a month
 - Once a week
 - Daily
10. Does the mission statement affect the way you complete your daily tasks? If yes, how? If not, why not?
11. What is the mission statement at this university (in your own words)?

Endnotes

¹Mission statement reference sources and the channels used for reference do not sum to 100 percent because subjects could select multiple responses.