

University at Albany Mission Statement

The prominence of the University at Albany as a modern and complex public research university belies its modest origins. Established in 1844 in an abandoned train depot donated by the city of Albany, the then New York State Normal School, the first state-chartered public institution of higher education in New York, hosted a beginning class of twenty-nine students who were instructed by two faculty members. Inspired by a zeal for liberal education and public service which they rightly believed would make a difference in their rapidly changing world, the Normal School's founders envisioned themselves engaged in a mission to prepare literate, informed, and compassionate citizens - citizens capable of thinking for themselves, of advancing the condition of their fellow Americans, and of enjoying to the fullest the intellectual, spiritual, and material benefits of democracy. While the physical character of the modern University at Albany has improved dramatically from that of its predecessor, the essential character of its educational mission has endured.

Separated from its beginnings by those leaps of cultural transformation which mark the extended history of all great institutions, the University at Albany of today is a multi-faceted university which enjoys numerous advantages, responsibilities, and opportunities in discharging its mission. Some of these result from the University's remarkable history and the campus's tradition of responsiveness to the intellectual and personal aspirations of America's increasingly diverse citizenry; some from the University's national designation as a Research University and its position within the State University of New York system; and some from the University's ideal location in the Capital District of New York.

Working across the disciplines of the Arts and Sciences and those of several select Professional Schools, the University's internationally recognized faculty of scholars, researchers, and professional staff hold themselves accountable to the highest ethical and professional standards in the education of all students. Members of the faculty and staff join with their students, undergraduate and graduate, in defining the University as characterized by these discrete, yet interdependent, qualities:

- First, a commitment to the pursuit and advancement of knowledge, for its own sake and for its practical benefits to society.
- Second, a commitment to the teaching of students, to their growth in knowledge, and to that reinforcement of character, through co-curricular experiences, which enables them to develop emotionally, physically, and socially even as they mature intellectually;
- Third, a commitment to the larger interests of society through acts of public service, and by fostering the ideals of social justice;

- Fourth, a commitment to freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression, and to the rights and obligations of faculty and students to pursue knowledge, wherever it may lead;
- Fifth, a commitment to profit intellectually and imaginatively from differences of opinion and of culture.

One of the four University Centers of the State University of New York, the modern University at Albany emphasizes the integration of teaching, research, creative expression, and public service in its undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Its educational mission sustains an intellectual climate in which the research and creative endeavors of the faculty enlarge their sense of inquiry on behalf of their students, so that at all levels students enjoy the stimulation and challenge of engaging in active, rather than passive, learning, and the satisfaction not only of assimilating the inherited wisdom of the past, but also of participating in the creation of new knowledge.

The University benefits from the campus's location in New York's State Capital in preserving a tradition of addressing significant issues of public policy, which will continue to be an integral aspect of its mission. This emphasis combines with the University's historical strength in education and pedagogy, and its more recent accomplishments in the natural and behavioral sciences and the arts, to give the campus a special character and provide substantial comparative advantages for its students and the citizens of New York State.

But more fundamentally, the mission of the University at Albany continues to be that of serving as a comprehensive research university wherein graduate programs in the Arts and Sciences and the professions reinforce each other and invigorate the undergraduate experience. Complementing its highly visible Professional Schools, the University encourages and supports Arts and Sciences curricula characterized by innovation as well as traditional breadth. Here, as at other major universities, studies in the humanities and social sciences, the creative and expressive arts, and the natural sciences and mathematics constitute the very center of the University's intellectual and imaginative life. At the University at Albany, these studies provide all students with wide-ranging opportunities for an education that balances breadth with the occasion to develop more specialized disciplinary understanding and professional expertise. What makes this University particularly distinctive as a center for the Arts and Sciences and the professions is its promotion of knowledge at the interstices not only where their disciplines historically have been separated, but also where, more importantly, they converge.

The vitality of New York's northeastern corridor provides the University at Albany with superb opportunities for enhancing the intellectual vigor and variety of the University and for advancing the political and economic well-being of New York State. Privileged to serve as a regional center of higher education and an imaginative catalyst for economic development, the University considers the expansion of partnerships with academic, business,

cultural, and governmental organizations situated throughout northeastern New York essential to the success of its educational mission. At the same time, the University recognizes that the significant social issues, environmental concerns, and informational challenges confronting today's Americans and their systems of higher education are not exclusively regional in character, and that the opportunities to answer them through shared technology and pedagogy, laboratory research, the application of social and political theory to practice, and improved understanding among cultures are rarely within the domain of one geographic area. Consequently, the University at Albany extends its mission to serve the interests of New York by promoting the University's capacity as a national and international center for scholarship, education, and service, and by engaging in academic and professional programs, well beyond the University's regional borders, which promote knowledge and understanding.

The mission of the University at Albany, as envisioned and elaborated on from our earliest days, compels us to move forward in finding improved ways of providing responsive, high quality public education. It also challenges us to be bold in charting new institutional courses both for ourselves and for the benefit of those who will follow. Out of respect for the ingenuity and devotion of the many generations of scholars and students whose perseverance has provided the foundation for Albany as an exceptional and unique modern university, today's University at Albany community eagerly seeks opportunities to enhance its educational mission - both in the creation and in the dissemination of knowledge. Consistent with our own heritage and that of the larger State University of New York, the University at Albany pledges to preserve and advance "equality alongside quality, accessibility alongside excellence, and liberality of thought alongside rigor."

Submitted by The Task Force on the University Mission, Professor Ronald A. Bosco and Dean Frank J. Thompson, Co-chairs, April 27, 1992

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Strategic Plan
University at Albany
State University of New York