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In What Ways Does My Work Reflect and Advance the Mission of the College?

I like working for an institution that takes its mission seriously. I take it seriously. I am the founding organizer for the staff mission interview committee. Chris Kimball and I identified staff members, invited them to serve and then trained them for service on a Staff Mission Interview Committee. We function when interviews are held for open Director-level positions within the Academic Affairs Division of the College.

All of my work should reflect the mission throughout the design of programs and submission of proposals. When seeking external funding we “bump up” against the mission of the funder. Submitting proposals for funding requires a collaborative effort between those of us seeking funds to support our mission with funders that have obligations to support projects and institutions which further their missions. This complicates the proposal process. Thus, there are restrictions placed upon seeking external funds to support a variety of work on campus. These restrictions are internal and external. Internally, while the mission drives much of what we do, there are also, what I call, “myths” that don’t seem to have facts to back them up and those “myths” influence what we do and how we view our work, our students, and ourselves. Externally, additional restrictions or influences come from public policy issues, assessments of post-secondary education by foundations or think tanks, and political stances. We are not immune from cultural norms.

The purpose of my position as I have identified it in my official position description is “to provide leadership in securing external funds to support the mission of the college.” Almost all of my work is focused on the academic portion of the institution. And, the funds I assist in securing usually require some sort of “product” and a reporting structure. In other words, most of these grants are not considered philanthropic.

Educational opportunities based in the liberal arts

Working with academic programs and faculty I can be assured that almost all proposed activities for external funding are consistent with the desired outcomes which the Augsburg Core Curriculum addresses. Other academic course work has required vetting by the department and Academic Affairs Committee and thus should fully meet this section of our mission. On occasion, when I receive an inquiry about an academic discipline or project which appears to me to be outside of the “based in the liberal arts” category, I ask for information regarding whether the Dean and/or President are supportive of the project.

Shaped by the faith and values of the Christian Church

This component is a bit more difficult because, unlike the curriculum of the College, there is no listing of specific religious values, ways to be inclusive and value freedom, etc. There are long held values which are a combination of Norwegian immigrant and Lutheran Free Church values. However, this component allows for a great deal of interpretation regarding inclusiveness, Lutheran “bias”, and egalitarianism. If a proposal project is specifically religious in nature (Lilly Endowment or Wabash Center), it is a bit easier to identify the population to consult on campus.

Shaped by the context of a vital metropolitan setting

This component is often addressed in my work through proposals which support service-learning activities. Most of the proposals in this area are strictly academic, in that many agencies require that service be attached to a course. Occasionally there are opportunities for other kinds of outreach, e.g. student interns, outreach by student groups, projects which address teacher professional development.

Shaped by an intentionally diverse campus community

Many proposals submitted have included an emphasis on diversity – whether that is StepUP, underrepresented students in graduate education, low income students, students from families with neither parent having achieved a bachelor degree, students of color, or students studying in a particular major. While each of these categories excludes many students, the purpose is to diversify the student body at Augsburg. This is becoming more difficult as the culture moves away from identifying people by race, gender, religion and toward a more inclusive method of encouraging enrollment in college. The “rules” often are in direct conflict between different funders. My work encourages faculty and staff to reach out to serve many differing groups of students without sacrificing a non-discriminatory stance.