
Mission statements for the community college LRC

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Clarifying the role of the Learning Resources Center.

The comprehensive community college attempts to provide a wide range of instructional programs to an even wider, heterogeneous student body. The learning resources center must respond to the instructional needs of this student body as created by their instructors.

With its finite resources, particularly the materials and equipment collections, learning resources centers cannot meet the instructional and informational needs of students in all college programs on an equal basis. Priorities for the allocation of resources and services must be established.

The backdrop for the setting of priorities is the mission statement of the learning resources center. It is no longer sufficient merely to say we support the curriculum. We must decide and articulate what that time honored phrase really means. We must be able to express to our significant others why the learning resources center is unique among the components of the college and how that uniqueness allows us to contribute to the intellectual life of the college. A mission statement does just this.

The determination of the learning resources center's mission within the college rests largely with the chief learning resources administrator.¹ According to Steiner, "Mission statements are highly

dependent on the values of the chief executive officer."

The chief learning resources administrator should determine the educational climate of his or her community college and assess his or her philosophical stance on the role of the learning resources center in the academic setting against this climate. From this analysis the administrator will be able to clarify what he or she feels the learning resources center can do in the present environment.

To students, faculty, and staff outside the learning resources center, the mission statement serves as a "unique window through which [they] gain a clearer understanding"² of the learning resources center's role in the college.

The need for learning resources center mission statements is upon us since most community colleges are engaged in some form of strategic planning. As Brown, Smith, and Scott point out, "...When evaluating both libraries and computing activities, the first question to ask is not how to, but what for? Since libraries...cannot be all things to all people, the administrator must ask, 'What is their role within the institution.'"³

²Laura Nash, "Mission Statements: Mirrors and Windows," *Harvard Business Review* 88 (March-April 1988): 155.

³Donald R. Brown, Shirley M. Smith, and Robert A. Scott, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Academic Libraries and Computing Facilities," in Robert A. Scott, ed., *Determining the Effective-*

¹George A. Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know* (New York: Macmillan (The Free Press), 1978), 158.

Doris Dale, a frequent contributor to the literature on the learning resources center, asks, "Why is there a library in the community college?"⁴ Surely others are asking or will soon be asking the same question. Dale offers tradition as the answer. Her

ness of Campus Services, New Directions for Institutional Research, no. 41 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984), 61.

⁴Doris Cruger Dale, "The Learning Resources Center's Role in the Community College System," *College & Research Libraries* 49 (May 1988): 232.

answer will not sustain us.

Learning resources center administrators must develop and publish mission statements so that our colleagues will understand how learning resources services contribute to academic excellence. We must respond in this manner so that when Rouche and Baker revise their book, *Access and Excellence: The Open-Door College*, there will be a chapter on learning resources centers.⁵ ■■

⁵As discussed in the closing paragraphs of Dale's article.

A case study in audio tape transfer

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How to preserve the sounds when the audio tape starts to go bad.

The Library of the American Philosophical Society is an independent research library with significant manuscript holdings in colonial history, history of science and technology, and materials related to the American Indian. In the latter category in particular, the Library has developed a large collection, much of which originates from its administration of a fund endowed in 1895, called informally the Phillips Fund. This anthropological grant was established to fund scholarly research in native American ethnohistory and linguistics.

The annual influx of materials to the Library resulting from Phillips Fund research has included hundreds of audio recordings, dating from the

1920s. These are primarily field recordings of native American chants, songs, dances, languages, and folk tales. Some tapes are believed to represent the only known recordings of certain obscure dialects, while others are considered invaluable linguistic and ethnological oral records. The Library is also the repository for numerous other audio collections, including oral histories, which are not related to the anthropological collections.

In the fall of 1986, members of the Phillips Fund Committee expressed concern that the audio collections might be deteriorating. The librarian responded by directing that a survey of the collections be undertaken, to determine the physical