

The Realities and Risks of Mission Drift

A Board's High Calling

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Purposes for this Session on Mission Drift

- To better understand the tendencies toward mission drift for Christ-centered, Scripture-anchored colleges and universities in these disrupted times
- To identify the factors and influences that lead to mission drift
- To develop policies and procedures to address mission drift
- To affirm through commitment and practice the high calling of Boards and institutional leadership to protecting mission integrity and delivering on both the implicit as well as explicit promises our missions imply for various stakeholders.

Is Your Institution in Danger of Mission Drift?

- What factors in your institution could lead to mission drift?
- What indications do you see as most indicative that mission drift may be occurring or about to occur in your institution?
- What do you believe to be the most important ways to:
 - Determine if mission drift is occurring
 - To prevent mission drift from occurring
 - To correct mission drift.

Definitions

- Mission is the primary reason the organization exists.
- Often anchored to the founding intent of the organization.
- Can change over time as new opportunities emerge or previous opportunities decline.
- Embraced by key stakeholders as the primary reason for existing.
- Mission drift can be defined as a process of substantive change, where an organization diverges from its main purpose.
- Mission drift is most often driven by:
 - Financial exigencies
 - Leadership motivations
 - Environmental threats
 - Lack of understanding about the essential components of the mission.

Factors Leading to Mission Drift

- Lack of awareness of the initial purposes, promises and commitments of those who founded the institution.
- A belief that those “Founder’s Intents” are no longer relevant for this time and place.
- The “softening” of the essential core values of the institution in order to become more relevant.
- A focus more on strategies for quickly fixing emerging problems and addressing pressing challenges than processing these in the context of essential core values and historical commitments.
- What other factors have you seen that could result in mission drift?

Indications of Potential Mission Drift

- When in fiscal crisis, to pursue programs that garner dollars rather than fit with the core mission of the institution.
- Confusion and disagreement about the core mission of the institution.
- Looking for “quick fixes” at the expense of long term fidelity to the essential deliverables our mission promises.
- The tendency to compromise faith essentials when confronted with uncomfortable challenges to those essentials.
- Realizing that the institution is coasting relying on previous achievements rather than asking the difficult questions about current conditions and quality of deliverables.
- Board and institutional leadership selected and empowered to make changes without understanding of core values and “Founder’s Intent” – a tendency to be looking more for competencies in leaders rather than character.
- Other indications that mission is drifting?

Strategies for Preventing Mission Drift

- Regularly reviewing the founding intent of the institution and the major points in our history that demonstrate commitment to the essentials of our mission.
- Hiring and enlisting leadership uncompromisingly committed to the core values and missional promises of the institution.
- Ensuring that those primarily responsible for the deliverables, that are implicitly and explicitly promised in the mission, are keeping faith with that mission.
- Requiring evidence that the mission is considered in each decision made by those who formulate policy and implement practices in keeping with policy.
- Intentionally seeking the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit when making decisions that impact the agreed upon mission of the institution.
- Selecting new Board members whose primary motivation for serving are to advance the mission at whatever cost.
- What other strategies do believe will limit mission drift?