# Icon Description automatically generated with low confidenceDeveloping a VisionIcon Description automatically generated with low confidence

*Coordinators work with students and their faculty teams to instill pride in their program or discipline/subject area.  Having a shared vision that is visible and valued is one way to create an identity that unites and provides a direction for students, other areas of Fleming College, stakeholders and the broader community. Below are definitions and guidelines for developing a shared vision, mission, values, and teaching philosophy with your program or discipline/subject area team. Please note that the order they are presented is deliberate as choosing core values can help better define the mission and vision statements. However, feel free to change and adapt the order and tips to better meet your team’s needs.*

## Core Values

Values are beliefs that are shared among those associated with the program or discipline/subject area. Some examples of values are respect, fairness, transparency, congruency, trust, professionalism, etc. These drive the culture because people feel united and so those beliefs and/or priorities are protected. They also provide a framework for making decisions and guiding people’s actions. While there are many variations on how to choose core values and write value statements, here are some tips to consider:

Brainstorm (could use divergent activities from the [Creative Problem-Solving Approach Guide 2016)](../Creative-Problem-Solving-ToolsTechniques-Resource-Guide_2016_PRINTER.pdf) with the team about the values that do and could represent the program or discipline/subject area. Also, consider those values important to the associated students, faculty, support staff, service areas, and stakeholders.

Create clusters of similar values and discuss their fit with for the program or discipline/subject area team culture (could use convergent activities from the **Creative Problem-Solving Approach Guide 2016**).

Be prepared to discuss differences between team members preferred values and the true values of the program or discipline/subject area (true values are reflected by the faculty beliefs and behaviour) as well as discrepancies between current beliefs and behaviour and preferred beliefs and behaviour.

Incorporate into the plan how to align any discrepancies between current and preferred beliefs and behaviour.

Select the top 4 to 6 core values from the clusters in order to develop value statements.

Write the value statements in the first person (“we”), focus on strengths, and make them concrete. Statements can range in length from 1 sentence to 5 sentences. An example of how the core value of “professionalism” is incorporated into a statement may be:

**Professionalism:** “We believe professionalism begins in the classroom and is reflected in relationships between students, faculty, and the community. We demonstrate this by teaching and adhering to the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics set by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. Professionalism means being kind, patient, transparent, compassionate, flexible, engaged, and able to give and receive constructive feedback.” Fleming College, p.1).

## Mission Statement

A mission statement announces the current purpose of the program or discipline/subject area, the reasons it exists, and what it does to achieve the vision. The mission defines services, goals, and culture to students, faculty, support staff, service areas, stakeholders, and the broader community. While it should capture the uniqueness of the program, it also acts as a standard for quality, service, and any marketing messages. Mission and vision statements are closely related, but distinct in that the mission gives an impression of the program in the present whereas the vision is about where the program wishes to be in the future.

Because the program objectives are clear, a mission statement is a guide for faculty to help them make critical and meaningful decisions that affect the direction of the program or discipline/subject area. It also helps align activities of other associated partners (like regulatory bodies, stakeholders, and other academic institutions) more closely with program or discipline/subject goals and values. Here are some considerations for crafting a mission statement:

Decide on the current aim(s) or purpose of the program or discipline/subject area with the team. If needed, use the question “Why does your program or discipline/subject area exist?” and choose divergent and convergent exercises contained in the Creative Problem-Solving Approach Guide 2016 to brainstorm, evaluate and achieve consensus.

Consider your primary stakeholders who are the students.

Describe how the program or discipline/subject area provides value to these stakeholders. This is where having already developed the core values can be helpful. Another way would be to list specific learning opportunities currently offered to the students and select those that are most important. For teams that are finding it challenging to articulate merit, apply the CPS Approach activities for assistance.

Be concise and mindful to write a mission statement that highlights the program’s or discipline/subject area’s uniqueness

An example of a **mission statement** may be:

“To empower our students with the innovative education, research and real-world experiences they need to build better lives, better communities and a better world.” (Fleming College Strategic Plan 2019-2024, p.8)

## Vision Statement

A vision statement is an articulation of a common vision for the future and should inspire, motivate, and instill confidence in the program or discipline/subject area team. Vision statements should be revisited and revised when the goals are met. Here are some recommendations for developing a vision statement:

Outline what the program or discipline/subject area wants to be or how it wants the world in which it operates to be. For example, the Peterborough Public Health Unit visions “healthy communities” for the future based on the organization’s current mission to protect and promote the health of various local communities.

Identify the gap between the program or discipline/subject area goals today (mission statement) and what goals they aspire to achieve tomorrow (vision statement).

Define the strategies that will bridge that gap to connect the mission and vision statements.

Be concise and mindful to write a vision statement that is future focussed and is a source of inspiration and motivation.

For instance, the mission statement of the YWCA of Peterborough-Haliburton for 2013-2018, connects to their overall vision.

Mission Statement:

“To support the right of all women and their families to live free from violence, poverty and oppression as they build their desired futures.” (YWCA, p.1)

**Vision Statement:**

“To see all women and children thriving.” (YWCA, p.1)

## Teaching Philosophy

To articulate a teaching philosophy for the program or discipline/subject area, it should briefly express values and beliefs that the team holds about teaching in the context of the learning environment. Please note that a teaching philosophy in this context is a smaller version of what an individual teacher might develop at the elementary and secondary school level. Here are some guidelines for articulating a group teaching philosophy:

Identify the team’s concept of learning or what happens in a successful learning environment. The team should be able to come up with examples of what a positive learning environment looks from their experiences.

Describe the goals for students or knowledge and skills they should acquire from the teaching they receive.

Share the learning strategies and activities that the team will use to help students obtain the knowledge and skills identified. For example, one could describe the types of experiential learning used.

Be concise in the description.

An example might be:

“We believe in providing applied learning opportunities within and outside the classroom. We expect students to be engaged in and responsible for their own learning guided by the evaluation, supervision, facilitation, and modeling practices of faculty, fellow students, and community agencies.” (Fleming College, p.1)

## Maintaining Program or Discipline/Subject Area Pride

After creating the mission, vision, values, and teaching philosophy statements, it is important to ensure it’s reinforced by the team and known to the students and other associated stakeholders. Here are some methods for maintaining the identity, unity, inspiration, and motivation developed by going through the process:

Document and store the completed statements in a shared electronic space that can be accessed minimally by the team, management and future contract faculty and management.

Celebrate the hard work and accomplishments by the team.

Where possible make the statements visible to the public. For example:

* Include within the Program Review documents;
* Include within the marketing and promotional materials specific to the program or discipline/subject area;
* Include on the College program page;
* Include at the bottom of course outlines;
* Hand out hard copies for the students and contract faculty;
* Give framed copies for full-time faculty and associated managers to hang in their offices;
* Present the statements at a Program Advisory Committee meeting; and
* Introduce them at Orientation and Open House as well as in courses; encourage all faculty to do so.

Review the statements for relevancy during Annual Program Review, however, make official changes every 3-5 years.

References:

Fleming College. (2013). SSW vision, mission, values, and teaching philosophy (2013-2018).

Fleming College. (2019). Fleming college strategic plan 2019-2024.

YWCA Peterborough-Haliburton. (2013). Strategic plan (2013-2018).