

The Mission of DePaul University

Supporting Document to the Mission Statement

Distinguishing Characteristics

A Catholic, Vincentian university in the global city of Chicago.

- (1) As a Catholic university in the Vincentian tradition, DePaul University is anchored in the **global city of Chicago**. While proud to call Chicago home since 1898, we acknowledge that we live, work, and study on traditional Native lands, once home to well over one hundred different tribal nations. Our social location in what has become a large, diverse, metropolitan city has fundamentally shaped our institutional identity and commitments over the course of our history as an educational institution. Whether ensuring access to higher education for the city's many immigrant communities, offering flexible and pragmatic approaches to student learning, or remaining actively committed to social transformation to better the city and its communities, DePaul remains inextricably linked to Chicago. We serve as a vibrant civic institution, an educational and workplace community that supports the well-being and development of a broad and diverse community of people whose influence reaches across the Chicago region and beyond. Our location in the heart of this global city remains attractive to traditional-aged, adult, and international students from across the region, country, and world. It also serves as a springboard for DePaul graduates to achieve success in their careers wherever their dreams may take them.
- (2) Motivated by the examples of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, who instilled a love of God by leading their contemporaries to serve urgent human needs, the DePaul community believes our mission as an educational institution is to foster integral human development, social mobility, and social transformation. As a comprehensive **university**, DePaul pursues the preservation, enrichment, and advancement of knowledge across a broad scope of academic disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as through a range of professional programs. We place a high priority on programs of instruction and learning, emphasizing the skills and practices that educate students to become lifelong learners, to succeed in the workplace, and to make meaningful contributions to society. DePaul University maintains a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences and to research, both for their intrinsic value and as a foundation for all specialized courses of study. Furthermore, our commitment to the [Global Compact on Education](#) means we recognize access to quality education as a fundamental human right that we both advocate for and preserve as we evolve to face new challenges.
- (3) Among the largest **Catholic** universities in the United States and the world, our mission proceeds from the heart of the Church and remains grounded in the values and life example of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Catholic identity inspires us to offer an education that supports the communal context of integral human development, while also advocating for an integral ecology aware of the interconnectedness of all people and nature. As a university inspired by a broad-ranging Catholic intellectual tradition, our community is enriched by people from many religious and philosophical traditions collaborating to further knowledge, wisdom, truth, and the common good. We endorse the interplay of diverse value systems beneficial to intellectual inquiry, and we seek to bring the light of faith and the treasure of knowledge into a mutually challenging and supportive relationship.
- (4) Our **Vincentian** character traces to seventeenth-century France and the remarkable lives of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, as well as all those who have followed to serve in the global Vincentian family. Together, they shaped a distinctive Vincentian legacy that continues to inspire our work as a university community. The Congregation of the Mission (C.M.) founded by Vincent de Paul and known

as the Vincentians, continue to sponsor DePaul University as an organic extension of their mission. Personalism and professionalism characterize the Vincentian spirit and permeate the culture of our institution. With this inspiration, we serve to ennoble the sacred dignity of all people, with special attention to those who are vulnerable, underserved, or materially poor, and we seek creative and effective solutions to institutional and societal challenges. Our Vincentian heritage motivates us to guide our students to work for the common good and the building of a just, equitable, and sustainable society. As an educational institution bearing the name of Vincent de Paul, we engage with other institutions and agencies in mutually beneficial research, service learning, and educational partnerships that contribute to the societal, economic, cultural, and ethical quality of life in our metropolitan area and beyond.

Core Values

Core values that flow from our identity and shape our work as a university community.

(5) Excellence in Teaching

While embodying all aspects of the twenty-first century university, we maintain a special commitment to excellence as a teaching institution. Therefore, we support faculty and staff to be effective educators regardless of their academic discipline or role, and we encourage ongoing, critical reflection upon our pedagogy and effective practices to foster student learning and holistic development. We provide support to help all students flourish to the best of their ability, including special assistance and advocacy for students of high potential who face educational, social, or personal obstacles to their learning success.

(6) Access to Higher Education

Founded to provide access to higher education for underserved immigrant communities in the city of Chicago, DePaul University's commitment to such equity and access has remained a common thread of our mission throughout our history. Today we continue to be an institution that provides access to higher learning for those of underserved and underrepresented communities. We understand and practice education as an effective means to break transgenerational cycles of poverty, and strive to offer an affordable, high quality private education.

(7) Human Dignity and Vincentian Personalism

As a university community, we strive to ennoble the God-given dignity of all people. Our Vincentian personalism and professionalism is reflected by our DePaul community whose members care for the needs of each other and of those with whom we live, work, study, and seek to serve. We recognize the intrinsic connection between dignity and diversity as a natural and necessary context for human flourishing, and thus we strive to be a welcoming and inclusive educational community that cultivates these important values among all persons at DePaul.

(8) Care for Society's Most Vulnerable

Grounded in our Vincentian character, our belief in the dignity of all people challenges us to exercise compassion for those in society who lack opportunity due to material poverty or flawed human systems and social norms. We strive for solidarity and social justice through education and by offering our academic expertise, research, service, and public advocacy on behalf of the common good.

(9) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Given a history of societal systems that perpetuate the unjust treatment of many in the United States and around the world, particularly in education, our teaching, learning, and operations are motivated to address causes of inequity and injustice. Both within and outside our university community, we work

to advocate for and build just, equitable, and inclusive communities, policies and processes that enable all to flourish.

(10) *Social and Environmental Justice*

Our institutional mission and values necessitate our active participation in civic life and public affairs as we strive towards social transformation and the building of a more just, equitable, and sustainable society. We recognize that solutions to the complex social and environmental problems faced by society demand an integrated approach that will combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded, and protect nature. Those impacted by injustice are often society's most vulnerable, to whom we owe a special responsibility inspired by our mission and values. As a teaching and learning community, therefore, we honor the dignity and diversity of all life in preparing for a sustainable future.

(11) *Public Service*

As a Catholic, Vincentian university our educational responsibility reaches beyond efforts to merely prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed to sustain meaningful careers. We aim to effectively prepare students to make positive contributions to their communities and to understand service as a part of their life's vocation. We model this vocation through our approach to community engagement, our public relationships, and in our role as an anchor civic institution in the city of Chicago. Furthermore, we know that our many community partners serve as co-educators who support the development of DePaul students.

(12) *Community and Collaboration*

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac founded communities organized around a mission, aware that their vision required the effective collaboration of people from all backgrounds united in a shared spirit of service, charity, justice, and systemic change. Vincentian communities around the world continue to model this collaborative spirit, working together with others for systemic change. Likewise, our faculty, staff, and administration work collaboratively for the good of students. We also seek to model this spirit in the way we work and study together, as well as through our community partnerships both locally and globally.

Fundamental and Emerging Commitments

Commitments that guide our decisions as we respond to current realities while looking to the future and remaining faithful to our core values.

(13) *Sustainability*

We consider sustainability a meaningful way to frame a broader set of institutional and societal challenges relevant to our work as a university in the twenty-first century.

(13a) Environmental: As a university community, we are strongly motivated to action by the looming crises caused by climate change. We must ensure that DePaul's education, research, and operations contribute to a sustainable future for our city and planet. Our role as educators compels us to prepare future generations with the proper knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary. We recognize the interdependence of environmental, human, and economic systems required by people around the globe to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling quality of life both now and in future.

(13b) Fiscal and Operational: At the same time, the economic vulnerability of institutions of higher education in the United States requires us to consider financially sustainable strategic approaches as to how we function in the present and in future. DePaul maintains

a mission-based commitment to invest the resources needed to ensure the success of the roughly one third of our students from underserved backgrounds. We know that a student body reflecting truly diverse economic circumstances and life experience is beneficial to learning, societal and self-understanding, and to creating world-ready students. This ongoing commitment challenges us to remain both creative and disciplined as we actively discern how to remain financially strong, responsive to the needs before us, and an attractive, viable option for all those we seek to serve.

(14) *Anti-Racism*

With racism so deeply intertwined in human history and still pervasive today, as an institution we recognize our ongoing complicity with systemic racism. These structures continue to cause harm today and prevent needed opportunities for many people who remain underserved and underrepresented. Therefore, we commit forcefully in thought, word, and action to do all that is required to transform our university into an anti-racist institution.

(15) *Nonviolence, Dialogue, and Peacebuilding*

As a Catholic university, Pope Francis' declaration of nonviolence as a fundamental commitment of the Catholic Church and Catholic education challenges us to model, teach, and foster the necessary awareness, theory, and skills of dialogue and peacebuilding. Furthermore, our grounding in Vincentian mission moves us to recognize the ongoing threat of violent conflict, both locally and globally, and how it harms those most vulnerable populations. Therefore, we strive to integrate nonviolence, dialogue, and peacebuilding into the educational experience of our university community.

(16) *Applied Research Oriented to Pressing Societal Needs*

As a university, research supplies the educational framework and learning opportunities afforded to those within our DePaul community and society-at-large. We place a high value on engaged research that enables us to apply knowledge and expertise to address pervasive societal issues and the needs of local communities.

(17) *Innovation and Adaptability*

We are more aware than ever that innovation is essential to a flourishing twenty-first century university. Rapid societal changes, as well as economic pressures on the higher education sector and on the students and communities we serve, require us to adapt continually so that we may respond effectively to today's needs. Our mission compels us to harness the creativity of our community to develop new approaches to learning, new advances in knowledge, and new ways of effectively operating as an institution. As we look to the DePaul of tomorrow, we pledge to evolve effectively in order to remain a source of hope, opportunity, and social transformation, sensitive to the needs of our students, and responsive to the challenges that lie before us.

Conclusion

(18) Our mission statement and the distinctive identity, core values, and commitments that follow from it, serves to define the ultimate purposes of DePaul University. These purposes mirror a common bond that unites students, staff, faculty, alumni, and trustees and frame a criterion against which our plans are formulated, and major decisions are made and assessed. Our future success requires the ongoing participation of all in our DePaul community as we seek to be what Vincent de Paul envisioned: *Congregation of the Mission*, a community gathered together for the sake of a common mission.