



MISSION STATEMENT

Defining the University's Mission

Many voices and more than 150 years of history meet in one memorably brief phrase.

By Kathleen McGarvey

"MELIORA" HAS BEEN THE UNIVERSITY'S motto for generations of students, alumni, and faculty members.

Now it's complemented by a newly developed mission statement: "Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—And Make the World Ever Better."

The 10-word statement was introduced to the campus community and trustees just

▲ **SUCCINCT STATEMENT:** The University printed special T-shirts—worn here by Lizzy Sieverding '12 (left), a brain and cognitive sciences major from Chappaqua, N.Y., and Olivia Cohn '12, an English major from Natick, Mass.—to celebrate the introduction of the new mission statement. Similar shirts are available from the University bookstore.

before commencement, to the rousing approval of both groups.

"A mission statement is not a statement about the future, but rather about what is enduring," says Provost Ralph Kuncel, who with Associate Provost Kathleen Moore oversaw the statement's development.

"It encapsulates and articulates the purposes, characteristics, and values of an institution, the core purposes and the actions that derive from them. It should explain what drives us, and what it is we are trying to create."

Kuncel notes that the best mission statements are both compelling enough to motivate those within the institution toward a unified purpose and short enough to be memorable.

Remarkably, the 16-month process—beginning with President Joel Seligman's

charge to Kuncel to develop a University-wide statement "that will identify our core values" and involving four focus groups with 46 members from across the University, plus a 14-member "creative panel" of original drafters, and many other constituencies—led to a statement only 10 words long.

"These 10 words allow the reader to project their goals and themselves within the context of an idea that is distinct to the University of Rochester, the action of Meliora," says Scott Strenger '12, president of the Students' Association for the 2010–11 year.

Kuncel expects the statement to be used in academic documents, including funding proposals and accreditation documents, and also as a complement to "Meliora" in other University publications.

"I think it will help us better tell our story for years and perhaps generations to come," he says. "There is probably no more authentic and succinct a university mission statement out there." ®