

All of us at Drake University consider our *Mission Statement* to be a *promise*—a promise to our students, their families, to our alumni, to society at large. The key elements of that statement guide our decision-making, our planning, our resource allocation, and our day-to-day behavior as a community. the mission statement reads:

Drake's mission is to provide an *exceptional learning environment* that prepares students for *meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishments, and responsible global citizenship*. The Drake experience is distinguished by *collaborative learning* among students, faculty, and staff, and by the *integration of the liberal arts and sciences with professional preparation*.

I would hope that that prose describes your experience at Drake, because—as I said—it's a *promise*. But we also recognized several years ago that behind those critical terms—*meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishment, responsible global citizenship*—there are important assumptions that those of us who think about these things all the time share and value, but that were probably fairly obscure to others, including our students.

So, after extensive discussions with faculty, staff and students, then-Provost Ron Troyer, then-Associate Provost John Burney and I decided to do what only three academics in the

humanities and social sciences can do—take a perfectly good, two-sentence statement and turn it into a four-page document, which is entitled the *mission explication*. We were, to put it simply, attempting to explain what Drake University’s Mission Statement *means*: what *are* the University’s responsibilities, in specific terms, to ensure that we deliver on our promise? And, equally important, what *are* the specific attributes of a graduate who is prepared for those three critical outcomes—meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishment, responsible global citizenship?

In a few minutes, you all are to receive a professional degree for which you’ve worked very, very hard. You are leaving here aspiring to assume leadership positions in vitally important segments of American society, and I want you to know that we are confident that you have what it takes to fulfill the considerable expectations and responsibilities that await you.

That confidence is derived from the specifics of Drake University’s *Mission Explication*, the specifics of the promise that we made to you when you enrolled. I’d like to share with you just a few of the essential attributes of Drake graduates listed in the section in the *Mission Explication* relating to “**professional accomplishment:**” it says that Drake graduates:

- hold themselves to high standards of integrity and accountability.
- raise ethical questions that lead beyond factual knowledge to informed choices.
- Pursue new knowledge with intellectual curiosity, rigor, honesty, and accountability.

It goes on to say that Drake graduates:

- are *reflective practitioners* with an understanding of the larger goals of stewardship inherent in their professional endeavors, and have a sense of obligation that extends beyond the self. They develop an ability to anticipate the consequences of their actions as well as a commitment to ethical conduct.
- Act to maintain professional practices that are consistent with their ethical judgment and stewardship responsibilities.
- Demonstrate the capacity to raise questions about the relationship of their profession to ethical and civic issues.
- Assume responsibility for the common good of local, national, and global communities.

I want to leave you with my hope that all of this sounds familiar to you—not only in the rhetoric, but more importantly, in the substance—that it sounds like the outcomes of your

experience at Drake, that it sounds like your aspirations for yourself, and that it sounds like we've kept our promise to you. But if we *have* kept that promise, I also want you to think about some of the key words in the passages that I just read to you—ethical conduct, stewardship, honesty and accountability, high standards of integrity, responsibility for the common good— and you can tell that we have very high aspirations for you.

Drake University is a very, very special place—after eleven years here, Maddy and I know that from our current students, from our colleagues and friends on the faculty and staff, and from the thousands of alumni we've met who tell us that their time at Drake was one of the most powerful experiences in their lives. We've also come to understand that graduating from Drake University is a *privilege*—it's a privilege that you yourselves have attained with hard work and often great sacrifice, but privilege entails *responsibility*, a responsibility to make things better than you found them, not just for yourselves, but—more importantly—for others. As you go forward, I hope that your sense of privilege for being a member of the Drake family provides you with satisfaction; I hope that your sense of responsibility drives you to do good and great things. In the meantime, please stay in touch with us; let us know if there are ways in which we can do even better in keeping our promise, and tell us how we can help you fulfill yours.