

To the Cooper Community.

Please find below a draft mission statement for The Cooper Union. We hope this draft will generate the kind of discussion and debate that will add to the renewed sense of institutional purpose at this time.

At the close of the academic year 2015-2016 Bill Mea, then acting President, presented the outlines of work required for strategic planning and for Middle States re-accreditation. He was also authorized by the trustees to assemble a sub-committee to review The Cooper Union's statement of mission. This draft presents the work of that sub-committee over the last semester. Its members are:

- Monica Abdallah, Student, ChE'17
- Peter Buckley (Chair) HSS Faculty
- Leslie Hewitt, Art Faculty, A'00
- Mauricio Higuera, Architecture Staff A'13
- Sangu Iyer, CUAA, CE '99
- Sam Keene, (MSCHE self-study liaison) Engineering Faculty
- Stan Mintchev, Engineering Faculty
- Elizabeth Rivera, Major Gifts, Alumni Affairs and Development
- Monica Shapiro, Academic administrator, Architecture
- Kevin Slavin, Trustee, A'95

As Rachel Warren, Chair of the Board of Trustees, indicated in her recent email to the Cooper Community, and as President Sparks reported to the Faculty-Student Senate at its meeting last week, an institutional strategic planning process that will incorporate the work of the Middle States Steering Committee and the Free Education Committee, among other efforts, will soon get underway. The debate and input we receive about the statement below will be important inputs into the formulation of a statement of vision, mission and values that the administration and Board will develop and adopt as part of the strategic planning process.

Since the last revision of the mission statement in 2001 many institutions have divided their "mission" from their "vision" statements and have devised other linguistic self-presentations including lists of key words that define their ethical values. Here the committee aimed to create a single page statement that was both aspiring and descriptive. Whatever language is finally approved by the Board of Trustees will have to be precise and compelling enough to produce institutional goals for the next planning period. We should be ready to state what we wish to work towards. We hope your response to this draft will help in that determination.

Please send your comments to the committee's email mission@cooper.edu. This draft will also be sent to the heads of administrative units, the academic Deans and the CUAA in the hope of receiving input that is the result of group discussion. The committee needs to know what people find missing by way of description or inspiration, whether the tone is appropriate or cloying, and whether the language is imprecise or inapt. We would like to receive such feedback by the end of March.

The committee will consider all responses and post a further annotated revision of the draft based on them in mid April.

Many thanks.
The sub-committee

Mission draft:

Founded in 1859 by Peter Cooper, philanthropist, inventor, industrialist and radical democrat, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art was among the first private institutions anywhere to admit students and the public without regard to race, religion, gender, status, or national origin. Lacking a formal education himself the founder mobilized his fortune so others could learn. Peter Cooper extended the enlightenment to all social classes through a free, practical education “to open the volume of nature by the light of truth,” unencumbered by debt or dependency. The institution continues to admit students on the basis of merit and potential, and awards scholarships to all enrolled. The Cooper Union strives to honor Peter Cooper’s vision to provide free education for all.

Located in the East Village, The Cooper Union values New York City as a site for learning and for service. The Great Hall, the city's historic platform for free speech, has witnessed debates on the most important issues facing the nation. Public events, outreach programming and continuing education opportunities offer informed civic discourse and cultural enrichment for the city and beyond.

The Cooper Union provides a rigorous professional education in the Schools of Architecture, Art and Engineering, enhanced by a broad curriculum from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Cooper Union seeks students who ask the question “What contribution should we make to the world?” Such students possess a strong work ethic and desire to become active thinkers and citizens who engage with the challenges before them. In doing so, The Cooper Union fosters a culture of collaboration among a diverse student body and faculty. Students learn that architecture, art and engineering have cultural, environmental and ethical contexts and consequences. In gaining an awareness of their own abilities they recognize their responsibility to advance Science and Art and to create a sustainable future. Peter Cooper trusted “that the students of this institution will do something to bear back the mighty torrent of evils now pressing on the world.”