

University Mission Statement

Adopted 10/25/1999

Educational Mission

Our mission at Stetson University is to provide an excellent education in a creative community where learning and values meet, and to foster in students the qualities of mind and heart that will prepare them to reach their full potential as informed citizens of local communities and the world.

At Stetson, the art of teaching is practiced through programs solidly grounded in a tradition of liberal learning that stimulates critical thinking, imaginative inquiry, creative expression, and lively intellectual debate. The art of learning is enhanced through small interactive classes, close student-faculty alliances, and collaborative approaches that provide the foundation for rewarding careers and advanced study in selective graduate and professional programs. We embrace diverse methodologies to foster effective communication, information and technological literacy, and aesthetic appreciation. We encourage the development of informed convictions, independent judgment, and lifelong commitments to learning that are characteristic features of the enlightened citizen. In bringing together learning and values, the University encourages all of its members to demonstrate personal integrity; to develop an appreciation for the spiritual dimension of life; to embrace leadership in an increasingly complex, interdependent, and technological world; and to commit to active forms of social responsibility.

Values and Vision

From its founding, Stetson University has affirmed the importance of spiritual life and the quest for truth in its educational mission. The University motto, *Pro Deo et Veritate* ("For God and Truth"), is a symbol of this commitment, and it expresses our determination to integrate the pursuit of a liberal education with the search for meaning in our lives and in our communities. Chartered as an independent and comprehensive university, Stetson has had an historical relationship with the Christian community and the Baptist denominations. That relationship has shaped our commitment to build an inclusive community. Today, the University includes persons from diverse religious, ethnic, cultural, economic, and intellectual backgrounds. It is thus from varying perspectives that members of the University community have joined together to affirm collectively:

- the centrality of knowledge, examined ideas, and independent judgment in the life of an educated person;
- the inherent dignity, worth, and equality of all persons;
- the importance of community in human life;
- the role of religious and spiritual quests for meaning in human experience;
- the value of diverse persons and differing ideas in an educational community;
- the responsibility we share to work toward social justice;
- the necessity for decisions to be guided by ethics and social responsibility; and
- the obligation of individuals and communities to act as responsible stewards of the natural environment.

In our curriculum and co-curricular activities, then, we aim to infuse traditional liberal education with the values of religious and spiritual life, ethical decision-making, human diversity and commonality, gender equity, community service, and environmental responsibility. We aspire to develop distinctive, innovative, and interdisciplinary

undergraduate and graduate programs that are centered on vigorous intellectual inquiry, informed by these values, increasingly global in perspective, and worthy of local and national recognition.

Heritage and Character

Florida's first private university, Stetson University was founded in 1883 by Henry A. DeLand, a New York philanthropist, as DeLand Academy. In 1887, the Legislature of the State of Florida enacted the Charter of DeLand University as an independent institution of higher learning. The university's name was changed in 1889 to honor John B. Stetson, the nationally-known hat manufacturer who gave generously of his time and means to advance the quality and reputation of the institution, and who served, with Mr. DeLand and others, as a founding trustee of the University. The first charter stated that the objective of the University should be "to promote the general interests of education, and to qualify its students to engage in the learned professions or other employments of society, and to discharge honorably and usefully the various duties of life." Stetson's first president, Dr. John F. Forbes, clearly described the commitment to teaching that has been a hallmark of the University throughout its history:

Buildings, libraries and apparatus are good and give added power, but the vital contact of students with a vigorous and stimulating mind and heart--this is the sine qua non of a successful education... The most important thing is to find men and women of large heart and mind, apt to teach and full of enthusiasm and stimulating power...to develop in the student the habit of independent judgment—of investigating statements and principles for oneself, and thus for oneself discover their truth or falsity.

Today, Stetson University is a non-sectarian, comprehensive, private university composed of individually strong undergraduate programs in various colleges and schools, and a selected group of academically distinctive graduate, professional, and continuing education programs. We seek academically talented individuals with leadership potential and records of personal growth and community service. We promote and support scholarly and creative activity among students, faculty, and staff as a means to enhance learning, teaching, and professional development, and as a contribution to the broader base of knowledge.