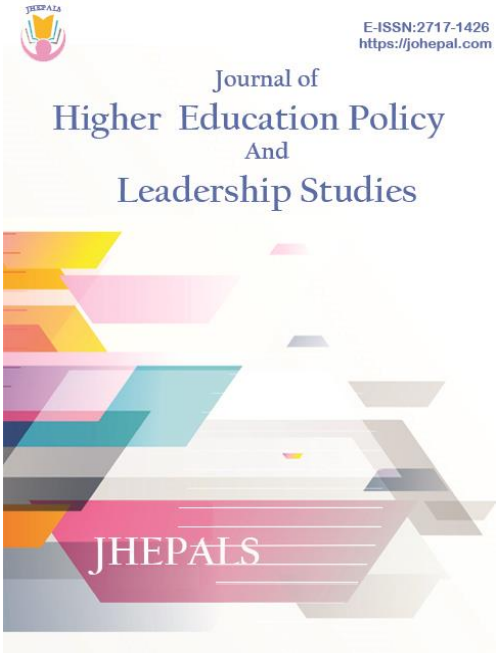
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What Mission Statements Say: Signaling the Priority of Leadership Development

Brittany Devies
Graduate Assistant,
Leadership Learning Research Center,
Florida State University, USA
Email: bdevies@fsu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3025-5613

Kathy L. Guthrie
Higher Education Program, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, College of Education, Florida State University, USA
Email: kguthrie@fsu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3209-0963

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Brittany Devies *
Kathy L. Guthrie

Abstract

Higher education has made leadership development an evident priority. This study examines institutional mission statements from the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS), of which 842 statements include the words "leader(s)" and/or "leadership" with the aim to provide context about institutional commitment to leadership. This content analysis reveals how the concepts of leader and leadership are described, contextualized, operationalized, and how purpose is framed for institutions who include this language in their mission statements. With only 16% of all institutional mission statements including leadership terminology, the authors explore the implications of how the terminology presents itself within the data and what it means that a majority of institutional mission statements do not include leadership development as a priority. Analysis on the content of mission statements who included leader and leadership in their mission statements is explored. Finally, implications about contextualizing and operationalizing these findings are presented.

Keywords: Leadership; Higher Education; Mission Statements; Leader

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* **Corresponding author's email:** bdevies@fsu.edu

Introduction

Since their inception, higher education institutions have been guided in their practice and purpose by their institutional mission statements. Oftentimes, mission statements are critical in signaling institutional priorities not only to those who are directly connected to the university, but for those who observe its culture. Stakeholders can better understand what institutions value by reading their mission statement. Institutional mission statements should be a foundational, guiding principle that share the purpose, goals, and deeply rooted values deemed central to the institution itself.

One of the aims of higher education in the United States has been to train leaders in the clergy, community, field of education, and more (Thelin, 2019). Two common goals of higher education are that graduates contribute to their communities and become engaged citizens (Meacham, 2008). Many institutions pride themselves on being leaders in academic disciplines and industries. Institutions also often pride themselves on training the next generation of leaders. Yet, little literature exists connecting the two concepts of mission statements and leadership. If mission statements exist to guide the aim of institutions and leadership development has historically been within the scope of higher education, more research and literature must exist about their intersections and operationalization.

This study looks to address the lack of literature and research on institutional mission statements, specifically analyzing mission statements that include "leader" and "leadership." This analysis aims to better understand mission statements that prioritize leadership in how they conceptualize the process of leadership and what it means for practice.

Situating Leadership Development in Institutional Mission Statements

Student leadership development is a commonly stated learning outcome in U.S. higher education (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012; Guthrie et al., 2013). Although leadership development has been a critical part of higher education in the United States since creating institutions to prepare future community leaders (Thelin, 2019), minimal research has been done on how leadership specifically shows up in institutional mission statements. Chunoo and Osteen (2016) wrote on the alignment of leadership education to institutional mission statements, stating "higher education's missions lie in the fact that across three guiding purposes of higher education (economic development and career readiness, critical thinking and a liberal education, citizenship and an engaged democracy), leadership education is ever-present as relevant and necessary" (p. 10).

Defining Leader and Leadership

Kellerman (2012) found there are more than 1,500 definitions and 40 models of leadership, which can lead to difficulty in comprehending the concept of leadership as a phenomenon. For this study, it is critical to acknowledge that leadership is a socially constructed process and holds different meaning to individuals based on their own lived experiences (Billsberry, 2009; Dugan, 2017; Guthrie et al., 2013; Guthrie et al., 2021; Volpe White et al., 2019). ACPA and NASPA, two major international cross-functional area higher education organizations, created professional competencies, of which, they define leadership as "both the individual

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role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad based constituencies and issues" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 27). This highlights how student affairs/services specifically defines leadership within the context of the profession and higher education. Guthrie et al. (2013) clarified leadership language is important because it can provide insight into our individual and collective worldviews. Considering this, it is essential to explain the foundational beliefs around leader and leadership in which this article operates from.

Leader development and leadership development are different. Leader development is focused on the individual through enhanced intrapersonal growth, understanding self, and enhancing our human capital as a leader, including the knowledge, skills, and experiences one possesses (Day, 2001; Dugan, 2017; Guthrie et al., 2021). Rather, leadership development is focused on understanding relationships and opportunities and expanding the collective leadership capacity of the group (Day, 2001; Dugan, 2017; Guthrie et al., 2021). While leader development focuses on the development of human capital, leadership development is focused on social capital, including networks and ways to increase organizational value (Guthrie et al., 2021). Emphasizing the importance of language, Guthrie and Jenkins (2018) state clearly, "[t]he language of leader and leadership directly influences who is identified as a leader, the development of leadership capacity (potential) in students, and the ability to reach students from all backgrounds" (p. 6). It is important to clarify leader and leadership development because "when used interchangeably, leadership becomes the work of one vs. all" (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018, p. 5), which does not align with how the authors define leadership, nor postindustrial models of leadership (Rost, 1991), which focuses on relationships and collective action.

Leadership as a Student Affairs/Services Professional Competency

Professional competencies are used to guide the profession in the capacity to perform general duties in one's profession, or to perform a specific professional task. ACPA and NASPA collectively proposed ten competencies for student affairs/services professionals, including the competency of leadership (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). "The Leadership competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority" and is divided into four concepts: education, training, development, and engagement (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 27). The first foundational outcome under education states, "Articulate the vision and mission of the primary work unit, the division, and the institution" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 27). Included as an intermediate outcome is, "Identify and understand systemic and organizational constructs of "leader" and "leadership" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 28).

As a core competency of student affairs and student services professional practice, it is evident leadership holds an essential place for students and student affairs practitioners on college campuses. Leadership can be understood as a lifelong process that builds on individual's identity, capacity, and efficacy (Bertrand Jones et al., 2016; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018; Komives et al., 2005; Parks, 2005; Pierre et al., 2020). Staff, faculty, and all administrators who work with students should consider themselves leadership educators. It is critical that all student affairs professionals intentionally create leadership learning opportunities in various contexts within the higher education environment (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). In 2015, Seemiller and Priest created the leadership educator professional

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identity model to conceptualize how faculty and staff create their own identity as a leader and how that influences their own development as a leadership educator. Priest and Jenkins (2019) went further to expand on leadership educator professional development within the college and university settings.

Mission Statements as Signals of Institutional Priority

Historically, one of the missions of higher education in America was to educate community and clergy leaders (Thelin, 2019). Foundationally, an institutional mission statement serves as a summary of the values and focus of that specific institution of higher education. "Some are an elegant sentence; some contain many rambling paragraphs. Some have endured unchanged since a college's founding; others have been frequently revised" (Meacham, 2008, para. 1). A functional mission statement provides the foundation in which an institution's vision and strategic plans of the future rest, gives employees a clear values framework, and can even serve as a source of inspiration for key stakeholders. Taylor and Cantwell (2019) remind us that higher education institutions are social entities and although they need money to exist, they do not focus on only creating revenue, but to focus on fulfilling their institution's mission statements. As Meacham (2008) eloquently states, "Mission statements are declarations of a campus's rationale and purpose; its responsibilities toward students and the community; and its vision of student, faculty, and institutional excellence" (para. 1).

An effective mission statement can also guide faculty, staff, and students in better understanding how to operate within the organizational interests and objectives, thus strengthening the overall success of the institution (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). Mission statements can serve as tools for starting conversations, addressing problems, and creating solution-oriented action (Meacham, 2008). Therefore, an institutional mission may serve a purpose that is less visible than the function of simply identifying purpose. This idea led us to ask how institutions used concepts of leader and leadership in their mission statements to convey a variety of organizational meanings.

Mission statements "should directly align with the calling, environment, and resources necessary to provide leadership education" (Chunoo & Osteen, 2016, p. 9). Many mission statements produce unattainable aims due to their broad rhetoric that may be limited in tangible outcomes (Carver, 2000). Additionally, Carver (2000) argues institutions would benefit from a shift from broad, philosophical foundations to more direct approaches to the institutional goals. When institutional mission statements are broad and philosophical, it raises the question of whether institutions use their mission statements in their daily practices or if they serve as simply a representation of the institution (Firmin & Gilson, 2009). Furthermore, Fugazzotto (2009) explored the confusion of institutional mission statements and suggested connecting mission statements to a physical space is a way to make mission statements more concrete.

Not only are the content and purpose of mission statements of interest, but also the ways in which they are used are important. An instrumental case study of nine community colleges conducted by Lake and Mrozinski (2011) specifically looked at how institutions are using the mission statements they have created in practice and to improve quality. In a study of nine community colleges, Lake and Mrozinski (2011) found mission statements serve three purposes in the strategic planning process: goal clarification, mission statements as a

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marketing tool, and accreditation requirements. They found that mission statements serve as decision makers, with the ability to identify institutional priorities, in addition to being used as marketing tools for the community colleges, and simply serving an accreditation requirement for their institution (Lake & Mrozinski, 2011). However, participants did indicate that there was conflict in mission statements having to serve multiple purposes that may not necessarily align, such as needing to be concise and outline institutional goals at the same time (Lake & Mrozinski, 2011). Institutions of higher learning are intended to serve interests of groups of people over engaging in specific sets of activities, and as a result should be created to frame how they will serve their recipients (Carver, 2000).

Methodology

Although studies have looked at institutional mission statements (Prins, 2002; Schnaubelt & Statham, 2007; Taylor & Morphew, 2010), less work has been done analyzing statements on a large scale. Additionally, our initial searches showed minimal literature on the intersections of leadership development and institutional mission statements. Our study looked at all 6,583 records from the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) 2018-2019 data set, which reports on all higher education institutions in the United States. Of the 6,583 institutional records, 2,675 institutions provided their mission statements, and 3,469 institutions provided web addresses to their institution's mission statement, which were located on their institution's website. Data cleaning was conducted to account for multiple campuses (1,066), closed institutions (49), and missing data (396), which yielded 5,072 institutional mission statements for analysis.

From the final dataset of 5,072 institutions, 425 mission statements included the word "leader(s)" and 417 included the word "leadership." While we acknowledge leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon, coding and analysis were conducted with the assumed definitions of leader as a person and leadership as a process. This distinction of leadership as a process and leader as a person, we felt it was essential to analyze these words separately to better understand how mission statements signal institutional priorities around these concepts. The research question for this study is:

- How do institutions use leader and leadership language in their institutional mission statements?

Conventional Content Analysis

From the cleaned dataset, a content analysis was conducted on the 425 mission statements included the word "leader(s)" and 417 included the word "leadership." For the purpose of this content analysis, our research question was: How were "leadership" and "leader" represented in institutional mission statements? Further, in our discussion and implications, we grappled with what these means for student affairs and leadership educator practice. Qualitative content analysis can be viewed as a flexible method for analysis, from interpretative analysis to strictly textual analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a method, it goes beyond counting words to analyzing language intensely with the intention to make meaning of large amounts of data and text into themes representing similar meanings with regard to the context of the text itself (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this study, analysis focused more on the explicit communication of the context and meaning of "leader" and

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"leadership" rather than the potential inferred or implied meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

There are multiple approaches to content analysis; in this study, we used a conventional context analysis that is defined by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) as an approach used to describe a phenomenon used "when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited" (p. 1279). In this approach, we allowed categories to emerge from the data itself through inductive, open coding, rather than through deductive coding from preexisting notions or themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Miles et al., 2020). First round coding emerged with the subthemes explored below, while second round coding resulted in the four emergent categories explored more in depth: contextual, operationalized, descriptive, and purpose; this approach to the data is consistent with conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Credibility in this process emerged peer debriefing amongst the research team and prolonged engagement within the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research team practiced prolonged engagement with this data as they worked for 18 months from time of the initial data collection to the writing of this article, with weekly meetings between this team to practice peer debriefing.

Researchers' Positionality Statement

A critical consideration of this research is our positionalities to the work. Our social identities, social location, and educational experiences undergird the lens in which we analyzed this data. As two leadership educators trained in and experience with student affairs, our socialization to the concept are from Western education. We believe leadership to be socially constructed but acknowledge and are aware of how most leadership research is from a Westernized lens and situated in the United States. In our content analysis, we operated with the framework and the assumption that leadership is a process and leaders are individuals engaged in the work. In our open coding approach, we worked to represent the mission statements as accurately as they were presented, our coding, analysis, and implications are all inevitably impacted by our positions to the work; however, we worked diligently to minimize this through constant reflection and discussion with experts in the field.

Findings

Out of the 5,072 mission statements included in our final content analysis, 842 (16.6%) included either "leader" or "leadership." 417 mission statements included "leadership" and 425 included "leader(s)" in their mission statements. Out of the 842 mission statements analyzed through this lens, four categories emerged from the content analysis of each statement: contextual, descriptive, operationalized, and purpose.

Leader(s)

"Leader" and "leaders" were included 425 times in mission statements within the data. In using the framework of "leader" as an individual, the coding focused on theming each case through that lens. While open coding was used to let the data best represent itself, the lens in which the message was analyzed was through the understanding that leader describes an individual person in each case. Within the data on "leader" in mission statements, over half of the cases came from a contextual understanding (281 of the 425). Following contextual

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in number of cases was descriptive with 123 occurrences. Finally, operationalized had 63 cases and purpose had 57 occurrences. Each theme is defined and explored more in depth below, including example cases for each category.

Descriptive

One category that emerged from the data was the use of descriptions to describe "leader." The theme of descriptive focused on words directly describing the type or traits valued in the leaders included in the statement. Some of these aligned with theories or models of leader development (ex: servant leaders) while some were more centered on adjectives, environments, or values of these leaders. The data showed 20 different terms to describe "leaders" in 123 occurrences within these mission statements. Table 1 shows the results in descriptions used to describe leaders. Other descriptions of leader(s) used in one and five cases include: engaged, compassionate, leader of character, effective, innovative, socially responsible, creative, cultural, principled, moral, visionary, emerging, perceptive, productive, progressive, and well rounded. While these sixteen descriptions had a smaller number of individual cases, they still emphasize the breadth of leaders being valued by institutions and the frequency in which descriptive words are used to describe the leaders at these institutions. Examples of cases that are descriptive in nature include "to apply a principled approach to their future roles as leaders in humanitarian service and as citizens in their communities," "to be servant leaders with Christ-like character," and "educates students to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders."

Table 1
Top Results in Descriptions of Leader(s)

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Servant	37	30.09%
Community	17	13.82%
Ethical	13	10.57%
Responsible	10	8.13%
Other Descriptions of Leader(s)	46	37.40%

Contextual

This category emerged with the most cases in the "leader" data within the analyzed mission statements. We understood the theme of contextual to mean there was a particular framing of who the leader was or what they might be. Often, this would align with the conditions or climate of the campus, institution, school type, region of the country, or founding purpose of the institution. We saw contextual framing of leader 281 times within the data (Table 2).

Within this, we found cases of faith and religious context, global context, the institution leading in educational contexts, industry-specific context, and societal context. Faith and religious contexts arose 107 times within the data for "leader" as referenced in mission statements. Industry-specific leaders were emphasized 80 times, encompassing industries such as healthcare, esthetics, business, beauty, veterinary, design, counseling, and more. The last theme with three unique cases was developing leaders within or for society. Contextual case examples include "to serve God's diverse world as leaders in churches, the academy, and public life," "develop global leaders committed to service, life-

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long learning and diversity," and "we prepare exceptional nurse leaders in an academic learner-centered environment." This theme includes (institutional leader) in education, which focuses on the institution as the leader, not necessarily the human capital within the institution. The data reveals examples such as, "to serve as a leader in educating aviation professionals," "aims to be a leader in online education for a global learning community," and "be the leader in providing post-secondary learning centered education programs."

Table 2
Top Results in Leader Contextualized

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Faith/Religious	107	38.08%
Industry-Specific, Career, and Entrepreneurial	80	28.47%
(Institutional Leader) In Education	47	16.73%
Global	44	15.66%
Developing Leaders for Society	3	1.07%

Operationalized

The third category that emerged from analyzing "leader" was the way in which the mission statement operationalized leaders (Table 3). While some cases of operationalized could look like they could align with several themes in this study, these cases were action orientated for the leaders. These cases focused on leaders who are working towards a goal. The tone of these mission statements often described these leaders as making change or preparing to engage in social change in these environments or situations. In 63 cases, this emerged as leaders working towards the betterment of society, leaders within and for a geographic region, or leaders for the next generation. Operationalizing leaders for a geographic region emerged as a call for the individual leader to mobilize in action for the betterment of the state or region, such as "producing leaders for Appalachia who possess high moral and ethical values, an attitude of self-reliance, a sense of purpose, and a spirit of service to others" and "builds the future of western Ohio by developing leaders." Additional examples include, "preparing leaders for the transformation of society," "educates and prepares future leaders to develop actionable solutions to global and ethical security challenges," and "building a community of lifelong learners who will become the leaders of tomorrow."

Table 3
Top Results in Leader Operationalized

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Next Generation, Future, Tomorrow	36	57.14%
For the Betterment of Society	20	31.75%
For a Geographic Region	7	11.11%

Purpose

The last category was leaders for a purpose (Table 4). While purpose language can feel broad, these cases emphasized a reason and intention for these leaders. These cases were often objective-driven, aspiring to a large commitment of these leaders and the institution's hope for them. In 57 cases, this presented as civic leaders, leaders as change agents, and the need to educate leaders. With just two unique cases in the data, social justice leaders

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were also mentioned. Within the purpose theme examples include "committed to cultivating diverse health professional leaders who are dedicated to social justice and health equity for underserved populations," "develop a diverse community of cultural and civic leaders and to advance progressive global citizenship," and "to educate, train, and prepare young men and women to be leaders capable of critical thinking and sound analysis, leaders who possess uncompromising character, and leaders able to meet challenging physical demands."

Table 4
Top Results in Purpose of Leader

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Educating Leaders	41	71.93%
Civic, Citizens, Change Agents	14	24.56%
Social Justice Leaders	2	3.51%

Leadership

"Leadership" was included 417 times in mission statements within the data. Undergirding our analysis of "leadership" in institutional mission statements is the foundation that leadership is a process. Open coding was used to best represent each case and then themed based on its situation to the leadership process framework. Operationalized had nearly half the cases within the "leadership" mission statement data (195 of the 417). Contextual had 141 of the 417 cases, purpose had 76 total occurrences, and finally descriptive had 72 cases within the data. All four categories are explored more in depth in the following section with definitions and example cases.

Descriptive

One category that emerged from the mission statements including "leadership" is descriptive with 72 total occurrences (Table 5). Descriptive as a category includes an explanation or portrayal of the style of leadership included. This occasionally aligned with a theory of leadership, like servant leadership, but more often was focused on the environment or style of leadership the mission statement was striving to achieve. This description of leadership was often about the students but also, in some cases, focused on the faculty, staff, or institution itself. Other descriptions with between one and five cases include: environmental, artistic, entrepreneurial, innovative, transformative, creative, enlightened, positive, professional, and visionary. Descriptive styles were less common, but we chose to keep them as specific in terminology as possible to show the breadth of descriptive terms used to describe the leadership process. Some case examples that are descriptive in nature include "provide educational and community leadership for the development of human ability," "responsible leadership to improve the quality of life for the community it serves," and "cultivates enduring intellectual growth, ethically grounded leadership, intentional faith exploration and meaningful service."

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What Mission Statements Say

Table 5
Top Results in Descriptions of Leadership

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Community	16	22.22%
Ethical	14	19.44%
Responsible	10	13.89%
Effective	8	11.11%
Servant	8	11.11%
Other Descriptions of Leadership	16	22.22%

Contextual

The second category for "leadership" with 141 occurrences was contextual (Table 6). Contextual came from mission statements that had a particular framing of "leadership" within a given context. This often included a campus context as well as beyond the institution itself. This category encompassed "leadership" framed by faith or religion, global perspectives, career preparation, and by a specific geographic region in which the institution resides. Career preparation cases are both broad and generalized but also included industries such as: health sciences, culinary education, engineering, math and sciences, horticulture, nursing, psychology, and business. Leadership for a geographic region emerged as additional context to where and why the leadership process was occurring, such as "promotes an integrated approach to problem solving that transforms lives and provides leadership for social, economic, and technological development across North Carolina and around the world" and "commitment to serve in leadership positions for communities throughout the New York area and beyond". Also, within the data for leadership contextualized with between one and five cases are: educational leadership (by the institution), major and educational program's leadership, and leadership within a family. Other examples within contextual theme include, "educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world," "train motivated individuals to become horticulturists of the highest caliber equipped to succeed in green industry leadership positions in both public and private sectors," and "each student is highly-educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success as a citizen in a global community."

Table 6
Top Results in Leadership Contextualized

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Faith/Religious	61	43.27%
Diverse/Global Society, Worldwide	45	31.91%
Career Preparation	19	13.48%
Geographic Region	9	6.38%
Other	7	4.96%

Operationalized

The most represented category in our analysis of "leadership" was operationalized. Operationalized context of "leadership" was driven by action, often focused on a goal around leadership. The 195 occurrences of this category centered around leadership preparation, future leadership, and leadership in service of others (Table 7). In addition, two other categories emerged in the data not presented in Table 7: pursuing leadership

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opportunities (five cases) and student's commitment to leadership (two cases). Examples of mission statements within this theme include: "empower students to obtain successful employment, develop leadership skills, and to serve their communities," "encourage the intellectual, spiritual, social, and cultural development of its students and to challenge them for future leadership and service to their local and global communities," and "educate students in spirit, mind, and body for leadership in service to others."

Table 7
Top Results in Leadership Operationalized

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Preparing Students for Leadership	100	51.29%
Leadership Development/Training	32	16.41%
Preparation for Leadership Positions/Roles	26	13.33%
Preparing Leadership Skills	11	5.64%
Leadership in Service of, Service Oriented	10	5.13%
Future Leadership	9	4.62%
Other Operationalizations of Leadership	7	3.59%

Purpose

The final "leadership" category of the data is purpose with 76 total occurrences (Table 8). Purpose in this analysis proved to be goal-driven, with an intention of the "leadership" the mission statement called for. Most the occurrences in this category were leadership for or within the institution itself or leadership as a value of the institution. In these cases, the focus was typically on the institution. Within the cases of leadership as a value or tenet of the institution, it was often explicitly addressed and was usually coupled with other topics like service, civic engagement, scholarship, lifelong learning, and more. Two other categories were in included in the analysis of purpose of leadership: civic leadership (three cases) and faculty leadership (two cases). Examples within the category of purpose include: "instill in our students the values of leadership, character, and service," "provide leadership and excellence in teaching, discovery, critical care, and service as a student-centered comprehensive research university," and "enriches like through comprehensive educational opportunities, a commitment to learner success, community engagement, and leadership."

Table 8
Top Results in Purpose of Leadership

Emerging Theme	Number of Cases	Percentage of Theme
Institutional Leadership	38	50%
Leadership as a Value/Tenet of Institution	33	43.42%
Other Purposes for Leadership	5	6.58%

Discussion and Implications

Mission statements are meant to drive the work of all institutional stakeholders to achieve a common purpose. As Chunoo and Osteen (2016) remind us, leadership development is present in the purpose of higher education through the goals of career readiness, critical thinking, and engaged citizenship. In the ACPA & NASPA Core Competencies (2015), an advance leadership engagement competency is to "develop and promote a shared vision

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that drives unit, divisional, and institutional short term and long-term planning and the ongoing organizing of work" (p. 25). This connection of mission statements, not just at an institutional, but to the division and program level, is evident. Better understanding what is included in not only the mission statements of institutions in which you are employed at, but as a collective field, is important to understanding the overall general landscape of higher education. The findings on how the terms leader and leadership are used in institutional mission statements reveal the need for reflection on current practice and the need for future research. Implications for educators and administrators includes the need to be familiar with the contextualization of institutional mission statements, how to operationalize mission statements, and how to intentionally develop ways to include leadership education in student affairs/services work to support and enhance the overall mission of your institution.

Contextualizing Leader and Leadership in Institutional Mission Statements

Being familiar with the mission statements in the contexts a program operates in is critical to align your work and practice with the broader goals of the institution, department, and work. Knowing your institutional mission statement also has practical outcomes with student engagement and involvement is important; Sullivan et al. (2013) emphasized "the importance of student familiarity with a college mission statement emphasizing obligations to others" (pp. 524-525), as they found significant findings that familiarity with institutional mission statements was associated with frequency of student volunteering. This same study showed increased likeliness in engaging religious community service, engaging in social justice projects, and generally student engagement in community service from student's familiarity with mission statements (Sullivan et al., 2013). Reflecting on whether students know the institution's mission statement, what is valued, and how that influences their education is important for mission critical work. Recognizing the values espoused in an institutional mission statement will assist in evaluating whether it is representative of the current needs of the student body, faculty, and staff, and how current programs support those values.

In the analysis of the 842 cases in this study, both student centered language and institution centered language are used, especially regarding leadership and being or becoming a leader. Contextualization of both the subject and audience of an institutional mission statement is important in better understanding and aligning your work. As this study's findings demonstrated, both faith/religious and global contexts were found in both mission statements that discussed leader and leadership. The frame of industry specific leaders was framed differently in how career preparation was critical for the process of leadership. These contextual differences signal varying goals for an institution. Another aspect to consider is how the contextualization of leader and leadership is used in mission statements can influence who is part of the decision-making process and how decisions are made regarding resources, both which signal the priority of leadership development at an institution.

As leadership educators and as a field, we operate from the assumption that leaders are individuals who engage in the leadership process (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Dugan, 2017; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). As evident in our findings, there are a plethora of conceptualizations, definitions, descriptions, and operationalizations of leaders and

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leadership in the mission statements analyzed. As we understand the leadership process to be a socially constructed phenomenon (Billsberry, 2009; Guthrie et al., 2013), there is inherently no right or wrong way to conceptualize leader or leadership. However, it is important to understand the frameworks and foundations in which these terms are used. This greatly influences how an institution conceptualizes leadership. For example, if an institutional mission statement indicates focusing on the preparation and development of industry leaders, leadership education programs may focus more on career development than service-learning, which is community focus. However, if an institutional mission statement focuses on preparing leaders for a geographic region, there may be less emphasis on global perspectives and more on local social issues. Contextualizing leader and leadership have influence in signaling institutional priorities. If mission statements ground and drive the work of higher education, it is critical to know the way they not only contextualize leadership, but how they operationalize it in the priorities of the institution through resources and programs.

Operationalizing Leadership in Mission Statements

Previous studies have been conducted on the operationalization and influence of mission statements on student behavior, engagement, and learning (Leonard & Huang, 2014; Fugazzotto, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2013). As discussed, understanding the framing of how leader and leadership is used in mission statements will allow educators to better conceptualize the grounding of leadership work on their campuses. Findings in this study revealed how institutional mission statements used the word leader to focus on the future and for the betterment of society. However, the word leadership was operationalized more frequently in mission statements to focus on preparing students to engage in leadership, for specific roles and skills, and in a service capacity. Although the purpose of this study was not to examine how institutions specifically practice content of mission statements, the findings speak to the focus of leadership development and preparing students for leadership either broadly or in a specific area is seen.

As mentioned, ACPA and NASPA (2015) conceptualizes the leadership competency of student affairs/services educators as to "identify and understand systemic and organizational constructs of "leader" and "leadership" (p. 28). In which it is necessary to, "articulate the vision and mission of the primary work unit, the division, and the institution" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 27). This alignment is critical in not only the development of a student affairs/services professional competency, but how the leadership learning opportunities they develop aligns with institutional priorities. This alignment is not only critical for the operationalization at a programmatic level, but how leader and leadership support strategic planning.

Navigating Complexity of Strategic Planning

Meacham (2008) states that institutional mission statements can give direction "from allocating resources and planning for the future to holding administrators accountable or building the skills essential for citizenship in a democracy and the global economy" (para. 2). Lake and Mrozinski (2011) discuss the influence of institutional mission statements to strategic goal clarification, overall marketing and institutional branding, and alignment with accreditation requirements. This influence on strategic planning can be critical for using

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mission statements as active documents that not only signal an institution's priorities but drives resources and the purpose of an institution. As Lake and Mrozinski (2011) offer, the efficacy of institutional mission statements depends on the clarity of purpose for which they are created. While this is an intuitive statement, oftentimes clarify of purpose is more difficult to achieve. Findings from this study not only illuminated how inconsistent mission statements used the terms of "leader" and "leadership", but demonstrates how important the clarity of purpose is, especially when working towards navigating how mission statements influence strategic planning.

As this study's findings suggest, educating leaders emerge as a purpose of using the word leader in institutional mission statements. However, when focusing on the process of leadership in mission statements, providing institutional leadership within higher education is what emerges as the purpose of leadership. Leadership as a value of the institutional also emerged as important as a purpose of leadership in mission statements. Situating the purpose of leader and leadership in these ways help highlight how important being familiar, contextualizing, and finding ways to connect to an institution's strategic planning can help align priorities and goals.

Reflecting on how leader and leadership are used in institutional mission statements, especially in connection with the ACPA and NASPA competencies (2015) can not only help your own professional development but assist in program development at your institution. Several questions can be asked to help your own journey in making sure you understand what your institutional mission statement is signaling to you, as a professional. Questions include:

Are "leader" or "leadership" in your institutional mission statement? If so, what is the context it is used? Do you see how leader or leadership is operationalized on your campus? If not, how do you think the exclusion influences the prioritization of leadership education on your campus? We acknowledge these are not always easy questions to answer but are critical to understanding the direct connection between as an administrator to the larger goals and mission of the institution. If you specifically offer leadership learning opportunities to students as a part of your position, it is essential to know if the values and priorities of your division, department, or office are represented in the institution's mission statement.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to show on a national scale the inclusion and exclusion of the words of leader and leadership in institutional mission statements. With only 16% of institutions in the dataset including these concepts in their mission statements, there is a lot of room for growth to show higher education's commitment to leadership development. Exploring how these complex concepts are used in mission statements can signal the importance of leadership development. It is our hope that these findings prompt not only implications for practice, but also follow-up studies and research on the operationalization and influence of mission statements on leadership development on college campuses.

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Ms. Brittany Devies (she/her) is a Ph.D. candidate at Florida State University studying higher education. Brittany is a graduate assistant for the Leadership Learning Research Center, where she works on research and scholarship around collegiate leadership learning. She is a lead instructor for the Undergraduate Leadership Studies Certificate. Her research interests include the intersections of gender and leader identity, capacity, and efficacy development, culturally relevant leadership learning, and the experiences of women in higher education. Her dissertation work explores the phenomenon of undergraduate women's leader capacity and efficacy development. In 2020, she was awarded NASPA-FL's Graduate Student of the Year Award and ACPA's Annuit Coeptis Emerging Professional Award. She was also named a 33 under 33 featured alumnus by Delta Delta Delta National Fraternity. She received her M.S. (Higher Education) from Florida State University and her B.S.Ed. in Early and Middle Childhood Studies with a minor in Leadership Studies from The Ohio State University.

Dr. Kathy L. Guthrie is associate professor in the higher education program, director of the Leadership Learning Research Center, and coordinator of the Undergraduate Certificate in Leadership Studies at Florida State University. Kathy's research focuses on leadership learning, socially just leadership education, and professional development for student affairs professionals in leadership education. Kathy has developed and taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership and higher education. Kathy has authored/co-authored over 50 refereed journal articles and book chapters, and co-edited 4 issues in the New Directions series. She co-authored Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning, Engaging in the Leadership Process: Identity, Capacity, and Efficacy of College Students, and The Role of Leadership Educators: Transforming Leadership and co-edited Shifting the Mindset and Changing the Narrative: Socially Just Leadership Education. Guthrie has served on several editorial boards and is currently the associate editor of the New Directions in Student Leadership series.

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