

Assurance Argument

Adler Graduate School - MN

7/30/2019

1 - Mission

1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A - Core Component 1.A

The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

Argument

Adler Graduate School (AGS) has the vision of being "*a leader in empowering and developing mental health and human service professionals to transform society through social interest in action*" and in order to achieve this vision the college operates according to a mission of "***Preparing mental health and human service professionals with a strong Adlerian foundation to foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging to the individuals, families, and culturally diverse communities they serve***". The core values that guide the college in pursuing this mission are

- quality education
- Adlerian principles (sense of community, belonging, and significance; responsibility and accountability; encouragement; horizontal functioning; strength-based approaches to human services)
- diversity
- institutional sustainability.

These vision, mission, and core values provide the framework for all institutional processes and decisions.

1.A.1 - The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.

Joining the HLC Assessment Academy triggered an examination of the AGS vision and mission statements in effect at the time. This examination revealed that those statements were outdated and no longer representative of the School's direction, leading to a process of developing new vision and mission statements. A newly formed strategic planning committee was tasked with identifying the core values of AGS to serve as basis for the development of a new vision and mission statement for the School. Although the group was successful in identifying the School's core values, they were not successful in creating a vision and a mission statement that accurately captured the AGS community thoughts about the School.

In December 2017, with the retirement of then-president Dr. Daniel Haugen, AGS hired a new president, Dr. Jeffrey Allen. This change in leadership led to significant cultural, structural, and operational changes. With a new commitment to the Adlerian values of belonging, encouragement, significance, social contribution, and horizontal functioning, a new [organizational structure](#) was developed, emphasizing shared leadership. Dr. Allen, who came to us with significant knowledge about institutions of higher education including development and accreditation processes, instituted a steering committee for strategic planning and accreditation, whose first task was to guide the review process of AGS's vision and mission statements.

Steps followed by the committee included:

- A draft of [Vision and Mission statements, Core Values, and Strategic Goals](#) was developed and submitted to stakeholders (students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators) for feedback; feedback from surveys was analyzed by the steering committee and used as basis for updating both statements; core values and strategic goals received very positive feedback and only required minor re-wording.
- Revised versions of mission and vision statements were submitted for feedback at the Faculty Development Day (1/17/18) and approved by the group.
- Vision, mission, core values, and strategic plan were submitted to the AGS Board of Directors and unanimously [approved](#).

Later in the year, with the creation of a new, non-clinical program (Applied Adlerian Psychology) focused on human services professionals serving in capacities other than mental health, the mission statement was slightly modified to include this new focus area. This revised version of the mission statement, stated in the first paragraph of this argument, was also approved by stakeholders and the board of directors.

1.A.2 - The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.

As briefly described in the [admissions Viewbook](#), AGS offers two master's degrees, one in Applied Adlerian Psychology in Leadership (initially named only Applied Adlerian Psychology) and one in Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy. Three programs lead to the degree in Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy:

- Art Therapy
- Counseling, which is offered in three specialties:
 - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Co-Occurring Disorders and Addictions Counseling
 - Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling
- School Counseling

AGS also offers certificates:

- [Post-master's certificate in Counseling](#). This certificate is offered in two specialties:
 - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling
- [Post-master's certificate in School Counseling](#)
- [Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders and Addictions Counseling](#)
- [Certificate in Applied Adlerian Psychology in Leadership](#)

Each of AGS's master level programs is directly related to the institutional mission by meeting high academic standards (discussed in detail in **Component 3**), providing students a strong Adlerian foundation, and promoting equity and diversity. This is demonstrated through encouragement, by providing a strong advising structure, and by offering service opportunities for students to develop competence for working with diverse populations. Certificates contribute to the college's mission by providing an Adlerian foundation to graduates of other institutions who may not have had the benefit of receiving an Adlerian foundation and by helping potential mental health and human services professionals to obtain the additional education they need in order to obtain licensure and to join the workforce in their professional areas. The [Adler Institute for Continuing Education](#) adds to the pursuit of our mission by offering affordable and quality continuing education programs to area professionals, increasing their knowledge and skills to better serve their communities.

AGS's [admission requirements](#), do not include scores from GRE or other culturally biased standardized tests, and have provisions for allowing conditional admission and supporting conditionally admitted students. These admission procedures support the School's value of creating and maintaining an inclusive campus and our mission of serving diverse communities. The [student body demographics for Fall 2018](#), which are representative of our continuous enrollment, show that approximately 17% of AGS' student population identify as non-white (1.7% American Indian, 3.0% Asian, 2.7 % Hispanic/Latino, and 9.4% African American/Black). This ethnic diversity resembles the area diversity, according to data retrieved from the US Census Bureau (3/7/19), which describes the Minnesota population as 84.4% White, 1.4% American Indian, 5.1% Asian, 5.4% Hispanic/Latinx; and 6.5% African American/Black, for a total of 18.4% non-white). The majority (83%) of our students are female, and ages vary from 21 to 76, which is consistent with the general demographics of the counseling profession. In addition, AGS recruitment and admission materials recognize gender identity fluidity by adding an option for choosing "other" rather than offering only a binary choice. AGS remains committed to recruiting and retaining an increasingly diverse student body, both through continuous improvement of recruitment methods and by providing support services based on equity and on promoting success of all students.

AGS supports students through a number of services, including [financial aid](#), [targeted tuition scholarship](#) discounts, [disability support](#), [writing support](#), [library](#) services aimed at promoting access to a wide range of information sources, [career assistance](#), and [technology support](#). Each of these departments/services recognizes and supports students' strengths, aims at encouraging students to develop to the best of their abilities, and contributes to the institutional mission of preparing quality mental health and human services professionals with a strong Adlerian foundation to serve diverse communities.

1.A.3 - The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission.

AGS is a not-for-profit private institution with the mission of preparing mental health and human service professionals with a strong Adlerian foundation to foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging to the individuals, families, and culturally diverse communities they serve. As such, 92% of the School's [operating budget](#) goes toward instruction, student services, student success services, and institutional support and sustainability, with the remaining 8% being dedicated to building and facilities.

Grounded on the four core values of quality education, Adlerian values, diversity, and institutional sustainability, the [institutional effectiveness plan](#) provides the scaffolding for institutional planning and operations. These values and institutional plan led to two major organizational changes in 2018:

the implementation of shared leadership and full-time faculty models.

As part of the shared leadership process, budgeting includes discussions within each institutional unit, intended to identify resources needed or desired, followed by discussion by a leadership group (consisting of the President; the Vice-President for Finances; the Directors of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Admissions and Student Success Services; a Program Chairs representative; and the HR/Administrative Assistant) to examine the needs of each unit within the context of resources available. Budget priorities are identified in these meetings, with the intent of maximizing the use of resources in order to accomplish the institutional mission. Details of budgeting priorities and planning will be discussed in the response to **component 5.C.1**.

As part of the re-structuring undergone by the institution in 2018, a full-time faculty model was introduced. This movement from a 100% adjunct faculty model to a model that recognizes the importance of full-time faculty in developing curriculum, establishing best-practices in instruction, advising, and in program evaluation reflects the priority placed on the mission of preparing quality mental health and human service professionals. During the 2018-2019 academic year AGS hired [16 full-time faculty members](#), of which five hold doctorates in counselor education and supervision, two are ABD in the same field, four hold doctoral degrees in other disciplines, and the remaining five hold master's degrees and professional licenses, and are highly qualified in their areas of expertise. The financial investment necessary for the establishment of this full-time faculty model is testament to the institutional commitment to its mission.

Sources

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- WEB_Financial Aid.pdf
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1.B - Core Component 1.B

The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

Argument

AGS's mission is articulated publicly on printed materials, our website, classrooms, and on audio-visual materials (such as slides) when we do presentations.

1.B.1 - The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.

AGS's vision and mission statements, as well as its four core values, are published as a page in the School's [website](#) and posted in all [classrooms](#). The mission and core values also serve as the framework for our [institutional effectiveness plan](#), our [budgeting](#), and our [institutional](#) and [program-specific assessment plans](#). In addition, the institution's mission and vision are represented in every issue of the AGS [newsletter](#), which is distributed via constant contact, social media, and published online both in pdf and webpage formats.

1.B.2 - The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

AGS is a teaching institution, fully focused on the mission of preparing mental health and human service professionals with a strong Adlerian foundation to foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging to the individuals, families, and the culturally diverse communities they serve. The pursuit of this mission is founded on four core values, namely quality education, Adlerian principles, diversity, and institutional sustainability. In pursuing this mission, the AGS hopes to make continuous progress toward the vision of being "a leader in empowering and developing mental health and human service professionals to transform society through social interest in action."

This mission statement was created in early 2018 and [updated](#) in August of the same year to include the newly created program in Applied Adlerian Psychology (now named Applied Adlerian Psychology in Leadership). The development of this program, created to replace a then-existing program in Adlerian Studies that did not have a target audience, was in itself an effort to better meet the mission of serving diverse communities by preparing [human service professionals](#) who work in areas other than mental health.

The [institutional effectiveness plan](#), which is firmly grounded on our vision, mission, and core values, guides institutional planning and evaluation. This document identifies mission- and value-based key performance indicators in each of the aspects of the School's mission. The document is a living-document that is updated as goals are achieved and new areas for improvement are identified. Internal and external constituents can access the document via AGS's website.

1.B.3 - The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides

The nature and scope of the academic programs offered by AGS were listed in response to **Component 1.A.2** and include master's of arts degrees that qualify graduates for work in mental health and other human services fields, as well as certificates in applied Adlerian psychology in leadership, counseling, and school counseling. In addition to these academic programs, AGS offers [continuing education programs](#) that serve current students, alumni, and other area professionals.

AGS mission is focused on serving diverse communities, which includes providing education to a diverse student body that in turn provides mental health and other human services to diverse communities. Equity and accessibility to services are important aspects to be considered when pursuing this mission, and AGS is committed to attracting and supporting students from communities that are under-represented in graduate education in general and in mental health and other human services professions in particular. The School's admission requirements, 2018-19 [student recruitment outreach](#) efforts, and diversity-promoting recruitment [plan for 2019-20](#) reflect this commitment.

AGS invests in establishing [partnerships](#) with agencies that offer services to diverse communities. By offering tuition scholarships to these agencies' employees, AGS increases community members' access to mental health services, while placement of students for field experience in these agencies helps increase graduates' competence in working with diverse populations.

As part of preparing students to “foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging” to the diverse communities they serve, AGS strives to secure field experience sites that serve populations of diverse cultural and socio-economical status backgrounds, both for students in [clinical tracks](#) and in [school counseling](#). In addition, AGS engages in providing service opportunity to students through the [Art Therapy Service Center](#), which provides services to aging communities and populations with different types of ability, and the [School Counseling Service Center](#), which provides direct and indirect services to underserved schools. AGS is also actively engaged in providing [ADA accommodations to students with disabilities](#) and in providing additional [support to students who are conditionally admitted](#).

Sources

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1.C - Core Component 1.C

The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

1.C.1 - The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.

The role of AGS in a multicultural society is clearly expressed in the graduate school's mission statement, "*preparing mental health professionals with a strong **Adlerian** foundation to foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging to the individuals, families, and **culturally diverse communities they serve**". (Bold added for emphasis.) As one of the institution's four core values, diversity serves as one of the pillars that form the framework defining AGS's goals, processes, and improvement plans. Because diversity is so central to AGS's mission, our efforts to recruit students from diverse communities, to provide services to underserved communities, and to place students in sites where they can serve and learn from individuals and families of different cultural and socio-economical backgrounds were also discussed under **component 1.B**.*

Although not so clearly spelled out, attention to cultural diversity is also reflected in the [Adlerian principles](#) that form a second pillar of this framework, as they show how the role of individuals in the social group to which they belong and the extent to which they contribute to the group are directly related to individual and community health.

1.C.2 - The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Preparing all students for service to all types of communities is one of the four broad strategic goals that guide AGS's [institutional effectiveness plan](#). In order to achieve this goal, the School identified four intermediate goals, to which each of the organizational units contribute with narrower specific objectives. These goals, processes, and activities developed to pursue them are:

- **Seek out, identify, attract, and retain an increasingly diverse student body, staff, faculty, and board of directors to promote opportunities for understanding different perspectives.** Examples of activities and processes that contribute to this effort include: [intentional admission efforts](#); intentional recruitment of faculty from diverse backgrounds; tuition discount [scholarships](#) offered to members of the military community, to employees of strategic community partners that offer services to underserved communities, and to members of the Native American community. [Ethnic diversity among faculty](#) increased by 8% between April 2018 and June 2019 and increased diversity/inclusion is one of the priorities orienting the development of a [plan for recruitment](#) of new Board members.
- **To sustain, improve, and promote a sense of safety, belonging, and significance for all students.** This includes Title IX training required for all faculty and staff and available to students; [professional development](#) events for faculty and staff focused on diversity and

inclusivity; [Adlerian students in Action](#), an open-membership student association that aims at increasing connectivity, inclusivity, and belonging among students; and Social Interest in Action, a staff-led group that promotes belonging and significance by 1) providing [opportunities for contributing](#) to the mental health community and 2) promoting connection among AGS members by recognizing birthdays and individual contributions to the greater good. One of the objectives of the monthly [writing contest](#) sponsored by the Writing Center is also to promote connectivity and a sense of belonging among students.

- **To increase multicultural counseling awareness, knowledge, and skills through curricular experiences.** [One three-credit course](#) is fully focused on multicultural and social-justice counseling competencies (MSJCCs). In addition, opportunities to develop multicultural and social justice awareness, knowledge, and skills are infused throughout the curriculum and at the end of their program students must demonstrate in their [portfolio defense](#) how they developed these competencies. All students are expected to participate in service activities during their career at AGS, and their participation in such activities is evaluated during the portfolio defense, according to the [service activities rubric](#).
- **To provide extracurricular opportunities for students to develop multicultural and social justice counseling competencies.** Examples include activities of the [Art Therapy Service Center](#); the [School Counseling Service Center](#); development of field experience sites that represent area diversity, both in [clinical specialties](#) and in [school counseling](#); and opportunities for immersion learning in [Jamaica](#) and [Romania](#).

Serving students from underrepresented cultural groups is instrumental in increasing access to care for members of these groups. In addition to the [2018-19](#) and planned [2019-20 intentional efforts](#) to recruit students from underrepresented groups, AGS also holds a designation as a [Military Friendly® school](#). As discussed above, AGS offers tuition discounts for employees of community partners who provide services to underserved communities. These community partners, in turn, also serve as field experience sites for our students, which increases students' opportunities to work with members of these communities.

AGS administrators, staff, and faculty recognize that recruiting students from underserved communities is not enough and that processes need to be in place to promote these students' success. As such, AGS is committed to retaining these students by providing academic and extracurricular support to promote their success, including [accommodations](#) for students with learning disabilities, [academic advising](#), [writing support](#) for all students and specialized writing support for students for whom English is a second language, and active support to students who are [conditionally admitted](#). AGS understands that not all students learn the same way. In order to meet a variety of learning styles we offer experiential learning activities in the classroom, immersion opportunities outside of the classroom, and online courses. For example, to demonstrate learning in our online courses, students can write, video, or audio tape themselves answering a question.

Policies against discrimination, gender-based misconduct, sexual misconduct, alcohol and drug abuse, policies protecting freedom of inquiry and expression, and policies promoting ethical behaviors are published in the [Catalogue/Student Handbook](#), in the [Employee Handbook](#), and in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

Sources

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1.D - Core Component 1.D

The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

Argument

1.D.1 - Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.

As discussed in previous sections, AGS's mission statement recognizes the public as the ultimate beneficiary of the education provided to our students. To this end, decisions are made with the understanding that a) educational institutions must be mindful of the needs of local, regional, and global communities, and b) quality education requires both strong curricula and extracurricular opportunities to interact with and contribute to different communities.

The types of degree-granting programs offered by AGS reflect the national and regional growing needs for mental health professionals in general and for counselors in particular, as these are the only mental health professionals who operate from a developmental, strength-based perspective (while psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers follow a deficit-based medical model). [Data for the state of Minnesota](#) show a shortage of mental health professionals in general and of professional counselors in special, which AGS hopes to help fill with graduates from the Art Therapy and Counseling programs. Likewise, the state of Minnesota has one of the worst counselor-to-student ratios (approximately 1:700, when the American School Counselors Association defines the ideal as 1:250) and the School Counseling program strives to help fill the gap. In addition, the [Applied Adlerian Psychology](#) program was created to fill what we see as a need for non-clinical human service professionals who operate from a strength-based, collaborative, and encouraging perspective. [Tuition scholarships](#) offered by AGS to its community partners and to members of the Native American and military communities is also a way to increase the number of counselors and art therapists in the region and to reduce the gap between need and service providers.

To fulfill our obligation to the public, it is also necessary to prepare these professionals to offer high quality services. This requires attention to both curricular and extra-curricular elements.

Curricula for the programs that lead to the degree in Adlerian Counseling and Psychotherapy are based on the academic standards defined by the organizations that provide national accreditations and/or state board approvals for such programs. While AGS' programs are not nationally accredited by these organizations (CACREP for Counseling and School Counseling and CAAHEP for Art Therapy) we have designed our curriculum to meet the curricular standards set by them, as these standards are recognized as the best practices in counselor and art-therapist education. As a result,

Art Therapy curriculum meets [CAAHEP](#) standards and Counseling curriculum (including the Clinical Mental Health, Co-Occurring Disorders and Addiction, and Marriage, Couple, and Family specialties) meets [CACREP curricular standards](#). School Counseling meets [ASCA](#) standards, which are approved by the MN Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board and also recognized nationally as best practice in School Counselor education. The [curriculum for the Applied Adlerian Psychology](#) was carefully designed by Adlerian experts to provide a strong foundation to non-clinical human service professionals.

Counselor education programs have an obligation to protect the public by functioning as gatekeepers to the counseling profession, which requires monitoring both academic preparation and students' development of appropriate professional attitudes and behaviors. To this end, AGS has implemented a process to support the development of the expected [professional dispositions](#), to develop remediation strategies when deficits are encountered, and ultimately to re-direct students to other professional choices if/when the student fails to develop in these areas. Academic rigor, a fiduciary obligation AGS holds toward its students and those who will be served by its graduates, is discussed in detail under **component 3**, and processes for assessment of student learning and for program evaluation are discussed under **component 4**. In brief, AGS has policies and procedures in place to uphold academic rigor (described in the [Faculty Handbook](#), [Manual of Online Learning](#), and [Catalogue/Student Handbook](#)), as well as procedures to [assess student learning](#) and for [program evaluation](#).

1.D.2 - The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

AGS is an independent not-for-profit organization and, as such, does not have a parent organization nor investors. The college also does not support any external interests and is focused exclusively on its educational responsibilities.

1.D.3 - The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.

In addition to having a Board of Directors that represents diverse sectors of the local communities, and a broader range of the Adlerian community and of higher education, AGS' programs have [advisory councils](#) (as represented here by the School Counseling program).

AGS recognizes the importance of outreach and engages with stake-holding communities in a number of ways:

- [Scholarships for community partners](#);
- Continuing education training for area professionals, via the [Adler Institute for Continuing Education](#);
- [Free supervision training](#) for professionals who supervise field experience for our students;
- On-campus activities for seniors and persons with disabilities, via the [Art Therapy Service Center](#), exemplified here by their partnership with the [Epilepsy Foundation](#);
- School counseling services and training for underserved schools, via partnerships with the [School Counseling Service Center](#); one of these partnerships has resulted in the creation of an [award-winning program](#);
- Training for area school counselors on a regular basis, offered by School Counseling faculty;
- Providing opportunities for master's-holding counselors to obtain specialty [certificates](#) and to

take isolated courses required for higher licensure.

- Reach-out and [articulation agreement](#) with Argosy University to provide Argosy students who were suddenly abandoned an opportunity to finish their degrees.

Sources

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- WEB_Scholarship information

1.S - Criterion 1 - Summary

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Summary

AGS's mission was revised through a process that involved all stakeholder groups, with final approval by the Board of Directors in August 2018. With a focus on preparing mental health and human services professionals to offer quality services to diverse communities, this mission guides all of AGS's operations, including recruitment of students and faculty, budgeting, academic programs, and student support services.

The mission is articulated in multiple ways including recruitment materials; employee, faculty, and student Handbooks; and newsletter. In addition to all these vehicles published on the AGS website, the vision, mission, and core values statement is posted in all classrooms and discussed in all institution-wide activities.

One of the four core values providing the framework for institutional goals and operations is diversity, and the mission statement recognizes the public as the ultimate beneficiary of the education provided to our students. To this end, decisions are made with the understanding that a) educational institutions must be mindful of the needs of local, regional, and global communities; and b) quality education requires both strong curricula, effective instruction and student support, and extracurricular opportunities to interact with and contribute to different communities.

As a stand alone not-for-profit organization, Adler Graduate School's obligations are centered exclusively on its constituents: students and the communities they serve. As such, AGS operations reflect mindfulness not only about the quality of education offered but also about financial management and engagement with external communities. Commitment to quality education is reflected in the quality of faculty, curriculum and academic rigor, and student support. Engagement with external stakeholders takes a number of different shapes including direct service through service centers, tuition scholarships for community partners, continuing education programs for community professionals, and immediate response to unpredicted events (such as Argosy's University sudden closing).

Sources

There are no sources.