

***Mission Questions to Consider During Any Decision Discernment
-- and During a Crisis / Post Crisis for Institutions of Mercy ¹***

General Questions for Mission Decision Making - Short List

1. Whose voices are at the table of decision making?
Whose are not? -- Are there people at the table who are silent?
Are those present sensitized to the complexities of biases, prejudices and racism and able to speak-up when needed?
2. What values are expressed in our particular response/action?
3. How does this decision/action reflect our mission?
4. Who will benefit from this decision/action?
Who will pay or lose some benefit or value?
Who will carry the work of this decision/action?
5. How do our *Mission Integration Core Areas* influence our decision?
How are these areas impacted?
6. Given present constraints, opportunities, and learning, is there a way to more deeply align our action/response with our mission?

During a Crisis

How we move through difficult times speaks volumes about who we are as people of Mercy.

As Mercy, we espouse values and ideals, a call to grow in character, and to attend to the common good. As institutions of higher learning we know the necessity of good information, facts, analysis, reason and honest dialogue in the sciences, humanities, and the arts, which can and do lead to better understandings of humankind and the world in which we live. — As Mercy, we know it is essential that we do this work with a sense of respect, compassion and fairness for each person involved, while tending to the essential nature and purpose of our mission to educate.

Thus, it is important that we pause and consider our decisions and actions during a crisis and post crisis in order to see where we are in sync with our Mission goals and values, as well as where there may be disjointedness, inviting us to understand our actions and processes more clearly, and with compassion and resolve to improve going forward.

--Consider the following questions for reflection and dialogue:

Describe features of your experience for you and your college/university? (Do not expect this to be an organized story.)

¹ Compiled in dialogue with Mission Officers across Mercy Higher Education. Special appreciation to Dr. Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley for her contribution of three important questions to the Quick List.

What is most difficult? What is most challenging in terms of being a Mercy institution and wanting to respond as such?

What is surprising you in a good way, and in a disturbing way about where you find yourself and the institution?

Are you getting reliable information that informs the decision making processes?

What are you learning about the processes that your institution follows to gather information, make decisions, and supports follow through? -- What works/does not work? What does, “its working or not working” look like?

Are there points when Mercy values seem to be secondary to the need to get on with things?

What helps to keep a process moving, yet attentive to values your institution names as important to being Mercy?

What impedes this happening?

Where do you feel called to lead? How are you leading? -- When do you follow and do your duty accordingly?

Is there any particular experience where you feel you are especially aware of the “grace of God” in the midst of this regarding your institution?

Who or what inspires you to carry on with your best efforts?

What are you learning about yourself and your institution’s community during this experience?

When brainstorming possible responses to situations are raised that ultimately lead to decisions, how are Mercy values and ethical concerns routinely raised and vetted professionally in the midst of these processes? By what criteria?

What are the areas, or who are the people not being seen or attended to, heard or included in the dialogue or the responses being initiated?

In terms of your institution, how do you think you are Mercy in meeting the challenges of this crisis and the havoc it is causing?

Recovery/Post Crisis

What do you wish you and your institution would have done differently during the crisis? How? Why?

If this were to occur again, or something similar, how do you hope you and your institution will be better prepared to confront the needs as a Mercy institution?

Where and how were Mercy values engaged in your decision processes and follow through? Give examples.

Do you think that your community reflected who you say you are and wish to be known by in your broader community?

What do your analyses suggest will be the consequences for your college/university as a result of this event?

If your institution’s sustainability requires cutbacks or layoffs, what is the process such that it speaks of Mercy . . . of respect, appreciation, and solidarity? Are there alternative possibilities? Who is involved in these decisions?

Looking Forward from a Crisis

How will this experience (crisis) change “business as usual” in terms of board work, administration, academics, extracurricular, alumni relations, local community and partnerships, collaboration across your fellow institutions in Mercy? What have we learned about ourselves, this institution . . . society? How will the needs guide us, and not a need to hold on to what was, or what we feel comfortable with? How can and should Mercy values and goals infuse and guide this evolving ministry of Mercy in the future?