

# Mission, Values, and Heritage

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## I. 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 and global communities.

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.

## II. Values

Stetson values the development of the whole person, one who is committed to building lifelong connections with the larger world through personal growth, intellectual development, and global citizenship. To that end, the university fosters policies, practices, and modes of inquiry to support and explore these values.

**Personal Growth** encompasses the understanding that no single formula defines the journey to personal success, but the passion to increase self-knowledge and the quest for balance are important tools in this process. Intercultural competence, religious and spiritual exploration, self-awareness, and wellness are components of personal growth.

**Intellectual Development** is a commitment from the university and from students to achieve excellence in academics, to foster the spirit of exploration that drives an engaged and active mind, to cultivate rigorous methods of academic inquiry, to model and support absolute integrity, and to value creativity and professionalism.

**Global Citizenship** is an important part of Stetson's mission to prepare students to be informed, active, and engaged citizens of both local communities and the world. Global citizenship includes university and individual commitments to community engagement, diversity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and social justice.

## III. Heritage and Character

Florida's first private university, Stetson University was founded as DeLand Academy in 1883 by Henry A. DeLand, a New York philanthropist. 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, alongside Mr. DeLand and others, as a founding trustee of the university. The first charter stated the object 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 of 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.