STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

PURPOSE
To synthesize and solidify the elements of the Policy Studies Major.

To regain an overview of the policy process and the integration of the phases of:

--problem definition
--analysis
--choice
--implementation
--evaluation

To practice and demonstrate individual skills necessary to the policy process, such as:

--listening
--effective communication
--group process
--clear problem identification
--creativity
--skepticism
--responsibility
--self-confidence
--historical awareness
--discovery of elegant solutions within resource constraints
--willingness and ability to recognize, acknowledge and correct mistakes

INTENDED RESULTS

1. The Upper Valley Co-op will function "better" (to be defined) in June 1981 and thereafter than it has functioned through March 1981.

2. Each person in the class will have identified a problem (unrelated to the Co-op), solved it, and reported on it orally and in writing by June 4.

3. Together we will have identified, shared, and discussed classical literature about human problem-solving and decision-making by June 4.
AGREEMENTS
(subject to amendment and addition,
to be decided by the class as a whole.)

1. I choose to be in this course and to be responsible for attaining my purpose for being in it.

2. I will be on time for all meetings and stay through the end of all meetings. I will support all meetings being efficient and worthwhile and ending on time.

3. I will not miss meetings for trivial reasons. If I miss a meeting, I will let whoever is conducting the meeting know beforehand, and I will be responsible for learning what I have missed and catching up with the group.

4. I will do exactly what I say I will do, when I say I will do it. If I know I cannot do something, I will not take it on. If unforeseen events prevent me from meeting an obligation, I will let whoever is counting on me know immediately that I will not be able to meet that obligation.

5. If I have a complaint, I will not swallow it. I will deliver it promptly to a person who can do something about it. I will not deliver it to anyone who can't do anything about it.

6. I will support all other members of the course (including the professors) in following the agreements and in realizing the purpose of the course.
THE POLICY STUDIES MANDALA

FACTS
(the current condition, what is)

GOALS
(how we would like it to be)

THE PROBLEM
(the gap between what we would like and what is)

MODEL, ASSUMPTIONS
(why we think things are the way they are)

POLICY OPTIONS
(what we might do about it)

PERCEIVED RESOURCES
(constraints that limit our choice)

VALUES
(priorities, trade-offs, considerations that tell us how to choose)

POLICY CHOICE
(what we intend to do)

IMPLEMENTATION
(what we actually do)

EVALUATION
(what happened, which either ends the problem or causes us to re-assess)
1. Choose a problem that you will solve before the end of the term.

The problem can be something in your own private life, in the College, your family, Hanover, your dorm, whatever. It should be something that you very much want to have resolved. You can join up with someone to work on a common problem, if you like.

The selection of the problem is crucial. It should be something that is definitely fixable during the ten week term. At the same time it should be worth your effort and should stretch you and teach you something—it shouldn't be trivial. Ideally it will be something just a bit harder than what you think you can do, something that you will be proud of when you have accomplished it.

2. Describe the problem in writing in the terms we have used in earlier Policy Studies classes.

That is, describe the facts (the current condition) and the goal (the way things will be when you've got the problem solved). Then give a careful, precise statement of the problem as the difference between the goal and the current condition.

Submit this in writing to the course professors before going any further. The write-up does not need to be more than one page long, but it should be very clear. When you get an OK from us, go on to the next steps.

You should have come this far by April 7 at the latest. After that date you may be called upon without warning in any class meeting to deliver a five (5) minute progress report on your project, whatever its state of completion. Please be ready to give such a report at any time.

3. Continue to follow the structure of the policy process, as we have described it, in working on the problem.

Write out your assumptions, your options, your choice, your reasons for that choice, etc. You may submit partial reports at any time for feedback from the professors. If it turns out that structure doesn't work, is not a useful way for you to structure your thoughts, tell us about it and change it so that it does describe a policy process you prefer.

4. Choose a solution, implement it, and evaluate the results.

You should do this early on, not at the end of the term, to allow for the possibility that your first policy may not work.

5. If the problem has not been solved, repeat the process.

Look hard at your description of the facts, your assumptions, your choice of options, the effectiveness of your implementation, and try again! If you're stuck, come talk about it.

The problem must be solved by the end of the term. If in the course of attacking it you learn something that changes your assessment of the project's feasibility, come talk to us about it. We may scale down the problem, if necessary, and that will tell you something about your ability to assess a problem.
Your work on this assignment will be judged by its effectiveness, not its volume. Trying hard and producing no result will not count for much. Taking time to think clearly and then producing desired results by a little effort directed to an identified leverage point will impress us greatly.

The entire process, including all iterations and the final result, should be written up (completely but concisely) and submitted to us by the end of the term.