Department of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
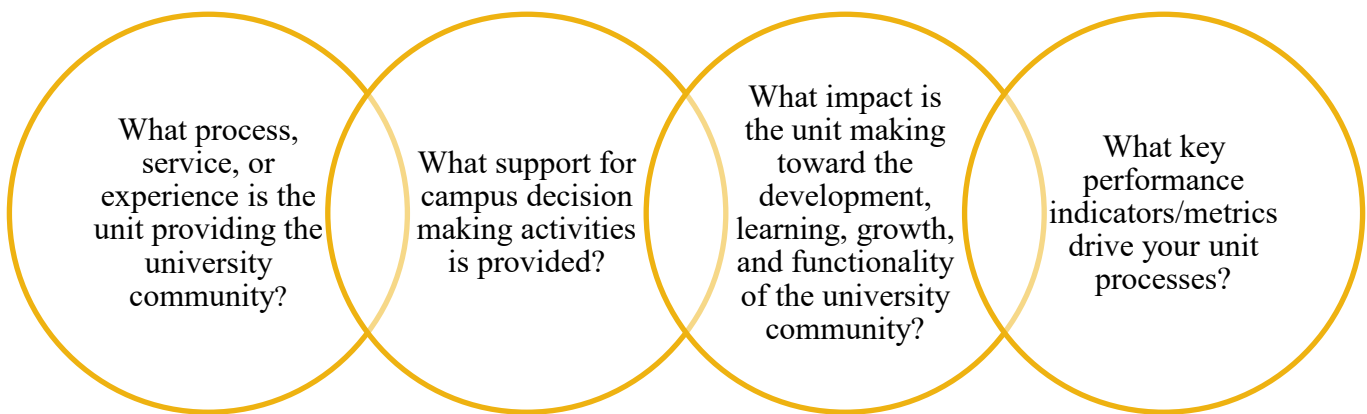
Writing Goals for Support Unit Assessment

The examples and tools included in this resource are intended to serve only as a reference and guide, not as an exclusive representation of all possible examples, tools, or best practices

Introduction to Goals

What is a goal? A goal is considered an observable and measurable outcome that assesses a particular process, service, or experience. It is with this definition in mind that university support units develop, assess, measure and improve goals.

How to begin developing goals? As a start, brainstorming among the departmental and divisional staff members, with like-minded colleagues, and with knowledgeable professionals in the field can generate answers to the below questions:

What process, service, or experience is the unit providing the university community?

What support for campus decision making activities is provided?

What impact is the unit making toward the development, learning, growth, and functionality of the university community?

What key performance indicators/metrics drive your unit processes?

How do we know if our goals are comprehensive? Because goals should be appropriate to and comprehensive of the support unit's mission, consult resources such as the following to gauge the relevance of the goals the unit develops:

Unit/Division mission, vision, and strategic plan

University mission/vision/strategic plan

Professional association guidelines

Industry practices/standards

External agency/reviewer/auditor requirements

Elements of a Goal

To begin writing a goal, first ask:

What is the overall purpose of the unit? (mission)

What does the unit do to support this purpose? (output)

What additional impact or quality improvement would the unit like to see
as a result of those actions? (outcome)

What specific actions will the unit take to accomplish this impact or quality improvement?
(operational tasks)

Distinguishing between the elements to be considered when writing a goal

Outputs describe and count what we do and whom we reach and represent products or services we produce. The unit's processes, services, and experiences (the normal activities of the unit) deliver outputs; what is produced at the end of a process is an output.

An **outcome** is a level of performance or achievement. It may describe the impact or quality of a unit's processes, services, or experiences. Outcomes imply measurement and quantification of the effectiveness of performance.

Operational Tasks refer to specific actions taken by the unit in support of accomplishing the desired outcome. These represent adjustments to a unit's processes, services, or experiences intended to affect the outcome.

These distinctions are helpful to understand in the development and review of goals. We seek to measure outcomes as well as their associated outputs and operational tasks; however, *goals focus on outcomes*. For example, while we produce a number (the output), it is important to have a measure of the *quality* of what is produced (the outcome). Strong goals describe, in measurable terms, these quality characteristics.

Examples that consider the elements of a goal using the above questions as guides:

What is the overall purpose of your support unit?	What does the support unit do to support this purpose?	What additional impact or quality improvement would the unit like to see as a result?	What is the support unit going to do to accomplish this impact or quality improvement?
Improve student learning and grades	Provide tutoring services to students	The number of students who utilize the center's tutoring services will increase	The Tutoring Lab will market the center's tutoring services to students and faculty
To oversee the university cafeteria and food venues	Prepare and serve food in the university cafeteria	The quality of the food served will be improved	The Office of Cafeteria Management will institute a new schedule for food storage and retention with guidelines established by the US Dept. of Agriculture
To manage relations and communications with staff	Resolve staff complaints	Staff perceptions of the helpfulness of the unit's efforts to resolve complaints will become more positive	The Office of Staff Resources and Relations will respond to staff complaints within two business days
To contribute to student health and personal well-being	Instruct students in financial literacy	Students will reduce their personal credit card debt	The Office of Student Assistance will provide three workshops on personal financial management topics

The responses generated by answering these key questions can assist in the writing of a goal statement.

How are goals structured?

There are a variety of formats and guides to structuring a goal statement. The below formulas represent two practical examples of what to include when writing a goal.

Using a formula to assist in structuring the writing of a student learning outcome:

The [Support Unit] will [verb describing action to be taken] in order to [description of desired <u>impact or quality improvement</u>].

OR

[<u>Constituents</u>] who [description of constituents' participation in Unit's services] will [verb describing <u>impact or quality improvement</u>].

*<u>Constituents</u> can include, but are not limited to: students, faculty, staff, community members, and/or external stakeholders who participate in or benefit from the unit's processes/services/ experiences

**<u>impact or quality improvement</u> can include those listed in the *Support Unit Taxonomy of Goals* table included in this resource (next page)

Example goal statements:

The Tutoring Lab will market its tutoring services to students and faculty in order to increase the number of students who visit the center to receive assistance.

The Office of Cafeteria Management will retain food according to recommended guidelines in order to improve the quality of the food served.

Employees who contact the Office of Staff Resources and Relations with a complaint will find the Office's efforts to resolve the complaint to be helpful.

Students who attend the personal financial management workshops offered by the Office of Student Assistance will reduce their personal credit card debt.

Support Unit Taxonomy of Goals

This taxonomy can be used to consider what actions the support unit may engage in and what indicators of the effectiveness of those actions they may wish to measure to assess desired outcomes – answering the questions: What do we do and what would it look like to do it more effectively? These categories are intended to be representative of but not exclusive to all of the processes, services, and experiences of support units.

OUTPUTS: What is your unit going to do?			
Areas of Action	*Definition*	*Sample Verbs*	*Sample Behaviors*
Maintain records, processes, or facilities	Processes overseen or monitored by the unit	Maintain, monitor, collect, oversee, manage, comply	Maintain faculty records
Perform tasks	Tasks performed by the unit	Submit, record, track, enroll, process, complete, implement, prepare, organize	Process financial transactions
Provide services and resources	Services developed and offered by the unit to constituents	Develop, offer, provide, advise, train, instruct, educate, counsel, assist	Provide assistance to graduate students in the enrollment process
Resolve problems	Efforts to resolve complaints, disputes, or problems for constituents	Resolve, adjudicate, improve, support	Resolve customer service complaints
Communicate information	The communication, distribution, and promotion of relevant information to constituents	Communicate, promote, market, publicize, share, distribute	Promote unit services to the university community
Create relationships and partnerships	Efforts to bring in new constituents and stakeholders to serve or to partner with in unit activities	Recruit, establish, partner with, network, create, build, cultivate	Establish partnerships with industry internship providers

OUTCOMES: What is the desired impact or quality improvement of your unit's action?			
Effectiveness Indicators	*Definition*	*Key Question*	*Sample Behaviors*
Quality	Improvements in the quality of the process/experience/service – flaws or errors resolved and value improvements made	How will the process/experience/service have more value because of this?	The error rate will be reduced
Efficiency	Processes are streamlined, resources are conserved, and productivity is increased	How will the process/experience/service operate more efficiently because of this?	The application process will be streamlined to eliminate redundancies
Timeliness	Time to completion is reduced and timeframes or relevant deadlines are achieved	How will relevant timeframes be positively impacted by this?	The report will be submitted prior to the agency deadline
Cost	Operating or student costs are reduced or optimized	How will costs be positively impacted by this?	Expenditures will be reduced by 5%
Reach	Increases are made in the number of people reached, impacted, or served by the process/experience/service	How many people/processes/entities will be impacted by this?	The number of student research presentations will increase by 15%
Perceptions	Changes are made in perceptions of or attitudes about the unit's processes/experiences/services	How do constituents view the process/experience/service?	95% of students will rate the academic advising they received as "Satisfactory" or "Very Satisfactory"
Behavioral changes	Services offered produce intended behaviors	What student/faculty/staff behaviors will change because of this?	Staff will follow safety procedures when operating university equipment
Learning outcomes	Services offered produce intended learning outcomes	What knowledge should students/faculty/staff be able to demonstrate because of this?	Students will be able to apply money management principles to their personal finance

Strong Goals

Consider the following guidelines for writing strong goal statements

Weaker Outcomes	Strong Outcomes
Verbs are vague (e.g., understand, show, be aware of) and do not really get at the intended goal	Verbs are sharp, clear, and specific (e.g., demonstrate, report, provide, develop) and make it clear what actions the unit will take or what constituents should receive or experience
Multiple verbs per goal	One verb per goal
Not easy to observe/demonstrate/measure	Readily observable/demonstrable/measurable
Refer to processes, services, or experiences in general	Refer to specific aspects of processes, services, or experiences

A strong goal is a S.M.A.R.T. goal

Specific	**M**easurable	**A**ttainable	**R**elevant	**T**imely
•Focused on a specific area •What processes/services and who are they affecting?	•Produces from assessments, actionable data that can be collected and measured	•Be realisitc but aspirational •Neither out of reach nor below standard performance	•Answers: Will it drive the university? Does it align with the mission? Does it matter?	•Establishes a timeframe •Describes activities that serve as benchmarks towards achievements

Strengthening a Goal using the S.M.A.R.T. Model

Weaker Goal to be strengthened:
Our office will educate faculty and staff

Example of brainstorming ways to strengthen the Goal using the S.M.A.R.T. Model:

<u>**S**</u>**pecific:** *The office of Intellectual Property Management will provide information to faculty and staff on new policies for the promotion and transfer of university technology for public use.*

<u>**M**</u>**easurable:** *Five, one hour information sessions will be hosted for faculty and staff in all divisions so that they can appropriately apply for new industry partnerships and the number of applications will increase.*

<u>**A**</u>**ttainable:** *Content would be created for presentations, rooms reserved, facilitators secured, and applications with updated guidelines made available online. The office will plan for at least 50 attendees overall and at least 3 new applications for approval of industry partnerships.*

<u>**R**</u>**elevant:** *Faculty and staff can build new industry partnerships to enhance the brand of the university and make available for public use valuable knowledge.*

<u>**T**</u>**imely:** *Five information sessions will be hosted over the course of the spring semester.*

Over the course of the spring semester, the office of Intellectual Property Management will host five one hour information sessions for faculty and staff to provide information on new policies for the establishment of industry partnerships which will enhance the brand of the university and make available university technology for public use. Content will be created and rooms and facilitators secured to reach a goal of 50 overall attendees. Applications with updated guidelines will be made available online, with the aim that at least 3 new applications for approval of industry partnerships will be made by the end of the semester.

Translating the work generated through the S.M.A.R.T. Model to an assessment plan:

Goal

The Office of Intellectual Property Management will educate faculty and staff on new policy guidelines on the promotion and transfer of university technology for public use in order to increase the number of applications for new industry partnerships.

Methods of Assessment

Session record: Record number of sessions and number of attendees.

Partnership Application Report: Report of number of submitted applications for new industry partnerships.

Standard of Success

At least 50 total attendees over the course of the spring semester.

3 new applications for industry partnerships will be received by the end of the spring semester.

Do a Support Unit's goals always remain the same? A Support Unit's goals are not set in stone – they can evolve and change over time.

When might a goal change?

After continuously meeting the goal over multiple assessment cycles	When changes occur in the function or mission of the unit or its division	When introducing or incorporating a new or existing review or auditing process	In response to an update or revision to industry standards or best practices

To whom should a Support Unit's goals be communicated? A variety of audiences should be aware of, or would benefit from, being familiar with a Support Unit's goals.

Who should be aware of your goals?

Vice President or Dean	Direct Supervisor or Unit Director	Unit Staff and Unit Faculty	Students and External Stakeholders

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