WRITING MEASURABLE OUTCOMES
By Jeanna Mastrodicasa

Adapted from Bresciani, M.J., Zelna, C. L., & Anderson, J.A. (2004). *Assessing student learning and development: A handbook for practitioners*. Washington, DC: NASPA.

Outcomes: specifically describe the end result of the program. What should students, administrators, faculty, and staff know or do?

- Is it <u>measurable</u> (can you identify or observe how you would know if they students are able to do what you said they would be able to do as a result of your program or combination of programs)? In other words, can you identify it or observe it? Can you also gather evidence that learning or development occurred?
    - Use active verbs to be measurable, such as:
    - Demonstrate, articulate, illustrate, conduct, define, describe, apply, compose, integrate, convince, create, plan, compare, and summarize
    - Can use CAS standards, accreditation standards?
- Is it <u>meaningful </u>(does the outcome mean something to internal and external constituents of the program)?
- Is it <u>manageable </u>(can you actually assess this regularly enough to make it work in your job)?

Types of outcomes:

<u>Student learning and development outcomes</u>: show cognitive abilities and affective dimensions that you want your program to instill or enhance. Learning is not merely academic or cognitive learning; it is a transformative process including affective development and identity.

- Cognitive: knowledge
- Affective: attitude
- Psychomotor: skill

<u>Program outcomes</u>: illustrate what you want your program to accomplish

<u>Student needs outcomes:</u> where students prioritize their service and educational needs—helps to write program outcomes

<u>Service utilization outcomes:</u> to help set standards for using services and facilities

More about learning outcomes

Adapted from Keeling, R.P. (Ed.) (2006). *Learning reconsidered 2: A practical guide to implementing a campus-wide focus on the student experience*. Washington, DC: ACPA, ACUHO-I, ACUI, NACADA, NACA, NASPA, & NIRSA.

Learning: a comprehensive, holistic, transformative activity that integrates **academic learning** and **student development**, processes that have often been considered separate, and even independent of each other. *(defined in Learning Reconsidered)*

Every program should have clear and specific learning outcomes and a clear link to the mission of the campus or the division of student affairs. This includes not only intentional programs, but also student employment, navigating the bureaucracy on campus, and more. The job of the student affairs practitioner is to organize events around learning, and the success of the event is measured by the resulting change in students' abilities, skills, or ways of thinking as opposed to the number of people who attended.

Template for writing a learning outcome

As a result of students participating in

_____

They will learn _____

After you make a list of the learning outcomes, then go through this checklist:

1. Does the outcome support the program objectives? (y or n)
2. Does the outcome describe what the program intends for students to know (cognitive), think (affective, attitudinal)? (y or n)
3. Is the outcome important/worthwhile? (y or n)
4. Is the outcome detailed and specific? (y or n)
5. Is the outcome measurable/identifiable? (y or n)
6. Can you create an activity to enable students to learn the desired outcome? (y or n)
7. Can the outcome be used to make decisions on how to improve this program? (y or n)

Example of outcomes in Maryland Leadership Outcomes Project

- Determined 22 core learning outcomes, 6 categories of them.
- Goal is to develop and adapt existing leadership programs to intentionally promote any combination of these outcomes
- Assessing annually to measure student progress toward learning
- To improve and refine programs and to be able to effectively communicate the benefits of involvement