

# ASSESSMENT PLAN GUIDE

Administrative units must assess their units to ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of students, parents, employers, faculty and other stakeholders. When developing the assessment plan for your unit, always refer to the four main functions of assessment:

- 1. To improve** – The assessment process should provide feedback to determine how the administrative unit can be improved.
- 2. To inform** – The assessment process should inform department heads and other decision-makers of the contributions and impact of the administrative unit to the development, growth and improvement of UNO.
- 3. To prove** – The assessment process should encapsulate and demonstrate what the administrative unit is accomplishing to students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders. (Adapted from WEAVE).
- 4. To support** – The assessment process should provide support for campus decision-making activities such as unit review and strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities such as accreditation.

## 1. MISSION STATEMENT

A written declaration of a unit's/department's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time. Properly crafted mission statements: (1) serve as filters to separate what is important from what is not, (2) clearly state who will be served and how, and (3) communicate a sense of intended direction.

### Defining the Administrative Unit Mission

**Briefly state the purpose of the administrative unit.**

- State the primary purpose of your administrative unit—the reason(s) why you perform your major activities or operations. Explain why you do what you do. For example, the main focus may be helping students to be prepared for employment after graduation.

**Indicate who the stakeholders are.**

- Include the primary groups of individuals to whom you are providing your services and/or those who will benefit from the services (e.g., students, faculty, employers, etc.)

**Indicate the primary functions or activities of the administrative unit.**

- Highlight the most important functions, operations, services, and/or offerings of your administrative unit or operation.

**Ensure that the mission statement clearly supports the institution's mission.**

- Make sure that your mission is aligned with the mission of the University (We work to advance the university mission by\_ or We assist UNO with \_)

**Example:**

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) provides institutional data to the University. OIER supports data-informed decision-making with accurate and timely reporting of official data to internal and external audiences. OIER is responsible for academic federal and state reporting. We assist the university, colleges, and departments/units with accreditation reporting requirements, professional organization surveys, and grant writing by providing student and faculty data. OIER manages the online factbook and collects campus-wide student, faculty and staff survey information. OIER is responsible for the assessment of administrative units and manages project evaluations when needed.

## 2. GOALS

Goals tend to be general statements. Goals should not be specific, but rather general statements of direction. These goals can focus on the key functions of the unit (e.g., application process, orientation service, facility maintenance, educational support, etc.).

**In a broad sense, how do you want to effect change?**

### Defining Administrative Unit Goals

- 1) Describe the most important services your unit provides.
- 2) Identify key functions or services within your unit that contribute to supporting the university's mission and/or strategic plan.
- 3) For each key function or service, ask how the university:
  - a. operates more efficiently as a result of your service
  - b. can support students because of your service
  - c. benefits from utilizing your service
- 4) In what ways should your unit make a difference in successful outcomes for students, other clients, or other administrative units?

**Example:**

- Provide high-quality academic programs and a learning environment that promotes student success.
- To promote institutional effectiveness through ongoing, systematic planning, evaluation and assessment efforts in order to support faculty and staff in achieving the institutional mission.
- Enhance the availability and use of UNO's print and electronic resources
- Attract and retain highly qualified professional faculty and staff.

### 3. OUTCOMES

Outcomes can be defined as statements that describe the desired quality (timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, etc.) of key functions and services within the administrative unit. Operational outcomes define exactly what the services should promote (understanding, knowledge, awareness, appreciation, etc.)

The outcome statements should be derived from the goal statements, which in turn should be aligned to the university's mission. For example, if an academic department has a goal of increasing diversity, then the department might have separate outcomes addressing the recruitment of more diverse students and recruitment of more diverse faculty.

Units are encouraged to set goals that may be a stretch and will take some time to achieve. What is important is that the unit can show that they are making progress on achieving that which is most important to the unit.

**Goals are broad statements, while outcomes are precise, specific and clear statements about the intended accomplishments of an administrative unit.**

#### **Key Words:**

You should use explicit verbs such as increase, enhance, minimize, provide, reduce, promote, rather than vague verbs such as understand, know.

\*Administrative units should focus on critical functions, services, and processes that impact customer satisfaction.

\*The outcomes may include the specification of expectations of demand, quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and other gauges of productivity

#### **Example:**

- Graduate Studies will increase the number of students who apply online.
- Technology Support Group: The Technology department will invest in their employees through education and training leading to technical certification.
- Career/Transfer Services: Increase student, faculty and staff awareness of Career Placement and Transfer activities, events and services.
- OIER: To support UNO units with training and guidance related to IE planning and to IE plan development

### 3. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT & ACTION ITEMS

#### Strategies for Improvement:

**What strategies do you plan to use to achieve your outcomes?** General statement of what is to be done in the reporting cycle. What actions are you going to take over the reporting cycle to achieve your outcome?

**Example:** The Office of Institutional Research will provide more training for staff and faculty to increase knowledge of assessment and ask for feedback from administrative users.

#### Action Items:

What tasks/projects is your unit going to perform to achieve your outcome?

**Examples:** On-campus and open house-training sessions.

### 4. MEASURES

A measure identifies evidence and methods used to determine achievement of expected outcomes. Every measure must be linked to at least one outcome. **What are you going to measure to know if your outcome was achieved?** (Surveys, Counts, etc.).

The Methodology section should state where data is coming from, how it is collected, and when it is collected.

#### **Measures:**

\*Each outcome should be assessed using at least one assessment measurement.

\*You can have multiple measures per outcome.

\*Be sure measures are appropriate and align with Outcomes and Goals – Do the chosen measures provide data on what you need to know?

Things you can measure: Demand, Quality, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Perception of Services, Satisfaction

#### **Example:**

• Student/Staff satisfaction surveys	• Number of users
• Count of program/event participants	• Growth in participation
• Number of complaints/suggestions	• Average wait or service time
• Number of applications	• Staff training hours and staff trained
• Processing time for requests	• Opinion/satisfaction surveys
• Number of staff/students served	• Dollars raised, dollars saved
• Statistical reports	• Focus groups

## 5. TARGETS

For each measure, an achievement target must be established; in other words, **how or when will you know if you've been successful?** Targets communicate clearly the expected level of accomplishment for the measure.

### Targets:

- \*Targets must specify something quantifiable (a number, percent, rating, score, or level of proficiency)
- \*Targets can offer directionality (an increase or decrease)
- \*Targets should change to reflect improvement over time
- \*Sometimes an anticipated date for completion can be a target, if no other targets seem appropriate

### Examples:

- Eighty-five percent (85%) of new UNO employees hired will have completed the required Institutional Compliance Orientation training within 60 days of hire
- Development of required state ABCD reports will be completed prior to the submission deadline and submitted on or before the deadline on an annual basis
- On August 31, 2019, 100% of required Conflict Management Plans for UNO researchers will be up-to-date and on file with the Research Office

## 6. CLOSING THE LOOP

The unit should reflect on what they learned through the assessment process and report actions they plan to take to improve relevant functions and services. Possible actions to report include planned modifications of service offerings, improvements to technology, additions to trainings or professional development resources, revisions to unit standards or processes, improvements to communications, etc.

**Findings:** Findings describe what the measures indicated about each outcome.

**Did you meet the target?** Enter the metrics from the measure if it was met or not.

**Analysis:** This is a planning and a reflection section. Describes what the department/unit has done given the findings. It's an action that describes specifically what the department/unit did (not will do) to improve.

- If you met target, what did you do achieve target? Will you increase/decrease the target next year? Will you stop using measure?
- If you did not meet the target, what needs to change to meet target next year?