Creating Program Goals

Develop program goals for your program. Each program should have at least one (1) goal and no more than three (3).

- Should be general statements about what the program intends to accomplish
- What are the core, individual functions of your academic program?
- If you were asked for a list of major ways your academic program supports the college, what would you say?
- When reflecting on your academic program, what topics come to mind as major items that need attention and continuous improvement?
- Be sure to relate the academic program goals back to the college mission statement:
  - “Thomas Nelson Community College changes lives, empowers students to succeed and enhances the social and economic vitality of the region through high quality education and workforce training, excellent service and innovative partnerships.”
- Describe the knowledge and skills of graduates, especially related to employment and transfer
- Approaches to develop program goals
  - Review existing materials
  - Course goals inventories
  - Review other institution program goals
- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Results-oriented
- Time Specific

Example of Program Goals:

“Prepare students to transfer to a four year college and improve major and non-major students’ knowledge of the Social Sciences.”

“Create designers and drafters that are ready for industry, no matter the field of design and drafting being entered.”

Based on your responses above, what are one (1) to three (3) program goals for students graduating from your program?
Creating Program Outcomes and Program Learning Outcomes

Program Outcomes:

Program outcomes should focus on an end product, and should specify what the program intends to accomplish.

They should be: (1) actionable, (2), realistic/attainable, (3) measurable/observable, (4) under the control of the program, (5) meaningful, and (6) directed toward continuous improvement.

- Program Outcomes differ from Program Learning Outcomes
  - Program Outcomes are used to assess program viability, efficiency, and success
  - Program Outcomes may also target graduation, enrollment, effective instruction, and/or transfer rates.

Examples of Program Outcomes:

“100 % of the program graduates will successfully pass their licensure and national certification examinations.”

“The Underwater Basket Weaving Program will meet or exceed the VCCS graduate requirement of 22, based on an average over the three most recent years.”

Program Learning Outcomes:

Learning outcomes should focus on the end product of your services, and should describe what your stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, staff) should be able to know, do, or value after receiving your services/instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Reflection</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the most important knowledge and skills students gain by completing this program?</td>
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<td>As a result of being in this program, what would you like students to:</td>
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<td>a. Know</td>
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<td>b. Be able to do</td>
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<td>c. Care about</td>
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<tr>
<td>What should every graduate of your Program know?</td>
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What should every graduate of your program be able to do?

- Program Learning Outcomes differ in scope compared to Program Goals.
- Specific statements that describe the required learning in order to attain the degree and meet the program goals.
- Each program should have three (3) to five (5) Program Learning Outcomes.
  - It is recommended to have no more than five (5) outcomes, so as to ensure that assessment of the program does not become cumbersome, but manageable and sustainable
  - Ideally, Program Heads and Faculty will be able to assess all of the Program Learning Outcomes for a given program within a three (3) year time span.
    - This approach will lead to re-assessment efforts and closing of the assessment loop
- All programs (to include: degree programs, certificates, and career-studies certificates – NOT including specializations) will develop program specific student learning outcomes.

Examples of Program Learning Outcomes:

Fine Arts: “The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to conceptualize and apply aesthetic judgments and creative problem solving skills.”

Computer-Aided Drafting and Design: “Develop digital prototypes for products using multiple software platforms, test the viability of the product within the ASTM testing guidelines for the product, and analyze the test results to determine accuracy of the model.”

Science: “Explain and demonstrate the use of the scientific approach to understanding the world using a set of information related to the particular science discipline.”
**Measures and Targets**

**Assessment Measures**

Measures are the sources of evidence you will use to determine the extent to which you are achieving your outcomes. Effective measures will capture enough of the essence of the outcome to represent it adequately, and be actionable without excessive cost or effort.

- Make sure the assessment measure is useful and leads to improvements.
- What would you need to observe to be convinced that the outcome is being accomplished?
- Where are you currently delivering the outcome to your stakeholders?
- Align the assessment method with the target goals.
- Consider where and when the assessment will occur (how to keep track of the students).
- Are there existing assessments?
- Multiple measures
  - Tests
  - Work samples
  - Interviews
  - Demonstrations
  - Rubrics
- Direct Measures are “tangible, visible, self-explanatory, and compelling evidence of exactly what students have and have not learned.”
  - Examples: Field Experience; Licensure or certification exams; Capstone experiences; Capstone experiences such as research projects, presentations, performances, so on using a scored rubric; Portfolios; Observations of student behavior; Student reflections (Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning*)
- Indirect Measures are “less clear and less convincing”
  - Assignment grades not graded by a rubric or scoring criteria; Retention and graduation rates; Admission rates; Placement rates; End-of-course student evals; Employer satisfaction. (Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning*)

**Examples of Measures:**

Computer Arts: “Interactive PDF document with portfolio work and visual identity system created in ART 292 Computerized Graphic Design I.”

Science: “BIO 150 Assess Gram stain lab exercise using a diagram of the process on a lab quiz.”

Social Science: “Student essays from HIS 121 scored using a common rubric.”
Targets

The target is the level of performance on the given measure that you will use as a threshold for achievement of the outcome. Targets should be realistic, yet aspirational. Typically, targets should include a numeric value.

Example of a Program Specific Targets:

Early Childhood Education: “80% of ECE students will receive 80% or better on their case study.”

Administrative Support Technology: “AST 230 online students will research and compose a paper. Seventy-five percent (75%) of students will earn a 70 (out of 100) on this assignment, as scored with the grading rubric.”