



Office of Academic Affairs Guide to Creating Strategic Plan Metrics

College and support unit strategic plans should include metrics that demonstrate progress toward desired outcomes in areas critical to their mission and earmarked for improvement. Below are some criteria that will help you to create quality metrics and avoid the most common pitfalls.

Metrics are objectively measurable. Lots of ideas for metrics seem good until you try to operationalize them. One test of the quality of a metric is whether or not you can actually count whatever it is that you're describing. In addition, it's important that all relevant parties agree that the metrics appropriately measure what they are intended to measure.

Graduates will have better employment outcomes.

"Better employment outcomes" is not objectively measurable.

Objective and measurable

The percentage of graduates who are employed one month after commencement or who are enrolled in graduate school will increase by X%.

Scorecards include only the highest level metrics. It's important to monitor the steps and strategies along the way to the big goals, but not all of the information belongs on the scorecard.

College will add twelve undergraduate minor programs.

Measures the ultimate goal

College will increase enrollments by 15%.

This works if the ultimate goal is to have more minor programs. But it's more likely that adding minors is a strategy toward a larger goal, such as higher enrollments.

Fewer metrics better communicate priorities and focus. Streamline your scorecards by creating indices and eliminating duplication.

*The average ACT score for new undergraduates will increase to 30.
The average GMAT score for new MBA students will increase to 675.
The average GRE score for new doctoral students will increase to 750.*

Too much detail!!! At this rate there will be 60 metrics where 20 would suffice.

Combines scores into a single metric

The student academic quality index will improve from 3.7 to 4.3.

*Freshman retention rate will increase to 95%.
Graduation rate will increase to 82%.*

Both rates are important, but if the graduation rate is increasing, it's almost certain that retention has gone up as well. If you have two metrics that are highly correlated, you only need one on the scorecard.

Use Yes/No metrics sparingly. Try to avoid using Yes/No metrics, since they say nothing about level of performance. This type of metric can make sense if you are planning a new venture and the measure is simply whether you've done it or not, but it should be revised to quantify progress as soon as the metric moves from "No" to "Yes."

*Capital Investment Plan Developed and Approved:
Yes*

As soon as the response to this metric becomes "Yes," the metric should be revised to track quantitative information about the success of the capital investments over time.