Administrative Unit Assessment

**Spence Spencer,
AVP for Institutional
Effectiveness**

2017-2018

Table of Contents

Unit Purpose/Mission, Objectives, Measures and Targets

Purpose
The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the development of Administrative Unit Assessment Plans for the 2017-2018 academic year at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) and after. It defines the minimum information that must be included in an Administrative Unit Assessment Plan, which will be entered into WEAVE.

This document supersedes guidance provided for any previous year.

Introduction
The pursuit of continuous improvement is the foundation of assessment, whether for academic programs or administrative units. In an ever changing world of higher education, OBU cannot merely maintain the *status quo* and hope to remain competitive with other national and regional schools.

Assessment is part of developing a culture of excellence, which is one of the core values of the University:

> Excellence should permeate all efforts and all facets of Oklahoma Baptist University. The Christian faith mandates excellence in service to God and humanity in all spheres of life and conduct. This commitment to excellence in all things is an expression of the Lordship of Christ and necessitates the stewardship of His creation. Because the Lord cares about our work, OBU strives to be motivated in humility to excellence in all things for the glory of God.

This means that assessment needs to be done well, in a manner that achieves results without excessively burdening people's time in search of novel innovations and hard-to-obtain evidences.

The administrative unit assessment process is a primary means that OBU uses to document performance and learn from operating experience. It functions to inform those who come behind us what we have done and how we have sought to improve through our efforts.

Under the umbrella of OBU's mission, each administrative unit should have a mission or purpose statement that is distinct but supports the mission of the institution. This mission should be succinct [i.e., one sentence or two] and define how a particular administrative unit fits into the university's purpose. It should answer the question: "Why does this administrative unit exist at OBU?"

Objectives function as strategic aims of the administrative unit. They should not reflect regular activities (i.e., the completion of annual reports, doing daily work), unless there is a measurable improvement that is being sought. Objectives should be focused on ways the administrative unit is going to work to get better in the future.

Each objective will be demonstrated by evidence from one or more *measures*. A measure is a piece of evidence that will provide information about the achievement of an objective. This may take the form of student census data, survey results, budget marks achieved, or projects completed.

A *target* is a numerical value expressed as a percentage that will be used to indicate an objective has been achieved in a program. For example, "Error rate on student applications will be reduced from 10% (2014-15) to 5% in 2015-16." The target is the quantifiable result that will represent success.

What Constitutes an Administrative Unit
The Administrative Unit will typically be the Code 7 level of the Budget system. In other words, if it has a budget spreadsheet in Randy's system, then it will typically be considered an Administrative Unit and will

have an assessment in WEAVE.

At times, based on the request of the budget director and approval of the AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, some budgets may be combined into one administrative unit.

The following items will be considered when consolidating budget orgs for assessment purposes:

1. Are the orgs largely redundant means of tracking expenses for a particular facility? For example, the dorms each have a separate budget org, but the budgets have a common purpose.
2. Are the budget orgs managed by the same budget director?
3. Do the budget orgs have a long-term purpose that may diverge?

Identifying a Program Purpose or Mission

Each Administrative Unit exists for a distinct purpose and has a unique relationship to the mission of the University. All units on campus should have a mission or purpose statement that describes the purpose of the unit and guides the unit's actions, spells out its overall goal, provides a sense of direction, and guides decision-making. The program mission should consist of one or two sentences that **summarize** why the program exists and how it relates to the mission of the University.

This mission or purpose should meet these criteria:

- Clarity – the mission is clear, concise, and addresses the service the administrative unit provides to the University community
- Alignment with the university mission – the unit mission clearly supports the University mission

An example purpose statement: "The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research exists to facilitate the assessment process at OBU and help the University to use data for the pursuit of excellence."

Developing Objectives

Administrative Unit objectives focus on focused opportunities for improvement in the future. These objectives should not relate primarily to regular activities (completing an annual assessment plan) or daily operations (processing normal paperwork) unless the intent is to significantly improve the efficiency or reduce the cost of daily operation.

Objectives are measured by establishing specific actions that will provide data that inform the assessor of the progress they are making toward achieving the objective.

Developing S.M.A.R.T. Objectives for Administrative Units

S.M.A.R.T. objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-limited or time-sensitive. This model for objective development can be helpful when developing academic program goals. Here are the basic components of S.M.A.R.T goals and guiding questions for developing them.

Specific
- What do we want to accomplish?
- Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal
- Who: Who is involved?
- Which: Identify requirements (essential attributes) and constraints

Measurable

- Need to establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal
- Measurable goals use active verbs to describe specific expectations
- Measuring progress helps you to stay on track, reach target dates, and experience the success of achievement
- Guiding questions: How much are we looking for? How many are we seeking? How will I know when it is accomplished?

Attainable
- Objectives must be realistic and attainable
- Attainable objectives may stretch a team in order to achieve it; the objective is not extreme
- Objectives are neither out of reach nor below standard performance, as these may be considered meaningless
- When you identify objectives that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them
- *According to theory,* an attainable objective may cause goal-setters to identify previously overlooked opportunities to bring themselves closer to the achievement of their objectives.
- Guiding questions: How can the objective be accomplished? Does the objective represent a goal toward which you are both willing *and* able to work? Is the objective both high and realistic? Does the objective represent substantial progress?

Relevant
- Choose objectives that *matter.*
- Many times you will need support to accomplish objectives: resources, a champion voice, someone to knock down obstacles.
- Objectives that are *relevant* to your leadership, your division or college, and your organization will receive that needed support.
- Relevant objectives (when met) drive the, department, division, and organization forward
- An objective that supports or is in alignment with other objectives would be considered relevant objectives
- Relevant objectives
    - Are worthwhile
    - Are set at the right time
    - Match other efforts/needs
    - Are assigned to the right person/area/group
    - Can be modified as needed

Time-limited or time-sensitive
- Objectives must be grounded within a time frame, giving them a target date
- A commitment to a deadline helps a team focus their efforts on completion of the objective on or before the due date
- This part of the S.M.A.R.T. objective criteria is intended to prevent objectives from being overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise in the academy
- Tips for designing time-limits:
    - Provide a timeframe for the completion of the objective
    - Describe what can be done in a year, 6 months, 6 weeks, or today
    - Set a sequence of activities that will serve as benchmarks for achieving the goal

Objective Format
Objective statements are usually structured as follows:

"To (action verb) (object) (modifiers)."

Some examples of Administrative unit objectives:
- "To utilize innovative social media strategies for student recruitment and branding, with at least 1,000,000 impressions in 2016-2017."
- "To reduce office paper usage by 10% in 2016-2017."
- "To increase student satisfaction with meal options by 10% in 2016-2017."

Ties to Strategic Initiatives

Ideally all of the objectives that your administrative unit is working on will tie to OBU strategic plan for the same year. However, that is not always feasible. On the other hand, you should ensure at least ONE of your annual objectives can be credibly linked to one of the seven strategic initiatives of OBU 2020.

During the Planning and Budgeting Process, members of the Executive Leadership Team will identify selected administrative unit annual objectives that significantly advance the strategic initiatives of the institution and propose raising them to the level of a UPAC Annual Objective. In some cases, similar objectives across administrative units may be consolidated into a somewhat broader UPAC Annual Objective.

Establishing Measures and Targets

Each Objective must have one or more *measure* that will demonstrate satisfaction of that outcome.

The measure should provide meaningful support for the objective, but it does not need to cover the entirety of the objective. For example, there may be multiple measures that support a given objective. Some may be direct (number of participants, specific factual results), while others may be indirect (satisfaction surveys, interviews).

The chief question to answer when choosing a measure is: "How will we demonstrate we have satisfied the objective?" If you determine that there are no reasonable measures to assess the objective, it may be necessary to rewrite the objective to be S.M.A.R.T.

Once the measure is created the next step is to choose a *target* that defines success for the Objective. Targets should be selected so that they are challenging but not impossible. Choose something that will drive success but which will not crush under unreasonable expectations.

If desired, two targets may be used for the same measure. The first for satisfactory performance ("We did a good enough job."); the second for excellence ("We became leaders in this area.").

Updating and Reporting on Findings

Budget Directors should update the status of the current year's objectives in WEAVE prior to each of the three BOT meetings and at the end of the Fiscal Year. Once a final status on a particular Target is established, no further updates are required.

Updates on findings need not be exhaustive or complicated. A few sentences that summarize the units progress toward the objective in light of the measure and target are sufficient. However, Budget Directors should ensure that a reader that is unfamiliar with the daily operation of their organization can readily understand whether or not a metric has been achieved. Documents may be uploaded to WEAVE as evidence as desired to illustrate progress.

"Met" should be used when the target is fully satisfied.

"Partially Met" should be used when significant progress toward a target has been made, but not sufficient to warrant granting a "Met" status. Or, it may be used for interim status on a target at a periodic update for the BOT if the unit may meet the target.

"Not Met" should be used when little or no progress toward a target has been achieved, or when the objective has not been funded. It should be used for periodic updates only when the Budget Director is confident the target will not progress toward success.

Action Plans

Action plans are not required for Administrative Unit assessment. If needed, the Budget Director should roll the Objectives, Measures, and Targets over to the following fiscal year with modifications as necessary.

What Does Success Look Like?

One potential pitfall of the assessment process is being overly concerned with the ability to check off all objectives at the end of the year.

To be clear, the assessment process is designed to lead to improvement not to determine the budget winners and losers. The budget should always be built around the needs of the unit. The assessment process is designed to instill an attitude of continuous improvement in an organization.

Therefore, success is setting good objectives and making progress toward them. It is acceptable to modify objectives between budget years and to extend the timeline if real progress is being made. Falling short of a challenging objective is not failure to succeed, it is falling short of excellence. If the objective is worthwhile, making reasonable progress toward excellence is the chief goal.

Data Entry for WEAVE

A separate "how-to" guide will be distributed with specific instructions for WEAVE. The minimum elements that are **required** to be entered into WEAVE for each program are:

1. Mission/Purpose: One or two sentences that define the administrative unit and show how it relates to the University's mission.
2. Outcomes/Objectives: Two to five Objectives that reflect focused areas for improvement in the coming time period. (Budgets with a special, temporal focus may have only one objective.)
3. Measures & Findings: Each Objective must have one or more measure associated with it.
4. Target: Each Measure should have a Target that clearly indicates what defines success.
5. A tie to the strategic plan objective from the same year as the budget.
6. Findings: For each BOT meeting and at the end of the fiscal year Budget Directors will be asked to update the status of the current year's objectives.

Support

The Director of Assessment and Institutional Research is available for assistance with training on how to develop/revise Administrative unit purposes, Objectives, and Measures and Targets. Please contact Spence Spencer at andrew.spencer@okbu.edu or 585-4102.

Works Cited

Note: This document was derived with permission from a document created by the Director of Assessment of the University of Florida. The original can be found here: http://assessment.aa.ufl.edu/academic-assessment