Writing Learning Objectives in a Student Affairs Context

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Goal

This session will help you to assess your participants’ learning.

Objectives

By the end of this session you should be able to:
1. Write a learner-centered objective.
2. Say how your proposed learning activity accomplishes your objective.
**Goals** are broad, generalized statements about the target we want to reach.

Example: Students will be able to produce a well-crafted résumé.

Goals are useful as a first step but are too broad and fuzzy for designing instruction.

More specific statements of what the learner must “do” are needed. That’s where objectives come in.
Objectives are the key to good assessment — they help us see whether our students have learned.

Objectives work best when they’re specific and measurable/observable.

They answer these questions:

If I am a student in this workshop, what should I know and be able to do when I leave?

If I am a student in this workshop, how will I demonstrate my learning?
When writing objectives, avoid “weasel words”:

Students will ...
• Learn
• Know
• Be aware of
• Be familiar with
• Have a firm grasp of
• Understand
• Appreciate
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Students will ...  

• Learn  
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← These criteria are vague and difficult to observe or measure.
Better choices are observable & measurable:

Students will be able to:
- Analyze
- Compare
- Critique
- Integrate
- Write
- Design
- Evaluate
There are many ways to write objectives, but one helpful approach is ABCD:

- **Audience**
  Who will accomplish the objective (e.g., students)

- **Behavior**
  What is expected; most helpful when overt and observable

- **Condition**
  Under what circumstances the behavior is expected

- **Degree**
  The acceptable performance level
Example of an objective:

Audience – (A)
Behavior – (B)
Condition – (C)
Degree – (D)

“By the end of the workshop, the student will be able to accurately describe three principles necessary for holistic health.”
Example of an objective:

Audience – (A)
Behavior – (B)
Condition – (C)
Degree – (D)

“By the end of the workshop, the student will be able to accurately describe three principles necessary for holistic health.”
Another example:

Audience – (A)
Behavior – (B)
Condition – (C)
Degree – (D)

“RAs will be able to demonstrate reflective listening when role-playing a meeting with two roommates in conflict over cleanliness.”
Students who complete my workshop/series should be able to ...

1.

2.

3.