

Why should student organizations set goals?

- To improve the self-image of a group by making members aware of strengths and weaknesses.
- To give the organization orderly direction.
- To set priorities.
- To make the organization responsible for its own activity.
- To sharpen decision making.

Setting goals as a team

It is very important that the entire group has a part in setting group goals, not only the executive board or the president. If members have input on the group's goals they will be more motivated and committed to achieving them. Furthermore, inclusion by everyone will lead to better goals and those goals will be clearer to all members.

What are some characteristics of well-constructed goals?

One way to construct useful and meaningful goals is to use the SMART method.

SMART Goals are:

- S**pecific
- M**easurable
- A**ligned
- R**eachable
- T**ime Bound

Specific If a goal is vague (e.g., "do the best you can"), people interpret it in many different ways, depending on their own personal experience, ability, and ambition. In contrast, if a goal is specific (e.g., "increase sales by 20 percent"), ambiguity and idiosyncratic interpretations are eliminated. When confusion over the desired result is eliminated, the likelihood of a goal being achieved is increased.

Measurable Goals are only meaningful for those who will implement them when they are specific enough to be verified and measured. Measurable goals have a clear outcome that can be objectively assessed. They also have clear benchmarks that can be checked along the way.

Aligned Goals should contribute to the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the organization. They should also be congruent with the objectives and values of the employees implementing them. Employee participation can facilitate personal and organizational goal matching.

Reachable Goals that are set unrealistically high create frustration and are likely to be abandoned. On the other hand, goals should not be so easily achieved that they offer no challenge. The best motivators are stretch goals that are perceived as challenging yet reachable.

Time Bound Open-ended goals with no specified ending point are likely to be neglected because no sense of urgency is associated with them. Goals should include a specific time for accomplishment. So, instead of stating, "I'm going to complete the bank management training program, with a score higher than 85," a time-specific goal would state, "I'm going to complete the bank management training program, with a score of 85 or more, by February 1 of next year."