Brown Bag Luncheon Assessment Series

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE?
Student learning objectives are specific, concise statements telling us how we will know students achieve goals.
Objectives differ from goals in that objectives are short-term, concise aspirations, whereas goals are general, long-term aspirations.
There are two types of objectives:

- Those that require mastery of knowledge and skills to pass an individual course before moving on to one at the next level
- Those that are more developmental over longer periods of time, usually an entire program
Objectives are based on two fundamental questions:

- What do you want your students to learn?
- What do you want your students to be able to do with what they have learned?
It is important to understand that there are two parts to writing a good learning objective:

– What the student will learn
– How the student will apply what she has learned to her profession or life
• An example of a bad learning objective is: By the end of this course, students will have knowledge of and appreciation for the essential theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates.
An example of a good learning objective is: By the end of this course, students will be able to critically analyze the essential theories of Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and other ancient philosophers by writing deep reflection papers demonstrating mastery of course content, critical reading and writing skills, and the ability to apply these theories to contemporary thought.
Student learning objectives should also:

- Specify the level, criterion, or standard for the knowledge, skill, ability, or disposition that the student must demonstrate.
- Include conditions under which they should be able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions.
- Contain action verbs.
- Be measurable.
• Be stated so that the outcomes can be measured by more than one assessment method
• Reflect the Department’s Mission Statement
• Reflect the Department’s program objectives
• Are limited and manageable in number (3-5)
• Be student-focused, not professor-focused
• Program learning objectives also should reflect the Department’s Mission Statement
What is the difference between a learning objective and a learning outcome?

- A learning outcome is what we want students to achieve.
How does this apply to program objectives?

- The process is very similar in nature, only program objectives are broader in scope because they cover multiple courses.
- They also require specificity, and the two components found in course objectives (what students will learn, and how they will apply what they have learned to real life).
An example of a good program objective is:

- Our core strategy for undergraduate learning in engineering, computer science, informatics and construction management embraces four distinctive objectives:
  - Graduates will be technically competent in core areas within their discipline and related mathematics and sciences
  - Graduates will be able to work within a team and communicate effectively through oral, graphical, and written modalities
• Graduates will be able to synthesize diverse information to develop creative design solutions
• Graduates will be able to function effectively in an evolving profession
Questions?

Individually or in groups, write 3-5 clear course objectives

Then think about how your course objectives reflect your program’s objectives. What are the similarities? What are the differences?
Good References to Consult

- UNLV’s Assessment Website (click on the toolbox)
- The University of Hawaii at Manoa’s assessment website
- Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis’ assessment website
- Ohio University’s assessment website