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ABSTRACT

Based on a review of the literature, procedures worked out at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and on insights gained working with personnel at several institutions in the formulation of goals and objectives, this report delineates procedures for goal-setting, and describes how the needs of community colleges differ from those of other types of postsecondary institutions. Specific definitions and examples are given for each of the following terms: "mission," "goals," "objectives," "priorities," "role," and "scope." Basically, this document emphasizes the need for concrete guidelines and alternative strategies for deciding about goals and especially for translating these general goals into specific objectives. A necessary first step is the identification of a limited number of goals that serve to define the broad mission statement of the institution. For the goal-setting process, this document recommends a modified Delphi-technique which involves discussion of the institution's mission statement and of the results of a needs assessment survey. Personnel on all levels of the institutional hierarchy participate in this discussion, and suggest priorities for the goals. After the list of prioritized goals has been resubmitted to the same population, the Delphi procedure is repeated to prioritize objectives. (NHH)

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DEFINING AND COMMUNICATING INSTITUTIONAL MISSION/
 ROLE/SCOPE AND PRIORITIES: THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT TYPES
 OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS*

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During the past few years, postsecondary institutions have been faced with increased pressures to better define "what they are all about," and to better communicate their purposes and goals to many different audiences. The community colleges of our country have also faced such pressures, and many institutions have not been as successful as desired in attacking the problems of explicitly defining and stating their purposes and goals. Therefore, they would like guidance in this area, as indicated in the survey where members of the AERA Special Interest Group on Community/Junior College Research indicated special interest in hearing papers at this convention on goal setting. The topic of this paper is on procedures for goal-setting, and on how the needs at community colleges are different from those at other types of postsecondary education institutions. This preliminary report is based on a review of the literature, on procedures worked out at NCHEMS and on the insights gained working with personnel at several institutions (including one community college) in the formulation and expression of their goals and objectives. We are currently seeking funding for a more extensive try-out of the procedures to be discussed here.

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The importance of clearly defining and communicating an organization's goals has been underscored by various organizational theorists (e.g., March and Simon, 1958; Selznick, 1960; Etzioni, 1964; Perrow, 1970; Kast, Rosenzweig, and Johnson, 1971). Thus Perrow (1970), when speaking of institutional character (a term which was initially coined by Selznick [1957]), stated the following:

I have paid so much attention, and devoted so many pages, to the neglected area of goals because I believe they provide a key, not found elsewhere, to an organization's 'character,' and thus to its behavior Goals, in this sense, are necessary for concerted effort. It is possible for an organization to lack important goals, or to lack a distinctive character. Without firm goals, such organizations are subject to vagrant pressures from within and without, even as they may grow and prosper. There is, of course, a direction of effort, but it may be changeable, vulnerable, and not firmly anchored in the organizational structure. While this gives the organization flexibility, it also provides few resources for unusual effort of a concerted kind. Organizations are tools; system, product, and derived goals shape the form of the tool, indicating for what it can or cannot be used. An organization with weakly held goals is a poor tool for accomplishing ends, so that it may be shaped by opportunistic forces in the environment. Thus, goals represent a positive resource to organizations [pp. 171-173].

In a recent essay on university goals, Conrad (1974) points out that goals: (1) are standards against which to judge success, (2) provide a source of legitimacy which justify the activities of an organization, (3) define organizational needs and priorities, (4) define production units for "outputs" for the organization, (5) define the organization's clientele, and (6) define the nature of the relationship between the organization and society. He also points out that "in most universities, goals are often implicit, residing in an extended body of collective understandings rather than in explicit statements." He goes on to say, "If university goals are to serve the purposes listed above, they must be identified more precisely."

The goals of specific colleges and universities have traditionally been described in broad, vague, "high sounding," and often internally inconsistent terms. Such a

situation did not cause any major problems as long as people fully accepted the intrinsic value of a college education and as long as the demands made on post-secondary education institutions remained relatively stable. However, during the fifties and sixties, postsecondary educational institutions, in particular those in the collegiate sector, came under increasingly severe pressure to grow in size and complexity (pressure readily acceded to by many officials) and to meet the diverse needs, desires, and expectations of many new groups throughout society. In response to these voluminous and diverse demands being made on them, institutions often found themselves trying to become "everything to everybody." They were indeed shaped by opportunistic forces in the environment. In the process, colleges and universities of all types grew increasingly alike; they increasingly lost their individual identities as they pursued an ideal typified by the university model. As a result, the purposes, goals, objectives, and priorities of specific institutions have not been very distinct, nor very apparent to even their students, faculty, and administrators. Although they have often been more distinct in their statements of mission than have other institutions, the same problems have been apparent at community colleges. One result of this is that the so-called "community college philosophy" has often not been very well understood by those outside of the movement who have heard it expounded.

Before discussing procedures in goal-setting, it will be helpful to talk about and define, for purposes of this paper, six terms. Examples of each term are given in Figure 1, and the definitions follow:

1. Mission - The statement of "mission" for an institution or organization is a statement of its enduring purpose or aspiration. As such, it serves only to describe the most general focus or direction. By virtue of the sweeping and typical generality of mission statements, they tend to be very similar for institutions of the same general type and even across types.

2. Goals - The "goals" for an institution represent conditions sought in pursuit of its mission. Goals are still stated in rather broad, qualitative terms, but they are more specific than a mission statement.
3. Objectives - "Objectives" are specific ends to be achieved with regard to a particular goal. Objectives are stated in quantitative terms and, once adopted, connote intent and presume that courses of action will be undertaken to attain them. It is at this point that true specificity concerning what is meant by a mission or goal is achieved.
4. Priorities - "Priorities" is a term used to reflect the relative importance of the institution's goals and objectives. Since goals and objectives are not necessarily of equal importance, some statement of what is most important, what is second in importance, etc. must be forthcoming if an institution is to operate so as to maximize the value of the achievement of its objectives.
5. Role - "Role" refers to the specific part one institution will play relative to the mission, goals, objectives and priorities of other institutions and of a larger organization or larger need (e.g., the postsecondary education system in a state). Because the concept of role is one which focuses institutions (and their funders) to identify their place in the larger educational community, it tends to be an item of much debate and concern. It is the issue that is more and more forcing institutions to search for ways to express their unique characteristics. As shown in Figure 1, roles can be established or identified for institutions on a variety of dimensions, e.g., programs offered, clients served, outcomes sought, and methods used. Some people would

Figure 1

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF SIX CONCEPTS IMPORTANT
FOR THE PROCESS OF GOAL-SETTING

1. Examples of common MISSION STATEMENTS

- For a community college - "to meet the needs of a particular locality for an educated citizenry, for trained personnel, and for community services."
- For a major university - "to meet the needs of society and a particular state or geographic area (or perhaps even the nation) for an educated citizenry, for trained personnel, for research and development, for scholarship, and for community service."

2. Examples of GOALS

- "An equalized opportunity for entry into higher education for the residents of a locality or geographic region, for all who are high school graduates or who possess equivalent experience."
- "An integration of the capabilities of the institution with the needs and aspirations of the community or region in which it exists."

3. Examples of OBJECTIVES

- "To enroll a freshman class having the same racial and economic characteristics as the high school graduates in the geographic area served by the institution."
- "To place at least 70 percent of the graduates of the institution in jobs for which they are trained within the geographic area served by the institution."

4. Examples of PRIORITIES

- "Of our major missions, vocational-technical training has first priority, general education has second priority, transfer courses have third priority, and public service has fourth priority."
- "In vocational-technical training, helping students to understand basic principles has first priority, helping them to read and interpret instructional manuals has second priority, helping them to develop skill competencies that will allow them to conduct basic operations with no on-the-job orientation will have third priority, helping them be prompt and dependable for their employer will have fourth priority, and helping them to get along with their work associates will have fifth priority."

5. Examples of ROLE

- Programs offered -- one institution will offer programs in the arts and sciences and another will offer vocational programs, or one institution will conduct only instructional programs while another will have both instruction and research.
- Clients served -- one institution will serve the academic elite while another will be egalitarian.
- Outcomes sought -- one institution will seek to better employment opportunities for individuals whereas another will focus on preparation for graduate school.
- Methods used -- one institution will utilize traditional teaching methods while another will emphasize some other form.

6. Examples of SCOPE

- For some community colleges the scope may be limited to providing specific kinds of narrowly focused academic and vocational programs to the residents of a limited geographical area.
- For a major research university, scope may include such things as providing a full array of academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, instruction in specified professional areas, research in the sciences and agriculture, community education is the foci of adult basic education provided via extension to people within a state.

consider the concept of "role" as part of the term mission, but mission statements often do not even refer at all to how the institution fits in with the other existing institutions, and how it fits into the relevant postsecondary education system.

6. Scope - "Scope" refers to the magnitude and extent (range) of institutional activities, the magnitude of impact that is sufficient to meet the institution's goals and the specific limits or boundaries of the target groups of concern. As with "role," some people would consider this concept part of the term "mission," but mission statements often contain no reference to what we have referred to as "scope."

Based on the aforementioned, it is apparent that the problem of goal-setting becomes one of identifying and clearly stating exactly (1) what it is that the institution is trying to accomplish; (2) whom it is trying to serve; (3) how it intends to accomplish its objectives; and (4) how much and how well it intends to accomplish. Without answers to these questions an institution cannot really specify its purposes and goals sufficiently to meet its internal needs for direction, plus it becomes difficult to stake out its claim to some special place in the larger postsecondary education community. And unless institutions get down to tangible, concrete levels of specificity, it is impossible to really answer these questions.

As stated above the key to solving the problem of goal-setting is "concreteness" or "specificity." For example, Sterling M. McMurrin, a former U.S. Commissioner of Education, said the following (1974):

When we engage seriously in attempts to reform and strengthen the educational systems, individual institutions, or specific instructional programs, we cannot permit decisions which do not serve our large educational purposes. But these purposes are ambiguous, elusive, and abstract. They have little meaning until they are given operational concreteness and specificity in the state goals of particular institutions and in their instructional objectives ... Individual institutions have too often failed to develop a clear sense of purpose and enunciate institutional goals which define that purpose. They have failed to concentrate their resources and energies on the achievements of ends appropriate to their distinctive characters and capabilities ... This situation is now so acute that whereas formerly we simply had a bankrupt educational philosophy, we are now faced with the prospects of numerous bankrupt colleges, colleges whose financial distress is sometimes apparently due at least partly to their failure to expend their resources wisely because they are not clear about what they are trying to achieve and therefore cannot effectively order their priorities [pp. 5-6].

A study of Planning for Self-Renewal at the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education (Palola and Padgett, 1971) arrived at the same conclusions:

A recurring theme in the literature of goals in education is that too little attention is paid to defining the aims of the educational process beyond coining global abstraction ... In the self-renewing institution, the plans allow flexibility while focusing on concrete goals; goals which represent achievable ideals rather than simply projections of the past on the other hand, or vague philosophical rhetoric on the other [pp. 77-78].

NCHEMS staff have received many indications that there is a widespread recognition of the problem, but limited capability to deal with it. Institutions have found that dealing in the abstract with the development of goals and objectives has proved to be a very frustrating experience: they can often state their goals in general terms but cannot make the crucial leap to stating their objectives in terms specific enough to be effectively acted upon. Developmental work conducted by NCHEMS at South Dakota State University and Kalamazoo Valley Community College concerning the development of institutional and organizational unit goals has further emphasized the need for concrete guidelines and alternative strategies for deciding about goals and especially for translating these general goals into specific objectives.

Before going further, we need to distinguish between outcome goals and process goals (or as Conrad [1974] has called them, operative goals). Outcome goals refer to the results or consequences that you aim to achieve with your programs and activities, e.g., for students and the community. Process goals refer to how you aim to achieve the outcome goals, what personnel, time, activities, techniques, methods, and tools will you utilize in the institutional process that aims at one or more outcome goals. Since the outcome goals are where the primary problem has been, and since the outcome goals need to be specified before you can effectively focus on the process goals, this paper will concentrate on outcome goals. (As will be pointed out, however, some of the techniques useful in setting outcome goals will also be useful in setting process goals.) In addition, although we will refer to goal-setting for departments, programs, and other sub-units of the institution, our focus will be on institutional goals.

A needed first step in the direction of concreteness and specificity is the identification of a limited number of goals that serve to define the broad and vague mission statements that are the rule in postsecondary institutions. This step of narrowing down the possible institutional thrusts or directions to a manageable size has historically been the focus of much of the work to date in the area of more concretely stating the goals and objectives of an institution. In fact, a number of procedures and instruments have been developed to aid in the process of selecting the goals of an institution from a longer list of possible goals (e.g., the Gross and Grambsch [1968] Survey of Educational Goals, Educational Testing Service's Institutional Goals Inventory [Peterson, 1973], and NCHEMS' Inventory of Higher Education Outcome Variables and Measures [Micek and Wallhaus, 1973], and on instruments and procedures developed for NCHEMS'

Outcome Measures Identification Study [Micek and Arney, 1974]). Although some have "started from scratch" by developing their own list from which to narrow down, and others have effectively decided on more specific goals by starting with no concrete list at all, our experience is that starting with such a "tested out" list will save time and help prevent problems during this step in the goal-setting process. For example, using an open-ended approach has the danger that the goals mentioned will be too broad and vague to be very useful in guiding institutional planning and operation. Most institutions will need to modify any of the three lists mentioned by adding additional goals appropriate for their institution (and sometimes the wording of a goal will need to be modified), but usually the majority of possible goals for an institution are included and the goals listed provide a good model for the amount of specificity and the form of the wording desired. Any of the three instruments mentioned above (the Gross and Grambsch Survey, the ETS Inventory, or the NCHEMS Inventory) could be equally useful and effective for this step, and we will not recommend one over the other. It should perhaps be mentioned that a more comprehensive extension and revision of the NCHEMS inventory is currently under development at NCHEMS called the NCHEMS Outcomes Structure. It also includes a dimension focusing on who or what should receive or be affected by the outcome.

There are several directions in which this step in the goal-setting process could go: (1) top-down, (2) bottom-up, or (3) down-up-down-up. The first direction has perhaps been the most common method in postsecondary institutions, where the top-level administrators decide on the goals for the institution and then these are disseminated to the other levels of the institution. In the "bottom-up" direction (such as the system instituted at Colorado State University

under the direction of Dr. Charles Weidt, or the system being developed at the University of Michigan, the lower levels of the institution formulate institutional goals that are passed up and aggregated and analyzed at the top level in the institution, where a final determination is made. The third approach, and the one we favor, is where a broad list of supposed outcomes plus relevant information is initially passed down from the top, and then a back and forth iterative process takes place that moves as far as practical towards consensus.

A couple of techniques for seeking consensus have become prominent, the Q-sort technique and the Delphi technique. Others are being developed, e.g., the policy-capture technique, combined exchange techniques, and reconsideration techniques.

For the goal-setting process we favor a modified Delphi-technique similar to the example reported by Evans (1975) where they used the Delphi for policy formulation at Portland State University. The process goes as follows: A broad list of outcomes that has been tried out elsewhere, a mission statement of the institution, and the results of a comprehensive and in-depth needs assessment that has been conducted by the institutional research office will be discussed among top-level personnel. (Needs assessment is a complicated and broad topic, so procedures for needs assessment will not be discussed here.) Then representatives of the lower levels in the institution (including students) will be brought into the discussion for their input before a modified outcomes goals list, the current mission statement, and a short needs assessment summary are sent to each department on campus. The department head should be asked to consult with his entire staff in completing the questionnaire. Each potential respondent should be asked, by checking on the list, to separate the outcome goals into: (1) those

that should have high priority, (2) those that should have medium priority, (3) those that should have low priority, and (4) those that should have no priority. Modifications to any goal, and additions should also be solicited. It would also be good to ask them to respond, for each goal, how well it is currently being met; and to have them identify who should receive or be effected by the various outcomes of concern.

Once the results of the survey have been analyzed, the findings should be sent back to the respondents along with another copy of the survey instrument. After the survey is completed and the results analyzed a second time, the committee should decide on the goals to be adopted and the priority of each. In addition to the needs assessment information and the results of the delphi surveys, decisions about priorities should be based on criteria such as: (1) the potential that the outcome can be brought about, (2) whether or not it lends itself to the methodologies and programs of the institution, (3) how much potential the outcome has for leading to postgraduate outcomes for individuals and to community or societal outcomes, (4) the expense and effort that will be necessary to achieve the outcome, and (5) whether or not the outcome will contribute to the institution be appropriately unique from its neighbor institutions and having suitably unique methodologies and programs.

In order to move beyond goals, it is necessary to respond to a second need, the need to develop some means for translating goals into specific objectives to be pursued by the institution. It is at this point that quantitative expression, concreteness, and specificity are reached. It is also this step that has been found to be especially difficult to overcome. Even if institutions can state

their goals, an inability to state them in specific, measurable objective terms hinders (if not precludes) them from gaining the benefits of such statements. Neither can they adequately assess the progress of their programs to determine the extent to which goals have been achieved, nor successfully communicate to constituents external to the institution sufficiently specific information to be of use to those groups (e.g., information that would allow a prospective student to ascertain whether or not his individual objectives could be met at the institution).

For each of the outcome goals (variables) in the NCHEMS Inventory of Higher Education Outcome Variables and Measures, a number of potential, quantifiable measures have been outlined. Others may be added if they are available and considered desirable. Criteria of relevance, reliability, validity, and ease of administration were used in deciding what measures were to be included in the inventory. These same concerns should be addressed for the particular campus setting, however. For example, will the measure have meaning, and be considered representative of the outcome being measured, by those who will be using the data to make planning and management decisions. Can the needed and proper data be readily obtained? How costly and time consuming will it be to implement the measure?

The next step in translating the goals to objectives, once the committee has decided on the measures appropriate for each goal, is to decide on the level of attainment on the goal that is desirable and that should be expected. Decisions about level can be based on logical reason, on past results in the context of the current situation, on the performance of other comparable institutions or

programs, and/or on some standard that has been determined by legislative mandate, a professional association, some agency, research results, etc. (For example, a learning objective might be that 85 percent of the students will pass a particular exam.) The objectives for each goal should now be listed in priority order utilizing similar prioritizing criteria for these decisions as were proposed for prioritizing goals.

Once the committee has made tentative decisions about the goals, goal priorities, objectives, and objective priorities for each outcome goal, the list should be circulated to the departments for reactions. Then, as such feedback is considered, the institution's goals and objectives should be finalized. Next, each institutional department can go through a similar process to determine its goals and objectives supportive of the institution's goals and objectives, and those goals and objectives necessary to meet its own added agenda of needs (assuming they do not conflict with the institution's mission).

An additional need is for integrating the specific statements of goals and objectives into the on-going planning, management, and evaluation processes of the institution and its components. If not so integrated any statement of goals and objectives becomes a sterile exercise. To be useful and meaningful it is necessary to make them a focal point for decisions and actions geared toward achieving those objectives (towards decisions about process goals). Resources must be allocated in such a way that achievement of those objectives is promoted. Furthermore, evaluation of an institution's progress can be accomplished only against the yardstick provided by its statements of what it intended to do.

Based on our experiences thus far, it would seem that the goal setting procedures outlined here will work as well at community colleges as at other postsecondary institutions. Some factors will probably be different, however. Some of the lists of goals mentioned (e.g., ETS' Institutional Goals Inventory) are more inclusive of university goals than of community college goals, which means that community colleges will probably have to add more goals of their own. Conversely, universities usually have more administrative levels, which complicates their consensus-seeking efforts. These are illustrative of the differences between community colleges and other institutions that will affect the goal-setting process. Factors that vary from institution to institution will also have important effects on the process. For example, certain administrative styles prevalent on a campus may not be amenable to the iterative method of goal setting outlined here. The numeration and evaluation of such constraints awaits the results of additional investigation.

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