



DATA GUIDES

TARGET SETTING GUIDE

SMART Target Template



Target setting is important for any measurement related to institutional improvement in student outcomes. Targets should be clearly stated and describe what is to be accomplished. Following the SMART steps in the template below will help to establish appropriate targets that are supportive of your student success work. See **SMART Target Tips** for assistance or if you hit a roadblock.

GOAL STATEMENT

What is your Goal? What is the overall vision of the ideal student experience, and what needs to happen to achieve that vision? *Example: Our vision is an institution that supports ALL students. We will close historical achievement gaps that occur between historically underserved students and others.*

SMART STEPS

SPECIFIC

Review the Goal Statement and consider the “W” questions: What? Who? Why?

- *What do you want to accomplish?*
- *Why is this your goal?*
- *Who are you measuring (e.g., low-income students, all students, first-year)?*

MEASURABLE

How will you know whether you have achieved your target? How can you measure or quantify progress? Review benchmarking, key performance indicator, or other internal or external data sources.

- *What is the measure you will use?*
- *What is the historical/current data for that measure?*
- *How much do you want to increase/decrease that number? How will you know when you have successfully reached your goal?*
- *Note, include operational/process, and near- and long-term targets.*



ATTAINABLE

An attainable target should be realistic and achievable, and based on defensible evidence. Establish the rationale for setting the target above.

- *What evidence did you use to determine the amount of improvement achievable – a best practice, historical data/trend, benchmark? E.g., What evidence supports the rationale that your target is achievable?*
- *What financial resources, staffing, and technologies are needed? Are they available?*
- *Is the target set appropriately – is it too low that it is not challenging enough? Or is it too much of a stretch?*
- *What are the environmental and cultural considerations? Can you work to achieve the target within the current environment and culture?*
- *Is this an area that you can influence? E.g., What is your institution's ability to change student engagement, advising policies, curriculum, pedagogy, etc.*

RELEVANT

Describe how the target addresses the student outcome in the goal statement above.

- *Is the target worthwhile? How is it aligned with the initial goal, strategy and mission?*
- *Is this the right time?*
- *Does this align with other efforts such as re-accreditation and other targets set by the institution?*



TIME-BOUND

Define the timeframe for achieving the target.

- *What is the target date for achieving this target? Note, setting intermediary targets, particularly for long-term targets, is motivating and ensures that you are keeping on track.*

FORMAL TARGET STATEMENTS

Review your responses above. Craft formal target statements for process/operational metrics, and near- and long-term student outcome metrics. The target statements should be descriptive, reflective of each of the five SMART elements, and concise. Example:

- *The percentage of (who) (doing) will (increase/decrease) from (X%) to (Y%) by (when) as measured by (which metric).*
- *The percentage of Pell students being retained will increase from 40% to 45% for the 2020 entering cohort as measured by retention to their second academic year.*

Target Statement #1

Target Statement #2

Target Statement #3

Target Statement #4

Target Statement #5

The idea of SMART Targets was first developed in 1981 by George T. Doran, a consultant and former Director of Corporate Planning for Washington Water Power Company. He suggested that goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-related); variations of his concept have been developed over time. The premise of SMART Targets is to provide a clear and manageable path to one's goals.

