Writing Effective Goals

Setting goals is an important strategy for developing a plan of action. Think of goal-setting in terms of criteria such as those seen below. To remember the criteria, consider the acronym SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time framed).

1. **Specific:**
   A. Is easy to understand
   B. Specifies desired future results
   C. Identifies actions to be taken or results to be achieved that will contribute to the achievement of a larger objective within a time period
   D. Uses concrete action verbs

2. **Measurable:**
   A. Describes how each goal will be measured
   B. Answers the following questions:
      I. How will I know when the result has been achieved?
      II. How will I verify the achievement/performance of this goal?
      III. To what level do I need to achieve this result?
   C. Identifies the quantitative factors involved and sets measures

3. **Achievable:**
   A. Is realistic
   B. Is within the individual’s/unit’s/team’s control and influence

4. **Relevant:**
   A. Is in alignment with the mission of the department, unit, or work group/organization
   B. Relates to broader objectives that the department wishes to achieve

5. **Time Framed:**
   A. There is a specific time frame to achieve this goal (beginning and end date)
   B. May include interim steps and a plan to monitor progress
   C. May establish a time frame for short and long-term goals