

Goals can increase the likelihood of realizing your hopes for the future. They help provide direction and motivation and increase commitment and persistence.

By setting goals you may feel less overwhelmed by what you are trying to accomplish because they break change down into realistic steps. Goals also help you to prioritize and organize your efforts towards desired changes.

You are likely to find your classes more motivating and enjoyable if you have clear reasons on why you are taking them. Goal setting can help you stay in touch with how your current classes may fit in with your larger personal, academic, career and life aspirations. This awareness can provide you a source of motivation, commitment and persistence - and can provide an extra incentive to stick with it when it is hard to concentrate or if you are not that interested in a particular class.

When setting goals, it is important to distinguish between short, intermediate and long term goals. It is also important to be able to identify steps that you can take towards reaching your goals.

Effective Goals:

- Come from your values and wishes, rather than from other people's expectations, or "shoulds"
- Are specific, obtainable, possible, and realistic. You will be able to tell if you are meeting your goals.
- Involve changes in your behavior, not that of others.

Goals that contribute to academic success often include:

- Requirements for a major and graduation
- Career aspirations
- Performance standards
- Knowledge or expertise in an area of personal interest

How to Set Academic Goals:

- Develop a plan of action that is specific and realistic by asking yourself the following questions: (sample answers are included in parentheses)
- What do you hope for or wish could be different this semester? (I want to improve my grades)
- Picture yourself accomplishing your goal; what would you be doing differently that would be helping you succeed? (attending classes and staying caught up with my studying on a daily basis)

- What are some of your strengths, abilities or current behaviors that could help you realize your goal? (When I attend classes, I tend to learn easily and remember the material presented)
- What are some positive steps that you would have to take to increase the likelihood of meeting your goals?
- What are some things that you would need to change because they get in the way of achieving your goals?

Adapted from UNC CAP Program