Citrus College

Everything You Need to Know
About Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Frequently Asked Questions
For All College Employees

**Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee
"Hot Shots"**

Spring 2013

Frequently Asked Questions: For All College Employees

1. Why are we doing this?
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) give us the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of instruction and programs on campus. Making improvements to instruction and programs will enhance student learning and success.

Recommendation #2 in our accreditation report states, "the team recommends that, in order to meet the standards by the Commission's 2012 deadline, the college complete the development and use of SLOs at the course and program levels and include SLOs in all course syllabi, including distance education."

The Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment (SLOA) Committee (Hot Shots) wrote a detailed planning agenda in our most recent self-study that identified a timeline for SLOA implementation for the college, linking assessments results to planning and institutional effectiveness.

The planning agenda states the following:
- In order to fully achieve the proficiency level of the ACCJC rubric relative to student learning outcomes by the year 2012, the college will complete tasks identified in a comprehensive timeline for SLOs in the areas of courses, programs, degrees and certificates, as well as instructional support programs, student services programs, and institutional support services.

- The college's institutional support services will continue its work to identify SLOs where appropriate, establish assessments and use the results for improvement.

- The college will continue its work to thoroughly incorporate SLOs into the curriculum and program review processes, identify systematic measureable assessments, and use the results for the improvement of student learning and institutional effectiveness.

- Each area will develop meaningful assessments that will enhance planning, evaluation and lead to program improvement and feed seamlessly into the program review process to support college decision-making.

- Continued progress toward integrating results of assessment in college processes will assure that planning and resource allocation contribute to student-centered institutional effectiveness.

The college also responded further to this planning agenda (now called self-improvement plan) in our most recent midterm report.
http://www.citruscollege.edu/accreditation/midterm2012/Documents/2012MidTermFinal.pdf

http://www.citruscollege.edu/accreditation/midterm2012/slo/Documents/SLOImplementationReport2012.pdf

2. Will this go away?

No. The current Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) standards have been in place for close to 10 years. The Commission is going to revisit the standards in the next year or two, but the general content of the standards stands the test of time. The Commission continues its commitment to the student learning outcome and assessment process.

3. What is a student learning outcome (SLO)?

An SLO is the "measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences." (From the ACCJC glossary)

This encompasses experiences that include, but are not limited to, those found within a course, a program of study, a degree or certificate program, or services offered by the college.

4. What is the difference between course objectives and SLOs?

SLOs for the classroom describe the knowledge, skills, abilities or attitudes that a student can **demonstrate** by the end of your course.

Don't think about content or coverage - consider what students should be able to DO with what they've learned by the end of the semester.
- How will students demonstrate this?
- What can they produce to show faculty that they have learned to apply their new knowledge?

When trying to define SLOs for a course, think of the big picture.
SLOs:
- Describe the broadest goals for the class, ones that require **higher-level** thinking abilities.
- Require students to **synthesize** many discreet skills or areas of content.
- Ask students to then **produce** something - papers, projects, portfolios, demonstrations, performances, art works, exams etc. – that **applies** what they have learned.
- Require faculty to **evaluate** or **assess** the product to measure a student's achievement or mastery of the outcomes.

Course objectives are on a smaller scale, describing small, discreet skills or "nuts and bolts" that require basic thinking skills. They are subsets of outcomes. Think of objectives as the building blocks used to produce whatever is used to demonstrate mastery of an outcome. Objectives can be practiced and assessed individually, but are usually only a portion of an overall project or application.

Objectives	Outcomes
Objectives describe skills, tools or content that a student will master by the end of a course.	Outcomes describe over-arching goals that a student will be able to demonstrate by the end of a course.
Objectives require the use of basic thinking skills such as knowledge, comprehension and application.	Outcomes require the use of higher level thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
Objectives do not necessarily result in a product. Most often, objectives are synthesized or combined to produce something that measures an outcome.	Outcomes result in a product that can be measured and assessed.

5. What is important to remember when writing SLOs?

Does the outcome represent specific knowledge/skills/abilities/attitudes students will acquire as a result of an experience in the intended forum (classroom, program, service area)?

Is the outcome measureable in a continuous and sustainable way?

6. What is assessment?

Assessment is an evaluation of student success in acquiring/demonstrating specific behaviors or skills.

Assessment is an ongoing process designed to monitor and improve student learning. Faculty explicitly define what they want students to learn, verify that the curriculum is designed to foster that learning, collect empirical data that indicate the extent of the learning, and use these data improve the program. (Allen, Mary J. *Assessing General Education Programs*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2006. P. 1.)

Assessment is any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, or divisional effectiveness. (Upcraft and Schuh, 1996)

The Higher Learning Commission defines assessment of student learning as follows:
 "Assessment of student learning is a participatory, iterative process that:
- Provides data/information you need on your students' learning;
- Engages you and others in analyzing and using this data/information to confirm and improve teaching and learning;
- Produces evidence that students are learning the outcomes you intended;
- Guides you in making educational and institutional improvements;
- Evaluates whether changes made improve/impact student learning, and documents the learning and your efforts."

7. What can I learn from assessment?

How well did the students in question acquire or demonstrate the desired behaviors or skills?

With what material did students have the most difficulty or the most success?

Do different student populations have different rates of success?

8. Are there specific examples of assessment?

Yes. They are posted in the Comprehensive Assessment Report for each year on the SLOA website. You can access this through the A-Z index on the college website.

http://www.citruscollege.edu/sloa/Documents/CompSLOReport2010-11.pdf

http://www.citruscollege.edu/accreditation/midterm2012/slo/Documents/SLOImplementationReport2012.pdf

9. How do students benefit from SLOA?

In instruction: Because expectations are communicated in the syllabus via rubrics and grading standards, students will know the expectations for performance and characteristics of evaluation, which will help them to be more successful. Students will be able to reflect on the learning experience and potential areas of growth.

In service areas: Service areas will be assessed and analyzed in a systematic manner, often reflecting on student feedback through surveys or focus groups which will result in improved support of students.

10. Do any other resources or guides exist?

Yes. Hot Shots is creating a handbook that details the process from writing the SLO to implementing an improvement plan, as well as how this articulates with our planning/budget allocation process. . This is currently **in progress**. The following organizations have information and may be accessed at the URLs listed:

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC): **http://www.accjc.org**

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC - statewide senate): **http://www.asccc.org**

The Research and Planning Group (RP Group): **http://www.rpgroup.org**

11. Where can I get help on campus?

You can contact the SLOA coordinator, the Hot Shots Committee (aka The Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee), your Academic Senate/Curriculum committee representatives, and your dean.

Frequently Asked Questions: For All Faculty

1. How often do SLOs need to be assessed?
SLOs need to be assessed on a regular basis (every semester that the course is offered and discussed every year for programs). Eventually, all SLOs need to go through this process.

2. How does assessment relate to faculty evaluation?
Faculty are required to participate in the SLOA and planning process, however, the results of assessments are not/will not be utilized as a pre-tenure or post-tenure evaluation tool. (Reference: BP 7203 and AP 7203)

3. Are the overall course grades the same as SLOA?
No. In many cases, grades do not provide insight into specific strengths and weaknesses of student learning/achievement of specific skills. However, when grades are evaluated as being tied to specific course goals and outcomes, they may enrich the assessment process. The sum of achievement of the SLOs collectively should directly relate to the overall course grade.

4. Will a faculty member write and assess outcomes for all of his or her courses and programs?
Yes.

5. Will faculty need to assess every outcome for every course eventually?
Yes. However, evaluating one or more at a time is fine. Every outcome for every course needs to be assessed within each comprehensive program review cycle.

6. Will faculty need to assess every course every semester?
Yes. Every time the course is offered, one or more SLOs need to be in the assessment loop.

7. What SLO components does the Citrus College Course Outline of Record require?
Our process requires that the SLO (e.g. the student will demonstrate, communicate, evaluate…) and the assessment language (e.g. which is shown through student performance on written or oral reports, a skills test, quizzes, homework, a portfolio…) be recorded in CurricuNet. Please complete both text boxes in the course outline of record when updating CurricuNet.

8. Where does one publish SLOs?
In as many places as possible: the syllabi, course outlines of record, certificates, degrees, program reviews. This will enhance student performance/experience, because they will know our goals/expectations.

9. What if I have too many SLOs and I would like to consolidate them?
Having somewhere between one and four SLOs for a course is a good standard. If you have many more than four, your language is probably more objective-related than outcome-related. You can update and revise them in CurricuNet, and the Curriculum Committee has a shortened approval process for course modifications that involve only an SLO and assessment revision. The SLO revision will appear as a choice in the drop down menu for the reason for submitting the course to the committee. If you choose this option faculty in your division, the SLOA coordinator, and your dean are the only approvals required.

Please keep in mind that if you choose this option, you **may not** change any other details in the course outline of record.

Frequently Asked Questions – For Student Service and Instructional Support Services Areas

1. What are Service Area SLOs?
Service Area SLOs *are statements that identify the program or department's client, service provided, and the experience or service that the department provides. Service Area SLOs identify critical and central services, processes, and function expected of a program or department and the desired quality (timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, effectiveness, etc.).*

Student Support Service Areas include Student Services and Student Instructional Support. Service Area SLOs include *support services* and *structured events that occur outside of the classroom, complement the academic programs, and enhance student learning and the overall educational experience of students through development of, exposure to, and participation in social, cultural, intellectual, and recreational and governance programs by*:
- Encouraging engagement in the campus community and society
- Encouraging exploration of activities that provide opportunities for growth in individual and group settings
- Exposing students to various cultures and experiences, ideas and issues, art and musical forms, and styles of life
- Informing students regarding college policies and procedures and how these relate to their lives and activities
- Aiding in the awareness and utilization of college facilities and resources
- Assisting with developing leadership, decision-making and related skills

Source: Student Life/Leadership, Maricopa Community Colleges, Arizona (www.maricopa.edu, 7/23/07)

2. How often do Service Area SLOs need to be assessed?
Service Area SLOs need to be assessed on a regular basis (every year). Eventually, all SLOs need to go through this process.

3. How do Service Areas write SLOs?
The writing should begin with a collective discussion about how the individual area supports students. The group can include all employees who work in an area. After brainstorming, the outcomes can be written using action language about what students will be able to "DO" as a result of contact with the service area. The outcomes should be broad and overarching goals that might encompass many detailed activities leading to the overall successful support of a student. The service area outcomes should also be connected with the mission and need to be measureable.

Frequently Asked Questions – For Institutional Support Service Areas

1. What are Institutional Support SLOs?
Institutional Support SLOs *are statements that identify the program or department's client, service provided, and the experience or service that the department provides. Institutional Support SLOs identify critical and central services, processes, and function expected of a program or department and the desired quality (timeliness, accuracy, responsiveness, effectiveness, etc.). Institutional Support service areas include Administrative and Financial Services, Facilities, Human Resources, Institutional Research, External and Government Relations, and Technology and Computer Services.*

Institutional Support SLOs include *support services* and *structured events that occur outside of the classroom, complement the academic programs, and enhance student learning and the overall educational experience of students through development of, exposure to, and participation in social, cultural, intellectual, and recreational and governance programs by*:
- Encouraging engagement in the campus community and society
- Informing students regarding college policies and procedures and how these relate to their lives and activities
- Aiding in the awareness and utilization of college facilities and resources

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