

Actionable Improvement Plan for Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Southwestern College is committed to maintaining sustainable continuous quality improvement in SLO assessment and use of assessment results across the institution to inform planning processes. The College meets all SLO Eligibility Requirements (ERs) stated in ERs 10, 11, and 19. First, it systematically defines, assesses, and publishes all programs' expected student learning and achievement outcomes, and it demonstrates the levels to which students achieve those outcomes. Further, all segments of general education patterns have stated student learning outcomes that are used to measure demonstrated competence in major areas of study, including skills in writing and computation. Finally, the College systematically evaluates student learning and posts evidence of learning on the District's website. The College integrates SLO assessment findings into its planning processes and in its allocation of resources. Assessment of institutional SLOs (ISLOs) is reported annually in the Student Outcomes and Achievement (SOAR) Report which all programs and units may use when completing an annual program review.

During the process of completing this Institutional Self Evaluation for the Commission, the College recognized it should improve its assessment of SLOs and use of SLO results in two areas. First, it recognized that more human resources support for SLO assessment is needed to ensure both continuous and authentic assessment of learning for all courses, programs, and student support services. Second, the College recognized it should expand its use of assessment results to support institutional effectiveness by better ensuring that SLO assessment results are used to plan for program improvements.

Currently, the College is working to increase human resource support for SLO assessment. In spring 2012, in order to meet the Proficiency level of SLO assessment for the Commission's Student Learning Outcomes Status Report, the College offered stipends to faculty to assist in colleagues in SLO assessment. As stated in the status report to the Commission (<http://www.swccd.edu/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=10519>):

"In spring 2012, it was acknowledged that more human resources were needed to support SLO assessment. One person from each of the nine Schools/Centers was hired to support SLO assessment in their areas. Titled "ISLO Point People," the "Points" trained faculty in assessment practices and procedures, assisted with entering data into eLumen, and guided faculty in the completion of assessment documents (i.e., timelines, rubrics, and plans for improvement). Points meet weekly as a group with the ISLO Coordinator to discuss assessment progress and to review and revise SLO practices and processes. Points were rehired in fall 2012 to assist with the preparation of our 2012 Midterm Report and this SLO report."

Given the momentum for assessing SLOs built by the Points, the College assumed that the momentum would continue after the status report was submitted and the College discontinued the SLO Point positions in fall 2012. Unfortunately, after the dissolution of the SLO Points, momentum for assessing SLOs has been steadily dwindling. In order to address this issue, the District is moving to reinstate SLO Points in Schools and Centers across the campus. SLO Points will be reinstated in Spring 2015 for an extended period of time. SLO Points will assist faculty in assessing SLOs in both on-site and online courses, conducting authentic assessments, generating open dialogue, creating actionable improvement plans using SLO results, and using the eLumen software system to store SLO results, generate reports, and track progress of improvement plans.

Next, the Shared Consultation Council (SCC) moved to expand the role of SLO results in integrated planning and allocation of resources. In fall of 2014, SCC supported a shift in goals and vision for its standing committee the Institutional Student Learning Outcome Committee. With this shift in goals and vision, came a

new committee name: Student Outcomes and Achievement Review (SOAR) Committee. This upgraded committee maintained the tasks and goals of its predecessor – to assist in the organization, process, and assessment of SLOs across campus. However, it added additional tasks of reviewing, discussing, analyzing, and making recommendations based on institutional student learning outcomes data, Institution Set Standards data, and California Community College Chancellor’s Office Scorecard data. By design, at the end of each academic year, the SOAR committee publishes the results of its review, dialogue, analysis, and recommendations in the SOAR Report. The SOAR Report is included in the data resources package provided for programs and units completing annual program review.

The first SOAR Report was completed in spring 2014 and accepted by the SCC. Although the intention was for the SOAR Report to be consulted during program review by all departments and units while creating annual goals and making requests for allocations, this did not occur District-wide. As a result, preparations for ensuring consultation of the SOAR Report at all levels of program review are underway.

Further, during the completion of the spring 2015 SOAR Report, it was realized that key component of institutional SLO data was missing – General Education SLO (GESLO) data. Although GESLO data is being collected in eLumen, the College has yet to analyze the results. The SOAR Committee has already begun discussion regarding the inclusion of GESLO data in the 2016 SOAR Report. The SOAR Committee is also discussing the inclusion of Student Affairs outcome (SAO) assessment results in the 2016 SOAR Report. Although SAOs are assessed annually in Student Affairs units and used in program review, they are not currently a component of the SOAR Report.

In summary, while the College is in compliance with Eligibility Requirements regarding SLOs, it believes there is room for improvement in human resources support for SLO assessment, the use of SLO findings in relation to integrated planning and resource allocation, and inclusion of GESLO and SAO assessment results in future SOAR Reports. The College is confident that it will reach all of these goals by the end of the spring 2016 semester.

Actionable Improvement Plan for Distance Education

Southwestern College is committed to providing comparable quality instruction and support to our students taking online and hybrid courses. As with face-to-face courses, the planning, implementation and evaluation cycle of SLOs by our online/hybrid faculty is close to being institutionalized and approaching optimal compliance. In other areas of online instruction, our efforts have been limited given the resources the college has been able to provide during the recession. We know we lack consistent quality in our online/hybrid instruction even though it totals approximately 19% of our course offerings. Our faculty, administrators, and students lack the training needed to enable us to improve student retention, completion, and success. In addition, we need to ensure that all student support and services for online learners are available at a level comparable to that of face-to-face students.

Over the last three years a Curriculum Committee ad hoc Distance Education (DE) Taskforce has met weekly to bi-weekly with the charge of responding to the new federal and state requirements for online/hybrid instruction. As we learned more about these requirements and recent innovations at other colleges and system wide, we expanded our goals to include writing a DE plan for our college with goals, objectives, and timelines. We are also creating a DE handbook, sample syllabus, new faculty evaluation, and new procedure for requesting DE as a mode of delivery for new and modified courses.

While the taskforce is very close to achieving these goals, during this process it has become clear that our college has a critical need to improve the consistency and quality of online and hybrid instruction. We lack the allocation of resources in the following areas: comprehensive training with compensation for all full-time and part-time faculty who teach online, continuing education opportunities so that online instructors can stay current in a rapidly growing and changing field, a faculty DE coordinator to ensure consistency and compliance, and college representation in system-wide meetings and programs.

In order to achieve significant institutionalized improvements, our college needs to invest in a faculty DE coordinator. A coordinator could 1) develop a comprehensive training and certification program for both current and new instructors of online/hybrid courses, 2) provide instructional design assistance for course development and review, 3) establish and maintain a repository of on-demand training resources such as modules, videos, and web resources, 4) advocate for implementation of student training in readiness and computer literacy, 5) ensure compliance for Regular Effective Contact and Last Date of Attendance, 6) represent our college at system-wide planning meetings such as Region 10 Regional Consortium, monthly CCC DE Coordinators meetings, and ASCCC Online Education Regional Meetings, and 7) serve as SWC liaison for the Online Education Initiative.