Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUO)Assessment

References: *WASC Standards I, II, III and IV;*
                Education Code Section 70902

Purpose & Background:

Assessment of student learning has always been an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and Administrative Unit Outcomes adds assessment beyond the measurement of learning based on instruction to Course Objectives. We now identify in SLOs/AUOs what we want our students to be able to do, either directly or indirectly, in one or more of the four Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO), which include communication, thinking and reasoning, information competency and/or global awareness, upon successful completion of a course or service.

Instructional review and assessment are a part of our Academic Program Review, Student Service Program Review, and Administrative Program Review cycle. Each program completes a comprehensive program review every six (6) to three (3) years and updates its work plan and SLO progress annually by completing the Annual Program Review Snapshot. Academic SLOs are archived in CurricuNET as an addendum, not part of the Course Outline of Record (COR) so as to allow faculty to revise, edit, or update as their discipline deems appropriate.

To put the assessment of SLOs and AUOs in context, Southwestern College poses and responds to the following key questions:

What is assessment?

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, evaluation and use of information about educational endeavors undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Palomba and Banta, 1999. *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, Improving Assessment in Higher Education*). In addition, Dr. Thomas Angelo, founding Director of the Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Akron, has defined assessment as follows: "[SLO] Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance" (Dr. Thomas Angelo, *Reassessing (and Defining) Assessment*. The AAHE Bulletin, 48(2), Nov. 1995, pp.7-9).

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What will assessment be used for?

Southwestern College has focused its instruction and assessment on course objectives, SLOs, and criteria for measurement of learning. Our goal is to work in partnership with our students as they develop the skills necessary for success first in our courses, and then, for honing these skills as they transfer to other colleges, programs, and/or the workplace as successful lifelong learners.

At Southwestern College, assessment of SLOs shall be used to understand, and thereby improve, student learning through informed decision making and planning. More specifically, assessment can serve the following roles in the institution:

> To improve services, feedback, guidance, and mentoring to students in order to help them better plan and execute their educational programs.

> To help design and improve programs and courses to better promote student learning and success.

> To identify shared definitions and measurable benchmarks for evaluating student abilities to more coherently and effectively promote student learning.

What will assessment not be used for?

At Southwestern College, assessment of student learning outcomes is never a part of the evaluation of faculty or staff as there are too many variables that can impact student learning that are beyond faculty control. For example, student learning outcomes is dependent on student participation in class activities, homework, study, or services. Individual institutions make individual choices about how they will use the tools of student learning assessment. Southwestern College will not use the tools of assessment in any of the following ways:

> The College District will not use assessment of SLOs as an end in itself to meet an Accreditation requirement. Rather the assessment data generated will be directly used to promote and improve student learning.

> The College District will not use assessment of SLOs punitively or as a means of determining faculty or staff salaries or rewards. The purpose of SLO assessment is to evaluate student learning.

> The College District will not use any single mode of assessment to answer all questions or strictly determine program decisions.

> The College District will not use assessment in a way that will impinge upon the Academic Freedom or professional rights of faculty established in education code.

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Individual faculty members continue to exercise their best professional judgment in matters of curriculum, assessment and grading.

The College District will not assume that a single assessment can answer all questions about all students. We will not assume that we need to directly assess all students in order to learn about the effectiveness of our programs and policies.

The College District will not use assessment only to evaluate the end of the student's experience or merely to be accountable to outside parties.

The College District will not assume that assessment is only quantitative. Indicators of student learning can be expressed both as quantitative and qualitative data based on established criteria.

The College District must not assume that SLO assessment consists only of grading. While numerical scales or rubrics (such as the four-point grading scale) can be useful, their accuracy always depends on the clear understanding of the concepts behind the numbers.

What is the college's role in assessing student learning?

The College District shall provide the necessary support technology and infrastructure, including, but not limited to, release time for a faculty SLO coordinator to support the assessment of SLOs as provided by contract language.

Language of Assessment: Creating a common language when discussing assessment is essential to academic planning and SLO assessment. Here are definitions of important assessment terms:

Term	Definition	Other terms with similar meaning
Analysis	Separation of complex information into parts for examination and synthesis as a summary. For assessment of SLOs this includes whether SLOs have been met or not met, as the basis for discussion and developing plans for improvement.	
Assessment	Systematic collection, review, evaluation and use of information about educational endeavors undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. (Source: Palomba & Banta, 1999. *Assessment Essentials: Planning,*	Evaluation

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	Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education). "[SLO] Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance" (Dr. Thomas Angelo, *Reassessing (and Defining) Assessment*. The AAHE Bulletin, 48(2), November 1995, pp.7-9).	
Assessment Cycle	The assessment cycle refers to the process called closing the loop and reflects our College District's adopted planning cycle of: planning, implementation/assessment, and evaluation.	
Authentic Assessment	Traditional assessment sometimes relies on indirect or proxy items such as multiple choice questions focusing on content or facts. In contrast, authentic assessment simulates a real world experience by evaluating the student's ability to apply critical thinking and knowledge or to perform tasks that may approximate those found in the work place or other venues outside of the classroom setting. (Wiggins, Grant 1990)	
Embedded Assessment	Embedded assessment occurs within the regular class or curricular activity. Class assignments linked to student learning outcomes through primary trait analysis serve as grading and assessment instruments (i.e., common test questions, CATs, projects, or writing assignments). Specific questions can be embedded on exams in classes across courses, departments, programs, or the institution. Embedded assessment can provide formative information for pedagogical improvement and student learning needs.	
Evaluation	To determine the value of, examine, judge	Assessment

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	student work for the purpose of improving student learning and program quality.	
Measure	Refers to the actual tool used to assess the learning of students	
General Rubric	A set of scoring guidelines that can be used to evaluate students' work. Rubrics allow for standardized evaluation according to specified criteria, making grading simpler and more transparent.	
SLO Rubric	Educational scoring guide for assessing student's understanding and attainment of SLO. The Outcome Rubric contains a scale describing the quality of understanding and attainment for each SLO as well as the number of points to be given at each level of the scale.	
eLumen	Proprietary software developed to house educational rubrics for assessment of learning of students at a course level and the assessment results.	

The Assessment Cycle:

As a part of program review, assessment and program improvement efforts are cyclical and ongoing. Faculty/staff members administer measurement tools to assess student learning throughout the academic year in their classes and during services. The assessment results are collected and analyzed by faculty and staff with the sole purpose of program improvement. Aggregate results are reported annually as a part of program review update. Written findings from assessment activities are included as a part of decision making on curriculum, budget allocation, and allocation of space.

Template Annual assessment cycle		
Activity	**By whom?**	**Timeframe**
Gather and archive SLO data		
Analyze data		
Plan program and curriculum improvements		
Prioritize budget needs		
Produce institutional SLO report		

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TEMPLATE ASSESSMENT MEASURES

SLO measurement options		
Activity	**When administered**	**When analyzed**

The Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Grants/Foundation (IPRG/F) produces the following data related to student learning.

Activity	**Timeframe**
Retention rates	End of semester
Success rates	End of semester
Certificate Completion	End of program
Graduation rates	End of program
Transfer rates	End of program
Licensure rates	End of program
Placement rates	End of program
Graduate satisfaction surveys	End of program
Employer satisfaction surveys	One year after program

Assessment Responsibilities:

Faculty
Faculty are given the right by our Governing Board to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards (Ed. Code Section 70902 (b)(7). These responsibilities include:
1. Developing SLOs and SLO measurement tools to assess student learning.
2. Creating rubrics that communicate clear criteria to be used for evaluation of student learning.
3. Analyzing SLO assessment results with colleagues.
4. Using SLO assessment results to plan ongoing course and program modifications.
5. Reviewing the validity of both measurement tools and rubrics in assessment as an ongoing process.
6. Providing aggregate assessment results in information to the RPG for posting on the internet for college and community review.

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7. Updating SLOs and include results of SLO assessment in annual Snapshot of Academic Program Review.

Faculty/Staff

Non-instructional programs/units provide services that support student learning either directly (i.e. Academic Success Center, Library, Cafeteria, Bookstore) or indirectly (i.e., Staff Development, Articulation, Purchasing, Office of the President/Superintendent). These responsibilities include:

1. Developing SLOs/AUOs and SLO/AUO measurement tools to support student learning either directly or indirectly.
2. Creating rubrics that communicate clear criteria to be used for evaluation of student learning (either directly or indirectly).
3. Analyzing SLO/AUO assessment results with colleagues.
4. Using SLO/AUO results to plan program improvements.
5. Reviewing the validity of the assessment and rubric as an ongoing process.
6. Providing aggregate assessment results information to the RPG for posting on the internet for college and community review.
7. Updating SLOs/AUOs and include SLO/AUO assessment results in annual Snapshot of Program Review.

Students

Assessment information that demonstrates student learning starts with the students. All college learning is based on student participation such as but not limited to: class activities, other outside assignments, study and tests, portfolios, community service and/or other academic projects. Thus, the student's responsibilities include:

1. Attending class, taking class notes, organizing class materials, following the course rubric and syllabus.
2. Participating in class discussions.
3. Asking questions to clarify learning.
4. Studying a minimum of two hours for every hour in class to include homework and completion of class assignments. For example, this equals a minimum of six (6) hours of study each week for every three (3) units of course work.
5. Using tutorial services and/or peer study groups as appropriate.
6. Providing feedback to instructors on instruction, rubrics, and measurement activities for improvement.
7. Using resources, such as the Library, Student Services, internet and other online College resources.

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SLO Committee

The SLO Committee is a standing committee of the Academic Senate. Its purpose is to research and develop SLO policies, procedures and guidelines for consultation and adoption by the Academic Senate and the college community. These responsibilities include:
1. Researching national and statewide progress in the development, measurement and assessment of SLOs.
2. Preparing draft documents on the development, implementation, and assessment of SLOs as the College works to "close the loop" and establish SLOs as a part of our Academic Program Review cycle.
3. Updating and revising SLO procedures and processes.
4. Providing training one-on-one and in Staff Development activities.

Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Grants/Foundation (IPRG/F)

The IRPG/F gathers, archives and makes data available for use by faculty in the assessment of SLOs. Its responsibilities include:
1. Coordinating with Computer Support Services in the uploading of student and course information from Colleague to eLumen.
2. Assisting faculty and staff with the development of rubrics for posting in eLumen.
3. Posting of data and SLO rubrics in eLumen.
4. Providing aggregate data reports and statistics of SLO assessment results to discipline faculty and programs.

Chairs and Deans

Department Chairs and Deans work with faculty to assist with the development, implementation, and assessment of SLOs. Their responsibilities include:
1. Supporting the development of measurement and assessment tools of SLOs.
2. Assisting with the participation of part-time faculty in the SLO Assessment process.
3. Representing faculty in Council of Chairs and Deans Council meetings.
4. Supporting instructional changes that result from assessment of SLOs.

Academic Program Review & SLO Assessment

Every program reviews progress in SLOs as a part of Academic Program Review (APR). Every three years programs formally review progress on the implementation and assessment of SLOs as a part of Component V on Criterion I. In this section, program faculty review the validity of SLOs, their measurement tools, their assessment results, and

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their ability to collaborate in the development of a plan to improve instruction. Improvements based on the assessment of SLOs are documented on the APR Work Plan, which is updated annually. For all other Academic Programs, the SLOs are reviewed during the annual "Snapshot".

Assessment, Planning and Resource Allocation

The Academic Program Review (APR) Committee chair archives all APR reports, which reflect data and program effectiveness. In order for programs to be considered for funding beyond instructional faculty, these APR reports must be completed on time. Funding may include instructional materials, hiring, and/or capital outlay for improvements. SLOs are a part of the APR process and must be completed in order to be included in funding considerations.

SLO Assessment and Faculty Workload

The District commits to examining the workload implications of the entire SLO process as it is placed on the table for negotiations.