

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME CONTACTS

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## SLO STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Faculty:

- ◆ Veronica Avila
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- ◆ Toño Ramirez
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- ◆ Mallory Newell

### Administrators:

- ◆ Christina Espinosa-Pieb
- ◆ Susan Cheu
- ◆ Marisa Spatafore
- ◆ Rowena Tomaneng
- ◆ Coleen Lee-Wheat

### Help Hours in Aca- demic Senate Office:

- ⇒ Tuesdays, 10:00-  
11:00 am
- ⇒ Wednesdays, 4:00-  
5:00 pm

## THE DREADED SLO...

**Article authored by Veronica Acevedo Avila, the newest member of the SLO team. A previous counselor, currently Reading instructor, Veronica brings to the table a unique set of experiences to lend a hand in the assessment of Student Service Outcomes and Administrative Outcomes.**

A few years ago, I was attending the Reading department fall quarter Opening Day meeting during which we were asked to create SLOs. I remember pausing upon hearing this request and silently thinking, "SL.. what?" De Anza lives in a world of acronyms and here was yet another acronym I hadn't a clue about, and that feeling of annoyance and resistance was creeping upon me. These feelings often come with the job; I suspected this was a top down decision asking staff to do more when we have such a paltry amount of resources as is. One glaring example of the lack of resources is within the maintenance staff. These are the hard working individuals who empty trash bins and clean restrooms amongst other duties and responsibilities. At present, there are less than 10 custodial workers cleaning the entire campus. Just look around campus and you will find everyone, from administrators to instructors to dining hall workers, is doing more as a result of past layoffs, job eliminations, and drastic budget cuts.

As the department meeting continued, so did the discussion about why we needed to do SLOs. I found out SLO was an acronym for Student Learning Outcome and this meant that the department needed to consider universal end means for all classes taught. What did we want our student to learn at the end of a class session or at the end of the quarter? The brainstorming began. The more we stated ideas about what we wanted our students to know and learn the more I began to think about learning outcomes for the classes I teach. One of our colleagues wrote our collective ideas on the board, and this helped us all think deeply about these outcomes.



At this particular fall quarter meeting we were able to agree on one outcome for one class. While that seemed to be a miracle in and of itself, I found the activity most worthwhile. Little did I know it was the beginning of fulfilling collegiate work.



After we solidified the SLO, we began to think of ways to assess this outcome. This resulted in the development of a creative rubric that clearly defined various levels

of textual analysis (what we teach), and we later used this assessment tool to help us score students' work. The department had limited time for this process, so we worked on SLOs during scheduled department meetings. Once the assessment was complete we reconvened, exchanged papers, and graded one another's class work.

This is when the magic happened.

When we met we learned about our unique grading policies, about our individual learning outcomes, about differing ideas of classroom management and best practices; the teachings were varied and vast. But something far more meaningful was occurring during that time. The meetings and discussions paved the way for honest discourse, subconsciously letting go of preconceived notions we had of one another. We were building needed respectful relationships that fostered a profound understanding of one another. These relationships fostered collaboration and ultimately contributed to effective teaching.

What appeared a mundane mandatory task actually became a worthwhile endeavor. Needless to say my perspective about SLOs changed dramatically with this experience. That's why when colleagues approached me last spring quarter to ask if I would consider joining the SLO Core Team I said yes. Most of my friends thought I was nuts, "why would you want to do that?!" But I knew the potential rewards and possibilities and I wanted to play a role in shifting the current paradigm about the SLO process.

SLOs are a mandate of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and in order to remain an accredited institution we can't avoid doing them. The good news is that research points to the success of the process (Bresciani, 2009), and this means SLOs are positively correlated with success. In addition, faculty and staff have the freedom to define learning outcomes specific to their area. In 2009 the Academic Senate issued a brief position paper titled, "Student Learning Outcomes: What they are or can be, What they are not or should not be, and What they require." One of the points stated was that learning outcomes are "for the purpose of promoting and enhancing student learning and improving institutional and program performance."

They are also closely tied to the budget, and this is important because SLOs can be used as a strong argument for more custodians, librarians, counselors, dining hall staff and instructors.

This process makes us intimately consider what it is we want students to leave with, whether in the classroom, in Counseling, or on the track and field. And it is a critical question we should continually remind ourselves of as we do our jobs. The SLO is but just one important way to contribute toward the educational journey of community college students, but it can make a poignant difference.

## Technical Corner

A template for outcome writing success:

1. This is a process to be completed in dialogue with your teaching peers. Ideally SLO outcomes should be created in department meetings.
2. Focus on a smaller number of high priority outcomes.
3. Make outcomes as specific, focused and clear as possible. You are writing them for your students to comprehend and aim for.

Use Bloom's Taxonomy high level action words: <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives>

*Examples – TOO general and VERY HARD to measure...*

- ⇒ Will appreciate the benefits of exercise.
- ⇒ Will be able to access resources from MyPortal.

*Examples – Specific and relatively EASY to measure...*

- ⇒ Will increase cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and improved body composition.
- ⇒ Will be able to identify the most appropriate resource that is pertinent to their college concern.

For a comprehensive review of the process please refer to: [http://deanza.edu/slo/guides/sloguide/SLO\\_Process\\_Guide\\_9-14-11.pdf](http://deanza.edu/slo/guides/sloguide/SLO_Process_Guide_9-14-11.pdf)

