

The Grossmont College Assessment Initiative: Implementation of Measured Student Performance Standards

June 15, 2006

History

During Professional Development Week of Spring Semester 2004, the Grossmont College Senate began discussion on student learning outcomes. The senate president reported that due to accreditation requirements for measured student learning outcomes, we had to develop a comprehensive, faculty-driven plan to implement this on-going self-evaluation of how well students have achieved collaboratively authored and collectively agreed upon student learning outcomes. The consensus was that we should begin with a resolution which articulates what our current standards are and how we measure whether students pass or not pass the standard. In the spring, the senate officers drafted a resolution entitled Grossmont College Academic Senate Resolution on Student Learning Outcomes (Attachment 1). The resolution captures the sentiment and position taken by the senators at the time. In fact, the senate president authored the following paragraph on SLOs in the *Institutional Effectiveness Study*; it was placed at the end of the items listed under Goal 1:

In accordance with the new ACCJC accreditation standards, the college began discussions of student learning outcomes for courses and programs. The Academic Senate passed a resolution in May 2004 regarding student learning outcomes stating that many of the measurable outcomes required by the ACCJC are already established at the college and any further development of student learning outcomes will be led by the faculty. Opportunities to engage in discussions about student learning outcomes and assessment have been offered to the faculty and staff through professional development workshops and via conference attendance.

Fall Semester 2004 began Grossmont's learning period. From this time until Fall 2005, Grossmont administrators, faculty, and staff had attended student learning outcome workshops led by experts in the field. On September 21, 2004, Dr. Barbara Beno, ACCJC president, led a presentation on how SLOs relate to the accreditation standards (Attachment 2.1 & 2.2). The senate president reported to the senate in October of 2004 on Dr. Beno's workshop.

In October of 2004, at the invitation of Vice President Colli, Brad Phillips, executive director of CALPASS, made presentations to both the Curriculum and Program Review Committees. The theme of his presentations was similar to Dr. Beno's, the importance of SLOs as they relate to the ACCJC standards. Dr. Phillips distinguished learning objectives that are outcome statements and those that are not. He also explained how outcomes are commonly measured. When meeting with the Program Review Committee members, Dr. Phillips insisted programs collect hard evidence to support statements of how successful students are in achieving the stated outcomes and report the results in the Program Review document. As a result of Dr. Phillip's presentation (Attachment 3.1) and Sue Gonda's report (Attachment 3.2) on a teleconference on student learning outcomes, the Curriculum Committee formed a subcommittee in November composed of Virginia Berger, Tara Jacobson, Janet Gelb, and Roxanne Tuscany to explore various facets of student learning outcomes and bring back information for further discussion with the Curriculum Committee. The key question was what role the Curriculum Committee would play in the

implementation of SLOs. The Program Review Committee has proposed changing the program review document template to include information on the program's process for identifying and assessing SLOs in addition to how the program utilizes the SLO assessment data for course or program improvement.

During Staff Development Week in January of 2005 Pam Amor, Scott Barr, and Sue Gonda coordinated a student learning outcome workshop presented by Research and Planning Group of the California Community Colleges. Sixty-eight attendees were from Grossmont, 27 from student services and 41 from instruction (Attachment 4). Administrators, staff, and faculty participated in this informative workshop. The 43-page materials packet provided to participants covers all areas of SLO implementation: getting started, writing outcome statements, doing outcome assessment, going through the student learning outcome assessment cycle (Attachment 5). For a more developed summary of the workshop, see the *Grossmont College Campus Scene*, January-February 2005 issue (Attachment 6).

Also during Spring 2005, the Grossmont College Senate elected Chuck Passentino as the accreditation faculty co-chair. In addition to leading the Accreditation Steering Committee, the co-chair is responsible for leading the implementation of student learning outcomes throughout the college and giving progress reports to the administration and Academic Senate on the implementation of SLOs at Grossmont (Attachment 7).

Spring 2005 also included a well-attended follow up meeting led by the senate president recapping the January workshop. One of the main concerns of the discussion was the need to develop a working definition of SLO's. Also, the issue whether to put our SLOs in the course outline of record or the syllabi was seriously considered. Faculty on accreditation teams also attended a planning workshop led by Debra Blue from ACCJC. Dr. Blue stated that ACCJC expects to see a clearly articulated SLO implementation plan within the accreditation document. Therefore, the goal at this point was to form an implementation plan of the assessment cycle.

During the summer of 2005, the accreditation faculty co-chair developed the Grossmont College SLO website. This website was designed to provide information to faculty and staff on designing and using student-learning outcomes http://www.grossmont.edu/student_learning_outcomes. The website includes a home page, definitions, benefits and challenges, how to write SLOs, how to assess SLOs, Grossmont SLOs, SLO links, and a interactive forum. The website also serves as a public place to post the outcome statements in addition to results of SLO assessments for each program.

Professional Development Week Fall 2005 (Attachment 8) the accreditation faculty co-chair led a college-wide forum on student learning outcomes. The forum included Beth Smith, Renee Tuller, Craig Milgrim, Chris Hill, and Bonnie Price. Chuck Passentino was the moderator. The forum was well attended by faculty, staff, administrators, and students. The speakers clearly described the benefits of SLOs; however, the speakers and active participants in the forum also defined the challenges. It was clear that the attendees wanted SLOs to be spelled out in the course syllabi, wanted more training, and wanted complete control over the implementation. In preparation for the panel discussion we had Fall 2005, Dr. Bonnie Price clearly articulates the reasons why Grossmont College must embrace the assessment initiative. This paper has been a

guiding light throughout my work in leading the assessment initiative at Grossmont (Attachment 9).

Since SLOs are an essential part of accreditation, the accreditation faculty co-chair was asked to work with the Academic Senate officers to draft a resolution to incorporate student learning outcomes in the curricula by including student-learning outcomes in course syllabi, not the course outlines of record, and into the planning and assessment of student service programs. The Academic Senate unanimously passed the resolution (Attachment 10). This resolution gave the faculty and administration a clear mandate to implement SLOs into academic, learning-support service, and student service programs. As an immediate result, the co-chairs of the Educational Development Innovation Committee (EDIC), Vice President Dean Colli and Academic Senate President Beth Smith, as well as all the EDIC committee members committed a substantial portion of their budget to support the beginning of the student learning outcome assessment process. The senate officers and college administrators agreed that EDIC money would be granted to the divisions to begin the implementation process.

Fall 2005 was an extremely busy time for the accreditation co-chairs. Bonnie Price and Chuck Passentino led SLO workshops with individual student service departments at the behest of the vice president of student services. The purpose of the workshops was to train colleagues on what SLOs are, how to write them, and how to assess them. Student service professionals at Grossmont were quick to point out that their main purpose in what they do is to serve students well; how well they serve students is what they want to measure; thus, we refer the outcomes statements authored by student service professionals as student service outcomes (SSOs). In the workshops, leaders in each of the student service programs wrote the student service outcome statements and identified particular quantitative and qualitative assessments that will be used to measure how well each outcome is achieved. The accreditation co-chairs met with the Transfer Center, EOPS, Career Center, DSPS, Health Services, Job Placement, Student Affairs, Financial Aid, Admissions and Records, and the LRC.

In addition to student service programs, the accreditation co-chairs led a workshop with the American Sign Language faculty, which was one of the first academic program to fully embrace SLOs and begin the implementation of the assessment initiative. During this semester, faculty continued to attend SLO workshops. One particular workshop presenter became a favorite, Norena Badway. Dr. Badway was selected by the members of the Professional Development Committee to be our plenary speaker during Spring 2006 Professional Development.

Also, during Fall 2005, the accreditation faculty co-chair met with the department chairs and coordinators at each of the division council meetings to discuss SLOs and how best to utilize the funds offered by EDIC. The accreditation faculty co-chair encouraged the chairs and coordinators to utilize the EDIC funds to support the assessment initiative at Grossmont. The accreditation faculty co-chair also attended the Chairs and Coordinator Committee meeting to prompt college leaders to begin the SLO implementation process. Since the accreditation faculty co-chair had taken on leading the implementation of SLOs, the senate officers and college administrators asked that he draw up a list of job duties that would be performed by an SLO coordinator (Attachment 11).

During Professional Development Week Spring 2006, the college gained great momentum in implementing the assessment initiative, thanks in part to the wise counsel and pragmatic implementation philosophy of Norena Badway (Attachment 12). Dr. Badway makes the daunting task of implementing the assessment initiative practical and doable. She challenged our faculty to identify a gateway course in each program, and within that course, to identify a particular student-learning outcome and a shared assessment instrument that is used to see to what extent the learning outcome is achieved. The data are collected throughout the academic year and reported at the end of the school year. From this starting point, faculty and staff will expand the assessment cycle to include other identified student learning outcomes in the gateway class to be studied in addition to expanding the assessment initiative to other courses, especially courses with multiple sections of the same course. Her suggested plan was accepted by the Grossmont faculty and staff, and we immediately embarked on instituting her suggested plan by continuing to lead SLO workshops with faculty of various departments.

Also during Professional Development Week of Spring 2006, Chuck Passentino and Bonnie Price, led a well attended (52 participants) workshop on How to Write Student Learning Outcomes. Suggestions on how to incorporate SLOs into syllabi were the main focus of the workshop (Attachment 12).

Also, during Spring 2006, the SLO coordinator led SLO workshops with Biology, International Programs, ESL, Library, Child Development, Exercise Science, Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Business Office Technology, and Dance. All of these disciplines have identified a gateway course and a student-learning outcome that will be studied in the coming school year. In addition to the workshops led by the SLO coordinator, ASL, CISIS, AOJ, Foreign Languages, English, History, Humanities, Math, and Communication all led their own workshops. English, ESL, and Foreign Languages are developing their assessment initiative to focus on entrance and exit criteria and test instruments.

One of the greatest accomplishments of Spring 2006 was the Institutional Grossmont College Student Learning Outcome Retreat. The SLO coordinator in conjunction with the senate and college administration planned and designed the retreat. Six writing teams made up of students, faculty, staff, and administrators wrote institutional student learning outcomes for our graduates and transfer students. The six lists of outcome statements were synthesized into one, by the SLO coordinator, who also directed the retreat. (Attachment 13). The synthesized draft composed at the retreat will be presented to the Academic Senate in Fall 2006 for adoption and publication.

Plan for the Near Future

A goal for this academic year is to have all Grossmont programs, including, academic, learning-support service, and student service programs, to have written student service or learning outcomes and identified one outcome to be studied using the student learning assessment cycle.

Another goal is to begin the assessment cycle in Fall 2006 with all the service programs. For the academic disciplines that have already identified a particular outcome of a gateway course that they want to study, they too will start the assessment cycle in the fall.

Summer 2006 will be spent reconnecting with each of the student service programs to help staff with beginning their first student service outcome study in the fall. Student service programs who have yet to write outcome statements for their program will do so this summer with the help of the SLO coordinator. The SLO coordinator will follow up with leaders in each of these academic disciplines and student service programs to make sure they are ready to begin with data collection in the fall.

The SLO coordinator will also contact each of the academic programs who have not begun the assessment initiative to schedule workshops in Fall 2006 and Spring 2007.

Reporting on the results of our first-year studies will occur in the Fall of 2007 during Professional Development Week. All reports will be posted on the SLO website and may be included in both the Educational Master Plan and Program Review document.

We are confident when the ACCJC visiting team comes next fall, they will find a college that is hard at work implementing the assessment initiative in an attempt to improve the quality of education and service at Grossmont College. Much is still to be done with this on-going self-evaluation process, but there is no doubt that our college will embrace the assessment initiative as another means to exemplify the high quality of education and service that Grossmont students enjoy.