Where do we go from here? An Accreditation Postmortem

The $64,000 question facing Chaffey College following the Accreditation Site Visit Exit Interview on March 4, 2010: where does the college go from here when it comes to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and the 2012 WASC SLO Proficiency deadline? The site visit exit interview brought a rough wakeup call to the large assembly of faculty and staff who had gathered for the exit interview on March 2, 2010. Most SLO gurus in California feel that any college going through accreditation prior to the 2012 deadline will receive the customary WASC site visit team recommendation of: “The team recommends that the college develop, review, and measure student learning outcomes in all of its courses, programs degrees/certificates, the general education pattern, and institution wide practices” (Accreditation Recommendation letter). This is seen as a gentle reminder that the college needs to move along with SLO development, implementation, and assessment because after 2012 we won’t be so nice.

What came as such a shock to most of those assembled for the exit interview at Chaffey was the detailed and specific nature of the recommendations given by the site visit team which went beyond the “gentle reminder” given to other institutions. To summarize the visiting team’s comments, it was stated that there was a “lack of evidence” at the course SLO level and that the college lacked “depth and breadth” of training programs and training opportunities for faculty on student learning outcomes. The visiting team finished by stating a “concern” that the college would not be able to meet the 2012 deadline for SLOs to be at the level of Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement (SCQI). How the visiting team came to this determination is somewhat of a mystery and is really not important at this stage in the game, but for those of us who feel that a significant amount of SLO work had been done over the past few years, here is some “evidence” for you to chew on:

13% of Chaffey College programs consider themselves to already be at the proficiency level of course level implementation based on the WASC SLO rubric (January, 2010 SLO Monitoring Report Research Brief from Institutional Research).

26% of Chaffey College programs consider themselves to be at the awareness level of course level implementation based on the WASC SLO rubric (January, 2010 SLO Monitoring Report Research Brief from Institutional Research).

37% of Chaffey College instructional programs with General Education (GE) courses have developed course level SLOs and means of assessment for these GE courses (January, 2010 SLO Monitoring Report Research Brief from Institutional Research).
Do consider workload and use realistic and effective assessment plans.

Don't be embarrassed when needs for improvement become evident - no one is perfect.

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<tr>
<th>Do's</th>
<th>Don'ts</th>
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<td>Do define expectations and criteria explicitly, hand out SLOs and rubrics.</td>
<td>Don't norm or rank students based on their hard work or participation, assessments are based on competence.</td>
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<td>Do describe which assessments are part of the grading process and which are anonymous and for feedback only.</td>
<td>Don't be embarrassed when needs for improvement become evident - no one is perfect</td>
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<td>Do focus on the appropriate level of Bloom's taxonomy and the three domains.</td>
<td>Don't focus on effortless recall, simplistic thinking skills, or factoids.</td>
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<td>Do reflect on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective outcomes.</td>
<td>Don't neglect important outcomes because they appear difficult to assess.</td>
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<td>Do make assignments and grading criteria public.</td>
<td>Don't ignore the public demand for accountability - you have reasons for doing things the way you do, just articulate these.</td>
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<td>Do create multiple methods to assess students' ability.</td>
<td>Don't depend upon a very few assessments that are all identical in nature, allowing only certain students to display what they can do.</td>
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<td>Do provide adequate opportunity for formative assessment.</td>
<td>Don't create high stakes assessments without opportunities to improve.</td>
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<td>Do provide detailed and diagnostic feedback.</td>
<td>Don't allow assigning grades or scoring to take precedence over providing meaningful feedback.</td>
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<td>Do use assessment as a teaching tool to prompt learning.</td>
<td>Don't assume that assessment is an addon; use it to improve learning as a strong motivational force.</td>
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<td>Do pay attention to confidentiality.</td>
<td>Don't share or report data that may reveal individual student's performance.</td>
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<td>Do consider workload and use realistic and effective assessment plans.</td>
<td>Don't try to do everything at once without closing the loop and improving anything.</td>
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<td>Do use student feedback to adjust SLOs, assignments, rubrics, and pedagogy.</td>
<td>Don't be afraid to change and use collegial dialogue to validate changes.</td>
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35% of Chaffey College instructional programs with GE courses have developed criteria for success to measure their course level SLOs (January, 2010 SLO Monitoring Report Research Brief from Institutional Research).

21% of Chaffey College instructional programs with GE courses have completed a summary of evidence and “closed the loop” for GE courses (January 2010 SLO Monitoring Report Research Brief from Institutional Research).

46% of all Chaffey College instructional programs are conducting on going course level assessment of student learning outcomes (May, 2009 WASC Annual Report Update on Student Learning Outcomes).

Between September 2008 and February 2010, there have been over 200 “Boots on the Ground” training sessions for the SLO assessment cycle, tailored to the specific needs of the programs and departments to which they were presented.

Now to answer the $64,000 question - “where do we go from here?” Simple, we get this SLO stuff taken care of now. This urgency can no longer be ignored. Now that ACCJC has come to our school and taken a look at us and found things that were not to their liking, we can expect increased scrutiny from our accreditation friends.

Long gone are the days of “SLOs are not a priority right now,” “SLOs don't work for us,” “Where was the memo about this?” and the belief that SLOs are going to go away are over. The 2012 deadline is less than two years away and a lot of work needs to be done. In order to be considered at the SCQI, ACCJC requires that every bullet under that implementation level be complete. (A copy of this rubric can be found on the SLO website www.chaffey.edu/SLO) This requirement will mean that in addition to SLOs, the college will have to make significant advancements and changes to our program review and institutional effectiveness processes which are linked to SLOs on many levels.

Regardless of what the final report from ACCJC reveals: reaffirmation of accreditation, warning, probation, or show cause, ACCJC are now the time keepers of the SLO clock, and they will determine when things need to get done and will diligently monitor our course of action. If we say we are going to do something, we better have it done when we say we will or ACCJC will act. Just ask Cuesta College, East Los Angeles College, Crafton Hills College, Solano College, Feather River College or Imperial Valley College.

So this is what we need to have accomplished in anticipation of ACCJC recommendation on Chaffey’s Accreditation and SLOs –

THE BOTTOM LINE:

100% of all courses will have developed 3 to 5 Course Level SLO outcome statements by September 2010.

100% of all courses will have identified a means of assessment to measure their course level SLOs by September 2010.

100% of all courses will have criteria for success/benchmark for each course level SLO by September 2010.

100% of all courses will have their course level SLOs, means of assessment and criteria for success/benchmark entered into the Curricunet Learning Outcomes page by September 2010.

100% of all programs will have hard copies of their course level SLO information in their program’s SLO Binder.

100% of all programs will have responded to the recommendations give by the SLO Committee to their program SLOs in the 2009 PSR by September 2010.

100% of all programs will have a completed 3 to 5 year assessment plan or assessment Gantt Chart completed by September 2010 (This requirement was given to all programs over a year ago as part of the 2009 PSR review by the SLO Committee).

We, as a college, need to take this issue of ACCJC, Accreditation, and SLOs seriously. No one who works here at Chaffey College is exempt from this work that must be done. Administrators, coordinators, full time faculty, adjuncts and classified staff must all be accountable. And for those folks who will continue to resist and refuse to address SLOs in their programs, a few words must be said: WASC and ACCJC don't put an individual program at the college on probation they put the entire college on probation.
This month’s feature program and SLO Success story is the Chaffey College Chemistry Department. Being one of the five pilot projects for SLOs at Chaffey College, the Chemistry department has developed their program SLOs based on several strands which they have divided their courses under. These strands of courses include general education, health science, and transfer. This story focuses on the program’s work in the transfer strand of Chemistry courses.

Chemistry Professor Sariwan Tjandra undertook an SLO assessment of all the program level SLOs and focused on the course level by looking specifically at the SLO activities taking place in the Chemistry program laboratory courses 75A and 75B.

The following is an analysis of Sariwan’s assessment of laboratory skills in Chemistry at the program and course level. The assessments was conducted over 2008 and 2009. Sariwan then summarized the results at end of the Spring 2009 semester.

Assessment Cycle Components

Program Level Student Learning Outcomes: Students completing courses in the Chemistry program transfer course sequence will be able to develop laboratory skills to be successful in subsequent courses and/or on the job.

Means of Assessment: Pre and Post Test
Criteria for Success: 70% of the students will be able to describe the lab techniques and concepts by scoring at least 70% on the post-evaluation questions

Course Level Student Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete Chemistry 75A and 75B will be able to develop laboratory skills to be successful in subsequent courses and/or on the job.

Means of Assessment: Pre and Post Test
Criteria for Success: 70% of the students will be able to describe the lab techniques and concepts by scoring at least 70% on the post-evaluation questions

Summary of Results
• Out of 20 students in Chem. 75B (Spring 09), 80% of them scored 70% or above. Only four students did not pass the post–evaluation.
Summary of Results

- Out of 29 students in Chem. 75A (Fall 08), 90% of them scored 70% or above. Only three students did not pass the post-evaluation.

- Out of 25 students in Chem. 75B (Spring 08), 88% of them scored 70% or above. Only three students did not pass the post-evaluation.

To see the complete report on Sariwan’s work with Chemistry visit the SLO website and look in the Chemistry folder under the Program Evidence tab at http://www1.chaffey.edu/slo/evidence.html#chem. The PowerPoint report is titled Chemistry Transfer Course Assessment.

If you have an SLO success story and would like to be featured in a Getting R Done article, please send a brief write-up outlining your program’s efforts as it moved through the five phases of the SLO Assessment process and how it closed the loop to Marie Boyd or Tom Vitzelio.
Call for Nominations!

Can’t think of a good way to show that the Accreditation Site Visiting Team was completely wrong in their assessment of the SLO work done by instructional programs at Chaffey College? Well we have got one for you

2010 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES P.O.W.E.R. AWARDS
Promising Outcomes Work and Exemplary Research Awards

Student Learning Outcomes assessment serves as an important means of demonstrating improvement and institutional change. Student Learning Outcomes assessment directs our instructional, student service, and administrative unit work by clearly describing and documenting the student knowledge, skills, and values as a result of student learning activities and service interactions. It is also an important means of improving student success, guiding practice, and driving institutional change. Well-designed SLO assessment goes beyond compliance and can address multiple goals—sustainable and learner-centered implementation methods, demonstration of student progress in classes and programs, and the generation of reliable, statistically valid data that document success and help guide interventions and improvement.

As a way to showcase effective practices in learning assessment, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges/RP Group SLO Assessment Cooperative is seeking nominations for the second annual Promising Outcomes Work and Exemplary Research (POWER) Awards. Winners will be featured on the SLO Assessment Cooperative website, have their work documented on RP’s national assessment listserv and the ASCCC website, and receive an award at the SLO Coordinators Pre-Conference session at the Strengthening Student Success Conference in Orange County on October 6, 2010.

You can read up on the award categories and make a nomination here: http://sloassessment.com/ where you will also find the latest updates on SLO Assessment and statewide activities. You will be asked to provide a name, contact email, and phone number as well as a short paragraph describing the work including evidence substantiating why the work is worthy of consideration (This can include data, course, program or institutional change, websites, professional development materials or other types of evidence.). The deadline for nominations is May 31, 2010. Winners will be announced on August 1, 2010. Applications are submitted electronically at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XB56YQC.

If you have questions or want help with the application process, contact Bob Pacheco at rpacheco@barstow.edu or Janet Fulks jfulks@bakersfieldcollege.edu or SLO Coordinators Marie Boyd or Tom Vitzelio.

2010 P.O.W.E.R. AWARD CATEGORIES for Instructional Programs

Exemplary Change Agent in SLO Assessment: This award recognizes a faculty member, researcher, SLO Coordinator or colleague who has used outcomes assessment to effect the greatest positive change. (Evidence to consider: changes in practice on the college, sustainability, wide-spread understanding about the power of assessment, initiates or expands collaborations)

Exemplary SLO Assessment in Noncredit: This award recognizes exemplary application of outcomes assessment in noncredit education. (Evidence to consider: Noncredit SLO assessment practices that have closed the loop, effective noncredit assessment plans and reporting of data, changes in practice subsequent to SLO assessment, the use of SLO assessment for the elusive noncredit accountability, initiates or expands collaborations)

Exemplary SLO Assessment Course Outcomes: This award recognizes a faculty member, SLO coordinator, researcher or colleague who has done excellent work in outcomes assessment at the course level. (Evidence to consider: Course curricular changes stimulated by SLO assessment, unique and effective assessment practices, curricular alignment, course outcomes that initiate or expand collaborations)

Exemplary SLO Assessment Program Outcomes: This award recognizes a faculty member, SLO coordinator, researcher or colleague who has done excellent work in outcomes assessment at the program level. (Evidence to consider: Course curricular changes stimulated by program SLO assessment, unique and effective assessment practices, curricular alignment, course outcomes, initiates or expands collaborations).
Related Links of Interest

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
  - http://www.acswasc.org/
- Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
  - http://www.accjc.org/

SLO Down Contact Information

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Interested in assisting with the S.L.O. Down? Contact either Marie Boyd or Tom Vitzelio.

The Chaffey College Outcomes and Assessment Committee

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Tom Vitzelio, Instructional Specialist Success Centers

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