

# Instruction Notes

3/07/05



## Instruction Notes SLO Corner

During the feedback sessions at the *Food and Thought: Chewing on Learning Outcomes flex workshop*, many good questions were raised. The SLO Corner will answer a few of them in each issue of Instruction Notes. Today's questions and answers are:

### *What is our responsibility?*

The new accreditation standards require that we assess student learning outcomes in our courses, programs and for each degree and certificate. In addition, they ask that each portion of the college, from Student Services to the Library, from Payroll to Admissions and Records, look at how they contribute to student learning, including our four core competencies. Each segment of the college is now required to create a plan to assess student learning outcomes and to begin to implement it. Faculty will contribute to this effort when their departments undergo Instructional Planning. During that time, non occupational programs will begin assessing Cabrillo's Core 4, define SLOs for each course the department offers and begin to assess them. Occupational programs will define SLOs for each degree and certificate they offer, develop a plan to assess them and begin to implement it. Every faculty member is responsible for participating in the process as are classified staff and administrative managers. The new accreditation standards recognize the contribution every person on campus makes to student learning. The new attitude is "It takes a village to raise a degree or certificate. We are all in this together."

### *Why do we have to do this?*

The assessment of SLOs is one of the standards mandated by our Accrediting agency, WASC and the federal ACCJC. In order to be accredited, we must meet all of the WASC standards. Being accredited is important to the college. It is the only way we can grant

students credit for transfer and the Associates degree or provide students with Financial Aid. There are two pieces of good news attached to this charge. First, we have the ability to design our own process, and we have. We will not wait for one to be imposed upon us. Second, SLO assessment actually helps students! The approach Cabrillo has chosen results in better communication with students and between all sectors of the campus, so that overall teaching and learning improves.

# Instruction Notes

## 4/04/05

### SLO Corner

During the feedback sessions at the *Food and Thought: Chewing on Learning Outcomes* flex workshop, many good questions were raised. The SLO Corner will answer a few of them in each issue of Instruction Notes. Today's questions and answers are:

#### *Will working with SLOs infringe on academic freedom? Will this affect the teaching methodology I use?*

The process that Cabrillo has adopted to measure student learning outcomes in the classroom is designed to preserve instructor autonomy. Transfer and basic skills faculty use a particular process, called course-embedded assessment that looks in detail at one class assignment or a series of test questions that they have designed. No one can tell an instructor what assignment to use or how to teach it. Academic freedom is **not** affected. Nor is teaching methodology. Occupation faculty will assess their programs' SLOs using a process that the department creates together. Many are adopting the same course-embedded approach that transfer and basic skills faculty use. Other occupational programs are using the results of required state board exams or other assessments that they already have in place. Since the department designs the process together, no one's academic freedom or methodology is infringed upon.

#### *Will this encourage us to give inflated assessments or grades?*

No. Faculty report the results on a simple form that does not record individual grades. Instead, faculty are asked to identify what student issues or needs became apparent as a result of the assignment and to discuss what is needed to improve teaching and learning. Later, in a department meeting, faculty share both the assignment and the student needs and issues it revealed. The entire department discusses what they need as a whole to improve teaching and learning. Those improvements are then incorporated into the department's Instructional Plan. Since no grades are recorded, there is no reason to inflate them. Individual instructors are **not** judged by how their students perform on the assignment. What matters is the instructor's identification of student needs and issues and how the department decides to address them. More details about the faculty's role in assessing SLOs can be found in three workbooks (Classroom/Course SLO Assessment,

Occupational Programs, and Instructional Planning) on our SLO web page at [www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html)

# Instruction Notes

## 5/12/05

### SLO Corner

During the feedback sessions at the *Food and Thought: Chewing on Learning Outcomes* flex workshop, many good questions were raised. The SLO Corner will answer a few of them in each issue of Instruction Notes. Today's questions and answers are:

*What the difference between an SLO and a course objective? Is there a minimum or maximum number of SLOs for our classes?*

An SLO describes one major piece of knowledge or a skill or ability that a student should be able to demonstrate by the end of a course, program or degree. SLOs ask students to synthesize many discrete skills, require higher levels of thinking, and result in a product that can be measured or assessed. Course objectives are the building blocks to SLOs. They are the smaller steps that lead up to the main skill of an SLO. There is no correct number of SLOs for a course. It depends entirely on the discipline. However, in general, one to three SLOs usually covers a course. A longer description of how to write SLOs and how to distinguish them from course objectives can be found on Fiesta (in those sections of the course outlines), as well as in the three workbooks (Classroom/Course SLO Assessment, Occupational Programs, and Instructional Planning) on our SLO web page at [www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html). The web site will also soon contain a Word file of sample SLOs written by Cabrillo faculty that you can download and edit to help you write your own.

*How is my syllabus supposed to look?*

Once your department has written SLOs for specific courses (which occurs when departments go through Instructional Planning), you are asked to include those SLOs in your syllabus. Cabrillo faculty who have done so have found that the information is helpful to students and gives them a better idea of what they will be able to do by the end of the course. It's also extremely useful to let them know how you intend to assess or evaluate the SLOs for the course. The design of your syllabus is entirely up to you. Marcy Alan Craig, SLO Assessment Coordinator, is currently seeking sample syllabi that include SLOs to be posted as examples on the SLO web page. If you have a syllabus you'd like her to include, please email it to her at [maalancr\\_at\\_cabrillo.edu](mailto:maalancr_at_cabrillo.edu). Keep your eyes out for the sample syllabi at [www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/services/pro/assess/assessweb/index.html)! Perhaps the creative spirit of your fellow faculty will inspire the design of your own syllabus.