

An Ohlone Story

Faculty Driven Approach to Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Submitted by Deb Parziale and Rob Smedfjeld

Overview

Ohlone College faculty have taken a proactive approach to the development of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment within courses and instructional programs. In 2002, WASC/ACCTC distributed new standards which incorporated Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment. In response to these standards, the Faculty Senate and the Curriculum Committee in collaboration with Administration, created a Task Force called Student Learning Outcomes Professional Enthusiasts (affectionately known as SLOPE), chaired by the Faculty Senate President and the Curriculum Committee Chair. This committee remained active from Fall 2003 through Fall 2005.

An open invitation was sent to all faculty to participate in SLOPE, which resulted in a diverse group of twelve faculty from Computer Studies, Counseling, Deaf Studies, Educational Technology, English, English as a Second Language, Library Science, Mathematics, and Nursing. Much of the initial work of the group was dedicated to learning about SLOs and assessment, with a focus on understanding and adapting terminology and exploring implementation methods that could be used at Ohlone. The work of SLOPE was instrumental in the college's move to a new SLO-based Program and Discipline Review process, and the members of SLOPE assisted the initial groups of faculty who went through this new process.

The major outcomes of SLOPE included the following (for a complete list, see the attached *Summary of Accomplishments*)

- Members of SLOPE participated in professional development activities on SLOs and assessment and shared that knowledge with colleagues across the college.
- The Curriculum Committee Chair facilitated guest speakers on SLOs and assessment for Ohlone faculty, in coordination with Staff Development.
- The SLOPE task force developed a set of standardized definitions for the terms *student learning outcomes*, *assessment*, *evaluation*, *goals*, and *objectives* (see attached *SLOPE Definitions*). The draft definitions were discussed at Faculty Senate, the Curriculum Committee, the deans' meeting, and the College Council. Feedback from the various groups was incorporated into the definitions resulting in further dialogue prior to final approval.
- Through the work of the Curriculum Committee, SLOPE developed standards for identifying and assessing SLOs at the course level. Outcomes and assessment at the course level were integrated into the official course outline within CurricUNET.
- In consultation with the Faculty Senate and the Curriculum Committee, the college's Program Review guidelines were revised to integrate assessment of SLOs, with an emphasis on continuous improvement. The Faculty Senate approved the new guidelines as a working document on October 20, 2004 and proposed to gather faculty feedback on the new form at the end of the academic year. Through workshops and individual consultations, members of SLOPE assisted the initial groups of faculty who conducted course reviews and program reviews under the new guidelines.
- All course outlines are available for review by the public through the CurricUNET website. All Program and Discipline reviews are available on the Office of Academic Affairs website.

- The Curriculum Chair developed a four year cycle and twelve year plan for both course and program review which was approved by the Faculty Senate and Curriculum Committee. (Note: eighty percent of all course and program reviews will be completed by the time of the accreditation visit.)

Relationship to College Core Values and Goals

Ohlone College's core value is *student success*. As such, the faculty and staff embrace the notion of identifying, assessing and improving student learning outcomes at the college, program and course levels. The ultimate purpose of assessing student learning outcomes is to promote increased student success.

The entire process of developing an approach to the student learning initiative and assessment initiative at Ohlone College was based on team work and open communication. Faculty and administration teams attended several workshops on student outcomes and assessments including conferences sponsored by the AAHE/WASC and the RP Group and then conducted workshops on said topics back on campus. Additionally Dr. Norton Grubb provided a day long conference for faculty and managers. Faculty and managers from many different departments worked together. Approval of definitions, official course outline revisions, and revised Program Review guidelines was conducted by the Faculty Senate, Curriculum Committee and the Deans and Managers. These groups are collectively representative of all of the college's academic divisions. Additionally Student Services developed SLOs and brought that work to the Curriculum Committee for discussion and approval. A web site was created which contained resources on SLOs and assessment. Journal articles, workshop handouts, and books were made available through the library. (*College Value: Team work and open communication; College Goal: Continuous Learning for all Personnel*)

The Curriculum Committee implemented the SLOPE recommendation of each course having a recommended 4 to 6 and maximum of 8 to 10 student learning outcomes. Student Learning Outcomes and Evaluation/Assessment was incorporated in the Official Course Outline within CurricUNET. CurricUNET help boxes incorporate SLOPE definitions with examples developed by Curriculum Committee Members. Sample course outlines were developed in Physical Education, English, Nursing, and in some of the science areas. (*College Value: High Standards in Constant Pursuit of Excellence; College Goal: Learning College Model*)

Guidelines for the Instructional Program and Discipline review process provide a format for programs to use to assess student learning outcomes at the program level. Creativity and innovation are encouraged when interpreting these guidelines and applying them to each unique discipline. (*Innovation, risk-taking and entrepreneurship*)

Relationship to Accreditation Standards

From the very beginning, much of the work of SLOPE was guided and informed by the new accreditation standards. The professional development activities that the group members participated in led to discussions about how best to identify and integrate SLOs into Ohlone's work. These discussions became the basis for Ohlone's current Program Review process, which incorporates development and assessment of SLOs at the program level. The emphasis is on SLOs that are measurable, and a by-product of this has been the increase in research-based activities at the college. The Program Review process also includes a correlation between the program's work and the college goals. (*Standard II.A.1*)

Although supported by administration, all of the members of SLOPE were faculty, and the resulting education that the college faculty and staff received about SLOs was all faculty-driven. In the initial year of using the new Program Review guidelines, SLOPE members were instrumental in assisting program

faculty in identifying existing SLOs and developing new ones. This central role of the faculty was crucial, as they are the experts and the caretakers of the curriculum. As each program has gone through the new Program Review process, the faculty in those programs have applied their expertise in identifying the specific needs of their students and assessing the program's success in meeting those needs. Additionally, the program faculty have developed plans for continuous assessment and improvement. Rather than be just a report that is re-visited every certain number of years, the Program Review process is becoming a way of thinking - a mindset of systematically working toward improved student success. (*Standard II.A.2*)

Relationship to Accreditation Themes

While the work of SLOPE was faculty-driven, it is important to note the consistent interest and support of the college administration. The Vice President of Academic Affairs regularly provided links to resources, ideas to encourage faculty dialogue, and funds to support the needed professional development activities. (*Institutional Commitments*)

College-wide, program level and peer review dialogue is encouraged in the development of measurable student outcomes and assessment strategies. Student learning outcomes and assessment approaches at the college level are developed through the shared governance process, particularly with the Faculty Senate, Curriculum Committee and College Council. Appreciative Inquiry was used within the SLOPE meetings to acknowledge and support the process of definition development, learning outcome refinement and a beginning dialogue on the development of new assessment strategies. (*Dialogue*)

Beginning with the first cycle of the new Program Review process in 2004-05, the aim has been to focus on the identification and implementation of student learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Deans and faculty worked as a learning community to develop and assess measurable student learning outcomes for Instructional Programs scheduled for Program Review during the 2004-05 academic year. Five workshops were held during that year. One of these included a presentation from the Associate Vice President of Student Services on information available from the Colleague database system and information on "Data Mart". Two workshops were given to the Deaf and Interpreting Services department. An end result of these workshops was the beginning development of SLOs with a dialogue on possible assessments. The remaining workshops included interested persons working on their program reviews. Throughout all of these workshops, ideas and support were shared. Members of the SLOPE task force continued to work with faculty from departments undertaking Program Review during 2005-06. Flex workshops were held during Fall 2005 and Spring 2006, and SLOPE members were available for consultation with faculty conducting program reviews. This resulted in a significant informal dialogue and exchange of ideas. (*Student Learning Outcomes; Dialogue*)

Starting with the Math Department in September 2005, faculty have presented their Program Review findings and future plans to the Ohlone Board of Trustees. Additionally, Program Review was incorporated into the domain of the Curriculum Committee beginning in the 2005-06 academic year, and departments have reported on their Program Reviews at this committee's meetings. Dialogue about and awareness of others' programs is encouraged, so that faculty can receive feedback, but also so that informed decision-making can occur. (*Evaluation, Planning, and Improvement; Dialogue*)