

# LEARNING ASSESSMENT BULLETIN

NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM THE LANEY COLLEGE LEARNING ASSESSMENT  
COMMITTEE

ISSUE 3 – FEBRUARY 2007

## News: Progress on developing SLOs at Laney

Many departments have successfully developed student learning outcomes and have included them in their syllabi. These departments include: Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Cosmetology, Economics, English, ESL, Environmental Control Technology, Ethnic Studies, Graphic Arts, Journalism, Labor Studies, Math, Media, Music, Photography, Political Science, Sociology, Theatre Arts, and Welding (as reported to the office of instruction). Hooray for these departments! Yay! Whoo-hoo! Good job!

Many other departments are in the process of developing their SLOs. We would like to remind all of you that Cheli Fossum is available this semester to meet with each department to develop SLOs for courses or programs, and to discuss appropriate assessment methods for your SLOs. Call (464-3272) or e-mail ([mfossum@peralta.edu](mailto:mfossum@peralta.edu)) to set up an appointment. We want to make the trainings as convenient for you as possible!

## Upcoming Events:

On the next professional day (Wednesday February 28), there are several short workshops scheduled on outcomes and assessment topics. Please join us to learn

more! All workshops will be held in A266.

## Schedule for Professional Day:

10-11 am: Accreditation, Assessment, and the shift toward learner-centered instruction

11-12: How to write course-level SLOs

1-2 pm: How to write program-level SLOs

2-4 pm: Assessing your SLOs: Rubrics and other assessment methods that everyone can use.

The next **Learning Assessment Brown Bag discussion** is scheduled for Thursday, March 1, from 12-1 pm in T-450. The topic is Institutional Outcomes. So far, discussions at Laney have been focused on SLOs for courses and programs. We also need to develop outcomes for the college as a whole. Of course, this will require input from everyone! Come to the brown bag, learn about institutional outcomes, and share your opinions on what Laney's institutional outcomes should include.

## Things to keep in mind:

The motivation for all of this (developing SLOs and assessing them) is to comply with accreditation requirements. However, it's also considered a "best practice" in education. Many colleges in different parts of the country have been doing this for years, so it

Want to learn more? Highly recommended: *Assessing Student Learning in Community Colleges* (2004) – an online course or downloadable workbook for various topics and hands-on work in assessment. <http://online.bakersfieldcollege.edu/courseassessment/>

Also check out the Learning Assessment Committee website:

<http://www.laney.peralta.edu/learningassessment>

To navigate to the LAC website from the Laney website, click on Instructional Programs:

Shared Governance: Committees: Learning Assessment Committee

"How to write SLOs" website: <http://www.laney.peralta.edu/SLOs>

Come to our bi-monthly brown bag discussions on assessment!  
Friendly, low-key, and informative. All are held from 12-1 pm in T-450.  
Thursday March 1, Wednesday March 14, Wednesday April 11, Thursday May 3

has been well tested. If we really take this seriously, it could lead to great improvements.

Keep in mind the overall concept behind the outcomes/assessment movement:

The focus is on examining what we do, collecting evidence of our effectiveness, and using the results for improvement of student learning. It focuses our attention and effort on what's most important – student learning. In general, the steps are:

1. Decide on outcomes (SLOs) – what students should be able to do at the end of a course or program.
2. Collect information during the class or program to find out if the students actually able to do the things you think they should be able to do.
3. Analyze, discuss, and reflect on the results. How can we modify the course or program to lead to more effective learning for the students?
4. Make changes in the course or program. See if these changes lead to improvement. Repeat.

This should be done for all aspects of the college: all departments, all student services units, all administrative offices, everything.

Some instructors have expressed concerns that all of this outcomes and assessment stuff is a step toward standardization of the curriculum and that it will lead to a situation like “no child left behind” at the community college level. This is not the intent at all. There is a lot of flexibility built into the process. Nobody is telling us what our outcomes should be – WE develop our outcomes, and we decide on our standards.

Developing outcomes ourselves prevents some “outside authority” from dictating what we have to do in our classes. We (faculty and staff) have to own this process and make it work for us. If we refuse to participate, then we open the door to outside authorities setting our standards for us. That's good motivation for being involved! In addition, keep in mind that there is **no** requirement or expectation that we ever use standardized tests. We can use assessment methods that are simple and appropriate for our needs. (How? Come to the workshop on Feb. 28 from 2-4 pm in A266 to find out.)

Developing outcomes and assessing those outcomes does not have to require a lot of extra work. We should choose assessment methods that give us meaningful, useful information without requiring a huge time investment. Focus your assessment efforts on finding information that you care about and that is useful to you. This will require some discussion among department members and some planning as to what methods to use, what to assess first, etc. Most instructors that have gone through this process have found the discussions and dialogue very valuable in themselves. It's helpful to talk to other instructors to discuss what we think is important for students to learn, what kinds of assignments we give, our standards for grading, and any especially effective techniques we use. We rarely make time to do this, because we are so busy most of the time. Who knows, these new accreditation standards could be the best thing that ever happened to us!

Learning Assessment Committee Members: Cheli Fossum, Elñora Webb (co-chairs), Tracy Camp, Vina Cera, Peter Crabtree, Jackie Graves, Evelyn Lord, Ann McMurdo, David Mitchell, Mae Frances Moore, Louis Quindlen, Karolyn van Putten, Ed Wright