

Student Learning Outcomes

College of San Mateo (CSM) has taken seriously its teaching and learning mission by addressing the effectiveness of its institutional efforts to support student learning by articulating student learning outcomes (SLOs) at the course, department/program/unit, and institutional levels. The college began by articulating programmatic and course SLOs within departments/programs/units and simultaneously articulating institutional SLOs campus-wide. Departments/programs/units then aligned programmatic and course SLOs. To complete the integration of learning outcomes at these various levels, departments/programs/units were then asked to align programmatic and course SLOs with institutional SLOs.

Since fall 2003 in an effort to improve teaching and learning, CSM has made progress toward using a student learning outcomes assessment cycle (SLOAC) as a means to analyze results and make substantive changes based on these results. The college has not completed the assessment cycle at the different levels; however, the college plans to continue to build on this effort in the coming years.

In fall 2003 student services units began in-service training addressing the then-new concept of student learning outcomes, and by the following semester, student services units began drafting SLOs. Instruction began addressing SLOs in the fall of 2004 with the forming of the College Assessment Committee (CAC), a subcommittee of the Academic Senate, comprised of all four constituencies. After creating a new position to lead the college's assessment efforts, the CAC appointed an SLO coordinator at the end of the semester. Since then, the coordinator has chaired the CAC, which has continued to meet regularly since its inception.

By spring 2005 student services units were continuing to address the assessment cycle while the assessment movement for instruction began with open dialogues within different college committees and groups. The effort was supported at all levels: the CSM community at an open forum brainstorming ideas which would be the basis for institutional SLOs for CSM, division deans helping determine the best approaches for presentations and dialogues of SLOs in departments within their division, and senior administrators enthusiastically supporting the initiative. To help all faculty and staff understand this new assessment initiative and assist them in their work, workshops by outside presenters were held on and off campus. Student service units submitted progress checks on their 2004-2005 student learning outcomes, based on the work they had initially done in 2003-2004.

By fall 2005, the CAC had written a philosophy statement to define the assessment effort at CSM. In addition, the committee began to draft a model for college-wide implementation of SLOAC. The committee also worked with the Academic Senate to integrate SLOs into program review and with the Committee on Instruction to integrate SLOs in official course outlines. The accomplishment of these undertakings has helped the college institutionalize SLOs into already well-established procedures, tying outcomes to the college's budgeting process.

To encourage faculty and staff to go beyond the articulation of SLOs to their assessment, a district-wide workshop by an external presenter introduced faculty and staff to assessment techniques and measurement tools during spring 2006. After a year and a half of revisions and input from the college community, the CAC adopted CSM's institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs); this was followed by discussion of measurement tools to assess the ISLOs during numerous CAC meetings. Again student services units submitted their year-end progress reports on their SLOs for 2005-2006.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, faculty and staff were encouraged to continue to articulate SLOs at the course and department/program/unit levels, take assessment workshops offered throughout the year on campus, and engage in dialogue in department meetings. During spring 2007, faculty and staff were asked to align their department/program/unit SLOs with the ISLOs. Also during this semester, pilot testing began on the two assessment methods determined by the CAC to assess the ISLOs: eportfolios and a survey.

To encourage dialogue within disciplines, college administrators set aside an August flex day both in fall 2005 and fall 2006, and two flex days in the 2007-2008 academic year will be devoted to assessment discussions. These days allow discipline faculty and staff to work on SLOs within departments/programs/units. In addition, the SLO coordinators across the district have met numerous times a year to discuss the SLO movement at their respective colleges.

To support dialogue and open communication, the CAC publishes Assessment Updates which are emailed college-wide every semester. The CSM SLO website is updated with current postings of course-level and department/program/unit-level SLOs. Moreover, on this site the college community has access to internal and external resources. Sharepoint folders provide a virtual space where instructional department members can archive department/program-level SLO assessment cycles and student services staff can archive student services unit-level SLO assessment cycles; in addition, these folders allow for virtual discussions, announcements, and other department activity. Each folder is accessible only to the members of that particular department/program/unit.

CSM has been actively engaged in articulating student learning outcomes since 2003, beginning with SLO activities in student services. Since then, the college community has attended workshops and engaged in articulating outcomes at the course and department/program/unit levels. Although a number of courses and programs and all student service units now have articulated SLOs, and although student services units and some departments have begun assessment, much work still needs to be accomplished. The college must evaluate the alignment of programmatic SLOs to institutional SLOs. Programs must assess outcomes, discuss the results, and make meaningful changes based on these results. Ultimately, the success of the assessment cycles will be evaluated by the improvement of the college's teaching and the success of students' learning.