



The SLO Lane

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Special Accreditation Issue

KNOW YOUR SLOs

Did you know?

- The Communication Studies Department is embarking on an ambitious and thoughtful assessment program. Read Stacey Bartlett's guest column on page 3 to find out more.
- Stacey Bartlett is a gifted singer songwriter. Of course you did. Did you know, however, that one of her most famous tunes is about Accreditation and SLOs? See page 2 to read about it and see the lyrics.
- You may be asked to show you know about SLOs. For potential questions along with answers and suggestions that will make you say "Oh...I know that," read the column that starts on this page.
- Butte College has both a Philosophy of General Education as well as Student Learning Outcomes for each of its GE Areas. To read more, turn to page 4.
- This newsletter's title is more than just a catchy play on words. To read about what it means to the newsletter's editor and Butte's SLO Coordinator, turn to page 2.
- If you missed the first issue of "The SLO Lane," it is available at the SLO Assessment website.

Just in case word hasn't reached you, this year is Accreditation year. In fact, this month is Accreditation month. In fact, the Accreditation Visitation Team arrives next week. And they will want to know what *you know* about SLOs. Here are some potential questions and some answers or suggestions that you probably already know but may forget under pressure.

Q: What are your program's Student Learning Outcomes and how does your program assess them?

A: The answer obviously differs depending upon which program you are a part of. All departments this year submitted SLO Reports that included not only the program SLOs but also planned assessment measures or measures already in place. Some programs actually included results of assessments already conducted and changes made as a result. While these will be published on the PBA website soon, you may request a copy of your program's SLO Report by contacting your chair, coordinator, or supervisor.

Q: What are the SLOs for the course you teach most often and how do you assess them?

A: As with program SLOs, these differ depending on what courses you teach. However, these are readily available on the Curriculum website (listed in the drop-down menu on Butte's homepage). At the course level, it is important to

remember that our SLOs are our Course Objectives, and that individual instructors have the ability to then make more specific SLOs for their courses. Many of us do not review those outcomes often enough, so taking a look and assessing how well we adhere to those is important. What's also important is assessing how well the methods of evaluation we already use in our classes address the outcomes stated on the Course Outline. In departments with multiple sections of a given course, this can lead to valuable discussions.

Q: What is the process for review, approval, and/or modification of course level SLOs?

A: Faculty are responsible for the development and review of SLOs at the course as well as the program level. With courses, SLOs (Course Objectives) for new courses or modifications to SLOs for existing courses are submitted to the Curriculum Committee. Faculty work closely with the Curriculum Chair and the Tech Review team to make sure the SLOs align with the content of the course and are stated in measurable terms. SLOs at the Program Level are currently developed in coordination with the SLO Coordinator and are submitted as part of the Unit Planning process. Eventually, these may be incorporated into CurricUNET, the software Butte currently uses for course level curriculum development.

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Q: What are the College's General Education Outcomes and how does the institution intend to measure them?

A: The General Education Outcomes, along with Butte's General Education Philosophy, is published on pages 56-59 of the 2008-2009 College Catalog. However, they are also included in this issue of *The SLO Lane* (see page 3). There has been much discussion about assessment of general education, especially around the use of ePortfolios. However, a General Education subcommittee, under the auspices of the Curriculum Committee, is being formed this Spring and will have as one of its charges discussion and recommendation of assessment approaches.

Q: How do SLOs and Assessment tie into overall planning at the Institution?

A: Every program on campus submits, as part of its annual unit plan, SLO Reporting Templates. These templates not only capture the SLOs and assessment progress, but also serve as justification for certain programmatic changes and even budget requests. They help demonstrate the connection between outcomes assessment and efforts at the course and program level to improve student learning. And since student learning is at the heart of what the College is all about, Outcomes Assessment is integral to Institutional Planning.

Q: Who is the SLO Coordinator at Butte College?

A: Kenneth Bearden is the SLO Coordinator and has served in that role since Fall 2006. Lyman Hagen Also assists when it comes to course-level SLOs.

Singer-Songwriter Finds Inspiration in SLOs

It probably won't surprise anyone to find out that Stacey Bartlett composed a song about Accreditation and SLO's. Most of us would be more surprised if she hadn't. On Institute Night last Fall, the song debuted, but only in a department meeting. But music critic David Payne was there. "It was bright, ambitious, and upbeat," he told *The SLO Lane*. It was a good tool to focus faculty on SLOs." While she has no immediate plans for additional SLO tunes, she did hint at a new source of inspiration. "My next project might just be scheduling as a form of haiku," Bartlett stated. "Right now the process is more of a limerick."

"Feelin' Groovy about SLO's"

To be sung to the tune of Simon and Garfunkel's "The 57th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)"

"Slo" down don't move too fast
We've got to make the learnin' last
So we're kickin' 'round these S.L.O.s
Lookin' for learnin' and feelin' groovy

Hello students what you knowin'
We want to assess your knowledge growin'
So we're kickin' 'round these S.L.O.s
Lookin' for learnin' and feelin' groovy

Accreditation team is comin' in Spring
We know we'll be ready
Our praises they'll sing
'Cuz we all know our "SLO's"
And just how to assess
We're lookin' for learnin' and feelin' groovy



What's with that Title?

Since the publication of Butte's first SLO Newsletter, I have been asked several times about the name: The SLO Lane. I came up with this idea in Fall of 2007, when I was preparing a presentation along with several colleagues from around the state for the Academic Senate Accreditation Institute. We had all decided on an "automobile" theme. But the idea of the SLO Lane went deeper than simply a play on words: just as it takes more than one individual in the car to drive in the HOV lane, it takes more than one individual to be in the SLO lane. In fact, the more individuals involved in SLO assessment the better.

“Lookin’ for Learnin’ and Feelin’ Groovy”

A Guest Column by Stacey Bartlett

Student Learning Outcomes are an agreed upon standards of achieved quality. “Quality” according to Phillip Crosby Proudfoot, author of *Quality without Tears* is “conformance to requirements.” Measuring “quality,” a subjective idea, requires agreed upon criteria. This begins the journey of Communication Studies into the world of assessing our student learning outcomes.

In many other disciplines, the right answer is evidenced via a known objective measure and readily translates to standard assessment strategies such as embedded test questions and written responses. Processing and measuring for these kinds of assessments are more common in practice. However, with Communication Studies, oral communication is more subjective in nature and nuanced differences exist due to situational factors such as the audience. This subjective area has allowed numbers of assessments at the faculty level to evolve into a plethora of holistic grading schemes as well as detailed rubric grading tools. This creative faculty initiative means that one person may weight research heavier than the next person. So how could we ever come to an agreed upon standard for measuring a key SLO? “Students will be able to present a variety of communication messages effectively.”

We started with dialogue in Fall 07. We talked about developing an AA degree that articulates completely with CSUC so that student success here has immediate and direct benefit when they transfer. This would require establishing more *perceived rigor* from all of our classes. Our dialogue expanded from Butte faculty to the Chair and key faculty at CSU and they graciously provided us with current grading rubrics. We also benefited from an intern, whose Master’s Thesis was redesigning a grading rubric for public speaking at CSUC. Most recently, we had a norming session where faculty were trained on the use of the rubric and then watched videos of student speeches and began to find out that even using a standardized rubric wouldn’t remove the subjective nature of grading a speech. One faculty noted, “I was a bit alarmed at the range of grades we gave the student’s speech...” So, our dialogue continues even as we are scheduling our next ½ day norming session.

Once we have completed this initial “meeting of the minds” and have all faculty trained to an agreed upon grading rubric, we will then select a cross section of Public



Speaking Classes and with student approval video tape informative and persuasive speeches. Then, an Assessment Team, using a similar rubric, based on key SLO indicators, will have a norming session and then actually assess a number of speeches to determine our level of success. Based on these findings, we will meet and agree upon specific changes (limited so that we can measure and evaluate again). The video taping, norming, and assessment process will start over again, this time also looking to see if the implemented changes were effective on the measured outcome.

I believe the rich nature of ongoing collegial dialogue and debate this process has encouraged has been a benefit. Our existing processes work namely because each faculty member is committed to student success and brings passion and hope and creativity to what they do each day. There is a beauty and magic in that relationship no assessment can measure. But, this process does cause us to pause and reflect and celebrate those special moments even as they challenge us to standardize. To that end, we are talking about specific grading challenges for that one Hmong student who couldn’t make eye contact at the first speech but by the end was engaging the audience with non-verbal skills, the one deaf student who couldn’t speak clearly or with conversational quality but still managed to communicate effectively, the one student who speaks English as a second or third language but carefully organized and presented a thoughtful message.

I don’t remember who said this—“Students may not remember what you taught them, but they will remember how you treated them.” If nothing else, this process has given voice to the individual and unique ways that faculty within the Communication Studies discipline are positively impacting students because this process invites us to share our human experiences, and in doing so, it invites us to demand equal attention to the standards and the exceptions.

Butte College General Education Philosophy and Outcomes

General Education at Butte College involves much more than merely the acquisition of knowledge; it also involves utilization of that knowledge to achieve outcomes, solve problems, and reach transfer and career goals. More than that, the process promotes learning as a lifelong endeavor, one that will continue long after transfer to a four-year institution or the completion of a degree. General Education at Butte College is rooted in its mission, to “create a student-centered, community-based learning environment which empowers students to become productive, literate, and responsible members of a diverse society.” Carefully designed curriculum and exemplary teaching, coupled with effective and efficient student support services and administrative support, play integral roles in student success and are therefore central to what we do.

At the heart of the General Education experience itself is the basic content and methodology related to the Natural Sciences, the Social and Behavioral Sciences, the Humanities, English Composition, Communications and Analytical Thinking, Self-Integration, and Physical Education. Each of these areas has associated outcomes identified below. Students are further expected to meet minimum competency standards in the areas of Written Communication, Mathematics, Reading Comprehension, and Multicultural Awareness. As with the General Education areas, each of the competencies has associated outcomes, and those outcomes are identified below. Students successfully completing the General Education Requirements will be able to:

- 1) utilize knowledge gained during his or her educational experience when evaluating and appreciating the physical environment, the culture, and the society in which he or she lives.
- 2) demonstrate an increased level of self-understanding.
- 3) actively examine values inherent in proposed solutions to major social problems.

A - Natural Science

A student completing courses in the Natural Sciences area will be able to:

1. demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the scientific method; and
2. understand the relationships between science and other human activities.

B - Social and Behavioral Sciences

A student completing courses in the Social and Behavioral Sciences area will be able to:

1. demonstrate an awareness of the method of inquiry used by the social and behavioral sciences;
2. think critically about the ways people act and have acted in response to their societies; and
3. appreciate how societies and social sub-groups operate.

C - Humanities

A student completing courses in the Humanities area will be able to:

1. demonstrate an awareness of the ways in which people throughout the ages and in different cultures have responded to themselves and the world around them in artistic and cultural creation; and
2. demonstrate aesthetic understanding and an ability to make value judgments.

D - English Composition

A student completing courses in the English Composition area will be able to:

- utilize the principles and applications of the English language toward logical thought, clear and precise written expression, and critical evaluation of written communication, including both expository and argumentative writing.

E - Communications and Analytical Thinking

A student completing courses in the Communication and Critical Thinking area will be able to:

- demonstrate the principles and applications of language toward logical thought, clear and precise expression and critical evaluation of communication in whatever symbol system the student uses.

F - Self Integration and Physical Education

Self Integration:

A student completing courses in the Self-Integration area will be able to:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the human being as an integrated physiological, social, and psychological organism; and
2. consider a majority of the following topics as they relate to decision making: substance abuse, sexuality, nutrition, mental health, fitness, disease prevention, stress, health care (including the effects of environmental issues and consumerism) and instruction which results in increased sensitivity to issues of aging, death and dying.

Physical Education

A student completing courses in the Physical Education area will be able to:

1. discuss the principles and benefits of lifelong fitness; and
2. assess his or her own physical activity level as it relates to lifelong fitness.