

FAQs: Academic SLO Implementation

March 25, 2011

1. What do we have to implement? I thought we were done with SLOs!

This has been an extraordinary semester because of all the changes at our College, which has been good for our College. Like all changes, good or bad, they can be stressful. All of us have been working very hard. However, we are not quite done yet. In order to meet Accreditation Recommendation 4 for SLOs, we must provide evidence that our College has:

- Course SLOs – *completed!*
- Program SLOs – *completed!*
- Implemented at least one SLO per course. – (*in progress: must be completed this semester!*)

2. Does this mean we have to implement both Course SLOs and Program SLOs this spring 2011?

No, that would be unreasonable and too much to handle with everything else our College is doing at this time. What needs to happen before the visiting team comes is this:

Faculty need to pick at least one course SLO to implement as a department this spring OR faculty can opt to individually select one course SLO to implement this spring.

Departments need to discuss how Full-Time faculty will accomplish this and **must ensure that all Full-Time faculty implement at least one course SLO this spring.** This will ensure that our College meets Recommendation 4 requirements and will help faculty gain experience and confidence in using eLumen.

Our College is not implementing Program SLOs at this time. However, in fall 2011, faculty will need to implement program SLOs so that our College will be ready for the ACCJC deadline of Fall 2012, when we will be required to provide evidence of SLO Program Assessment.

3. Why do I have to do SLOs? Aren't SLOs optional?

No, unfortunately, SLOs are no longer optional so they will be required every semester from now on. At the March 2011 Accreditation Conference, we received reconfirmation that SLOs and data for accountability will be required. The Dept. of Education is still requiring data and accountability for all accreditation processes, including ours. Both state and federal legislatures are in support of SLOs and their implementation.

The good news is that once you do the Course and Program SLOs a first time, they are much easier to do the next time around. In fact, many Colleges that we heard from at the Accreditation Conference, such as Citrus College, Ohlone, and Monterey Peninsula College, benefit greatly from faculty doing what they do best: having significant dialogue with their peers about their teaching and methodology. As Tom De Angelo says *“Accountability matters, but what matters most is teaching.”* SLOs have opened a door for dialogue on what matters most to faculty: reaching our students.

4. Will results be used to evaluate faculty?

Absolutely not! SCEA has had a “Demand to Bargain” on SLOs since last April 2010, which means that the Union is asking the District to come to the bargaining table for evaluation and workload. In the meantime, the SLO Committee has written an SLO Assessment Policy and Procedure (District Policy & Procedures 4350) that is being taken through consultation beginning at the Academic Senate and then on to the SCC for Governing Board approval. These policy and procedures clearly state that SLO assessment results will not be used to evaluate faculty in any way.

5. Why do we have to do both Program Review and SLOs?

Short answer: SLOS have been a part of our Academic Program Review for many years in Component V, so we should have been doing them all along.

Long answer: Nationally, Program Review has always been required for Accreditation. Some colleges, like our own, have received sanctions because not all departments have been doing Program Review nor have they taken it seriously by reviewing data and SLOs. In addition, colleges were not using data and the results of program review for planning and, most important, resource allocation. This lack of compliance resulted in Accreditation Offices developing the “Two Year Rule”. This rule means that if a college has a “sanction” for improvement, then the sanction must be resolved within two years, with no extensions and no exceptions. The requirement for colleges to also examine student learning in a meaningful way began at the same time.

Our accrediting agency (ACCJC, commonly referred to as WASC Jr.) did not implement the Two Year Rule or the Student Learning requirement until the Department of Education forced it to do so in 2003. This forced the ACCJC to do a re-evaluation of Program Review and the data gathered at all California Colleges, resulting in an extraordinary number of Colleges being placed on “sanction.” Colleges are now required by the ACCJC to submit evidence of annual Program Review by all units/programs, including Academic Programs, Student Services, and Administrative units, such as Human Resources, Business & Financial Affairs, and even the Superintendent/President/s office. The annual program review can be either a Comprehensive Program Review or an annual “Snapshot”, SWC’s term for the annual update.

6. What are the rules for “implementing” SLOs?

There are no specific rules at this time other than we must implement SLOs in a meaningful way with documentation. If faculty do not, then someone else (either WASC or the Department of Education) will decide how SLOs will be implemented. The Academic Senate of California Community Colleges (ASCCC) has taken the position that it's better for faculty to assert its primacy in the implementation of SLOs (which are tied to our number one 10 + 1 item, curriculum) instead of allowing non-faculty to dictate what faculty do. Implementation Guidelines have been quickly developed to support this process.

Faculty can decide how often to assess SLOs. We are required to document our evaluation of SLO assessment results in our Program Review each year. So it makes sense that we would assess SLOs at least once a year but it's been shown to be helpful at other colleges to assess them each semester.

As per the ACCJC SLO rubric and by our ACCJC accreditation recommendations, our College must begin implementation of SLOs this semester, provide evidence that we are implementing SLOs on April 11 when the visiting team comes, and outline our College's plan to be proficient in the implementation of SLOs by fall 2012. Failure to do so could cause our College to fall to show/cause status.

7. Do part-time faculty have to implement SLOs too?

Part-time faculty are not required to implement course SLOs this semester; however, they must implement both course and program SLOs starting fall 2011. The plan is to have Full-Time faculty implement SLOs first, gain experience with this, and be able to support Part-time faculty with SLO implementation in fall 2011. The SCEA has negotiated Hurdle/Flex credit for attendance at SLO Workshops for both Part-time and Full-time faculty this semester.

8. Why am I required to tell my students about SLOs?

Because our students need to know what is expected of them by the end of the course, and what we expect them to be able to do with the material we are teaching. Faculty can communicate the SLOs on the syllabus, discuss it directly with students periodically, and/or communicate it any way he/she likes, such as on Blackboard. Conveying this information is also a requirement for Accreditation.

9. What is this “eLumen” I keep hearing about?

eLumen is an SLO software system that the College purchased in fall 2008 to meet the reporting requirements for accreditation. This product came at a one-time cost with free

ongoing support. The most important thing about eLumen is that the eLumen consultants who assist us are retired community college faculty who are working with 2-year/4-year colleges around the country. eLumen works with Datatel, our college data system. For our convenience, all our course information has been uploaded into eLumen for us so we don't have to put it in ourselves. The only thing left to do is to input the assessment results.

Assessment results can be input as aggregate (totals) scores or as individual student scores. We are recommending aggregate data only for now. There are different options for doing this. Departments can opt to input all the data gathered for one course by one person, the SLO Liaison or Department Chair. Schools can decide to enter data by school. The goal is to eliminate any concerns about the use of data so we can focus only on student learning. The only thing that is required is that data be input and results discussed by faculty for use in planning for the future of the program.

To avoid problems and more questions, faculty can contact the SLO Coordinator at X6615 or attend one of the trainings offered this April to get a clear understanding of eLumen options. It is really very easy.

10. How do faculty know if they are actually using SLO assessment?

Many of our faculty are already focused on student learning outcomes in their teaching and assessment. If you have always identified learning outcomes for your students, focused on them, and assessed them, then you are already implementing SLOs as is required. The only addition to this process is that we must document what you already do in order to have evidence that it's being done.

Faculty must meet with their departments to discuss assessment results. The minutes of your department meeting serve as evidence of this dialogue of assessment. Because Program Reviews (either comprehensive or the annual update) are done each year, this annual meeting would be a perfect time to review SLOs and Program Review and document our accomplishment as well as our planning to provide evidence for the ACCJC.