

Fall, 2005

## SLO Task Force

# Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment: Report and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The Las Positas College (LPC) Student Learning Outcomes Task Force was formed in fall, 2004, to facilitate a college-wide student learning outcomes assessment plan. The Task Force spent the 2004-2005 academic year creating a list of core competencies (institutional outcomes) for the college, organizing a student learning outcome (SLO) flex-day workshop, facilitating departmental SLO workshops, establishing a pilot program for SLO projects, attending SLO training workshops, gathering SLO information from other institutions and sources, and presenting that training and information to the LPC community.

The goal of the Task Force for this fall (2005) was to create a recommended process for systematically and cyclically incorporating SLOs and assessment at LPC. After reviewing the myriad SLO assessment processes in place at California community colleges, the new accreditation standards, and the accreditation reports from community colleges that have been reviewed under the new standards, the Task Force tried to come up with an authentic assessment cycle that not only would improve our institution, but also would provide a simple and easy process, in keeping with the size, organization and culture of our college.

This report summarizes the Task Force's ideas and recommendations concerning the process, responsibilities and resources necessary for a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle (SLOAC) at Las Positas College. Attached are example templates for course and program assessment reports, an example matrix for program alignment of course outcomes, and an example of an SLO organizational map based on our recommendations. Also attached is a step-by-step, two-year implementation process ("Specific Goals: Actions and Responsibilities"). Our idea is that after the two-year implementation (fall, 2006 to

fall, 2008 -- guided by an SLO Steering Committee), the student learning outcomes assessment cycle will be built into the process and structure of the college.

## **Recommended SLO Assessment Cycle**

### **Process**

Currently we have a draft of institutional outcomes (Core Competencies, 2005 Edition); our goal is to assess these outcomes, as well as Program outcomes, using a course-embedded assessment process. The following list outlines the proposed process:

- Using the “Assessment Plan” form (see attachment), faculty will list core competencies, intended outcomes (SLOs) and assessment for one course.
- Assessment plan is submitted on-line.
- Faculty collect assessment results for at least one outcome on their assessment plan form. (This may be coordinated by the institutional researcher to correlate with assessment of a core competency.)
- Faculty evaluate the results of the students’ assessments, identify any issues or needs that the results reveal and, using the assessment plan form, record how they will use results for any improvements or modifications. The completed form becomes an “Assessment Report” (see attachment).
- Completed assessment reports are submitted on-line. (Accessibility of information to be determined by Steering Committee.)
- The assessment reports are discussed in flex-day sessions; discussions include analysis of what help the department or program needs to improve teaching and learning.
- If support is needed for the improvement of teaching and learning, based on assessment reports, recommendations are submitted to Deans, PBC or Vice President for Academic Services (to be determined).
- Faculty continue to write or revise assessment reports each semester (determined by the courses they are teaching and possibly through the coordination of Deans, curriculum committee and institutional researcher).
- The college’s institutional researcher collects and sorts course assessment reports in order to cyclically assess achievement of institutional core competencies.
- Programs use the course assessment reports in the program review process to analyze program outcomes. The “Program Matrix” (see attachment) is used

to assess alignment and correlation of course outcomes and program outcomes.

## **Responsibilities**

The Task Force suggests embedding the tasks necessary to complete an ongoing SLO assessment cycle in committees and resources already in place at the college.

**Staff Development Committee:** Faculty, in the initial stages of creating SLO assessment plans, will need support and training. A group of SLO mentor faculty should be organized to guide those unfamiliar with the process. Faculty will also need time to discuss outcomes and assessment with colleagues who also teach the course, as well as with colleagues in their program. After faculty become practiced in writing SLO assessment plans and reports, routine use of flex-days for review of reports will be needed. Arranging and organizing this support for faculty logically seems the purview of the staff development committee.

**Curriculum Committee:** Because student learning outcomes should correlate with the outcomes listed on the course outline of record, it makes sense that faculty submit SLO assessment plans to the curriculum committee for review. The curriculum committee will also need to be involved in decisions concerning whether SLOs appear on the course outline of record (as they do at some colleges) or remain separate. In addition, the curriculum committee will decide on the collection process for completed assessment reports, including the development and use of an on-line collection.

**Program Review:** Assessment report procedures and timeline for program level outcomes should be determined by program review.

**Academic Senate:** Decisions, documents and recommendations made by the staff development, curriculum and program review committees regarding SLOs and assessment should go to the Academic Senate for consideration and approval.

**Technology:** Technology provides technical support to develop an on-line assessment report process and any other technical support needed for SLO projects and research. PDC trains faculty to use technical support. Curriculum committee representative, Institutional Researcher and PDC should be involved in the development of the on-line collection resource.

**Research and Planning:** Research and Planning provides support to faculty as they collect and interpret assessment data (last stages of assessment report). Researcher also compiles report out tools, maintains college portfolios for assessment of core competencies, and writes college-level assessment reports.

**Deans:** Deans monitor the SLO/assessment process for courses in their divisions. They keep track of the course assessment plans being developed for the semester, and make available to faculty a list of courses that do not have assessment plans or reports. They also provide support for faculty developing SLO plans/reports, including time for discussion of the SLO/assessment process at division meetings. Deans work with Research and Planning to select a sample of courses for assessment of core competencies.

**Student Services:** Student Services develop and maintain SLO assessment reports for non-academic services offered by the college. These reports will be available on-line to the college community for use in analysis of course/program/college assessment reports.

**Vice President of Academic Services:** The Vice President for Academic Services serves as key coordinator, synchronizing the SLO/assessment timeline with program review, course outline review and accreditation, as well as working with deans to fairly organize faculty workload based on these tasks.

(See organizational map attached.)

## **Resources**

The Task Force recommends an SLO Steering Committee for the next two years (fall, 2006 -- fall, 2008), which will oversee the implementation of the SLO/assessment process, collect information and suggestions from the college community and, in 2008, make a recommendation for modifications in the process, after which, it will disband. We recommend that the Steering Committee be comprised of a curriculum committee representative, a staff development committee representative, a faculty senate representative, a student services representative, a PDC/technology representative, the institutional researcher, and the vice-president for academic services. A two-year commitment is recommended. Without a two-year commitment from each of these members, key and consistent information concerning the effectiveness of the two-year plan will be missing.

The Task Force recommends that funds for implementation of the SLO assessment process be allocated in the following ways:

- Technology support for systematic collection of SLO assessment reports. An on-line template for faculty to fill in, as well as a method to access assessment reports will be needed.
- Stipends or release time for faculty representatives (curriculum, staff development and senate) serving on the Steering Committee. In addition to

serving on two committees, these faculty members will be undertaking a major two-year commitment, which will involve research and the creation of process and policy documents regarding SLOs and assessment at LPC.

- Stipends or hourly pay for SLO mentor faculty. Organized by staff development, these faculty members will facilitate workshops during post-town hall meetings, lead flex-day SLO workshops, and work with departments and programs that are developing SLOs; in addition, they will provide on-call help for full and part-time faculty who are creating SLO assessment plans or reports.

At the end of the two-year implementation process, the Steering Committee will recommend any continuing funding necessary to maintain the SLO assessment cycle.