

**SLOAC Steering Committee Agenda
October 31, 2005, 1:45-3:45, Room 5131**

Present: Lori Adrian, Susan Andrien, Connie Beringer, Alma Cervantes, Carlos Colombetti, Jan Fosberg, Jon Freedman, Cathy Hasson, Rick Hough, Jennifer Hughes, Betty Lindgren-Young, Jen Merrill, Jude Navari, Virginia Padron, Christine Roumbanis, Arthur Takayama, Phyllis Taylor, Dennis Wolbers, Soodi Zamani, Karen Wong

- I. Updates on the SLOAC Framework
 - A. Part I:
 1. Review the chart.
 - B. Part II:
 1. Note that the revised versions for "Objectives vs. SLOs" and "Writing SLOs" will replace the ones in the existing document.
 2. Review the checklist.
 - C. Part III:
 1. Should we ask representatives from the governing bodies to sign off on these assessment principles? (Similar to the SLOAC Philosophy)
- II. Pilot Section 2, Writing SLOs
 - A. Write SLOs using one of the two methods, or perhaps a combination of them.
 - B. Discuss questions and concerns about the process.
 - C. Provide feedback about the clarity of the directions.
- III. TO DO:
 - A. Initiate dialogue with your departmental colleagues about the draft SLOs so that you can begin to design a pilot assessment.
 - B. By Monday, Nov. 1st, complete the "Guiding Questions for Developing the Assessment Plan." Provide feedback about the clarity of the directions.
- IV. **SAVE THE DATE: FRIDAY, FEB. 3RD WORKSHOP @ CSM WITH ASSESSMENT GURU AND FORMER CSU BAKERSFIELD PROFESSOR MARY ALLEN**

Objectives vs. SLOs

One way to understand the distinction is to understand how they are related to each other. While course objectives are the input, outcome(s) are the output. Instructors provide whichever discrete, skills, tools and/or content that are needed for students to fulfill the outcome(s) (the "input"). Conversely, student learning outcomes describe what students can DO with the aforementioned to demonstrate proficiency (the "output"). Note the shift in orientation from the instructors "inputting" to the students "outputting."

Consider the following example from a Bakersfield College Nutrition course. What differences do you note?

Course Objectives:

- Review nutritional recommendations and components.
- Discuss differences in nutritional requirements associated with sex, age, and activity.
- Describe causes and consequences of nutritional problems.
- Explain complications of underlying physiologic conditions (e.g. diabetes & malabsorption).
- Identify key factors involved in correcting nutritional behaviors.
- Describe resources and strategies to treat nutritional disorders.

Course SLO – Upon completion of this nutrition course, students will be able to analyze a documented nutritional problem, determine a strategy to correct the problem, and draft a nutritional policy addressing the broader scope of the problem.

Note that the course objectives make explicit what the teacher will provide to enable students to fulfill the outcome, breaking down the process in to manageable stages. On the other hand, the SLO shifts to the students' perspective and identifies what they should be able to DO with that knowledge. The SLO requires students to employ higher level thinking that integrates the content and activities. In sum, objectives can be thought of as the input and SLOs the output, with students applying all they have learned.

Another way of thinking of SLOs is they're on a "macro " level. When articulating student learning outcomes, think of the big picture. As such, SLO(s):

- ❑ Are broad in scope and require **higher level** thinking:
- ❑ Require students to **synthesize** many discrete skills or areas of content;
- ❑ Ask students to **produce** something-- papers, projects, portfolios, demonstrations, performances, art work, exams, etc.-- that applies what they have learned;
- ❑ Require faculty to **evaluate** or **assess** the product to measure students' achievement or mastery of the outcomes.

On the other hand, objectives are on a more microscopic level, describing discrete skills, tools, and content. Think of objectives as the building blocks used to produce whatever is used to demonstrate mastery of an outcome. Objectives can be practiced and assessed individually, but are usually only a portion of an overall project or application.

In sum, consider the following distinctions:

Objectives	Outcome(s)
Objectives describe skills, tools, and/or content (nuts and bolts) that enable a student to fulfill the outcome(s).	Outcome(s) describe overarching product(s) that students will generate by applying the skills, tools, or content.
Objectives require the use of less sophisticated tasks such as comprehension or replication.	Outcome(s) require the use of higher level thinking such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in order to demonstrate their ability to apply the skills, tools, and/or content in authentic contexts for learning.
Assessing and reporting on each objective for each student may be impossible because objectives can often be numerous, specific, and detailed.	Outcome(s) are assessable ; they result in product(s) that can be observed as a behavior, attitude, skill, or discrete usable knowledge <i>and</i> can be evaluated against criteria.

As you **talk to others** about SLOs, keep these things in mind:

- Each course, classroom, and program has unique factors.
- Disciplines have unique language and culture.
- Cross disciplinary conversations are invaluable.
- Ultimately discipline-specific conversations best define competencies for students.
- Everyone is a learner when it comes to assessment.
- As professionals, we are guided by the principles of academic freedom.

As you **write your SLOs**, keep these things in mind:

- Use action verbs. See Appendix B for the lists of action verbs.
- Make sure that the outcome is something that can be assessed or tested. For example, be careful when describing attitudes in a learning outcome. They are hard to assess. Ask yourself if the attitude is crucial to success in your course. Are you satisfied if a student possesses the knowledge and skills being taught but doesn't have a certain attitude?
- Write the SLO in language that a student will understand. These will ultimately be included on your syllabus and you will explain them to the students. To check for clarity, try explaining the SLO to a colleague who is NOT in your field. See if they understand it.
- Limit your SLOs to no more than six since eventually you'll have to assess all of them.

Use the Student Learning Outcomes Checklist on the next page to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of your SLOs.

Writing SLOs

Time to get started! Remember that you have been doing this all along. Now is your chance to put what you intuitively know as a professional into words.

1. A good place to start is to look at your major assignments. In the left column, list all of your major assignments for this course, and describe what students will do to demonstrate their understanding-- not just content, activities or hours. What is the primary purpose of each assignment? What are the students expected to produce as a result of each assignment? These are the products or demonstrations of your outcomes. Then in the right column, describe *what* the students are being asked to demonstrate in this assignment. Depending on the number of outcomes, each sentence should describe each major knowledge, skill, ability or attitude that a student will have gained by the end of your class. (See Worksheet I.)
2. Another approach to writing the SLOs is to draw from the "Specific Instructional Objectives" section of the existing course outline, and to a lesser extent the "Assignments," and "Evaluation of Student Performance" sections. Your objectives state what skills, tools, and/or content you'll provide; if said objectives are the "building blocks," what do you want them to "construct" in order to demonstrate competence? Try to categorize them according to the larger purpose that they will serve. By tying these objectives to something students will produce and an evaluation process, making them measurable in a given context, you have a quantifiable method of assessing whether a student has fulfilled the SLO. (See Worksheet II.)