

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES EVIDENCE

(See Mesa College website at <http://www.sdmesa.net/instruction/>)

In spring 2002, Mesa College took the first steps toward implementing student learning outcomes (SLOs) through participation of several members of the College in a workshop held at San Diego City College. Further discussion occurred at the spring 2002 President's Cabinet Retreat and the task of defining SLOs was assigned to the Research Committee, whose membership was expanded to assure representative College-wide involvement.

A goal for 2002-2003 was to develop College-wide understanding and build consensus about SLOs. Presentations, discussion and dialogue occurred at the Academic Senate, Academic Affairs Committee, Research Committee, President's Cabinet, Deans' Council, school meetings, school leadership meetings, and accreditation self study meetings. Under the leadership of the Vice President of Instruction, a team of six faculty and administrators attended the fall 2003 California Assessment Conference in Palm Springs. The Vice President made presentations on SLOs to several schools. By the end of the year, there was greater understanding of student learning outcomes and assessment and a developing consensus about their implementation, although some departments still had concerns.

To assist the dialogue, a conscious effort was made to offer workshops, both College and District, that focus on pedagogy, best teaching practices, outcomes and assessment. The District workshops were offered under the auspices of the Fourth Friday presentations and were developed by a steering committee with representatives from all three colleges in the District. The workshops were rotated in location to all three colleges and, with the exception of the February event, were presented by District faculty and administrators. A series of seven workshops was offered in 2003-04 starting with an introduction to SLOs. One workshop focused on accreditation standards for SLOs and assessment. A forum was held to discuss the City, Mesa, and Miramar models for institutional SLOs. In February, a two-day workshop, led by Dr. James Anderson, taught participants how to develop and write SLOs for their own courses. In March 2004, the presentation was on writing and using rubrics.

Additionally, in January, a one-week Curriculum Writing Workshop led by Dr. James Anderson and offering graduate credit, was offered at Mesa College. The workshop was open to all community college instructors in the San Diego region and included Mesa participants.

Mesa College faculty who have participated in these workshops have developed SLOs and assessment models for selected courses. Their models include goals, defined outcomes, reference to SCANS skills, and rubrics that illustrate how the outcomes will be assessed. Examples of their work are posted on the Mesa College website. Others have independently begun to implement and assess SLOs in their courses. One example is a research study carried out by psychology professor Dr. Yoshito Kawahara in collaboration with other faculty and a student. The study was of three Psychology of

Learning courses with a total enrollment of 138 students and aimed to determine the parameters of measures of student learning outcomes. The paper, presented at the 2004 Western Psychological Association conference, was judged to represent the best research pertaining to this topic and received an award for outstanding research. The pre- and post-test research results have prompted the researchers to spend more time on teaching certain concepts and to do further research. The abstract of this research is posted on the Mesa website.

In January 2004, a Flex workshop was convened to discuss what professional organizations say about SLOs. The workshop was organized by a member of the Research Committee. Two panels of Mesa College faculty, representing a broad spectrum of academic and occupational disciplines and student services, served as presenters. There was extensive discussion and dialogue that assisted in addressing some of the fears and concerns about SLOs.

By the end of the 2002-03 academic year, the Research Committee had finalized a statement of six student learning outcomes for the Associate degree. The statement was distributed to all in the summer communications and in fall 2003, information packets. During fall 2003, all faculty, administrators, and staff had the opportunity to review and comment individually or by department. A Research Committee subcommittee considered the suggestions and made minor modifications. The modified statement was accepted unanimously by the Research Committee in March 2004. Final adoption by the Academic Senate and President's Cabinet is anticipated in late spring, 2004. Following continued concerns expressed by some, the Research Committee also developed and accepted unanimously a statement, developed largely from a Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) document, to define the role of SLOs within the institution. This statement has been approved by the Academic Senate and by the President's Cabinet. Both statements are posted on the College's website.

In 2001, the District embarked on what is known as the course integration project to improve course outlines. Over 600 Mesa courses have been integrated. The new course outlines provide much greater detail on course content and objectives and have focused attention on the need for greater clarity in establishing student expectations. SCANS skills have been integrated into the writing of the outlines. In 2003, the objectives were relabeled as student learning outcomes on the basis that they provide the first level of outcome detail. The College understands that this is not sufficient to define fully student learning outcomes at the course level. The work that has been started by faculty who participated in workshops is the next step in addressing SLOs at the course level and needs to be expanded to many more disciplines.

The newly adopted set of six student learning outcomes establish the outcomes for the Associate degree and will also be incorporated into the assessment of program outcomes. The Associate degree SLOs are broad-based and non-discipline specific. They describe the skills and abilities that can reasonably be expected of a graduate. Programs will use and assess these SLOs as well as assessing the discipline-specific outcomes for their program.

The next step for the College is to develop rubrics that provide greater detail for faculty and programs on how the six outcomes may be assessed. A Mesa faculty member presented the rubric workshop and will take the lead in this work with the Research Committee.

At the recommendation of the Research Committee, the Flex Subcommittee has set aside two entire August flex days for SLOs. The first day will include workshops on SLOs and public policy issues, design of assessments, and rubrics. The second day will provide workshops on best practices and on discipline-specific SLOs.

To support program level outcomes, the instructional Program Review process has been revised to include review of student success and student equity data at the discipline level, and the option of program-designed student surveys. District research now provides access to discipline data that formerly was available only on an institutional level.

In summer 2003, a District General Education subcommittee was formed to address certain questions about the relationship between Associate degree and transfer general education. The subcommittee reviewed the existing District policy on general education and recommended revisions to incorporate the new accreditation standards for G.E. The recommendation has been forwarded to the District Curriculum and Instruction Council (CIC). The Council has requested input from the three college Academic Senates before taking any action. If approved by the Senates and CIC, the revised policy will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

A wealth of institutional effectiveness data for Mesa College is provided by the District Office of Institutional Research and Planning (<http://www.sdccd.net/research>). The data comes from analysis of the student database, from periodic surveys, and from research reports generated at the behest of the Board. The data is reviewed by the Research Committee and by the President's Cabinet; summaries are included in the President's Cabinet update. District research personnel are active members of the Research Committee and provide routine research updates as well as providing additional material to respond to new research needs.

In the past year, the College has initiated several programs intended to improve student success and retention, particularly for new students. One of the programs provides an early pathway for high school students to matriculate to Mesa College. Each program includes a research component to assess its effectiveness.

The first success/retention program addresses the need to provide better orientation to college for more students. New students are recruited by counselors assigned as liaisons to high schools to take a half-unit course, Personal Growth 65, in summer culminating in a student-parent orientation just prior to the start of the fall semester. Similarly, the cohort of students enrolled in the Mesa Academy or Puente are being systematically tracked to determine the effectiveness of these programs as compared to a cohort of non-

Academy or non-Puente students. The results of these pilot programs will be assessed in order to improve the programs.

The Fast Track program, initiated in fall 2003, provides an opportunity for Kearny High School students to take courses at Mesa before or after their high school day. Fast track students are selected only after careful counseling by a counselor dedicated to Kearny and their success is tracked each semester.

In addition, Mesa has embarked on a Freshman Experience Learning Communities initiative, a collaboration between instruction and student services. Modeled upon the successful program at Santa Ana, the Learning Communities project, pairs a Personal Growth class with an introductory mathematics or English class; students are enrolled in the program for a full year. With just one learning community in 2003-04, the program will expand to six in 2004-05.

Several of Mesa College's occupational and technical programs are designed around the use of capstone experiences that incorporate real-world assignments and authentic assessment. Such programs include multimedia, computer information systems, architecture, interior design, fashion, and geographic information systems. Student work is assessed by means of juried competitions and exhibitions with local industry experts joining faculty on juries and panels. Students engage in semester-long projects that culminate in the work to be evaluated. End-of-year shows and exhibitions showcase the work. In some cases, shows include cross-disciplinary collaborative efforts.

Mesa College is making progress in identifying student learning outcomes and their assessment. Associate level SLOs have been agreed upon. A policy for their use has been developed. Training on how to develop and use SLOs has occurred and more is planned. Individual faculty and programs are using or experimenting with SLOs. Such work needs to continue and to be expanded. Next steps must include broader and consistent development and the use of SLOs across the institution.