



Assessing Student Learning

A Newsletter
Fall 1998

Campuses Continue Work in Defining GE Outcomes



CSU
Institute
for
Teaching
and
Learning

In February 1998, over 250 CSU faculty participated in a conference entitled "General Education Learning Outcomes, Phase 1: Mathematics and Written Communication in English." At this event, sponsored by the Institute for Teaching and Learning, the participants began the process of creating an initial set of outcomes statements in the areas of mathematical reasoning and written communication for students graduating with the baccalaureate degree.

The work begun at this conference is being continued through two avenues: individual campus efforts and a multicampus pilot project in which three CSU campuses are exploring the possibility of jointly developing outcomes in these two fundamental skill areas.

Many campuses are already engaged in developing learning outcomes for general education, and some of these efforts are posted on the CSU learning outcomes website: <http://www.co.calstate.edu/aa/sloa/> Other campuses have concentrated on specific components of the GE package and have identified necessary student competencies in oral communication, critical thinking, or quantitative reasoning.

But perhaps the most ambitious undertaking is the pilot project being pursued by a group of faculty from Chico, Sacramento, and San Francisco State. The goals of this endeavor are twofold: (1) to establish a draft set of student learning outcomes in mathematics and written communication which reflect the view of faculty within those two disciplines, of faculty within general education, and of faculty responsible for program majors; and (2) to create and implement a multicampus set of processes aimed at creating student learning outcomes for the CSU.

Led by Jim Morgan, a faculty member from CSU Chico, a total of 36 professors from the three campuses have created individual campus teams, a subset of which comprises the multicampus team. Each campus team includes 6 faculty members developing outcomes in written communication and 6 in mathematics. For each 6-member discipline team, 2 individuals are from the discipline (i.e., either math or English), and the remaining 4 represent disciplines vitally concerned with student competencies in this area.

After the individual campus teams complete their work, they will come together as part of the larger multicampus group to attempt to create a common set of statements of educational outcomes for both mathematics and written communication.

The group is exploring a basic set of outcomes which could be applicable on CSU campuses, with the understanding that each campus is free to develop its own objectives reflecting an individual campus's unique and distinctive mission.

Through efforts like these, the work of the February 1998 GE conference is continuing. The emphasis remains on generating an all-university responsibility for GE outcomes and on building consensus on what graduates should know and be able to do when they earn a CSU baccalaureate degree.

ITL Seeks Proposals for Discipline-Based Discussion of Learning Outcomes

To stimulate thinking about what students should know and be able to do when they earn a baccalaureate degree in a discipline, support is available for systemwide discussion in the disciplines.

In the first year of funding, campuses are urged to prepare proposals for hosting systemwide or regional discussions of student learning outcomes in specific undergraduate arts and sciences disciplines (see list).

Working with the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL), the Chancellor's Office will provide support for planning discipline meetings, for participant travel, and for supplies and materials. The meetings should occur in spring term 1999.

The intent of the grants is to enable campuses to host meetings of multicampus faculty in an undergraduate arts and sciences discipline. For example, the anthropology faculty at a CSU campus in the Bay Area might choose to invite three anthropologists from each of five CSU campuses in the region. The group would travel to the host site on Thursday evening and spend Friday examining already existing drafts of learning outcomes for students earning a baccalaureate degree in anthropology or creating a new set of outcomes statements.

Another example: a campus might choose to host theatre arts faculty from all CSU campuses, organize presentations by those who have already developed outcomes in this discipline, and lead discussion groups.

Campuses that are awarded funding for these projects will be expected to provide the following deliverables: (1) an annotated bibliography of books, articles, and websites that pertain to student learning outcomes in the

specific discipline; and (2) draft statements of measurable outcomes that graduates earning a baccalaureate degree in the discipline should achieve.

It is assumed that the discipline's outcomes will vary from campus to campus. Therefore, it is not assumed that all participants in this project will agree on a specific set of outcomes. Participants are expected to develop a list of measurable outcomes that individual campuses can use as a basis for discussion in a process for determining their own campus-based set of outcomes for the degree program.

The Request for Proposals is available at <http://www.co.calstate.edu/aa/sloa/> You can also get a copy by calling 562-985-2002.

Review of proposals will begin on November 20, 1998, and results of the review will be announced no later than December 11, 1998.

Selected Arts & Sciences Disciplines (majors offered on 12 or more campuses in the CSU)

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Anthropology | Modern European Languages |
| Art | Music |
| Biology | Philosophy |
| Chemistry | Physics |
| Economics | Political Science |
| English | Psychology |
| Ethnic Studies | Sociology |
| Geography | Speech Communications |
| Geology | Theatre Arts/Drama |
| History | |
| Mathematics | |

Sample Statements of Outcomes on WWW

Examples of CSU campus efforts to define student learning outcomes are on the world wide web. The URL is <http://www.co.calstate.edu/aa/sloa/>

These sample statements of outcomes were offered by 10 CSU campuses to serve as examples of work currently being done in various academic departments. The intent is to assist others whose thinking might be stimulated by viewing the approaches taken by CSU colleagues.

The website includes statements of General Education outcomes from 3 CSU campuses. It also presents work from several academic degree programs that have attempted to define what their majors should know and be able to do when they graduate. The disciplines represented include Africana studies, anthropology, art, business, chemistry, communications, economics, engineering, English, geology, history, liberal studies, management, psychology, recreation, theatre arts, and women's studies.

CSU campuses contributing to the website have stressed that all attempts to define student learning outcomes are works in progress. Experience has shown that identifying and measuring student learning is a continuously evolving and metamorphosing process which requires constant rethinking, modifying, and refining. No program of assessing student learning is static, self-contained, and unchanging, and thus there are no "perfect" or "ideal" statements of what universities expect of their graduates.

In addition to statements of learning outcomes, the website also includes links to CSU campus assessment sites, to the work done at other U.S. universities, and to organizations and publications concerned with assessment.

CSU Participates in Wharton/IRHE Institutes

In April 1998, faculty and administrators from 10 CSU campuses attended a week-long session at the Wharton Institute for Research in Higher Education in Philadelphia. The 10 campuses participating were:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Bakersfield | Northridge |
| Dominguez Hills | Pomona |
| Fresno | Sacramento |
| Fullerton | San Bernardino |
| Los Angeles | Sonoma |

Through the facilitation of the Wharton staff, the CSU campus teams developed plans to implement outcomes assessment at their institutions. These plans will be the focus of an information exchange in April 1999, in which campuses will have the opportunity to share the knowledge gained, obstacles overcome, setbacks encountered, and progress made in the past year.

Because the 10 campus teams reported that the Wharton experience enabled them to increase their capacity to work cohesively in advancing the assessment of student learning outcomes, 10 additional campuses will visit Wharton in March 1999. These institutions are:

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Chico | San Francisco |
| Hayward | San Jose |
| Humboldt | San Luis Obispo |
| Long Beach | San Marcos |
| San Diego | Stanislaus |

The core of the Wharton program is built around a specific case study that each CSU campus brings to the Institute and works on during breakout sessions. Sponsored jointly by the Chancellor's Office and the campuses, the program allows 5-person teams to explore their current assessment situation and map a strategy for the future.

System Provides Funding for External Consultants

In the 1997-98 academic year, 6 CSU campuses took advantage of system funding for external consultants to assist CSU faculty in developing specified outcomes for student learning.

Four more campuses have used the summer for workshops or for planning fall workshops on the identification of student learning outcomes.

Throughout the 1998-99 academic year, the Chancellor's Office will continue to provide support for external consultants to strengthen campus efforts in defining and measuring the outcomes of general education or academic degree programs. For more information, see contact information on page 4.

CSU Bakersfield (May 28-31, 1998)

Dr. Karen Schilling of Miami University worked with departments to specify the outcomes of student learning in the major.

CSU Hayward (October 29-30, 1998)

Dr. Mary Senter of Central Michigan University will work with faculty in the College of Arts, Letters, & Social Sciences.

Cal Poly Pomona (August 10-13, 1998)

Dr. Mary Senter of Central Michigan worked with faculty to develop departmental and program assessment policies and plans.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (October 7-9, 1998)

Dr. Trudy Banta of Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis conducted workshops on using student learning outcomes as part of a revision of General Education.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment at the 1998 Teacher Scholar Conference of the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning

by **Harold Goldwhite**, Faculty Director, CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning, 1996-98

As part of the program of the 1998 Teacher Scholar Conference of the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning, held on the campus of CSU Long Beach from the evening of Sunday, July 5, 1998, through midday Friday, July 10, 1998, there was a two-day workshop on "Learning Outcomes: Academic Assessment, Portfolio Assessment, and Effective Use of Results" led by Norman Fullner, Bonnie Ericson, and Paul Baum from CSU Northridge, and Mary Ellen Vogt of CSU Long Beach

The 30 or so faculty participants from all over the CSU actively worked with the 3 presenters from CSU Northridge on learning outcomes and academic assessment. The session agenda included the state of program assessment at CSU Northridge including an account of how a faculty interest group was established at that campus; the definition of the position of assessment coordinator, and the duties of that officer; the establishment of department and program liaisons; the establishment of campus policy on program assessment; the range of procedures used in program assessment; and quite specific examples of assessment in two areas, namely the Department of Secondary Education, and the College of Business Administration and Economics.

Workshop participants were helped, in small groups, to design similar assessment matrices for their own programs, and were urged to develop action plans for implementing them.

The final session led by the Long Beach presenter focused on the nature of "authentic assessment," defined as "engaging students in tasks that are grounded in instruction, that are personally meaningful, and that take place in real-life contexts." The primary evidences of authentic assessment are assembled in a portfolio. The workshop gave practical help to participants on the items appropriate for inclusion in various types of portfolios; how portfolios are assembled; and how they may be assessed. Several different types of portfolios were discussed and evaluated, with actual examples of student portfolios from the presenter's courses being displayed.

Faculty engaging in this workshop found the presentations and interactions helpful. Given the growing interest in the CSU in learning outcomes and assessment, it is likely that further workshops of this kind will be offered by the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning.

For more information call:

Lorie Roth, Director, Academic Services and Professional Development
Tel: (562) 985-2002
Fax: (562) 985-2120
Email: lorie_roth@calstate.edu