PLANNING PROGRAM-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES 101: WHAT AND WHY

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2017 ADMINISTRATORS CONFERENCE
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Required by all accreditors (programmatic and institutional)
- Focus on what students should learn
- Make sense of your curriculum

What are these mysterious SLOs?
Student Learning Outcomes: What Are They?

**Definition:** Student learning outcomes clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that students are expected to acquire at an institution of higher education.

- National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Student Learning Outcomes: Why?

- Multiple Benefits
  - For Institution…
  - For Student…
  - For Program…
Student Learning Outcomes: Multiple Benefits

- For Institution...
  - Student-centered
  - Quality teaching, advising, professional relationships, based on student learning
  - Measurable outcomes
  - Demonstrate student accomplishments/achievements
Student Learning Outcomes: Multiple Benefits

- For Students...
  - Provides clear expectations for what they are to learn
  - Clarifies where this learning is to take place
  - Identifies key parts of the curriculum where they demonstrate learning
  - Sets expected performance levels
Student Learning Outcomes:
Multiple Benefits

For Program...

- Sets your focus on the student and learning as the end, you and your teaching as a means
- Makes sense of your curriculum
- Justifies courses and requirement
- Permits “checkpoints” and adjustments
Two Types of Student Learning Outcomes

► Program-Level
  ► Graduates of the Program will {action verb} {something}
  ► Required in programmatic and institutional accreditation

► Course-Level
  ► Students who have completed this course, will {action verb} {something}
  ► Building blocks for program-level
Two Types of Student Learning Outcomes

- **Program-Level**
  - Usually prepared by administrator and revised and approved by faculty

- **Course-Level**
  - Always prepared by faculty instructors but reviewed by full faculty
  - Can be combined into program-level
Why is Assessing Student Learning Important?

- State what you want students to know, do, value
- Demonstrate achievement of that learning
- Make adjustments in outcomes not fully achieved
Beyond Delivering Courses...

Programs need to demonstrate achievement of student learning outcomes

- Curriculum, courses, activities/experiences provide the opportunity to learn....

- But must demonstrate that students actually learned

**Must**: define outcomes, establish appropriate measures, collect data on a routine basis, and interpret/use results
Required Elements in a Student Learning Assessment Plan

Four things

1. Set of program-level student learning outcomes and levels of performance

2. Curriculum map that links course-level learning outcomes to program-level outcomes
Required Elements in a Student Learning Assessment Plan

Four things

3. List of measures/evidence to be collected and how

4. Schedule for collecting evidence and using the results to improve student learning
Required Elements in a Student Learning Assessment Plan

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1. **Set of program-level student learning outcomes** and levels of performance

2. **Curriculum map** that links course-level learning outcomes to program-level outcomes
Student Learning Outcomes

Specific items that the program expects students to develop, learn, or master during their degree completion process:

- Knowledge,
- Practical skills,
- Areas of professional development,
- Attitudes,
- Higher-order thinking skills, etc.

Suskie, 2004
Context for Your Program

- Resources available - faculty, financial, ...
- Institutional goals/mission
- Specialized Accreditation requirements
- Strategic contributions to institution
- Job/career needs and expectations
- Curriculum
  - Required/elective
  - Pre-requisite
Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes

- What do you want students to know at the end of the program?

AND

- What do you want students to be able to do at the end of the program?
Three Major Characteristics

They specify an action:

- by the students that is **observable**
- by the students that is **measurable**
- that is done by the **students** (rather than the faculty member)
Format of a Student Learning Outcome

- Students who have completed this program, will \{action verb\} \{something\}
Student Learning Outcomes – Program-Level

- Typically 7-12 student learning outcomes
- Often with various subparts
- Must be measurable
Student Learning Outcomes – Program-Level

- Often come from your program or institutional mission
- Can be a “cumulative” statement of course-level student learning outcomes
Four things

1. Set of program-level student learning outcomes and levels of performance

2. Curriculum map that links course-level learning outcomes to program-level outcomes
Curriculum Mapping

- Links course-level learning outcomes to program-level learning outcomes
- Identifies where learning outcomes are expected
- Shows you strategies for in-course learning assessment of program-level outcomes
## Program Learning Outcome/ Course

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X = Covered in Course; A = Covered and Assessed in Course
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Measuring Student Learning Outcomes

Two categories of measures (direct and indirect)

- **Direct are best**
  - Tests/Test items (correct items, scores and pass rates on licensure exams)
  - Rubrics applied to project or paper (portfolios of student work, capstone projects)
  - Field supervisor ratings and employer ratings (if ratings address knowledge, skills, and values)
Measuring Student Learning Outcomes

- Indirect are easier but flawed:
  - Course grades (do not distinguish which knowledge, skills, values areas achieved)
  - Surveys (measure opinions and satisfaction)
  - Student self-ratings (lack objectivity)
  - Alumni satisfaction with learning (satisfaction is often subjective)
  - Honors, awards, scholarships (uncertainty in criteria applied)

- Multiple measures provide corroborating evidence
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Measuring Student Learning Outcomes

1. Measure and level of performance
2. Methods – whom? how often? how many?
3. For what purpose? Feedback loop
Learning Outcome Measurement Plan

- Employer Survey
  - Topics: Participatory approaches, Legal, institutional issues; Teamwork;
  - Benchmark: Compared to entry-level planners
  - Every other year
  - How many? Written/oral survey? Focus-group at conference?
Learning Outcome Measurement Plan

- Professional exam – certification, licensure
  - Topics: ethics; comprehensive planning
  - Benchmark: passing score
  - Every other year
  - All graduates who take exam that year
Learning Outcome Measurement Plan

- Rubrics applies to Capstone/Thesis Reports
  - Topics: written communication; application of appropriate methods to study issue; synthesize material across disciplines, etc.
  - Benchmarks: defined on each rubric
  - Every year, random sample of 5-8
  - Read in summer by 2 faculty members
Assessment Plan

1. Set of Learning Outcomes at the Program-Level

2. Curriculum Map that indicates where outcome is addressed and assessed

3. Methods of Assessing Outcomes
   ▶ Measures/Artifacts (what and how)

4. Schedule and Use of findings
   ▶ Schedule (frequency, when, by whom)
   ▶ Results and Changes made
Questions?

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NOTE: ACSP DOES NOT ENDORSE MY CONSULTING PRACTICE