Student Learning Outcomes at Gavilan College

A Fresh Look

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“Institutional Research – Use it for good, never for evil.”

October 19, 2016
Today’s Agenda

• Quick SLO introduction for new faculty
• SLO utility
• New changes in SLO expectations
• Examples from our peers
• An example alternative
• Discussion
“I hate SLOs!”

- A story of revulsion and redemption...
- As experts, faculty “know” – trust your experts
- Federal mandates, which turn to accreditation mandates
- Turn the “know” into data
- Can be much more than simply “getting it done.”
- Retention → Success → Learning Outcomes
- **SLOs CAN add value in addition to compliance**
Student Learning Outcomes - Primer

• SLOs, as opposed to grades, came into vogue nationally in the 1990s
• In theory, SLOs allow for comparison of measurable outcomes across courses and instructors
• As designed, course grades don’t do that
• SLOs are increasingly a part of institutional evaluation and accreditation
Student Learning Outcomes – Primer

• Why do they matter?
  – SLOs allow for “objective” measurement of student knowledge/skill in courses
  – There are scientific limitations
  – Methods and improvement
  – SLOs matter for accreditation
The ACCJC Brain Trust

• ACCJC (our accrediting body) is a bit behind the times in using SLOs for accreditation
• Because of this, they’re moving fast to catch up
• Standards revised in 2014 – and will apply for our next reaffirmation in 2019
ACCJC SLO Changes for 2014

• SLO results must be “disaggregated”
  – Under current system, we can’t do this
• SLOs must be used in the evaluation process for all employees
• What constitutes “regular”
• Dissemination and discussion of results / specific improvements made
What are our peers up to?

• Example 1:
  – 100% have SLOs
  – 80% of courses assessed annually
  – 80% of faculty involved in SLO activity annually
  – Those that aren’t are due to error/circumstances
  – Improvements based on results are documented and revisited in subsequent assessments
  – Results become basis for committee dialog, program planning, quality improvement
What are our peers up to?

• Example 2:
  – Document participation, discussion, follow-up
  – Simplify simplify simplify
  – Stipends for setup work
  – Either a full-time faculty facilitator or multiple department-level facilitators with stipends
  – Assessment committee
  – Disaggregation is key
Gavilan’s Potential Hiccups

• Complex
• Irregular
• Consistency (or lack thereof)
• Documentation, improvements, follow-up
• Participation
• Feeder for PLOs/ILOs
Gavilan’s Potential Solutions

• Do less work
• Get better results
• Simplify – 2 to 4 SLOs max
• Regularity – settle and stick to schedule
• Consistency – report it the same way
• Discuss, plan, and document
• Done right, PLOs and ILOs should be minimal extra work
• An example...
An Alternative Model

• What if... we assessed every student, in every course, every semester, with less work?
• It’s possible!

• True story...
• A college using the following method went from “show cause” to a “model” in three years
An Alternative Example

• Baseline
  – Many courses had no SLOs
  – Those that did were assessed every five years
  – No discussions or improvements documented
  – No consistent dissemination of information
  – Fewer than 15% of faculty reported being involved in SLO work annually
An Alternative Example

• Scramble to save accreditation – college closure possible
• New model, with multiple steps
• Threw money at the problem
The Example – Step 1

- Shared governance discussions
- Identified faculty leaders in each operational area or department
- 3 to 5 days of summer work (one time only)
- Faculty were paid for this initial summer work
- An MOU for evaluation and schedule
The Example – Step 2

• Faculty selected *existing* exam or assignment, added SLO score along with grade
• Entry of grade alongside overall SLO score at end of semester
• When surveyed, faculty reported the additional work as “very minimal”
The Example – Step 3

- Facilitators pulled simple reports
- Facilitators led annual department discussion
  - Results
  - Documentation
  - Improvements
  - SLO goal setting
- $750 for a day’s work
- Revisited the whole thing next year
The Example – Step 4 (PJW Style)

• My former college’s spin on it:
• In year two, a committee would use the SLO results from year one to develop:
  – PLOs (no more than 5 per program)
  – ILOs (no more than 6 for the college)
• SLO results $\rightarrow$ PLOs
• PLO results $\rightarrow$ ILOs
• Do less work, get better results
• Include in annual fact book / report to state
The Example – Results

• Institution went from “show cause” to a “model institution” for SLOs

• After the initial setup, faculty reported:
  – Less work and better results
  – ≈100% faculty participation
  – ≈100% assessment of all students in all courses every term
The Example – Advantages

• Accreditation
• Track student growth
• Disaggregation easy; SLO scores tied to student IDs
• Made planning efforts based on data easy
• Faculty control; trust the experts
• Simplicity, transparency, consistency
• Eliminated need for SLO-specific artifacts and a summer duty day
The Example – Disadvantages

• Setup was time consuming for some
• Conflict prone departments ➔ conflict prone SLO development
• Disproportionate burden on CTE programs
  – Not necessarily different than now
• Cost for stipends and initial summer setup
Closing Remarks

• Regardless of the direction, updating our SLO procedure will be a large process
• Updating our procedure and going through one cycle before our next visit means starting immediately
• “No brainer”: As subject matter experts, faculty should be empowered and trusted to lead the process
Before I turn it over to the legendary Susan Dodd for discussion...

Any questions about the presentation material?
Discussion

Where does Gavilan go from here?