Taking Assessment to the Program Level

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Today...

1. What is assessment? What is a program?
2. What is a program learning outcome?
3. Make sure students have enough opportunities to achieve each program learning outcome.
4. Why is it a good idea to look at program learning outcomes?
5. Assessing program learning outcomes
6. Organizing and implementing program learning assessments
What is Assessment?

- Deciding what we want our students to learn
- Making sure they learn it!

--Jane Wolfson, Director, Environmental Science & Studies Program, Towson University
What is Teaching?

- Deciding what we want our students to learn
- Making sure they learn it!

--Jane Wolfson, Director, Environmental Science & Studies Program, Towson University
1. Learning Outcomes
2. Learning Opportunities
3. Assessment
4. Using Results
What is a Program? San Francisco Ideas

- An integrated collection of courses designed to achieve particular outcomes
- A group of courses that leads to something tangible for the student like a degree or certificate
- What about courses completed for transfer that lead to no credential?
- What about gen ed?
A Program is More than a Collection of Courses

- The institution’s degrees and programs follow practices... including appropriate... depth... course sequencing... and synthesis of learning.
  - ACCJC

- Gen ed outcomes should be “practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.”
  - AAC&U
Two Years of 100-Level Courses is Not an Associate Degree

- A degree program has
  - Coherence
  - Depth
  - Synthesis
What is a Program Learning Outcome?

- The BIG things you want students to get out of a program
- Developed throughout the program, in multiple courses
- Not one faculty member’s sole responsibility
What Are the “Big Things” Students Need to Learn?

- **Knowledge & Understanding**
- **“Hard” Career Skills**
- **“Soft” Transferrable Skills**
- **Attitudes, Values, Dispositions, & Habits of Mind**
What “Soft Skills” Do Employers Need?

- Teamwork and collaboration skills
- Articulating ideas clearly and effectively
- Real-world problem solving
- Evaluating information and conclusions
- Flexibility and adaptability to change
- Creativity and innovation
- Working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Ethical judgment
- Understanding numbers and statistics
What “Soft Skills” Do Employers Need?

- Teamwork and collaboration skills
- Articulating ideas clearly and effectively
- Real-world problem solving
- Evaluating information and conclusions
- Flexibility and adaptability to change
- Creativity and innovation
- Working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Ethical judgment
- Understanding numbers and statistics
Course learning outcomes help students achieve program learning outcomes.

**Program**

Articulate one’s progress & development as a practitioner in the discipline.

**Course**

Reflect on one’s strengths and areas for improvement as a practitioner of the skills developed in this course.
Program
Articulate ideas clearly & effectively.

Course
Organize research material.
Use a variety of visual tools to present information.
Present a clear argument supported by compelling evidence.
Institutional
Apply critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills.

Program
Use research methods in the discipline.

Course
Interpret statistical tests of research data.
What about Gen Ed?
Gen Ed Curricula Help Students...

- Develop “soft” transferrable skills
- Develop attitudes, values, dispositions, & habits of mind.
- Apply these skills & traits in a variety of disciplines.
Connecting ILOs and GELOs

- **Core GELOs** expected of all students
  - Including those in career programs
  - Including ACCJC expectations
- Faculty may agree some GELOs should also be addressed in all programs
  - = **ILOs** – addressed in gen ed and all programs
- Additional GELOs in transfer AA/AS
  - Broader and/or deeper learning
- Area of emphasis PLOs
  - Deeper learning
Transfer AA/AS Programs

- Gen ed learning outcomes
- Area of emphasis learning outcomes
  - Beyond gen ed learning outcomes
    - Higher achievement of some gen ed outcomes
    - Additional outcomes
- Prepare students for junior-level coursework
- Not 2 years of 100-level courses!
Why Are You Here?

- What do you need to learn in this workshop?
- Why?
- What do you want to be prepared to do when you get back to your office?
- How do you want to use what you’ll learn when you get back to your office?
San Francisco Ideas

- Plan how to assess program learning outcomes.
- Create a sense of urgency and meaning/value in assessing program learning outcomes.
- Learn how our programs impact graduates’ performance on the job.
- Develop plans on how and when to assess program learning outcomes.
- Plan professional development for faculty on how to assess
Good Learning Goals

State Outcomes

- What students should be able to do AFTER they pass a course or graduate

- Appropriately cite sources.

- Connect areas or topics of study within their major to the study of related disciplines.
Good Learning Goals are Clear

- Students understand them.
- Colleagues understand them.
- No fuzzy terms!

- Make appropriate interpretations of numerical and graphical information.
- Maintain a self-regulating process of inquiry.
Good Learning Goals are Observable

- Action words
- If you can see it, you can assess it.

- Critically evaluate information sources.
- Commit to the highest standards of social responsibility.
Good Learning Goals Focus on **Skills** More than Knowledge & Understanding

- Articulate a question and identify potential sources of information to answer the question.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance and limits of the subject in the contemporary world.
Good Learning Goals are Relevant

- Meet **important** student & employer needs 5-10 years from now
  - *Teamwork and collaboration skills*
  - *Articulating ideas clearly and effectively*
  - *Real-world problem solving*
  - *Evaluating information and conclusions*
  - *Flexibility and adaptability to change*
  - *Creativity and innovation*
  - *Working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds*
  - *Ethical judgment*
  - *Understanding numbers and statistics*
Good Learning Goals are **Rigorous Yet Realistic**

- Provide compelling rationales for why assumptions are important.
- Respond constructively to questions or conflicts that arise between cultures or between diverse groups within our society.
Time to Talk!

- Calada College is developing a certificate program in Intercultural Studies.

- **Purpose:** Prepare students to work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Identify 1-3 potential learning outcomes for the program.
  - **Outcomes**
  - **Clear**
  - **Observable**
  - **Skills**
  - **Relevant**
  - **Rigorous yet realistic**
San Francisco Ideas

- Employ problem solving skills to resolve conflicts in groups with diverse views.
- Gather and synthesize information about a new culture for use in real-world situations.
- Communicate effective to a variety of colleagues that is respectful and sensitive to cultural differences.
- Apply models of cross-cultural competence.
Time to Think!

- Draft up to 3 program learning outcomes for one of the programs you brought with you.
  - Outcomes
  - Clear
  - Observable
  - Skills
  - Relevant
  - Rigorous yet realistic
- If you have time, get feedback from a tablemate.
Make Sure Students Have Sufficient Opportunity to Achieve Each Program Learning Outcome

- A collection of courses is not a program.
- If you’re not teaching it,
- or students don’t have an opportunity to learn it,
- there’s no point in assessing it.
Program Capstone Requirement

- Students integrate and synthesize what they’ve learned throughout the program.
  - Projects
  - Performances
  - Internships/field experiences
  - Portfolios
Foundation and Cornerstone Courses

- What every student needs to learn in order to succeed in the program
What about All-Elective Programs or Areas of Emphasis?

- A collection of courses is not a program.
- Individually designed programs or areas of emphasis
  - *Student and advisor*
    - identify program learning outcomes
    - identify courses to achieve those outcomes
Time to Work!

- Intercultural Studies breakout
  - *Questions 1 and 2*

Time to Think!

- Your program curriculum map
  - *Questions 5*
Course Curriculum Mapping

*Students learn what they’re graded on.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is what you’ll learn to do.</th>
<th>This is how you’ll learn it.</th>
<th>This is how you’ll show me that you’ve learned it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is what you’ll learn to do.</td>
<td>And this will help you learn how to...</td>
<td>This is how you’ll learn it.</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>[PLO/GELO]</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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Looking at Learning Outcomes from a Program Perspective

- All 7 regional accreditors require
  - Articulation of program learning outcomes
  - Program curricular coherence
  - Assessment of program learning outcomes
  - Appropriate rigor in learning standards

- Why?
- Why is this a good idea?
Los Angeles Ideas

- Gives you a bigger picture across courses – identify patterns
- Professionalizing what we do – making sure we give students the optimal education to be successful in their field
- Be clear to students what they will get out of it
  - *Explains to students the value of what they’re learning*
- Assure quality – moves colleges away from reputation as measure
- Opportunity for faculty to own and control what they do
Assessing Program Learning Outcomes: Start at the End and Work Backwards.
Achievement of Program Learning Outcomes

- Capstone requirements
- Ersatz or quasi-capstones

- Students demonstrate achievement of multiple program learning outcomes.
  - Projects
  - Presentations
  - Performances
  - Internships/field experiences
  - Portfolios
Progress Toward Achievement of Program Learning Outcomes

- “Foundation” required courses
- “Cornerstone” required courses
- Course capstones demonstrate progress toward program learning outcomes
  - Projects
  - Presentations
  - Performances
  - Final exams
What about All-Elective Programs or Areas of Emphasis?

- A collection of courses is not a program.
- Individually designed programs or areas of emphasis
  - Student and advisor
    - Identify program learning outcomes
    - Identify courses to achieve those outcomes
  - Student documents achievement of outcomes through a portfolio.
## Sources of Program Learning Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Sources of Information</th>
<th>How They’re Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge &amp; conceptual understanding</td>
<td>Multiple choice tests</td>
<td>Item scores, mapped back to test blueprints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking &amp; performance skills</td>
<td>Papers, projects, performances, essays,</td>
<td>Rubrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes, values, habits of mind</td>
<td>Reflective writing</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking &amp; perf. skills, attitudes, values, habits</td>
<td>Portfolios</td>
<td>Rubrics and reflective writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing Program Outcomes vs. Course Outcomes

**Course Outcomes**
- Use course-embedded assessments
- Every course
- Focus on course-specific outcomes
- Used by faculty teaching the course

**Program Outcomes**
- Use course-embedded assessments
- Only key courses
- Focus on broad program outcomes
- Used by all program faculty addressing the outcome
Rubrics for Program Learning Outcomes

- Use course rubrics as resources.
- Create a “developmental” rubric showing progress over the program.
  - *Start by defining capstone standards.*
  - *Then work down.*
- Update course rubrics for capstones and foundation courses, if needed.
What is an Appropriate Standard?

- Passing work (C? C-? D?)
- You would not be embarrassed that this student passed the course or graduated.
- The student is doing well enough to succeed in later studies or career.
Time to Talk!

- Complete part of the developmental rubric template for the Intercultural Studies certificate.
- “Proposes realistic solutions to intercultural interaction challenges”
  - Define the capstone standard.
  - Define the foundation standard.
Organizing and Implementing Program Learning Assessments
Look for the biggest return on investment.

High enrollment gen ed courses
Program capstones and cornerstones
Quick & easy assessment tools
Limit the number of program outcomes.

Focus on the forest, not the trees. The fewer the goals, the less assessment work. There’s a limit to how much students can learn well. What do student most need to learn?
Keep your curricula lean.
Use models & ideas from community colleges in other regions.
Name a faculty assessment coordinator for each program.
Time to Reflect!

- For one of the programs you brought with you,
  - Complete the “Rubric for Evaluating a Program’s Learning Assessment Processes.”
  - Complete “Rubric for Evaluating a College’s Program Learning Assessment Processes.”
  - Complete “Reflections on Assessing Program Learning Outcomes.”
Time to Talk!

1. **Why** is there foot-dragging on assessment?
2. How might you address that “root cause”?
Time to Reflect Again!