

Assessment Strategies

CLOSING THE LOOP

As we move into the heart of the semester, the Faculty Assessment Committee hopes that student learning outcome (SLO) assessment is part of your Fall 2010 mental map . An important assessment concept is the idea of “closing the loop.” Keep in mind that the goal of SLO assessment is to provide evidence that an instructor has modified teaching practices in order to increase the student success rate on a specific SLO. Closing the loop refers to a change in teaching with the result of student improvement. The ACCJC is expecting that every course have at least one SLO assessed by the end of Fall 2011. This means that the loop must be closed for one SLO in every course (not every section).

Not all of your assessment projects may result in closing the loop. For example, you want to confirm that a high percentage of students are correctly answering a certain question on an exam. By all means, include that project in your assessment report, but please be aware of the need to close the loop on an SLO in that course.

EXAMPLE OF CLOSING THE LOOP

By focusing on a topic students are having difficulty with, you can be assured of closing the loop. Keep the focus on one component of the class that connects to an SLO on the course outline of record (COR). For example, you focus on one question of a 25 question midterm and determine that 50% of the students correctly answered it. Your goal is for 70% of students to correctly answer the question either the same semester or the next. The next step is to consider the revision of an existing teaching tool or the introduction of a new one. Either the same semester or the next, the revised/new teaching tool (a revised or new assignment, a new exercise, the introduction of student demonstrations, etc.) is implemented.

ASSESSMENT STEPS: CLOSING THE LOOP

1. Choose SLO & inquiry topic
2. Choose assessment vehicle (midterm exam, paper, presentation, etc.)
3. Initial inquiry: record student responses
4. Set a benchmark
5. Create/revise a teaching tool
6. Implement teaching tool in the classroom
7. Re-inquire: record student responses
8. Discuss results



EXAMPLE OF CLOSING THE LOOP (CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE)

This is followed by a re-inquiry of student responses to the same exam question either the same semester or a later one. Assuming there is an improvement in student performance, the loop has been closed-there is evidence that a change in teaching practices has led to increased student success on a learning outcome.

The connection between teaching practices and student performance is key in SLO assessment. If the focus were solely on student performance, grade distributions would suffice. Assessment is a tool for moving beyond grades in order to foster the analysis and discussion of direct linkages between instruction and student learning.

Faculty create and assess outcomes. Faculty analyze the evidence to improve teaching and student learning.

FACULTY ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR

SLO Assessment is now a local, campus-driven effort.

Each college has a Faculty Assessment Coordinator to be of assistance.

The Moreno Valley College coordinator is Carlos Tovares.

Do not hesitate to contact Carlos at any point in your SLO assessment project.

Email him at carlos.tovares@rcc.edu
Office phone:
(951) 571-6282

AFTER CLOSING THE LOOP

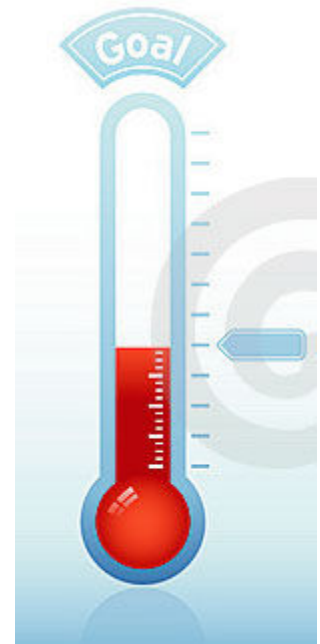
After closing the loop on one course, the objective needs to be on achieving the goal of assessing one SLO for every course by the end of Fall 2011. Disciplines need a strategy for achieving the goal. If your discipline has multiple instructors teaching multiple sections of courses, you have options in terms of the next step. You may want to consider assessing the same SLO, but in a different type of class-comparing daytime sections to evening ones or success rates in a traditional face-to-face class to a hybrid or online section.

It is not necessary for you to discuss your findings, however everyone is encouraged to do so. A meeting of discipline members to discuss assessment projects is an idea to consider. Be sure to include a discussion of the SLOs for each course. Do the current SLOs need to be revised? Are there too many SLOs? Is there a need for a new SLO? Department meetings are great places to share assessment insights and hear what other disciplines are doing. Lunch with colleagues or beer with fellow instructors after work are also great opportunities to discuss teaching and learning.

WHAT IF?

What if I do not reach my benchmark?

There is no such thing as failure when undertaking quality SLO assessment. You may see improvement, but not reach your benchmark. If this happens occasionally it is not a cause for concern. It is the process of inquiry that is important along with the discussions that can follow. No doubt, something meaningful can be discerned about your assessment strategies, teaching methods, the capacity of students to learn, or the relevance of the SLOs in any project.



PROFIENCY

The ACCJC is expecting us to be proficient at SLO assessment by 2012 . We must be beyond mere Awareness and beyond the stage of Development. The ACCJC is expecting us to be Proficient: to know how to do it and actually be doing it!

