Creative Opportunities
For
Outcomes & Assessment

Sierra College Forum
August 13, 2008
Roseville Gateway

On Wednesday, August 13, 2008, Sierra College held its first Forum on Outcomes and Assessment. Sixty-four faculty and staff gathered at Roseville Gateway for a day-long conversation about the opportunities and concerns related to assessing outcomes in Instruction and Student Services. Conversations were lively, disagreement was welcome, and all participants were invited to bring their passions into a co-created agenda.

The day began as all of the participants gathered together and worked to create an agenda that reflected issues and topics around the theme of "Creative Opportunities for Outcomes & Assessment." After a set of sessions were created, the individual participants moved on to discuss a variety of topics. Each individual who volunteered to convene a session around an issue brought their passion to the topic and agreed to take responsibility for generating notes to capture the conversation.

As Sierra College accepts the challenge of assessing outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level, what follows is the beginning of a conversation on the variety of issues this challenge represents.

As a campus leader, your presence and participation are needed to begin the conversation and create the process that will move Sierra College toward outcomes assessment and away from accreditation warning! Please join your friends and colleagues in a discussion about the future of outcomes and assessment at Sierra College. Bring your passion and expertise as we discuss:

Creative Opportunities
For
Outcomes & Assessment

What: Forum on Outcomes and Assessment

When: 9 – 4, Wednesday, August 13, 2008

Where: Roseville Gateway, Room 605

Why: This forum will allow you to share your knowledge, ignorance, hopes and fears about this process with your colleagues. We need your participation to help shape the direction of assessment at Sierra College!

What to bring:
- A copy of the outcomes from a course you are teaching
- Ideas about outcomes from a service you are providing
- Examples of how you have assessed student learning at the course or program level

Share your Best Practices and Best Experiences
Lunch & Snacks Provided - Flex Credit Available

Mandy Davies   Rachel Rosenthal

List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Department
Neal	Allbee	Executive Dean
Cheryl	Axton	Counseling
Barbara	Battenberg	Communication Studies
Elaine	Bienvenue	Business
Rebecca	Bocchicchio	Associate Dean
Kevin	Bray	Institutional Research
Dotty	Brown	Art
Darci	Brownell	HPERA
Julie	Bruno	Communication Studies
Dan	Burns	Chemistry
Denise	Bushnell	CIS
Nini	Cardoza	Chemistry
Suzanne	Davenport	Distance Ed
Mandy	Davies	VP Student Services
Lynn	Davis	Counseling
Richard	Elliott	Counseling
Beth	Ervin	English
Marlene	Feldscher	Nursing
Tom	Fillebrown	Applied Art & Design
Anne	Fleischmann	English
Kaye	Foster	ESL
Laurel	Gardner	English
Betty	Gudz	Spanish
Stephanie	Guevara	Dean
Ed	Gutowsky	English
Tim	Haenny	ASSC/Campus Life
Brian	Haley	Dean
Betty	Hawkes	Counseling
Jay	Hester	History
Harry	Houpis	Astronomy
Darlene	Jackson	Associate Dean
Craig	Kelly	Research
Cheryl	Kenner	Associate Dean
Sonja	Lolland	Business
Susan	Lucyga	English
Michelle	Macfarlane	Agriculture
Cindy	Mariano	Counseling

Diane	McKnight	Dean
Sue	Michaels	Public Information
Jennifer	Molina-Stidger	Anthropology
Keri	Muma	Biological Sciences
Sandy	Muraki	Counseling
Aimee	Myers	History
Paul	Neal	Counseling
Brook	Oliver	Counseling
Robin	Persiani	ESL
Melissa	Prinzing	CIS
Janet	Riswold	Tutor Center
Heather	Roberts	Biological Sciences
Jason	Roberts	English
Lisa	Rochford	English
Rachel	Rosenthal	VP Instruction
Luis	Sanchez	Associate Dean
Megan	Seely	Sociology
Mike	Sequeira	Dean
Blair	Spaulding	Administration of Justice
Stan	Spencer	Economics
Deb	Sutphen	Dean
Johnnie	Terry	Philosophy
Tennis	Tollefson	Fire Technology
Susan	Trant	ESL
Alistair	Turner	Outreach
Corrine	Vieira	Admissions & Records
John	Volek	Dean

Forum Recollections

- **Issue/Topic: Relationships between General Education (GE) & Career Technical Education (CTE) Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)**
- **Convener: Neal Allbee**

Participants made the following points:

There is a need for a correlation (or at least an understanding) of SLO's between GE and CTE outcomes. CTE students cannot be successful unless there are positive learning outcomes in the GE area. This is particularly acute for critical thinking, reading, writing, math, and communication skills.

CTE courses generally are of a technical nature and ensure the person is prepared for employment. However, students need to be able to pass reading and writing employment examinations and this is a problem. Example twenty percent of those seeking employment as peace officers (even with a college degree) are not able to pass a reading/writing examination (12th grade proficiency).

CTE course tend to have an organized structure with a degree of emphasis on building "customer services and communication skills." The soft skills tend to be emphasized. The group felt GE should also be sure to work on these as part of their SLO's. It is important that all instructors have some common SLO's in the area of "Soft Skills". The expectations need to be enforced through out the District and not just in some classes. Students need consistency. Responsibility and accountability would top this list.

There needs to be some commonality with SLO'S in all three areas - course, program, and institution.

CTE programs may want to give some thought to a redesign of course/program requirements. Example – Fire Technology (FT) has a 15 unit core requirement,

plus 15 units of electives within the program. Students then have the required 18 units of GE requirements leaving them with 12 units of electives for the 60 units required for a degree. FT could change this requirement and examine SLO's and change the unit configuration to add other courses i.e. computer, science, math, to ensure students are meeting outcomes to better prepare them for employment.

ACTION: Participates recommend that the Academic Senate and the CTE Committee be requested to form a Task Group to examine and make recommendations for identifying common instructional needs that would lend themselves to development of some standard SLO's to be used across the curriculum. These common SLO's would meet the individual requirements in all three areas, course, program and institution.

Possible points (common critical needs) might be in areas such as: ethics, accountability, responsibility, communications, computer literacy, critical thinking, and ability to read and follow directions.

- **Issue/Topic: How do we assess students' success after a student service intervention/interaction? What will we measure? Let's develop one tool.**
- **Convener: Cheryl Axton & Sandy Muraki**

Before determining our outcomes assessment, or designing our assessment (qualitative, quantitative, mixed, etc.), we first identified SLOs.

We identified student learning in terms of abilities, knowledge, values and attitudes as a result of a student service provided. To accomplish this initial task, we did an OUTCOMES Primer exercise developed by Ruth Stiehl and Les Lewchuk (**Reference:** *Stiehl, R., Lewchuk, L (2002). The Outcome Primer: Reconstructing the College Curriculum (2nd ed.), Corvallis, OR: The Learning Organization. Stiehl, R., & Lewchuk, L. (2005). The Mapping Primer: Tools for Reconstructing the College Curriculum. Corvallis, OR: The Learning Organization.)*

"The OUTCOMES Primer is the collaborative thinking of faculty, staff, management to identify learning outcomes, create capstone assessment tasks and assessment tools, and map programs to establish stronger relationships between student services, courses, etc."

In our session, individuals took time to identify student learning or student experiences as a result of an intervention/interaction with a student service, i.e.

> - Admissions & Records; Evaluations
> - Financial Aid Programs
> - Academic Foundations Program
> - Assessment Center
> - CalWORKS
> - Career Connections
> - Counseling Services
> - Distance Learning: Online and Television Courses
> - DSP&S
> - Learning Opportunity Program
> - Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOP&S)
> - Health Services
> - Housing
> - International Student Center
> - Job Placement Center
> - Library/ Learning Resource Center
> - Outreach & Recruitment Services
> - Police Services
> - Public Information
> - Research
> - Student Leadership/Government
> - Supportive Education
> - Transfer Center

- ➢ Tutorial Services
- ➢ Veterans Services
- ➢ Writing Center
- ➢ Etc.

Individuals wrote each SLO on individual little sticky notes. As many SLOs were written in the time allotted. Because of the lack of time, we only took 15 minutes or so. Ideally, you want to (1) conduct this exercise within your service area/program for everyone's input, (2) take more than 15 minutes. However, the idea was to get a sense on how to conduct this the Outcomes Primer exercise so that participants could conduct this exercise in their student service area at an upcoming staff meeting. Then work what to assess and how to assess.

In groups of 4 or 5 individuals, individuals reported his/her SLOs and placed them onto a large poster sheet. Then individuals grouped SLOs into categories with the same theme and then named the theme (in terms of Department, Division, and Institution mission, values, and goals).

Here are the beginning stages/brainstorming results:

Again the prompt was:

Identify student learning or student experiences as a result of an intervention/interaction with a student service:

Group A

- ♦ Resources and Information

  - ✓ Student will be able to learn what online services are available and be able to access those student support services
  - ✓ Student will use tools to succeed in an online course, e.g., websites/also learning styles, etc.
  - ✓ Student will be able to access online library resources
  - ✓ Student will gain a good idea of what the library has to offer them
  - ✓ Leave with an understanding as to why their problem was or wasn't solved
  - ✓ Be able to find their resources
  - ✓ Go to Financial Aid for assistance
  - ✓ Know what the reference librarian can do for them

- ♦ Responsibilities & Outcomes
  - ✓ They will understand how to use Blackboard
  - ✓ Learn how to evaluate their own degree progress
  - ✓ Know what the rules are for borrowing materials from the library and know the consequences of not returning borrowed materials, etc.

- ✓ Read the probationary process / dismissal policy and know what that means
- ✓ Understand deadline dates and how to avoid getting an "F" on their transcripts (for failure of dropping a class or classes or failure of withdrawing by the deadline date)
- ✓ Student will gain an attitude that they feel comfortable coming back
- ✓ Student will gain sense of accountability and responsibility

- ♦ Personal / Academic Development / Identity
  - ✓ Develop short term and long term goals: academic, career, personal
  - ✓ To begin to think critically about the validity and accuracy of information they find on the internet
  - ✓ Develop Life Skills: communication skills, analytical thinking skills, decision making skills
  - ✓ Understand their readiness to take an online course
  - ✓ Know how to be a successful online student

Group B:

- ♦ Matriculation Process: Students will go through the matriculation process: *Apply, Assess, Attend New Student Orientation, Receive Counseling, and Register* according to his/her identified goal(s): AA, transfer, vocational certificate, job skills, etc.

- ♦ Public Information:
  - ✓ Students will be able to access information on: when and what they need to register for each semester from the Sierra College website and publications, etc.
  - ✓ From websites and publications: students will know where to access information on the critical date to apply and register, add/drop, semester (important) dates, etc.

- ♦ Student develop problem-solving, analytical, communication skills:
- ♦ Transfer Center:
  - ✓ Student question, presented problem, is answered
  - ✓ Student will be able to access resources available to solve his/her concern
  - ✓ Student will be able to name the transfer university representative, get needed phone numbers, access websites to get needed information
  - ✓ Student will be able to utilize www.assist.org to identify and understand major coursework to reach their education goal
  - ✓ Student will be able to identify transfer options in major, four-year universities, etc.
  - ✓ Student will be able to acknowledge that transferring may take longer than two years

- ♦ Admissions and Records:

- ✓ Student will receive answers to the questions they don't ask / Students don't know what they don't know
- ✓ Student will know where to access information on: Deadline dates: Registration, Submit degree petition, apply FAFSA/financial aid, etc.

➕ Awareness of student services: Writing Center, Math Center, Tutor Center

➕ Skills and strategies to be successful in college
- ✓ Identify the difference between a "W" and a "F"
- ✓ Identify the difference AA / BA degree
- ✓ Identify the factors to why it is hard to work full-time (40 hours +) and take a full load of academic work (12 units+)
- ✓ Identify and explain the AA degree requirements: General Education, Major Requirements, Learning Proficiency Requirements: Writing, Reading, Oral Communication, Math, unit requirement, GPA requirement, residency requirement
- ✓ Utilize and navigate assist.org and webcms.sierracollege.edu

Group C:

➕ Information Gathering Skills
- ✓ Where to find information
- ✓ Access to and use of resources, what we have, what we can do and what we can't

➕ Be a proactive learner
- ✓ Increase self-esteem and personal awareness
- ✓ Know what it means to be proactive and independent

➕ Work with faculty, staff, and students outside the classroom

➕ Support the classroom environment
- ✓ Each student will successfully complete his/her test to the best of his/her ability
- ✓ Student will actively participate in tutoring sessions (ask questions)
- ✓ Student will apply skills and techniques learned

➕ Student can explain what they have learned in each session/
➕ Ascertain that the student's questions have been answered/understood

- ✓ Student will gain study skills
- ✓ Know what an SEP (Student Educational Plan) is and who else needs a copy of it
- ✓ Know how often they need to meet with me/counselor
- ✓ Know which forms each semester I (counselor) need from him/her

- ✓ Know what other services he/she may be eligible for: EOPS, CARE, financial aid, DSP&S, etc.
- ✓ Know what to do if he/she has a personal crisis
- ✓ Demonstrate how to register
- ✓ Be able to get his/her books
- ✓ Go to the right resource (Tutorial Services) if they are struggling in a class
- ✓ Know how to get advocacy services if issues arise with his/her worker
- ✓ Student will write or have a plan (SEP) for next semester

- ＋ <u>Student identify areas in which a tutor can help</u>
  - ✓ Test is available readily with clear instructions
  - ✓ Environment allow student to perform to ability

One of the goals of the OUTCOMES Primer exercise is define student services SLOs so when we are trying to assess--we will know if we are actually measuring what we want to know.

The following was not included in that meeting, but I am including it now so that participants can have additional information that may be helpful.

"Assessment methods have been categorized as being either direct or indirect based on whether you want to assess student learning or student experience. Direct assessors of learning specifically evaluate the competence of students in what they have learned as a result of the provided support service. Indirect assessors differ in that they measure the student's, parent's and employer's experience rather than their knowledge and skills. These methods include feedback from internships, supervisors, student self-reports, etc." (2005 University of Central Florida: UCF Administrative Assessment Handbook *Information, Analysis, and Assessment)*

Adapted from Concordia College:

"A modified categorization scheme is proposed with the purpose of providing a more clearly defined system for selecting appropriate assessment methods that address what you are trying to assess. Assessment methods have been classified based on what you are trying to assess. Two categories have been identified and are described briefly below.

1. Student or client learning
    Direct assessors of student or client learning. This category includes methods that evaluate the learning of students in terms of:
    - a. Cognitive: What does the student know?
    - b. Performance / skills: What can the student do?
    - c. Affective: What does the student care about?

    Indirect assessors of student learning. This category consists of assessment methods that allow students or others (such as employer) to report on what students have learned. In other works, the methods are used to evaluate the "perception" of student learning. As with the direct method there are three learning types that we are concerned with:

a. Cognitive: What is reported (perceived) that the student knows?
b. Performance and skills: What is reported (perceived) that the student can do?
c. Affective: What is reported (perceived) as important to the student?

Discussion Topics:

❖ Brook mentioned that students could be assessed on things they learned how to do from their experiences with Career Connections. However, a clear distinction was made on what the students were responsible for and what the counselor/program could be held accountable for. For example, a possible SLO after a resume writing workshop could be to have the students produce effective resumes. We would not make the counselor/coordinator/or program accountable on whether or not a student actually got a job as a result of the workshop.

❖ Mandy asked "How might a student understand they learned something (e.g., counseling)?" Possibly the student could identify 10 key ideas; out of the 10 ideas, what did they hold on to (in that 30 minute counseling moment)?

❖ What do you want the student to carry away from that experience?

❖ Counselor can identify for the student what those items can be, e.g., Transfer requirements, AA degree requirements, career-decision making skills, new student orientation information, etc. Have the counselor identify what he/she wants the student to gain from his/her counseling session.

❖ What are the things that counselors want students to be able to do after a New Student Registration?

❖ Rich suggested one meaningful assessment question that we can ask all new students after they have attended a New Student Orientation and met with a counselor is:

Assessment Question: After attending the New Student Orientation, do you feel comfortable registering on MySierra?

❖ Rich made an observation, that if our initial goal is to identify one SLO then that is no problem. Counseling has done SLOs in the past, we can easily different ones. However, with the complexity and number of important SLOs, one (or even a handful) doesn't seem like enough. He gave an analogy to being thirsty. If I'm thirsty, giving me one ounce of water will not quench my thirst. And doing one SLO seems like the same thing--it just doesn't seem like enough. Counseling will do the required one but most likely take advantage of the opportunity to do additional meaningful assessments so we can continually enhance/improve services and student success.

- ❖ Craig offered his research expertise and assistance during the workshop and for future reference and assistance.

- ❖ How do we assist and support students? And measure that?

- ❖ Cindy stated an important point: Counseling is not just about dissemination of information. We are not information givers—our role and responsibility is more complex and deeper than that. Through counseling we can empower and encourage student confidence and success. It is that sense of community that makes the student feel connected to college and gives him/her that sense that he/she belongs in college. Through our counseling relationships (or instructional faculty relationships) with students is where students feel success (or can feel a lack of success).

Assessment: Based on your attitude about your relationship with your counselor, do you feel more (or less) connected to college?

Assessment: Based on your attitude about your relationship with your counselor, do you feel more (or less) confident that you will succeed in college?

- ❖ Some concerns were discussed regarding do SLOs with the limited time and personnel on accomplishing our assessments.

Best Practices

- ❖ Cheryl shared her experience working in a non-profit organization and how the organization was able to utilize one assessment tool related to the organization's mission statement. It was effective, useful, and successful.
- ❖ Discussion included how we might accomplish that as a long term goal. Initial assessments might utilize various assessment tools and timelines depending on the student services.
- ❖ Paul Neal has already done SLO assessment in the past for the Assessment Center and is already prepared to do additional SLO assessments. (In fact, I spoke to Paul before writing these notes and the Assessment Center has already identified a meaningful SLO and he and his staff have already assessed it.)
- ❖ The assessment should inform and impact practice and advocate for change or transformation.

Note: I hope that I captured the essence of what was discussed. Please contact me if there is something that needs to be corrected or added. Thank you so much for your participation, your input, your energy and passion. – Peace, Sandy Muraki

- **Issue/Topic: "Make SLO's Safe and Meaningful, Not Just Compliant**
- **Convener: Kevin Bray**

Notes:

- Some are very concerned; several have approached SCFA. Should we fight, concede?
- Outcomes movement has spread west to accreditors in the last several years.
- How can we make what we're already doing work? Most faculty already do outcomes work—let's not make this a 20 hour load.
- It's what we want our students to learn—let's take it as an opportunity.
- Concern with employee safety—after looking at K-12. All the other factors that go into student success could count against us. You can't put a number on a lot of the things we do. Could be different from what the state might want.
- Maybe this is an opportunity; however, this is not being framed as a discussion whether or not to do it. The WASC letter was to tell us to do it. Rachel said at last night's board that no one has said a contrary word. But some have.
- Pick an outcome from WebCMS, evaluate it, report it to your dean by November 1—no, not true—no one has said report to dean. Discuss within your department.
- "We all want to retain our accreditation."
- SCFA has the role of negotiating evaluation.
- Need to make this meaningful and not just a useless exercise.
- First this felt "we have to;" now intrigued. What's student's responsibility? Don't take their responsibility. But can we review our methods of helping students learn?
- It's about passion and commitment.
- We don't want to be told WHAT to teach and how to TEST it.
- Safety: tough when faculty is fragmented—fight the appropriate fight. What would make the process sufficiently inclusive?
- There's a fundamental problem with outcomes. Is student passes the class, he's presumed to have them. But we can't control the outcome—it depends heavily on

the student. Students aren't machines. Huge legal problem—can we be sued if the student really didn't get the outcomes?

- We have to stand up and say no, this is not the right thing to do. Does it make sense to roll over, when the federal climate may change soon?

- Agreed, but the winds change too slowly—we could get caught before it shifts and lose accreditation. Some staff see this as an opportunity—let them do it. For the others, let them do something small and simple.

- When this first hit, the Academic Senate wanted to resist; but this is a political reality. We don't want to lose accreditation waiting for the climate to change.

- Some science departments already do this. Huge list of outcomes, measured regularly. We can meet this using parameters we set. Academic freedom is not such an issue in science.

- Give us a way we can easily document what we're doing and let us get on with it. Keep doing what we're doing. Find something already approved and copy it.

- Humanities has it tougher than science. This has come up with whiff of nationalism, standardization of views. Don't tell me how to teach.

- Deans would welcome working with the Senate and SCFA to do this right—they don't' want to enforce anything they don't believe in.

- Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are the stages of coming to terms with a difficult reality. We seem to be some in anger, many in bargaining.

- Can we envision a process with benefits? Yes. "We will fully implement SLO's where we feel it is appropriate to do so."

- Other examples like Modesto JC: huge website re outcomes, still dinged—why?

- Look at the media as to why schools are deemed deficient. More to do with the WASC agenda. Did 20 schools suddenly go bad?

- What is their agenda? WASC said, We want changes made—what THEY view as accountability.

- But are the outcomes on WebCMS ok? Some in my department were not mine.

- Talk with my department peers and work it out.

- Sac City has senate protection calling for aggregate data only.

- Difficulty in humanities: how create outcomes across a wide range?
- If you create an outcome, does that mean you are elevating it over other topics?
- Issue of increasing patriotism as function of instruction—historians seen as a tool in that.
- WASC doesn't seem to be aiming at the outcomes themselves—we still have outcome control; not being attacked there. The assessment level seems to be what they're attacking. How or if we are assessing.
- How does this affect evaluation or budgeting?
- Safety concern: aggregation won't protect the easily identified instructor.
- What about focusing this on macro skills? E.g critical thinking, or communications, that belong in all classes?
- Don't evaluate at the "semicolon" level. No nitpicking. Top-down, not bottom-up.
- This is good in GE courses.
- Have to start thinking at the department level about the scale of outcomes to seek.
- We get confused between evaluation (summative) versus assessment (formative).
- If used as a tool to find things we need to look at, it's a good thing.
- Revise of outcomes for consistency.
- But we're still dealing with the evaluation aspect. There's value in looking at other institutions—how are they dealing with it? Reverse engineer it.
- Our senate committee on this will continue this year with Ann Fleischman and Carol Eisenhower chairing.

- **Issue/Topic: Student Outcomes/Assessments in Science**
- **Convener: Dan Burns**

Chemistry and Biology (represented here) have been defining student learning outcomes and performing evaluations (and assessments) for years.

The WEBCMS course documents contain detailed lists of the outcomes and potential assessment tools.

In Chemistry, the "program" outcomes are assessed via the standardized, normalized ACS (American Chemical Society) exams administered in Chemistry 1B, 2A, 2B, 5, and 12B.

Biology is working on program outcome assessments.

- **Issue/Topic: Affect of Environment on Student Success**
- **Convener: Nini Cardoza & John Volek**

I. Sierra College Personnel = the Environment
   a. Students First!
   b. Staff- 1st Contact; Outreach/ Support
   c. Counselors- Assessment, Advising, Orientation, Placement
   d. Instructors- Full/ Part Time-
      Set Student Expectations
   e. Administrators- Provide Resources, Training, Set Tone
   f. Trustees:

II. Issues:
   a. Access to accurate information
   b. Expectation S.C. = 12th grade reading level
      Reality = 8th grade level for High School Graduate
   c. New Wave Coming-
   d. Prerequisites determine basic skill need
      No class availability

III. Student Needs:
   a. Accurate Info
   b. Plan
   c. Basic Skills
   d. Learning Communities

IV. Suggestions; Outcomes
   a. Welcome Center
   b. Clear Instruction Expectations
   c. Knowledge of Demographics
   d. Cross Awareness
   e. Mentors
   f. Active Learning Models

- **Issue/Topic: Student Success and Retention in Online Courses**
- **Convener: Suzanne Davenport & Michele Macfarlane**

Below the conversation is categorized into the three themes that emerged throughout the conversation regarding online student success and retention. Increasing online success and retention is one of the goals in the Distance Learning and Instructional Technology PAR.

Student & Faculty Engagement

The importance of faculty-student interaction was emphasized. It was mentioned that this is not the only variable contributing to online success and retention. It is one of the variables we can more easily impact and one that has a large influence according to the current body of research addressing online success and retention. Many strategies were shared such as incorporation of audio and video as well as many other techniques to give student feedback as well as deliver content (see below). The issue of training was brought up. Increasing the awareness of the professional development opportunities in the iTech lab was mentioned as well as the repository that exists to provide examples for faculty. Support for online instructors was brought up. Everyone who teaches online goes through a Blackboard training where strategies for student success are discussed and illustrated. There seems to be a disconnect with some faculty in the implementation of the tools they learn about in this training.

Student & Faculty Support Services

More student & faculty support services are needed.   There are some being developed. Online counseling ... writing center…There is a class that has been offered the first time in the summer titled How to be a Successful Online Student. This course will be offered every other three weeks throughout the year. There was discussion if this course should be listed as an advisory for online courses. This would be difficult given the existing curriculum process and the logistics of the catalog and schedule. It could be advertised by individual faculty to their online students as well as posted on the welcome page of the Blackboard site.

There is a serious lack of support in terms of people and fiscal resources where our distance education program is concerned. There is mounting pressure to grow the program but without proper support the quality will suffer and certainly not improve.

Faculty Evaluations & Online Standards/Expectations

This evolved to a conversation around faculty evaluations. Faculty evaluations are needed to provide a tool to follow up on trainings as well as to provide a means for development. They have no teeth. There are two types of faculty: those that want to do a good job and want to improve and those that want to do as little as possible and think that online is a way to achieve that. The same is true for online students. How do we engage them or redirect them? Could we develop an evaluation tool that is not used for evaluation (tenure or non-tenure) but rather as a tool. Provide a survey to students on a regular basis to be used for development of the instructor. The piece of this that would be used in the formal evaluation process is the instructor WILLINGNESS to improve their teaching .

There are fundamental differences between online classes and on ground classes. Should the standards for online and on ground be the same? Do the current definitions and expected levels of success and retention really indicate student success in online courses? Are online courses different enough to have a separate success and retention rate expectation? Online faculty evaluation should be different as well. There are fundamental differences and there are core similarities between online and on ground.

Faculty should be committed to doing a different type of work. There is a greater workload with online courses. If there is more work for the instructor should there be a limit on the number of online courses that one can teach. This is true for on ground as well. Is there a maximum number of courses that can be taught successfully given time? Online instruction should be considered an earned privilege and not an entitlement. The Deans have right of assignment.

There was discussion of using existing online course design assessment tools to improve online instruction at the course and institutional level such as Quality Matters. Individual faculty can pursue this and there is an opportunity to subscribe to it as an institution.

This evolved in to a discussion of some of the work the DLIT committee has been doing. We discussed the draft best practices document that is currently being developed as well as many of the workshops being offered such as the Sierra Online Summit. Standardized course design was brought up. The group deemed the components of good course design critical however did not like the idea of rigidity in the design where the content was concerned. It was mentioned that there would be an advantage to having a similar look and feel of all online courses at Sierra College.

- **Issue/Topic: How can we address Part-Time Buy-In and help faculty to do this Outcome Assessment?**
- **Convener: Tom Fillebrown & Kaye Foster**

Fall 08
What can we do right now?
Flex Department Meeting

- Give faculty the Outcomes on paper and electronically

- Discuss updating syllabi to add the Outcomes and how to accomplish that

- Clarify dates/deadlines

- Have a template/form available for PT/FT to plug into w/their outcome assessment
  [not sure of our source on this; perhaps Skidmore College example…]]

- Have discipline-specific examples of how to complete the template/form and possible ways of assessing

- Have attendees do a mock identification/assessment of a course outcome to choose

How can we provide support to faculty?
Follow-Up

- Set up a FT member/go-to person/people for PT faculty
- Set a date for faculty to submit their draft and have go-to person review [2 weeks before deadline]

Spring 08

- Evaluate the assessments as a department
- Self-evaluation
- Updating syllabi/adding outcomes

- **Issue/Topic: How to use SLO assessment data most effectively**
- **Convener: Anne Fleischmann**

This group focused on the issue of how to meaningfully use assessment data. Robin mentioned that a web-based data storage/collection/reporting system would be available and there were questions about how that would/should be used. Would the data be searchable by instructor or class? Would privacy be protected? Would the numbers be useful or would the useful part of data collection be the departmental discussions and curricular changes and enhancements that would result? The group felt that the latter would be the case. However, the group was concerned about exactly what data WASC or even our internal PARs would ask departments to report and/or explain.

There was also some discussion about the suggestion in Aimee's summer email for individual instructors to select one course outcome and assess for it early in the semester. Participants in this group wondered whether WASC is asking us to show that individual instructors assess for SLOs or whether this suggestion was made so as to familiarize faculty with the concept of SLO assessment. The questions raised: shouldn't SLO assessment be something that's decided on by more than the individual faculty and shouldn't the results be used as a way to improve instruction or delivery of services over a whole program rather than by targeting individual instructors? It was agreed that assessments and their results should be used to inform programmatic improvements rather than to provide information about particular instructors, sections or courses.

Privacy of assessment data is a big concern. Participants felt that any extra-departmental use of data, such as in the PAR, should be in very general terms – i.e. describing the outcomes assessed and the method used, giving a general overview of the data collected (i.e. 30% of student papers/tests sampled revealed x or y competency), and discussing plans for use of data (i.e. do another study, provide resources to department to improve student learning, use it to request funding or resources).

A tangential discussion of the new "pickaprof" site ensued, with participants agreeing that data can be skewed and misread and misused in a lot of ways (if you haven't checked out www.pickaprof.com, go there to see this new site that provided instructors' grade distributions to students. Sierra just entered the site this summer).

- **Issue/Topic: Soft skills integration across the curriculum**
- **Convener: Brook Oliver**

Definition of soft skills: good communication skills , self-awareness, common sense, movement away from self-centeredness, awareness, accountability, personal responsibility, reliability (punctual, attendance), conform to reality

Current issues when teaching these skills: many students tend to take it personally (you don't like me) as opposed to trying to teach or help them; fine line between support and enabling; upset students going to dean; "you can't make me" attitude, I'm fine, I don't need to change, entitlement, lack of respect for authority or 'wisdom' of instructor; generational issues (when to adapt, when to expect conformation), online classes have a lack of modeling opportunities.

Action Items:
- Create handout defining soft skills and outlining importance of incorporating the teaching and/or support of them in class. Give suggestions on how to counter some 'typical' student responses and ideas on how to start the conversations through class activities as well as modeling the skills as faculty. (input from all)
  - On time to class
  - Assignment deadlines kept
  - Set clear expectations
  - Maintain boundaries
  - Take advantage of teachable moments
  - Generational differences
  - Support vs. enabling

    - Introduce through Flex activity in Spring '09; include deans and VP's in dissemination to create buy-in for when/if students arrive with complaints at their office (Brook—flex/Stephanie + Brian—Deans)
    - For interested faculty, create set of resources/emails that help introduce these topics and incorporate into curriculum.(Brook from current resources)

- Start conversation at Academic Senate level; build consensus for importance of incorporating into curriculum and outcomes (Brook)

- Design and produce video using employers, former students, instructors, transfer institution reps, athletes replying to common set of question on what shows soft skills and how important they are in life. (Sue/Brook/Stephanie)

- Eventual: Soft skills become common meta-outcome for all courses at Sierra College.

- **Issue/Topic: How to Effectively Combine Reading and Writing Assessment**
- **Convener: Jason Roberts**

Much of this topic derives from the English 1A/English 11 Hybrid course offered this fall by Jason Roberts and Beth Ervin. We plan to compile data from our course through spring 2009 and offer recommendations about the necessary role of reading (now referred to as Academic Literacy) and writing and how reading skills assessment affects writing assessment.

We understand that a pre-requisite requirement of Reading courses for English Composition courses is unrealistic; however, encouragement of concurrent enrollment may be possible.

How do we teach the teachers how to incorporate the skills into the composition courses? Teachers need to assign specific reading assignments in order to assess academic literacy. These assignments need to address outcomes that are already a part of English 1A outcomes. Instructors should re-read these outcomes and create reading assignments based on specific criteria that lead the student from reading comprehension to writing. "Academic Literacy," then, is a combination of reading, writing, and research.

- **Issue/Topic: What is Academic Literacy?**
- **Forum Convener: Lisa Rochford**

The group spent a great deal of time talking about what reading is exactly (the first item)

and then another chunk on what students should be able to do in terms of reading skills.

How to recognize what students aren't able to do was another topic of some length.

Topics of discussion:

What is reading, exactly?
    Decoding vs critical thinking
What reading looks like to content area folks?
What exactly do content area instructors want students to be able to do (summarize,
analyze, paraphrase)?
How do we assess these skills so that students are "college-ready"?
How do we create opportunities for students to learn/develop/enrich these skills in
tandem with content area learning?

- **Issue/Topic: How do we achieve consistency in course evaluations across sections while maintaining Academic Freedom, Instructor Autonomy and avoiding standardization?**
- **Convener: Johnnie Terry**

There are benefits to consistency of student evaluation and assessment tools across distinct sections of a similar course and yet there are potential problems associated with standardization of classroom evaluations.

Harry Houpis stated that the Astronomy Department uses one syllabus for all sections of a single course regardless of instructor. Hence, each section uses the same topic schedule, the same evaluative measures of student performance and the same teaching methodologies. The department works collaboratively to assess the evaluative tools and to create course materials.

Responses to this description included the following:

- This process may work well for the sciences or sequential courses but not for other courses, like humanities based courses.
- This method is syllabus driven rather than student driven. Each section of a course, it seems, is obligated to progress at a certain rate and assess students at a specific time regardless of student readiness. This seems to interfere with an instructor's ability to recognize and respond to the needs of students in each individual class.
- Chemistry incorporates some of these similarities in their common syllabi and text book selections.
- How does this work with part timers who are new to the department?
- If the course becomes a "canned" item, how do these canned courses respond to disparity in approaches to the theories and tools of a discipline?
- Astronomy seems to work well with this process without any of the negative effects described above.
- If education becomes standardized like a General Motors assembly line, it could lead to a loss of professorial passion in the classroom. Professors who are

- This will work better if local departments have control and we don't try to adopt a one size fits all procedure.

The definitions of 'Assessments' and "Evaluations' was clarified. Instructors evaluate the work of students. Departments assess the validity of the evaluation tools.

There are concerns about how assessments will be used to evaluate instructors. Responses to this item were:

- Students sign up for classes with different goals from those set out by the class. How can we evaluate instructors based upon their ability to achieve the student learning outcomes when the student may not had the goal of passing the class. Students often do now know why they are in a specific class much less why they are enrolled in college at all.
- Assessments can be used to assess other things besides instructors. For example, if students are starting a sequential course without having been prepared by the prior course in the sequence, it could be that one professor is not finishing the outcomes required in the prior course or it could be that courses taught at a specific time of day are not finishing the course or it could be that the curriculum contains too much information and should be pared down somewhat or it could be that the curriculum is demanding behaviors that are not fitting with the stage of human development of the students enrolling. The assessments will help determine the locus of the problem and improve evaluations.

- **Issue/Topic: What instruments (tools) are available to assess outcomes?**
- **Convener: Tennis Tollefson**

1. This is a hot topic at the secondary education level around the state. The current philosophy of the State Department of Education is that we should determine how to assess the outcomes, and then develop the curriculum around that material.

2. We need to separate assessment (how well are we doing what we set out to do) vs. evaluation (test).

3. We need to keep outcomes straightforward.

4. The Austin Community College form and thought it would work if "Program Assessment" were changed to "Course Assessment".

5. Discussed the Skidmore College form and thought it would work fairly well.

6. We can use existing tests to evaluate the students. If the students achieve grades/scores as expected, then complete the assessment. If students don't achieve as expected, then you can adjust methodology etc.

7. We want to develop a "turnkey" form to use with part time faculty.