

## **Spring 2013 Convocation Break-Out Sessions Institutional Learning Outcomes Analysis: Executive Summary**

Office of Institutional Effectiveness  
(February 2013)

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### **Background and Methodology**

During spring convocation activities in January 2013, stakeholders from across the college, including faculty, staff, and administrators, met to discuss college-wide learning outcome assessment methods and the most recent year's assessment data. Convocation participants divided into five break-out groups to analyze aggregate institutional learning outcome (ILO) assessment data. Four of the groups focused on one ILO each (Communication, Critical Thinking, Global Awareness, and Technological Awareness), and one group focused on two ILOs (Personal Actions/Civic Responsibility and Self-Awareness/Interpersonal Skills). Participants were able to self-select into any of the five groups.

Each group was provided with an overview of the college's outcomes identification and assessment process and a dashboard of general education course outcomes mapped to the ILOs (see Appendix A). In addition, participants received a matrix of potential ILO assessment methods, and participants were asked to identify and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach at the college (see Appendix B). Finally, participants were asked to complete a survey regarding their experience in the break-out sessions and make recommendations for future ILO assessments (see Appendix C).

During each session, facilitators recorded the discussion points and findings. In one session, a consensus was not reached verbally; however, the majority of participants completed and returned all worksheets to the facilitators, and responses documented in these worksheets were used to determine if the ILO was achieved. All facilitator notes, returned worksheets, and surveys were compiled to determine 1) if each ILO had been achieved, and 2) which methods might be appropriate (according to participants) for future ILO assessment. A summary of the findings is provided in the following section.

### **Summary of the Findings**

#### **► Achievement of ILOs Based on Mapped Course-Level Outcomes Data**

Each group was asked to determine if the college had achieved the given learning outcome based on the dashboard information provided. Three of the break-out groups (Communication, Critical Thinking, and Technological Awareness) came to a consensus that, given the limited data presented in the dashboard, the college achieved the ILO. Two break-out groups (Personal Actions/Civic Responsibility and Self-Awareness/Interpersonal Skills; Global Awareness) agreed that they did not have adequate information to determine if the ILO had been achieved.

Although consensus regarding the achievement of the ILO was reached in three of the groups, participants in each of these groups shared many of the same concerns as participants in the remaining two groups. All five groups discussed a number of issues and limitations with the general education course-level outcomes mapping method. The most commonly identified issues included the following:

- Limited number and breadth of courses included in the analysis
- Course outcomes to ILO mapping is not intuitive; a more appropriate analysis would include mapping program-level learning outcomes to ILOs
- Lack of consistency in course-level outcome criteria and need for more guidance, such as a rubric

End-of-session survey results revealed that participants were interested in expanding ILO assessment to include all areas of the college, including basic skills courses, campus and community activities, non-general education courses, and administrative and student services areas.

### ► Potential Methods for Future ILO Assessment

Break-out session participants engaged in a detailed discussion of each of the ILO assessment methods outlined in their worksheets. Specifically, participants identified the benefits and limitations of the following methods:

- Mapped learning outcomes approach (such as the one used in the first activity)
- Student surveys
- The Writing across the Curriculum approach
- Capstone courses or projects
- Course-embedded assessment methods

#### *Mapped Course-Level SLO Data*

There was considerable consensus among participants that the current course-to-ILO mapping method was a starting point for the assessment of ILOs but was not adequate by itself. Taken in the context of multiple ILO assessment methods, many participants believed it was an efficient option but needed to include broader representation of the college (such as non-general education courses and student and administrative services units).

#### *Survey of Students*

Participants generally had positive perceptions of student surveys, and many participants said a survey would provide a method for obtaining feedback directly from students at different momentum points (at the point of matriculation, each semester of enrollment, at the point of transfer or graduation). Among the limitations identified by participants were the subjectivity of survey responses and the resources required to develop, administer, and analyze results of the survey(s).

#### *Writing across the Curriculum*

Regarding the prospect of implementing the Writing across the Curriculum approach, participants were relatively divided. While some believed the approach was appropriate for certain disciplines or specific ILO assessments, such as Communication and Critical Thinking, many indicated that it was not a viable option for assessing all six ILOs. Some participants expressed a concern regarding the retention of academic freedom if such an approach was implemented, and particularly if a common rubric was utilized.

#### *Capstone Courses or Projects*

Overall, perceptions of capstone projects were positive, although many participants expressed concern about the appropriateness of capstone courses for non-CTE programs. The concept of e-portfolios appeared to garner significant support among participants, with many indicating that it would provide an authentic assessment of student learning at the culmination of an experience or a course.

#### *Course-Embedded Assessment*

On the whole, participants were unfamiliar with course-embedded assessment methods and did not provide much commentary regarding this approach.

#### *Other Assessment Methods and Recommendations*

Among the other assessment methods discussed by participants were longitudinal or cohort studies, engagement measures for students who utilize campus support services, and holistic ILO assessments that reflect the breadth of the college experience. Participants also proposed additional guidelines for ILO development, review, and assessment. For example, one group of participants indicated that the current ILOs should be reviewed at regular intervals to determine if they are still appropriate for the college. In addition, a group of participants also suggested implementing timelines for ILO assessment and improving communication with students regarding ILOs.

**Appendix A:**  
**Assessing Institutional Learning Outcomes - San Diego Mesa College**  
**Convocation: January 25, 2013**

**Assumptions:**

- In 2002, ACCJC Standards were revised to place new emphasis on creation and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in a continuous cycle
- Mesa College began this work with the creation of:
  - *Institutional Learning Outcomes*, which would cascade down to guide the development of *Program and Service Area Outcomes*
  - Which in turn cascaded down to guide the creation of *Course-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)* and *Service Area or Administrative Unit Outcomes (SAOs or AUOs)*

***Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)***  
***(ILOs were written and vetted with the College 2003-2005)***



***Program-level Student Learning Outcomes and Service Area Outcomes (PSLOs and SAOs)***  
***(PSLOs and SAOs were written beginning in 2006 and published in the College Catalog 2008-2009)***



***Course-level Student Learning Outcomes and Service Area Administrative Unit Outcomes (SLOs and AUOs)***  
***(SLOs and AUOs were written beginning in 2006 and have been on-going)***

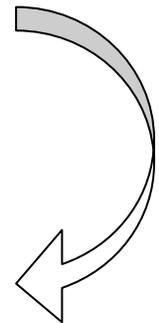
- Mesa College began the assessment process working from the ***opposite direction***:
  - Assessment of *Course-level SLOs* and *Service Area AUOs* was conducted by the faculty and/or staff, and results were mapped up to the Program or Service Unit for program or service area assessment
  - For this assessment cycle, results of *Course-level SLOs* for GE courses that are mapped to the ILOs will be used for ILO assessment purposes

***Course-level Student Learning Outcomes and Service Area Administrative Unit Outcomes (SLOs and AUOs)***  
***(Assessment has begun and the loop has been closed: first cycle beginning 2006 and culminating 2012)***

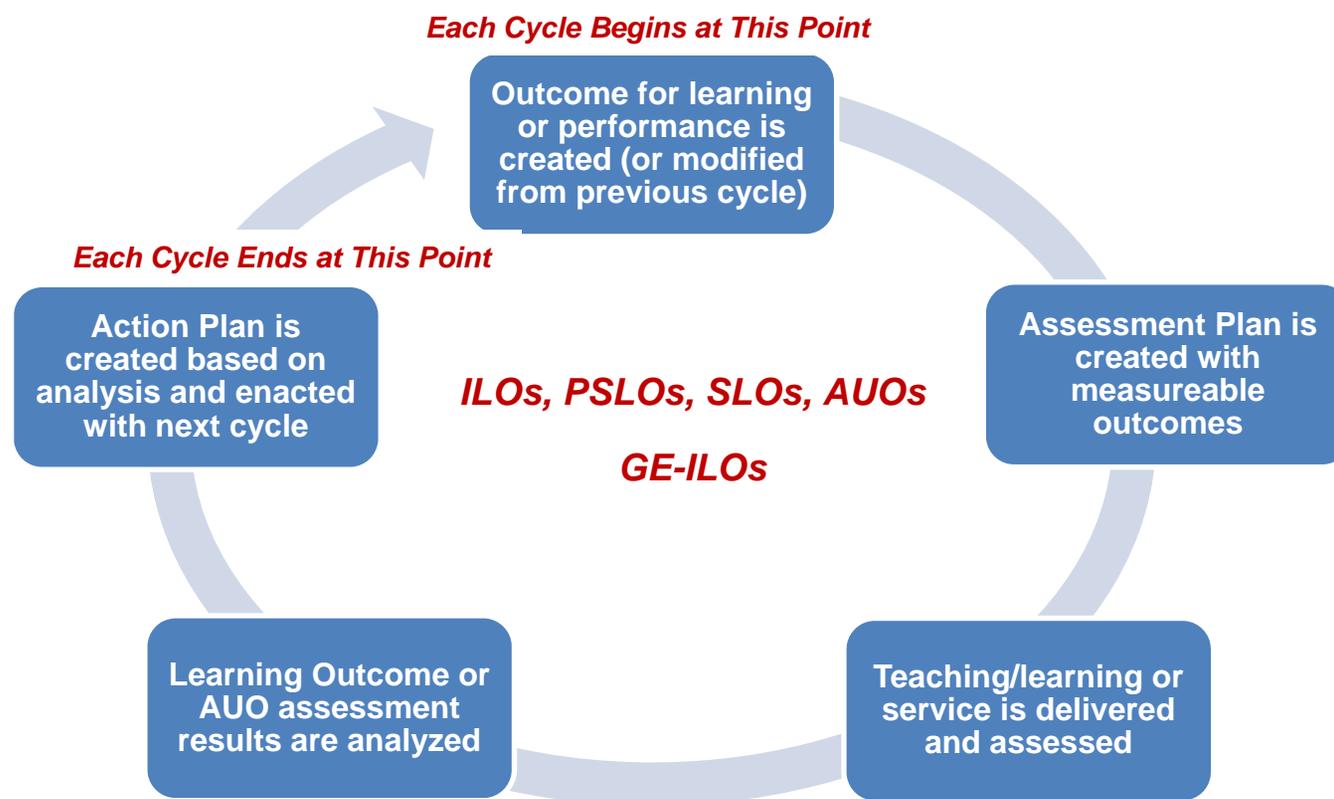


***Program-level Student Learning Outcomes and Service Area Outcomes (PSLOs and SAOs)***  
***(Assessment has begun and the loop has been closed: first cycle of program outcomes assessed in 2012)***

***Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)***  
***(Not yet completed: will be assessed today)***



## Continuous Cycle of Assessment, Analysis, and Action



### Outcomes for today's activities:

- Assess ILOs using mapped course outcomes and determine if achievement has been met during this first assessment cycle
- Propose ILO assessment plan for next cycle

### Process for today's activities:

- Pick one of the six ILOs and go to the appropriate breakout session to assess the outcomes

### Materials for today's activities:

- Dashboard with summary assessment results by ILO of GE courses that are mapped to them (Attachment 1)
- Packet of six sample assessments for the ILO you are evaluating (Attachment 2)
- Grid with targeted questions to facilitate assessment (Attachment 3)

**Attachment 1: San Diego Mesa College Institutional Learning Outcomes Dashboard**

Below is a summary of course-level assessment conducted in the 2011-2012 academic year. The summary includes data for general education courses that (1) were fully and explicitly mapped to a specific institutional learning outcome (ILO), and (2) included all core components of the assessment and analysis process.

A total of 125 courses met the criteria and were organized according to Institutional Learning Outcome. The table below provides a breakdown of ILOs, the number of courses assessed and fully mapped to the ILO, the number of courses that met, exceeded or did not meet course-level targets, and the percentage of courses that met or exceeded targets. One additional column is included for group discussion. Your group will be focusing on the **one specific ILO for the first portion of the group discussion**.

Please examine the table below, focusing on the highlighted SLO results, and discuss the question below as a group. Please take notes on your group discussion and include them in the space provided below the question. You may also refer to **Attachment 2** to respond to the question below.

<i>Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO)</i>	<i>Total Courses Assessed</i>	<i>Number of Courses that Met Target</i>	<i>Number of Courses that Exceeded Target</i>	<i>Number of Courses that Did Not Meet Target</i>	<i>% of Courses that Met or Exceeded Target</i>	<i>Did Institution Achieve Learning Outcome?</i>
Communication	32	19	13	0	100%	
Critical Thinking	68	12	53	3	96%	
Global Awareness	4	1	3	0	100%	
Personal Responsibility	4	3	1	0	100%	
Self Awareness and Interpersonal Skills	4	3	1	0	100%	
Technological Awareness	13	6	6	1	92%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	125	44	77	4	97%	

**Group Discussion Question:** *Based on the data provided above, have we as a college achieved the learning outcome? Why or why not?*

**Group Discussion Questions:**

The following are guiding questions to keep in mind while your group is discussing the ILO assessment results.

1. Based on the data provided, have we as a college achieved the learning outcome? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the effectiveness of the SLO information provided in the spreadsheet in informing the overall assessment.
3. Discuss the usefulness of a target outcome and of other types of assessments and rubrics.

## Appendix B

### **Attachment 3: Questions to guide discussion of what the Assessment Plan should be for the next ILO Assessment Cycle**

The current ILO Assessment Plan is based upon the mapping of course-level SLOs to specific Institutional Learning Outcomes. Review the types of information that are included in the course level SLO information and discuss whether they provide adequate information to assess what higher level skills and knowledge our students should take with them when they complete their work at Mesa.

In this activity, your goal is to evaluate the information contained in the spreadsheet and consider the added value of “multiple measures” to assess Institutional Learning Outcomes. Use the grid below to record your thoughts and guide your discussion.

In looking at the data summary contained in the spreadsheet, assess the effectiveness and thoroughness with which it provides information on how our students are learning. Is the depth of information sufficient to tell us what we want to know about student learning?

<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Overall Thoughts</b>
<p><b>Mapped course-level SLO data:</b> This is an indirect measure of the ILO, but shows how it is addressed at the course level.</p>			
<p><b>Survey of students:</b> To self-assess their learning: these can include targeted questions (addressing each ILO) about how the student has grown during his or her tenure at the college.</p>			
<p><b>Writing across the Curriculum:</b> Classes are randomly selected across the campus to participate in a short discipline-specific writing prompt that measures ILO level learning. Faculty make use of a common rubric to assist with consistent evaluation.</p>			

<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Overall Thoughts</b>
<p><b>Use of capstone courses</b> or projects within culminating program courses that require students to demonstrate breadth and depth of learning. Outcomes at this level would be reported by the program faculty according to a common rubric to assist with consistent evaluation.</p>			
<p><b>Embedding assessment methods into existing courses</b> and using results to inform campus wide inquiry (i.e., providing problem solving assignments to students across multiple disciplines and then evaluating how students demonstrate their skill level; use of a common rubric assists with consistent evaluation).</p>			
<p><b>Brainstorm an assessment of your own...</b></p>			

**Summarize what would be an effective set of multiple measures to assess your ILO, and why.**

**Appendix C**  
**General Questions on ILO Assessment**

1. We are currently assessing our ILOs as part of our GE curriculum. Do you think this is adequate? YES NO
2. Are there other areas that should be included in the assessment? YES NO
3. If YES, list some areas that you think should be included in ILO assessment:

4. Would you be interested in participating in focused “Assessment Think Tanks” with the new Office of Institutional Effectiveness?  
YES NO

If YES, please provide your name and email below:

Name:

Email: