

# Assessment Pulse Roundtable

## Quick Summary for Outcomes Committee

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*Campus employees were invited to attend the Assessment Pulse Roundtable on April 29, 2011. The purpose of the roundtable was to gather their thoughts on specific areas of student learning outcomes assessment at the college.*

*Seven questions were asked. Seven groups were organized each having 12 minutes to review one question and record their thoughts. Participants were also given the questions on a form such that they could write their responses on the form and also provide them to the researcher, if desired. In the end, the attendance for the two-hour event comprised 24 faculty members, 1 professional expert, 2 classified members, and 11 managers for a total of 38 employees. The following are the suggested summary and recommendation for each question. The responses to each question are not mutually exclusive so reading the document in one sitting is advised.*

### **Question #1: What does your area enjoy or find beneficial about our current student SLO assessment process?**

- A lot of people focus on and find the process of creating and assessing SLOs to be cumbersome, not enjoyable, not meaningful, invalid when examined from a research perspective, and discussions are not happening well at the department/division level. They also are not sure how SLOs are different or similar to measurable objectives. A few feel threatened by the process and wonder when it will change to the next flavor of the year.
- The positives of doing SLO assessment include reexamining curriculum, realigning course work to assure progression of skills, and how the GEO work allows for cross-team discussions that focus on pedagogy and improving student success. They also discussed how at times the SLO process allows for healthy meta discussions/dialogue with the faculty and the department chairs that give useful data with a focus on student learning.
- Recommendations for action include the following: use valid and reliable measures, use common measures and SLOs across many courses (similar to Employer Demands of our graduates such as critical thinking), settle if SLOs are similar to measurable objectives, include meaningful SLO discussions in department meetings regarding curriculum alignment and student learning, and have researchers work on SLOs more.

**Question #2: How embedded is the SLO assessment process in the ongoing workings of your area?**

- Overall, it is clear that SLOs are typically not embedded in the workings of their areas/departments, especially when other priorities, such as the budget, get in the way. People who have worked with ePIE find it cumbersome. It is difficult to get faculty together for these conversations.
- The SLO assessment process allows for some dialogue related to curriculum and there is a direct relationship to instruction.
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - Have programs, such as Honors and the Writing Center, create an overriding SLO.
  - Have each department agree to and outline how and why the SLO assessment process should work in their area. Allow for people to understand how they should be involved and their level of responsibilities. Focus on what people want to do and not what they have to do.
  - Consider going to one (1) SLO per course
  - Consider how to level researchers' time to help with the SLO process including linking measurable objectives to SLOs and to grades (if agreed upon with AS)
  - Provide opportunities for working with adjuncts and full-time faculty in structured times.
  - Provide higher-level training on use of results.
  - Provide designated times (e.g., College hour) for these discussions
  - Provide collaborative learning opportunities for faculty to meet to hear about each other's SLO assessment work.

**Question #3: How often, and for how long, does your area spend time discussion SLOs? This would include your development, discussion of information gleaned from the assessment process, and what has been learned as a result of the process.**

- Most areas are not spending much time on SLO work. The discussion tends to be more at the process side of things. Areas that are small and/or specialized don't feel they have anyone else to talk with regarding SLOs.
- Sometimes faculty learn something about the students – not always a positive thing about their learning. There does not appear to be a structure for these discussions to always be during any particular part of the department's operations – especially meaningful pedagogical.
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - Suggest ways departments can discuss SLO assessment in a meaningful way.
  - Give feedback to faculty on whether they can use measurable objectives for their SLOs and how that relates to grades, etc.
  - Would like more direct and constructive feedback on ePIE data – both from the deans and the VPs
  - Provide more directive examples of how to work with the findings once they have it (e.g., the Use of Results or Action Plan).
  - Link SLOs to transfer and employability

**Question #4: What does your area find lacking, in need of improvement, or a barrier to full inclusion of SLO assessment into your area?**

- The biggest barriers include implementation, figuring out how to use the data collected, finding time to do the work, using ePIE efficiently, getting adjuncts involved, lack of cross-department communication, finding meaning in the work, making SLOs public, confusion between SLOs and measurable objectives, need a connection to resource requests
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - Increase cross-campus dialogue on trial and error; ideas; best practices
  - Consider how to make further improvements in ePIE and how to provide cheat sheets to those who use the system. Consider working with ePIE vendor to help with improvements.
  - Make SLO assessment more meaningful by focusing on what people care about when they teach.
  - Determine if there are valid and reliable instruments available for use.
  - Further connect ePIE to resource requests.

**Question #5: What do you think of the college providing resources for the ongoing training of participants in SLO assessment implementation and also providing resources for departments to offer annual meetings with adjunct and full-time faculty to reflect upon and discuss assessment activities? What other suggestions would you offer?**

- The groups felt adjuncts were an important part of the campus and they also saw it problematic involving them in the process because of the monetary aspect and their other competing work assignments.
- The groups believed that providing resources for SLO assessment work would be valuable. Typical areas included training and most anything to do with helping adjuncts take a meaningful role in the SLO assessment piece. Some indicated a need to provide more resources for research support of the process. Annual or more frequent meetings (some even called it ongoing) to allow department-level and/or cross disciplinary discussions were also put forward.
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - The college should consider other ways to provide ways for adjunct faculty members to be more included in departmental activities, including SLO assessment.
  - The college should consider how to provide more avenues for faculty to see the meaningfulness of the SLO process through its department/division specific training or feedback sessions in one-day marathon sessions.
  - The college should consider finding ways to increase the resources available from the research department for SLO assessment.

**Question #6: What do you think of the SLO assessment activities using current College mechanisms, like using ePIE for recording purposes, using curricular “measurable objectives” as SLOs, and allowing for the creation of broad-based SLOs that would cross disciplines for use in multiple courses? What other suggestions would you offer?**

- Some agreed with the use of broad-based SLOs while others did not believe that it would be a valid SLO. ePIE issues, as discussed in the other questions, surfaced again about ePIE being clunky, hard to learn each year, and more trouble than it was worth because some did not believe that those beyond their dean read anything that was in ePIE and thus they felt there was little value in taking the time to put the information into the system. Some asked why they were being asked to document resources needed when there was no money to support the resource requests. They also felt that including a resource request connected with an SLO is usually a stretch. Most feel that measurable objectives could be easily used as SLOs and that faculty would find it most useful.
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - Let faculty know that the purpose of SLO assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning and not to achieve a perfect performance from students.
  - Consider using broad-based SLOs as one option.
  - Rework ePIE to make it more functional and add cheat sheets and make it more transparent.
  - Provide feedback from VPs on department-level PIEs

**Question #7: What do you think of faculty being strongly encouraged to include measurable objectives on all course syllabi, and also being encouraged to include course-level student learning outcomes on syllabi if they differ from the measurable objectives? What other suggestions would you offer?**

- The groups were inconsistent in their desire to and value in placing SLOs and/or MOs on the course syllabus. They felt that students might not understand the nature of each well enough to fully appreciate how they are being graded. Some wanted student friendly language to be used on the syllabus. Faculty were concerned that they might be evaluated based on the SLO/MO.
- Recommendations for action include the following:
  - See if it is reasonable to make a link between MO/SLO and course grades.
  - Need to revisit AS Resolution on SLOs and syllabus
  - There needs to be a campus culture regarding the value of and use of SLOs/MOs.