

# The Spotlight



From the Desk of Joan Sholars, SLO Coordinator

Odette Richardson, Editor

## English, Literature and Journalism

By Kristina M. Allende

The English, Literature, and Journalism Department has written at least two SLOs for 100% of its active courses. A lot of work has gone into the process, and it certainly feels good to be done with this step.

The Department's SLO journey began a few years ago when two SLOs were developed for ENGL 67, and those two SLOs went through a cycle of assessment. The criteria for success that the Department set was met, and the results were discussed. The faculty decided that the SLOs and the results of their assessment did not have any real value for the Department. So, the journey stalled. It wasn't until last year that the Department picked up where it had left off.

The Department's Basic Course Review Committee gathered and wrote SLOs for each of the composition courses in the Department. Then, another meeting was set for all interested departmental faculty to discuss the SLOs and to make suggestions for improvement. After this meeting, some of the composition courses had more than ten SLOs! As the faculty began to think about assessment, they knew that this was well beyond the scope of anything that could be handled well. So, this year, the list was narrowed, the rubrics for assessment were written, and the composition SLOs were done.

Now, the focus had to be on the literature, the journalism, and the other specialty courses offered in the Department. The literature SLOs were quite simple to develop. Since the skills students learn in each course are very similar, with the content being the difference, the Department decided to make things easy. The same SLOs were given to each literature course, with the content portion being altered to fit each course. Making a seemingly difficult task easy is certainly the way to go! The journalism professors worked to complete their SLOs, and SLOs for the specialty English courses were written, too. All of these, along with the composition SLOs, were taken to the March department meeting, and the Department faculty voted unanimously to approve them.

With such a large number of course offerings each semester, the next hurdle was to determine when to assess. Gary Enke, the Department Chairperson, suggested a cycle that would allow all course SLOs to be assessed on a three year cycle:

Cycle	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Assessment Cycle A	ENGL 1A/1AH 1C/1CH			ENGL 1A/1AH 1C/1CH			ENGL 1A/1AH 1C/1CH	
Assessment Cycle B		ENGL 67 & 68			ENGL 67 & 68			ENGL 67 & 68
Assessment Cycle C			LIT and Specialty Courses			LIT and Specialty Courses		

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### DEFINITIONS

- **SLOs** (student learning outcomes) are statements about what a student will think, know, feel or be able to do as a result of an educational experience.
- **AUOs** (administrative unit objectives) are statements about what a client will experience, receive, or understand as a result of a given service.
- **GEOs** (general education outcomes) are statements that define the knowledge, skills, and perspectives acquired by students who satisfy our general education requirements.

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The English, Literature, and Journalism Department is excited to begin the assessment of its SLOs this semester. While this has certainly been a long journey, the continuing of it is what will really be a benefit. The

## Coordinator's Corner

The next step in the SLO assessment cycle is to assess the course-level SLOs that have been developed. How do we do that? How often do we need to assess? Do we need to assess every section of a course?

**How are we going to assess our SLOs?** Many faculty members have chosen to use a course-embedded assessment, which is assessing an SLO through a pre-existing activity such as a class assignment, project, exam, or portfolio. Let's say your department has decided to use a question or a set of questions on the final exam to assess the SLOs for the course. Do we all have to use the same question(s)? Not necessarily. Though using the same questions could result in sounder data, it is acceptable to use similar questions that address and measure the skills in the SLOs.

**How often do we need to assess?** This question is best answered by the department faculty. Did your assessment results confirm your expectations and/or stir up more dialogue? As a result, when should the SLO be reassessed? You do not need to assess every course every semester; however, you do want to assess each SLO on a regular schedule.

## Did You Know....

### **GLOSSARY TERM: Rubric**

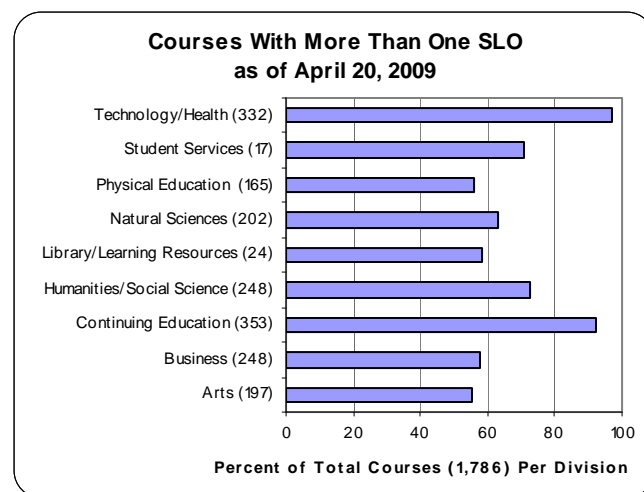
Designed for scoring student work against a pre-defined set of criteria. A rubric is typically in a tabular format with two or more criteria and two or more levels of performance to be measured. Analytical rubrics specify individual criteria and evaluate these standards as independent of one another. Holistic rubrics measure performance across multiple factors as a complete product (*see* #11, Rubrics, under Methods of Assessment in the SLO/AUO Guidebook, page 41 at <http://www.mtsac.edu/administration/senates/academic/documents/SLOAUGUIDEBOOK090808FINAL.pdf>).

### **FAQ: Do all sections of a course need to use the same assignment/activity to measure a course-level SLO?**

No. Though it would allow for a more accurate comparison, it is not necessary for all sections assessing an SLO to use the same assignment or activity. Consider asking the various faculty members teaching the same course to select an assignment that appropriately addresses the skill in the SLO. Develop a rubric that could be used across multiple assignments, including those that the faculty members have selected. Then, use the rubric to evaluate the students' performance, regardless of the assignment, as a combined way to see if the students in the various sections have collectively met the expectation in the SLO. Contact the Research Office if you need help with rubric design and development.

purpose of SLOs is to allow the faculty of a department to determine whether its courses are resulting in student learning. As the assessment produces results, dialogue will continue, and students will learn. And isn't that what we are all here for anyway?

**Do we need to assess every section of a course?** You do not need to assess every section of a course. You can sample a set of sections. For more information on sampling, visit <http://www.mtsac.edu/instruction/outcomes/newsletter/> and download, "Sampling Techniques for Assessing Course-Level SLOs." This paper is a guide in determining which and how many sections of a course you may want to assess. Additionally, it provides some direction on how to work with full-time and part-time faculty members.



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