

**Final Report
to the Diablo Valley College
Faculty Senate Council**

Submitted by the
Teaching Strategies/Learning Outcomes Task Force
April 29, 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2002, the ACCJC (Accrediting Commission for California Junior Colleges) instituted new standards which stated that

- the purpose of community colleges is to foster learning in its students and that
- effective colleges would
 - ensure resources and processes support student learning
 - continuously assess that learning
 - pursue institutional excellence and improvement
 - maintain an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about quality and excellence

In an effort to promote institution-wide dialogue that stresses student learning outcomes and emphasizes improvement through planning, doing, and reviewing the cycle, the Faculty Senate created a task force whose charge was to develop a philosophy statement and guidelines for DVC's Teaching Strategies/Learning Outcomes efforts, and to make the following recommendations:

- *What* should be assessed in TS/LO
- *Who* should assess TS/LO
- *How* assessment of student learning outcomes will take place

In addition, the task force was asked to evaluate how institutional and student efforts relate to student learning outcomes.

Task Force Objectives. Between February 12 and April 15, 2003, the task force met several times as a group or sub-groups to discuss and form its recommendations. The understanding among the task force members was to develop a philosophical statement and guidelines, calendar, and model that reflected a positive approach to assessing student learning outcomes, to emphasize the advantages of participating in the TS/LO assessment cycle, and to assure faculty that the process and its findings would not have any bearing upon individual faculty or program evaluations. In addition, assessment at Diablo Valley College is an on-going faculty-driven process for understanding and improving student learning. As such, efforts will be directed toward the improvement of institutional effectiveness.

Task Force Members. The recommendations and supporting materials included in this report have been developed through the efforts of the following task force members:

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Judy Foster, Chair	George Turner

RECOMMENDATIONS

The TS/LO task force makes the following recommendations to the DVC Faculty Senate Council:

1. The DVC Faculty Senate should create a standing committee to coordinate and oversee the assessment of student learning outcomes at DVC and to ensure faculty involvement in the process.
2. The ongoing process of assessing TS/LO should begin with a focus on general education, developmental education, and transfer
3. After three years, at least 70% of the programs/departments/divisions should have completed an assessment cycle
4. The assessment model should be implemented over time as follows:
 - a. Cycle 1—learning cycle
 - b. Cycles 2 and 3—expansion of assessment
 - c. Cycles 4 and 5—full implementation

Specific proposals included in this report are the following:

- Proposed philosophy statement
- Proposed guiding principles
- Proposed student learning outcomes model for Diablo Valley College
- Proposed calendar of assessment cycle
- Proposed letter to the faculty

Proposed Philosophy Statement

Assessment at Diablo Valley College is an on-going faculty-driven process for understanding and improving student learning. Efforts are directed toward the improvement of institutional effectiveness.

[Assessment] involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help us to focus our collective attention, examine our assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education. (Angelo, T., 1995, p. 7)

Assessment is important because it

- helps to *demonstrate* and *improve* student learning and student success.
- includes systematic collection of data and information from courses, programs, and the institution.
- is an integral part of teaching and learning and is used to help both.
- supports Diablo Valley College's mission to maintain a high-quality teaching/learning environment.
- focuses on outcomes, but also includes process, especially in seeking ongoing improvement.
- is needed for accreditation, accountability, and institutional effectiveness.

The focus of the assessment effort is enhanced student learning and a process by which program accomplishments may be identified and validated. The faculty will drive this effort and use gathered data for academic program improvement.

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges encourage local senates to work in cooperation with local bargaining units to create security barriers between collected data and individual instructors, students, and courses;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges encourage local senates to employ methodologies that aggregate Student Learning Outcomes data, such as summaries, reports, and fact sheets, so that they may, in effect, create a blind between individual courses and the institution; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges stress adherence to the 1974 Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as statements on academic freedom and privacy adopted by the Academic Senate and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

Proposed Guiding Principles

1. Assessment of student learning outcome processes at Diablo Valley College is an academic issue and, as such, will be a faculty-driven process.
2. Assessment efforts will be respectful of academic freedom, faculty responsibility for the curriculum, and shared governance.
3. Assessment will be a decentralized process that will build upon departmental assessment efforts already in place, efforts that are directed by the faculty.
4. Assessment will include systematic collection of reliable data that will be used to improve student performance.
5. Assessment results will be used to guide practices affecting student learning outcomes and student success. It is a means to improve student learning; it is not an end in itself.
6. Assessment results will be used for identifying strengths and shortcomings in academic programs based on analysis and reflection by the faculty.
7. Assessment will be a process of ongoing dialogue and analysis of data that will result in improved student success.
8. Assessment should be ongoing and institutionalized and become part of the accepted culture of the college.
9. Assessment will not be used for any personnel or student evaluation.

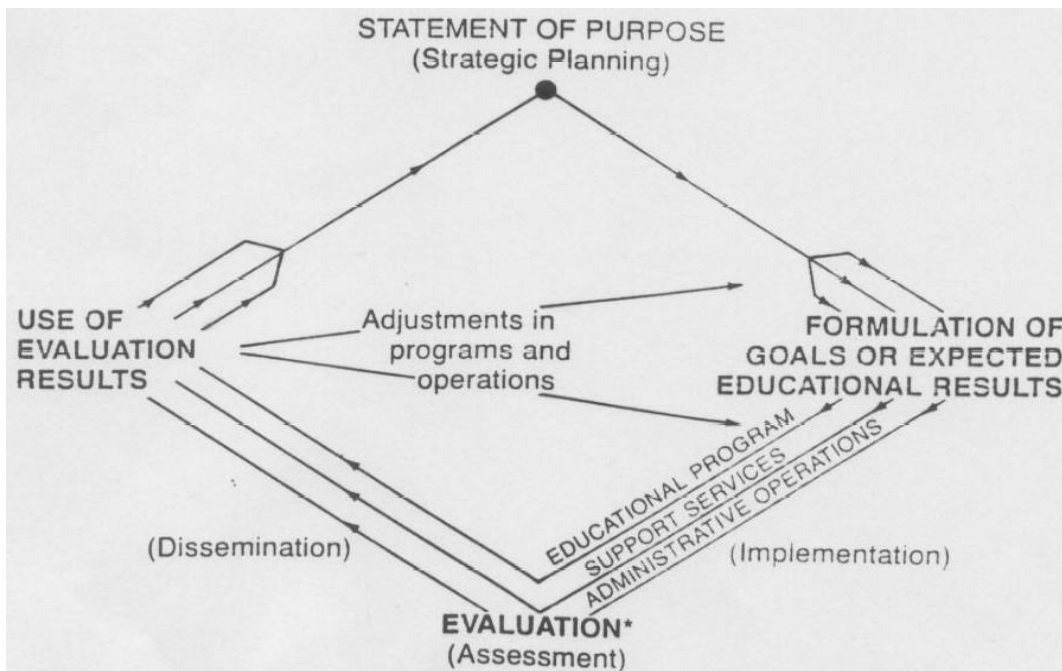
Proposed Student Learning Outcomes Model for Diablo Valley College

The success of an effective assessment of student learning outcomes must be anchored in an ongoing planning and evaluation process that takes into consideration the use of assessment results to improve programs, services, and operations. The process of “closing the loop” or use of results is crucial to the success of the assessment program. The proposed model consists of four basic components, namely:

- Development of a clearly defined statement of institutional purpose
- Formulation of goals or expected learning outcomes
- Development of procedures for assessing the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved
- Use of assessment results to improve educational programs, services, and operations

Each one of these components will be discussed in the following pages. A pictorial presentation of the model appears below.

Student Learning Outcome Model



1. Statement of Purpose:

The statement of institutional purpose is frequently identified as the mission statement and it should include the following:

- A brief history of the institution (including founding date, founders, location or locations, and significant developmental changes over the years).
- Pertinent descriptive information (e.g., public/private, two-year, rural/suburban/urban, coeducational, affiliation, etc.)
- Statements expressing essential beliefs, values, or intent of the institution.
- Description of the types of students that the institution hopes to attract, often accompanied by statements about the types of occupations or endeavors for which graduates will be prepared to undertake.
- Delineation of the geographic region for which the institution intends to provide services.
- Outline of the major functions of the institution (e.g., general education, developmental education, vocational and technical education, professional education, student development, community or public service, research, continuing education, etc.)
- General description of the skills, knowledge, experiences, and attitudes ideally to be acquired or developed by the institutions students.

Because a clear statement of purpose describes in general terms the desired results of the educational programs, it also defines the fundamental criteria for evaluating institutional effectiveness. The statement, therefore, may serve several important functions:

- To provide guidance for administrative decisions regarding the overall direction of the institution.
- To provide direction to each of the divisions and departments of the institution, creating an “umbrella” under which those units may plan, operate, and evaluate their programs.
- To establish a general “blueprint” for the development of processes for assessing and improving institutional effectiveness.
- To provide a framework for the formulation of more specific goals, including expected student learning outcomes.

Individual divisions, departments, and programs may articulate their own statements of purpose that express the institutional purpose at their own respective levels.

2. Formulation of Goals or Expected Student Learning Outcomes

While goal setting may occur at various levels of the institution, the congruence of those goals is important, and the connecting theme is their relationship to institutional purpose. Again, that relationship is critical because it is through the evaluation of goal achievement that the institution's effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose will be judged. As a starting point, goal statements at DVC may be formulated at two levels:

Institution-wide Aspirations. These broad aspirations may fall into four categories:

- The outcomes of general education
- The outcomes of the transfer program
- The outcomes of developmental education
- The personal development of students

Specialized Goals for Academic Departments. The great bulk of departmental and institutional effort will be consumed in the implementation of plans through the development of programs and curricula, offering of classes, provision of support services, conduct of administrative operations, and other important work of the educational enterprise. Assessment of student learning outcomes at the departmental or program level will focus on student competencies related to degrees, certificates, or other curricular groupings. The college may use the inventory of degrees and certificates approved by the State of California as a starting point. The following certificates are currently in place:

Administration of Justice	Early Childhood Education—Site Supervisor
Alcohol and Drug Studies	Early Childhood Education—Teacher
Architecture Technology	Electronics Technology
Broadcast Communication	Engineering Technology—Civil Engineering
Business—Accounting	Engineering Technology—General Drafting
Business—Office Professional	Engineering Technology—Material Testing
Business—Real Estate	Engineering Technology—Mechanical Drafting
Business—Real Estate Broker's License	Engineering Technology—Surveying
Business—Real Estate Sales Person's License	Horticulture
Business—Retailing	Horticulture—Landscape Design
Business—Small Business Management	Horticulture—Landscape Maintenance
Computer and Information Science	Hotel/Restaurant Management—Baking/Pastry
Computer Science—Computer Hardware	Hotel/Restaurant Management—Culinary Arts
Computer Science—Microcomputer Software Support	Hotel/Restaurant Management—Hotel Administration
Computer Technician	Hotel/Restaurant Management—Restaurant Management
Construction and Building Inspection	Library and Information Technology
Construction Management	Machine Technology
Construction—Supervision	Management Studies
Dental Assisting	Multimedia—Advanced
Dental Hygiene	Multimedia—Basic
Dental Laboratory Technology	Music Industry Studies
Early Childhood Education—Associate Teacher	Respiratory Therapy
Early Childhood Education—Family Day Care Provider	Women's Studies
Early Childhood Education—Master Teacher	

3. Assessment Methods/Procedures

The institution's task is to identify the specific means of evaluating each of the significant goals set forth by various components of the institution. In describing both expected student learning outcomes and assessment procedures, the following conditions should be met:

- Use clear and explicit language with action verbs
- Specify appropriate time frames (e.g., for periodic assessment for achievement of particular goals over several years, etc.)
- Address both minimum standards and targets for excellence
- Indicate at what level (e.g., program, department, division, institution, etc.) the assessment will be conducted and used
- Designate responsibility for implementing assessment and for assuring appropriate use of assessment results.

A vast variety of assessment methods is available. The following list provides examples of student learning outcomes frequently employed in the assessment process:

- Student achievement in general education
- Student achievement in the major field
- Student perceptions of their development toward educational objectives
- Opinions of program quality given by student, alumni, employers, and drop-outs
- Job replacement rates
- Rates of placement and indicators of performance in graduate/professional education
- Performance after transfer from 2-year to 4-year institutions
- External recognition of achievements of students and graduates.

Despite the variety of methods and instruments currently available, the expectation is that DVC will have processes that are appropriate to its purpose, resources, and environment. No ideal set of universally appropriate methods for assessment presently exists. Though it can be anticipated that experience over time will engender development of many new evaluation techniques, it will remain necessary and entirely proper for DVC to choose among the variety of assessment methods available and, on occasion, to devise unique procedures. The important objective is to identify that array of assessment procedures which most clearly and accurately reflects the level of achievement of institutional goals and student learning outcomes.

4. Use of Results

An important component of this model is the clear communication of pertinent assessment results to the institution's academic constituents. Data or information provided to or by each department should focus primarily upon that unit's operations and/or the accomplishments of its students. The information provided should meet certain quality standards and should be available in a central location. Furthermore, there should be a commitment on the part of the institution to use the results with a keen awareness of the extensive interdependency that may exist among the college components.

Quality of Information. The information should be

- Easily understood by the persons expected to use it.
- Clearly related to pertinent statements of goals or expected student learning outcomes
- Compared (when feasible) to appropriate reference groups, either internal or external.
- Analyzed in reference to comparable assessments repeated at period intervals.

Central Location. Also desirable is the designation of a central location where copies of assessment reports are filed. The information base thereby developed will be useful at the institutional level in planning, in the process for reaffirmation or accreditation, in the refinement of planning and evaluation procedures, and in a variety of other operations.

Interdependency. Following review and discussion of assessment findings, DVC and/or its appropriate units should determine the uses of significant findings in improving programs and operations. In describing uses of assessment findings, the college should recognize the extensive interdependency that exists among institutional components. An evaluation of admissions procedures, for example, may produce findings pertinent not only to the admissions office but also to the public relations unit, the counseling office, the president, and department faculty.

Commitment. In the absence of commitment to use assessment results, all previous steps in the planning and evaluation process would become little more than futile exercises which an institution can ill afford, and the institution's planning and evaluation process could not be considered adequate. The application of this model should enable the college to identify any substantial discrepancies between statements of purpose and goals and the results of assessment and to indicate steps planned or taken to address those discrepancies.

(See Appendix for assessment models for general education and vocational programs)

Proposed Calendar of Assessment Cycle

Basic Cycle

1. State general purpose
2. State desired outcomes
3. Decide how to measure
4. Apply/collect
5. Use results to make changes

Suggested Timeline

Note: Departments/programs/divisions/committees should adapt this to suit individual needs.

Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
results	purpose outcomes	How to							
Apply and collect (ongoing)						Apply and collect			

August/September

- Summarize results from previous year.
- List of results from previous year posted.
- Ongoing statement of purpose and outcomes posted.
 - Faculty suggests changes to statement in writing.
Suggestion: Have a paper posted next to the statement for two weeks for people to write on, to facilitate a relaxed exchange of ideas.
 - Reaffirm or modify statement at (department./program/division/committee) meeting

October/November

- List of past year’s measuring methods posted (could be same as “results”)
 - Faculty indicates which measuring methods they want to continue.
 - Faculty adds new suggestions for how to measure.
- Suggestion: Have a paper posted next to the statement for one month for people to write on, to facilitate a relaxed exchange of ideas.
 - Finalize at (dept./prog./div./comm.) meeting
 - Determine who will be responsible for collecting/summarizing.

December

- Collect results for fall for ongoing methods already in place, or new methods for which the data is already or readily available.

January-May

- Apply measures and collect data.

Ongoing

- At any time in the cycle, department/program/division/committee uses results to suggest changes.

Proposed Letter to Faculty

Dear _____:

The Faculty Senate Council is initiating a process of developing assessment tools appropriate to determine student learning outcomes at the program/department level. We would like to begin this process with an inventory of current practices. For programs within your department (GE, transfer, developmental education, vocational certificate, etc.), what are you doing, formally or informally, to find out what your students have learned and how well they are prepared for the next phase in their education?

RATIONALE

The faculty of DVC is professionally committed to maintaining a high quality teaching-learning environment. To accomplish this purpose in an ever-changing world requires on-going assessment of the effectiveness of our efforts. At the classroom and course level, we do this every day as part of the give and take of the teaching/learning process. At the department or program level, and at higher levels, more formalized procedures of assessment are desirable.

CAVEATS

Program Review and faculty evaluation are not part of this assessment
Program review does not deal with the issue of assessment of learning outcomes, as it focuses on effective resource allocation in an administrative sense.

Faculty evaluation also does not deal with the issue of student learning outcomes assessment as that process does not touch upon the effectiveness of the course within the curriculum or program nor with the effectiveness of the program in preparing the student for whatever is next.

The better informed we are as faculty about what you are already doing and about what things you think can and should be done, the more able we will be to shape our assessment tools to meet our needs and concerns, rather than simply responding to external pressures.

Please take this matter up with the members of your department. We would like to have your responses to the enclosed survey by _____. Please send them to the Faculty Senate Office.

Sincerely,

INVENTORY OF CURRENT PRACTICES STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Formal Methods of Assessment

(For example, vocational program advisory committees, correspondence with transfer institutions within a major, surveying former students)

Informal Methods of Assessment

(for example, conversation and anecdotal reports from former students, people you run into)

Suggestions For New Methods of Assessment

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Angelo, T., (1995), "Assessment," *Bulletin*, American Association of Higher Education.

APPENDIX

- A. General Education Program Assessment Model
- B. Automotive Technology Program Assessment Model

**General Education Program
Assessment Model**

**Automotive Technology Program
Assessment Model**