

## **ACCJC Evaluation Team Visits 2002 Standards**

### **Student Achievement and Student Learning Outcomes: What Accreditation Teams Would Ideally Find**

The Core mission of community and two-year colleges is education of its students. In order to promote improvements in student learning (and institutional effectiveness), an institution should collect and use data to assess its own effectiveness and develop and implement plans to improve student achievement and student learning. Ideally then, accrediting teams could hope to find information on *student achievement* and on *student learning outcomes*.

Teams conducting external evaluation visits are asked to comment on the institutions' progress in incorporating all of the Standards' requirements about student learning outcomes into their reports. Below are some suggestions for how teams might find information on both achievement and learning outcomes.

#### **Information on Student Achievement:** (i.e., student progress through the institution)

Is there evidence that the college has the capacity to collect, does collect, and uses in its own evaluation and planning processes, data on student achievement? Is there evidence that the college does so regularly? This includes data on:

- Student demographics
- Student preparedness for college, including performance on placement tests and/or placement
- Student needs (i.e., local employment training needs, transfer education needs, basic skills needs, etc.)
- Course completion data
- Data on student progression to the next course/next level of course
- Data on student program (major) completion
- Data on student graduation rates
- Data on student transfer to a four-year institution
- Data on student job placements
- Data on licensure exams (scores, pass rates)

**Information on Student Learning Outcomes:** (i.e., student mastery of the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies, etc. identified by those designing the educational experience of the college).

Is there evidence that student learning outcomes are defined?

- By course
- By program
- By degree (including General Education requirements)

Is there evidence there was dialogue about the SLOs?

- Prior to development
- As part of developing integrated educational services and courses/programs
- As part of institutional self evaluation, planning, and improvement
- At the appropriate level of inclusion for the SLOs for courses, programs, and degrees (is it evident that SLOs are “tracked” from courses, through programs, and to certificate and degrees)
- In terms of how institutional processes can be oriented to better support learning.

Is there evidence the SLOs are measured and the measurements are analyzed in order to:

- Inform pedagogy and help improve the educational services
- Evaluate institutional effectiveness and plan institutional improvements
  - The rubrics created to describe SLOs and related measurement strategies
  - The ways in which specific pedagogical practices are changed in response to analyses of SLO attainment
  - Analyses of SLO attainment used in the Program/Unit Review process to improve student learning, programs, and services?

Is there evidence that students are learning?

- Samples of student work
- Copies of summary data on measured student learning outcomes



## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment methods can be indirect, using criteria that assume learning has taken place, or they can be direct, that is using criteria that measure student learning directly. Examples of indirect measures include grades, success rates, retention rates, enrollment patterns, degree and certificates awarded, placement, outcomes in special programs, and student equity data. Direct student learning outcomes are measures of competencies or attainment levels reached by students, i.e. skills, abilities, knowledge.

As you look for evidence that the institution is evaluating student learning outcomes, you will want to think about the **designed** curriculum, the **taught** curriculum, and the **learned** curriculum, bearing in mind that grades are not the best evidence of student learning. The designed curriculum is what is in the college catalog and in official course outlines, the taught curriculum can be found in syllabi, and the learned curriculum is what assessment is all about—what have students learned? What can they do? What do they know? Included among the methods commonly used to assess student learning are:

- capstone experiences (research papers, ways that demonstrate attitudes and values, case studies)
- classroom assessment techniques
- dance productions, music productions
- evaluation by advisory councils
- evaluation by employers
- exit exams
- exit interviews
- faculty-developed rubrics for scoring student work
- licensure information
- locally developed tests
- paintings, drawings, newspaper articles, computer programs
- portfolios (student work collected and reviewed for evidence of learning and development)
- practicum and internship evaluation
- standardized tests

Regarding General Education, you might seek evidence that the faculty have had dialog about their philosophy of general education and that the goals and objectives of course outlines guide the faculty in teaching the courses. You might want to assess the utility of goals and objectives as the basis for assessment.

The Commission's expectation for general education is that the courses introduce students to the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences and that the institution can provide evidence that students know how to: investigate, analyze, use critical thinking skills, relate to and negotiate with others, be sensitive to the values of others, develop a sense of responsibility for actions, and develop an enthusiasm for learning on a continuous basis.

Regarding Student Services, you might seek evidence that those services are part of a program review and that the institution is at least beginning to look at the role of such services as contributors to student development and that assessment of each of these services is occurring. Some of the methods used by student services might include:

- transcript analysis (course taking patterns)
- surveys (student satisfaction surveys)
- retention and completion rates
- extracurricular activity and its role in developing leadership abilities or such things as self-esteem and confidence
- assessment of learning strategies courses and learning communities
- tracking counseling
- tracking transfer
- analyzing "alert plans"
- studying outcomes of students identified or referred who utilized services (versus non-users)
- follow up on EOP&S students
- exit interviews with students
- longitudinal studies of cohort groups with specific student groups (international, Puente, other high-risk groups or gender, age, ethnicity)
- looking at risk-taking, career selection, decision-making, leadership
- assessing orientation: what students are supposed to learn? what did they learn?
- assessing success rates for at-risk students

The typical output measures of student services include course completion rates, basic skills completion, retention rates, persistence rates, graduation rates, transfer rates, success after transfer, and job placement.