



Los Angeles Valley College
Student Learning Outcomes Newsletter
May 2008

SLO Update

Much progress has been made on the writing of course-level SLOs this year. We now have more than 400 written (around 50%), up from less than 3% at the time of the ACCJC visit. Congratulations to the faculty in the following disciplines, many of whom have written SLOs for all their courses!

Accounting
Administration of Justice
African American Studies
Anthropology
Architecture
Armenian
Art
Astronomy
Biology
Broadcasting
CAOT
Chicano Studies
Cinema
Cooperative Education
Dance
Economics
Electronics
English Composition
English as a Second Language
Fire Technology
French
Geology
German
Health
Italian
Math
Media Arts

Music
Nursing
Women's PE
Physiology
Respiratory Therapy
Sociology
Spanish

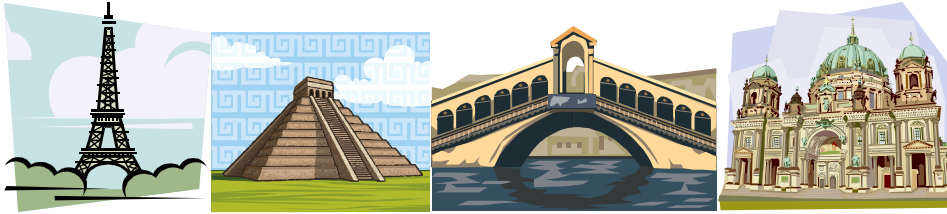
Coming Next Semester:

- Completing SLO Writing
- Course-level assessments in every discipline
- Workshops on rubrics and assessment
- Theme Year: Communication Skills and Culture of Respect

For more information, see the SLO webpage: www.lavc.edu/slo/

Foreign Language Spotlight

The disciplines in the Foreign Language Department were among the first to complete writing all of their course-level SLOs and are completing a pilot assessment of Spanish 1 and French 1 this semester. Starting on page 2, Rafael Arias and June Miyasaki describe their process.



Developing Foreign Language SLOs: The “Taking Stock” Approach **by Rafael Arias and June Miyasaki**

As of Spring 2008, the Department of Foreign Languages has become one of the first departments in the college to develop Student Learning Outcomes for all of its courses and A.A. programs. What at first seemed a daunting task was achieved with a high dose of collegiality, ingenuity and resolve. In fact, in the space of a few intensive hours of working together, we had accomplished the project.

In our favor, we had a subject matter that was clearly oriented towards out-of-class applications, and we also had the standards set forth by the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), also oriented towards beyond-the-classroom applications and measurable outcomes. Against us, we each had different philosophies about how languages are better learned and taught and different approaches to language teaching, as well as the issue of each professor’s academic freedom.

Rather than focusing on the differences among us, we started by taking stock of what we, as educators, were already doing in our classes. We realized that each instructor’s individual teaching approach also represented his/her vision of what the students will be able to do outside the classroom with the language they were learning. We also realized that there was a certain overlap in these varied visions, outcome expectations, and teaching approaches. We then proceeded to see how these common traits in our practice were related to our vision for the learning outcomes in the department’s courses and programs.

In spite of diverse teaching approaches and philosophies, we identified two most important goals that were common across the board. Each professor in the department expected the students to: (1) be able to perform communicative activities in the target language, and (2) demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the cultures of the countries where the target language is spoken. These outcome expectations were consistent across four of the disciplines taught in the department (French, German, Italian, Spanish) and, with some modifications, also valid in our fifth discipline, Armenian.

To avoid redundancy, we then decided to develop common SLOs for each level we teach (i.e., same SLOs for German 1, French 1, Italian 1, Spanish 1). We called this FL1 SLO, FL2 SLO, FL3 SLO, etc. It was also decided that the SLOs for Armenian should be developed separately, given the different nature of the language, writing system, objectives, and teaching approach.

After acquiring a better understanding of the overarching nature of learning outcomes, thanks to the support of the SLO Committee and with input from the Foreign Languages faculty, Rafael Arias took charge of writing the FL1 SLO in Spring 2007. The faculty's common expectations for student outcomes relating to language and culture were stated as follows:

- Using the vocabulary and structures learned, students will be able to perform elementary, everyday communicative functions in the target language orally and in writing.
- Students will be able to recognize the relationship between culture and language use, identify common traits of the target culture, and examine the similarities and differences of these common traits with their own culture.

The FL1 SLO was approved by the SLO Committee in February 2007, and served as a model for developing the remaining common course SLOs for the department. This model also included two assessment rubrics: one to assess students' communication SLO and one to assess the cultural SLO. Starting in Fall 2007, all instructors in the department teaching a first-semester course (except Armenian) state the SLOs on their syllabi.

During the same period, June Miyasaki developed the SLOs for four of our A.A. degree programs: French, German, Italian and Spanish. These SLOs, also approved by the SLO Committee in Spring 2007, were accompanied by two assessment tools: an Exit Survey form to be completed by the student, and an Exit Interview form to be completed by the major instructor. Given the nature and content of the Foreign Languages curriculum, the program level SLOs for Foreign Languages fully align with the college's SLOs in areas related to communication skills (verbal, written and interpersonal); information competency; reasoning skills (critical thinking); diversity and cultural awareness, and aesthetic responsiveness.

In Fall 2007, in order to complete our Program Review, the department needed to write SLOs for the remainder of our courses. Rather than assigning tasks to each instructor and meeting numerous times to discuss, critique and revise, we decided that the most efficient way to accomplish our goal was to spend one entire day and write all of our SLOs at once. With the skillful guidance of Rebecca Stein, the entire full-time faculty met in late November of 2007 and spent a day together, an "SLO-fest," as we nicknamed it. During the meeting, faculty members formed several working groups, coming together for discussion and consensus. By the end of the day, the SLOs for every course, save Armenian and Linguistics (cross-listed with English), had been written. Again, because the SLOs were the same across the board for many of our courses (all courses numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 21, 22, 185, 285, 385), because our faculty had already met and discussed our ideas over a long period of time, and because we had all very recently revised all of our course outlines for the Program Review, the task was not as overwhelming as it might have been.

In Spring 2008, the Department of Foreign Languages, along with several others, has already embarked upon the next phase of the SLO undertaking: assessment. Two

sections of Spanish 1 and one section of French 1 will conduct a pilot assessment study using our new Linguistic Rubric to assess the Communication SLO. The results of this pilot program will be used to evaluate our students' achievement of the first FL1 SLO—their communicative competence in the target language—and also to assess the adequacy of the rubric itself as an assessment tool. With this information, the department expects to be able to review whether our students are able to minimally communicate in the target language in a “real life” situation and, if not, identify areas where change is needed so that students can achieve the stated SLO. This pilot will also allow us to refine the rubric as needed.

To see the PowerPoint presentation and the assessment tools that go along with this article, see the SLO webpage: <http://www.lavc.edu/slo/SLOManual.html>.



Have a great summer!