



**Los Angeles Valley College**  
**Student Learning Outcomes Newsletter**  
**September 2007**

**Coordinator's Corner**

By Rebecca Stein

Welcome back to a new academic year – and the first in what will be monthly issues of the SLO Newsletter. This is where you'll find updates on what is going on in the world of the SLOs and hear from a variety of people about issues related to outcomes and assessment. Future newsletters will be available online. [Continued on page 2.]

**SLOs: The Writing Center and Tutor Training**

By Scott Weigand

Training for tutors in The Writing Center is an ongoing process—a weekly activity in which all tutors are required to participate. Both an endeavor that helps to ensure that tutors remain informed about current trends in tutoring and also an enterprise that contributes to their growth as both tutor and student, constant training remains an integral component that factors into the success of each tutoring session. The fall semester training curriculum in The Writing Center will continue to address major issues concerning theoretical and pedagogical approaches to peer tutoring such as working with ESL students, teaching writing process, understanding learning styles, using error analysis, and of course addressing grammar and punctuation. However, we will also be adding something new: sessions focused on SLOs.

[Continued on page 4.]

**SLO Spotlight – Sociology**

By Sally Raskoff

The Department of Sociology and Ethnic Studies has created student learning outcomes for one program and one course: the Sociology AA and Sociology 1. We arrived at our SLOs through much discussion, including that provided by a session at Opening Day last year. Although we are social scientists, comfortable with clear conceptual definitions and data, it has taken some time and effort to arrive at these two sets of SLOs and their assessment plan. [Continued on page 3.]

**SLOs in a Wiki Wiki World:  
Web 2.0**

By Deborah Harrington

Can assessing Student Learning Outcomes really be as Wiki Wiki as making a Peanut Butter sandwich? Will your students discover that demonstrating what they can do with what you have taught them is a Del.icio.us process?

This column will be the first in a series examining the ways in which Web 2.0 can be harnessed in order to create simple, effective, and student-centered measures for evaluating learning outcomes. [Continued on page 5.]



## Coordinator's Corner

By Rebecca Stein

[continued from page 1] This summer we learned that the ACCJC had reaffirmed our accreditation with the requirement that the college complete two Progress Reports to address certain recommendations, two of which involve SLOs. The district recommendation concerning SLOs and faculty evaluations will be addressed in a future newsletter. At the campus level, we need to address the recommendation to “accelerate the continued development and assessment of student learning outcomes at the course, program, certificate and degree levels to ensure continuous improvement.” A progress report on our resolution of this is due by October 15, 2008.

To encourage SLO efforts, the Curriculum Committee and Academic Senate approved a recommendation to no longer accept new or revised courses or programs without the accompanying SLO addendum. And writing SLOs is just the first step – we need to start assessing SLOs and using the assessment information to improve. Three trainings will be offered this semester in conjunction with Professional Development/STARS. Together, the three trainings will address all aspects of the SLO Assessment Cycle (SLOAC). Save the dates!

- Tuesday, September 18 (1 p.m.) - Writing SLOs
- Tuesday, October 16 (1 pm) - SLO Assessment in the Classroom
- Tuesday, November 20 (1 pm) - Completing the SLO Assessment Cycle

To facilitate the SLO process, each discipline on campus is also being asked to name an SLO representative. This person would attend SLO trainings, be responsible for working with the SLO coordinator and facilitating SLO development in his/her discipline, present SLO submissions to the appropriate committee, and keep his/her Department Chair apprised of plans and progress.

The SLO Steering Committee has also been revamped for the coming year. One addition is adding “Academic Cluster” representatives to the committee. The Clusters are:

- Cluster 1: Business, Child Development, CAOT, Emergency Services, Journalism, Nursing, Physical Education, Respiratory Therapy, Technology
- Cluster 2: Art, Media Arts, Music, Theater Arts
- Cluster 3: Biological Science, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Mathematics, Physics
- Cluster 4: Anthropology, Economics, History, Law, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
- Cluster 5: African American Studies, Chicano Studies, English, Foreign Languages, Humanities, Jewish Studies, Philosophy, Speech

If you are interested in serving as either a Discipline Representative or Academic Cluster Representative, just let the SLO Coordinator or your department chair know.

Have a great year and I will see you at the trainings!



## **SLO Spotlight – Sociology**

By Sally Raskoff, Department Chair

[Continued from page 1.] It has not been an easy process but it has been a rewarding one. Since we do have control over how we define our SLOs and how we will assess them, it has given us an opportunity to take a look at what we do—and to shape what we could be doing. The American Sociological Association had already published two booklets on SLOs for the discipline—we did not adopt those directly but instead used them for inspiration, focus, and direction. This process added much to the work we had already begun with our previous program review and it will help shape the ongoing discussion and plans in our next review.

Our two Program SLOs consist of the following: Upon completion of their AA in Sociology, our students will (1) have the ability to use a societal framework in order to analyze any given situation rather than an individual analysis and (2) be able to explain and advocate for healthier societal policies and practices. Our assessment plan to measure these is to randomly collect student work from a random selection of Sociology courses, both Soc 1 and other courses, and analyze those documents to assess the level of sociological learning. Such work would include that already done in our courses (essays, group discussions, film/cultural analyses, journals, book analyses, news analyses, research papers), but also the gathering of other data (student emails, etc.). Our one Course SLOs, for Sociology 1, the Intro course, is the same as the first SLO for the program: Students in Soc 1 will develop the ability to use a societal framework in order to analyze any given situation rather than an individual analysis. Thus the data gathering process for the Program SLOs will also collect information for this SLO. The difference in our analysis and assessment will lie with the level of achievement and depth of understanding: we expect that students with only Soc 1 completed (as opposed to the entire major) will have a basic understanding of how to use a societal framework while those who complete the major (or, the more classes they take), will be better able to apply this framework in a more holistic manner and to more situations.

We anticipate that when we start actually gathering information to see if our students do indeed learn what we think they do, we will tweak not only our program but also refine these SLOs to better capture and focus on those things we feel are most relevant to our students' learning. We have planned this assessment to include different types of information from different sources, all triangulated to give us a picture of what our students take away from their learning opportunities with us.

We're not adding to the work that students and faculty already do in our courses; we've added a discussion among faculty of randomly gathered student work. This discussion should generate some specific insights into what our students are 'getting' and what they are having trouble with across the board. These discussions will focus on the program and all sections of the course, not on the instructors themselves.

That we remain in charge of this process (rather than give autonomy to others), keep it focused on the larger entities (rather than use it as individual evaluation), and tap into useful elements that we most probably already practice (rather than add busywork) is something to relish. What better way to attract and retain students than to be clear and current with what we offer and know how well they learn it?



## **SLOs: The Writing Center and Tutor Training**

By Scott Weigand

[Continued from page 1.] During the last two semesters, we have seen a pattern where students have brought in syllabi that explicitly state the SLOs for the course. Some of these syllabi are from neighboring schools such as CSUN, UCLA, and Pierce—some of the syllabi are from LAVC. Because tutors refer to assignment sheets and/or syllabi in an effort to assist the students in understanding their assignments, they continue to encounter more and more SLOs at least on an informal basis. Although our first inclination may be to simply pass over this information, we can begin to address the SLOs to engage students in a brief conversation about how a particular assignment relates to a stated SLO. Not only does this serve as a useful ice-breaker and informal way to focus a tutoring session on the requirements of a particular course, but it can also help to provide some context for one of the most common problems that students encounter when tackling a writing assignment—understanding the assignment itself. Furthermore, this exchange can help students to understand how each assignment in a class is a stepping stone to acquiring and developing new knowledge and skills that should ultimately carry over to future classes.

In an actual tutoring session, this exchange between tutor and student will take all of one or two minutes, yet by engaging in this conversation, students are provided a valuable opportunity: they can critically reflect upon what they are learning in the class. Quite often, students fail to recognize the connection between the class they are enrolled in, their major, and ultimately their lives. However, when the different components of a class are clearly sequenced—when we connect the dots between the assignments for the course and the skills we expect the students to have learned—then students have a clearer understanding of their responsibility as students and the goals they are working toward achieving.

Students are not the only ones who will benefit from SLO training in The Writing Center. The tutors working in The Writing Center also will have the opportunity to develop a more informed understanding of the purpose behind SLOs, which they can expect to encounter on a syllabus in one of their own classes in the near future. Furthermore, many of the tutors who work in The Writing Center have future aspirations to teach, and some of our tutors who are graduate students are already teaching Composition classes at CSUN; therefore, working with SLOs now as tutors will be valuable preparation for their future as teachers working in post-secondary education. As we have come to realize, SLOs and the assessment cycles, as mandated by the accrediting bodies for colleges, have and will continue to become part of what we do—something as naturalized as the syllabus itself. Rather than resist this process, we can embrace it and view it as a tool that will help to enhance the very thing that we are here for—learning.



## SLO Assessment in a Wiki Wiki Web 2.0 World

By Deborah L. Harrington

[Continued from page 1.] First let's begin with some definitions. In our SLO process at Valley we have come to define Student Learning Outcomes as what students take away from a course or courses that they can use in other courses or in life. We have also established that a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Cycle involves gathering assessment information about how well students have met outcomes and making adjustments based on that data. Both of these definitions are predicated on notions of teaching and learning rooted in participatory, active models of student and faculty engagement at the course, program, and institution level. In this sense, SLOs and SLOACs mirror the ways in which the Internet has come to be regarded in its transition to Web 2.0.

As defined by one of its most central sites, Wikipedia, Web 2.0 “refers to a perceived second [generation](#) of web-based communities and [hosted services](#) — such as [social-networking sites](#), [wikis](#) and [folksonomies](#) — which facilitate collaboration and sharing between users.” As an example of how communication works in Web 2.0, if you are reading this column online, go ahead and click on any of the links in the previous quote, starting with [wikis](#), the primary subject of this article. Once there, the first paragraph reads:

A wiki is a [collaborative website](#) which can be directly edited by anyone with access to it. [Ward Cunningham](#), developer of the first wiki [WikiWikiWeb](#), originally described it as “the simplest online database that could possibly work”.<sup>[1]</sup> [Wikipedia](#) is one of the best-known wikis.

If you think you've entered through the looking glass, perhaps you have. The point being, it's a new world out there full of knowledge that is constantly being changed, inverted, subverted, upended, challenged, and, yes, agreed upon with a surprising sense of community and intelligence. It is a world that our students are increasingly used to, and it's one that I think can be easily entered by faculty with the ultimate outcome being that conclusions “reached in collaboration with and from competition among multiple individuals will be more intelligent than any conclusion reached by an individual, no matter how smart” (*Lessons from the Center of Collective Intelligence* posted by Muhammad Saleem December 10, 2006 on newassignment.net).

In other words, Web 2.0 in so many ways is the reflection of what we academics understand as scholarship: a collective conversation about ideas in the present but also reflective of the past and looking to the future. And a wiki can be an appealingly

interactive way to not only give students an introduction to scholarship, but it also is a very simple way to record the steps they take in learning.

The word wiki comes from Hawaii and refers to something that is quick and easy; pbwiki.com, a very popular wiki hosting site, self-referentially sells itself as being as easy to set up and use as making a peanut butter sandwich. And it really is—you can have your wiki site up and running within minutes and for free.

What can you do to support and assess learning via a wiki? You could have students define key concepts of a research project on a wiki, and then further develop their skills by requiring that their posted work be supported by carefully formatted citations and an annotated working bibliography. You can also have students individually set up wiki pages and post all of their papers, thereby creating an instant e-portfolio system.

For an example of a collaborative group research project done via a wiki, go to <http://freshmancomp.wetpaint.com/page/Team+2>. For an example of a student e-portfolio wiki, visit <http://freshmancomp.pbwiki.com/Gloria>. Both of these student examples come from Freshman Composition courses taught by Dr. Alyssa Cooper of Maricopa Colleges in Arizona. She has an amazing wiki entitled “Coop’s Word on Technology in Education” [<http://drcoop.pbwiki.com/>] which has served as the touchstone for this column.

Better yet, try contributing to a wiki—or, to use wiki-speak, play in the sandbox. I’ve set up a wiki to use in conjunction with this newsletter: <http://slowiki.wetpaint.com/>. The purpose of the wiki is to allow us to share how our student learning outcomes efforts are progressing. You can help by

1. Adding comments and questions about Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Cycles,
2. Posting rubrics and other assessment tools you've used or suggest can be used at the course, program, and institution level,
3. Adding links to this site that can help our campus write and assess SLOs,
4. Editing this wiki in any way that you feel will help us improve our understanding and facilitation of SLOs and assessments that will increase student access, success, and retention.

Until next time.