



September 16, 2016

One of the benefits that the process of institutional self evaluation for accreditation provides is the opportunity to address any areas where gaps in our policy, practice, or understanding of the Standards is revealed. Over the last several months, the areas of learning outcomes and program review have emerged as being unclear for many of us in the college community. Specifically, it appears that the purpose of these quality practices has been lost in the pressure of deadlines and reporting of completion. I will admit that I woke at 4:00 AM yesterday and began this *Reflection* intending to spark renewed enthusiasm and shared understanding of the value of outcomes assessment and program review as core elements of our cycle of continuous quality improvement as higher education practitioners.

Learning outcomes, assessment, and evaluation was integrated into the ACCJC Standards launched in 2002 providing alignment with the other regional accreditors. Colleges accredited by ACCJC had ten years to develop course, program, and institutional learning outcomes, establish a cycle of assessment, and integrate evaluation of assessment results into curricular and institutional planning processes including resource allocation. In 2012, the Commission (ACCJC) made it clear that colleges were to demonstrate proficiency in the utilization of learning outcomes as a minimum level of acceptable practice. You may recall the outcry that started in 2014 when 75% of colleges placed on sanction were noted to have deficiencies in Student Learning Outcomes Implementation, in 2015 the figure rose to 83.3% of the colleges placed on sanction ([ACCJC News, Spring/Summer 2015, p.5](#)). Clearly, colleges face serious consequences when their institutional practice does not align with the Standards, but why are we expected to engage in learning outcomes assessment?

The answer is in Principle One of the [Regional Accreditation and Student Learning: A Guide for Institutions and Evaluators](#) found on page 4. Assessment of learning outcomes allows us to measure the extent to which the college ensures educational quality. Educational quality encompasses both the student learning element of development of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and values of students and the extent to which the college provides an environment that is conducive to student learning. Educational quality is measured by impact on students and the outcomes achieved. Other measures such as success rates, retention rates, and persistence provide evidence of institutional effectiveness, but educational quality is evidenced by learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes assessment and evaluation serve as a feedback loop on our courses, programs, and on our craft as educators. The fundamental value of outcomes assessment rests in the dialogue and reflection as faculty engage in the analysis of data. It is in the conversations of faculty comparing outcome trend data, or exploring changes from one term to the next, or across delivery modalities that leads to improvement. It is exploring ways in which the assessment outcomes might be improved that leads to changes in course sequencing, methodology, or other curricular innovation to increase outcome attainment. The intention of

learning outcomes assessment is that colleges, departments, and units use the assessment evaluation process to inform review and revision in the cycle of continuous quality improvement.

Student learning outcomes assessment data is an integral component of program review. Program review emerged in the 1990s as the mechanism for ongoing evaluation of college programs and services and still stands in the current Standards as a required component of our institutional evaluation elements. In 2011, 19% of the colleges placed on sanction had deficiencies related to program review and in 2015, 58.3% of institutions on sanction were determined to be deficient in program review.

At MJC, program review includes reporting of outcomes assessment data and a narrative of analysis. Program review is our institutional tool for evaluation of programs by faculty which may lead to a variety of changes to improve educational quality and student experience including, but not limited to, resource allocation. The Resource Allocation Council (RAC) follows the Budget Development and Resource Allocation Process for MJC to make recommendations leading to allocation of resources in support of improving learning outcomes based on program review. The [RAC website](#) has all of the related minutes, agendas, supporting links, and guiding documents related to this process and the allocation summaries. The final resource allocation results are shared in Resource Allocation Council, College Council, Deans' Cabinet, and are made available on the related websites. The Instructional Equipment and Library Materials (IELM) allocation summary from 2015 is available [here](#). The Resource Allocation Council has launched the process for allocating the next round of IELM monies based on the 2015/16 program reviews and will make recommendation to College Council before the end of fall semester.

There are many ways in which learning outcomes and program review are similar. We have great flexibility as an institution to determine our template for program review and establish our schedule for the ongoing cycle of program review in the same way we establish our own course, program and institutional learning outcomes and cycle of assessment. We are entrusted with the responsibility to develop timelines and processes that align with the Standards and our mission as a community college. We have developed and implemented our outcomes assessment and program review cycles and periodically evaluate and update them as part of our ongoing cycle of institutional effectiveness review. College Council has established a Program Review Workgroup co-chaired by Academic Senate President Curtis Martin and Vice President of Instruction Brenda Thames to review and make recommendation for revision of our program review template as part of the cycle of continuous improvement.

It is imperative that we engage in the evaluative processes of outcomes assessment and program review according to our schedule. We get to build the system and then are expected to use it to inform our decision-making at the course and program level and to allocate resources to increase learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The Standards are clear; there is no room for failure to engage in these research based, quality practices. We are expected to have 100% of scheduled course learning outcomes assessed and 100% completion of program review as scheduled.

If you are interested in knowing more about outcomes assessment and program review, I hope you will explore some of the resources noted below. A quick Google search for "student learning outcomes" brought 27.5 million results, so I thought it worthwhile to share a few of the trusted resources from Academic Senate of California Community Colleges and ACCJC.

CRAC [Guide to Evaluating and Improving Institutions July 2015](#) (p. 7 Evolution of the Standards)

ACCJC [Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation](#)

[Accreditation Standards 2014](#)

[ACCJC News Special Edition: Featuring SLO Projects at 16 Member Institutions](#)

MJC [Outcomes Assessment](#)

[Resource Allocation Council](#)

ASCCC [FA07 Agents of Change: ...SLO Coordinators...](#)

[SP09 Program Review: Setting a Standard](#)

[FA09 SLO Terminology Glossary](#)

[Resolutions SP10 Embedding Program SLOs in Program Review](#)

[Publication SP10 Sharing SLOs with your College Community](#)

[FA10 Guiding Principles for SLO Assessment Paper](#)

[FA15 Effective Practices in Accreditation A Guide for Faculty](#)

There are many more resources on the ASCCC site. I recommend using search terms: outcomes, SLO, assessment, program review.

Wishing you a restful, even if warm, weekend!

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