

Victor Valley College Faculty Senate

A Proposal for

Establishing Systematic Learning Outcomes Assessment within the Instructional Programs of Victor Valley College

Preamble:

This proposal recommends a set of specific and constructive steps toward implementing the following requirement of ACCJC/WASC Standard II for Instructional Programs:

The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements. (ACCJC IIA1c)

In addition, this proposal represents a challenge to the Victor Valley College Faculty and Administration to initiate organized implementation of the following objective of District Goal #2, “Institutional Commitment to Student Learning and Student Success through Educational Excellence:”

The College will develop and implement plans for learning outcome assessment in all courses, programs, and services and as a basis for resource allocation.

Current State of Learning Outcomes Assessment at Victor Valley College:

The evaluation of learning is an integral component of all instructional programs at Victor Valley College. However, focused interest in formalization and documentation of outcomes assessment in this district began during the period of preparation for the comprehensive ACCJC visit in March of 2005. The Faculty Senate Learning Assessment Committee was established during this time in order to facilitate learning outcomes dialogue and training and to plan for the systematic implementation of accreditation requirements for learning assessment within the district’s instructional programs. Following the site visit in 2005, the district was asked to submit a progress report addressing the following recommendation:

Recommendation 2: Student Learning Outcomes

To meet the standards’ focus on ensuring student success and the quality of programs and services, the team recommends the college conduct meaningful, timely, and inclusive dialogue with all campus constituents to identify student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. The college should also systematically assess these student learning outcomes and use the results of these assessments for the

improvement of institutional effectiveness. (Standard IB.1, IB.4; Standard IIA.1c, IIA.2a, IIA.2b, IIA.2e, IIA.2f, IIA.2g, IIA.2h, IIA.2i, IIA.3, IIA.6, IIA.6a, IIB.1, etc., etc. etc.)

Although the subsequent ACCJC Progress Visit Report (April, 2006) noted that substantial progress was made in addressing Recommendation 2, this conclusion was based on very slender evidence. In fact, the only substantial progress made at Victor Valley College toward formal, systematic, and documented compliance with the ACCJC standards has been the establishment of a Faculty Learning Assessment Committee and, as recommended by this committee, the addition of student learning outcomes as a required component of all course proposals submitted for review to the Curriculum Committee. Although this revision of the curriculum approval process in the Fall of 2004 was a significant step toward compliance with ACCJC expectation, there have been no further organized or self-conscious efforts to insure that student achievement of the identified learning outcomes is systematically assessed and that the assessment results are used for the improvement of learning.

Purpose & Objectives:

The purpose of the present proposal is to request support for a recommended set of coordinated actions by which to initiate and embed thoroughgoing learning assessment practice on all levels and within all instructional programs at Victor Valley College. The recommended actions are intended to contribute toward achieving the following objectives.

- The identification and approval of learning outcomes for certificates, majors, and degrees.
- The specification and implementation of consistent and reliable methods for assessing learning outcomes at the course, program, and degree levels.
- The review and evaluation of assessment results followed by implementation of plans for the improvement of student learning.
- Ongoing cycles of evaluation through assessment, dialogue, planning and action.

Organizational Constraints:

The evaluation of student learning is an essential component of instruction and is most effectively carried out by faculty as they design and participate in normal instructional activities within the context of individual courses. Instructors select among a wide variety of methods to assess student performance and provide students with feedback about their work. ACCJC standards for learning outcomes assessment require, in addition documented data sharing and dialogue among instructors to determine whether students learned what was intended; whether certain instructional strategies or delivery methods are better than others to accomplish the learning intended; and whether changes can be made to achieve the impact intended. Furthermore, ACCJC standards require careful planning, implementation, and evaluation of any instructional improvement efforts associated with assessment.

Compliance with ACCJC standards, then, places additional demands on the time and energies of faculty as they learn and begin to adopt new practices or habits around assessment. Consequently, it is reasonable to request a compensatory commitment of district resources to seed this major mandated innovation; additional constraints include the following:

- Because faculty who are already teaching overloads to support the district's enrollment growth targets lack the time for additional obligations, the success of outcomes assessment at Victor Valley College requires that the district take immediate and sustained actions to hire new and replacement faculty.
- Because of the substantial additions and changes in the exercise of faculty responsibilities that are entailed by formalized, systematic, and collegial outcomes assessment, significant progress toward compliance with ACCJC expectations is unlikely to occur unless faculty receive appropriate compensation for their participation.

Recommendations and Requests:

Immediate action on the following requests is required in order to proceed with the systematic implementation of learning outcomes assessment at Victor Valley College. A response to the Faculty Senate is expected from Executive Cabinet no later than _____.

1. Administrative support for faculty engaged in learning assessment implementation must be made absolutely evident by the dedication of existing resources:

- The Executive Dean of Institutional Effectiveness advises the Learning Assessment Committee and facilitates and assists in organizing assessment activities and ongoing consultation among faculty engaged in assessment activities.

- The office of the Executive Dean provides clerical support for the documentation of dialogue and planning by the Learning Assessment Committee and participating departments.
- The Institutional Research Office advises faculty on assessment methodology, and assists, as appropriate, with assessment data collection and analysis.
- The Technical Services Department provides the Learning Assessment Committee with a dedicated Webpage, including appropriate rights and levels of access, in order to manage the content for communicating and sharing resources with all faculty.

2. The appointment of a full-time Assessment Coordinator:

- This position provides oversight, structure, and line of responsibility for organized and informed implementation of learning assessment.
- The Assessment Coordinator must be an experienced instructor who is responsible for acquiring a thorough understanding of assessment and for using this knowledge to inform others and contribute to shaping the institutional assessment activities.
- The Assessment Coordinator chairs the Learning Assessment Committee and takes a position of leadership in assessment planning and implementation.

3. Specific designation of funds for learning assessment projects. Funding in the amounts of \$50,000 for the Spring and Summer '07 terms and \$100,000 for the 2007-2008 academic year is requested for faculty stipends as follows:

- Proposals are submitted by individual instructional departments for the design and implementation of coordinated assessment activities involving multi-section courses or programs (certificates, majors). Proposals are also accepted from two or more departments for General Education assessment activities.
- Each proposal is subject to review, approval, and renewal in accordance with published guidelines by the Learning Assessment Committee.
- Each proposal includes a detailed and justified funding request, and compensation to participating faculty is reserved until acceptable documentation of project completion has been received by the Learning Assessment Committee.
- Each faculty member who receives a stipend in connection with a funded proposal must additionally commit to developing and implementing an action plan for fostering future development of SLO assessment practice across campus. This includes but is not limited to mentoring new assessment practitioners, or providing training workshops.

Requirements and Criteria for Approval of Assessment Project Proposals:

The following are required components of any application for funding of a Learning Assessment Project:

1. The proposal must include:

- Names and signatures of participating faculty members and department chair indicating participation in developing and approving the proposal.
- Identification of target course(s) and section numbers (if available), certificate program(s), major, and/or general education category.
- Identification of benchmarks, estimated completion dates, and description of deliverables or outputs demonstrating achievement of benchmarks.
- An Assessment Plan that includes:
 - Learning outcomes to be assessed as indicated in the current course outline of record.
 - Specific methods(s) of assessment consistent with the course outline of record, including rubrics or other scoring mechanisms.
 - Schedule for data collection and faculty review
 - Description of possible actions to be taken as a result of anticipated findings.
- Action plan for fostering future development of SLO assessment practice across campus.
- Dollar amount for funding request, including anticipated uses and justification.

2. Documentation and participation requirements:

- Participating faculty members from funded departments must attend regularly scheduled Assessment Review Meetings facilitated by the Executive Dean.
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will organize events and/or other forms of communication regarding the presentation of Progress and Final Reports of funded proposals.
- Participants in funded projects must assist in the development of assessment practice across the faculty through mentoring, seminars, or similar activities.
- Required documentation may include but it not limited to minutes of Department meetings, compiled assessment data, analysis of data, plans for improvement based on this review, and the implementation and evaluation of such plans.

3. Selection Criteria

- Applications from a variety of disciplines and all divisions are encouraged.
- Preference is given to applications with three or more participating faculty.
- Preference for course assessment is given to proposals at least three sections of the same course.
- Proposals for high demand, low success courses and programs are preferred.

- Direct methods of assessment are required; multiple methods of assessment are recommended..
- Assessment Plans must specify a complete cycle, and each component of the plan will be evaluated according to the level of detail provided, the feasibility of implementing the plan, comprehensiveness of the cycle described, and potential for impact on institutional practice.
- Members of the Learning Assessment Committee may not receive compensation for discharging the duties of Committee membership. However, members of the Learning Assessment committee are not prohibited from receiving stipends in connection with a successful proposal from their respective department.