



Task Force on Institution-Set Standards and Institutional Learning Outcomes

Presented to the President of the College, March 31, 2016

Background

Accountability in the California Community College system has never been higher. Within the last ten years, this has been led by the system's regional accreditor, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges/Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC/WASC). ACCJC began by setting high expectations for student learning outcomes, institutional planning, and program review—defining levels of awareness such as “Development,” “Proficiency,” and “Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement” and requiring schools to improve in these ratings along a well-defined timeline. In recent years, it has ramped up expectations regarding the dominant role played by the mission statement and the need for disaggregated data for student learning outcomes.

In the midst of these other changes, ACCJC implemented Institution-Set Standards. This requirement was actually a hand-down from the Department of Ed, who required it for all spring 2013 visiting team members. ACCJC was originally not in compliance, and in its reauthorization report in December 2013, it was told in no uncertain terms it must evaluate the appropriateness of the measures of student achievement chosen by its institutions. The result, first communicated to member institutions in February 2014, was for schools to establish institution-set standards by the 2014 Annual Report—on March 31st. Schools scrambled that year to get something together, including Cerro Coso. But that one-time response was not sufficient on the long term. Setting and monitoring institution-set standards are now a continuing part of the accreditation landscape, and the President called the task force not just to review and (if necessary) revise the numbers from 2014 but also determine how the review can be done ongoingly within the College's planning processes.

At the same time, it was necessary for the College to review and revise its institutional learning outcomes (ILO's). Cerro Coso Community College has had ILO's from almost the beginning of the SLO era. It established an ad hoc committee in 2007-2008, which developed a list of seven ILO's—such as demonstrate foundational academic skills, use technology effectively, demonstrate self-efficacy skills and an appreciation for life-long learning, demonstrate the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively, and so on. The only assessment tool for these initial ILO's was the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. For several reasons, this has turned out to be unsatisfactory on the long-term: CCSSE is administered only once every three years, its relation to the ILO's are tenuous at best, it is voluntary, it does not include online sections, etc. Consequently, at the same time the institution was ready for a review and revision of its institution-set standards, it was ready for a review and revision of its ILO's.

No sooner had the President called the task force than, in what seemed like a replay of 2014, the Chancellor's Office delivered its *own* set of standards to adopt targets for. This requirement came out of the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, and—just like the ACCJC Standards—is intended as ongoing accountability, requiring yearly goal-setting and monitoring. As this also needed quick action and because the task force was already meeting, recommending the first IEPI targets became an expanded charge of the task force.

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Proceedings

The Task Force had its initial meeting on February 27, 2015. It determined that it needed to move quickly on institution- set standards to meet a hard deadline of March 31. Once that was accomplished, the committee met two more times in April to look at performance indicators and recommend IEPI targets, which it delivered to College Council on March 19, 2015. This meant the ILO discussion had to be delayed to the fall; during a series of three videoconferenced meetings in fall 2015, the task force reviewed ILO's from other schools, examined best practices, and created recommendations.

Recommendations follow. Unlike other task force reports and because of the nature of the material, the recommendations in this report have little in the way of timelines, outcomes, budget implications, rationales, and key performance indicators.

A. Institution-Set Standards

Recommendation

The Task Force compiled a spreadsheet that listed a series of measures over the last five years, calculated the average as well as one and two standard deviations, and indicated whether the trend was up or down. Much time was spent discussing one vs. two standard deviations and what was meant by “standard.” In the end, the group decided that an institution-set standard meant a ‘floor’ measure that the College would mobilize significant resources for—essentially, drop everything else—if it ever fell below. It also decided that measures should be set between one and two standard deviations depending on the five-year trend.

Based on this spreadsheet and ensuing discussion, It recommended that the following institution-set standards be reported for the period 2015-2018:

| Item | Measure | Standard |
|------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 14a | % Successful Course Completion | 64.0% |
| 15b | # Program Completions – degrees | 175 |
| 15c | # Program Completions – certificates | 55 |
| 15a | # Program Completions – combined | 225 |
| 17a | # Transfers | 150 |
| 20 | % Licensure Pass Rates | set by department |
| 21 | % CTE Graduate Employment Rate | set by department |

In addition, the task force recommended deletion of **% Persistence** as a standard that had been added in 2014 as an optional measure. The task force felt that its inclusion in 2014 was more or less random. It considered several other possible optional measures, including:

| Optional Measures | Proposed Standard |
|--|-------------------|
| % Remedial English Sequence Completion | 23% |
| % Remedial Math Sequence Completion | 23% |
| % Basic Skills Course Success | 50% |
| % Online Course Success | 57% |
| % Transfer Velocity | 38% |

In the end, the task force believed that each of these measures tells part of the story of Cerro Coso. In the spirit of the standards as communicated by ACCJC, however, an optional standard should be specifically important to the College. For that reason, persistence was dropped but basic skills course success and online course success were added—providing better alignment with those major components of the college mission.

B. Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Target

Recommendation

Using the same information for institutional set standards discussion but recognizing that the IEPI targets are designed more as aspirational goals than ‘floor’ goals, the task force recommended the following **short-term** IEPI target for 2015:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| % Successful Course Completion | 68.0% |
|--------------------------------|-------|

IEPI required additional measures to be reported—accreditation status, fund balance, and audit findings—but successful course completion was the only discretionary one within the scope of action by the committee. In ensuing years, additional targets will be required with both short- and long-term goals.

C. Institutional Learning Outcomes

Recommendations

The task force discussion was dominated by two considerations: how to make ILO's useful and how to make assessing them practical. The first of these centered on questions like why have ILO's at all, how many ILO's should the College have, and who makes up the whole set of students in the denominator. The second concerned at what point are they to be assessed and what mechanism is to be used?

It was decided after much discussion that assessing anyone other than a student who has completed a program gives the college little to go on *for ILO's*. The College no doubt wants a variety of information about students: why students who apply do not enroll, why students who enroll then drop, why a student takes a single course but never returns, etc. But these are not students who have achieved an outcome *of the College's* (not at the College, something different). There are other mechanisms for getting this other information (surveys, focus groups, and the like). ILO's, on the other hand, reside in the meeting place between a student's outcome having been received (completion of their educational plan) and the College's complete course of instruction having been delivered (the skills and knowledge of the program—PLO's essentially). There, at that point, is an institutional outcome.

For this reason, the task force recommends the following:

1. That ILO assessment results are to be gathered from students engaged in completing instructional programs
2. That each instructional program addresses all four of the ILO's listed below
3. That each instructional program maps from assessments already embedded in program courses, whether PLO's or course-level SLO's
4. That while the preferred method is **one** PLO or course-level SLO to **one** ILO for each program, the ultimate number of mappings depends on faculty judgment
5. That the implementation timeline, including any necessary adjustment to PLO's and/or course-level SLO's is the 2016-2017 academic year.
6. That the following four ILO's be adopted:

Outcomes

1. Critical Thinking. Students who are completing a program will be able to think critically and creatively and apply reasoning

Sample behaviors

- Use the terms and concept of a particular subject matter
- Reason effectively
- Think systematically
- Make informed judgments
- Problem solve

- Analyze
- Synthesize
- Evaluate
- Conduct research
- Articulate one's own assumptions and those of others
- Articulate awareness of personal biases and perspectives
- Demonstrate new ways of doing things based on self-reflection of previous experiences
- Transform concepts into praxis

2. *Communication:* Students who are completing a program will be able to communicate ideas, perspectives, and values clearly and persuasively while listening to others openly

- Present knowledge orally, visually, or in writing
- Express ideas, perspectives and values clearly and coherently
- Identify audience and purpose for particular communications
- Support ideas, perspectives, and values with reasons and evidence
- Fashion persuasive arguments
- Deliver focused and coherent presentations
- Demonstrate active and discerning listening and speaking skills
- Create and deliver presentations
- Participate in collaboration and teamwork
- Listen actively, empathetically, and respectfully
- Understand and articulate other perspectives on a particular topic
- Engage in effective cross-cultural communication

3. *Information Competency.* Students who are completing a program will be able to access, evaluate, and effectively use information

- State a research question, problem, or issue
- Determine information requirements in various disciplines for research questions, problems, or issues
- Use information technology tools to locate and retrieve relevant information
- Organize and maintain information
- Analyze and evaluate information
- Communicate using a variety of information technologies
- Understand the ethical and legal issues surrounding information and information technology

4. *Citizenship.* Students who are completing a program will be prepared to engage in responsible citizenship at various levels.

- Apply the skills gained in information competency to enable lifelong learning
- Document texts and resources appropriately
- Access needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Understand the economic, legal, ethical and social issues related to using information.
- Demonstrate social perceptiveness, including respect, empathy, cultural awareness, and sensitivity to diversity
- Understand ethics and ethical inquiry
- Use effective interpersonal skills
- Engage in community service
- Articulate an awareness of economic competencies -
- Articulate an awareness of social and cultural competencies: personal values clarification, inter-cultural effectiveness, comparative religions/philosophy, political geography, language, history, the arts
- Articulate an awareness of environmental competencies: the meaning and significance of sustainability and sustainable development, the relation between sustainability and personal values, one's relevant local community, systems thinking and system interrelationships in the organizational, national, and global levels.