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Implementing Student Learning Outcomes: The Link to Accreditation in California Community Colleges

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IMPLEMENTING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: THE LINK TO ACCREDITATION IN CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

As the public demands accountability in higher education, regional accrediting bodies are under pressure from external governmental agencies, as well as from key stakeholders, to demonstrate their effectiveness and more specifically, provide evidence of student learning. All regional accrediting agencies now have incorporated some level of student learning outcomes into their criteria for reaffirmation of accreditation.

This case study describes how three California public community colleges are implementing student learning outcomes on their campuses. Administrators, faculty and staff were interviewed about perceptions and insights related to learning outcomes. Artifact analysis was conducted to establish credibility and data triangulation.

Findings suggest formidable challenges exist in initiating this movement. Faculty cited fears that outcomes would be linked to tenure evaluations and lead to punitive measures from administrators. Some saw focus on student learning outcomes as the latest fad. Administrators stated that inability to document outcomes could result in external agency intervention. Sustainability of outcomes efforts, both in terms of manpower and fiscal resources, during a time of economic crisis was a concern.

A number of important themes were revealed in this study. Communication was the key ingredient in the initial planning phases. Venues such as convocation, orientation, retreats and workshops were the most common avenues for conversations and dialog on student learning outcomes. Leadership was critical and presidents that were visible early in the process were instrumental in creating momentum. Faculty felt they had to "trust" the people in the process. Education in the form of workshops, conferences and literature readings often reduced resistance to implementing student learning outcomes. Finally,

shifting to an "assessment" paradigm was cited as resulting in major organizational change for institutions.

A beginning composite model effectively linking student learning outcomes activities to themes of the new accreditation standards is offered. The model is structured around improvement and provides a guide to training faculty, staff and administrators. This research identifies specific processes, strategies and implementation components of student learning outcomes that can be adapted or modified to fit existing institutional cultures.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, **Tara** and **Ryan**. Your support, input,

patience, and encouragement will never be forgotten.

To all the men and women who have served in Operation "IRAQI FREEDOM."

PFC **Joel K. Brattain,**

"Delta" Company,

1st Battalion, 504th Infantry Regiment

82nd Airborne Division.

1982-2004

We will never forget your courage and sacrifice.

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CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Introduction

Regardless of structure, a factor distinguishing higher education from other organizations is that all institutions must meet their accreditation goals. As the public demands accountability in higher education, regional accrediting bodies are under pressure from external governmental agencies, as well as key stakeholders, to demonstrate their effectiveness, and more specifically, provide evidence of student learning. Thus, higher education has witnessed an explosion on the topic of assessment of student learning, evidenced by numerous national meetings, a plethora of literature, on-line discussions, workshops, and speeches. All regional accrediting agencies have now incorporated some level of student learning outcomes assessment activities into their criteria for accreditation and reaffirmation of accreditation (Seybert, 2002). In higher education, many initiatives and reforms have arisen and then disappeared quickly; however, the assessment movement only seems to be gaining rather than losing strength (Seybert, 2002).

Student learning outcomes are central to the heart of higher education. However, the evidence between outcomes and statements of institutional mission, objectives and effectiveness will need to be demonstrated in order to reaffirm accreditation. The accreditation process, then, is an attempt for an institution to self-examine the connection between desired and achieved outcomes. Evidence about "student development and learning outcomes can be used to make broad judgments about institutional effectiveness,

but can also be used internally to enhance academic programs, adjust planning and determine resource allocation" (Volkwein, 2003,p.3).

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) affirm accreditation for 108 California community colleges serving 2.7 million students. In 1999-2000 with *Project Renewal*, the Commission underwent a form of self-evaluation in the spirit of academic excellence. The outcome of this effort has led to the development of specific changes in the ACCJC's standards that not only examine institutional effectiveness, but target identifiable student learning outcomes. These new standards become effective in fall 2004.

Where do California public community colleges begin the process of implementation of student learning outcomes? Leading an institution in focusing on measurable learning outcomes will not be a simple task. Most community colleges have been in existence for many years and have rich, established cultures. The concept of assessment is not new, although educators have resisted efforts to measure outcomes as this is viewed as more appropriate for a business model than for education (Boggs, 1997). It is imperative that institutions of higher education establish clear evidence of student learning outcomes; if not, state governments may impose measurement mandates. Boggs (1996) posits that the mission of the community college should be student learning, and "we should measure our effectiveness based upon student learning outcomes" (p.25).

Literature is limited regarding implementing student learning outcomes in California public community colleges and, in particular, how they will impact ACCJC's mandate to include outcomes in order for institutions to maintain accreditation.

Therefore, the goal of this research has been to respond to the need for guidelines previously undocumented in the implementation of student learning outcomes.

Background of the Study

In most other countries, the establishment and maintenance of educational standards is the responsibility of the central government. In the United States, however, the regulation of education is reserved through the Constitution to the states. The system of voluntary evaluation, called accreditation, has evolved to embrace both regional and national approaches to the determination of educational quality (Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, 1995). When accreditation was first introduced in the early decades of this century, it primarily evaluated whether or not institutions met minimum standards for library holdings, curricula, faculty, and other resources in order to satisfy constituents that the institution was what it claimed to be and had the expertise to teach students. By the mid-twentieth century, the institutional *Self-Study* came to the forefront. It is through these self-studies that schools validated their purpose (Palmer, 1993).

Today's contemporary accreditation procedures (Ewell, 1992) retain the emphasis on the *Self-Study,* but have included the requirement that colleges address impacts on student learning. The exact wording of student learning seems to differ amongst the six regional accrediting associations, but what is consistent is that institutions will be held accountable in part by what learning experiences occur with students (Palmer, 1993). Manning (1987) states, "The current doctrine of accreditation says that institutions...are to be assessed against their stated purposes. Among those purposes...must be goals for the educational achievement of their students. Thus, assessing whether an institution or

program is achieving its purposes includes whether its students are achieving satisfactory educational goals" (p.34).

Today, ACCJC defines standards of good practice in the community and junior college education. They are standards based on experience, research, and extensive consultation with member institutions. The standards center on outcomes and accomplishments, requiring that an institution assess its resources, processes and practices. In short, the Standards focus on assessing institutional effectiveness in meeting institutional purposes. Institutions can assess effectiveness in achieving objectives through the use of both qualitative and quantitative instruments and procedures (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1997). ACCJC revises Commission standards every five years, with the last approval of standards in June 2002.

The new standards are a dynamic shift from previous standards and reflect a variety of themes. Of noted importance, and at the core of this study, rests the requirement that colleges identify and implement student learning outcomes (SLOs), measure student achievement, evaluate that achievement and use the evaluation to make improvements in institutional quality. In particular, Standard One, Section B states: "The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The Institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing (1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes and (2) evidence of institution and program performance. The institution uses ongoing

and systemic evaluation and planning to refine its key processes and improve student learning" (ACCJC website, The New Accreditation Standards).

In 2001, prior to the adoption of these new standards, The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges provided specific feedback to the Commission. It was agreed that the marked feature of the new standards is the keen emphasis on the establishment and use of clear student learning outcomes and their demonstrated achievement. It was agreed by the group that said standards represent a serious effort to enhance the focus on student learning in the community college system and to introduce and implement good practices. The tasks of evaluating outcomes of learning are clearly outlined and addressed through the content of the standards and the potential implementation issues. The group was particularly concerned with the content of the standards and emphasized that the assessment of learning represents an experiential development of explicating shared understandings and approaches and use of models and templates, similar to what educators expect of student learning new disciplines of thought. With respect to the implementation of the new standards, the group felt there was an immediate need for broad circulation of exemplary practices and case studies that the Commission would endorse as appropriate as references. The group further concluded that the Commission foster collaborative partnerships among institutions to tap the knowledge and skills of groups who have been involved in the assessment of learning (Luan, 2001).

With the adoption of the new ACCJC standards, California community colleges will have to respond to the increased attention on student learning outcomes. Historically, community college educators have welcomed the attention to student learning as an

affirmation of their institutions' emphasis on teaching and learning (McClenney, 1989).

Uncertainty remains in how outcomes will be implemented and documented. A number

of concerns pertinent to this uncertainty have been echoed amongst authors regarding the

following issues: the limited expertise in research among community college staff

(McClenney, 1989); failure in the accreditation process to provide " a systematic

conception of the proper role of assessment in the accreditation process" (Ewell, 1992,

p.1); and the concern that colleges formulate statements of process versus statements of

outcomes (Palmer, 1993).

Over the past year, the statewide Academic Senate for California community

colleges has entertained a host of ideas about how to respond to the newly adopted

accreditation standards that will go into effect in the fall of 2004. At the heart of the new

standards, the focus on measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) has stimulated

radical discussions amongst the majority of community colleges in their attempts to

define and implement SLOs. In Howard R. Bowen's book, *Investment in Learning: The*

Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education, he acknowledges that "many

of the outcomes, perhaps the most important ones, are intangible and therefore not easily

identified or measured" (Bowen, 1997, p. xxxi). Bowen nevertheless enumerates the

intended outcomes of higher education: to assess the extent to which they are realized,

and to evaluate whether the results are worth the costs. The thoughts contained in

Bowen's work offer not only creative guidelines but stimuli for discussion as campuses

wrestle with the demands of the new accreditation standards.

Accreditation remains the centerpiece of continuous academic improvement and

quality assurance. Yet there is ample evidence that the new mandated standards from

ACCJC suggest assessment and student learning outcomes link directly to the demand of performance. This movement towards assessment has been percolating over the past 15-20 years in higher education and therefore warrants a brief discussion to illuminate the intersection of accreditation and student learning outcomes. The prominent statement on *Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning*, which was derived under the auspices of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Assessment Forum, clarifies what is assessed and the assessment flow from institutional values: "Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about" (AAHE, 1992, p.2). By 1990, two-thirds of all states had policy mandates in place that required colleges and universities to assess student learning (Ewell, Finney, and Lenth, 1990). Policy commentator Aims McGuinness suggests, in his opening remarks in an Education Commission of the States publication, that "new concepts concerning the roles of government-initiated reform appeared to be emerging, contributing to a gradual shift in the landscape of state roles in higher education that include such things as: Broadening the definition of 'accountability' from primarily an emphasis on equitable access and efficient use of resources to an emphasis on performance and results" (McGuinness, 1994, p.1).

Throughout the 1990's, the pressure in which colleges and institutions meet their goals and missions has intensified, along with the current context which centers on their abilities to demonstrate accountability, institutional effectiveness, and overall efficiency (Volkwein, 2003). It is not surprising that federal and state agencies appear to be holding institutions of higher education more accountable, particularly as it relates to receiving

funds. The recent *Student Right-To-Know (SRTK)* and *Campus Security Act* refer to a federally mandated public disclosure of a college's completion, transfer, and crime rates. The intent of SRTK is to provide to the consumer a statistic of comparable effectiveness that can be used in the determination of college choice. Furthermore, federal student financial aid regulations indicate the length and time that students are eligible for aid, as well as grades that must be maintained for continued eligibility. These types of accountability, although out of the scope of this research, merit mentioning, as they are contingent upon affirmation of accreditation.

Statement of the Problem

Out of a response to accountability measures and policies, a greater debate and increased focus over the area of institutional effectiveness has flourished. According to Volkwein (2003), there seems to be an expansion to focus greater attention on effectiveness with growing interest in obtaining answers to questions such as, *What should students learn?* and *How well are they learning it?* However, questions pondered today emphasize ideas such as *How does the institution know what students are learning? What evidence does the institution possess to demonstrate its effectiveness to the public?* and *What does the institution plan to do with this evidence to improve outcomes?* Results-oriented questions previously stated lie at the heart of both state and federal regulations to provide information to key stakeholders and, as a result, higher education must deal with these challenges in developing measures of its performance (Volkwein, 2003).

A growing problem in the United States is that key stakeholders (i.e. governmental agencies, business and industry, community, families) want to know that colleges are producing students with attainment of certain knowledge and skills sufficient

to function in a global society. Stimulated by this problem, accrediting commissions have created new performance standards. Standards require colleges to identify: what it is they want students to learn, how they are evaluating those learning outcomes and how they are documenting the attainment of the aforementioned. Accrediting agencies serve as the link to ensure colleges produce students who possess identified knowledge and skills.

Several discussions and studies have been conducted on specific assessment methods of student learning (Astin, 1993; Alfred, Ewell, Hudgins & McClenney, 1999; Seybert, 1994, 1998; Nichols,1989; Klassen, 1984; Struhar, 1994; Banta, Lund, Black & Oblander, 1996). However, the focus of this research is to describe implementation of student learning outcomes in the California public community colleges. Upon review of the ERIC database, 34 results were obtained that pertained to student learning outcomes. Out of these 34 results, only three queries somewhat described actual implementation. This literature focused on targeted discipline areas such as nursing or general education. Further elaboration into the literature is found in Chapter two.

The apparent lack of implementation resources available to assist practitioners, as they grapple with this overwhelming task of implementing student learning outcomes was of concern to this researcher. Therefore, the overarching problem under investigation in this study was to accurately describe how: California public community colleges currently are implementing student learning outcome measures on their campuses; what steps, issues, problems, resistance, buy-in from administration and faculty are being taken; and finally, how campuses have introduced student learning outcomes.

To summarize, the emergence of interest in measuring student learning outcomes was prompted by government and accrediting bodies in response to the public's demand

for increased accountability in higher education. It remains to be seen how California public community colleges will respond and implement student learning outcomes, how practices will be documented and where campuses and accrediting agencies go from here.

In 1835 Alexis de Tocqueville wrote concerning democracy in America: "They all consider society as a body in a state of improvement, humanity as a changing scene, in which nothing is, or ought to be, permanent; and they admit that what appears to be good may be superseded by something better tomorrow" (as cited in Mingle, 1986, p.1). Nowhere is this propensity to change seen more than in the evolution of the educational system in America. The birth of the community college was a direct result of democracy in American education. In the guiding spirit of inquiry and educational effectiveness, these institutions should lead the way in the student learning outcomes movement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a snapshot as to what current activities were taking place in the California community college system within the context of student learning outcomes. More specifically, this study described how three California public community colleges are implementing student learning outcomes on their campuses. A further component of this study was to offer perspectives from practitioners' descriptions of strategies for implementing assessment of student learning outcomes.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes?

2. What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21st Century Skills) of student learning outcomes exists at the institution?

3. What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

4. What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to address the implementation phase of student learning outcomes assessment. The study identified organizational issues leading to successful implementation strategies that can serve as a useful model to all community colleges. Additionally, because this study took into account the new ACCJC accreditation standards, it is expected that this inquiry will provide meaningful research and understanding of the relationship between implementing student learning outcomes and the link to accreditation that was absent in the literature. Finally, it was the intent of the researcher that this study may provide a rich source of information upon which community colleges may draw as the demand continues for evidence of student learning outcomes. Since other compilations of literature similar to this research are limited, it is expected that community college faculty, administrative leaders and regional accrediting associations will benefit from the results of the proposed study.

Definitions of Terms

ACCJC defines student learning outcomes as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences (ACCJC website, Student Learning Outcomes). Student learning outcomes are often confused with institutional effectiveness, which is operationally defined using quantifiable data to include: 1) the number of degrees or certificates granted; 2) grade point average of students; 3) number of students who transfer; 4) persistence towards graduation and 5) retention of students. Therefore, for purposes of this study the researcher will use the ACCJC definition of student learning outcomes. 21st Century Skills (League, 2000) refers to "core skills, general education core, critical life skills, core competencies, basic skills, etc.- usually includes 4 to 6 areas deemed essential for student success in the Knowledge Age that characterizes the new global economy" (p.61).

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

The research was limited in that only three California public community colleges were studied. Obviously, broad generalizations about how community colleges will implement student learning outcomes were difficult based on such a small sample. However, the three colleges were selected as exceptional examples based on suggestions from members of the Research and Planning Group of California who maintain a close 'pulse' on student learning initiatives in California. The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges concurred that the Research and Planning Group was the recommended organization, as they were heavily involved with the researcher's topic. The deliberate choice of exemplary colleges allowed for more in-depth study and analysis

of implementation activities of student learning outcomes that was believed to prove more useful to practitioners. Given the researcher's extensive background with community colleges, a potential bias for the system existed; however, this also was a strength of the study. Other assumptions such as whether the three colleges selected and their members provide true information to the researcher had to be considered throughout the process.

Summary

To summarize, ACCJC's new standards that mandate evidence of student learning outcomes will revolutionize how institutions conduct assessment activities in order to reaffirm accreditation. How California public community colleges will begin the implementation process of these outcomes remains at the forefront for institutions as they address this critical issue. Chapter Two will include a critical review of literature pertinent to student learning outcomes. Chapter Three will address the methodological procedures of the study. Chapter four presents the findings of the three case studies. Chapter five presents a summary that considers practical implications of the findings and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Much of the research pertaining to student learning outcomes focuses on measurement or assessment activities. There are multiple studies that have been conducted over the last decade that have illustrated effective assessment practices in both four-year universities and community colleges across the country. However, there is limited research available that detail implementation of student learning outcomes on community college campuses. With accreditation as the cornerstone of every institution, evidence of student learning outcomes is now required for reaffirmation of accreditation; therefore, the review of literature was broken into three main topics. These topics were: (1) the historical development of accreditation in American education; (2) empirical research on implementation of student learning outcomes; and, (3) the role of leadership in implementing student learning outcomes into the institutional culture. Without a discussion of how accreditation has influenced American higher education, it would have been difficult to understand the prominent role accrediting commissions play as institutions define student learning outcomes in order to reaffirm accreditation. The researcher reviewed some empirical studies that may be useful to practitioners in implementing student learning outcomes. Finally, the researcher examined the role that administrative leadership plays in the undertaking of an outcomes initiative.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that will guide this study is centered on a Change Model. Although several models exist, the model for instituting industrial change, and most closely in alignment with this study, was developed by Kirkpatrick. This model has

seven steps: determining the need or desire for a change; preparing a tentative plan; analyzing probable reactions; making a final decision; establishing a timetable; communicating the change; and implementing the change (Kirkpatrick, 1985, p.102). Characteristics of this model consider criteria for developing change based on *what, why, how,* and *when.* Specifically, in researching implementing student learning outcomes (Miller, 1988) the model considers: *What* is the nature of the institution? *Why* is the assessment being proposed? *Who* should develop the strategy for introducing and undertaking assessment programs? *When* is the final consideration that addresses the timing of the various phases for change strategies?

Kirkpatrick (1985, pp. 112-150) writes that the three keys to successful change are empathy, communication, and participation. Strategies for change need to be designed to fit the nature of the particular institution, the governance style of the institution, the required or developed timetable, the complexity and sensitivity of the assessment, and the personalities of the innovators. According to Miller (1988, p.12) "strategies that adapt rather than adopt national models" are important in considering guidelines that may be more flexible than prescriptions, less threatening to faculty members, and structured enough to initiate change to get the project on schedule.

Miller offers success and failure prone strategies for initiating change; although, for the purpose of this research, the following offers guidelines that were considered in implementing student learning outcomes on campuses. Success-prone factors include the following:

- An obvious problem or need that is generally recognized as needing serious attention
- A CEO who is fully committed to the project
- Additional available human and material resources
- Change viewed as leading to improvement

- A carefully developed plan of action widely communicated
- Appropriate faculty involvement and active participation, particularly among "campus influentials"
- Effective and efficient project leadership
- A campus climate conducive to assessment of student learning
- Credibility of the overall effort and of individuals most closely involved
- An error-expectation attitude among project leaders

Failure-prone strategies include the following:

- Weak, clandestine, or indecisive project leadership
- Insensitivity of overenthusiastic advocates
- Nominal or token support at the top
- Ambivalence not treated as normal when there is concern about "maintenance of the way things are, versus the risks and energies involved in a change effort" (Lippitt, 1985, p. 67)
- Poor timing in terms of campus morale or major academic activities
- Poorly designed plans
- Excessively complex plans
- Failure to appreciate the intricacies and complications of communication
- Failure to realize the human propensity not to change (Miller, 1988, pp. 12-13).

Because community colleges vary in terms of student demographics and geographical location and the communities they serve, this theoretical framework was seen as most relevant to this study.

History of Accreditation

Accreditation, unique to the American educational system and distinct in its voluntary participation, arose out of the struggle for decentralized authority in the development of social institutions. Competing groups seeking to influence and develop standards for colleges and universities can be traced back to Colonial America. Harvard College in 1642 and the College of William and Mary were the first to attempt measures of internal control, although these measures failed miserably (Selden, 1960). Stedman emphasized that the founding fathers of our country feared strong government control over educational institutions and advocated for states to take the responsibility for

education through the Tenth Amendment (Stedman, 1980). The Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declares: "The power not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people" (Knezevich, 1984, p.201). Thus, a radical departure from centralized authority was emphasized, which created passionate debates from scholars throughout the United States. Unlike other countries, whose history of education is entrenched in centralized governmental control of schools, regulation of education was advocated as a legal responsibility of the state government (Knezevich, 1984).

Harcleroad describes American society as being divided into three sectors: private enterprise, public enterprise, and voluntary enterprise (Harcload, 1980). The emphasis on voluntary enterprise as controlling accrediting is a marked distinction over other countries that rely solely on external governmental educational ministries who ultimately control local academic standards. Higher education accreditation has evolved into a complexity of inter-related agencies, offices, committees and departments that evaluate and are responsible for the quality of education. Four distinct but related factors have contributed to accreditation's evolution: (1) state government responsibilities; (2) specialized academic disciplines and their voluntary national associations; (3) diverse educational institutions and their voluntary regional and national associations; and (4) the federal government and its "listing" or statistical responsibilities (Harcleroad, 1980, p.1). According to G.F. Zook and M.E. Haggerty, accreditation is defined as "the process whereby an organization or agency recognizes a college or university program of study as having met certain pre-determined qualifications or standards." These standards are then made known to the general public. In order to achieve the objectives of quality education,

accrediting agencies "evaluate and recognize a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined qualifications or standards" (Zook and Haggerty, 1936, pp.18,19, 25).

The original organization to utilize accrediting as a means to control educational standards is still debated today; however, there is no doubt that the origins of accrediting bodies can be traced back to 1784. Legislation was enacted that called upon members of the New York State Board of Regents to visit every college in the state at least once per year and annually report its findings (Selden, 1960; Harcleroad, 1980). Thus, the groundwork for state involvement in accrediting was laid, although the next hundred years would remain relatively uneventful. The majority of states did not assume accrediting functions until 1910, and even then activities appeared limited to teacher education programs (Boyd, 1973).

In 1867 the Department of Education was established and the emergence of federal activity within higher education began. Of its several missions, the Department of Education was charged with the collection of facts about colleges and universities in order to develop and publish a directory. To complete this task, the department had to define "college" or "university." Thus, the first definition of college was referred to as any institutions granting degrees and having students in attendance (Kelley and Wilbur, 1970). By 1900, what became known as the U.S. Bureau of Education sought to impose some order to the "accrediting" effort. In 1911 Kendric C. Babcock, the first federal Higher Education Specialist, compiled a list classifying All-American colleges according to the success of graduates in graduate school. Prior to the publication of this list, it was forwarded to select deans of graduate schools for sun shining and solicitation of

feedback. Several colleges had faired poorly in the Babcock study, with only 17% of schools being listed in the highest of its four categories. This study created such chaos that President Taft ordered all efforts toward publication be halted. Consequently, even his successor President Wilson did not want anything to do with the list. As a result, the federal government retreated from the controversial task of accrediting and returned to its original task of data gathering (Brubacher, 1958).

The states were scarcely more successful at accrediting efforts than the federal government had been. Although the Board of Regents of the state of New York was well into its second century of regulating the incorporation of the effectiveness of schools, this was an exceptional case. The majority of other states seemed to have little concern for the quality or sheer quantity of institutions springing up. Certainly there were few regulations as to the caliber of students being admitted, as well as the types of degrees being awarded. In 1900, according to contemporary opinion, no more than one-third of all higher educational institutions could have met the standards of the New York Board of Regents (Brubacher, 1958). It was unfortunate that there was not a direct means by which the standards enforced in New York could be made binding in other regions of the United States.

However, in 1905 the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was organized as an indirect attempt to offer a form of accrediting. The Foundation was charged with dispersing $10,000,000 in the form of retirement allotments to college teachers. The challenge remained in that so many organizations were calling themselves "colleges" that it was virtually impossible to ascertain which schools' professors were eligible. Henry S. Pritchett, president of the foundation, in frustration with the whole

endeavor, felt that the terms 'college' and 'University' had no fixed meaning on this continent (Selden, 1960). Once again, the set of standards of the New York Board of Regents was revisited. Following the failure of the U.S. Bureau to provide a formalized accreditation system, several educators looked to the Carnegie Foundation as a leader in the accreditation movement. Not surprisingly, the Foundation had stumbled into its role and as such did not want to undertake the ongoing responsibility for the arduous task. So, the nation would wait for yet another leader to shepherd institutions towards a common accrediting system.

The Association of American Universities (AAU) appeared to look as if it might provide the necessary leadership. AAU was, however, backed into the accrediting responsibility just as the Carnegie Foundation had found itself. In 1905 the University of Berlin informed the association that it would declare a bachelor's degree from any nonmember institution belonging to the AAU as being equivalent to the diploma earned for completion of the German "gymnasium", but warned that a degree from any nonmember institution would not be so regarded (Brubacher, 1958). This meant that the German universities, a hub for American graduate students, were assuming that the AAU was the United States official accrediting agency. This assumed role forced the AAU to either assume the role the German universities assigned to it or publicly to renounce any accrediting function. The AAU attempted to avoid the issue. They turned once again to the Carnegie Foundation, although they maintained their position of having no interest in accrediting activities. Thus, the AAU reluctantly became the undeclared national accrediting agency.

The National Association of State Universities (NASU) expressed twinges of

interest in assuming accrediting functions. In 1905 a resolution was passed:

> It is the sense of the Association that no member accord greater
> advanced credit to graduates of a normal school than is accorded
> by the state university in the state in which the normal school is located
> (Zook and Haggerty, 1936).

By 1908 a committee to address standards reported to the Association that it had

formulated six standards for NASU membership that pertained to facilities, faculty

preparation, curriculum, and graduate requirements. Unfortunately, a lack of procedures

to accomplish the measurement of these standards were included, and the influence of

NASU on the accrediting movement were diminished (Brubacher, 1958).

The first decade of the twentieth century was witness to a number of false

attempts by the federal government and national organizations to systematize

accreditation; however, its failures would eventually lead regions to take accreditation

into their own hands.

Development of Regional Accrediting Associations

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, regional associations grew out of the

continued confusion over common standards for college entrance and uniform academic

standards as they pertained to degree completion requirements. In addition to this

confusion, the country witnessed a proliferation and diversity of higher educational

institutions and programs. Depending upon regional location, institutions were identified

as normal schools, professional schools, junior colleges, universities, and technical

colleges (Harcleroad, 1980). In 1885 the New England Association of Colleges and

Secondary Schools was the first attempt in this country to bring together for the common

good educators and higher educational institutions from within the same geographical

area." (Selden, 1960). Educators formed four of the regional associations during this

period: New England, Middle States, Southern and North Central. By 1895, all regions of

the United States had been covered with the exception of the Pacific coast and some

mountain states (Harcleroad, 1980). It seemed that even Woodrow Wilson captured the

dynamism of this chaotic period when he observed in 1907:

> "We are on the eve of a period of reconstruction. We
> are on the eve of a period when we are going to set
> standards. We are on the eve of a period of synthesis,
> when, tired of this dispersion and standardless analysis,
> we are going to put things together into something like
> a connected and thought-out scheme of endeavor. It is
> inevitable" (Selden, 1960).

At least a half dozen major agencies and organizations at this point, for one

reason or another, attempted to provide a similar "scheme" and, in so doing, quickly

found themselves in the business of accrediting (Shawen, 1983). Selden (1960) felt the

most important purpose for regional accrediting was to serve as a countervailing force to

the external and internal pressures that were being exerted on educational institutions.

Today there are six regional accrediting associations: New England Association of

Schools and Colleges; Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; North Central

Association of Colleges and Schools; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;

Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges; and the Western Association of Schools

and Colleges (WASC). Although there are apparent distinctions amongst the country's

regional accrediting bodies, they are characterized by and embrace five common

purposes for accreditation: service to the public; institutional improvement to promote

institutional self-study; facilitating transfers; raising professional standards; and

informing prospective employers about the quality training a graduate student has

received (Mayor and Swartz, 1965). Maintenance of academic standards and admission

policies, as previously noted, were the original impetus for the formation of regional accrediting bodies. However, as more colleges and universities were accredited, institutional self-improvement was emphasized.

WASC, the final regional accrediting association, was founded in 1962 when several accrediting bodies came together and formed three commissions. WASC is the umbrella organization of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), which prevails as the overarching accrediting body for all California community colleges. The Commission requires member institutions to conduct evaluation through a comprehensive self-study, write a report, and undergo a professional team visit every six years (Palinchak, 1993). It is at the heart of the self-evaluation that an institution examines itself in terms of its stated mission and purposes, as portrayed to its constituents. An institution evaluates itself in accordance with standards of good practice as developed by the Commission. Institutional goals and objectives; the appropriateness, sufficiency, and utilization of resources; the usefulness, integrity, and effectiveness of its processes; and the extent to which it is achieving its intended outcomes are measures or standards that assure students and the public of the institutions of continued commitment to quality (WASC, 1997).

Development of Standards

Several educational organizations existed at the turn of the century including: the National Education Association's Department of Higher Education; the National Association of State universities; the Association of American Universities, and others that, at the turn of the century, were viewed as accrediting bodies. It was, however, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a regional association,

which led the way in developing a specific accrediting program (Semrow, 1982).

Confusion over terms such as secondary school, college, and graduate school was the

impetus that led the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools to

develop the first list of accredited schools. This was important as it would lead to the

eventual development of this country's first set of standards. In 1909 the North Central

Association adopted what would be seen as the first set of standards for colleges.

Standards, similar to those determined in 1909, have served as the foundation for guiding

accrediting decisions and are still relevant today. However, a growing concern over the

term "standards" began in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. Some argued that the

standards were arbitrary and inflexible (Semrow, 1982). According to WASC, the word

"standards" was practically abolished amongst several of the regional accrediting

associations, including WASC. Subsequently, alternate terms such as "self-study

guidelines" or "criteria" were coined (Western Association of Schools and Colleges,

1987).

After World War II and the Korean War, veterans entered the college arena and

enrollments soared, along with the impetus in diversification of students in terms of age,

gender, and ethnicity (Bogue & Aper, 2000). The newly established junior colleges

resulted in growth both programmatically and geographically. Junior colleges took the

lead in nontraditional course offerings. Most significant was the emergence of

vocational/technical certificates and diploma offerings. Students also sought greater

recognition for completion of college transfer programs in junior colleges (Day &

Mellinger, 1973). During the 1960's there was an acceleration of non traditional students

and the established norms of quality were once again challenged. This era also witnessed

the rapid emergence of the junior community college movement. Expansion of the junior college system was, in part, a response to the demands of businesses lacking skilled and semiprofessional personnel. Stimulated by the availability of substantial state and federal funds, vocational technical programs rapidly were added to the curriculum. Increased orientation to community needs further prompted the addition of a variety of community service programs, contributing to the complexity and comprehensiveness of public two-year institutions (Day & Mellinger, 1973). The development of more specific accreditation standards were called for in order to address the panorama of higher education.

The 1970's began with aspirations that the accrediting process would become more qualitative and flexible with respect to individual institutional missions. With the close of the decade, it became clear that a need for specific standards would promote reliable indicators of educational quality within the academic community. Furthermore, specific standards would be beneficial to accrediting teams and the commissions with specific reference points when it came to making difficult decisions (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1987). In 1977, WASC responded to this situation and embarked upon a comprehensive assessment of accreditation influences through a study conducted by Professor Keith Warner of Brigham Young University. The findings of this study concluded that accreditation profoundly affects institutions of all types and sizes. It further established a clear need for more formal accreditation standards as a means to assure quality within the region and as an alternative to the threat of State or Federal controls over accreditation (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1987). It is worthy of note that other regional accrediting

commissions conducted similar studies at this time. For example, in 1978 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Learning introduced the "Certification Statements." These statements were an attempt to clarify what was certified as true about an accredited institution or about an institution holding candidate status. In addition to this development, the Commission also conducted content analysis of on-site accrediting team reports and institutional self-studies, along with the categories and content of evaluation for accreditation. The data was utilized to develop "basic indicators" of the criteria utilized for accreditation. The basic indicators broaden the meaning, provide greater detail, to the criteria of accreditation (Semrow, 1982).

In 1979, WASC assembled a *Handbook of Accreditation* which contained nine standards and relevant policies of the commission. These standards were a compilation of over 200 experts that reflected the best judgment of institutional representatives throughout the region. They were considered normative expectations for the operation of any accredited institution of higher education (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1987).

The *Handbook* was revised in 1982 and again in 1987. These standards and policies have been instrumental in improving the quality of tradition and innovation in higher education. As noted earlier, nontraditional students mandated a diversification of educational offerings in the 1960's and 1970's. State licensing laws in California permitted almost any kind of degree-granting institutions to operate. Public institutions in California did not offer or make provisions for working adults or those interested in securing advanced degrees, other than in a full-time student status. In response to these needs, several accredited institutions developed the concept of accelerated degree

programs, offering credits for prior learning experiences, satellite educational programs and developing contracts with organizations to market degree programs under the institution's name and accredited status in exchange for a percentage of tuition. The Commission, challenged by legitimate innovation, sought to establish standards and policies that would support nontraditional education and at the same time offer protection from charlatans. Several new standards and policies were quickly developed, adopted and applied (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1987).

Today, ACCJC defines standards of good practice in the public and private community and junior colleges. They are standards based on experience, research, and extensive consultation with member institutions. The standards center on outcomes and accomplishments, requiring that an institution assess its resources, processes and practices. In short, the Standards focus on assessing institutional effectiveness in meeting institutional purposes. Institutions can assess effectiveness in achieving its objectives through the use of both qualitative and quantitative instruments and procedures (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 1997). ACCJC revises Commission standards every five years, with the last approval of standards in June, 2002.

The new standards reflect a variety of themes. Of noted importance, and at the core of this study, rests the requirement that colleges identify student learning outcomes (SLOs), measure student achievement, evaluate that achievement and use the evaluation to make improvements in institutional quality. Standard One, Section B states: " The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning." (ACCJC website, The New Accreditation Standards).

Student Learning Outcomes

The majority of literature regarding implementing student learning outcomes suggests methods of classroom assessment and pertains primarily to addressing educational reform movements. The literature is scant and typically publicized are reports from institutions or studies that indicate the demand for accountability. Some studies are outdated; however, the researcher will attempt to frame what literature there is in order to provide useful background information. Additionally, there may be studies in the field that are not necessarily published. However, the reader is cautioned as the term 'Institutional Effectiveness' clearly is prevalent in the literature and has marked characteristics different from student learning outcomes.

Assessing student learning outcomes is a major component in maintaining accreditation in higher education institutions. Several studies, as previously noted, have been conducted on the use of specific assessment techniques to measure student learning outcomes. Although classroom assessment techniques or learning models are beyond the scope of this study, a brief review of the literature follows.

Alfred, Ewell, Hudgins and McClenney (1999) suggest that the assessment of general education within community colleges can be subdivided into critical literacy skills (communication, critical thinking, problem solving and interpersonal skills) and citizenship skills (community involvement, multicultural understanding and leadership). Specific methodologies to measure these skills include standardized tests, surveys, portfolios and authentic performance-based techniques. Seybert (1994, 1998) and Nichols (1989) believe that standardized tests effectively assess student knowledge in general education coursework. Such instruments include: ACT CAAP; ACT COMP; College

BASE and ETS Academic Profile. The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal instrument utilized by Klassen (1984) in a longitudinal study suggested the instrument was useful in measuring pre and post testing of student's knowledge in general education topics.

At Columbus State Community College in Ohio, faculty developed two courses, the Freshman Experience and the Capstone Experience. The Freshman Experience was designed to assist the matriculation process for new students including information on general education and faculty requirements. The Capstone Experience is utilized to assess student performance outcomes (Hunt, 2000). Sinclair Community College in Ohio assembled a general education assessment committee. They addressed the assessment of general education with a multidisciplinary team consisting of college-wide representatives. The team identified 17 components of general education. The team then surveyed students in classes. Questions included: "Considering the skills listed, what are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? What do you think is the most important aspect of general education? What comments would you like to make about general education?" This information was compiled, as well as computer results in mathematics and English test results of students in capstone courses. Then the information was presented to a panel of administrators, faculty and counselors, who not only reviewed the information, but also made recommendations for improvement (Struhar, 1994).

Banta, Lund, Blackand and Oblander (1996) offer 82 case examples of effective assessment practices. The authors divide the text into the following categories: Assessing student achievement in the major; Assessing student achievement in general education; Assessing student development and progress; Assessment at the classroom level; Faculty

development to promote assessment, and Developing a campus wide approach to the assessment of institutional effectiveness. Maricopa Community Colleges was one of 82 assessment examples, entitled 'Assessing and Enhancing Academic Advising in a Multi-College Institution'. Due to the size of the district (ten campuses) a significant discrepancy in the delivery of advising services was identified as problematic. The purpose of the study was to ensure a form of institutional quality control in the delivery of advising services and to enhance student awareness of the advising services provided at the institutions. The district created an Advising Council made up of program and faculty advisors, counselors and college and district administrators. A survey was conducted of all the colleges' advising center coordinators. The questions were both qualitative and quantitative. An advising audit was conducted, as well as a faculty advisor needs assessment. Finally, a student evaluation of advising services was conducted. Findings suggested that academic advising was undervalued and under funded. There were no overarching board policies to govern services as well as a lack of common procedures as to the delivery of services. As a result of the needs assessment effort, a number of changes have occurred at several of the district's colleges. Due to the implementation of on-going assessment and evaluation, the institutions have been able to sustain continuous quality assurance efforts (Rooney & Harper-Marinick, 1996).

In 1988, a national study was conducted that investigated outcomes measures for assessing institutional effectiveness (Cowart, 1990). According to the survey three sets of student outcomes were identified: academic progress and employment outcomes, student learning outcomes, and student satisfaction outcomes. A sample of 675 institutions of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges indicated that 61% of the

colleges used academic progress and employment measures to assess institutional effectiveness. Only 35% of the colleges measured student learning outcomes and about 75% used measures of academic progress and employment outcomes in the accreditation process. In conclusion, over 90% of the respondents expected outcomes measures to remain as their current priority or increase in priority over the next three to five years (Cowart, 1990).

According to Alexander, in 1988-1989, North Hennepin Community College conducted a pilot project designed to facilitate implementation of outcome assessments and to develop a 'How-To-Do-It' manual that will facilitate implementation at other colleges. The primary thrust of the college's efforts was to create a Research and Planning Office to primarily implement assessment testing, course placement, and college-readiness of entering students. The Research and Planning Office did conduct graduate surveys, along with longitudinal interviews of student cohorts regarding their college experiences, and, as a whole, the college implemented an oversight group to evaluate and supply the institution with information from Student Outcomes programs to improve the overall quality of education. There was a wealth of data in this manual; however, the majority pertained to Research and Planning office procedures. One survey finding is noteworthy, however. It indicated that the students do not return to college because of a poor experience, but due to outside reasons (i.e., finances, work schedules, family and medical reasons), (Alexander, 1990). Hamilton College in Mason City, Iowa suggests that with the emergence of the assessment process on their campus, the creation of an Institutional Research office that was "centralized, systematic system" was instrumental in the process (Campagna and Throne, 1997).

Howard Community College in 1991 published an Evaluative/Feasibility report of assessing student learning outcomes. This is a performance accountability report and, although helpful in investigating its implementation plan, the report describes issues related to institutional effectiveness such as number of students who graduate, gain employment following college, transfer to a university and student-to-counselor ratio, etc. (Howard Community College, 1991). Likewise, Prince George Community College surveyed their students and evaluated student graduation/retention rates, course pass rates, grade point averages, transfer and employment preparation, a report that detailed institutional effectiveness (Clagett, 1991).

In 1992, Lehigh County Community College published a descriptive report that provided activities conducted by the President's Study Group on Student Learning Outcomes. This group was established in 1990 and was charged to identify associate degree and certificate competencies to develop strategies for their implementation and assessment (Lehigh County Community College, 1992). The group established a "feedback loop" and also conducted follow-up surveys with students. The surveys however, were used to determine employability of graduates and evaluating community needs. The report, although primarily focusing on institutional effectiveness, had some value in reviewing 'minutes' the group kept. This offers an actual account of how the group addressed its work and other excerpts such as discussions the group held. History of the Study Group summarizes: "The committee met during the spring 1991, progress was more philosophical than operational. The committee focused on global educational topics, the mission of the college, and the nature of the teaching/learning relationship. During these months, a critical sense of trust and intellectual candor was established.

While specific progress beyond a shared perspective appeared minimal, in retrospect these initial meetings established the academic parameters, which would later be used in framing meaningful competencies" (Lehigh County Community College Study Group, 1992). Again, although this report focused more on institutional effectiveness, it was helpful to review how the group organized their work. Finally, the study group indicates that throughout the process the *Framework for Outcomes Assessment* from the Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association (1991) was an intricate component that guided their work. The accrediting Commission provided "questions for assessment": 1. What should students learn? 2. How well are they learning it? 3. How does the institution know? Thus is seen the first emergence of student learning outcomes.

Astin (1993) developed a conceptual 'Model' for use in assessment as a result of his first research project, in collaboration with psychologist John Holland, entitled the *Ph.D. Productivity*. The study was primarily interested in finding ways to encourage undergraduates to pursue graduate work, especially in the sciences. At the time of the study, both Astin and Holland knew from popular research that particular colleges were more likely than others to graduate students that eventually would earn a Ph.D. degree. Thus, they began to study issues they coined as productive colleges. They questioned whether a college's output of Ph.D.s could be explained simply in terms of its initial input of talented freshman. They conducted a number of studies centered on this question and determined that as far as a Ph.D. was concerned, the student input was the most important determining factor. From these early studies, Astin developed the I-E-O model of assessment. The model has three variables: Inputs (I), Environment (E) and Outputs (O). Inputs refer to the personal qualities a student brings with them to the institution at

the time of entry; environment refers to the student's experiences while in an educational program, and outputs refers to the "talents" developed while in the educational program. Astin believed that the assessment of education, as the study on *Ph.D. Productivity* illuminated, the relationship between environment, student outcomes and student inputs are interrelated and that it is important to consider all components when designing assessment activities.

Since 1997, an emergence of community college student learning outcomes projects is apparent. Butler County Community College offers a model for college-wide assessment. The college developed a faculty assessment team to determine how well students were demonstrating their general education learning skills. The team developed a program that would assess students in an on-going sequence of overlapping three semester cycles of rotating targeted courses. The learning outcomes are taken from the college's Learning PACT, and consists of the following: P= personal development skills, A= analytical thinking skills, C= communication skills and T= technological skills. Faculty and administrators from both academic and vocational programs developed the Learning PACT. Although implementation steps were missing, ideas such as faculty in-service, assessment improvements and collaboration amongst staff were offered (Speary, 2001).

The Institute for Clinical Social Work in Chicago, Illinois, along with Milwaukee Area Technical College, offered a glimpse into the implementation of student learning outcomes. The focus of their literature dealt with engaging faculty resistance in the implementation phase of student learning outcomes effort (Saltzman, 1997; Carter & Burrell, 1997, Way &Goodman, 1997). Authors describe the lack of faculty buy-in into

assessing student outcomes and offer hope that by the second year of implementation a communication 'blitz' occurs. Suggestions for motivating faculty are also offered. Other difficulties with implementing student learning outcomes seem to lie in the heart of language. According to Kater and Lucius, "Sometimes it all seems about as clear as mud-institutional effectiveness, student academic achievement, outcomes assessment, evaluation, institutional assessment. The terms are so common now in educational literature, and so often used interchangeably that the lines between them begin to blur even amongst those of us who use them almost daily." (Kater &Lucius, 1997, p.88). The authors suggest that before implementation can occur in promoting an assessment effort that the campus must speak and communicate with a common language and agree with some common terms. Kater and Lucius share that following their last accreditation visit, the institution was charged with developing a plan that would document student achievement. In revising the plan to assess student academic achievement, what was clarified and significant for the institution was the difference between assessing student academic achievement and institutional effectiveness (Kater & Lucius, 1997).

Kean College of New Jersey offer specific suggestions for creating awareness and involvement in outcomes assessment on a campus environment. Specifically, at Kean College open communication "has proven to be a successful vehicle for acquainting faculty and administration members with the principles of assessment, informing them of assessment" purposes, ensuring ownership of data, and encouraging participation in the assessment process (Gallaro, Deutsch, Lumsden & Knight, 1996). The authors suggest that, in order to stimulate participation and get faculty involved, open communication is crucial. Information-sharing sessions, open to all campus constituents at various stages of

the planning and implementing stages of outcomes assessment, are also critical. The authors suggest these provide "faculty with opportunities to share ideas and participate in cross-discipline exchanges." (Gallaro, Deutsch, Lumsden & Knight, 1996). Finally, good communication serves to reduce fear and resistance and keeps the campus community informed with the projects purposes and progress.

Spokane Community College and Austin Community College offer documents to practitioners that describe the outcomes assessment at their respective colleges. Each college provides detailed prescriptions on 'how-to' develop assessment plans, what critical abilities will be assessed, 'how-to' document outcomes assessment, methodologies, and communicating results (Austin Community College, 2001; Spokane Community College, 1998). Spokane described efforts to get Student Services involved in what they coin the Core Group, who ultimately has the responsibility of outcomes assessment. They offer mini-grants to facilitate integration of student outcomes into faculty courses, as well as faculty and staff development efforts. They also utilize a Web page to reinforce outcome efforts (Spokane, 1998). Although a wealth of practical data was included, again implementation of student outcomes was missing.

In 1999, the League for Innovation in the Community College convened a focus group of ten presidents from community colleges that were viewed as leading institutions in terms of their focus on learning and outcomes. From this group the Learning Outcomes For the 21st Century project was birthed. The study branched into a follow-up group with representatives from 15 colleges, including two Canadian representatives, to achieve consensus on what constitutes 21st Century Skills. From this group came the argument that the first hurdle to address would be achieving consensus about the skills, knowledge,

and abilities that students, employers, and other institutions demand and recognize as important (Wilson, Miles, Baker & Schoenberger, 2000). Colleges refer to skill sets respective of their institutional culture. For example, core competencies, learning outcomes, generic skills, and critical life skills were the most frequently sited definitions of skill sets (Wilson, et al., 2000). Again, the important step in the beginning of this project and in agreement from all participants was to identify and agree on a common frame of reference for what constitutes 21st Century Skills. The group identified a set of eight categories of core skills:

1. Communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)
2. Computation skills (understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning, analyzing and using numerical data)
3. Community skills (citizenship, diversity/pluralism, local, community, global, environmental awareness)
4. Critical thinking and problem solving skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, decision making, creative thinking)
5. Information management skills (collecting, analyzing, and organizing information from a variety of sources)
6. Interpersonal skills (teamwork, relationship management, conflict resolution, workplace skills)
7. Personal skills (ability to understand and manage self, management of change, learning to learn, personal responsibility, aesthetic responsiveness, wellness)
8. Technology skills (computer literacy, Internet skills, retrieving and managing information via technology)
   (League, 2000).

From these eight categories, the League (2000) coined the term '21st Century Skills' which is referred to as "core skills, general education core, critical life skills, core competencies, basic skills, etc.- usually includes four to six key areas deemed essential for student success in the Knowledge Age that characterizes the new global economy" (p. 61). To gain greater understanding of competency-based programs for the 21st Century Skills, League staff members, at the direction of focus group representatives, visited five

institutions to validate practices of 21st Century Skills. Insufficient resources and models

for putting these ideas to practice were a common theme. Another major activity involved

conducting a survey to determine the current status community colleges were at in

defining competencies in student learning. With 259 of the League's 677 member

colleges responding to the survey, or a 38% response rate, the survey validated that

colleges are at some stage of addressing 21st Century Competency Issues. A sample of

survey questions and statements included: Is your college currently addressing the issue

of 21st Century Skills? Indicate the level of implementation of 21st Century Skills that

your college has achieved. Rate the following barriers to integrating 21st Century Skills in

your institution. To what extent does your college assess competencies in the following

program areas (i.e. occupation/technical, liberal arts/transfer, workforce training and

remedial/developmental programs?). Although the question was optional, the survey

asked respondents to identify exemplary college models of implementation of 21st

Century Skills. There were 50 recommendations. The League selected two community

colleges, Cascadia Community College and Waukesha County Technical College, based

in part on their contrasting implementation models in addressing 21st Century Learning

Outcomes (Wilson et al., 2000).

Cascadia Community College, located in Washington, initially designed a

Curriculum and Learning Design Team (CLDT) to develop effective planning and

development strategies in addressing student learning outcomes. The CLDT initially

addressed the core values of Cascadia Community College and then developed

overarching learning outcomes for the entire college community based on these values.

The team identified and defined learning outcomes in all discipline areas in order to form

guiding principles for curriculum design. Finally, course outcome guides that identify

specific course learning outcomes were developed. The outcome of the CLDT project

guides the overall direction of the college and provides alignment of learning outcomes,

which are at the heart of student success in the 21st Century (Baker, 2000).

Waukesha County Technical College, located in southwestern Wisconsin, began a

movement towards student learning outcomes in 1986. The college initially identified

Signature Abilities that result from the student's experience at Waukeska. From these

Signature Abilities, the college developed four initiatives. These initiatives include:

Critical Life Skills; Student Outcomes Assessment; the College Matriculation Plan; and

the Quality Value Process. All initiatives began as a grassroots effort and are

incorporated into the college's Quality Value (QV) process. This process is accomplished

through the work of QV teams. The teams are imbedded into the culture of the institution

and serve the college on a variety of issues. The QV process involves faculty,

administrators, and staff throughout the college to ensure the delivery, assessment, and

documentation of student achievement and outcomes (Schoenberger, 2000).

As a result of the Learning Outcomes For the 21st Century project, the League

(2000) had envisioned that an implementation model of student outcomes would be

identified. The model would progress through the following steps: a definition of 21st

Century Learning Outcomes; Integrating outcomes into the curriculum; Teaching

outcomes in the courses; Agreeing on assessment methods; Routinely assessing student

achievement of these skills and, Documenting their achievement (p. 54).

The League states "no end is in sight for the movement toward outcomes

assessment, accountability to external stakeholders, and demands of educational

consumers for immediate, portable evidence of the outcomes of their investments in higher education. If anything, this aspect of the Learning Revolution seems to be accelerating" (League, 2000). They conclude that community colleges appear committed to implementing student learning outcomes, but they lack one or more critical resources that allow linear progression toward this goal. It is suggested that colleges focus their energies in a certain division or on a single step within the system where progress can be made and then expand to a larger institutional level (League, 2000). The League further indicates that the development of global models and best practices are needed in order to assist community colleges in preparing students for certifying achievement of learning (League, 2000).

Role of Leadership in Implementing Student Learning Outcomes

To adapt to the new environment of rapid, chaotic change in the community colleges, often constituents look to the president to lead their organizations to develop new visions and missions (Roueche, Baker, and Rose, 1988). The chief leadership behaviors and ones that impact change are those capable of shaping organizational values and culture that allow them to find congruence within the new mission and/or institutional goals (Roueche et al., 1989; Martorana, 1989). This type of thinking is an example of the shift from traditional management to visionary leadership or transformational leadership, often seen in business and industry.

Changing an organization's culture is crucial on the part of the president's work in creating a new mission, vision or values to adapt to rapid change (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). One must be mindful that it is through the organization's culture that the mission, vision of the institution, and values are realized that allow alignment of work processes

and activities to flow. (Kurzet, 1997). Kouzes and Posner developed a 'leadership practices inventory' (LPI) based on their work with over 1330 managers and leaders. They surveyed respondents and generated a number of themes which the researchers identified five key practices of effective leadership behavior, each with two strategies:

1. Challenging the process
   a. Search for opportunities
   b. Experiment and take risks

2. Inspired a shared vision
   a. Envision the future
   b. Enlist others

3. Enable others to act
   a. Foster collaboration
   b. Strengthen others

4. Modeling the way
   a. Set the example
   b. Plan small wins

5. Encouraging the heart
   a. Recognize contributions
   b. Celebrate accomplishments
   (Kouzes & Posner,1987; p.310).

The researchers posit that these skills, although viewed through a transformational leadership lens, are critical for leading successful organizations in times of change.

For community college presidents, several studies have been conducted that have recommended leadership strategies during times of change. Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) studied 256 community college presidents identified as 'transformational leaders.' Presidents were observed as empowering their institutions to participate in developing a shared vision of their institution's future. Successful presidents had a future orientation, were action oriented, engaged in strategic planning, took reasonable risks, shared power

and decision-making, encouraged collaboration, showed respect for others, developed the skills and motivation of followers, modeled trustworthy and ethical behavior, and showed their commitment to quality teaching and learning.

Community colleges are being forced to respond to change from external governing bodies, in particular accrediting agencies. Leaders will have to transform their institutions in order to align it with change initiatives. As our society is transforming itself, it stands to follow that social institutions, including community colleges, will need to transform themselves in ways unprecedented, ways that will redefine the essence and reshape the culture of those organizations. What will it take to lead such a major institutional transformation? (Lorenzo, 1998). In 1993, Ian Wilson surveyed 50 global corporations to determine how they would develop strategic directions. Wilson (1994) concluded that the corporate emphasis was shifting from strategic planning (a periodic cycle of planning documents) toward strategic thinking (continuous concern for the organization and its changing operating environment) and strategic management (the integration of strategic thinking and operational action). Wilson emphasized that "there can be no real value in plans per se, only in the thinking that goes into them and the action that flows from them" (p, 2). Wilson concludes that colleges and universities need to consider the benefits to a similar approach (Wilson, 1994).

According to Banach and Lorenzo (1993), issues which are generally complex, such as implementing student learning outcomes, cannot be solved by experts but must be "resolved" through informed dialogue among colleagues. They believe that in order for institutions to successfully approach and manage a change in institutional culture, community college leaders will need to do the following:

- More fully explore and interpret the impacts of their changing social and organizational context;
- Employ a planning and decision-making model designed to facilitate strategic thinking and strategic management;
- Become conversant with the critical issues facing their colleges, especially those that have the greatest potential for redefining the essence of the institution;
- Envision a framework for initiating and assessing the progress of fundamental change efforts; and
- More completely understand the cultural context within which the transformation will occur (Banach and Lorenzo, 1993).

Lorenzo elaborates on the volumes of literature describing the nature of change; however, he posits that the true task is in isolating the changes most germane to community colleges (Lorenzo, 1998). There is no doubt that community colleges are being asked to change in ways never seen before, specifically, their charges to implement, measure and document student learning outcomes. Institutions will undergo transformation; however, it is clear there is little consensus on how to bring about the change. Lorenzo and LeCroy (1994) offer a framework, a useful guideline for achieving fundamental change appropriate for community college transformation. The following ten elements of their framework explore how institutional culture would be impacted:

- Think Holistically
- Streamline Governance
- Redefine Roles and Redesign Work
- Diversify Funding
- Provide More Options
- Assure Relevancy
- Apply Technology
- Cultivate New Relationships
- Change Success Criteria; and
- Facilitate Continuous Learning (Lorenzo & Lecroy, 1994).

Finally, it was the intent that the literature offered on cultural change will assist leaders as they begin to address the change that will occur as they implement and institutionalize student learning outcomes on their campuses.

Summary

As previously noted, the League for Innovation (League, 2000) and their study entitled *Learning Outcomes For The 21st Century,* concluded that "further research and development of models and best practices" (p.58) is the next step in helping community colleges create processes in implementing student learning outcomes. The Vice President of Learning & Research of the League, when asked if other research similar to this study was being conducted, stated "No, but I wouldn't be surprised if there are others since it is such a timely topic" (C. Wilson, personal communication, November, 17, 2003). The present study sought to address the limited literature and research available on implementation models to assist community colleges in addressing student learning outcomes. An exhaustive review of literature was conducted by the researcher and three university reference librarians. In addition the User Services Coordinator of the ERIC clearinghouse for community colleges assisted the researcher; however, in an e-mail conversation with the ERIC coordinator she concurred "there are few resources that actually describe implementation of student learning outcomes" (P. Sophos, personal communication, October 7, 2003).

From the foundation of a change model, used to inform the conceptual framework of the present study, the research examined three California public community colleges as they attempted to implement student learning outcomes at their institutions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Design Rationale

A Case Study method was utilized to allow the researcher an in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state "the case study is the most appropriate product of naturalistic inquiry into social phenomena, where reality and meaning are socially constructed by the participants" (p.232). The goal of the research was to examine three California public community colleges, and by analyzing the implementation process of student learning outcomes discover factors that contribute to a successful model. Furthermore, the case study method allowed the researcher to effectively investigate the research questions and provide a clear, detailed, description of each case that will give perspectives to practitioners. The case study research method was a particularly appropriate design for this study as the researcher was interested in the process component of implementing student learning outcomes. Process can be viewed as "monitoring: describing the context or population of the study, discovering the extent to which the program has been implemented, providing immediate feedback of a formative type" (Reichardt & Cook, 1979, p.21). Merriam (1998) suggests that case studies are useful in education, particularly in presenting information where little research has been conducted. She suggests that innovative programs and practices lend themselves well to a case study design (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, Patton (1990) argues that a qualitative case study permits the analysis of selected issues to be examined in both depth and detail.

The researcher conducted a study utilizing more than one case. The "more cases included in the study, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be"

(Merriam,1998, p. 40). Miles and Huberman (1994) concur that "the precision, the validity and stability of the findings can be strengthened with the inclusion of multiple cases" (p.29). Again, this study has been specifically designed as an inquiry into three California public community colleges in an attempt to illuminate the implementation process of student learning outcomes and offer models replicable for community colleges throughout the state.

Method strengths

A case study method is rich and descriptive in evaluating the phenomenon under study. It illuminates the researchers experience for the reader. Case studies are particularly useful in advancing knowledge within a field, such as education. The case study is well suited in investigating educational processes, problems and programs. According to Merriam (1998) case studies have the capability to enhance understanding that can affect and lead to practice improvement.

Method limitations

Researchers may not have the time or resources often required for a case study. Furthermore, the end product may prove to be too detailed or too involved, therefore reducing its usefulness for the intended audience (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1981) caution that "case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs" (p. 277). They are also concerned with unethical writing styles and biases of the researcher that can affect the end product (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Merriam (1998) suggests that, due to the lack of sample representativeness, reliability, validity and generalizability can pose limitations in case study methods.

The researcher made every attempt to be aware of suggested limitations and was mindful of personal biases, such as preconceived ideas as to how student learning outcomes should be implemented. Issues of reliability, validity and generalizability of the study were addressed by examining more than one case.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes?

2. What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21st Century Skills) of student learning outcomes exists at the institution?

3. What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

4. What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

The research questions clearly pointed to a qualitative inquiry utilizing a Case Study method.

Specific Procedures

The research questions were explored utilizing Patton's (1990) strategy of qualitative inquiry, which emphasizes three themes: naturalistic inquiry, inductive analysis and qualitative data. These themes framed the case study. Naturalistic inquiry guided the researcher and allowed for freedom and an "openness to whatever process emerges" (Patton, 1990, p.40). This element reduced researcher bias and also enhanced the strength of the design. Inductive analysis relied on "discovery rather than theory testing as the researcher comes to understand patterns that exist in the case under study" (Patton, 1990, p.44). Qualitative data captures the perspectives and experiences of study participants through personal, in-depth inquiry (Patton, 1990). As this study unfolded,

Patton (1990) suggests the need "to collect in-depth and detailed" information on the process under study (p.39).

Five specific steps were followed to accomplish this study. First, was the identification of three California public community colleges. According to ACCJC, California community colleges are the last to include student learning outcomes as part of their reaffirmation for accreditation. Although several states, such as Ohio, have long been developing and institutionalizing student learning outcomes, their community college structures are markedly different from California and may present difficulties with adaptability. Selection sites were recommended through members of the Research and Planning Group of California. This is California's premier leader in supporting student learning outcome initiatives. ACCJC suggests this organization has a 'pulse' concerning public community colleges that can provide exemplary models in implementing student learning outcomes. In addition, the researcher consulted with the Administrative Dean of Planning at Long Beach City College on site selections. Not only has she been the past president of the Research and Planning Group, but is active nationally in the student learning movement.

Secondly, the researcher contacted Presidents at nominated sites to determine interest in participating in the study. Once this was determined, a letter of introduction/formal invitation was sent to the Presidents of the selected community college to participate in the study (Appendix A). Upon agreement, a site participant form was completed (Appendix B). This form was in accordance with the University of San Diego's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Upon consent and approval via IRB, the third step was the researcher contacting individuals to be interviewed. The Superintendent/President, Vice president for Instruction, Faculty Senate president, Accreditation co-chair, Vice President for Student Learning and the Research & Planning director were initially interviewed. The researcher believed these were key constituents in the student learning outcomes, although other individuals emerged through the interview process. Key faculty leaders that were instrumental with implementing student learning initiatives at selected sites were also interviewed. Each site varied in the composition of individuals interviewed, although the titles previously mentioned encompassed the totality of all interviews that were conducted. The fourth step was the examination of interviews, and artifacts to identify perceptions that emerged within the selected colleges. The fifth and final step was the identification of recurrent patterns, categories, and structures that detailed an implementation model for student learning outcomes replicable for other California community colleges.

Sampling and Selection of Sites

The site selections for this study included three California public community colleges. The researcher, as well as experts in the field believed that three colleges would yield sufficient information for a rich, descriptive study. Nine potential sites were identified through preliminary investigation by the researcher. The Administrative Dean for Planning at Long Beach City concurred with the selection of these nine sites, as the sites were identified as being innovative and advanced in addressing student learning outcomes. From these nine sites, six were excluded. The three sites selected most closely fit the selection criteria which included: the length of time the institution has been

addressing student learning outcomes, the size of the institution, demonstrated institutional commitment to student learning outcomes versus being in an exploratory phase of the topic, and the involvement of contact individuals at selected sites in statewide learning initiatives. The criteria for geographic location included public community college campuses situated in a rural, an urban, and a desert location, with a single college and a multi college district included to add breadth to the study. Although the selection of study sites may be viewed as a convenience sample, that is, sites limited to California only, it was not the intent of the researcher to select sites solely based on convenience. Other states, such as Ohio, Wisconsin and Tennessee have been addressing student learning outcomes for several years and offer exemplary models; however, the structure of their community colleges is vastly different from California. For example, these institutions have a transfer component for students going on to a four year university. Transfer designated courses are overseen by universities in terms of student learning outcomes. Therefore, the selections of sites for this study have structures which most accurately represent the majority of California public community colleges.

Purposeful sampling was chosen as the method for site selections under investigation in this study. Merriam (1998) suggests that "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, or gain insight into the phenomenon and must therefore select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Furthermore, Patton (1990) states "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth (p. 169).

Selection of Participants

Although there are various types of purposeful sampling, the sampling strategies utilized for participant selection within each site included snowball sampling as identified by Patton (1990). The strategy for identifying participants or "cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is good examples for study, good interview subjects" (Patton, 1990, p.182). Participant selection was also based on the researcher's recent experiences as Co-chair for the accreditation *Self-Study* and familiarity with key constituents during the accreditation process.

Lincoln and Guba (1981) recommend sampling until the researcher discovers redundancy in data collected. Likewise, Patton (1990) recommends specifying a minimum sample size "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (p.186). Sampling within the site, as previously stated, included a minimum of four participants per site; however, respondents emerged through the interview process and were included in the study.

To provide confidentiality to all research participants, the college sites hereafter are designated as College A, College B and College C., participants are referred to by their job title, such as faculty, staff or administrator. Applying the chain sampling approach, the interview process began with an administrator at College A, who was asked to identify key constituents who had not previously been identified by the researcher. This same sampling approach was utilized at the two other selected sites; however, several participants had already been initially identified by the researcher for participation. The study focused on the instructional division at each institution and

included: two college presidents, five faculty leaders, five administrators and a classified staff member. A total of thirteen participants were interviewed with the following protocol. An informed consent form (Appendix C) was completed prior to each interview. All interviews followed a semi-structured format utilizing an interview guide (Appendix D). It was anticipated that interviews would identify perceptions of the implementation process of student learning outcomes: strategies, issues, barriers, resistance, etc. Furthermore, artifacts that supported or were evidence of student learning outcomes, such as course outline records, course syllabi, assessment plans, were examined to triangulate the data.

All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and the researcher would maintain their anonymity. Thus, their remarks have been slightly altered to protect participants and the responses are simply identified as either faculty, staff, administrator or president.

All participants were asked similar questions as presented in the interview guide (Appendix D). However, depending on position or level of involvement with implementing student learning outcomes, questions did vary from participant to participant. Each semi-structured interview, which allowed for a conversational-like style, lasted for one hour.

Entry and Access

Given that the researcher was a current Co-chair for the recent accreditation *Self-Study,* and now has established statewide contacts, it was believed that entry and access was highly probable. Furthermore, the researcher resides in California and has been employed in California community colleges for 15 years, which enhanced credibility for

the study. Access to three colleges was not difficult, due to the researcher's prior experience with accreditation and her relationship with ACCJC, and with members of the Research and Planning Group, and given the statewide importance of the new accreditation standards for all community colleges.

Research Subjects

Upon confirmation of access, an administrator from each selection site was asked to sign an acceptance/site consent form in accordance with the University of San Diego's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent was also obtained from all participants who were interviewed for the study. All selected sites and participants were assured of their anonymity and all names of all subjects have been and will be kept confidential. Audiotapes were erased magnetically and files will be destroyed not later than two years after the completion of the doctoral degree.

Researcher's role

Merriam (1998) suggests that the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data in a qualitative study. The qualitative researcher must be able to deal with ambiguity throughout the research process. There are no procedural guidelines for the researcher to follow; therefore, Merriam (1998) states "the best way to proceed will not always be obvious" (p.20). The researcher must be patient with the process to prevent missing pivotal pieces of information. The researcher must exercise discretion in each step of the study to ensure validity. In this study the researcher was an interviewer and an artifact analyzer. The researcher was sensitive to the participants and to the information gathered, and "aware of any personal biases and how they might influence the research" (Merriam, 1998, p.21). Biases may include the researcher's own

experiences as the accreditation Co-chair and the difficulties experienced in that role. The researcher exercised good communication skills and was sensitive to respondents and prepared for ambiguity during the process. The essential components just mentioned are what Merriam (1998) believes "captures what most writers consider critical for those who conduct qualitative research" (p.24). The researcher made every effort to accurately represent participant perspectives and experiences and to capture and articulate interpretations of their expertise in the field of student learning outcomes.

Data collection

Interviewing and artifact reviews were the primary data collection methods used in this study. The multiple sources of data, in addition to three sample sites for the case study, resulted in the rigor and credibility of the study and allowed the researcher to triangulate the data. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the college superintendent/president at each sample site and for all phases of the research.

Artifact Reviews

A variety of artifacts that pertained to and described student learning outcomes were reviewed. These artifacts corroborated the interviews and thus contributed to the trustworthiness of the data. Artifacts reviewed included: student outcomes assessment plans, statements on principles of assessment, assessment models, faculty pilot projects pertaining to student learning outcomes, internal communication documents for faculty, *Self-Study* documents, and individual college websites that chronicled student learning initiatives.

Interviews

In an effort to determine how three California public community colleges were implementing student learning outcomes, the researcher utilized a "semi structured interview format" as described by Merriam (1998). This format allowed the interviewer to have questions prepared ahead of time, although it also built in the flexibility for the researcher to respond to the situation as it unfolded (p.74). The questions were a mixture of open-ended and structured, allowing the respondents to share their insights and perspectives in a more conversational style and to avoid unwarranted assumptions on the part of the researcher. Finally, to ensure the quality and rigor of the study, the researcher engaged in the guidelines that Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest: "were the interviews reliably and validly constructed?" (p. 378).

An Interview guide (Appendix D) was developed and consisted of questions that centered on processes and strategies for implementing student learning outcomes. The interviews were intended to compare and contrast perceptions of the implementation of student learning outcomes and the effect upon institution where said practices were employed. There were differences in some of the interview questions depending on the constituent group consisting of staff, faculty and administrators. Each interview was personally conducted by the researcher in a quiet, private setting, agreeable to the participant and lasted no longer than one hour. Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose and nature of the research. Permission to audiotape all interviews, which were later transcribed by a professional secretary, was obtained in advance by the consent form (Appendix B). Each participant was asked upon completion of the interview if they wished to review printer paper copies of transcript prior to inclusion in the

research study. The option for follow up questions was addressed to allow for researcher omissions or lack of clarity in findings. This follow up session was conducted via email or telephone.

Data Management

Field notes were maintained throughout the study to assist the researcher in providing a detailed account of interviews and chronicle the progression of the study. Interviews and artifact analysis were utilized for the purposes of triangulation of the data in order to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study and establish trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998). As Patton (1990) states "multiple sources of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective... by using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the field worker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings" (p. 244).

Materials that were part of the data collection process were color coded based on each selection site and were maintained in separate files. As previously noted, all interviews were audio taped and later transcribed. The researcher ensured that confidential materials and audiotapes were secured in a locked file cabinet. Backup copies of audiotapes were maintained as well. Names of all participants in this study have been and will be kept confidential.

Data Analysis

Initially, field notes, artifacts and interview transcripts were analyzed and studied in order to identify global patterns and emerging themes. Spradley (1979) suggests that when attempting to identify large overlapping themes domain analysis may be helpful. This type of analysis allowed the researcher to identify symbols used by the informants

"which are included in larger categories or domains by virtue of some similarity" (p.94). These symbols were the foundation to formulate categories (domains). An example of a symbol that emerged was the language participants used to describe student learning outcomes at their institutions. Definitions included: core competencies; ability-based learning; general education core and institutional abilities. From these identified domains, the researcher sorted the data into clusters for purposes of identifying related terms utilized by study participants. The researcher continued with a thorough theme analysis of all data obtained and further proceeded with coding and categorizing patterns of data into sub-categories of themes. Each category that was identified became a major coding scheme for the data, with less prevalent ideas being treated as sub-categories. As each category was identified, every effort was made to select a theme identified in literature and from interviews on implementing student learning outcomes. In some instances, terms did not necessarily fit the findings in this research and had to be adapted.

The researcher manually coded the Interview Guide (Appendix D) to assist in initial phases of maintaining, sorting and analyzing the data. The Interview Guide was seperated into the following categories:

1. Background Information (code BI)
2. Process Information (code PI)
3. Implementation Information (code II)
4. Change Information (code CI)
5. Leadership Information (code LI)
6. Closing Questions (code CQ)

Coding of data was done manually. Microsoft Word was utilized to include the following features: text editing, word search, search and replace and spell check. The researcher utilized artifact analysis throughout the study to further detail the findings, and compared the data to discover additional themes that allowed for an indepth and detailed

description of the phenomenon under study. As previously noted, the variety of data

collection, including interviews and artifact reviews, assisted in not only confirming data

collected in interviews, but contributed to the triangulation of the data. Furthermore, the

researcher incorporated research guidelines according to Glesne (1999), "the use of

multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data" (p.31).

Trustworthy data was the intent of the data analysis for this study.

Product results

The researcher produced a narrative description and summary of the case studies.

An implementation model emerged based on the information gathered on student

learning outcomes. To enhance the generalizability of the outcomes, the researcher

included "rich, thick descriptions, modal category and multi-site designs" (Merriam,

1999, p.5). A 'theme' chart was developed, along with a step-by-step PowerPoint

presentation that detailed the implementation process of student learning outcomes at

selected sites.

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Summary

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To summarize, Chapter three examined the research design in detail that was

followed in the study. To investigate the processes and strategies utilized by institutions

in the implementation of student learning outcomes, a case study method was selected to

address this phenomenon. Three sites were selected to investigate the inquiry and a total

of twelve participants were interviewed to corroborate findings from artifact analysis and

field notes, in order to triangulate and enhance trustworthiness of the data. The researcher

was the primary instrument in the study and every effort was made to conduct value-free

research. The researcher wrote up detailed case studies of all three sites with the findings

presented in Chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a snapshot as to what current activities are taking place in the California community college system within the context of student learning outcomes. More specifically, this study described how three California public community colleges were implementing student learning outcomes on their campuses. A further component of this study offered perspectives from practitioners' descriptions of strategies for implementing assessment of student learning outcomes.

Each of the selected sites will be described individually. Descriptions will include institutional demographics, an overview, and finally, data will be arranged to answer the specific research questions for the study. Findings are the result of extensive artifact reviews, examination of field notes, and interviews at selected sites to include a total of thirteen participants (i.e. five faculty, five administrators, two presidents and a classified staff member.) The following research questions guided the study. Research Question #1: What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes? Research Question #2: What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21st Century Skills) of student learning outcomes exists at the institution? Research Question #3: What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes? and, Research Question #4: What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

Table #1 describes common themes encountered by colleges during the initial phases of implementing student learning outcomes. Table #2 provides an overview of

evidence of student learning outcomes that was the result of artifact reviews. Table # 3 offers a theme analysis of College A and College C vs. College B. Table #4 offers a theme analysis of College A and College B vs. College C. Finally Figure #1 offers a composite description of activities occurring at an ideal California community college campus, linked to the themes of the new accreditation standards.

College A

Demographic Profile

College A is a single college, multi-campus district that serves the educational needs of students within a 450 square mile area. The college was established in 1916; in 1991, two satellite campuses joined the main campus. Today, there are also a variety of educational centers. The college offers over 100 programs leading to an associates degree, career certificate or transfer to a four-year college or university. Each semester over 30, 000 students take classes online or at one of the college's campuses or education centers. The current enrollment is approximately 32,000 daytime, evening and weekend students and is expected to surpass 35,000 students by the end of 2004. Female students (59.2%) and male students (40.5%) made up the general population. Ethnicity compositions of the student population included: Caucasian students (41.6%); Hispanic (31.5%); African American (11.1%); Asian/Pacific Islanders (9.0%); Native American (0.9%); and Other (5.9%). Thirty-seven percent of general student population was in the traditional ages of 20-24 with most students being enrolled in at least 6.0-11.9 units. The majority of students had a high school diploma (82.4%), and the majority of students were returning students from the previous semester Most of the student population

indicated that they planned on transferring to a four-year institution after obtaining an

Associates Degree (30.2%).

Descriptive Overview

College A began addressing student learning outcomes through the development

of an assessment program in 1999. An electronic chronicle of this movement was

maintained and the URL continues today as the primary delivery vehicle for current

information on student learning outcomes. College A described the purpose for

addressing student learning outcomes and implementing assessment as a means to

internal improvement of teaching and learning, and to address the new accreditation

standards that place student learning outcomes (SLOs) at the center of the institution's

accreditation process. As part of the institutional *Self-Study* to the Accrediting

Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), institutions must now

identify SLOs at the course, program and degree level in order to measure their

achievement. Additionally, the use of assessment of student learning must be

incorporated into the institution's planning and improvement efforts. Despite initial

misunderstandings and fears that some faculty expressed about assessment, the institution

has embraced assessment and turned it to the advantage of the institution and students,

with a promise of continued institutional improvement.

College A initially formed a core group, the College Assessment Committee

(CAC). This committee, made up of individual knowledgeable about assessment

processes, was created to be faculty-driven, function as an ad hoc committee of the

Academic Senate, be multidisciplinary, and required its members to make a long-term

commitment. Currently, the committee is comprised of 16 faculty and two administrators. Members from all three campuses are equally represented. The goals of the committee were to develop a college Statement of Principles of Assessment to include ideas such as why do assessment, what is assessment, what are the purposes of assessment, what are not the purposes of assessment, what are assessment priorities, who will do assessment and how will the college use assessment. Additionally, the committee was charged with identification of appropriate educational outcomes, development of appropriate assessment methodologies, development of strategies for implementation and assistance in implementing the assessment process. It is noteworthy that the college, early on in this process, emphasized that communicating to all faculty was a priority, as was distinguishing the differences between student learning outcomes from institutional effectiveness or accountability measures. They defined institutional effectiveness as: a broad concept including students' progress through the institution toward degree/certificate completion as well as retention, persistence, transfer rates and transfer readiness. Examples of student learning outcomes were based on Palomar College's Draft List of Core Skills which include: Communication- students will communicate effectively in many different situations, involving diverse people and viewpoints (speaking, listening, reading, writing); Cognition- students will think logically and critically in solving problems; explaining their conclusions, and evaluating, supporting or critiquing the thinking of others (analysis/synthesis, problem solving, creative thinking, quantitative reasoning and transfer of knowledge and skills to a new context); Information Competency- students will use printed materials, personal communication, observation and electronic resources to find and evaluate information (research,

technological competency); Social Interaction- students will interact with individuals and within groups with integrity and awareness of others' opinions, feelings and values (teamwork and effective citizenship); Aesthetic Responsiveness- students will produce or respond to artistic and creative expression, and Personal Development and Responsibility- students will develop individual responsibility, personal integrity and respect for diverse people and cultures (Palomar College website, List of Core Values, March 2004, http:// www.palomar.edu).

From 2000-2001, the CAC conducted extensive research on assessment and looked at five models of assessment which included: Palomar College (Palomar College website, Principles for Assessment, March, 2004, http://www.palomar.edu) , Alverno College (Alverno College website, Learning Abilities, March, 2004, http://www.alverno.edu) , Cabrillo College (Cabrillo College website, Learner Outcomes, March, 2004, http://www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us), Lane Community College (Lane Community College website, Strategic Learning Initiative, March 2004, http://lanecc.edu) and Northern Michigan College (Northern Michigan College, The Program or Services Self Assessment Process, March 2004, www.nmc.edu). From this research, CAC defined assessment for the institution utilizing Palomba & Banta's (1999) definition: "Assessment is the systematic collection, review and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning and development" (p.4). CAC believes that assessment has come to mean something very different from grades and placement. They view grading as primarily evaluative, a method of classifying students and assessment as primarily ameliorative, a method of understanding and improving teaching and learning. CAC developed and provided the

institution with a glossary of terms that defines not only assessment but terms such as benchmark, competency, course-embedded assessment, criteria, criterion-referenced tests, direct assessment methods, formative assessment, goals, indirect assessment methods, norm-referenced tests, objectives, performance indicators, performance-based assessment, portfolio, rubric and summative assessment. Outcome is an operationally defined educational goal, seen as a culminating student activity, product or performance to be measured as a result of attending college, or student learning outcomes (SLO's). The CAC communicated that the institution must determine what students should learn, how well are they learning it, what evidence exists that students are learning and how can the evidence gathered be analyzed and then used to improve learning and teaching.

In December, 2001 the CAC funded eight faculty members to pilot classroom based assessment techniques. Participants received $3000 in project funding- $1000 for training, $1000 for project development, and $1000 for implementation. Participation required outside readings and attendance at assessment workshops in Spring 2002. Projects were developed and refined during the workshops. Project implementation took place in fall 2002. Reports that were reviewed by the CAC were required at the end of the project. Among the first to implement student learning outcomes into their courses included faculty from English, Writing and Reading Center, Computer Information Systems, Political and Social History and an Academic Success Project in mathematics. The CAC identified through these pilot projects that SLO's should be reflected in mission statements, institutional plans, program review documents, course descriptions or outlines, syllabi, course content and measurement tools (i.e tests, assignments, etc.).

From 2002-2003, CAC wanted to further clarify and integrate and link assessment into its institutional program review and planning process. Part of the discussion that took place included a revision in student learning outcomes assessment guidelines that disciplines would use during program review (i.e. emphasis on revised accreditation standards and link program, course, and institutional level learning outcomes). Also, the CAC continued to provide assessment workshops and trainings for disciplines undergoing program review. Finally, the development of an Assessment Plan for College A, based on accreditation standards, was determined as a priority. Key elements with this goal were to develop an inventory of other colleges' institutional level learning outcomes and propose a process for defining College A's institutional level learning outcomes. The CAC is exploring methods for aligning course, program, degree and institutional level learning outcomes.

From 2003-2004 CAC activities have included: recruitment of faculty for additional pilot projects, development of and participation in Learning Assessment Listserv and a proposal to develop of an Assessment Plan for the college. Identification of groups to involve, along with a review of outcomes in course outlines and identification of gaps between intended outcomes and course requirements, are currently underway. One of the critical findings from the work of CAC is that faculty needed tools to incorporate student learning outcomes and assessment practices into their teaching practices. From this critical information, an administrator wrote a grant that was funded to develop an online professional development tool to assist faculty with a network of resources and learning modules designed to acquire new tools for teaching. The resource

is divided into five models that includes helping faculty develop their syllabi and building in assessment.

Interview Question 1:

What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes?

All four participants at College A believed that conversations around student learning outcomes (SLOs) and assessment began over 10 years ago. Conversations were initiated in the curriculum committee, the primary body that oversees and drives all institutional curricular decisions. This body is also responsible for the oversight of all course outline development and revisions. One administrator recalled "we recognized that it was a long term type of project because there weren't readily available measures that you can use to assess SLOs and you must develop them with faculty." It was not until 1999, however, that for a two year time period, a faculty member was reassigned 100% to examine assessment and implementation of SLOs in depth. Today, this faculty member has 60% reassigned time for coordination of assessment related activities. This member read extensive materials on assessment, as well as visited a number of institutions investigating where and how to initiate an assessment model. The faculty participant described this as "a very long process." How to implement SLOs was examined to identify how learning outcomes could be included into curriculum course outlines and further link to the overall mission of the institution. Informal conversations continued as constituents wrestled with how SLOs were going to be defined, developed and linked to planning processes already in place, like the college's program review.

College A has an extensive program review process in which all disciplines and departments conduct a self-study every five years. These self- studies examine evidence-based information pertaining to disciplines regarding their current status and desired futures. College A interview participants collectively voiced that the program review process was the key link to campuswide dialogue with representatives from the larger community college. This was viewed as a natural vehicle to introduce and begin to develop SLOs. Conversations began to circulate to individual disciplines and departments to examine how they would integrate SLOs, not only into individual courses, but into their program review process. An administrator commented:

> SLOs are linked with Program Review. We wanted to make assessment of SLOs an on-going process of the college and so, one conference we were at in South West, a college in southwest Missouri, that had a process that we thought made a lot of sense. What they did as part of program review, they asked questions about the assessment plan for that discipline. So it was a way of integrating the assessment of SLOs with the rest of their plan and department goals. We did the same thing; we inserted a section that asks these disciplines to discuss where they are at with their assessment of SLOs. Also they are required to go through the course outlines as part of program review, so it makes sense to review the learning objectives, change to SLOs as you go through the programming. While departments are doing this, they might as well talk about ways to assess SLOs and how to achieve those learning objectives in their courses and programs.

In 2000, the president of the institution charged one of its administrators to develop the college's student learning outcomes assessment program. This charge was partially driven by external mandates such as Partnership for Excellence, Student Right-to-Know, and external accountability measures. However, the institution was simultaneously going through reaffirmation of accreditation and the visiting team recommended the institution begin addressing student learning outcomes. College A's

Governing Board also issued an internal mandate for the institution to examine and

address student learning outcomes.

Getting Started

In 2000, an Assessment Committee (CAC) was formed to study assessment,

develop an Assessment Plan in tandem with its Program Review process and make

recommendations to the district. The CAC "jump started" the SLOs movement, although

an administrator stated "it really was the accreditation site visit that mandated we look at

SLOs for the college." He felt the College was constantly struggling with the process of

implementing SLOs and stated:

> We don't want it to be burdensome for the faculty. The more you can
> streamline, make use of their work, the better. So we try to do things like
> have mentoring. We provide faculty with support, we give them the
> administrative support as well. We have added resources for faculty and
> provided stipends when departments were going through Program Review
> and were the first to incorporate SLOs. We wanted faculty to know early
> in the process that we recognized that this was a tremendous amount of
> work. We also wanted to engage everybody in the different disciplines.
> We wanted to streamline the process to make it better for faculty. The
> CAC would ask for feedback on the process, how we could improve it,
> make useful to faculty and not burdensome.

CAC was faculty-driven and the group, according to one administrator, was

comprised of the "most respected faculty" from the campus. CAC also was

multidisciplinary and included faculty from its vocational division. The committee was

Co-chaired by an Assessment Coordinator (i.e. a faculty member) and an administrator,

along with 14 other faculty members. CAC reported frequently to the Academic Senate in

its initial planning phases. Participants interviewed felt that those initial conversations

with the Faculty Senate were crucial in demonstrating the activity clearly was a faculty-

driven process. Members of CAC had bi-weekly reading assignments and weekly

meetings that occurred over the course of the first semester. Members visited colleagues

at other colleges to study assessment models, which proved to be very useful. An

administrator commented:

> We tried to give faculty resources and the time to work and mentor other
> faculty so that it was more of a collegial process and not administration
> saying here is some sort of program, you work it. We gave reassigned
> time, to, well, actually one faculty initially but then we got reassigned time
> for three other faculty to work with the college and explain the process to
> faculty to help them with the issues that come up. This was helpful to have
> resource people with a project of this magnitude. It wasn't an authority
> relationship; it's like a mentor thing, a trusted mentor.

There was a continual debate that centered on whether or not to develop

institutional learning outcomes or outcomes beginning at the classroom level. A decision

was reached to begin with classroom-based assessment that quickly allowed for projects

to get started. CAC developed a 'Statement of Principles of Assessment' that detailed

appropriate and inappropriate uses of assessment, the purpose of the CAC and other

relevant information to communicate to the college communities about the work of the

committee. Other initial products developed by the CAC included an assessment glossary

that listed definitions of key assessment terms, an assessment Web site that contained the

assessment principles, glossary, draft plans and links to other assessment sites. The CAC

operationally defined assessment with an emphasis on improving student learning based

on Palomba and Banta's (1999) work: Assessment is the systematic collection, review,

and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of

improving learning and development (p. 4). College A defined student learning outcomes

as what students have learned as a result of attending college, with individual

departments defining what those learning outcomes would be. CAC gave a number of college presentations, both campuswide and at department chair meetings, flex day workshops, retreats for faculty, staff and administrators to discuss SLOs information. One administrator stated "we are also trying to incorporate faculty SLOs activities with our Professional Development Office."

Goals of the committee included: identification of appropriate educational outcomes, appropriate assessment methodologies, implementation strategies of assessment, and to assistance provided to faculty in implementing the assessment process. The committee communicated that its purpose was not to measure accountability, which was defined as retention rates, persistence, transfer rates/readiness and degree/certificate completion. Initial learning outcomes were defined utilizing Palomar College's list of core skills which included: communication, cognition, information competency, social interaction, aesthetic responsiveness and personal development and responsibility (Palomar College website, List of Core Skills, March 2004, www.palomar.edu).

In spring 2002, the CAC funded eight faculty members to pilot classroom-based assessment (CBA) techniques. Participants received $3000 in special project funding-$1000 for training, $1000 for project development, and $1000 for implementation. Participation required outside readings and attendance at assessment workshops hosted by CAC in spring 2002. Projects were developed and refined during the workshops. Project implementation took place in fall 2002. Reports that were reviewed by the CAC were required at the end of the project. One example of a pilot project was course-based assessment in an English 1A course. Seventeen SLOs, falling into five categories, were

chosen to assess, and a four-point rubric was developed for scoring. It was envisioned by the faculty member who piloted this project that all faculty who teach English 1A would collaborate to develop SLOs at, not only the course level, but at the discipline level, and ultimately migrate to the institutional level, which, of course, College A has not yet achieved. As the faculty member described "this is a bubble-up process." This faculty member also was a member of the CAC and he described that, prior to developing classroom based assessments, he "read a lot of materials, had lengthy discussions and conversations about assessment and examined assessment models and also visited other community colleges." He felt that visiting other colleges made him feel that he did not have to "re-invent the wheel" which reduced some feelings of anxiety. He reflected wrestling with how to determine where College A should begin assessing SLOs, let alone how they would define institutional level outcomes. The CAC decided to begin assessing SLOs at the micro or local classroom level and, as one interviewee described, "cross pollinate to the course and discipline level." One faculty member described that he worked "in tandem with the CAC and also the Program Review committee when developing SLOs for my English class." The process "takes time" and also some frustrations were voiced that indicated assessment activities were not linked to the Curriculum Committee and somehow faculty would view this process as too" time consuming" and may resist acceptance.

Strategies that College A utilized included faculty pilot projects, with stipends as an initial vehicle for implementing SLOs. Informal mentoring of faculty-to-faculty was a natural byproduct of this activity, and provided a mechanism to communicate to the larger campus of the importance of assessment activities. This strategy has allowed

faculty to "own" SLOs versus having SLOs imposed on them, and encouraged creation of assessment plans at individual course levels. It further demonstrated that the assessment of SLOs was truly faculty- driven and that faculty could "trust the process, get help during the process and see that assessment of SLOs was not a threat to their academic freedom."

Another key strategy was getting faculty involved early in the process. This created "momentum" that one administrator felt was critical to movement of the process. To communicate SLOs to faculty he stated:

> We have given lots of presentation on SLOs at college-wide retreats; there are a lot of them. A retreat is held each semester; in fact, the administration met with department chairs so they could discuss SLOs. We also offer faculty and staff flex days; we have flex workshops. The other thing we are trying to do is integrate all this with our Professional Development program for faculty. We are fortunate to have a Dean of faculty who developed a Web site, so information about SLOs is posted there. We are trying to integrate this for our part- time faculty as well.

CAC inventoried what assessment practices were already in place, such as the college's Program Review process. This step proved to be critical because the message sent was that SLOs were not "one more thing to do." CAC, in conjunction with the Program Review committee, created an on-line form for the Program Review process and reduced duplication as much as possible. This also created a natural feedback loop which allowed the faculty to see this was not another unit report that was going to "sit on a shelf" but would "bubble-up" into the institution's planning processes. Another interesting strategy noted was that the Co-chairs for CAC were also Co-Chairs for the Program Review Committee, further streamlining the communication process between these two vital activities.

The eight pilot projects that were originally funded were offered to College A constituents to communicate successes and also to solicit a second round of faculty pilot projects that are slated for the 2004-05 academic year. Initial faculty, who piloted classroom- based assessments, communicated to fellow faculty at a recent college retreat that they "had support from the CAC and they weren't on their own in this process." A Web site for the CAC also facilitated not only campuswide communication but was a resource for faculty. Another strategy to implement SLOs was to link the CAC, who provided guidelines and oversight to assist disciplines with the development of their assessment plans, to the college's Program Review, Institutional Effectiveness and Research and Planning bodies. These links ultimately lead SLOs into the college's overall strategic planning process. As the college moves forward with further development and implementation of SLOs, all College A interview participants described being driven by a set of guiding questions while engaging in this work: What should students learn? How well are they learning it? What evidence exists that students are learning? and How can the evidence gathered best be analyzed and then used to improve learning and teaching? These questions ensured that the 'assessment loop' was closed and that faculty could connect the importance of this activity in which they were engaged.

Interview Question #2

What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21ˢᵗ Century Skills) of
student learning outcomes exists at the institution?

Currently, student learning outcomes are evidenced in the eight pilot projects course record outlines. Additionally, College A utilized Palomar College's definition of

institutional abilities that is maintained on a Web site. College A has a Statement of

Outcomes and also SLOs are reflected in the college catalog. Language of SLOs is

evidenced in the college's strategic plans, educational master plans, and instructional

program review process. Additionally, the CAC committee minutes and activity reports

are chronicled on a Web site, as well as electronic versions of the college's program

reviews. In 2004, College A will administer the Community College Student Experiences

Questionnaire (CCSEQ), which will reflect what students have learned as a result of their

experiences at college. College A is developing a number of indirect measures of

assessing SLOs, such as student experiences once they transfer from college, as well as a

questionnaire for employers who have hired students from College A. A variety of

databases exist that reflect SLOs, most notably the CAC Website, which eventually will

link to one database that will warehouse all SLOs information. College A has three

campuses and ideally they plan to link all SLOs activities that are taking place to "bubble

up" into the college's planning cycle.

Interview Question #3

What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

As with any new campus initiative, the implementation of student learning

outcomes is not without its struggles. College A interview participants voiced that clearly

the major barrier was that faculty view this process as an infringement or violation of

their "academic freedom." One faculty member stated, "There is more resistance from

faculty in traditional liberal arts than faculty in disciplines such as nursing and computer

science." He also stated "faculty has doubts, skepticism that the process of implementing SLOs is too demanding and time consuming." The issue how information about SLOs would be used was evident. There were concerns from faculty that the information collected from classroom based assessments would be used in their faculty evaluations. One administrator stated:

> We have made it clear from the start that we are not going to use this information to evaluate individual faculty. There is a prescribed method in place at College A for faculty evaluations in the negotiated contracts. So, that is not what this is about; it is helping people to work more effectively together in teaching courses. We need a shared vision of what SLOs are, what are the central outcomes and so forth. We have had a number of conversations with the union expressing concerns about keeping information confidential, or waiting some time so faculty could feel protected from administrators who might use the information against us in certain ways.

The administrator voiced that there was not a way to have access to the data to show the learning outcomes for each individual instructor, such as an English faculty. But faculty, nevertheless, was concerned that the college could track back to them that their students hadn't achieved the learning outcomes they intended. Although CAC has attempted to dispel these myths, the perception existed that the information gathered from SLOs will be used against faculty.

One faculty interviewed expressed concerns about the "language" utilized to define SLOs. More specifically, she was concerned faculty may begin to use jargon that may or may not be reflective of the courses they teach. A great deal of education needs to occur to minimize this possibility. In retrospect, she felt one way to reduce barriers encountered with faculty were to get them involved early in the process, inventory how faculty already assess their students, offer models of SLOs developed at other colleges,

give lots of feedback and show faculty successes from other faculty that have implemented SLOs. An administrator felt that one of the things the CAC has tried to do is reassure those faculty who have concerns about SLOs, that they don't have to get involved now. He commented:

> At this point I hope skeptical faculty will see as this develops that those that are using assessment are pleased with the results and that they will see that results aren't being used against them. In fact, the disciplines should use this information in their discipline meetings to discuss their courses. I want them to see this is their process, they develop it, they control it and CAC is here to make it systematic, to ensure the quality is sufficient, to use the information and to integrate it with other institutional processes.

Concerns from faculty also centered on the distinction between accountability and improvement. The CAC emphasized that SLOs are for improvement and these outcomes tell more than what the institution's graduation and persistence rates are. As one administrator stated:

> Measures like graduation rates don't tell the whole story, especially when dealing with the kinds of student populations we have. For example, a case might be a student comes in and takes a few computer information courses and is able to get a better job. Now they haven't graduated and they didn't persist very long but they were able to improve their life and get a better job. Those kinds of stories won't be captured by a student progressing through the system, but they would be captured with student learning outcomes because the college could show that the student attended classes, learned certain things that has enabled them to improve their lives.

That, in essence, is what SLOs are about for College A and what they communicate to constituents.

Interview Question #4

*What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of
student learning outcomes?*

The president at College A realized the importance of moving forward with
implementing SLOs. He identified a well- respected faculty member and offered her two
years at 100% reassigned time to research and investigate SLOs. According to one
administrator, the president "asked me in addition to the faculty member to start working
on addressing SLOs and his role has been that, to get the college moving but not to shape
what it is we do. He just wanted to get people moving on it and I think we have done that.
It's the momentum that the president created that was helpful." College A felt that the
president handed SLOs to one "trusted" administrator and one "respected" faculty
member and then "he looked to us to make this movement begin. The administrator in
charge stated "I'm there to systematize it and see that there are incentives, like stipends
for faculty, money for planning and to show the college that administration is committed
to SLOs." Three Outcomes Assessment Specialists, one for each campus, will be hired.
Their charge is to work with faculty and supplement the efforts of CAC. Given budget
constraints, recruitment of this magnitude was viewed as a "strategic" leadership move.

Although most interview participants described the president's style as being
"hands-off", he was instrumental in selecting well respected faculty and an administrator
that was trusted among faculty to introduce SLOs. Overall, faculty felt this reduced the
feeling of intrusion from the outside. The president consistently communicated faculty
success stories at retreats and other college functions and was highly visible during
introductions of SLOs. The president reallocated resources through appropriate planning

bodies that further demonstrated the institution's commitment to SLOs. Finally, it was the

voice of the president that communicated with the governing board, that internal

activities and the momentum to address SLOs had begun.

College A Today

To summarize, College A developed a core group with knowledge about

assessment processes, known as the CAC, which studied and examined models of

assessment, linked Program Review to planning and assessment and tested SLOs models

with pilot projects of eight individual faculty members. CAC presently is refining,

disseminating and institutionalizing the SLOs assessment processes. An institution -wide

assessment plan is currently being developed and will include some recommended

learning outcomes to assess, proposed measures and/or strategies for assessing those

outcomes, and strategies for more fully developing assessment activities at College A.

Additionally, the college is preparing to pilot its second round of faculty classroom based

assessments. Ultimately, these measures will be in alignment with the new accreditation

standards that place student learning outcomes at the center of the institution's

accreditation process.

College B

Demographic Profile

College B is part of a multi-campus college, multi-college District, serving

approximately 24,800 square miles in a rural county. College B, founded in 1913,

remains one of the oldest community colleges in operation today. *Community College

Week* magazine lists College B as the 97th largest community college in the United States.

The college serves an average of 15,000 students on a 153-acre campus. College B is the largest of the three colleges in the District. It contains 19 major buildings, a large stadium, home to the only college football team in the area, has multiple green belts and ample parking lots. In addition to the main campus, College B operates a center nearby in a downtown area and a satellite center in a predominately Hispanic rural nearby city. College B prides itself on its rich history accompanied by strong community roots. The college is increasingly low-income, first-generation college, minority and academically under-prepared students.

In fall 2003 enrollment reached 15,500 of which, 59.4% were female, 39.5% Hispanic, and 76.5%attended part-time. Almost half (42.1%) of its students were concentrated in traditional 18-21 years of age. For the first time in the history of College B, racial and ethnic minority enrollment outpaced the enrollment of white students. Distance enrollment for TV courses included 1,074 students and 1,518 students enrolled in online courses. The majority of students enrolled in daytime courses (81.1%), although there was an increase in students enrolling in evening courses. College B embraces an "open-door" policy and is dedicated to serving all who are able to benefit.

Descriptive Overview

College B began addressing student learning outcomes in 2001. A small group of staff, faculty and administrators from College B joined a 30 member district-wide task force that created a position paper, the initial assessment philosophy. The paper offered perspectives on assessment. When the work of the task force was completed at the district level, some members became part of the Assessment Team at College B. This team attended a variety of assessment workshops, followed up by extensive research and

study on student learning outcomes assessment models. A variety of staff development workshops were conducted at College B to educate the campus community about the Student Learning Model. The focus on student outcomes assessment for improving operations and educational accountability was consistently communicated during these workshops. Following a number of workshops, the team distributed a position paper on assessment throughout the campus community.

The Assessment Team, in cooperation with Faculty Senate leaders, developed College B's Outcomes Assessment Philosophy Statement. College B defined outcomes assessment as: a process that systematically gathers, measure, and utilizes qualitative and quantitative information about student learning to both demonstrate and improve the quality of student learning and to strengthen institutional effectiveness (AAHE, 1992). College B created a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning with available resources designed for faculty. The Center also provides leadership and support as faculty and staff experiment and develop assessment projects. The information collected by the Center is utilized to review and refine assessment activities taking place at the college.

In 2002 a process for developing an assessment plan was addressed. Components of the process included: specific program outcomes, assessment mechanisms, improvement strategies, faculty support systems and policies and procedures that would link assessment into the annual institutional effectiveness plan. By the end of 2003, a formal assessment plan with specified timelines, goals, activities, student outcomes and proposed faculty pilot projects was completed. College B projects that by the year 2005 the Outcomes Assessment Plan will be fully implemented and linked to the institution's educational master plan and strategic plan.

Interview Question 1:

What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes?

All five participants that were interviewed agreed that the impetus for moving College B towards implementing student learning outcomes (SLOs) was the college's accreditation site visit in 2000 that charged the college to communicate by 2002, in its midterm report, how it proposed to "measure student and institutional outcomes." Faculty began having conversations about accreditation standards that would require evidence of SLOs. Successful faculty protests lead to reassignment of the president, as well as the resignation of the chancellor and a number of administrators. Vast organizational changes included: the inauguration of a new, visionary president, a new administrator with extensive assessment experience, a new Deans' team, a new Director for Institutional Research and a large number of new faculty hired that were open to student learning initiatives. These changes allowed the college to move forward, with a district-wide vision which ultimately placed student learning outcomes as cornerstones of the college's mission. This rapid movement was in spite of having had a relatively damaged culture due to suspicions between faculty and administrators, weakened governance systems and competition among the three colleges in the district.

To facilitate planning, the college initiated dialogue with faculty, staff and administrators. Five faculty and two deans attended a California Assessment Conference. This group returned and conducted a variety of workshops on campus to educate the college community about the Student Learning Model. During initial stages of

communication the phrase often voiced throughout interviews was "centrality to assessing student outcomes would result in improved operations and accountability."

Getting Started

From 2001-2002 an internal task force was assembled and conducted an internal "audit" to examine student learning outcomes practices that existed on campus. From this "audit" it was discovered that a lot of confusion surrounded student learning outcomes. The group therefore assembled and disseminated a "white paper" on assessment, and a preliminary program level assessment proposal that endorsed the Johnson Foundation (1989) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. The proposal outlined activities, including timelines to measure and enhance student learning. This artifact guides the college through a series of systematic activities culminating with its next accreditation cycle in 2006. In cooperation with College B's Faculty Senate and the Accreditation Committee, an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee on assessment was created. They initially developed a statement on an Outcomes Assessment Philosophy, tied to the AAHE Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE, 1992). This statement cited effective outcomes assessment for improving student learning. The statement outlined the processes the college would use to collect data and described how this data would be used to improve courses, services and programs. These processes detailed the link between curricular improvement, staff and student development, teaching and learning innovation, broad-based planning, resource allocation, organizational leadership and institutional governance. The assessment process was communicated as "continuous and ongoing." One faculty member described the process as "empowerment for faculty to document

excellence in teaching and learning and to give them the tools to measure SLOs and to initiate improvement in pedagogy." However, at the most fundamental level, the college was guided by four deceptively simple questions: What are we trying to achieve? How good a job are we doing? How do we know how good a job we are doing? and how do we improve?

In tandem with the assessment team, other governance bodies and departments, such as the Institutional Effectiveness and Curriculum committees, offered assessment seminars to the campus. The college, according to an administrator, was "building the assessment capacity while establishing a collegial process." The college continued with its extensive faculty development evidenced by the sheer number of faculty sent to conferences and workshops both at the local, state and national levels. One administrator coined this strategy as "training the trainers."

One administrator felt that another important ingredient during initial stages of planning was to link SLOs to the college's Program Review. When he was hired he recalled:

> We had a program review system and this office hadn't gone through a program review for years. But we were on the list and I saw that as an opportunity to help define a new agenda for the institution. That's where we defined these SLOs that are also reflected in the Academic Plan and our division established, pretty ambitious, that in 5 years we would have the highest quality, best documented student outcomes in the state. We'd like to have an ambitious division but what that Office of Student Learning program review did was to show that this office was now going to be about improving teaching and learning and assessing. And I think it's very, very important if you're going to take SLOs forward for the academic leadership to establish that vision, to have a clear strategy and then never ever deviate from the message. We'll never deviate from the message that we do have the best outcomes assessment in place.

By January 2002 members of the assessment team had developed a number of papers for the college on assessment. By February 2002, a process for enhancing institutional effectiveness and a preliminary assessment plan was completed. From 2002-2003, the assessment team worked in concert with faculty, department chairs and the Academic Senate. They identified and developed specific individual program outcomes, assessment mechanisms, improvement strategies, faculty support systems and policies and procedures for purposes of goal setting that linked to the budget cycle. Critical to processes and implementation of SLO's was the "informal" dialogue that occurred among faculty. The power of dialogue was deceptively simple, yet was echoed as a key strategy for faculty buy-in. Another unique activity taken very seriously by the assessment team was interviews of several faculty on campus to gauge faculty opinions regarding SLOs. Interviews were conducted in person, designed to build trust and openness around the topic of SLOs. One faculty member stated, "The interviews were intended to educate faculty how SLOs, assessment and Program Review would link together." There was genuine concern and fears that SLOs was another task for faculty already overwhelmed. Also critical during the initial processes were workshops hosted and conducted by faculty for the faculty at College B. In these workshops faculty were educated about student learning outcomes but also were trained 'how-to' write and implement SLOs into their course record outlines and classes. How-to measure indirect and direct SLOs , outcomes/strategies and attainment of measurable SLOs were critical pieces in the workshops.

College B's draft Assessment Plan was recently introduced. The plan included templates on class outcomes, how to employ implementation strategies, to achieve measurable progress and attainment timelines. Central to the assessment plan is its clear alignment with the Curriculum Committee, Program Review and the link to Institutional Effectiveness. College B defined SLOs based upon the four College initiatives including: Improve student access, retention, and success; Provide effective learning and earning pathways for students; Support student learning through appropriate technology, and Support student learning through streamlined systems and processes.

Strategies for implementing SLOs were summed up by one administrator as "Communicate, communicate, communicate." In addition, to incentivise faculty to engage in SLOs, the institution secured a number of grants to support assessment activities and provide nominal financial support and resources including reassigned time. SLOs have been faculty driven, although one administrator stated "we are here to navigate the process." Additionally, vocational programs brought the community into the process of developing SLOs in the form of Advisory Committees. This connection to the community enhanced faculty buy-in and was seen as "leverage" from one administrator. The president's vision was noted as another key strategy. Paramount in this process was to decide whether or not to implement SLOs at the institution or course level. Having examined a number of models, including the Alverno Model, constituents at College B believed that implementing SLOs at the course level matched their institutional culture. A systematic approach was utilized to address SL's which one administrator contributes to the "Record speed the institution has moved with." Having the infrastructure in place prior to implementation of SLOs successfully drove the change process.

Interview Question #2

What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21ˢᵗ Century Skills)
of student learning outcomes exists at the institution?

Currently faculty write SLOs on course outline records which link to Program

Review at the institution. SLOs are at the course level with plans to move to the program

level. Other evidence such the task force Assessment Proposal, Faculty Senate

Assessment Philosophy, "White Papers" to Communities of Learning had strong SLOs

and assessment components. Minutes from these various committees involved with SLOs

have also been maintained that demonstrated conversations and dialogue had occurred.

Although the college does not utilize 21ˢᵗ Century Skills, as defined by the League for

Innovation, there is movement to define a set of core student learning processes for the

institution as evidenced in the draft Educational Master Plan. One administrator felt that

in the definition of SLOs it needs to be clear that, despite what the accreditation standards

say, data collected from SLOs "would never be used in faculty evaluations. He believed

the accreditation commission made a tactical mistake when they put the word evaluation

in the criteria. College B planned to use the data for formative evaluation and for

Program Review to support innovation and experimentation within the curriculum.

College B utilized a variety of databases to streamline evidence of SLOs. One

public Web site offered faculty the ability to submit course records that included SLO

statements. Additionally plans to include SLOs will be visible in the Strategic Plan,

Educational Master Plan, Program Review and Governing Board policy statements.

Student Satisfaction Surveys that centered on SLOs was maintained by faculty who had

already piloted outcomes in their courses. Faculty perception surveys on SLOs have been

conducted as well. Nationally normed disciplines, such as the Nursing program, maintain

SLOs as one administrator put it "like every community college in the country that has a

nursing program, we have the ultimate student learning there because our students have

to take state boards in order to enter the profession." There are a number of vocational

programs that articulate skills and student competencies, or what College B is calling

student learning outcomes. College B had a number of Title V grants that mandate

articulation of SLOs. One grant program was particularly impressive in that not only was

it primarily made up of Hispanic students, it was facilitated by a young Hispanic woman

who mentored and supported the cohort. Students surveyed attributed their success, in

part, to the program facilitator. The program has probably 90-95% success in retention

rates with an impressive number of the students that have moved on to the University.

The college had begun to collect this type indirect measure of evidence.

An administrator concluded:

> At some point I'd like to have assessment activities, indirect measures of
> evidence, go out and interview students and employers in the workplace to
> see how well trained and prepared they were. All these kinds of activities
> are going to be in the planning, but hopefully they're going to be reflected
> in the integrated Assessment Plan that we're going to be developing over
> the next couple of years.

Interview Question #3

**What barriers, if, any, exist in the implementation of student learning
outcomes?**

As with any new campus or change initiative, time is involved in a college's

transformational change. College B has experienced minimal challenges, based on the

fact the campus has emerged from a climate of mistrust amongst faculty and

administrators. To the contrary, faculty expressed that having had a "supportive"

president, who offered incentives for faculty development of SLOs reduced potential

barriers. The opportunities for dialog and conversations at the college-wide and discipline

levels enhanced the college's culture to move forward within a shared governance

structure, although not all campus constituents would agree with that observation. One

administrator stated "There have been intense bumps in the roads" although specific

"bumps" were not specified. The researcher was able to deduce that the "bumps"

centered on turf issues, collegial processes and interpretations of AB 1725, the shared

governance model for California Community Colleges.

Faculty have voiced that SLOs are just another "fad" and will eventually go away.

This has resulted in some non-participation in the movement. An ethics-based suspicion,

with faculty questioning the use of interpretive data collected from SLOs was evident.

The Union echoed this fear that implementing SLOs and assessment at the course level

would be utilized in faculty evaluations. One of the greatest barriers at College B, voiced

by both faculty and administrators, centers on the language used to define SLOs. This

topic is debated today and it seems consensus is required prior to campus-wide

implementation of SLOs.

One administrator stated that "SLOs require the college to shift culture in order to

create systems." Administrators and faculty realized there is no one way to achieve

implementation of SLOs. Although not voiced as a barrier, the researched concurred with

interview participants that institutional culture was an invisible barrier and warranted

discussion. An administrator voiced:

> We may all have a common goal, but every institution is going to take a
> different path in order to get there, because inevitability the kind of

student learning and assessment system you develop is also going to have to reflect your own history, your own traditions, the nature of your staff, the nature of your culture, your organization.

When interviewed, the president felt, in retrospect, had the college implemented SLOs at the institutional level versus the course level, that questions and confusion would have been reduced, although she stated that the "culture at College B doesn't allow for such a formal system." Individual campus cultures run deep with faculty and as College B moves forward unforeseen barriers not evident in the research may emerge.

Interview Question #4

What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

Although faculty had primarily driven the SLOs movement at College B, substantial support from administration was evident. It was clear during the interview process the tremendous commitment administrators had invested in SLOs. Two administrators stated that "faculty drives the assessment of SLOs but educational administrators have a roadmap and help to navigate!" Two administrators clearly had linked with faculty in the development of the college's Assessment Proposal and the draft Assessment Plan. One administrator commented, "I've persuaded the president to begin marshalling resources to kick-start assessment. I saw to it that a number of faculty were able to attend conferences at the state and national levels; that required resources." The president felt that the hiring of a new administrator and a new team of faculty Deans was critical for the process. She believed that the linkage between campus-wide governance committees allowed the SLOs movement to work at "warp" speed. Some college

members were shocked that 85% of faculty had written SLO's for their courses and it was believed this was due to faculty driving the process, although an administrator felt "it is a partnership between the educational administrators and the faculty." He commented:

> If you are going to make SLOs work, it's got to be a partnership of the educational administrators, the Faculty Senate, Department Chairs, along with individual faculty to make it work. Because when you're shifting to the assessment paradigm, what you are talking about is a major organizational change and we have to have as many people involved as possible. Leadership is required to get the movement going. I think there needs to be a lot of experiments, a lot of different approaches to SLOs; there's not going to be one size that fits all. It's going to be a number of years before we have a whole assessment phase, paradigm in place and to be institutionalized will be a 5 to 10 year process. Faculty has been the drivers; have to have administration as well.

Assessment of SLOs is a large undertaking for any institution and College B administrators generally voiced concern that there are not many operational dollars to "support assessment." The institution has sought external funding in the form of grants to get the movement of SLOs going. This has primarily been as administrative leadership activity. The ability to offer faculty "reassigned time to carry forward the agenda" is also critical. As one administrator commented, "Funding is going to be a huge issue and it's unfortunate." An administrator felt he intended to provide leadership statewide because he felt strongly that "if we don't get ahead of the curve, if we don't focus on improving student learning, somebody's going to do it for us, like the Federal government." This would undermine academic freedom and in the long run might undermine "academic integrity."

The role of the president was vital at College B given light of the college's culture of historically divided faculty and administrators. The researcher, therefore, offers a focused perspective of the president's role in the implementation of SLOs. At Opening

Day in fall 2003, the president presented to college constituents the concept of SLOs. From that point she was visible at campus seminars and workshops pertaining to SLOs. The president consistently praised and rewarded faculty for their investment in SLOs. Rewards were in the form of acknowledgement, affirmation or monetary awards. She believed her visibility and acknowledgment of faculty gave them a "feeling of not being taken advantage of." This perception of the president's role was echoed by both College B faculty and administrators.

In the fall 2002, an English class was taught by a faculty team which included the president. The team grappled with how they would implement and measure SLOs. This class is required to transfer to a local university and the university charged College B to include SLOs. The president had to wrestle with the concept of SLOs in the classroom and she reflected back on asking herself questions about what she expected students to learn from the class and how to engage them in the process. From this experience the president was viewed as "credible" amongst faculty. As one faculty put it "she walked the talk." The president was described by all interview participants as being "visible and involved" in the process. The president offered these words as advice: "Participate in SLOs as a teacher, offer lots of training to faculty, integrate the process, collaborate, give praise/recognition and be engaged."

College B Today

To summarize, a draft of a formal assessment plan with timelines, goals, and activities has been presented to the college and is expected to be finalized by the end of 2004. Ongoing planning continues to ensure that SLOs are linked to Program Review, Curriculum, Educational Master Plan and the college's overall Strategic Initiatives. As of

February, 2004, 192 (85%) of fulltime faculty had developed and electronically

submitted SLOs for their course record outlines. One hundred thirty- one (58%) fulltime

faculty have received training in interdisciplinary teams on SLOs development. The

Faculty Senate Assessment Team will become an institution-wide Assessment Team with

Co-chairs ideally made up of faculty and administration. By 2005 the Assessment and

Institutional Effectiveness Plan are expected to be integrated campus-wide and fully

implemented. Overall refinement of this plan is anticipated with linkage into the strategic

planning processes of College B and the District. The college believed that implementing

SLOs is a major paradigm shift and that to "shift to student outcomes assessment, it really

is going to take a whole lot of collegiality and a lot of interdisciplinary activity." To

effect change will take between 5 and 10 years. The college believed that the

sustainability of the movement mandates resource commitment and in a time of shrinking

budgets with demands for evidence of SLOs from external agencies, is cause for concern.

College C

Demographic Profile

College C is a single college, multi- campus district located in an urban area.

College C was founded in 1934 and today its main campus is situated on 122 acres. It

serves an average of 10,000 students per year, 31% of which students are full time, with

69% of the student body enrolled at least part time. The majority of College C students

are in the traditional student ages, 18-19 (22%), and 20-24 (32%), with 58% students

being female and 42% being male. Ethnicity composition of students included: white

(62%), Latino (18%), Asian (9%), African American (5%), American Indian (1%) and

Other/Unknown (5%). In the 2002-03 academic year, 416 vocational certificates and 357

Associates degrees were awarded and approximately 533 students transferred to either a California State or University of California institution.

Descriptive Overview

College C began studying and addressing student learning outcomes in 1997 with a group of faculty and administrators interested in the Alverno Model developed at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This model focuses on student learning and its central feature is a defined set of "institutional abilities" which all students are expected to acquire as a result of their educational experiences at Alverno College. This model was developed in the seventies and is still in existence today. In the spring of 1998, at a department chair retreat, faculty attended a workshop at a neighboring community college to learn about the Alverno College Model. In the summer of 1998, a team was assembled and attended an intensive week-long training at Alverno College to learn about the concept of developing an institutional based Learning Abilities Model. Upon return from Alverno, the members from this team worked to educate other faculty about the development of learning outcomes and the incorporation of outcomes into the curriculum. During the 2000 academic year learning outcomes assessments was included into the Program Review process that occurs for every department on a six-year, three-year and annual update basis. Each discipline was asked to identify at least one student learning outcome and develop a sample assessment. For the 2000-2002 year, one action plan that was incorporated into the Educational Master plan stated that "the college implemented a Learning Outcomes Initiative by sending faculty to not only Alverno College but to other conferences on learning outcomes and had also invited guest speakers to the college who presented learning outcomes assessment information." This

component offered faculty a forum in which departments and disciplines could share ideas and have conversations about learning outcomes activities.

In concert with this plan, the college sponsored a two-day workshop during the spring semester of 2002. Representatives from all departments/disciplines were asked to attend and work with faculty from Alverno College on how to develop learning outcomes. In the summer of 2002 a second team from College C was assembled and participated in training at Alverno College. All members from College C who attended training at Alverno College formed together and created the college's Lead Team that was comprised of eight faculty members, one administrator and one student. The group was dedicated to helping College C create its own unique strategies for developing their institutional abilities and learning outcomes program. It was this Lead Team that made the decision that the institution would develop overarching conceptual institutional learning abilities first, followed by developing student learning outcomes at the course level. The abilities and their definitions were published on the college's Web site. This is noteworthy as this approach to implementation was opposite of College A and College B. The institutional abilities were intended to provide coherence to the faculty-led process of developing student learning outcomes with the intention of students seeing the connection between learning outcomes as they progress through the college's curriculum. College C ultimately plans to translate institutional abilities into degree and certificate level learning outcomes.

In fall 2002, the Academic Senate conducted a poll of all full time and part time faculty and determined their position on the creation of Institutional Abilities to guide individual discipline and departmental student learning outcomes. That concept was

ratified, with 56% of faculty in favor of developing and implementing institutional

abilities as an overarching approach to student learning outcomes. The vote did not ask

the faculty to endorse a specific set of institutional abilities. In the spring of 2003,

College C utilized one of its major planning committees and chose five institutional

abilities for the college. Those initial abilities continue to be discussed today and the

Academic Senate has not had a vote to adopt specific abilities, although these preliminary

abilities offer a starting point for the college to allow individual departments and

disciplines to begin voluntary implementation within their courses. Once College C

adopts its official institutional abilities, the option to revise and refocus the abilities will

exist as the college becomes more experienced in institutionalizing this concept into their

culture. Communication to the college about learning outcomes was achieved through

websites, retreats, workshops, fall opening day, and voiced throughout the institution's

embedded collegial processes, as was echoed throughout every interview the researcher

conducted at College C. The college also welcomed input from all constituents utilizing a

Web Board where discussions on learning outcomes are chronicled today. In addition,

College C frequently defined terms that created confusion such as Institutional Ability,

Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives.

College C believes that the integration and implementation of its institutional

abilities will occur over a period of about six years. The newly created ad hoc committee

(name to be determined) is charged to gather information from a variety of institutions on

how they have established and assessed student learning outcomes. Once this has been

completed, the college will promote pilot implementations and assessments of student

learning outcomes. Following a two- to three-year period, the committee is expected to

develop college-wide recommendations for implementation of student learning outcomes across the curriculum. Evidence of institutional abilities will appear in the college's Academic Master Plan, Accreditation Self-Study, Discipline Outcomes, Course Outlines and the Program Review process that will include assessment based upon discipline-specific student learning outcomes. College C's planning agenda, as it pertained to student learning outcomes, included: (a) Creation of a new ad hoc committee, established by the Academic Senate to replace the previously existing Lead Team and in concert with the college's Academic Master Plan Committee, Policies and Procedures group jointly make recommendations on how student learning outcomes data will be collected and incorporated into the college's planning process; (b) Faculty revision of course outlines of record that will reflect learning outcomes in accordance with Institutional Abilities and assessments will be modified and re-tuned to accurately measure student success in said abilities and outcomes; (c) Data reflecting the efficacy of identified assessments will be developed and documented in the Program Review process; (d) Administrative support and professional development activities for gaining a better understanding of documenting discipline-specific student learning outcomes will foster successful implementation of the Institutional Abilities; (e) Vocational programs will work with community Advisory committees to develop assessment methodologies for student learning outcomes; (f) Student Learning Outcomes will be incorporated into the college catalog and; (g) The college will work with budgeting and fiscal teams to reflect fiscal support for demonstrated achievement of student learning outcomes.

Overall, College C defined itself as being at various stages of identifying, implementing and assessing measurable student learning outcomes. The college believed

it was engaged in a campus-wide dialogue on the issue of student learning outcomes and

was making progress towards defining what the college wants its students to know as a

result of having been at College C. It was clearly communicated that having been a pilot

site for the new accreditation standards, the institution has moved forward in its

transformation towards creating a culture of evidence.

Interview Question1:

What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes?

All four interview participants recalled that in 1997, with the revision of

accreditation standards focusing on SLOs, initial conversations began on how to address

SLOs. The Chief Instructional Officer had caught "wind" of the new standards and seized

this as an opportunity to redesign curriculum to include SLOs versus traditional learning

objectives. The president volunteered the college to pilot the new standards in 2004

versus going through reaffirmation of accreditation under the old standards. According to

the president the college was not in "chaos" at that time and he believed piloting the new

standards would "push" SLOs into the planning cycle. This activity was the major

impetus in moving the college forward with conversations on SLOs. One administrator

felt this gave the college "momentum." Preliminary activities included the study of the

Alverno Model by seven faculty members and one administrator. They personally visited

Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is important to realize at the heart of the

model is the focus on student learning. Central to the feature of this model is a defined set

of broad "institutional abilities" which all students are expected to attain as a result of

their experiences at Alverno College. A staff member commented:

The first group that went to Alverno was called the Team and that group started the discussion and brought it back, and then we brought Alverno here. They had a workshop for faculty. Since then we have sent two other groups to Alverno. I think serious conversations on SLOs started only in the last 2 years.

Questions College C modeled after Alverno included: When a student leaves College C what should they be able to do with those experiences? and What did they leave with that they didn't have before they came? College C believed this Model closely aligned with their institutional culture even though the two institutions are very different. College constituents felt that implementation of SLOs should therefore start at the institutional level versus at the course level.

Upon return, the team initiated conversations about how the Alverno Model could be modified to fit the culture of College C. A number of conversations on SLOs followed. One staff member recalled:

Upon return from Alverno, some members were really surprised that students at Alverno were able to communicate what they learned and how it fit with their lives and career. So that when they were done with the program or class or whatever it was, they knew what they were supposed to get out of a class that would help them in real life. They knew their competencies, and that's part of the learning outcomes. So I think the faculty- the couple of members I can think of-were really surprised, and then they came back as different people in the aspect that "we need to do this, we need to start working towards this."

This original group formed the college's C Team, an ad hoc Academic Senate committee driven by faculty but also included two administrators. The C Team was dedicated to assisting the college in designing its own unique strategy for developing SLOs and eventually developed the first draft of the four institutional abilities: communication, analysis, problem solving and community responsibility. Faculty discussions eventually led to the inclusion of a fifth ability, aesthetic responsiveness. The

institutional abilities were published on a Web site, which remains central to the college's communication today.

Those institutional abilities were intended to provide coherence to both faculty and students as the college embraced the vision that students would see the commonalities between learning outcomes in the courses they took and as they progressed through the curriculum at large. The C Team communicated that "institutional abilities will ultimately be translated into degree-certificate-level learning outcomes." The C Team operationally defined SLOs as a discipline-specific application of an institutional ability. College C viewed institutional abilities as overarching with learning outcomes at the program then course level. Faculty from College C began to realize the benefits of implementing SLOs to both the students and the college and engaged in the process. When asked if College C had a formal SLOs Model, a staff member responded:

> We are in progress. With the new standards, the accreditation visiting team wants to see that we are planning toward putting together SLOs, so planning and planning is what is happening. Being a pilot school, we had to work toward implementing SLOs. So what we have to work now is how institutional abilities fit into a program level and department level with student services and all those other aspects of campus that obviously the accreditation standards require.

Getting Started

In the spring of 1998, department chairs attended a retreat to learn about the Alverno Model. Concurrently, a second group of faculty spent one week at Alverno College to learn about SLOs and classroom assessment. Upon return these same faculty members worked in concert with the college's Academic Policies and Procedures Committee or commonly known as a Curriculum Committee, to educate other faculty about how to develop SLO's and incorporate into class level curriculum. Incentives such

as flex-credit were offered for faculty to attend workshops. An administrator in early

investigations of SLOs models observed after having attended several outcomes

workshops about outcomes:

> We found institutions were all over the board with this process. Some
> people were starting at the top looking down, some people were starting at
> the bottom looking up and I think we will probably end up starting at both
> ends and working toward the middle. We really started SLOs with the
> degree level institutional outcomes. Alverno College asked themselves
> when they started this journey three decades ago, what do we want our
> students to know and what should they be able to do when they leave
> here? We found a very strong compelling connection to that. We thought
> whether we're talking about a course, a single course or two courses, we
> should be asking ourselves what we want our students to leave with that
> they didn't have when they came here. And so the Alverno Model made
> sense, I think, for us to ask that question at a broad level, it was a logical
> place to start.

By 2000, the C Team identified preliminary SLOs that they incorporated into the

college's Program Review process. Disciplines undergoing Program Review were asked

to identify at least one SLO and devise a sample assessment. A basic question asked

during Program Review is to discuss the relevance to SLOs in the discipline. A faculty

member felt the college was at a point where the college needed to say something to the

effect "discuss the status of the development of or incorporation of SLOs and

assessments in your programs and courses, like a status report." Development of SLOs

was incorporated into the Educational Master Plans. Specific action was delineated such

as "implement SLOs initiatives by sending faculty to Alverno College to be educated

about SLOs, inviting guest speakers to the college with a focus on SLOs and create a

forum in which departments and disciplines will report on SLO's activities." In the spring

2002, representatives from almost all disciplines attended a two-day workshop at the

college conducted by faculty from Alverno College. A student who lived near College C

was identified as an Alverno graduate and participated in this workshop. She gave a powerful testimony to the benefits SLOs had in her life beyond the college experience. This strategy employed by the C Team promoted faculty buy-in.

In fall 2002 the C Team hosted a faculty discussion on SLOs at the fall orientation day. Discussions were followed up on a Web Board from October through December 2002. Discussions are chronicled and can be viewed today. The five proposed institutional abilities were posted and a majority of College C's faculty debated the merits of abilities as well as what constituted a student learning outcome and concerns regarding implementation issues. In November 2002 another faculty forum was held to decide whether or not College C wanted to embrace institutional abilities at all. The Faculty Senate sent out a vote that was ratified with 54 percent in favor. The vote, however, did not endorse the specificity of the institutional abilities. Participants interviewed all concurred that institutional abilities are still in a draft form. Participants echoed that "this is a work in progress and continued dialogue is expected on this matter."

A new committee is being formed that will replace the C Team. The Faculty Senate will incorporate C Team members and make this a joint committee with the college. Currently there is discussion regarding release time (100%) for the faculty chair. Other college members from the Educational Master Plan Committee and the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee will be included. The C Team has been charged to gather information from a wide variety of institutions on how-to establish, assess and implement SLOs, promote pilot implementations of SLOs and continue development of the college's institutional abilities. This process demonstrated the college's commitment to collegial processes that were voiced during each interview. College C was dedicated to

the inclusion of all constituents and was the only college who insisted that the researcher include a classified staff member in the interview process. Discussion on institutional abilities and SLOs has occurred primarily within the Faculty Senate and currently a pocket of faculty members have begun implementing SLOs and institutional abilities in their own courses. Interviewees at College C referred to SLOs as not being "a flavor of the month" and has encouraged buy-in from all constituents. An administrator felt that after two to three years of extensive "piloting" of SLOs, the committee would be able to develop broad implementation plans for SLOs to "ultimately encompass all courses and programs" at the college.

All participants interviewed clearly articulated that SLOs would be closely aligned with Program Review, the Planning and Budget Committee and the Governing Board service indicators. The newly created Faculty Senate Committee, which replaced the original C Team, will work in tandem with the college's governance structure to offer support, feedback and resources to faculty and act as an advisory body to the college. One classified staff member offered the following advice for practitioners: "Plan SLOs early, establish how to assess SLOs, don't make faculty feel like SLOs have been imposed on them and include all staff in the decision making process." Finally, one administrator indicated that while "various individual departments have identified SLOs and course-specific tools for assessment, collegewide implementation of the institutional abilities is a work in progress."

Interview Question #2

What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi, 21st Century Skills)
of student learning outcomes exists at the institution?

Evidence of measurable student learning outcomes exists in seven department Program Review documents. One department included sample learning outcomes with course specific assessments and two of the proposed institutional abilities, communication and problem solving. A classified staff member commented:

> I think there is a lot of evidence of SLOs in the class level. We have faculty that have gone above and beyond establishing SLOs for their classes. We have a faculty member who worked out of the goodness of his heart, established SLOs for every single lesson that he was going to teach. He made students aware of what they were learning and in fact received a lot of student feedback that SLOs helped students understand what they were learning.

Evidence of SLOs exists on a number of college Web sites, minutes from the C Team, faculty emails on SLOs and training materials. The Educational Master Plan, Curriculum Committee, Program Review Committee and the recent accreditation *Self-Study* all reflect evidence of SLOs. One administrator indicated that SLOs will be documented in student clubs and the college's well established Service Learning program. SLOs will eventually be embedded in the college catalog, Governing Board policy and institutional databases. The college plans to develop a Teaching Academy in conjunction with the Professional Development Office. This will serve as a streamlined central location for resources, information and dissemination of SLOs. The college envisioned having a Curriculum and Assessment Specialist housed in the Teaching Academy serving as an "in-house' consultant. The college believed this addition would facilitate implementation of SLOs. One administrator stated "institutional adoption of SLOs takes time as SLOs will create transformational change."

There is a Web-based system for managing existing course outlines and new course proposals. This system will include as part of the process inclusion of SLOs. An administrator stated, "Our goal is to have SLOs on every course syllabi, course outline and reflected in our grading policy." A newly appointed Faculty Senate committee is currently working to develop the implementation of SLOs in vocational educational programs.

Interview Question #3

What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

Participants voiced throughout the interview process that faculty were "skeptical" about SLOs. Some saw it as another fad, although College C leaders stated SLOs are not "a flavor of the month" and this has become a slogan for the institution. A classified member stated "faculty perceived SLOs as imposing on their academic freedom." At College C there are a number of highly enthusiastic faculty (10%) that have already implemented SLOs in their classes. By far the majority of faculty think SLOs are a "good idea" but they are not sure how to implement. There is also faculty that have voiced "there is no way I'm doing this, over my dead body." One administrator felt there were "pockets" of resistance. A staff member stated, "Faculty feel that SLOs are imposing on their academic freedom, so they aren't gonna do it. I would say that's a very small number. I would say that's very, very small." The majority of faculty is "in the middle;" they believe SLOs are a good thing but are concerned that they will take a lot of work. Sentiments echoed "maybe this is a flavor of the month and I don't want to spend a

whole semester to change my curriculum and find out something else I need to do. Let's see how this goes and maybe I'll jump in your boat and go with this student learning outcomes thing."

To address this group of faculty, College C has offered a lot of trainings and workshops. Presentations have been from faculty and they have provided examples how they have incorporated SLOs into their classes. Faculty have communicated they are developing SLOs not only at the classroom but departmental levels. However, the consensus with faculty is that SLOs are going to take a lot of work and they feel they will need support in the process. College C has addressed barriers by offering trainings, workshops, faculty orientations, etc. which administrators indicated they will continue to do so. One administrator stated, "The continuity of college players is paramount so as not to create a culture of discontent and mistrust." She felt that type of barrier would be insurmountable in creating a culture of evidence. Although not voiced as a barrier, one administrator felt that the college "plans until it is perfect" and there may not be infinite time to implement SLOs. He felt that an SLO plan needs to be "put out to the college, develop it and re-develop it and re-develop it."

A classified member felt very involved in the process of implementing SLOs at the college although this was not the perspective of her colleague. She stated:

> Being a Tri-Chair for the accreditation Self-Study, I made sure I went to the classified Senate meetings. I presented information on SLOs and wanted then to see how they fit with the classified employees. That was a good discussion. I think the accreditation standards and the belief in the past is that accreditation deals with the faculty aspect. The instruction and classified felt "there's an accreditation coming. Oh, but it doesn't fit with us anyway so who cares." But I think now more than ever with the new standards the classified employees need to participate in the student learning outcomes in their departments. We need more training to learn how to implement SLOs and how they are beneficial to our students.

Although not identified by most constituents as a barrier, the message was clear that all college members need to be involved and communication is critical to reduce barriers to implementation.

Interview Question #4

What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes?

Administrative leadership addressed SLOs through a variety of venues. One approach was through the accreditation perspective that communicated a new focus of the standards were on SLOs. At yet another level SLOs were presented to the college as a movement that had already occurred in the rest of the United States. Administrators were key constituents in voicing that SLOs were not a "fad" but produced relevant data that lead to educational and planning improvements. One administrator commented "SLOs don't occur overnight, faculty needs support and models, and they can't be expected to reinvent the assessment wheel. They need to collaborate, have conversations and allocated resources." Administrative leadership was clearly a link in the implementation of SLOs, particularly when it came to budget and resource issues.

Linking SLOs to not only educational improvement but to accountability was echoed by three administrators. Administrators "seized" opportunities for dialogue and to address SLOs at all college meetings in the fall and spring semesters. The president highlighted to the campus at one fall orientation how SLOs focused on students and retention of students. The president stated:

> At one fall orientation there was not only faculty and administration that presented on SLOs, but we had this student who explained how she benefits from the Alverno model. She was very good because she started

telling us how she doubted the process was going to be useful to her because her concern was finishing her degree. She articulated the benefits from realizing SLOs don't just impact students in the class but in their lives. That was a really nice presentation.

Administration in conjunction with the C Team led the way at fall 2002 orientation where they arranged small groups made up of faculty, staff and administrators that discussed SLOs. These groups were facilitated by members of the C Team. The president was observed to support college constituents and was visible during discussions that centered on SLOs. The president stated "SLOs produce change, change is good; the college is willing to change for the betterment of our students and the community." He felt that as leader he must "understand, listen, and move forward together." The president felt it was "revolutionary" that faculty across disciplines were "talking" to one another, this was an institutional change process itself. SLOs encouraged those conversations and the president hoped to "integrate" a broader conversation with all faculty, those in general courses and vocational/career faculty. Finally, the president felt instrumental in shaping a "common" language on SLOs was asking the simple question, "How do we teach students to be more effective citizens?" His goal for SLOs is that they will "create a continuous feedback loop." The president was charged by the Board of Trustees which wanted the college to "be aware of SLOs and plan in that context. The president ultimately reports to that body and utilized the charge from the Board as a "springboard" to move forward with SLOs. Upon examination of the president's role in implementing SLOs he responded:

> The culture of this institution is that we have been able to allow a lot of ideas to develop and be tried. We have some amazing failures that we can point to and that's really important in the development of SLOs, because if you don't try, you don't succeed-until you've tried you may fail. I see my

role as this person who says "yes" a lot. So I think we have a strong focus on retention and to me that's tied to SLOs and accountability to our students. And that's the sort of theme we have been able to push as an administration and institution.

The president felt his leadership supported good ideas related to SLOs and had the opportunity to "highlight" these to the campus. He felt that he was very "visible" during workshops, orientations and workshops which evidenced his support and was important with something that was new and had some resistance. The president was eloquent in describing the culture at the institution where he felt, as the college president, his role was not to "be out there leading the charge, given our culture, but to support dedicated people in the process." In retrospect he was reluctant to give advice to other leaders initiating SLOs but he did offer:

> You have to match the outcome with the institution you are at. We happen to be a highly collaborative institution in our decision-making. And so what has worked for us is from the beginning to include all constituents. I think anywhere when you are trying to do something to change the approach in instructional programs, to the academic life of the institution, I think you need to start with members of the Academic Senate. Get the leadership to understand what it is you are trying to do, listen to them, make adjustments and be ready to move forward together. For us it's very much how we plan everything here, so SLOs aren't really too different except institutionally the effects are much broader. My thrill is finally giving faculty a reason to talk to each other. If I have two faculty members who teach the same introductory course, talk to each other and they understand what it is they and the departments have defined as SLOs for the students, and that the institution has agreed what is important for the students to have when they finish here, I think that's revolutionary.

College C Today

A handful of faculty currently assesses SLOs in their courses. What constitutes a student learning outcomes has created a mixture of confusion and faculty had voiced

"what we need are models to reduce the confusion around here." Plans to send faculty out to other institutions to observe and also to offer a variety of models via a Web site is the college's next step. Opportunities for faculty to develop their own models through reassignment or support from a stipend are also planned. Having recently piloted the new accreditation standards, the visiting team recommended that the college needed to develop a SLOs plan with timelines and specific tasks and responsibilities assigned to individuals to get SLOs "woven" throughout the course-programs-degree levels at the college. Administrators have communicated "no one size fits all," meaning the college still needs to collect a variety of assessment models and adapt to the institutions culture. The president believed a number of models would be collected by summer 2004 and by fall 2004 pilot models would occur in the classroom. An Assessment Model that will include timelines, specific tasks and assigned responsibilities is expected to be in a draft form by the fall 2004. One administrator envisioned SLOs as "woven" into the course, program and degree levels although linkage to what the college's trustees want needs to be addressed. One administrator felt that by the end of spring 2004 a draft SLOs Assessment Plan would be in place with implementation in fall 2004 followed by an "intensive, systematic learning curve" in 2005. Currently under discussion is the creation of a Teaching Academy, a central place to disseminate, support faculty and operate as a "warehouse." SLOs data would be aggregated and linked to an outcome Web site. The college would hire, perhaps on a temporary basis, an assessment specialist and a curriculum specialist to work with faculty on the redesign of curriculum they would work as an "in-house consultant." Ideally, this plan would link to the Professional Development program for faculty.

Some interview participants from the college felt the Commission wanted a "thematic" approach to the new standards, yet lack of support to incorporate this approach was felt. One administrator felt that the Commission was driving SLOs; however, it was understood that there was a lot of external pressure from the federal government demanding accountability from accrediting bodies. He stated, "The Commission is asking institutions to transform themselves and that transformation expected is significant." Implementation of SLOs must funnel into existing processes and structures given financial resources at the college level are too "thin" to support such widespread encompassing activities.

Comparisons of College A, B and C

All three colleges examined suggest there are formidable challenges in initiating a student learning outcomes movement. Although all three colleges were prompted by different venues to address student learning outcomes, changes in accreditation standards clearly was the impetus. Similarities in processes and/or strategies institutions utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes were uncovered. Artifacts, such as course record outlines of student learning outcomes, existed at two colleges. It is noteworthy that 21st Century Sills, as identified by the League for Innovation, were not referred to by any of the colleges. Administrative leadership in concert with respected faculty was instrumental in reducing potential barriers in the implementation of student learning outcomes. A detailed theme analysis follows that examines college findings.

Theme Analysis of College A, B and C

Field notes, artifacts and interview transcripts were analyzed from College A, B and C in order to identify global patterns and emerging themes. Table 1 represents common themes identified from all study participants. Table 2 provides evidence of student learning outcomes. Table 3 offers a theme analysis of College A and C versus College B. Table 4 offers a theme analysis of College A and B versus College C. Tables are followed by a brief discussion of each theme.

Table 1: Common Themes between College A, College B, College C:

Theme	Findings
Communication	Faculty and administrators have dialogue, informal/formal, inclusion of classified staff.
Improvement	SLOs lead to improvement in teaching and learning, improve quality of life for student.
Education	Faculty/staff workshops, seminars, readings, college visits, examine SLO models. Language.
Accreditation	Site visits "jump-start" examination of SLOs.
Evidence	SLOs documented in course outlines, Program Review.

Communication

All thirteen participants consistently expressed throughout interviews that communication was the key "ingredient" in the initial planning phases of implementing SLOs. Communication from faculty and administration was essential in informing the campus community. Venues such as convocation, orientation, retreats and workshops were the most common avenues for conversations and dialogue on SLOs. Participants felt

communication was critical in the "assessment piece" of SLOs and that SLOs will become part of the college's processes. Several administrators expressed that communication must be inclusive of faculty from all departments; both the "Gen Ed" and vocational/occupational areas ensured full college participation. Faculty felt that cross-disciplinary communication enhanced the feeling that "we're all in this together."

Faculty that had already piloted SLOs in their courses expressed it was helpful when the college communicated what SLOs were and offered declarations such as 'Statement and Philosophy of Assessment." One faculty member interviewed stated, "Communication is an on-going problem for most institutions, so communication through workshops, presentations, retreats and woven into program review is critical. Faculty needs to hear SLOs are a mandate and they must understand what assessment is all about." This was a critical piece in the communication process, yet at his institution he recalled that at most functions, there was always low faculty turnout; he found that "frustrating."

There was expressed frustration at one college surrounding communication with the accrediting Commission. General lack of guidance in the form of "how to" write the Self-Study thematically to link to new standards was a concern for some practitioners. Conversations from colleges with the Commission requesting models, yet offering few, was a concern as well. This concern was a challenge to the researcher. Having conducted extensive research at three colleges, it appeared that SLO models are contingent on institutional culture; therefore, prescribed models may or may not fit. Perhaps the challenge remains for institutions to go through the discovery and development process, although support from the Commission during initial model development would be useful

in the quest for implementation of learning outcome. Participants acknowledged and highlighted that the "informal" faculty-to-faculty conversations were critical in the communication loop. Some had created "mentor" relationships which strengthened faculty buy-in. One administrator summarized implementing SLOs into three words "Communicate, communicate, communicate."

Improvement

Student learning outcomes were described over and over as leading to improvement. SLOs focused on student success and improved learning. SLOs improve and also validate for faculty what it is they are best at, teaching. SLOs improve accountability to the public as well as providing data to make evidence-based decisions. Improvement in courses also was viewed as a direct result of implementing SLOs. One faculty member stated: "SLOs improve student access, retention and success, effective learning and earning pathways for students." Overall, SLOs help align programs of study-prerequisites have SLOs that directly should link to subsequent classes. Ideally, SLOs should link to budgeting, planning, institutional effectiveness and improve instruction. Participants believed SLOs improved and clarified expectations for students, faculty and staff. Colleges need to distinguish between accountability measures and educational improvement. Improvement in the teaching and learning process was a consistent theme. Two faculty members summed up SLOs: "It's all about improved student learning."

SLOs lead to improving and sustaining credible evidence of learning achieved through multiple measures of assessment. Equally critical is that processes for interpreting and using evidence for improvement are a result of faculty engaged in the

development, collection, application, and documentation that ultimately is evidence of improvement.

Education

Education was crucial in the implementation of SLOs. Faculty communicated that education about what SLOs were "reduced resistance." Education in the form of literature readings (i.e. Angelo & Cross works cited frequently), attending conferences and workshops was essential. Not only did this provide professional growth opportunities but allowed for meaningful informal dialogue, evidenced throughout the study as the single most important link in the process. Examination of existing models, physically visiting colleges and bringing experts to campuses was useful, both to faculty and administrators.

Faculty felt that pilot projects were an essential ingredient. Not only did they provide for experimentation of SLOs but also gave evidence to other faculty that SLOs were not a fad, could be done, were fun for students, and there was a lot of flexibility. Pilot projects also allowed for modification and refinement of the process. One college offered a number of workshops for faculty given by faculty. Faculty was placed into cross-disciplinary teams which created the opportunity to establish relationships outside of their "silos." Faculty were trained in "how-to" write SLOs into their course outlines and were given examples how faculty implemented SLOs in their courses. Strategies for training were based on over thirty interviews that had been conducted at the institution. Faculty developed workshops based on results of those surveys. Faculty leadership in the education of SLOs was echoed from most study participants. The language of student learning outcomes was a concern from faculty leadership. Faculty was cautioned about using language they "don't own", i.e. reflective of specific disciplines.

Finally, colleges' educated new faculty hires on SLOs and the direction colleges were headed. Most participants voiced that overall, new faculty were enthusiastic and embraced the concepts of SLOs. One administrator summed up faculty education as "training the trainers."

Accreditation

Implementation of SLOs was consistently "jump started" with colleges who had recently had accreditation site visits. Two colleges had been asked to report on the progress of implementation in required mid-term reports. Additionally, colleges felt "pressured" form the accrediting Commission to address and focus on SLOs. One president recognized that SLOs were on the "horizon" and was mindful more than five years ago that evidence would be required on SLOs. One college also had a "thumbs-up" that SLOs were looming. They had a faculty leader that had worked with the Commission in the development of the new standards.

Administrators believed that the new standards are not going away any time soon and leadership on outcomes was critical. One administrator stated that he is "insistent" on providing leadership with this movement to get the state "ahead of the curve." He believes that if colleges do not start focusing on SLOs and improving learning, that "somebody's going to do it for us" and that is the argument he has made from the beginning. He felt that there are "rumblings" at the Federal level on accountability measures which would be a disaster for all of higher education. External mandates would not only undermine academic freedom but in the long run could undermine academic integrity with the Legislature imposing issues regarding measures of student learning.

Evidence

   The researcher, through artifact reviews, discovered a variety of evidence of

SLOs. Artifacts most common included: course outlines; vocational skills and

competencies; statement and philosophy of assessment; surveys on SLOs; board policy

and statements of SLOs in college catalogs. Although one Board had mandated the

college address SLOs, policy to support assessment of SLOs was limited. Discussions of

policies and procedures to support assessment are on the horizon. Table #2 outlines

detailed artifacts.

Table 2: **Evidence of Student Learning Outcomes**-Adopted from WASC-Senior (2002) "Guide to Using Evidence in Accreditation Process." Additions from Waite (2004).

Evidence of SLOs	College A	College B	College C
Institutional databases; Web sites	X	X	X
Documents: catalogs, handbooks, factbooks, policy statements, college procedures, strategic plans, program review, educational master plans	X	X	
Steering Committee(s) minutes and reports	X	X	X
Surveys of students, faculty, alumni feedback.		X	
Assessment results: Nationally normed discipline exams, capstone courses, course rubrics, portfolios, self-reported (student) gains in knowledge/skills, cross-disciplinary learning communities. Direct and indirect assessment measures.	X	X	
Departmental mission includes SLOs.	X	X	
Institution Statement/Philosophy/Definition of SLOs	X	X	X
Efficacy of SLOs assessment	X	X	

Table 3: Theme Analysis of College A and College C vs. College B:

Theme	Findings for College A and College C	Findings for College B
Collegial	AB 1725: Shared governance structures. Inclusion of classified staff in developing SLOs.	Interpretations of AB1725 vary. Disconnect between who will lead, manage and supervise implementation of SLOs.
Culture	SLOs transform college culture; evaluate institutional culture prior to implementation.	Culture not consistently included in planning process.

Collegial

Two presidents insisted that SLOs must be a collegial process. Interpretations of AB 1725 seem to vary according to the institution, yet the partnerships between administration, faculty and staff were critical, particularly during initial stages. Presidents echoed working in "tandem" with faculty so the task was not an authority relationship. Faculty felt they could spearhead SLOs at the classroom level but were challenged with implementing SLOs at the institutional level. A shift to a learning model will mandate collegiality and interdisciplinary activities to pedagogy reflective of SLOs.

Culture

Shifting to an "assessment" paradigm will result in organizational change. This shift will refocus a college from teaching to learning. It was evident that implementation of SLOs required a match to the institutional culture. Faculty has to make "sense" of what SLOs are and need to able to get their "arms" around the concept. One college felt implementing SLOs at the institutional level was too abstract and conversations became difficult. Yet another college, because of their culture, felt that the only way to move

forward was to start defining SLOs at the institutional level. Outcomes would "bubble-

down" to the classroom level which would "create a culture of assessment" for faculty.

As one faculty stated, "SLOs will change the culture of a campus, it can be done, and it

will take time."

Table 4: Theme Analysis of College A and College B vs. College C:

Theme	Findings for College A and College B	Findings for College C
Process	5-10 year process, streamlined, thoughtful, consolidated, centralized, flexible, alignment w/WASC standards. Process defined by college.	Process defined by acceptance of outside SLO model.
Leadership	Leaders are respected faculty, provide momentum, and allocate resources.	Leadership from accreditation perspective. Accreditation self-study teams drove SLOs. Pilot college for new accreditation standards.
Trust	Faculty/staff need to trust process and individuals involved.	Trust inherent in college structure.
Barriers	SLOs controversial, external intrusion, infringement of academic freedom, linked to faculty evaluations.	Abundance of training/workshops reduced barriers encountered.
Resources	Support, manpower and budget allocation.	Resources referred to in conversation, no demonstration of reassigned time, stipends, etc.
Strategies	Initiate SLOs classroom level, pilot SLOs, "bubble-up" of SLOs to institutional levels.	Initiate SLOs at institutional level. SLOS "bubble-down" to classroom level.

Process

The process of implementing SLOs was equally important to study participants. Phrases and key words frequently offered that described processes included: systematic, thoughtful, no shortcuts, leads to a product, consolidated, centralized planning, flexible, disseminate data, slow, streamlined, bubble-up, minimize burden, movement, momentum, and meaningful. It was evident that the three colleges investigated had been involved with SLOs no less that two years, although most agreed this was at least a 10-15 year process. One administrator stated, "We don't want a process which just fills the need; we want a process that is beneficial and links to WASC standards." A president outlined the process quite simply: develop a statement and philosophy on assessment, define what assessment is, develop a committee to drive the process, inventory what processes you already have, pilot projects, develop Web sites to communicate the process and institutionalize the process.

The process needs to be integrated with pre-existing processes in the college. Conducting an 'internal-audit' of existing process will reduce duplication in efforts and be less burdensome for faculty. Linking SLOs into Program Review, Educational Master Plan, and Strategic Plans will incentivise faculty buy-in to the process. SLOs that were linked to budgeting and planning were powerful for constituents. Linkages also created a "feedback loop" whereby Instructional programs and administrators could demonstrate linkages on Web sites. For multi-campus districts SLOs fed into college goals whereas multi-college plans fed into district plans.

Integrated enrollment plans that blended in SLOs were discovered at one college. SLOs that were integrated into faculty professional development activities were helpful

and also colleges with a Professional Development Office felt that this was a strategic location to warehouse SLOs resources. All colleges had developed various flowcharts to visually demonstrate the integration of SLOs into established college processes. These charts also illustrated direction and "movement" of outcomes.

All participants agreed that to create buy-in to the process constituents had to be engaged. Engagement was solicited through retreats; faculty/staff flex days, convocations, orientations and seminars. One president offered that to report on the process "engaged-in" created opportunities for dialogue which was a vital link in the process of developing SLOs.

Moving SLOs forward was always initiated through either a steering committee or task force. Committees were viewed as instrumental in "expanding" the dialogue. Participants concurred that these groups were comprised of "respected, seasoned, thoughtful" members. The groups were primarily composed of faculty with experience in assessment or had been involved with an accreditation self-study. Inclusion of one or two administrators was also important. One administrator coined the idea that "faculty drive the process, administrators jump start" SLOs.

Leadership

All study participants felt that the leadership involved with implementing SLOs was essential. Presidents interviewed felt they were instrumental in creating "momentum" and all concurred that once the process was underway they took a "hands off" approach and "got out of the way." It was powerful when Presidents endorsed the introduction of SLOs and were visible at workshops, retreats, and seminars. One president offered leadership in the form of support as it pertained to good ideas related to

SLOs. He also would "highlight" these ideas to the campus in a variety of way, such as the fall orientation where he attended one of the half-day workshops on SLOs and felt his visibility created support for the process. He recalled, "I feel I really let staff take the ball and run and they have." Given the culture, the president didn't feel he was required to be out in front "leading the charge." His leadership came in the form of support for the dedicated people who did the legwork for the institution and he felt "that seemed to work well." The theme of support, particularly with a new idea that had the potential for resistance was strategic. One president commented that to support the concept was very important "not only to student learning outcomes but everything that takes place on the campus."

Administrators voiced that they realized their role was to "acknowledge" that implementing SLOs was a "tremendous amount of work." One administrator described rules to lead by: have an attitude of improvement; reward efforts of improvement by looking for local success stories; be consistent; don't change the rules; communicate and publicize the process at any opportunity.

Most presidents felt their job as a leader was to "marshal" resources for implementing SLOs. This was in partnership with other administrators who worked in concert with faculty, department chairs and the Faculty Senate. Finally, one president reflected that in the early planning stages she "acknowledged, affirmed and appreciated" the work the college had completed and she felt this gave constituents a "feeling" that advantage had not been taken of them. She also felt recognition had to not only come in the form of praise but tangible things like stipends or reassigned time. In retrospect,

leaders who were visible, engaged and collaborated contributed these attributes to progress their colleges had made thus far.

Trust

Faculty interviewed felt they had to "trust" the people in the process. Trust infiltrated the college in the form of its governance structure and colleges where terms like "confidence, belief, reliance and care" were communicated and visible had established this value. One administrator offered that you have to "trust faculty to do the right things."

Barriers

SLOs were frequently viewed as an "external imposition." Motives or consequences of implementing SLOs often were stated as having "unclear motives." All colleges struggled with an organizational base or lack thereof for SLOs. However, faculty fear and skepticism was the greatest barrier discovered. Controversy over assessment techniques and clear definitions of SLOs were frequently referenced. How data from SL's would be collected and used was evidenced with faculty feeling data would be tied to their evaluations. Unions also voiced concerns how administration would use data in punitive measures like "tracking" data back to individual faculty. One faculty member stated, "To minimize these fears will take time; faculty will need to witness the process to trust it." An undercurrent of infringement of academic freedom was discovered.

Leadership perspectives on minimizing barriers included involvement in the process from all constituents and as one president said, "Don't forget the classified staff." Leadership felt that scarce resources for an initiative of this magnitude were a barrier. Measurement of SLOs was seen as a "huge, unfunded mandate." Operational dollars

were required, as well as other support mechanisms such as research and planning needed to support documentation of SLOs. It was believed that institutions would be required to seek external funding for financial barriers to be reduced. Finally, deciding "where to start" was consistently found to be the greatest challenge of all.

Resources

Faculty and administrators alike believed that resources were the link to successful implementation of SLOs. Most common resources to support faculty included: stipends, reassigned time, and assistance with pilot projects. Mentoring for faculty was a resource that not always mentioned, the researcher saw evidence in terms of committee members assisting and meeting one-to-one with faculty. Discussions at department meetings, feedback during the process, helping faculty develop SLOs in their course outlines and classes were tremendous resources that were not always monetary.

Strategies

Although a number of strategies were discovered, some were intentional while others were not. To gain faculty and staff buy-in was essential. Presidents typically introduced SLOs to the college and handed the concept to faculty. Determination of SLOs either at the institutional level or the class level was always the first strategy employed. One president echoed, "Figure out campus culture, decide to assess SLOs at either the class level or the institutional level, if you don't the process gets bogged down." Institutional culture dictated the direction for implementation. Selecting a small group of faculty to examine, define and develop models of SLOs was frequently a strategy to enlarge the process. As mentioned, providing support, resources and technical advice was critical.

Develop, refine, re-define and field-test models was employed. Cross-disciplinary teams were tremendously successful. Strategies to collect data and determine if efforts made a difference were discussed although not on a large scale. Dissemination of information to expand the number of faculty involved was in progress at the collection of study data. Finding allies and early adopters within the faculty in both general education and vocational areas was common and strategic to reduce faculty alienation. The most powerful strategy employed was developing a common vision and approach to organizational issues of student leaning.

Summary

Findings suggest formidable challenges exist in initiating movement of student learning outcomes at California public community colleges The planning phase includes intense communication on SLOs. Retreats, convocations and orientations offer opportunities for discussion and conversations. Informal dialogue is critical during early planning phases. Literature readings, examination of models and visits to other colleges are excellent methods to educate faculty. Awareness of intuitional culture reduced resistance and barriers. Processes for implementation need to be streamlined, thoughtful and consolidated so they don't appear burdensome for faculty. Alignment with Program Review, Strategic Plans and Educational Master Plans is a must. Leadership inspiring a shared vision, encouraging others' involvement, establishing momentum and securing resources is strategic in the plan phase.

The implementation phase includes experimentation with pilot projects, fostering collegiality and strengthening faculty's trust and confidence in the process. The opportunities to define, re-define and refine student learning outcomes are required.

Faculty need to see that outcomes lead to improvement in the teaching and learning process. During the implementation phase faculty with fears that outcomes will be used for punitive measures need to hear local success stories to builds confidence in the process.

The documentation phase requires a centralized warehouse with a variety of databases and Web sites to facilitate data management. Colleges studied are challenged with a lack of an infrastructure in place to facilitate collection, analysis and application of student learning outcomes data. This phase is just beginning to be tackled and will most likely prove the greatest challenge for practitioners. Chapter 5 will address implications of the findings, study limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study Summary

Leading an institution in focusing on measurable learning outcomes is not a simple task. Most community colleges have been in existence for many years and have rich, established cultures. The concept of assessment is not new, although educators have resisted efforts to measure outcomes as this is viewed as more appropriate for a business model than for education (Boggs, 1997). It is imperative that institutions of higher education establish clear evidence of student learning outcomes; if not, state governments may impose measurement mandates. Boggs (1996) posits that the mission of the community college should be student learning, and "we should measure our effectiveness based upon student learning outcomes." (p.25).

According to ACCJC, California is one of the last states to address student learning outcomes as part of their reaffirmation for accreditation. This movement has now been mandated by the accrediting Commission. New standards were passed in 2002 and as of fall 2004, colleges are required to provide evidence of outcomes in order to reaffirm accreditation. Where do California public community colleges begin the process of implementation of student learning outcomes? The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges agreed that the marked feature of the new standards is the keen emphasis on the establishment and use of clear student learning outcomes and their demonstrated achievement. The group felt the standards represent a serious effort to enhance the focus on student learning in the community college system and to introduce and implement good practices. The group was particularly concerned with the content of the standards and felt that the use of assessment of learning represents experiential

development of explicating shared understandings and approaches and use of models and templates. With respect to implementation of the new standards, the group felt there was an immediate need for broad circulation of exemplary practices and case studies that the Commission would endorse as appropriate references. The group further concluded that the Commission foster collaborative partnerships among institutions to tap the knowledge and skills of groups who have been involved in the assessment of learning (Luan, 2001).

The purpose of this study was to examine ways that community colleges are defining and measuring student learning outcomes. More specifically, this study describes how three California public community colleges are implementing student learning outcomes on their campuses and implementing assessment strategies. Perspectives from practitioners of strategies and processes for implementing student learning outcomes were offered. A number of models and literature references were offered throughout the study with the hope that as each college addresses student learning outcomes, they will not have to start from "scratch" or "reinvent the wheel."

A Case Study method was utilized to allow the researcher an in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state "the case study is the most appropriate product of naturalistic inquiry into social phenomena, where reality and meaning are socially constructed by the participants" (p.232). The case study method allowed the researcher to effectively investigate the research questions and provide a clear, detailed, description of each case that offered perspectives to practitioners. The following research questions guided the study: (1) What processes and/or strategies has the institution utilized to define, develop and implement student learning outcomes? (2) What evidence (e.g. course record outlines, course syllabi,

21st Century Skills) of student learning outcomes exists at the institution? (3) What barriers, if any, exist in the implementation of student learning outcomes? and (4) What role has administrative leadership played in the implementation of student learning outcomes? Research questions clearly pointed to a qualitative inquiry utilizing a Case Study method. The case study research method was a particularly appropriate design for this study as the researcher was interested in the process component of implementing student learning outcomes.

The researcher conducted a study utilizing more than one case. The "more cases included in the study, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be" (Merriam, 1998, p.40). Miles and Huberman (1994) concur that "the precision, the validity and stability of findings can be strengthened with the inclusion of multiple cases" (p. 29). Again, this study was specifically designed as an inquiry into three California public community colleges as an attempt to illuminate the implementation process of student learning outcomes and offer a model replicable for community colleges throughout the state.

The research questions were explored utilizing Patton's (1990) strategy of qualitative inquiry, which emphasizes three themes: naturalistic inquiry, inductive analysis and qualitative data. These themes framed the case study. Naturalistic inquiry guided the researcher and allowed for freedom and an "openness to whatever process emerges" (Patton, 1990, p.40). This element reduced researcher bias and also enhanced the strength of the design.

Five specific steps were followed to accomplish this study. First, was the identification of three California public community colleges. Selection sites were

recommended through members of the Research and Planning Group of California. In addition, the researcher consulted with the Administrative Dean of Planning at Long Beach City College on site selections. Not only was she the past president of the Research and Planning Group, but is active nationally in the student learning movement. The criteria for geographic location included public community college campuses situated in a rural, an urban, and a desert location, with a single college and a multi college district included to add breadth to the study.

Secondly, the researcher contacted Presidents at nominated sites to determine interest in participating in the study. Once this was determined, a letter of introduction/formal invitation was sent to the Presidents of the selected community college to participate in the study (Appendix A). Upon agreement, a site participant form was completed (Appendix B).

The third step was the researcher contacting individuals to be interviewed. The Superintendent/President, Vice president for Instruction, Faculty Senate president, Accreditation co-chair, Vice president for Student Learning and the Research & Planning director were initially interviewed. Other individuals emerged through the interview process such as key faculty leaders that were instrumental with implementing student learning initiatives. Each site varied in composition of individuals interviewed, although the titles previously mentioned encompassed the totality of all interviews conducted.

The fourth step was the examination of interview transcripts and artifact analysis that identified perceptions within the selected colleges. The fifth and final step was a theme analysis that identified recurrent patterns, categories, and structures that detailed an implementation model for student learning outcomes.

Findings Summary

The study offered a number of findings. Most clearly evidenced was that accreditation mandates spearheaded the learning initiatives at the colleges studied. In fact, one college was a pilot site for the new standards this spring 2004. Upon analysis what became clear is that all colleges seemed to follow a fairly linear progression in the implementation of SLOs. Each interview participant felt that communication was at the cornerstone of this process. One administrator described the process as "communicate, communicate, communicate." Education on student learning outcomes typically was the initial activity of most colleges. A variety of readings, examination of models and site visits to other colleges was paramount. What became clear is that all colleges examined similar models and referenced throughout interviews similar literature readings. Steering committees were typically created to initiate institutional definitions and statements on assessment and student learning practices. Key to the success of these committees was the involvement of respected faculty and trusted administrators. Leadership and visibility from the president were cited as beneficial to the momentum of the initiative. Presidents often saw their role as initiators of the process and as some commented, "Then get out of the way." Frequent communication with presidents was instrumental in their ability to communicate with their Governing Boards.

Leaders that were able to secure and allocate resources attributed this as instrumental to the "buy-in" from faculty. Resources in the form of reassigned time, stipends or flex days were typically the most common resources. Support from committee members in terms of training, workshops and as mentors also contributed to faculty engaging in the process. They felt they weren't "alone" in the process. Leaders that

celebrated local success stories were consistent in communicating that SLOs were not a fad. Administrators who collaboratively team-taught a course with faculty also viewed this effort as contributing to "success" factors. Visibility throughout the implementation of SLOs was critical as well.

Opportunities for faculty to pilot student learning outcomes are a recommended strategy for implementation prior to formal institutional of SLOs. Having permission to experiment with SLO's encouraged early participation from faculty, particularly when they were assured there would be no repercussions. One college felt that faculty training faculty in cross-disciplinary teams was particularly helpful. One faculty commented that this strategy "got faculty out of their silos." Workshops that specifically provided guidance in documenting SLOs on course outlines was helpful and, in fact, recently resulted in 85% submission rate from faculty course outlines that included SLOs. Inclusion of faculty in vocational areas such as agriculture or automotive technology reduced perceptions of alienation.

Faculty must realize they "drive" the process; however, administrators are a critical partner in what one participant coined "navigator." Faculty clearly are the experts in developing and implementing SLOs in the classroom, but administrators have the institutional vision and, as importantly, how SLOs will link to accreditation. It was communicated over and over that without a collegial approach to SLOs, resistance and barriers were inevitable. The most common barrier was the fear faculty felt that data collected from SLOs would be linked to their evaluations. Frequently offered was the perception that SLOs are an attack and violation of academic freedom. Pockets of

resistance from specific disciplines were evidenced at two colleges. The researcher inquired about this observation; participants chose not comment.

All colleges studied have a variety of artifacts that clearly supported a "culture of evidence." Colleges that linked SLOs to Program Review, Strategic Plans and Educational Master Plans had progressed at a greater speed to produce evidence. However, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the aforementioned planning structures do not replace documentation of SLOs but can be a conduit or link for inclusion of SLOs into established processes. SLOs that were illustrated on course outlines were yet another common example of evidence. Colleges that utilized electronic forms found that faculty felt less burdened with the activity. One college planned to administer the Community College Student Engagement Questionnaire (CCSEQ) to collect indirect measures of SLOs. Faculty who had piloted SLOs had developed SLOs in course syllabi and had initiated conversations of implementing SLOs at the program level.

Finally, all participants echoed that implementing SLOs was a "work in progress" and that mid course corrections facilitated movement. All participants concurred that this process will ultimately transform the culture of their institutions and transformation is a 10-15 year process.

College Distinctions

College A

College A is a single college, multi-campus District that serves the educational needs of students within a 450 square mile area. The current enrollment is approximately

32, 000 daytime, evening and weekend students and is expected to surpass 35, 000

students by the end of the 2004 academic year.

College A began addressing student learning outcomes back in 1997, although as

a function of institutional effectiveness. Typical measures such as graduation rates and

persistence were evaluated and it was determined that these measures were ineffective in

capturing student flow through the system. Data about what students know and what they

do as a result of learning experiences were absent. The institution felt there was a need to

initiate a kind of learning assessment to address these measures. Although there was

some early work completed it was not until an accreditation site visit in 2001 that the

college was formally charged to address implementing student learning outcomes.

Student learning outcomes were officially addressed through the development of a

learning initiative. Processes included: formation of a faculty driven committee with

inclusion of one administrator, development of Principles of Assessment, assessment

methodologies, implementation strategies, education of faculty and campus-wide

communication of the movement. Faculty were funded to pilot assessment projects at the

course level. The committee identified through these initial pilot projects that SLOs

should be reflected in mission statements, institutional plans, program review documents,

course descriptions or outlines, course content and measurement tools (i.e. tests,

assignments, etc). Further clarification and integration of SLOs into the institutional

program review and planning process is currently taking place. An institution wide

Assessment Plan is also planned.

A distinguishing factor at College A was that the implementation of student

learning outcomes stemmed from a 'grass roots' effort. Although some resistance and

fears were encountered, overall, there has been wide spread support of the initiative. The researcher contributes this to the fact a "trusted" administrator and "respected" faculty initially drove the process. The president "handed off" the implementation of SLOs to a committed group who started assessment with eight faculty members and have expanded to include faculty from all three campuses. SLOs began at the classroom level with plans to develop an institution wide Assessment Plan. Members of the original assessment committee believed that College A would have been "bogged" down had they implemented SLOs at the institution wide level. This in part could be due to the size of the institution and the fact there are three campuses that make up the District.

College B

College B is part of a multi-campus college, multi-college District, serving approximately 24, 800 square miles in a rural county. The college serves an average of 15, 000 students on a 153-acre campus. College B is the largest of the three colleges in the District. In addition to the main campus, College B operates a center nearby in a downtown area and a satellite center in a predominately Hispanic rural nearby city.

College B began addressing student learning outcomes in 2001. This was a direct result of an accreditation team who in 2000 recommended the college initiate implementation of student learning outcomes. In 2002 , College B asked that the Commission for a 'focus' visit which it was again recommended that they address implementation of SLOs. College B viewed themselves as more "open" to the dialogue on SLOs than perhaps other institutions were. Study participants contributed this to one of their leading faculty members, who had been on the Commission committee

responsible for the development of the new standards. The faculty member was also co-chair of the Curriculum Committee and was instrumental in expanding the dialogue.

Implementation processes included: development of a faculty driven Assessment Team, statement on Principles of Assessment, faculty education, faculty pilot projects and plans to develop an institution wide Assessment Plan. The Assessment Plan will be linked to the institution's educational master plan and strategic plan.

A distinguishing factor at College B was the creation of a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The Center provides leadership, support and is a resource for faculty and staff as they develop and experiment with assessment activities. The president was instrumental in the initial phases of introducing SLOs. She was highly visible and also team taught one of the first courses where student learning outcomes were developed and measured. Faculty conducted interviews in person with other faculty to gage initial impressions of student learning outcomes. Interviews assisted faculty as they developed content for workshops that proved beneficial for faculty

College C

College C is a single college, multi-campus District located in an urban area. Its main campus is situated on 122 acres and serves an average of 10, 000 students per year. The majority of College C students were in the traditional student ages, 20-24 (32%).

College C began studying and addressing student learning outcomes in 1997 with a group of faculty and administrators interested in the Alverno Model developed at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This model focused on student learning and its central feature was a defined set of "institutional abilities" which all students are expected to acquire as a result of their educational experiences at Alverno College. This

model was particularly attractive as the idea of "institutional abilities" closely simulated the culture at College C. It further supported the institutions driving question, What do we want our students to leave College C with that they didn't have when they came?

Implementation processes included: development of a faculty driven Assessment Team, education of college constituents, and incorporation of SLOs into Program Review. It was the original Assessment Team that made the decision that the institution would develop overarching institutional learning abilities first, followed by developing student learning outcomes at the course level. Ratification of the concept had occurred although final institutional abilities have to be voted on.

College C is distinguished from other sites as the only college that initially implemented student learning outcomes at the institutional level. This in part may be contributed to their culture and smaller size. Also unique to College C when student learning outcomes were introduced at fall convocation, a student who graduated from Alverno College gave a testimonial to the positive effect institutional abilities had on her educational experience.

To summarize, all three colleges initiated implementation of student learning outcomes approximately three-four years ago and although activities were somewhat different, they essentially ended up in similar places.

Recommendations for Effective Implementation Processes

The theoretical framework that guided the study was centered on a Change Model developed by Kirkpatrick. This model has seven steps: determining the need or desire for a change; preparing a tentative plan; analyzing probable reactions; making a final

decision; establishing a timetable; communicating the change; and implementing the change (Kirkpatrick, 1985, p.102). Characteristics of this model consider criteria for developing change based on *what*, *why*, *how*, and *when*. Although the study began with this framework, it became clear to the researcher during interpretation of data, that elements of the model were not as relevant to SLOs as originally considered. Study hallmarks identified specific processes, strategies and implementation components of student learning outcomes. Volkwein (2003) provides guidelines useful for implementation and assessment activities of student learning outcomes. Guidelines are considered advantageous within the context of measurable goals and particularly helpful in determining what students are expected to learn as a result of their college experiences. Guidelines are evidence driven and center on improvement. Colleges must now measure student learning outcomes in order to evaluate effectiveness and documentation of attainment of outcomes in order to adhere to accreditation standards. Figure #1 is the beginning of a composite model that includes Volkwein's principles and further offers the linkage between implementation activities and the new accreditation standards as identified by the researcher. The visual model was developed by the researcher.

Institutional commitments, dialogue, evaluation and planning, organization, integrity and student learning outcomes are arranged around the outer parameter to indicate they are essential themes to the new accreditation standards. Institutional activities, strategies and/or processes employed during initial implementation phases are arranged in the inner core of the model. It delineates processes and offers a systematic approach to thematically developing an institutional accreditation Self-Study. The model

is structured around improvement and provides a guide to training faculty, staff and administrators.

The model is intended to introduce faculty to student learning outcomes and specifically demonstrate that SLOs are not the latest fad but are here to stay. Improvement in teaching and lear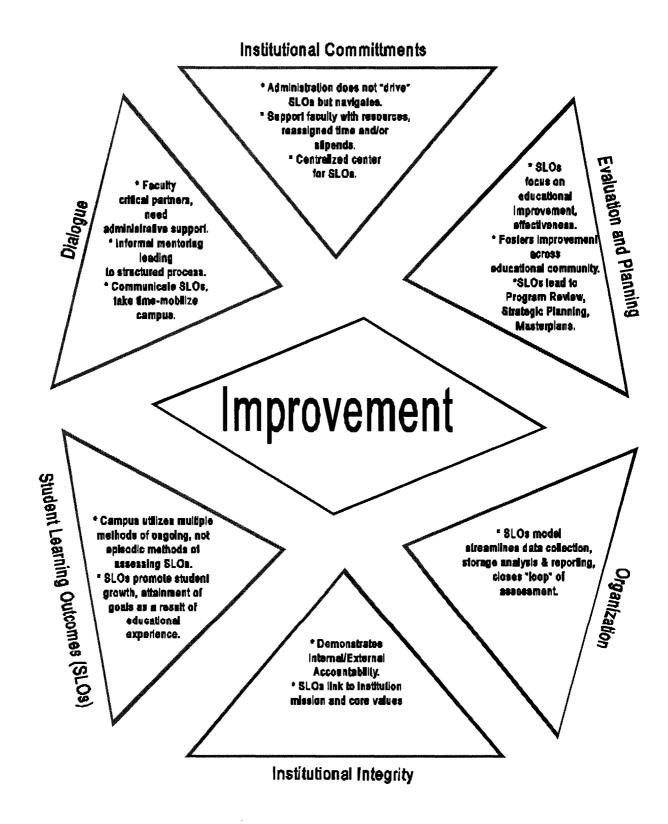ning must be communicated to gain faculty buy-in. Improvement is central to the process of student learning outcomes and at the heart of the model. The model effectively outlines the faculty driven process and the requirement of institutional support. Resources in the form of reassigned time, stipends, and faculty Centers to support implementation efforts are detailed.

The model is also intended for administrators illustrating essential activities for implementing student learning outcomes and to offer the link of said activities to new accreditation standards. The model offers a thematic approach for describing activities in developing and writing the institutional *Self-Study*.

Finally, accrediting Commissions can utilize the model in regional trainings offered for community colleges. Examples of activities will assist colleges in the initial phases of implementing student learning outcomes and understanding the new standards. Other institutional models and literature references are offered throughout this study that Commissions can reference practitioners to. It is intended that institutions will reduce duplication efforts and not reinvent the wheel as they initiate implementation of student learning outcomes.

Figure 1

Composite Model of Implementing SLOs and the link to themes of New Accreditation Standards - guided by Volkwein (2003) Modified by Waite (2004)

Institutional Committments

* Administration does not "drive" SLOs but navigates.
* Support faculty with resources, reassigned time and/or stipends.
* Centralized center for SLOs.

Dialogue

* Faculty critical partners, need administrative support.
* Informal mentoring leading to structured process.
* Communicate SLOs, take time-mobilize campus.

Evaluation and Planning

* SLOs focus on educational improvement, effectiveness.
* Fosters improvement across educational community.
* SLOs lead to Program Review, Strategic Planning, Masterplans.

Improvement

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

* Campus utilizes multiple methods of ongoing, not episodic methods of assessing SLOs.
* SLOs promote student growth, attainment of goals as a result of educational experience.

Organization

* SLOs model streamlines data collection, storage analysis & reporting, closes "loop" of assessment.

* Demonstrates Internal/External Accountability.
* SLOs link to institution mission and core values

Institutional Integrity

Implications

Based on the discovery from study findings, a number of implications have been identified. Excellent resource materials and models exist on student learning outcomes. The fact that colleges are scrambling and essentially end up researching and duplicating other efforts demonstrates that a centralized warehouse for these materials should be established, this centralization would minimize perceptions that colleges are often overwhelmed in the initial stages, particularly when initiating conversations about a process that is daunting. Just as participants who identified resources for faculty were critical in the implementation of SLOs, the implication for colleges yet to begin this process could be supported by early pioneers. Excellent processes and strategies that other community colleges can follow have been offered in this study. Duplication in processes and strategies was observed at all colleges in the study and other community colleges to follow will wrestle with such wasteful efforts in implementation unless steps are taken. A streamlined warehouse that electronically disseminates collected literature and models is an ideal solution particularly in times of scarce resources.

How colleges will measure and report results of SLOs is beyond the scope of this research, yet clearly will be an implication for the learning outcomes mandate. Consensus on what educators want students to look like remains to be seen. Most colleges are in the infancy stages and documented outcomes are sporadic at best. Guidelines for developing measures of student learning at the course-program-degree level seem to be an implied next step for the colleges who participated in this study. Dissemination of guidelines in the form of a template could then be utilized across the state.

Evident from the study was the power that faculty found through workshops, trainings, and conferences on assessment. Faculty engaged in the process embraced the importance of implementing SLOs. Resistance from faculty primarily stemmed from a lack of understanding on effective pedagogical techniques that support measurements of SLOs. Colleges must support faculty trainings if they are to move forward in this process. Operational definitions of student learning outcomes need to be clarified to reduce confusion with language that was a concern for a majority of participants.

One college implied that the accrediting Commission needs to be more involved in offering training to colleges. Providing instruction in the development of the *Self-Study* using a thematic approach would be helpful. For California's 108 public community colleges, appropriate guidance and assistance in suggested methods of assessing outcomes and documentation of data is, by far, the more global implication from the accreditation standards.

Implementing a SLOs initiative requires resources. In a time when California is faced with its worst fiscal crisis ever, sustaining this movement will be a challenge. Study participants suggested seeking external funding as a strategy for supporting and supplementing the learning initiative. With community colleges already doing more with less, the researcher is concerned that an educational reform of this magnitude may cause some colleges to collapse.

Accreditation remains the centerpiece of academic improvement and quality assurance. Yet there is ample evidence that the new standards from ACCJC suggest assessment and student learning outcomes link directly to the demand of performance. This movement towards assessment has been percolating over the past 15-20 years in

higher education. Although much has been written about the importance of linking assessment of outcomes to improvement, providing documentation of outcomes in California public community colleges remains to be seen.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the research is that only three California community colleges were studied. Although they were selected as advanced models and exhibited a broad range of processes and strategies to implementing SLOs, it is certain that a larger study, including more sites and participants, would increase the range of findings. The limitation prevents the development at this point of a single model to assist colleges in the effective implementation of student learning outcomes. The limited study means that the proposed model (Figure #1) must be recognized as a beginning model with proposed activities that might not necessarily work at all colleges.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study detailed processes and strategies employed during the implementation of student learning outcomes which offered the beginnings of a model for linking student learning to the new accreditation standards. Once implementation of SLOs has occurred, how will the college collect analyze, document and disseminate outcomes? Best practices that would support practitioners during that phase are warranted to create a more definitive model that would offer practitioners a next step.

Further research might examine student learning outcomes at private two year institutions versus limiting the study to only public institutions. Selection of sites might also include colleges in other regions of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, such as Hawaii. The types of processes and strategies employed in colleges in a

variety of settings would provide more global models; particularly helpful would be models that have been sustained over time.

Other studies might evaluate the impact of student learning outcomes in distance education such as on-line or television courses. These courses are extremely popular today, yet effectiveness measures remain a challenge and are easily omitted. Also, studies that detail the Student Services division at community colleges would be beneficial. Both Instructional and Student Services are mandated to document SLOs as part of accreditation; therefore collaboration must occur for all units.

These are a few of the many areas to be addressed about student learning outcomes in the community colleges. Research will be worth pursuing in light of the changing economics of higher education and the explosion of students that is projected to hit community colleges in the next few years. Nowhere is the propensity to change seen more than in the evolution of the educational system in America. The birth of the community college was a direct result of democracy in American education. In the guiding spirit of inquiry and educational effectiveness, these institutions should lead the way in the student learning outcomes movement.

If you want to truly understand something, try to change it.... Kurt Lewin

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Appendices

Appendix A
Formal letter of introduction/Request for participation in study

November 15, 2003

Jane Doe (pseudonym)
Vice president for Instruction
Southern California Community College
One View Drive
Ontario, CA 92055

Dear Ms. Doe:

I am a doctoral student at the University of San Diego conducting a dissertation research study entitled "Implementing Student Learning Outcomes: The Link to Accreditation in California Community Colleges." Since this research is extremely vital and is intended to benefit all California community colleges, I am writing to request your assistance. As you are aware, the new accreditation standards go into effect fall 2004 and mandate evidence of student learning outcomes.

I am specifically interested in the implementation component of student learning outcomes and your college has been nominated as a potential site for this important research. Your participation is critical in assisting California community colleges as they address implementing student learning outcomes on their campuses. The research will consist of one- hour interviews conducted at your institution. Key constituents to be interviewed will include: Superintendent/President; Vice president for Instruction; Faculty Senate president; Research and Planning director; Accreditation chair, and other key faculty as identified through interviews. I will review any pertinent artifacts pertaining to student learning outcomes. This research study has approval by the Institutional Review Board of the University of San Diego.

If you agree to participate in this research, I kindly request that the formal letter of acceptance (see attached) be signed and submitted in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope. Once this letter has been received, I will follow up with a telephone call within one week to confirm receipt and also arrange interview appointments convenient to the participants' schedules. For questions, you can reach me at (760) 744-1150 ext. 2298 or via e-mail at lwaite@palomar.edu. Thank you for your consideration in regards to this study.

Sincerely,

Lori Waite 7700 Calle Meja
Carlton, CA 92000

Appendix B
Acceptance letter/Site consent form

Lori Waite, a doctoral student at the University of San Diego, is conducting research at your community college. The purpose of this research is to compare three California public community colleges as they implement student learning outcomes on their campuses. The information gathered would offer insight and current practices to all California community colleges as they attempt to incorporate student learning outcomes for reaffirmation of accreditation.

As a participant in this study, your community college will be assigned a pseudonym. Your name or any documents reviewed at your college will be assigned an identification number to further ensure complete confidentiality. The study will include individual interviews, document review and observations (if appropriate) with respect to student learning outcomes. There are no expenses associated with this study and participation is strictly voluntary. Your acceptance to participate in the study will assist the researcher in any conclusions or recommendations that might come as a result of the study.

There are no other agreements, written or verbal, related to this study beyond that expressed in this consent form. If you have further questions you may contact Lori Waite at (760) 744-1150 ext.2298 or by e-mail at lwaite@palomar.edu. You may also contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Sue Zgliczynski at (619) 260-4600 or by e-mail at zglnski@sandiego.edu.

I, the undersigned, understand the above explanation and consent to the voluntary participation in this study.

_____   _____

Signature of Site Participant   Date/Location

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form

Lori Waite, a Doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Diego, is conducting a study about implementation of student learning outcomes in California public community colleges. This research is in partial fulfillment for the Ed D. Degree. Below are the procedures under which participants of this study agree to:

- This research is part of a dissertation in fulfillment of the Ed. D. Degree at the University of San Diego.

- No risks are anticipated other than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

- It is anticipated that subjects will find reflecting upon the questions to be both interesting and beneficial.

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary and the subject may withdraw at any time.

- Each subject will have had an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before he/she agreed to participate.

- There is no agreement, written or verbal, beyond that expressed on this consent form.

- Interviews, which will last approximately 60 minutes in length, will be audio-taped. Interviews will be conducted over a period of 3-4 weeks.

- All comments and responses will be confidential. A pseudonym will be used for the subject, college and district.

- Each subject will have the opportunity to edit/delete any segments of the taped interview in any fashion.

- Each cassette tape is destroyed after the written transcript is completed.

- Prior to publication, the subject will have the opportunity to read/edit/delete any portion of the interview.

- If the participant would like to contact the dissertation chairperson Dr. Susan Zgliczynski, for any reason, he/she may do so at (619) 260-4600 or zglnski@sandiego.edu. The participant may also contact the researcher, Lori Waite at (777) 635-2878 or lwaite@palomar.edu.

   I, the undersigned, understand the above explanations and, on that basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date/Location

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Researcher   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date

Appendix D
Interview Guide

(A) *Background Information* (code BI)- RQ 1
- When did your institution begin discussions of student learning outcomes (SLOs)? Who initiated discussions?
- Who were the key players that took part in these discussions? How were discussants selected?
- What involvement did ACCJC play?
- How was your institution selected as a pilot site for the new standards? (College C only)
- Did your institution research SLOs? Models? If so, which ones?

(B) *Process/strategies Information* (code PI)- RQ 1, RQ 2
- Can you describe step-by-step the process or strategies your institution utilized in introducing/addressing SLOs? Themes that emerged? Utilize Faculty Teams? Pilot projects?
- What documents or evidence has the institution produced?
- How does the institution define SLOs?
- Did faculty drive the process? What was the involvement from the Faculty Senate? How was process communicated to faculty?

(C) *Implementation Information* (code II)- RQ 1, RQ 3
- Were SLOs implemented campus wide or only in specific disciplines?
- Did the implementation phase follow a delineated plan? Is there a formal Institutional Assessment Plan?
- Are SLOs linked to the institution's strategic plan, educational master plan or departmental program reviews?
- What barriers/problems or resistance, if any, were encountered during the development or implementation phase?

(D) *Change Information* (code CI)- RQ 1
- What was the timing of the various phases for change?
- What strategies or models were used to initiate change?

(E) *Leadership Information* (code LI)- RQ 4
- What role or voice has administrative leadership played in the implementation of SLOs?
- What effective strategies have leadership utilized in this effort?
- What strategies were ineffective?
- In retrospect, would you do anything differently in terms of implementing SLOs?

- What suggestions would you have for leaders at other community colleges as they implement SLOs?

(F) *Closing Questions* (code CQ)
- Is there any other information you believe would be useful for me to know?