

Quality Focus Essay (QFE)

Introduction

El Camino College is committed to quality improvement and regularly engages in data analysis related to institutional effectiveness. During the process of completing its Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, the College identified two focus areas for improving institutional effectiveness related to student learning and student achievement. This Quality Focus Essay will detail the action projects that the college has planned to address the two focus areas: 1) revision of outcomes statements, alignment grids, and assessment protocols for course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) and service area outcomes (SAOs) in select areas; and 2) development and pilot assessment of program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) for Guided Pathways “meta-majors.”

Action Project #1 - Revision of outcomes statements, alignment grids, and assessment protocols for select course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) and service area outcomes (SAOs) in select academic disciplines and student service units.

Identification of Project

The history of outcomes assessment at El Camino College is a rich one, characterized by active faculty leadership and the engagement of faculty and staff campus-wide. As the assessment of learning outcomes has gained momentum over the years, the ongoing review of the assessment process by the Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) has resulted in more focused discussions regarding the current process and opportunities for improving the assessment protocol.

Variability in achievement of student learning outcomes

A review of course-level (SLO), program-level (PLO), and institution-level (ILO) learning outcomes data during the 2018-2019 academic year resulted in recommendations regarding outcome statements and assessment methodology (QFE1.1). The ALC discussed the need to update SLO statements to ensure that they reflect appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and awareness at the course level of student learning. The committee also discussed the benefits of developing equity-minded signature assessments and standardized scoring rubrics to promote more meaningful comparison of student achievement data across multiple sections assessing the same outcome statement.

Alignment grids for course-, program-, and institution-level learning outcomes

Feedback from academic programs participating in the 2018 ILO assessment suggested the need to review and update alignment grids (QFE.1.2). Assessment data from class sections of courses purported to align with the ILO statement yielded inconsistent measures of student achievement, and some participating faculty called into question the alignment of the course SLOs with the ILO statement being assessed.

Integration of service area outcomes (SAOs) into the assessment of institution-level learning outcomes (ILOs)

During the planning process for the Community and Personal Development ILO assessment, the ALC noted the need for enhanced integration of service area outcomes (SAOs) and other assessment by student services areas (QFE.1.3). Current SAO statements must be reviewed and updated to reflect the equitable delivery of services to all student populations. Moreover, a review of the alignment of SAOs with ILO statements is necessary to ensure that the delivery of student services appropriately supports institution-level learning outcomes.

Description of Project

Instructional faculty and student services faculty/staff will collaborate to revise select SLO and SAO statements, respectively, to more meaningfully align with applicable program- and institution-level learning outcomes (including new Guided Pathways PLOs).

Anticipated Impact

Enhanced relevance of assessment data

It is anticipated that updating SLO statements will result in more meaningful outcomes assessment which measures the knowledge, skills, and awareness that are the current basis of course instruction.

The employment of more standardized assessment methodologies for SLO assessment would also increase the reliability of assessment data and lend itself to trend analysis of student achievement over time.

Moreover, it is anticipated that updated assessment protocols will result in more reliable and meaningful data to inform program review, program planning, and resource allocation to ensure that the college meets student needs (curricular and co-curricular) related to course/program completion.

Increased student equity and mitigated performance gaps

An anticipated impact of the use of signature SLO assessments is an increase in sample sizes resulting from combined data sets; increased sample sizes may support the analysis of disaggregated data to identify any student equity issues, particularly the identification of any performance gaps among various student populations.

It is also anticipated that the development of equity-minded protocols for assessing SLOs will minimize implicit bias in assessment and data analysis and will decrease consequent performance gaps among student populations.

The anticipated impact of updated SAO statements is equitable access of student services by all students.

Enriched integration of overall student learning experience

It is anticipated that updating SLO and SAO alignment grids will result in a more integrated overall learning experience (inside and outside of the classroom) to promote achievement of core competencies represented by institution-level learning outcomes.

Resources Needed

- Release time and/or special assignments for participating faculty/staff
- Professional development training (e.g., equity-minded outcomes statements and assessment protocols)

Specific Activities, Responsible Parties, Anticipated Outcomes, and Timeline

The timeline presented below includes detailed information regarding the specific activities, responsible parties, and anticipated outcomes associated with the action project.

TIMELINE			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Anticipated Outcomes	Target Completion
Consultation meeting to identify which academic disciplines and service delivery areas will be included in the pilot	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Academic divisions Student Services units	Identification of academic courses and student services areas selected for the pilot	
Faculty development training focused on developing equity-minded signature assessments that can be administered at the course level (SLOs) with minimal variation across delivery method (e.g., distance education)	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) Director, Student Equity and Achievement Distance Education Office External trainer(s) - TBD	Completion of training in the area of equity-minded signature assessments by faculty participating in the pilot	
Faculty and staff professional development training focused on developing equity-minded service area outcome (SAO) statements and assessment protocols that can be administered with minimal variation across delivery method (e.g., virtual counseling)	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Director, Student Equity and Achievement External trainer(s) - TBD	Completion of training in the area of equity-minded outcome statements and assessment protocols by faculty/staff participating in the pilot	

Faculty-lead work sessions to update SLO statements and develop signature SLO assessments for courses selected for the pilot	Faculty representing academic disciplines selected for the pilot	Updated course-level learning outcome (SLO) statements for courses identified for the pilot, representing the knowledge, skills, and awareness that are the current basis of instruction Development of equity-minded SLO signature assessments and scoring rubrics for courses identified for the pilot	
Faculty-lead work sessions to update the alignment of select course-level learning outcomes (SLOs) with applicable: 1) program-level learning outcomes (PLOs), including new Guided Pathways PLOs; and 2) institution-level learning outcomes (ILO)	Faculty representing academic disciplines selected for the pilot Members of all meta major work-groups	Updated grids aligning course-level (SLO), program-level (PLO), and institution-level (ILO) learning outcomes	
Faculty and staff work sessions to update SAO statements for service delivery areas selected for the pilot	Faculty and staff representing service delivery areas selected for the pilot	Updated service area outcomes (SAOs) statements for the student service areas participating in the pilot, emphasizing equitable delivery of services to all students	
Faculty and staff work sessions to update the alignment of select service area outcomes (SAOs) with applicable: 1) program-level learning outcomes (PLOs), including new Guided Pathways PLOs; and 2) institution-level learning outcomes (ILO)	Faculty and staff representing service delivery areas selected for the pilot	Updated grids aligning SAOs with applicable PLOs (e.g., new Guided Pathways PLOs) and ILOs	
Presentation of updated SLO and SAO statements to ALC for feedback	Faculty and staff representing academic divisions and service selected delivery areas	Endorsement of SLO and SAO statement updates	

Communication of updated SLO and SAO statements and assessment protocols	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs	Updated Assessment of Learning Handbook (e.g., updated SLO and SAO statements; sample signature assessments and scoring rubrics) Posting of updated SLO and SAO statements to college website (e.g., learning assessment webpage; Student Services webpages)	
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Action Project #2 - *Development of program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) for each of the Guided Pathways “meta-majors” and implementation of a pilot round of assessment and planning.*

Identification of Project

El Camino College is committed to the success of all of its students. The college has supported various initiatives to enhance student learning and achievement over the past several years. In Fall 2018, the college had a 70% success rate with rates for African American and Latino students at 60% and 67%, respectively. Moreover, a time-to-completion study (QFE.1.4) conducted in 2017 revealed that only 6% of El Camino College degree earners completed their educational goal within two years; within four years, 54% of degree earners had completed their educational goal. The average time to completion for African American (4.8 years) and Latino (4 years) students was longer than the college average (3.8 years), with 40% of African American and 52% of Latino students earning their degrees within four years. Given the college’s goal to reduce equity gaps in student performance and to increase completion rates for all student populations, there is room for improving student outcomes and other opportunities for growth at El Camino College.

Based on student completion rates, average time to completion, and the number of units completed at time of graduation, El Camino College identified the need for more streamlined programs of study and enhanced guidance for students pursuing degrees and certificates. In response to this need, the college has adopted the Guided Pathways framework and has developed seven meta-majors. Each meta-major represents related programs which share a set of broad curriculum-related outcomes. Meta-majors were determined through group card-sorting activities scheduled throughout Spring 2019. In all 130 groups of 680 faculty, staff, administrators and students completed a card-sorting activity; 75% of the participants were students. Upon announcement of the identified meta-majors and their associated programs,

academic departments were permitted the opportunity to appeal their placement into a particular meta-major during a meeting with the Guided Pathways Committee (QFE.1.5)

The proposed project builds upon the college's foundational work related to the Guided Pathways (GP) framework. Namely, program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) will be developed for each GP meta-major to facilitate an integrated student learning experience and to coordinate student support efforts campus-wide. The PLOs for each meta-major will reflect the four pillars of the GP framework (i.e., clarify the path, enter the path, stay on the path, ensure learning) and specific outcomes related to each meta-major. Meta-major PLOs will be assessed on a regular basis to inform planning and decision-making related to the Guided Pathways framework.

Description of Project

Instructional faculty, counselors, staff, and students will collaborate to develop equity-minded program-level learning outcome (PLO) statements for each of the seven Guided Pathways meta-majors based on: 1) *specific objectives of the four Guided Pathway pillars*, and 2) *broad curriculum-related outcomes* shared by the programs within the meta-major. The group will also collaborate to develop guidelines for assessing meta-major PLOs on an ongoing basis and will implement a pilot round of assessment and planning with select PLO statements.

Anticipated Impact

The anticipated impact of the project is two-fold.

1. Improved student outcomes and achievement (e.g., completion and retention rates; time to completion)

The identification of meta majors is the first step in implementing a comprehensive model of guidance and support within the Guided Pathways framework. For every degree and certificate within each meta-major, the college will develop clear “program maps” which will represent a model for completing each of the related degrees and certificates within a target timeframe (e.g., two years for degrees). These program maps will identify specific courses and co-curricular tasks to be completed *in each semester of the map* to ensure timely program completion, as well as readiness for graduation, transfer, and/or entry into the workforce. It is anticipated that the development of these term-by-term program maps will contribute to increased program retention and completion rates, as well as a shorter time to completion for all degrees and certificates offered at the college.

2. Equity-minded program-level planning, assessment, and resource allocation

The program-level learning outcomes (PLOs) that will be developed for each meta-major will reflect the four pillars of the Guided Pathways framework (i.e., clarify the path, enter the path, stay on the path, ensure learning), as well as specific outcomes related to each pathway. The anticipated impact of developing meta-major PLOs is the resulting alignment of meta-major programming with key performance indicators currently prioritized by the college (e.g., retention, completion, student learning). Such alignment will promote deliberate action-planning and decision-making which are focused on facilitating student learning in the classroom, as well as ensuring the quality and appropriateness of student services offered to support successful course and program completion in timely fashion.

Meta-major PLOs will be assessed on an ongoing basis in accordance with an established cycle of assessment (e.g., 4-year cycle). The college currently maintains a standard protocol for regularly assessing student learning at the program level. However, the current model of program-level assessment defines a “program” as an academic discipline. This model essentially results in a summary of the course-level assessment of *every course within a particular discipline* rather than an assessment of what students have learned upon completing an *integrated program of study* designed to prepare students for advanced studies and/or workforce preparation. The protocol for assessing PLOs for Guided Pathways meta-majors will include the evaluation of courses from multiple disciplines represented among the program requirements, as well as the evaluation of counseling, advising, and other support services provided within the Guided Pathways framework.

Moreover, the protocol for assessing meta-major PLOs will include signature assessments which will be developed to facilitate disaggregated analysis of PLO data. This level of analysis will assist in the identification of any equity gaps in student learning across meta-majors or in access to support services offered within the Guided Pathways framework. Data from meta-major PLO assessment will be analyzed on an ongoing basis, and assessment results will be used to inform budget requests and the allocation of resources to: 1) support program completion, 2) promote student equity, and 3) eliminate performance gaps among student populations.

Resources Needed

- Release time and/or special assignments for participating faculty/staff
- Professional development training (e.g., assessment methodology, equity-minded planning and evaluation)

Specific Activities, Responsible Parties, Anticipated Outcomes, and Timeline

The timeline presented below includes detailed information regarding the specific activities, responsible parties, and anticipated outcomes associated with the action project.

TIMELINE			
Activity	Responsible Party/Parties	Anticipated Outcomes	Target Completion
Consultation meeting to establish guidelines for PLO assessment	GP Steering Committee GP Co-coordinators Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs	Development of general guidelines for meta major PLO assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • target number of PLO assessment statements • parties responsible for PLO assessment (i.e., meta major leads) • cycle for PLO assessment • PLO report template 	Spring 2020

Identification of members for each meta-major work-group	Guided Pathways Steering Committee Guided Pathways Co-coordinators	Development of functional work-groups to develop PLO statements and sample PLO assessment materials	Mid-Spring 2020
Professional development training - <i>Assessment methodology</i>	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) External trainer(s) - TBD Members of all meta-major work-groups	Completion of training in the area of assessment methodology by all work-group members	End of Summer 2020
Professional development training - <i>Equity-minded planning and evaluation</i>	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) Director, Student Equity and Achievement External trainer(s) - TBD Members of all meta-major work-groups	Completion of training in the area of equity-minded planning and methodology by all work-group members	Fall 2020
Orientation session for all meta-major work groups to outline the project (e.g., timeline; anticipated outcomes; planned activities) and review guidelines and resources available for the work effort	GP Steering Committee GP Co-coordinators Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs Accreditation Co-chairs	Orientation of all work-group members to the PLO development project	
Brainstorming and work sessions to develop program-level learning outcome (PLO) statements for meta-majors which align with ILOs	GP Co-coordinators Meta-major work-groups	Development of PLO statements for each meta-major and alignment with ILO statements	
Brainstorming and work sessions to develop signature assessment(s) and scoring rubric(s) for assessing the meta-major PLOs	GP Co-coordinators Meta-major work-groups	Development of sample signature assessments and scoring rubrics for the assessment of meta-major PLOs	

		Development of equity-minded plans for meta-major programming which reflect analysis of PLO assessment data	
Presentation of PLO statements for each meta-major to ALC for feedback	GP Co-coordinators Meta-major leads	Adoption of PLO statements for each meta-major PLO	
Compilation of handbook for the assessment of meta-major PLOs	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs GP Co-coordinators	Development of a handbook for meta-major PLO assessment, which will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopted PLO statements • PLO assessment cycle • templates for PLO assessment reports • sample signature assessments and scoring rubrics 	
Communication of meta major PLO statements campus-wide	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs GP Co-coordinators	Campus-wide “tours” of standing committees and other stakeholders Posting of adopted meta-major PLO statements to college website (e.g., learning assessment webpage; Guided Pathways webpage)	
Professional development training related to any software and/or web-based tools that may be employed in the delivery and/or assessment of PLOs (e.g., ECC Connect, Canvas)	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs ECC Connect team External trainer(s) - TBD Members of all meta-major work-groups	Completed training of faculty and staff in the use of software and/or web-based tools that may be employed in the delivery and/or assessment of PLOs	
Assessment of select meta-major PLO statements based on the established cycle	Meta-major leads	Collection of data for the assessment of meta-major PLOs for the pilot project	
Analysis of PLO assessment data in consultation with the	Meta-major leads	Submission of formal reports which include analysis of assessment data	

Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP)	Institutional Research and Planning	for PLO statements assessed in the pilot project	
Campus-wide communication of the results of meta-major PLO statements scheduled for assessment	Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) Co-chairs GP Co-coordinators	Posting of adopted meta-major PLO statements to college website (e.g., learning assessment webpage; Guided Pathways webpage)	
Development of equity-minded plans for meta-major programming	Meta-major leads GP Co-coordinators GP Steering Committee	Development of equity-minded plans which incorporate action items from PLO assessment reports from the pilot project and reflect other programming needs based on assessment data	

Evidence List

- QFE.1.1 2018-2019 SLO Coordinators Report
- QFE.1.2 Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) minutes – November 18, 2019
- QFE.1.3 Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) minutes – May 8, 2017
- QFE.1.4 Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) 2017 Time-to-Completion Study
- QFE.1.5 Guided Pathways Committee minutes – October 1, 2019