

June 7, 2019

Transparent Assignments: What's good for ALL students, College and Continuing Education

“Transparent teaching methods help students understand how and why they are learning course content in particular ways.”

- from UNLV Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project.

If you attended any of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) workshops this year (*Assignment Design, Assessment, or Best Practices for SLOs*), you may have heard about the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Project housed at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). As with [Backwards Design](#), Transparent Methods are good for ALL students and are here to stay.

UNLV researchers demonstrated in a national study that transparency around academic assignments enhances students' success at statistically significant levels, with even greater gains for historically underserved students. [Winkelmes et al., Peer Review 2016].

When faculty make the purpose, tasks and criteria of an academic assignment clear before students begin to work on it, students are more likely to experience greater academic success with that assignment, developing the knowledge, disposition, and skills necessary to succeed both at school and in life (in comparison to when students experience less clarity around purpose, tasks and criteria for their academic work). [Winkelmes et al., Peer Review 2016]

For UNLV students, benefits also included a significantly higher rate of retention (returning to college each fall term) up to two years after experiencing transparent instruction. [Gianoutsos and Winkelmes, 2016; Winkelmes, Calkins, Yu, forthcoming 2018].

An inclusive learning environment benefits all students and offers more equitable learning opportunities for underserved students. Research on student learning links college students' academic confidence and sense of belonging with higher GPAs, persistence and retention rates [Walton and Cohen, Science, 18 March, 2011].

College students increased their test scores when supported by a system that advocated the belief that intelligence is not fixed but rather malleable.

A year later, these students were 80% less likely to drop out of college [Aronson et al, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 38, 2 (2002)].

“When faculty create transparent assignments and use the right technology, faculty become more effective and students improve.”

*Nancy Quam-Wickham,
Ph.D.*

National learning assessment expert, Nancy Quam-Wickham, shared with SDCE faculty that, “When faculty create transparent assignments and use the right technology, faculty become more effective and students improve.”

Click below for more information or to review transparent assignments and teaching methods from the *TILT* project: www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency.

SDCE’s Transparent SLO Syllabus Templates

If students perform better when they know what is expected of them, and they do, then being explicit about expectations from the beginning greatly helps students who struggle. Just being very clear helps students with diverse abilities to understand expectations for the course and each assignment, thereby creating equity! SDCE’s transparent syllabus templates and transparent assignment examples can provide equity if we use them. Click here to access: [Transparent SLO Syllabus Templates - Examples of Less and More Transparent Assignments](#)

Benefits of Transparent Syllabus Design:

- Students are more motivated about your class
- Students have better perceptions of the syllabus, the course, and the instructor
- Students use the syllabus as an interactive learning tool throughout the course

Palmer, M. S., Wheeler, L. B., & Aneece, I. (2016). Does the document matter? The evolving role of syllabi in higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 48, 36-46.



SDCE Faculty in Assignment Design Workshop at ECC Campus

Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Team praises SDCE’s progress on Student Learning Outcomes

SDCE was granted \$200,000 to implement its Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Plan, which includes SLOs. On March 18th, the IEPI Team made its third and final visit to SDCE to discuss the plan and mentioned they were most impressed with SDCE’s progress on SLOs and integrated planning.

The Student Learning Outcomes section of the IEPI plan focuses on SLO assessment development, training and tracking.

Accomplishments include:

- 1) ongoing faculty trainings aimed at institutionalizing a student assessment process.

Delivered Trainings include:

- *Assessment 101: Working Smarter Not Harder: Managing Assessment for Busy Faculty Members*
- *Assignment Design: Features of Effective Assignments*
- *Best Assessment Practices with Guided Pathways in Mind & Time-saving Tips for Busy Faculty*
- *Using Software and Mobile Devices for Quick in-class Formative Assessments and Curriculum Mapping*

Upcoming Trainings include:

- *Curriculum Mapping*
- *Making Assessment Meaningful with Formative Assessments*
- *Quick and Effective Surveys for SLO Assessment*
- *Campus Labs Outcomes & Assessment Module*

- 2) implementing a software system for SLO data collection and student performance tracking.

- SDCE purchased the  **campuslabs**™ Data Driven Innovation Outcomes and Assessment Module after it was reviewed by the SLO Taskforce. The Task Force found Campus Labs useful, particularly the ability to evaluate whether SLO statements are measurable and aligned with the new Bloom's Taxonomy, SDCE goals and objectives.
- The module will serve as a repository and will allow programs and departments to collect, track and share outcomes and assessment data.
- An SLO summer workgroup has been established to learn about the Outcomes and Assessment module and assist with SDCE preparation and implementation.

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SLO Task Force

Meet the  **campuslabs**™ Data Driven Innovation Outcomes and Assessment Summer Workgroup!



Marne Foster, Elliott Humphrey, Diana Vera-Alba , and Anetha Johnson (not shown)

Faculty Spotlight

Meet Laurie Cozzolino- All About Professional Learning!



Laurie is a faculty member who touches all programs and departments through coordinating professional learning and the FLEX Calendar for SDCE. While Laurie has been leading Professional Development for 10 years and has helped to create and grow the position, she has previously been an ESL Faculty, curriculum developer, workplace learning specialist, technology mentor, and trainer among many other responsibilities.

Laurie talks about professional learning where SDCE begins to lean in and breakdown key terms that impact all stakeholders. As an example, perhaps in September we focus on Integrated Planning. SDCE begins to ask, “What is Integrated Planning, or how should we see it?” Maybe it’s as simple as thinking: “Planning that’s integrated, not siloed, and considers several critical data before making institutional decisions (critical data: program review [FTES, Program Costs, Enrollment, Certificates Conferred, Labor Market Information, Student Outcomes, Needed Resources], strategic plan, pathways, grant guidelines, budget).” Or perhaps, program chairs, faculty, and professional staff participate in a blog and attend workshops around integrated planning. However we see it, the desired outcome of such an exercise is that SDCE stakeholders start to ask how they can most effectively contribute to their program or department with an integrated planning lens.

Prepare Now for Fall Integrated Planning

By the way, the fall signals the next cycle of Integrated Planning. Look for integrated planning workshops during fall FLEX. In the meantime, all can visit the Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE) webpage for more information (www.sdce.edu/organizational-effectiveness).

Those already actively engaged in integrated planning, remember you can update your strategic plans all year around and simply finalize those plans in the fall.

Use fall FLEX Meetings Wisely! During fall FLEX meetings, program chairs and deans should make time to review program data and Cycle 3 program review reports with faculty. Faculty and professional staff want to feel apart of the program, know where it’s headed and contribute to program success. A best practice is putting faculty and professional staff in small groups according to sections of the program review report and having them discuss and update those sections based on their experience. Then, collect responses to inform your upcoming cycle 4 program review or have the group come together and share their section updates. This practice builds the capacity of the group, shares the work, and better reflects the program.

“Those already actively engaged in integrated planning, remember that you can update your strategic plans all year around and simply finalize those plans in the fall.”

Marne Foster-
SLO/Program
Review
Coordinator

Learning Outcomes in Healthcare

Learning Outcomes in Healthcare & Careers (HC)

Healthcare Careers - Program Review

During Cycle 3 Program Review, programs were asked to discuss SLOs. The following are reflections from the Healthcare Careers Program.

How are clear student learning outcomes (overarching learner goals/competencies) developed and measured?

The SLO's are created with the course objectives and course competencies the student needs to perform in order to finish the course. Competencies should be evaluated as the student progresses through the course. If the student is not achieving the competencies in the timeframe expected, the instructor can counsel or utilize other strategies to improve performance such as peer mentoring, online resources, practice time for skills or academics with instructor or instructional assistants, counseling, etc.

Program: Healthcare Careers

Course(s): Healthcare Careers Department SLOs

SLO(s): Healthcare Career Students will perform in a responsible, accountable, and professional manner, while fostering and recognizing professional growth

Describe the quantitative or qualitative results:

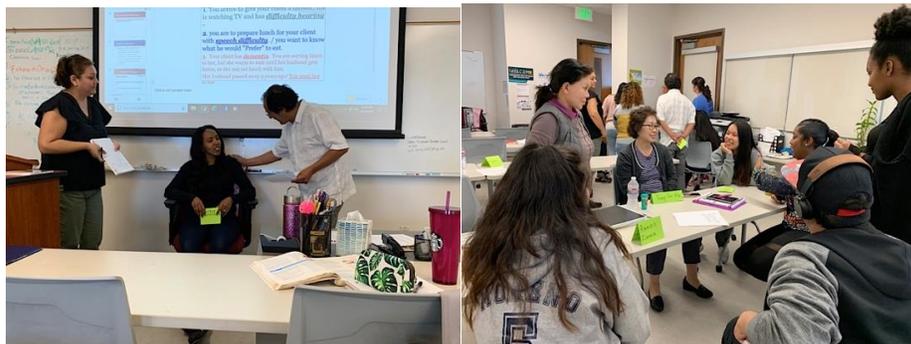
The SLO above was emphasized by all Healthcare programs (see actions below) on the feedback and recommendations of industry and general vocational education research. The Survey Monkey survey from an acute care class in spring 2018 showed 23 out of 30 students were hired at hospitals; three graduates were hired at a post-acute facility and one at a subacute/rehabilitative center. That is 27 out of 30 students hired.

Discuss any actions taken so far (and results, if known): All Programs have emphasized soft skills in a variety of ways: discussion/role play activities, explaining specific behavior expected in the workplace and specific behaviors and attitudes frowned upon, having industry speakers talk about professional workplace expectations, and quickly telling students when their behavior in the workplace or classroom is inappropriate or exceptional.

“The Survey Monkey survey from an acute care class in spring 2018 showed...27 out of 30 students hired.”



Healthcare Careers Students at Work



Patient and Home Care Aide Class

Learning Outcomes in Emeritus

During Cycle 3 Program Review, programs were asked to discuss SLOs. The following are reflections from the Emeritus program.

How are clear SLOs (overarching learner goals/competencies) developed and measured for each course so that success can be measured and students who are struggling can be identified and helped?

Emeritus program SLOs are developed by faculty following the parameters set by the institutional SLOs and applying them to unique course content to assess the achievement of the goals and competencies identified in Emeritus Program course outlines of record. Using ISLOs as a starting point, subject area experts modify them to reflect the desired outcomes of individual course goals. Periodically, pre and post-assessments are used to identify each student's understanding of the subject matter before the start of the course in order to target areas of need; and progress 2/3 of the way through the course, to insure achievement of goals and offer additional help if indicated.

Describe an example of how your program/department used course SLO data from the past year to impact student learning or achievement.

Course: Health/OA - Online Brain Fitness

Course SLO: Critical Thinking

The Emeritus Health Education student will critically process information, make decisions, and solve problems independently or cooperatively.

Describe the quantitative or qualitative results: Problem solving skills were difficult to assess last year in online classes because not all students in non-credit classes want to participate in assessment exercises... Through some very creative design ideas, by expert faculty, assessment opportunities are improving in our online courses. We recognize that cooperative learning is important for the development and maintenance of decision making and problem solving skills in older adults. Opportunities to work cooperatively have been increased in our online instruction. Currently, online forums, chat boards, virtual bulletin boards, surveys, and zoom sessions are being successfully used to assess student progress and understanding, and to capture qualitative data. Quizzes and progress monitors are being used to capture % of improvement, time spent in exercises, standing within the class (and age group), and other quantitative results. Examples: Quizzes demonstrate understanding of new concepts, information, terms, etc. Progress monitors calculate and display speed of processing/problem solving/decision making. Bulletin boards and chat rooms demonstrate a student's ability to process and apply class content.

Discuss any actions taken so far (and results, if known):

1. Multiple online sharing applications have been added to online course websites to help solicit student understanding, needs, and to share information with peers.

Results: Students are enjoying; the new formats, sharing their ideas and experiences, and hearing from peers. This has been a very successful means of communication and evaluation for online instruction, and appropriate to our target population.

"Multiple online sharing applications have been added to online course websites to help solicit student understanding, needs, and to share information with peers."

*Emeritus – Online
Brain Fitness*



Emeritus Brain Fitness

2. Weekly live Zoom sessions are offered for online students to review and discuss lessons with the instructor and peers. Students are encouraged to attend, especially when lessons are more difficult or of special interest to them. Some students are still reluctant to be seen online, but attend via phone. New students sometimes need assistance with live online participation. Weekly emails are sent out to remind students of the sessions and direct links to the Zoom app are included in the email.

Results: More students are attending the Zoom sessions and those attending enjoy the experience of live student/instructor interaction and peer sharing.

3. Last year, an instructor-facilitated weekly in-person class was established for students to get hands-on assistance and/or technical support for online learning (contact hours).

Results: This lab has become a popular venue for students. They love their instructor and the opportunity to share and interact with their peers. These live lessons have proven a great support to online content. This has turned out to be a very accessible and excellent format for instructor-student contact, and a model for all new online classes - hybrid instruction seems to be highly successful in older adult education.

The SLO Taskforce Needs YOU R Voice!

The SLO Taskforce typically meets at ECC on the second Thursday of the month at 2:45 PM in room 134. The taskforce, chaired by the SLO Coordinator, informs and reviews the SLO process so that it consistently supports the success of students, faculty and professional staff in their joint effort to foster student success. SLOs are the purview of faculty. Therefore, it is important that programs be represented on the Task Force and have input on institutional efforts regarding SLOs. Main focuses for the year include:

1. Implementation of Campus Labs Outcomes and Assessment Module
2. SDCE's Student Learning Outcomes website
3. SLO assessment trainings and supports



The SLO Task Force

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The Speedy SLO is the official Student Learning Outcomes newsletter of San Diego Continuing Education (SDCE). Published biannually by the San Diego Continuing Education SLO Task Force, the Speedy SLO provides SDCE faculty and professional staff with the most up to date information relating to student learning outcomes at the institution. Checkout hot topics and SLO websites by clicking on links below:

- Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project: UNLV research demonstrates that students do better when faculty employ teaching methods that help them understand *how* and *why* they are learning the course content.
<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>
- Be transparent about expectations
<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/classroomclimate/strategies/expectations.html>
- Curriculum Mapping Tool Carnegie Mellon University: Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation
<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/assessprogram/tools/Curriculum%20Mapping%20Tool.html>
- Writing SLOs for Course Syllabi (covers SLOs, syllabi and assessment)
<http://uwf.edu/offices/cutla/supporting-pages/writing-slos-for-course-syllabi/#form>
- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) website is a great resource for faculty!
<http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org>