Recommendation 3

“As noted by the 2006 team and in order to fully meet the Standards and facilitate the college's achievement of commission expectations of proficiency by AY 2012-13, the team recommends that the college identify student learning outcomes that are related to course objectives for all courses; evaluate all courses and programs through an on-going systematic review of the relevance, appropriateness, and achievement of student learning outcomes, currency, and future needs and plans; and conduct authentic assessment of student achievement at the course, program, and institutional levels in order to improve student learning.” (Standard II.A.1.c, 2.a, 2.e, 2.f, 2.h, 2.i; II.B.4; II.C.2., IV.A.2.b.)

In its first decade working with Student Learning Outcomes, West Los Angeles College implemented a cycle of SLO identification, assessment, discussion, and improvement. The project, initially faculty-led, expanded steadily with the assistance of significant resources including dedicated administrators and staff. In early 2012, West believed it had demonstrated proficiency in the SLO cycle; the college has since recognized the need for a major adjustment, committed to it, and plunged into the work required to implement it.

Establishing a Cycle of SLO Assessment, 2002-2012

At the root of West’s SLO cycle was a college-wide agreement on Institutional SLOs initially identified by the faculty and subsequently adopted by non-instructional programs as well. Progress was incremental, as early adopters modeled SLO assessment, AFT and the Board clarified full- and part-time faculty obligations in the contract, and the Planning and Program Review committee modified instruments to fold SLO assessment into planning. Participation was both broad and deep: dozens of faculty participated in workshops focused on Institutional and Program SLOs and more identified the roles of these SLOs in their courses; faculty and administrators sought out expert advice at state and local meetings. West allocated faculty release time and administrative support to shepherd the institutionalization of the SLO assessment cycle. At the 2009 Student Success Conference, the RP Group honored West’s SLO Coordinator for his SLO work. [http://www.rpgroup.org/content/2009-power-awards]. He also served on the SLO Assessment Guidelines Ad Hoc Committee that wrote “Guiding Principles for SLO Assessment” that was adopted by the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges in fall 2010. [http://asccc.org/papers/guiding-principles-slo-assessment].

West began working on defining and assessing Student Learning Outcomes in November 2002, when faculty and administrators attended a Student Learning Outcomes Workshop led by the Research and Planning Group (RP Group). The college formed an SLO Committee in spring 2003, which led a group of faculty in identifying Institutional SLOs by November 2004. Groups of faculty from disparate disciplines met together and pondered what they expected students to be able to do as a result of taking their courses. They then sorted the resulting course outcomes into logical groups and discussed what they held in common. The resulting broad descriptions of what faculty expected students to be able to do became the first draft of West’s Institutional SLOs. In identifying Institutional and Program SLOs, planners maintained the connection to specific course outcomes. To identify Program SLOs, faculty typically began by listing the critical outcomes of the courses that made up the program. In order to

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apply a Program SLO to a course, an instructor needed to reverse this process, matching an assessment in the course to a Program SLO.

By 2006, the college began an SLO Portfolio Project to capture SLO assessment, with about 25% of the faculty starting the project each year through 2009. Focusing on high-impact courses, instructors created (or identified existing) lessons focusing on a specific program SLO, developed a rating scale for the assignments students produce as a result of these lessons, and posted model student work illustrating A, B, C, D, and F grades in relation to the SLO. Instructors also posted reflections stating what they learned during the process and what they might change the next time they taught the course. In this way, West calibrated grade on individual assessments (essays, quizzes, speeches, art projects, etc.) with SLO achievement, showing how faculty evaluate student achievement. Faculty were prompted to use the results of this process to help more students achieve their SLOs. The resulting cycle (design, develop, pilot-test, evaluate, modify--if necessary--test again) allowed for continuous improvement, both in instruction leading to student achievement of SLOs and in the assessment process itself. Faculty from 34 disciplines assessed 60 classes in this way. 

http://www.wlac.edu/staffandfaculty/SLO_rating_scale/rating_scale_2/

West described its SLO assessment procedure in its 2009 Focused Midterm Report:

In the past two years, we have concentrated on helping faculty develop single-course assessments of student SLO achievement. So far, 61 (out of 70 fulltime) faculty have posted SLO portfolios containing the following documentation:

- Teacher Name
- Class Name & Number – for example: English 101
- College SLO and/or Program SLO
- Assessment Instrument/Assignment/Exam Question—designed to determine how well students achieve the SLO
- Rating Scale – descriptions of scores 6 highest through 1 lowest (or A through F)
- 5-6 Sample papers, projects, or written exams to illustrate grades of 6 through 1 (or A through F)—one of each.
- Faculty member’s reflection on the process—What did I learn? What do I want to change?

In accepting the Midterm Report, the Commission made no comment on SLOs, asking for resolution only of a recommendation on unfunded retiree health benefits.

Three faculty members attended the WASC and AAHE conference held in Hawaii from January 28-30, 2010 and returned energized to continue this process, focusing particularly on faculty dialog on assessment results, leading to improved teaching and learning.

http://resources.wlac.edu/userfiles/apigomj/SLOPodcastMay2010.mp3

The SLO Coordinator retired in June 2010. In February 2011, a new SLO Coordinator was hired. He participates on the district-level SLO Advisory Committee and Co-Chairs West’s SLO Committee. This draft is fairly complete. It uses materials from the Corrective Action Matrix, with additions from Mary-Jo Apigo and Todd Matosic.
expanded the scope of SLO development, review and revision beyond the previous focus on academic SLOS to all divisions and programs in the college. To support this wider sweep, the college created an SLO taskforce (which evolved into an SLO Committee reporting to the Academic Senate through the Curriculum Committee) with representatives from the three major divisions of the college (Academic Affairs, Student Services, and Administrative Services). Academic Senate and the Curriculum Committee members serve as resources to the taskforce. The SLO Coordinator works with the Curriculum Committee on technical review of courses, and reporting at all Academic Senate meetings on SLO progress.

In August 2011, the college hired a Dean of Teaching and Learning. She provides leadership over SLOs, supervises the SLO Coordinator, and co-chairs the SLO Committee. [Review Senate minutes to note the Senate discussions of sample SLO assessments—i.e., Melinda Smith’s on the Health 11 essay—unless we mentioned that in the Self Study.]

West continued to fine-tune its SLO assessment cycle. In 2011 the Senate approved assessment tools that faculty could use to more easily assess student learning outcomes for their courses and programs, and which also clearly aligned courses with both institutional and program SLOs. [documentation http://www.wlac.edu/slo/forms/index.html] The new SLO Coordinator held one-on-one training sessions and workshops with faculty, and the SLO Committee mounted an extensive video tutorial on the college website. [http://west-slo.weebly.com] The website also features the SLO Coordinator’s focused and comprehensive reports on all course SLO work completed to date, including graphics conveying the work for the path to proficiency. [Documentation—process diagrams – www.wlac.edu/slo; reports – www.wlac.edu/slo/forms/index.html.] The SLO Coordinator and Dean also developed and distributed a Year-in-Review 2011-2012 report that included SLO History and Assessment Plans, SLO Reports, SLO Process Diagrams, SLO Assessment, SLO Committee Meeting Minutes. [documentation – http://www.wlac.edu/slo/forms/documents/SLOYearinReview2011-12.pdf] The SLO Coordinator and Dean of Teaching and Learning presented these reports Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, and Divisional Council meetings. Division chairs included the results of SLO assessments in annual program reviews.

At the writing of the 2012 Self Study in support of Reaffirmation of Accreditation, all syllabi were required to include SLOs and an indication of how students completing the course would demonstrate their attainment. 97 percent of the courses taught in the previous two years had been assessed. Faculty were required to file a comprehensive SLO assessment for each course taught each semester. The SLO Coordinator was tracking and reporting our progress in assessing SLOs at the course, program and institutional level. Furthermore, the required documentation now included

- Report of Data (the breakdown of student scores for the assessment)
- Plan of action aimed at changes to improve student learning for the SLOs assessed
- Changes already implemented based on the previous assessment cycle
- Plans for sharing the results of the assessment

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At that point, all courses taught at West had an ongoing SLO assessment as part of three-semester SLO review cycle (semester 1--assess; semester 2--discuss results; semester 3--institute changes). This cycle fed into the annual program review process; each unit reported on its progress in developing and assessing SLOs as well as any changes resulting from the assessment.

Refining the SLO Cycle: Focus on Course SLOs

On the basis of all this work and in good faith, most members of the College community regarded institutional progress on outcomes as robust.

As the 2012 Visiting Team pointed out, West instructors were generally measuring Program SLOs in their courses, rather than identifying and assessing specific Course SLOs. This is not to say that instructors were not aware of the goals of their courses; in the course of developing Program SLOs for all degrees and state-approved certificates, SLOs first identified at the course level had been aggregated into Program SLOs. Some disciplines, notably mathematics, had seen the necessity of assigning Program SLOs to individual courses, or of breaking down Program SLOs and assigning portions of them to specific courses. In other words, they were identifying Course SLOs.

Although the college was deeply invested in an SLO process that worked down from Institutional SLOs, through Program SLOs, to the assessment of courses, the 2012 Evaluation Report and subsequent Commission letter helped the college as a whole understand the value of linking course objectives to SLOs specific to each course. Recognizing the scale of the issue, West engaged a consultant, Matthew Lee, to review its SLO processes. His preliminary recommendations helped the SLO Committee draft an ambitious plan of action, which the college adopted through its participatory governance process. In effect, West has now undertaken to work up from the course level to the institutional level, an organic shift of focus within the established process.

In July of 2012 the Accreditation Steering committee asked various established committees to form workgroups to address the recommendations and an SLO Workgroup, comprised from members of the SLO Committee, formed in [give month] 2012 and agreed to meet twice a month to. At the August 2012 Flex Day, the SLO Coordinator and Dean of Teaching and Learning led a breakout session on Linking SLOs and Pedagogy: Rubrics, Assessment, and Faculty Dialogue. They presented the first edition of the monthly SLO Newsletter that includes updates on SLO progress, SLO tips, and upcoming events. In this session, faculty discussed ways to engage in dialogue, and participants developed a rubric.


The timeline agreed to by the Academic Senate, College Council, and appropriate committees (PIE, Curriculum and SLO Committees) in September is ambitious:

- By the end of November 2012, course outlines of all courses taught in fall 2012 will include at least one course SLO.

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Before the spring 2013 semester faculty will discuss SLO assessment results, evaluating all courses for:
  - Course SLOs
  - Achievement of SLOs
  - Currency

The fall 2012 Program Review incorporates SLO assessment to link assessment with planning and resource requests.

In spring 2013, faculty will incorporate improvements determined via course SLO assessment.

Continue to conduct authentic assessment of student achievement at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Continue to use results of assessment at all levels to improve student learning.

To facilitate this work, the Academic Senate approved an SLO addendum to the Course Outline of Record, and the Curriculum Committee doubled its normal meeting schedule. The SLO Addendum includes course objectives and requires course SLOs, corresponding assessment methods, and the criterion levels representing satisfactory performance on each SLO. In addition, each course SLO is mapped to Program and Institutional SLOs.

Between August and November 2012, the SLO coordinator and Dean of Teaching and Learning reviewed the course outlines of record to identify the gaps in course SLOs for all currently-taught courses. The SLO Committee prepared a list of the courses that required new Course SLOs. To facilitate their identification and documentation, the SLO Committee published a handbook on Course SLO Development. The SLO Coordinator conducted Course SLO Development Training with Division Chairs, Curriculum Committee members and Area Deans, and met with representatives from all of West’s 14 divisions to discuss course SLO development and review the handbook, and held open SLO labs on Monday and Wednesday afternoons to train individual faculty members. By Oct. 23, 13 such one-on-one sessions had been held. On Oct. 17, 119 course outlines were updated with course SLOs; on Oct. 31, 46; on Nov. 19, xx; and on Nov. 28, xx.

The Office of Instruction is collecting faculty syllabi for all courses taught in fall 2012. The SLO Coordinator trained staff on reviewing syllabi for inclusion of SLOs. Faculty who do not have SLOs listed are contacted, and an SLO Bulletin with SLO information is sent.

[Here we need to describe our plans for discussing SLO assessment data and making any changes needed.] Where the changes can be done by the instructors alone, they will be implemented in the Spring 2013 semester; where they require changes to course outlines of record, those changes will be implemented in time for the following term.

The consultant provided a Gap Analysis on Oct. 15, 2012, in which he detailed what the college needs to do, not only to achieve our goals for this year, but to sustain a meaningful cycle of assessment, discussion, improvement and reassessment. The Senate discussed these significant tasks at length at its

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Oct. 23 meeting. Although the college president suggested a more gradual pace for identifying course SLOs, no Senators supported this route, and many urged that the faculty continue in the ambitious task of identifying (where necessary) and assessing an SLO for each course taught in the fall 2012 semester. It was noted that SLO assessment is part of a cycle of continuous improvement, so that getting started is itself valuable, and imperative. [Here any subsequent Senate actions, plus any of College Council and Divisional Council, if they come.]

West is engaged in a full-court press to identify Course SLOs in all current courses and to conduct authentic assessments of Course SLOs in all fall courses. Before the start of the next semester (February, 2013) faculty will have discussed the results of the assessments to determine what, if any changes need to be made in the course, the SLO, or the assessment. In spring 2013, West will complete the cycle by implementing the improvements identified. Some will require changes to the Course Outline of Record, which the Curriculum Committee will oversee in the first half of 2013; others will involve changes in pedagogy and will be applied to courses in the Spring 2013 semester. The SLO Committee is also planning an SLO Symposium at West to feature national and state SLO experts. The tentative date for the symposium is March 2013.

Despite the pressing nature of the timeline to complete course SLO development a commitment to quality has pervaded the entire process. Faculty, Division Chairs and Office of Instruction Deans participated in detailed training on SLO development and gained a clear understanding of the connection between the course objectives and their overarching student learning outcomes. Faculty who teach the actual courses in need of an SLO developed them, many utilizing the additional one-on-one sessions with the SLO Coordinator to get clarification on the process and hone their skills even further.

After faculty developed the course SLO (using the course objectives to develop the outcome), they reviewed the SLO with their Division Chair who then sent it to the SLO Coordinator to review and confirm that there is a robust course SLO in place that is based on the course objectives, an assessment method(s) to assess the outcome, and a criterion level attached to the outcome so that future assessments would foster stronger student learning and better courses over time. Lastly, the area Deans reviewed the course SLOs to make sure that there was alignment with the Institutional and Program learning outcomes for each course SLO developed.

One example of how this communication cycle has taken place was the evolution of English courses in mid-November 2012. The division originally decided that real world outcomes for some courses would be to have students develop progressively better essays for courses in a sequence. After review with the SLO Coordinator, the decision evolved to using essays as the assessment for these courses and the outcomes became “defend an argument with a thesis...” Faculty discussed this in division meetings and continued the conversation on email. The process was very engaging and allowed for input and collaboration by faculty.

The college’s annual Leadership Retreat was designed to engage 120 faculty, staff, administrators and students in using data, especially SLO assessments, in planning to improve the college.

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[not sure what tense to use here] To assist in SLO assessment in fall 2012, the SLO committee is publishing a second SLO Handbook – *Back to the Basics: SLO Assessment* [documentation – need to link to this]. In addition, workshops and one-on-one sessions will be scheduled. SLO Hours will also be available for faculty conducting SLO assessment.

Faculty have met the challenge of creating high-quality SLOs and associated assessment methods. Almost all SLO Addenda presented to the Curriculum Committee and subsequently incorporated in to the Course Outlines of Record have identified more than the target of one Course SLO.

Workshops in January brought faculty together to discuss the Course SLOs they had measured in the fall semester. XX new lesson plans resulted, as well as XX syllabus revisions, and plans for XX revisions to course outlines, including course SLOS.

[How do faculty report their SLO assessments this fall? How will we track discussion? Improvements?]

The Dean of Teaching and Learning and Dean of Research and Planning are developing a module in the online Institutional Effectiveness System (IES) to capture SLO assessment. IES is the same system used for Program Review, so faculty and staff are familiar with the software. Through IES, the assessment information will be stored into a much-needed database.

**Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement**

The college recognizes that its work on SLOs since the 2012 visit represents significant progress in a short amount of time, setting the stage for continuing work on sustainable continuous quality improvement. The faculty in particular have committed to having

- Student Learning Outcomes in place for all course, programs, certificates and degrees, and to their regular, authentic assessment.
- Dialog on the results of assessment at the level of course, discipline, division, and college, leading to the identification of gaps.
- Course SLOs aligned with degree and certificate Program SLOs and Institutional SLOs.
- Student awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.

Administration support, as well as faculty commitment, will assure that

- Decision-making includes dialog on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward aligning college-wide practices to support and improve student learning.
- Appropriate resources continue to be allocated.
- Comprehensive reports are completed, updated and consulted on a regular basis.
- The entire outcomes cycle is evaluated and revised on a regular basis.

West is committed to keeping the forward momentum we enjoyed in the previous system while adding the depth and detail the standards require.

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