

Citrus College Faculty Newsletter

Citrus College

SLOs and You: A Veteran Faculty Member's Perspective by Terry Miles

Most of you probably recall the events leading up to the day when you were hired as tenure-track instructors at Citrus College. The process for most usually starts with an awareness of availability of the position, followed by introspective thought, the application process, the interviews and finally the acceptance and welcome to the college. As I recall the process took about a month from start to finish and seemed to be over as soon as it began; except for the part where you waited for the phone call from HR offering you the job. What may be lost to many in this short time frame is some of the fine print in the numerous documents one is required to pour over and fill out; not the least of which is the description of duties for the posi-

tion. I would guess that all of us shared one duty in common in these descriptions, which vary greatly depending on the disci-



pline(s) in which you were hired to teach: the requirement to develop and maintain departmental curriculum and participate in the program review process. When I started in 1998, I had a

sense of what might be required of me for curriculum development, but no clue what program review was. Development, implementation, assessment, and revision of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) were certainly not in my job description back then.

Fast forward to now and try to imagine what a description of duties section in a job flyer might say. If it accurately describes what we are expected to do, it might include SLO development *et seq.* in its text. The natural question that might arise is "what part of education has changed that makes this a required duty?" The answer is simple: accountability.

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Soliciting future articles (500 words or less) on:

- *Improving Student Engagement in the classroom*
- *Navigating a Sabbatical*
- *Tackling Program Review*
- *Using Technology in the classroom*

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To SLO or not to SLO—THAT is the question by John Vaughan

Greetings Colleagues,
Below is an excerpt from a recent communicate that I received from Statewide Academic Senate President Mark Wade Lieu concerning SLO's and accreditation. Please read and then I will comment.

"Subject: President's Update April 2009 Thursday April 9, 2009 Accreditation There is no new budget information at this time, so I turn to our number two preoccupation, accreditation. One of our longstanding complaints

about the Accrediting Commission has been the ambiguity and inconsistency of some of its guidance on the standards. Well, the good news is that the Commission has been quite definitive for a change. The bad news is that their position is contrary to the thinking of the Academic Senate. I am referring in specific to the issue of whether or not student learning outcomes (SLOs) need to be included in the course outline of record and class



syllabi. The Academic Senate has interpreted from the beginning, with no firm disagreement from

A MARK OF MATURITY

by Dale Salwak

I have been thinking a lot lately about one of my former students, Claudia Cervantes. Although eighteen when I met her four years ago, even then she showed maturity well beyond her years. She comes from a family of nine. In the 1980s her father, on his own, moved from Mexico to the United States, became a citizen, and worked to support his family back home. In 1992 the rest of his family joined him and also became citizens.

The family expected Claudia to complete high school, get married, and raise a family. That's wonderful if that is your call in life. But Claudia heard a different voice and she had a different vision; and so in spite of the expectations of her parents and the traditions into which she had been born, she went on to college, and that's when I met her.

After graduating from Citrus College with a 4.0 G.P.A., Claudia transferred to Cal Poly and majored in Political Science. Last June I attended her graduation where she was honored as outstanding graduating senior and spoke as valedictorian. Last summer she was invited to an all-expense paid leadership conference in Monterey Bay, hosted by Leon Panetta. Last fall she was invited to another conference in Denver, Colorado. This spring she is serving as a special assistant to the President of Cal Poly, and next summer she will intern for a Congressman in Washington, D.C. I have just learned that she has received a \$5,000 scholarship as she completes her Master's degree and prepares to work toward her Ph.D. in Political Science with an eye on teaching at the university level.

Not long ago Claudia e-mailed me to say, "I could never have imagined how much education would change me for the better." It was never easy for her. The studies were one thing, but the questions and doubts and pressures at times from those she loved the most – quite another. In fact, at times she felt so discouraged she wondered if she should continue. All along her other teachers and I assured her that eventually her family members would understand – and that the best way to honor them is to be true to herself and her call.

Following in the footsteps of the patriarchs of old, Claudia was called to leave behind her country and her kindred and her father's house. She did. That takes courage and faith – and great maturity.



Join in the Second All-Faculty Book Event as we read Dale's Book: Teaching Life—Letter from a Life in Literature! Details are on page 4.



The Great & Many Things We Do...

Editor's Note: I was particularly glad when Kathy Bakhit proposed this section for our Faculty Newsletter. It is common to relate to our colleagues through what we do in the workplace generally and in the classroom specifically. However, when we take an opportunity to talk "beyond the classroom," it is amazing to find the rich and diverse ways in which our colleagues contribute to their communities, disciplines, and professions. Four people contacted me with items that they wanted to share. I hope that we will see this segment grow as it recurs.—sl

Kathy Bakhit is working on her EDD through the University of La Verne. She is one of 10 children to parents who have sixth and third grade educations. She will be the first woman in her family to earn an EDD and is proud to be a role model to her children and students!

Jack Call completed a book while on Sabbatical last year. It will be published in November by O Books (based in Winchester, UK and Washington). The title is: God Is a Symbol of Something True: Why you don't have to choose either a literal god or a blind, indifferent universe. The book can be pre-ordered through Amazon.com

Matt Jackson & Maryann Kvietkauskas Rachford's presentation in the Citrus Gallery was titled "Crossbones", with skulls implied. Matt's paintings dealt with the death of his mother. This series of paintings was a way for him to work through his emotions. Maryann had a small stained glass piece and a series of seascapes based on square-rigged ships and pirates along with another painting illustrating the loneliness of Biblical Tribulation. Maryann has also been invited to have work included in, and participate in the activities at the Millard Sheets Art Gallery during the Los Angeles County Fair in September and October of 2009.

Michael Hillman once again organized and led the annual Glendora Empty Bowls event. In the Citrus College Ceramics room, students and visitors create bowls that are then fired by Mike and his assistants. These are then delivered to the First Christian Church (DOC) in Glendora, filled with soup from various restaurants in downtown Glendora, and sold to the attending public in order to gather monetary donations to feed the homeless.

The **art faculty's show** entitled "**Blue Plate Special**" presented to the "art of the day" for each of the individual artists. The art faculty involved included: Dyane Duffy, Mike Hillman, Matt Jackson, Elanie Moore and Maryann Kvietkauskas Rachford. Adjunct faculty artists included: Bob Orso, Jesse Standlee, Mark Wessel, Alexandra Wiesenfeld, and Mailka Zweig. Work included paintings, sculpture, drawings, mosaic, and stained glass which demonstrated the diversity of the Citrus College art faculty.

To SLO or Not to SLO, continued from page 1

the Commission, that the decision on these issues rests with the individual colleges and what works best for them. However, recommendations from visiting teams have been inconsistent regarding these issues, and the Commission has been requested to clarify these issues. In the Commission's March 2009 newsletter, the Commission has stated firmly that SLOs must be on both the course outline of record and each class syllabus.

Needless to say, the Academic Senate is not at all happy with this interpretation. Furthermore, this interpretation now exists separately from the Standards themselves, which means that groups that interact with the Standards in future years may easily overlook this interpretation, possibly to their peril. Your Executive Committee will begin discussions of how to respond to this interpretation at its next meeting, and your input is always welcome and valued. "

As you can see, SLO's and assessment is not just an issue that is a frustrating to our leaders in the Faculty Association but also to leaders in the Academic Senate. The members of the accrediting commission have been woefully inadequate at stating exactly when, where and how they wish to see student learning outcomes and assessment implemented. At conferences that I have attended, the "party line" of the last few years has been "do it so it is meaningful at your own institution".

I believe to a large degree we have done that at Citrus, placing slo's within the course outline of record and not mandating that they also appear in the syllabus given to students. Many schools list student learning outcomes ONLY in the syllabus and not in the course outline of record. As you can imagine, confusion reigns as a result.

Those of you who know me know I'm rather plain spoken. Let's not beat around the bush when we discuss slo's- many of us hate them, or at the very least believe that they are one more unnecessary intrusion into the educational process imposed by academic "Big Brothers" trying to justify their salaries. A few of us actually like the darn things. Am I off the mark here? I doubt it.

So why am I on the Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Team- the HOT-SHOTS? Well, believe it or not, I feel that a lot of good can come from slo's and assessment. "Huh?", you ask. Yep, I do. First of all, it has made us here at Citrus take a nice long look at much of our antiquated curriculum, a process we are mandated by the state to undertake every six years. Secondly, looking at not just *what* we teach, but *how we teach it* is not such a bad thing- to me, that is the essence of

...looking at not just what we teach, but how we teach it is not such a bad thing- to me, that is the essence of what SLO's and assessment should be about.

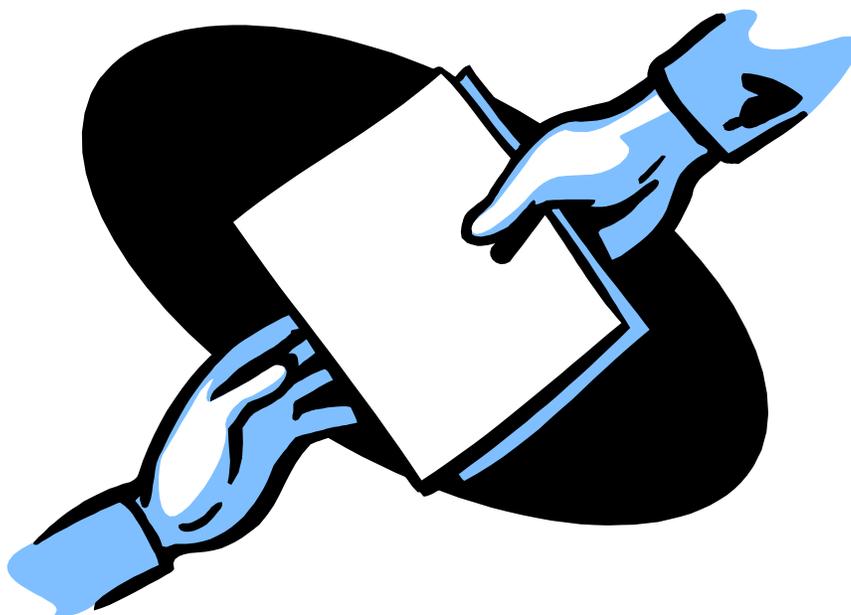
what slo's and assessment *should* be about. Unfortunately, it's feeling like its becoming about a federally mandated intrusion into our teaching methods, documentation of those methods, and possibly our evaluations. For this reason, slo's, even though they do some good, are a slippery slope.

This brings us to the question at hand- "to slo and assess or not to slo and assess"? At least for now, I encourage us at Citrus to do just as we have been. Making a big stink at our col-

lege about refusing to write slo's or refusing to assess them will probably get us nothing more than a news conference explaining to the surrounding communities why we were sanctioned by the accrediting commission. Who wants that? Not I, said the goose. I will tell you that we should keep doing exactly what we have been doing- which is developing slo's and assessment strategies that are worthwhile to each of us in very individual ways. Departments and divisions that have taken ownership of them in methodologies that are useful to them are actually getting something meaningful from the process. For ideas, contact myself or Roberta Eisel, and we'd be glad to show you what we mean.

In the meantime, also rest assured that the Statewide Academic Senate is on record as opposing slo's in faculty evaluations, and is more than a bit "hot under the collar" as to the mixed messages coming from the accrediting commission. This promises to be a very hot topic at the Spring Plenary and I look forward to giving you updates very soon.

Regards,
John Vaughan



SLOs and You, continued from page 1

Without going into a long history of the sequence of events that have lead accrediting agencies like the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to hold us accountable for student learning, the rationale for such accountability measures has a clear connection

to political motivation. No tax payer contributing to the public education system can deny the politician that claims that they will improve education through accountability. After all, aren't these same tax payers subject to accountability in the workplace? Do they not have to turn out some product or service for their earnings? Shouldn't they expect that teachers be subject to the same type of accountability in the classroom? Certainly, the politicians agree with them and are taking steps in a very bipartisan manner to ensure that the tax payer is not disappointed. How are the politicians accomplishing this, you may ask? By holding teachers and institutions accountable through accreditation.

Now, performance can be assessed in a myriad of ways for an educator. We have a formal evaluation process that takes general guidelines into account, some of which include duties outside the classroom. We can look at grades. We can look at student success through transfer rate, degree completion, certification, or performance on standardized tests and exit exams. These so called "multiple measures" are used often in various capacities as assessment tools to gauge how well students are being taught, which could be a reflection on the whole educational experience for a given student at a given institution. Certainly standardized testing is viewed as a viable assessment tool in the public sector K-12 system where institutions are required to demonstrate minimum success rates on standardized exams lest they fall under the scrutiny of the State Department of Education. This is the

legacy of No Child Left Behind and continues to be employed, much to the chagrin of many public educators today.

In higher education we have not been under the microscope to the same degree as have our K-12 counterparts. My recollection of first hearing about SLOs wasn't until 2002 or



2003. At that time it was just one of many TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms) routinely used as jargon in higher ed. There was no sense of urgency for assessing them, let alone even drafting them at this time. Around 2006 is when I remember first hearing a sense of urgency in the Academic Senate followed by genuine concern on the part of Management. We needed to get cracking...and fast.

If you have a few hours to kill, it may be a fun exercise to peruse the Accreditation Standards that we are now held accountable to fulfill in our next accreditation review in the fall of 2009. These can be found on the Citrus website at <http://www.citruscollege.edu/accreditation/Pages/Self-StudyResources.aspx>.

These standards are rife with the term "Student Learning Outcomes;" a term virtually absent in the standards we were held to in 2003, our last accreditation cycle. I am certain that no one serving on any of our self-study committees has been able to escape addressing SLOs as they pertain to their standard.

Our Academic Senate, under the leadership of some very astute faculty members has chosen to fully embrace SLOs and map out a pathway for Faculty ownership of them. This is a proactive, rather than reactive approach to a paradigm that has been foisted upon us by ACCJC/WASC. I doubt very seriously that our Academic Senate would have dreamt up SLOs and successfully gotten an entire institution to

work so feverishly on them if this were not the case. As a result, the District has supported these actions by hiring a SLO Coordinator with 60% reassigned time, increased the reassigned time for the Curriculum Chair to 40%, and hired a Program Review Coordinator who is paid via stipend. In addition, part of the duty of every dean, director, vice president, and even some classified staff is to make sure that SLOs are getting worked on in their respective areas. I for one would be interested in seeing the increase in cost to the District due to the man-hours spent on SLO-related activities.

As Faculty members, we are caught in a tight spot. On the one hand, we could simply cross our arms and refuse to work on SLOs. The risk for such behavior (although I suspect that some within our ranks have been successful in pulling this off so far) could be disciplinary action on the part of the District or worse, loss of accreditation for the entire institution. On the other hand, we could fully embrace SLOs, work hard to meet every standard required of us by ACCJC/WASC, and maybe keep our status as an accredited institution for a few more years. Well, this is a no brainer; I think all of us would rather keep our jobs. However, there is a price to pay for meeting every standard.

Accreditation Standard IIIA1c (see URL above) states that "Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, ef-

These so called "multiple measures" are used often in various capacities as assessment tools to gauge how well students are being taught, which could be a reflection on the whole educational experience for a given student at a given institution.

fectiveness in producing those learning outcomes." At first glance, this directive might seem rather benign.

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After all, if SLOs are part of our job, why shouldn't we be evaluated on them? Two words stand out in this standard: "progress" and "producing." Progress implies moving forward, improving, doing better than we did the last time we did whatever it was we were doing. Producing, used in this context could be interpreted two different ways. It could mean simply writing the SLOs into our credit course outlines, or it could mean showing demonstrable achievement on the part of our students. It would appear that this language gives us a directive not only to write, implement, assess, and reevaluate the SLOs

that we draft, but to show at least some degree of success on student achievement...or else!

State labor regulations are very clear about matters that lie within the scope of bargaining. Namely, districts are required by the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA) to meet and negotiate in good faith any proposed changes to wages, hours of employment, and other working conditions, including evaluation procedures. For an agency like ACCJC/WASC to impose standards on an institution that involve specific changes to working conditions is tantamount to taxpayers refusing to pay taxes to an institution because it doesn't have specific contract language in its faculty contract. Although this example would be illegal on the part of the tax payer, both actions harm the affected institution if it doesn't negotiate in specific contractual provisions.

OK. Let's talk about price. Since we have adopted the SLO paradigm, most of us have had to write them (and learn how to use CurricUNET), implement them, assess them, and eventually reevaluate them. This is an ongoing process that will stay with us until either we retire, die, resign, get fired, or the accreditation agencies decide it was all a big mistake and we should do something else to demonstrate accountability to the taxpayer. Some faculty have been charged with writing SLOs for only one or two classes, others up to 20, classes, and some have done nothing at all. Perhaps this observation is characteristic of

how the various departments operate, but it doesn't seem fair. Next, all of us, in one capacity or another will be charged with having to assess whether or not the outcomes have been met in the individual classes that we teach. Then we will have to interpret the data acquired from our assessment tools. Once this is complete, we will need to get together at the department level and discuss the collective

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meaning of the data for all sections of a given class and eventually all of the courses offered in the curriculum. We then would modify the SLOs, our teaching behavior or both. Presumably, this information will be integrated into our annual program review and eventually the 6 year program review cycles. Wow! Quite a bit of work; all the while done for free. Do you think private sector employees would stay for long at jobs that continued to increase the workload with no compensation? In normal economic times, I doubt it.

So, let's step back and process this for a moment. We are being asked to work for free with the veiled threat looming that if we do not do so, we run the risk of losing our accreditation, and hence, our jobs. Also, ACCJC/WASC intends to break state law and force us to be evaluated based on our ability to "poop" out students that have mastered our SLOs. Meanwhile, our District and others are spending exorbitant amounts of cash to make sure all of this happens so we can demonstrate accountability to an accrediting body that seems to have no issue with breaking the law. I wonder how the taxpayers would feel about this.

I for one plan to play along with this exercise, at least for a while. There are some positives that I think will come out of it. It will give us a chance to have more involved discussions about teaching and learning as peers. The Leadership in our Academic Senate has

done an exemplary job of making sure that the Faculty, not Management, own the SLOs. We may be able to make better arguments for funding programs and maybe even restoring Department Chairs as this process evolves. Regardless, I refuse to just put my head down and do this work without a sense of direction and some hope of compensation. And if the day comes that Management tries to evaluate me based on my "productivity" (however that is determined) on SLOs, I will fight them with every resource at my disposal. My hope is that I don't look up from this work some day with a realization similar to that of J. Robert Oppenheimer when he finally witnessed the fruits of his labor.

Epilogue: As I work under this paradigm, I can't shake the eerie sensation that I'm doing this for the benefit of some other power. I rue the day when the "powers that be" understand all that we are doing well enough to say, "OK, we'll take it from here." If you think this smacks of conspiracy, look at what has happened to the public K-12 system. Standardized tests, accountability, oversight; yet, the product churned out is no better than it was before, and in many cases, worse. We need to make sure we always own this and are ready to abandon it if we deem it to be ineffective.

Terry Miles



Citrus College

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Our vision for the newsletter is to provide an opportunity for faculty to share ideas, concerns, solutions, successes, and challenges in an open and collegial forum. We welcome your contributions and hope that you will consider sharing topics that are of importance to you. Our next newsletter will coincide with the start of the Spring Semester. If you would like to submit a piece for inclusion in the upcoming newsletter, please send it electronically to Senya Lubisich (slubisich@citruscollege.edu).

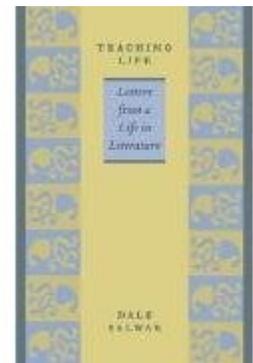


Presenting...

TWO UPCOMING FACULTY LEARNING INSTITUTE EVENTS:

2nd All Campus Book Event! May 28 or May 29, 12:00 – 1:30, CFI Community Room.

We'll discuss Citrus Professor Dr. Dale Salwak's latest book, *The Teaching Life: Letters from a Life in Literature*—Dr. Salwak will facilitate both events. Contact Diana Gill, dgill@citruscollege.edu, to receive a book as you RSVP.



Stressed Out? Come to the John Vaughan's **Stress Buster Workshop**, on Thursday, April 30, 2:45 – 4:00, CFI Community Room, or Friday, May 1, 9:00 – 10:15, CFI Community Room. Contact Diana Gill, dgill@citruscollege.edu to RSVP.

The DSP&S Recognition Celebration will take place on May 6th from 1:00 to 3:00 in the East Campus Center. Please join in honoring students who have demonstrated perseverance, good attitude, responsibility, goal orientation, good character, exemplary effort, and personal growth throughout the school year.



Looking for a computer classroom to reserve just for one class time?

Three computer labs are available on campus for reservation for one-time use.

Hayden Hall HH #758 (20 computers)

Contact Lois Bottari x6401

Center for Innovation CI 158 (24 computers)

Contact Lari Kirby x8569

Library Orientation Room LI-118 (20 computers; 20 chairs)

Contact Barbara Rugeley or Reference Desk x8644.

