Program Learning Outcomes

- What do we expect our graduates to know/be able to do?
- How does the curriculum address these outcomes?
- How do we measure these outcomes?
- How do we communicate them to our students?
Why are we doing this?

• Help us ensure quality of our programs
• Help us focus our programs
• Help our students understand what they are learning, which helps them learn better
• This guidance is particularly important for first-generation students
• Help our students understand what skills they will have upon graduation, for employment or graduate school
• Help us improve our programs based on what is working well and what isn’t
• It benefits our campus
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Accreditation is required for students to get federal financial aid

Our 10-year accreditation review is upcoming

Following national trends, the review process has changed completely since our last review
  – From self-improvement to compliance
  – From open-ended to checklists

Campus focus on items that are also intrinsically good things for us to do

Learning outcomes were expected at our previous review — we really have to have them in place for this review, all the other UC campuses already do
WASC Timeline

- Faculty developing PLOs since Spring 2013
- Some programs started assessment in Summer 2014, the rest starting this year
- Institutional report due February 26, 2015
- Off-site review May 7, 2015
- Site visit October 13-15, 2015
• Demonstrate knowledge of how biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology are used to elucidate both the function of cells and their organization into tissues.
• Recognize that biology has a basis in chemistry, physics, and mathematics.
• Present advanced knowledge in the specialized fields of molecular and cell biology.
• Describe how the scientific method is used to explain natural phenomena.
• Generate hypotheses, evaluate data, and design experiments to investigate a scientific problem.
• Understand safe laboratory practices and perform basic molecular biology techniques.
• Use effective oral and written language skills to communicate scientific data and ideas.
Defining Learning Outcomes

- Both discipline-specific skills/knowledge as well as contextualizing and extending general education skills such as critical thinking, communication, and quantitative reasoning
- May include ethics, values, and/or cultural competencies
- Outcomes should be measurable
- Outcomes must relate to required classes
  - Each required class should cover/assess at least one outcome
  - Each outcome should appear in at least one required class
- Consider published standards for the discipline
- Consider outcomes at other UC programs
History PLOs

- Demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of historical events in a specific region of the world.
- Demonstrate knowledge of scope and thematics across different periods, transnational, regional or transcultural history.
- Distinguish primary and secondary sources; understanding and evaluating historical ideas, arguments, and points of view; and evaluating competing interpretations and multiple narratives of the past.
- Gather and assess primary historical evidence and compiling bibliography.
- Provide constructive and effective critiques of other students’ work and completing a shared research project.
- Present clear and compelling arguments, based on critical analysis of diverse historical sources, and effectively communicate interpretations in written essays and/or other media.
- Develop a research question and completing a well-supported piece of historical writing about it.
Film & Digital Media PLOs

- Demonstrate employment of research skills, including the use of appropriate print and technology sources in the discipline, to construct effective arguments.
- Understand the pre-production, production, and postproduction digital media and filmmaking process.
- Demonstrate the relationship between different types of form and meaning through the creation of film and digital media projects or the critical analysis of them.
- Work collaboratively to produce a film or digital media project.
- Demonstrate broad knowledge of film and media history internationally.
- Analyze, interpret, and critique films and media from a variety of theoretical perspectives using the critical vocabulary and methodologies of the discipline.
- Demonstrate scholarly writing skills appropriate to the discipline of film and digital media.
- Articulate and defend their research and practice in a critical environment.
Faculty Ownership

- Learning outcomes are defined by the faculty, are owned by the faculty
- PLOs are discipline-specific
- Living document, can be updated as the faculty feel necessary
- Contrast to standardized approach seen in K-12 and CSUs
Other Levels of Learning Outcomes

- Course Learning Outcomes
- General Education
- Institutional Learning Outcomes
- Core Competencies
Core Competencies

- Written Communication
- Oral Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Information Literacy
Assessment

- Goals of assessment are quality assurance and program improvement
- Focus on cohort of students, does the cohort meet expectations?
- Not tracking of individual students
- Focus on graduation competencies
- Provides feedback to the department on student learning—where are students doing well, where are they doing less well?
Assessment

• Assessment can be seen as research about teaching

• When we do research we:
  – State a hypothesis
  – Collect data
  – Evaluate our hypothesis

• Outcomes assessment applies a similarly rigorous approach to our hypotheses about student learning
Focus on PLO Assessment

- Campus focus is on PLO assessment
- Discipline-specific, faculty-owned
- Build into existing assessment structures
- Most value for the effort
- Complements existing course-level assessment
Communication of PLOs

- Posted on the department webpages
- Links from central webpage: http://planning.ucsc.edu/irps/assessment/
- Need to be communicated to the students
  - Students should be able to articulate where they are in the program
  - They should understand why they are taking the classes they are
  - They should understand how each class fits into the whole curriculum
Connections to Advising

• Comparing PLOs can help with choosing a major
  – What are the expectations for the major?
  – What skills will be learned that may improve employability?

• Provides guideposts for learning during the major

• Helps students see the program from the classes

• Particularly valuable for students from families with less understanding/experience with college (e.g., first-generation students)