

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

AP-004-212

Replacement of Institutional Learning Outcomes with Institutional Learning Goals

Academic Programs Committee

Date: 11/03/2021

**Executive Committee
Received and Forwarded**

Date: 03/02/2022

Academic Senate

**Date: 03/09/2022
First Reading**

BACKGROUND:

The development of CPP's Academic Master Plan was a year-long process from Fall 2016 through Summer 2017. Involving constituents from across the campus community, ten working groups of students, faculty, and staff drew on CPP's mission, vision, and core values, and the University Strategic Plan. This iterative process of drafting, seeking input, and modifying multiple versions, resulted in the eight elements of an inclusive polytechnic university. These eight elements reflect an integral component of a CPP education, and are already embraced by the campus community in different ways.

Hence, the drive to focus learning goals to these eight elements aligns well with the institutional objective of providing all students with an inclusive polytechnic education. As part of this work, active discussions occurred within the Office of Assessment and Program Review, the 2019-2020 Academic Programs Assessment Committee (APAC) and 2019-2020 GE Assessment Committee (GEAC; both replaced with a single Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) as of Fall 2021.) Discussion highlights centered around:

- 1) the high number of ILOs (n=12) and GE-SLOs (n=14) which, as named as "outcomes," require assessment at the institutional level, while "goals" do not;
- 2) that the institution has never been able to assess all 26 ILOs and GE-SLOs, considering its overlapping yet different definitions and criteria for each learning outcome;
- 3) that the current capacity of degree programs and operational level of the Office of Assessment and Program Review is insufficient to meaningfully and effectively assess all 26 learning outcomes twice in a ten-year cycle (using WSCUC reaffirmation of accreditation timeline as a guide);
- 4) that Student Affairs found it challenging to align their assessment efforts to the current ILOs.

As a result of these discussions, both APAC and GEAC voted to eliminate the current 12 ILOs and replace them with Institutional Learning Goals aligned with the strategic priorities of the institution (e.g., elements of the Inclusive Polytechnic University.) The benefits are as follows:

- The proposed alignment of institutional goals with the institution's strategic direction would not only be more meaningful, but would, accordingly, support the work and assessment of learning outcomes of our academic degree programs;
- The proposed alignment would help reduce faculty workload. Currently, departments complete annual reports outlining faculty achievements and the extent to which departments contribute to the elements of the inclusive polytechnic university elements. The proposed alignment helps eliminate duplicative efforts;
- Institutional Learning Goals provide a strategic framework for discussions pertaining to assessment and improving student learning.

The proposed language:

CPP's inclusive polytechnic education prepares students for a life of learning, contributing to their communities, and personal and professional success. CPP graduates will possess knowledge and abilities reflective of the eight elements of an inclusive polytechnic education. These elements serve as learning goals for our curricular and co-curricular learning activities. Student learning outcomes across the university, including in academic programs, general education, and student affairs programming are written to align to these goals:

1. Application of Knowledge: CPP graduates will apply existing and new knowledge and skills to real-world situations, opportunities, and challenges.
2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: CPP graduates will use analytic and decision-making skills to identify and solve problems effectively.
3. Creativity, Discovery, and Innovation: CPP graduates connect theory and practice to drive creativity, discovery, and innovation.
4. Diverse and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives: CPP graduates will demonstrate awareness, understanding, and respect for diverse viewpoints—particularly those perspectives historically silenced—related to current and emerging issues across cultures and disciplines.
5. Integration of Technology: CPP graduates will appropriately utilize and adapt to new technologies.
6. Collaborative Learning: CPP graduates will demonstrate the ability to share and gain knowledge and skills as part of a team.
7. Community and Global Engagement: CPP graduates are prepared to contribute to and improve local and global communities.
8. Professional and Career Readiness: CPP graduates embody the knowledge and skills of their chosen discipline/profession.

In summary, this referral is to eliminate the 12 existing Institutional Learning Outcomes with more meaningful and relevant Institutional Learning Goals that are aligned to the strategic priorities of the institution and to student learning outcomes expressed by academic programs and in the Division of Student Affairs, thereby streamlining the assessment and program review efforts of academic programs.

RESOURCES CONSULTED:

Chairs, all departments

Deans and Associate Deans, all colleges

Laura Massa, Associate Vice President, Academic Programs

Jocelyn Chong, Coordinator, Office of Assessment and Program Review

Seema Shah-Fairbank, Faculty Fellow for Program Review (for historical perspective)

2019-2020 and 2020-2021 APAC and GEAC. Some members include:

Aaron DeRosa, Assoc. Professor, English (CAL for CLASS, APAC)

David Edens, Asst. Professor, Nutrition and Food Science (CAL for Agriculture, APAC, GEAC)

Eden Haywood-Bird, Asst. Professor, Early Childhood Studies (CAL for CEIS, APAC)
Laila Jallo, Asst. Professor, Chemical Engineering (CAL for Engineering, APAC)
Shonn Haren, Library (CAL for University Library, APAC, GEAC)
Robert Nyenhuis, Asst. Professor, Political Science (GEAC)
Denise Kennedy, Co-Chair of Academic Assessment Committee (AAC)
Chitra Dabas, Elif Ozkaya, Hyoung Soo Kim, Sooyun Im, Patrick Lee, Members of AAC

DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATION:

This referral aims to replace the 12 existing Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) with 8 proposed Institutional Learning Goals (ILGs), which are better aligned to the strategic priorities of the institution and to student learning outcomes expressed by academic programs, and help streamlining the assessment and program review efforts of academic programs.

Consultation started on Oct. 15, 2021 and ended on Nov. 15, 2021. Comments and responses from the proponents are listed in the appendix at the end.

On the positive side, the proposed ILGs leave more flexibility to academic programs to define, align, and assess their learning outcomes, which seems to ease the workload of assessment (as mentioned in comments 5 and 6 and responses). Furthermore, the proposed ILGs apply to undergraduate level only, therefore do not impact graduate programs (as mentioned in comments 7). Specifically, the AP committee received supportive comments from one department and one college.

Concerns and responses are summarized as follows:

1. There is a lack of coordination to develop goals and outcomes at the institutional level (comment 1).

Responses from the proponents: As pointed out by WSCUC's visit in 2019, current institutional level outcomes (institutional, academic, and GE) overlap and hard to assess, which is the reason of replacing current ILOs with proposed ILGs. There is also work going on to update GE outcomes. These efforts aim to simplify and reduce the workload of assessment and demonstrate our inclusive polytechnic identity.

2. Some of the goals are not clearly defined or not suitable at institutional level (comment 2 and 3).

Responses from the proponents: Goals serve the purpose of expressing what are considered important by the university regarding the quality of its graduates. Thus, the language used in goals is intentionally broad. Depending on disciplines, details can be incorporated into program level learning outcomes, which can be then assessed accordingly. The ongoing update of GE outcomes will also include detailed rubrics for assessment of students' capabilities.

3. Proposed goals do not incentivize assessment efforts (comment 4).

Responses from the proponents: Yes, the proposed ILGs are not likely to incentivize assessment efforts. Updating ILGs presents an opportunity to raise awareness of assessment, and resources and support will be provided by the Office of Assessment and Program Review to facilitate assessment.

To summarize, there is no strong objection to the proposed ILGs, and all concerns are addressed either by providing insights or ongoing related work.

The Academic Programs Committee recommends replacement of the 12 existing Institutional Learning Outcomes with the 8 Institutional Learning Goals listed above.

APPENDIX

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES:

1. There is a lack of coordination to develop goals and outcomes for the University Master Plan, the Academic Master Plan, and General Education. Any effort that establishes connections between the institutional, academic, and general education learning goals deserves support.

Response:

The university's Strategic Plan and Academic Master Plan each have goals and objectives toward achieving the visions laid out in those plans. These are separate from institutional learning goals and student learning outcomes, including from the GE program.

We do have lots of learning outcomes at the institution, including both institutional learning outcomes and GE learning outcomes that overlap and create a very challenging and workload-heavy assessment structure. In fact, this was one of the issues that WSCUC highlighted during their 2019 reaffirmation of accreditation visit. On a related note, there is work going on to update the GE learning outcomes (in accordance with CPP's Strategic Plan). The update will reduce the number of GE learning outcomes, further reducing assessment workload.

The replacement of institutional learning outcomes with institutional learning goals is a step toward clarifying and connecting learning outcomes across the university. This change will simplify and reduce the workload of assessment.

An additional benefit of the proposed institutional learning goals is that they align to our Academic Master Plan's expression of the inclusive polytechnic university. This will help us all to show the connection between learning outcomes across the university and our inclusive polytechnic identity.

2. The second proposed goal: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving needs a clear definition of what Critical Thinking should demand of students working towards a CPP degree. Currently programs are allowed to waive GE courses that cultivate critical thinking skills based on assertions that those programs can provide such skills. There have been few assessment data supporting such assertions.

Response:

As a goal, the language is intentionally broad. This will allow for more specific learning outcomes to define expectations for critical thinking, and the ways that students will demonstrate these abilities within programs. Most all degree programs, including those in Engineering, have learning outcomes that call for

critical thinking abilities. Program student learning outcomes can be more specific in defining critical thinking according to the standards of their discipline.

The GE learning outcomes under development will also include critical thinking. A rubric will be developed by the Academic Assessment Committee to further define what critical thinking elements should be demonstrated by students. Assessment of the GE critical thinking learning outcome will include student work from a representative sample of students across the university. The process will allow for disaggregation so that performance of key groups may be understood, and efforts toward improvement may be directed as indicated.

3. The last proposed goal: Professional and Career Readiness would be best left to the programs, whose faculty are in the best position to clearly define and assess how and how well students achieve it.

Response:

This is exactly right. Including this as an institutional learning goal is an expression that this is an important learning goal for the university – that all graduates should be professional and career ready. Individual program student learning outcomes are written to further specify and define what this means and how students demonstrate it within the discipline. Program faculty would then assess whether their students are achieving it, and make improvements to their program as needed.

Including Professional and Career Readiness as a goal also invites other units across the university to align their learning outcomes to the goal, and assess them as appropriate. For example, CPP's Career Center has learning outcomes that align well with the Professional and Career Readiness goal. However, the tool and criteria used to assess that learning outcome may be different from an academic program's. Yet, they both contribute to the same goal.

4. Updated institutional learning goals/outcomes do not necessarily incentivize colleges and programs to treat assessments more than just compliance exercises. Some colleges provide richer and more engaged responses to assessments for outside accreditations in their disciplines. Assessment process should present departments with a clear and simple process that allows them to demonstrate how and how well their programs align with these goals.

Response:

We agree that updated institutional learning goals aren't likely to incentive our community to understand or value assessment. This is a great opportunity to teach folks about assessment, and potentially increase engagement in the process. The Office of Assessment and Program Review is working hard to provide resources, including things like workshops, consultations, summer grants

and supporting College Assessment Liaisons (CALs), to help folks to better understand and carry out meaningful and manageable assessment processes.

If the goals are adopted, then one of the resources the Office of Assessment and Program Review will provide is support for programs in aligning their outcomes. The broad language of the institutional learning goals were developed and written in such a way that most learning outcomes would align quite nicely – but by no means is there a requirement that all align.

5. Some programs will be able to align to all of the goals more easily than others. What if a program finds they cannot align their program goals or outcomes to all of the proposed institutional learning goals? Is it OK to not reflect some of these in a program?

Response:

It is okay. Our goal is that CPP graduates will possess knowledge and abilities reflective of the eight elements of an inclusive polytechnic education, and that these elements serve as goals for both academic and co-curricular learning activities. Students should have various opportunities throughout their CPP experience to achieve these goals - some may be achieved as a result of their degree program experience, and some by actively participating in out-of-classroom activities such as leadership opportunities (e.g., serving in ASI, as a peer mentor, etc.).

Academic programs are certainly encouraged to align their learning outcomes to as many institutional learning goals as possible to facilitate progression towards these goals, but there may be exceptions where the institutional learning goals may not align as well. The Office of Assessment and Program Review will be able to provide support and guidance to those programs that would like it.

6. What happens if a program has goals or outcomes that are not related to the proposed goals? Is it OK to keep them at program level without aligning to institutional goals? For example, goal #1: Application of Knowledge requires assessment of students' ability to utilize knowledge but does not require students to demonstrate they have acquired the knowledge first.

Response:

A program with a learning outcome of knowledge acquisition would help facilitate progression towards the ability to apply said knowledge as a goal. We actually see a strong alignment in this example since attaining knowledge (e.g., as demonstrated by stating or explaining a concept) reflects a necessary step prior to being able to apply the knowledge in real world scenarios.

It's plausible that a program's learning outcome would not align well to an institutional learning goal. This is okay. The Office of Assessment and Program

Review team will be available to answer questions about this and provide support to programs as needed.

7. Faculty believes that the ILGs will not work for graduate programs for the following reasons:
 - a. The graduate programs have aligned their work to the new GILOs
 - b. The GILOs are intended to delve deeper into the disciplines
 - c. The proposed ILGs will make it harder to create new and innovative graduate programs

Additional comments from the proponents:

Learning goals are broad statements reflecting the learning we aim for our graduates to achieve. Goals are not assessed. Learning outcomes may be aligned to goals. The Office of Assessment and Program Review will look at assessment of aligned learning outcomes from across the university to be able to summarize accomplishments and actions taken for improvement. This summary will help to tell a story about what our students learn, and may be useful for suggesting activities the university might wish to take in support of the goals.

Learning outcomes are specific statements that indicate how a student may demonstrate learning of identified knowledge, skills and values of the course/program/activity. Learning outcomes are assessed, and that assessment includes utilizing what is learned to take steps to improve the course/program/activity (i.e., “close the loop”).

This referral applies to the undergraduate level only, and represents one part of a bigger piece of work to streamline and develop an assessment structure that is both meaningful yet manageable for programs and the institution.