Mission College Student Services
Service Area Outcomes (SAOs)

Non-instructional student learning outcomes are called Service Area Outcomes (SAO). So what is an SAO? A Service Area Outcome (SAO) is a statement about what we want a student to know, understand or do because the student participated in the service or program or states how the student will benefit from the service being provided.

The writing of SAOs should begin with a collective discussion about how the program area or department supports students. The outcomes should be tied to the college Mission statement, relate to the college ILOs and relate to goals listed in your program review.

Define
When creating your Student Services SAOs (Service Area Outcomes) you need to ask and answer the following questions:

1. What service(s) are you providing? (What is your program’s core service?)
2. Are your SAOs measurable? (What data will you use?)
   (Identify how many students (%) are expected to achieve the competency)
3. What is your timeline?
4. What is your goal for each SAO?

Each SAO should align with the campus ILOs –

1. Effective Communication
2. Personal Development and Ethical Responsibility
3. Critical Inquiry
4. Community and Citizenship and Information
5. Technology Literacy.

Measurement
Depending on the wording of your outcomes, you may elect to use qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methods data collection. You may decide to use existing data, rather than collect new data. You will also need to decide if your outcomes require direct or indirect evidence.

Qualitative data collection has these characteristics:

- Involves open-ended questions, observations, research, interviews, document analysis, descriptions, theme development and audio-visual materials
- Typically a small number of individuals
- Searching for larger meaning
Quantitative data collection has these characteristics:
- Involves the use of predetermined instruments where numeric data is collected
- Typically measures a large number of individuals
- Involves statistical analysis, description of trends, comparison of groups, relationships among variables, comparison of results with predictions and past studies

Do we want to collect direct or indirect evidence?
Direct methods of collecting information require the students to display their knowledge and skills.
- Direct measures of learning are usually accomplished through assessment methods such as rubrics, document analysis, observation, portfolios, visual methods, one-minute assessments or a case study
- Example of a direct measure of student knowledge: Where on campus would you go or who would you consult if you had questions about which courses to register for the fall semester?

Indirect methods require that students reflect student learning, behavior or attitudes rather than to demonstrate it.
- Indirect measures of learning are usually accomplished through assessment methods such as surveys, focus groups, and document analysis or one-minute assessments.
- An example of an indirect measure: I know where to go on campus if I have questions about which courses to register for the fall semester. (Strongly agree, Moderately agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Moderately disagree, Strongly disagree)

What type of assessments do you plan to conduct? What methods will you use?
Learning Outcomes – assess how a participant will think, feel, or act differently as a result of your program/course/service
Usage Numbers – tracks participation in programs or services
  Consider the following: existing data, tracking system, calendar system
Student Needs – keeps you aware of student body or specific populations
  Consider the following: surveys, focus groups, and visual methods
Program Effectiveness – level of satisfaction, involvement, effectiveness, helpfulness
  Consider the following: surveys, focus groups, observation
Cost Effectiveness – how does a program/service being offered compare with cost?
  Consider the following: existing data, comparative data
Campus Climate or Environment – assess the behaviors/attitudes on campus
  Consider the following: focus groups, document analysis, surveys, existing data, case studies, observation
Comparative (Benchmarking)–comparing a program against a comparison group
Consider the following: surveys, rubrics, existing data

Using National Standards or Norms – Comparing a program/service with a set of pre-established standards (e.g. Information Literacy) or normative data (e.g. ACT scores)

Consider the following: surveys, document analysis, and existing data

Regardless of method of data collection, you want to make sure you determine:

- What students need to Know, Do or Report to demonstrate your intended outcomes
- Use methods that allow you to measure outcomes tied to the college mission statement as well as your program’s goals and objectives

Collect data that:

- You believe will be useful in answering your important questions
- Will provide consistent (reliable) information
- Will ensure compliance to the methods (e.g. will participants fill out questionnaires carefully, engage in interviews or focus groups, and let you examine their documentations?)
- Provides enough diversity of information to make decisions about programs and participants
- Respects human rights/ethics (confidentiality & anonymity, appropriate use of data for intended and not unintended purposes)

Create data/information that informs:

- Decision making, budgeting, planning or policies
- Who needs to make decisions with this data
- The decisions you need to make about your programs, services, content and delivery

Analyze, interpret, report and use results:

Here are some straight forward ways to examine your quantitative data:

- Look at characteristics of your respondents. What can you learn about your respondents that will help you to better understand your data? For example, do student responses vary by age, years in school, cumulative GPA, to name a few? Also do responders look like the population from which they were drawn? Having a high response rate does not guarantee that your responders are representative and that your results will generalize.
- Report frequencies of each response; report the mean, median or mode

Here are some straight forward ways to examine your qualitative data:

- Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
- Read through all the data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning.
- Begin detailed analysis by coding. Coding is the process of taking data and putting it into categories, and labeling the categories with a term, often a term based on the actual language of the participant.
- Evaluate the lessons learned from the data and make interpretations (or meaning) of data.
Using data

- How do your results provide evidence for your outcomes?
- What do your results say about your program process and the impact of the program on students’ learning and development?
- Based on the results, what decisions will you make or what action will you take regarding programs, policies, and services as well as improvements/refinements to the assessment process?

Plan to summarize and disseminate information to fit the needs of various stakeholders including sharing information on websites, in briefings, in marketing, and soliciting feedback where appropriate.

Data tracking

(The following are examples)

- Use of statewide report data (Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges)
- Use of program data – % increase in number of students participating; % of students who will define a major or educational goal, etc.
- Use of college data – enrollments, course completions, degrees earned, number of transfers, understanding of college processes, enrollment increases in specific courses, curriculum improvement, grades used to increase/improve services
- Technology – adopt new software or online tools for better assessment results, streamlining the admissions or transfer process

Open ended survey questions:

“Identify one campus resource…..”
“Name three services offered by….”
“Which of the following have you experienced as a result of…?”

Pre and post tests (Likert scales):

“Mark your current knowledge of housing resources ___none ___know of one resource ___know of several resources”
“Now that you have……___strongly agree ……. to ______strongly disagree”

Evaluate

Once you have collected the data:

- Analyze the results of the data
- Use the results to identify and develop program improvements. What can we learn from the results that will help us understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
- Develop an action plan to change your program weaknesses
- Reassess your program the following year