# An Anthropological Approach to Student Learning Outcomes Development

League For Innovation: 2010

Rosemary Arca & Darya Gilani

FOOTHILL COLLEGE

# What is culture?

- the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group

*New Oxford American Dictionary*

- For our purposes, the culture of the college is the customs, institutional memories, achievements, and learning styles of all of us in our institution.
- As a result, when we need to effect changes in the above, as in the mandated changes of the SLOAC process, we need to study our college culture to find the best way to go about this.

# Because pulling together works best …

# What is your college culture?

Take a moment to answer your pretest questions.

Think about:

What resources does that culture provide?

What challenges does it present around SLOAC?

# Describing a Culture of Curiosity

- Willing to ask the hard questions
- Eager to use research to explore hypotheses
- Open to a variety of possible diagnoses based on the data

# The Foothill College culture…

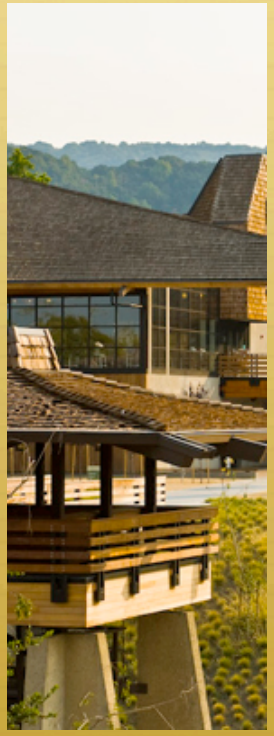
## We are

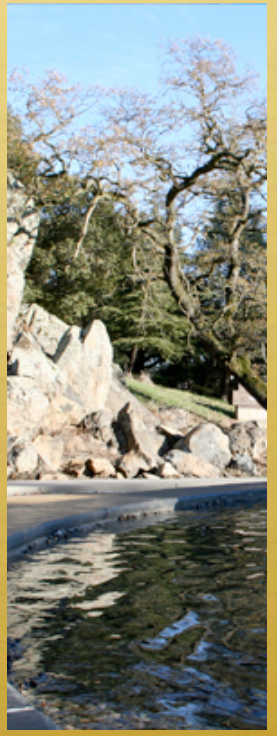
- Heavily involved in shared governance
- On the Quarter System
- Living 30-45 miles from campus
- On the cusp of generational change
- Block scheduled
- Allowed only 2 flex days a year
- Very WHY driven
- Weathering leadership changes

## So, our SLOAC process is

- Embedded in existing governance structures
- Scheduled well-in advance to accommodate commute schedules
- Repeated at various time slots with multiple points of access to the information
- Created to intrigue and entice—with a coolness factor
- Focused on the rationale and the imperative

# How did we begin?





Based on our anthropological snapshot…

# We introduced a new way of looking at learning

# Enter the Convocations

**Spring 2008 -** Intro to SLOAC

*and all that jazz*

•The Conceptual Framework and Our Mandate

•Student Learning Outcomes And All That Jazz

•Lunch

•Department Planning Sessions

## FALL 2008 - ASSESSMENT

| Date | Time | Event and Speaker |
|---|---|---|
| October 31<br>*Convocation* | 9-3 | Batter Up: RBIs and Assessment Cycles<br>Mary Allen, WASC Fellow, Keynote Speaker |
| November 5 | 12-1 | Assessment Nuts and Bolts: Practical Examples of Tested Methods<br><br>Workshop 1: There will be one workshop a quarter so sign up for the yearlong series for 1 UNIT PGA credit. |
| SLO Coffee & Conversation | | Division, Department or Individual consultations scheduled by appointment. |

# Continuing the Conversations…

## WINTER 2009 - REFLECTION

| Date | Time | Event and Speaker |
|---|---|---|
| February 27 Convocation | 9-3 | LENSES: Reflection on Data and What's Next?<br><br>Speaker on effective practices for analyzing assessment data in useful ways for our classrooms. |
| February 25 | 12-1 | Reflection strategies and Organizational Models: Hands-on<br><br>Workshop 2 |
| SLO Coffee & Conversation | | Division, Department or Individual consultations scheduled by appointment. |

## SPRING 2009 - MAKING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

| Date | Time | Event and Speaker |
|---|---|---|
| May 15 | 9-3 | Sustainable Change: Curriculum Enhancement in Action<br><br>Speaker on improvement of instruction/small group activities |
| May 27 | 12-1 | Interactive Hour on Classroom Activities that Create Deep Learning<br><br>Workshop 3 |
| SLO Coffee & Conversation | | Division, Department or Individual consultations scheduled by appointment. |

# The DARED Process

- **D**efine
- **A**ssess
- **R**eflect
- **E**nhance
- **D**ocument

- Knowing our college culture, our motto became "Start slow and get it right"

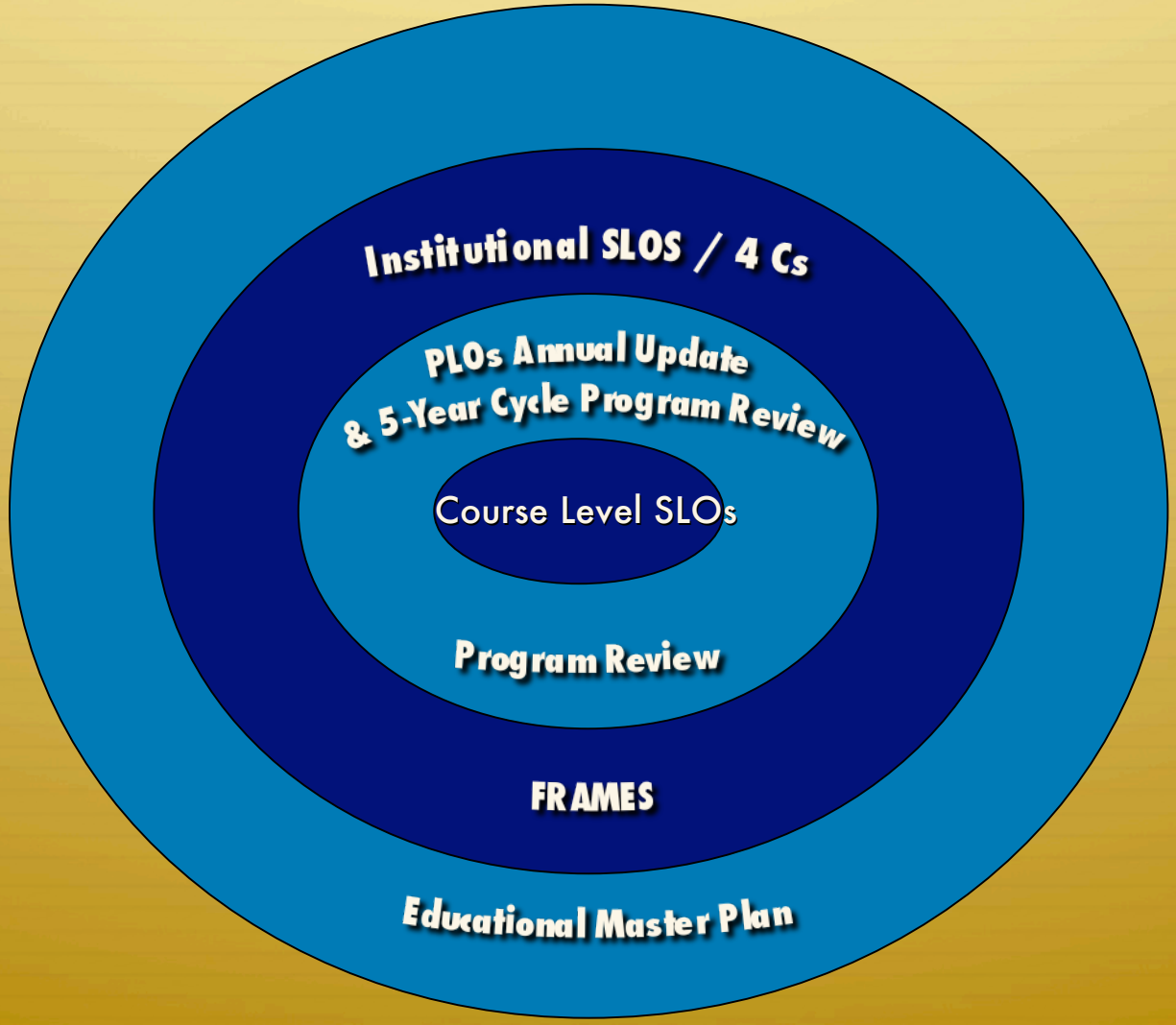
# The Gentle Cycle: Our ONE3 Project

- One Course
- One Outcome
- One Cycle
- Over one entire year
- With supporting workshops and consultations
- PIE Wednesdays and handbooks,
- At least that **was** our plan!

# Meanwhile…

- We also developed a new program review process that kept our SLO work at its core
- We planned a one-year SLO process that shepherded the conversations in each department.
- We completed our FRAMES pilot
- We were working on assessment simultaneously…at the institutional, program, and course levels…
- …while developing a vibrant college-wide conversation around teaching and learning

# The Layers of the Process



# SLOs Begin With Faculty Choice

## OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH

### Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Cycle (SLOAC) Project

***The SLOAC Menu (nod to Counter Burger)***

### HOW TO BEGIN TO WRITE A SLOAC

If you've ever eaten at a Counter Burger you know that you can build a burger to your own specifications by making a series of choices. Choose the bun, choose the meat, choose the toppings, and choose a sauce. The power of choice indeed.

With the SLOAC design process, you have an equally interesting series of choices. Here's the SLOAC Menu:

1. Choose 1- several outcome(s) for your course. Think of the most important concepts or skills you'd like one of your student to remember four years from now OR think of a pedagogical challenge you'd like to resolve in that course. Write your outcome around those ideas.

2. Choose a formative or summative assessment to measure the outcome. Do you want to shape student learning within the quarter (the former) or describe student success at the end of the quarter (the latter).

3. Choose assessments efficiently: Whatever your assessment goal, use assessment measures you already have embedded in the course —tests, rubrics, essays, projects, observation checklists, surveys, etc. The *Classroom Assessment Techniques* (CAT) work of Cross and Angelo provides effective and quick formative assessment ideas. Each division has a copy of that book.

4. Choose when, how and with whom you'll reflect on the data you've gathered in the assessment cycle. Want to meet as a team, a department, or a group of colleagues? It's your choice! Make the reflection meaningful to your goals then tell us not only what you thought about what you've learned but also if you're prompted to change content, teaching method, assignments, assessments, or even the SLO as a result.

And that's an SLO! Once written, then it's filed in the Office of Instruction **course management system** and scheduled for the AC part of SLOAC, the assessment cycle that occurs on a rotating basis — think one-third of the courses in the catalog every quarter.

# And then Program Review

- Our Program Planning Committee consisted of 2 faculty members, the Vice President of Instruction, a Dean, and 2 Classified Staff (our culture of shared governance)
- We announced the 5 year cycle at our Opening Day 2008 in a fun, lottery style drawing
- Program Plans were and are being written in all three areas: Instructional, Administrative Unit, and Student Services.

# And the next layer of the circle: FRAMES

- Foothill's Rubric Assessment Model for Evaluating SLOs.
- This project was initiated in Fall 2005 to create useful assessment tools to enhance and measure Foothill College's institutional student learning outcomes at the course level.
- Each of the four FRAMES teams had between four and six faculty members representing a variety of departments across campus.
- Each team spent about a year developing and testing the rubric assessment tool and using the tool to assess between 100 to 150 student artifacts from departments across campus.

The Four C's

- Communication
- Computation
- Creative, Critical, and Analytical Thinking
- Community/Global Consciousness and

# We had a plan!

And it was progressing…

# But then…

- the Letter Arrived and the plan changed
- The letter said

**Recommendation #4**

The team recommends that all instructional and non-instructional areas inclusive of student services and other administrative service areas further develop well-defined and measurable student learning outcomes and evaluate these outcomes to increase effectiveness. [Standard II.A.2.a]

With regard to Recommendation 4, the Commission is concerned that at the current rate, Foothill College will have difficulty meeting the Commission's 2012 deadline for compliance with standards related to student learning outcomes and needs to accelerate its efforts to fully address the recommendation. The institution's relative inaction on this matter to date means extraordinary work must be done to comply with the 2012 deadline.

- Our course correction became…

And again we needed to look to our college culture to determine how we were going to make this work.

# Acceleration

It was February 2009

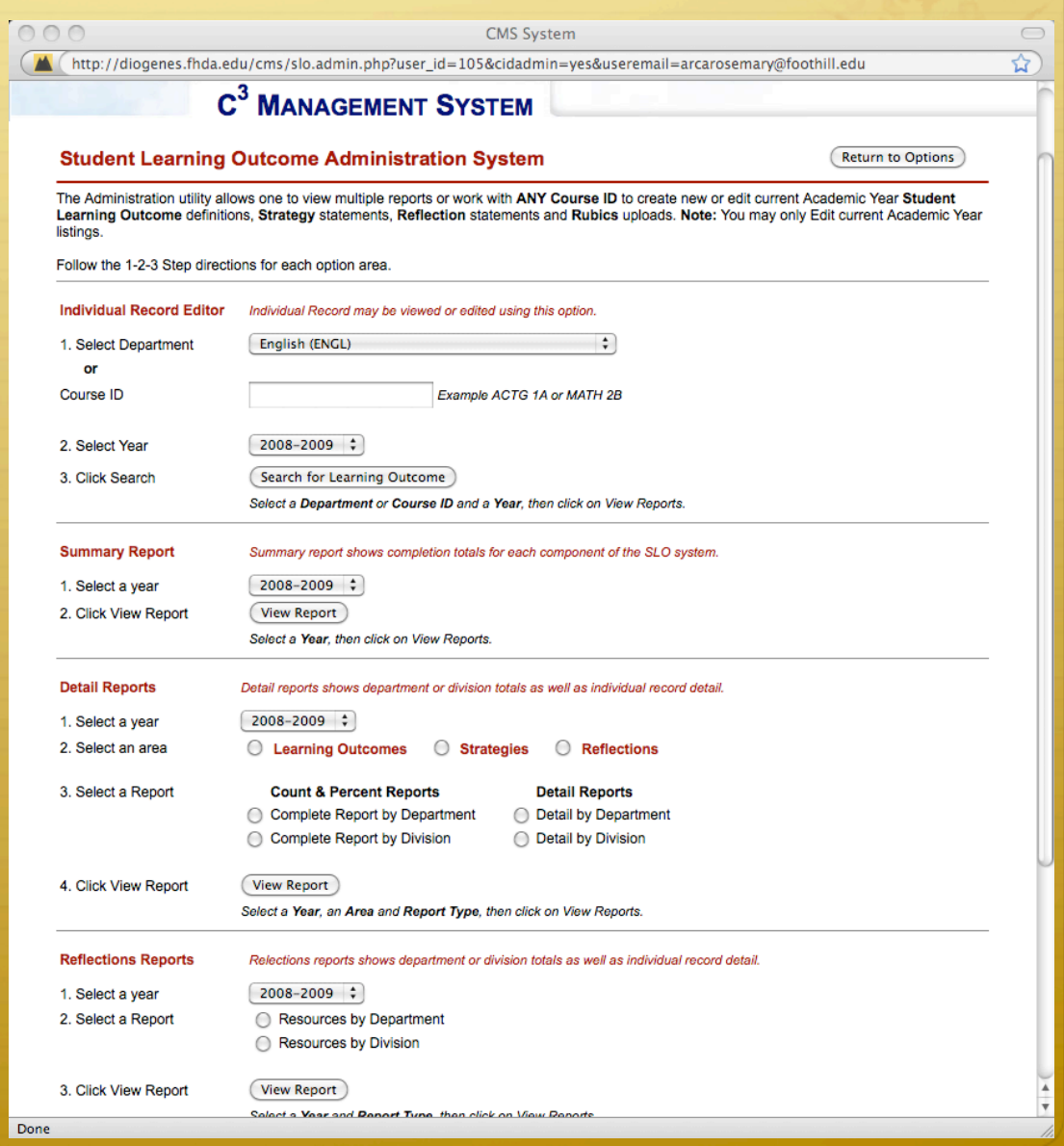
Our Site Visit is Fall 2011

# We entered the very fast track…

- 180 hours of workshop time!
- Deadline of June 30, 2009 for SLOS for all 3000 courses
- Assessment of 1/3 each quarter thereafter
- Reflection due Week 3 of the Quarter following the assessment
- A re-design of our Course Management Program to accommodate our SLO work
- Division Meetings

# A Look at Our CMS Form

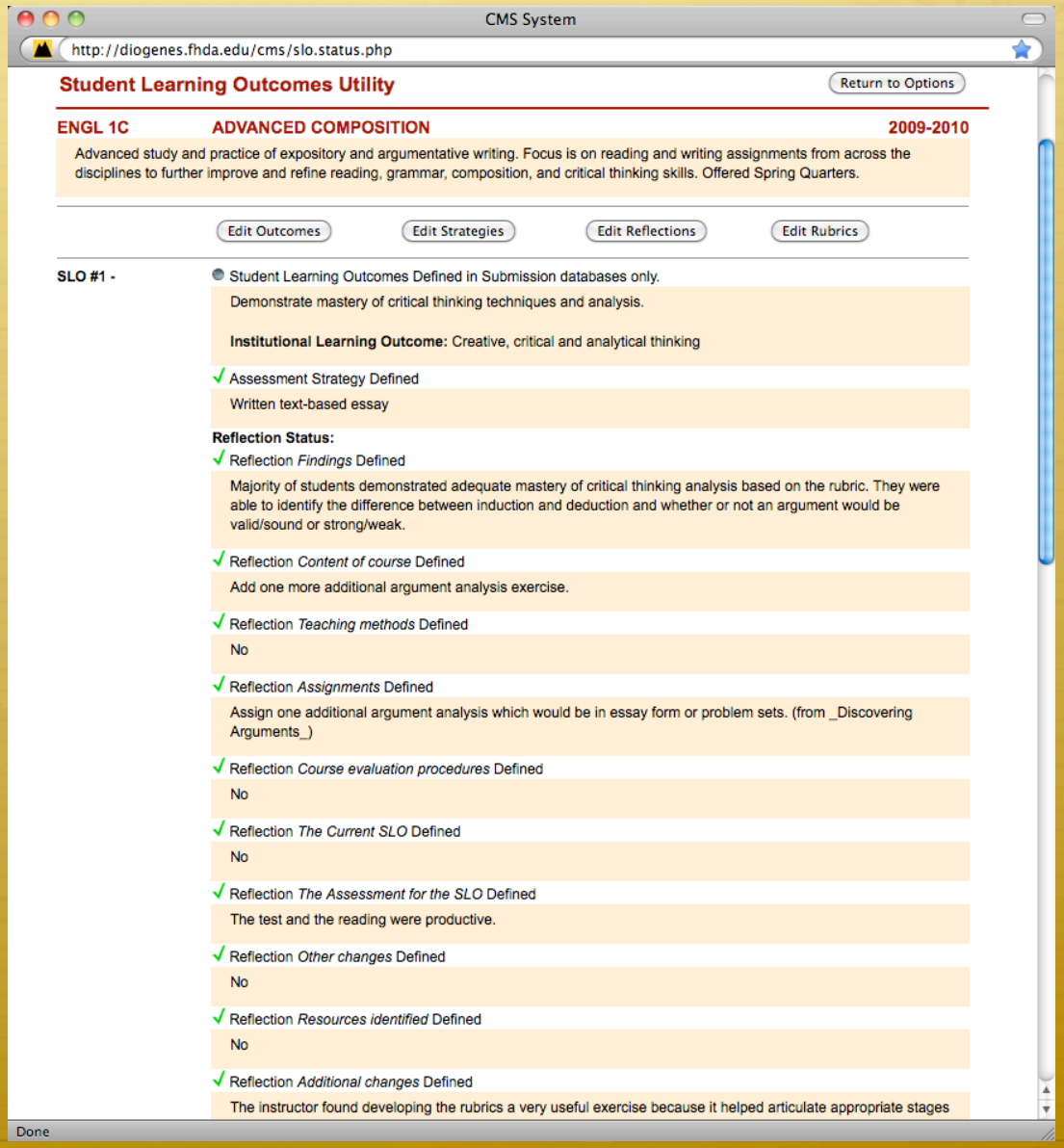
- We embedded the SLO process into the system we already used.
- We began a push to complete a huge amount of SLOs in one Quarter



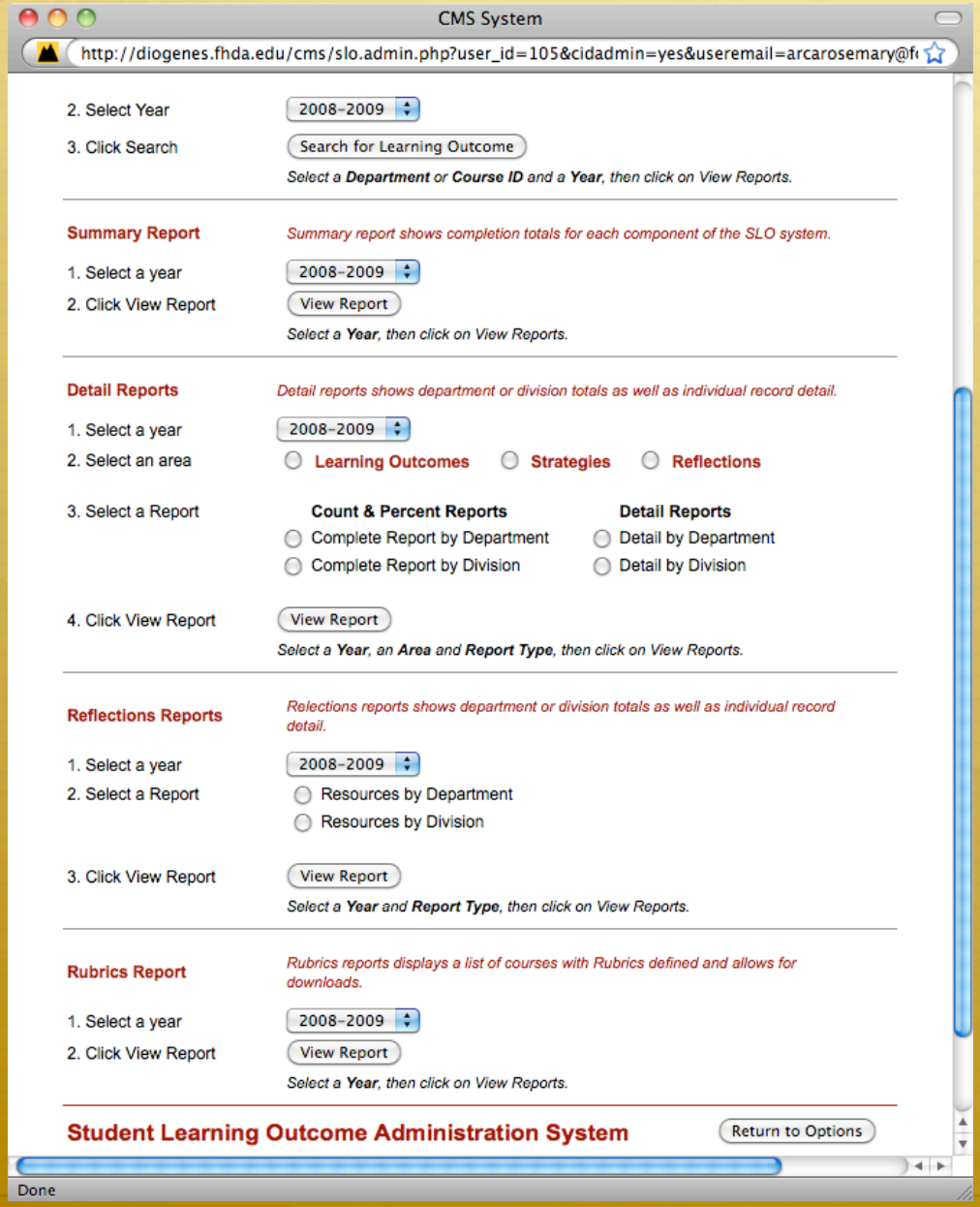
# What An SLO Reflection Looks Like

✧ We designed it with our Webmaster and VP of Marketing.

✧ A One Year Project became rapidly accelerated



# A Form that Functioned




✧We wanted simple but elegant.

✧We needed robust reporting capabilities.

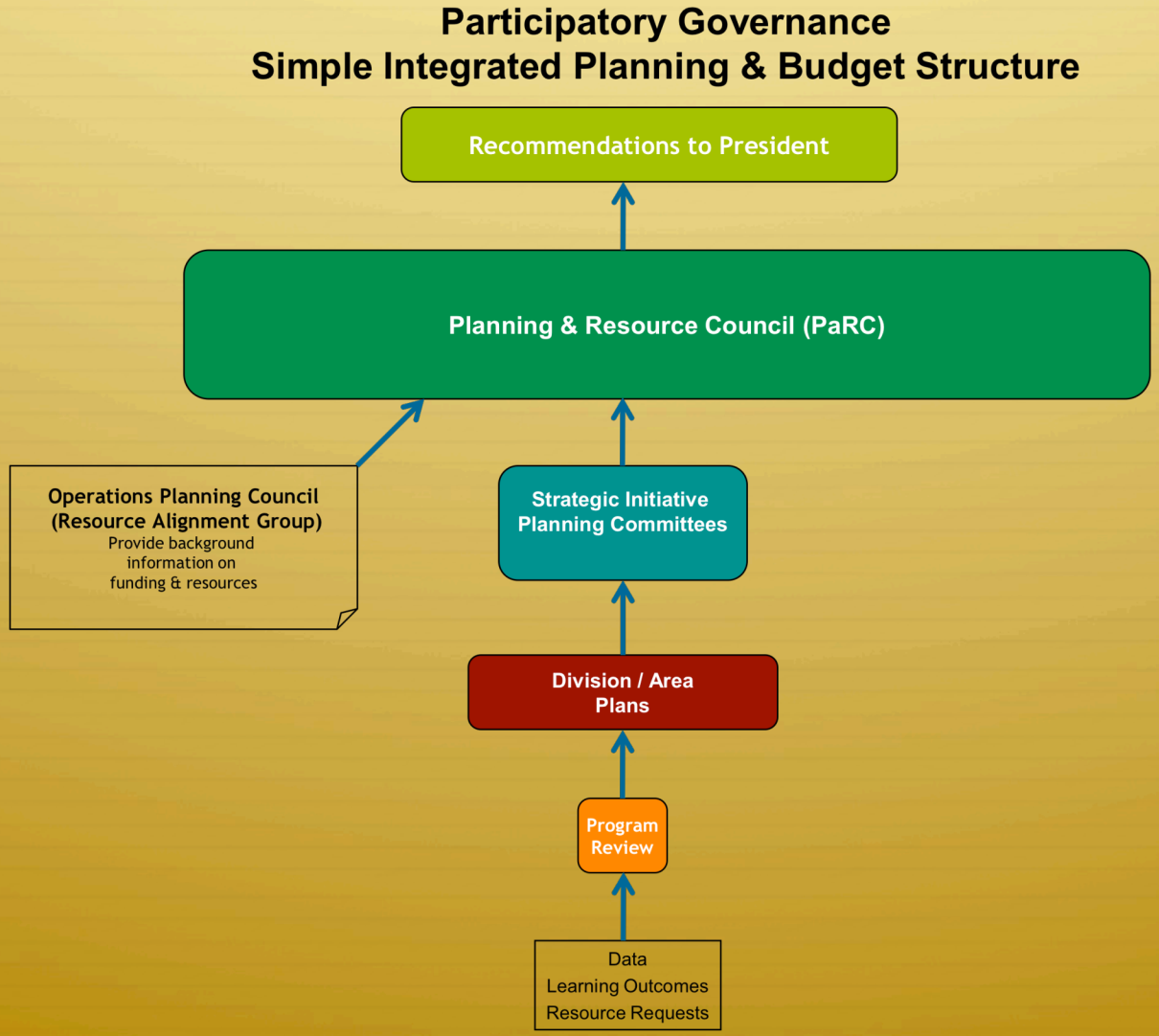
# Completed SLOs

- We made huge progress!
- Pick a department and a course to explore our public database of Course Level SLOs
- This is what we do!

# Integration with Campus Governance

- To continue acceleration, we looked at what was already happening in our campus governance structure
- The structure itself was changing in response to “the letter”
- Their Spring 2009 charge was to Review Goals of IP&B, Study Models of Integrated Planning/Budget Structures; ReviewGuiding Principles; Generate Ideas

# Decision Making Starts With Student Learning



# A Continuous Cycle

| Quarter | Department | Strategic Initiatives | PaRC |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fall** Weeks 1-4 | Submit Reflections on SLOs assessed in the previous quarter | Orientation | Orientation |
| Weeks 5-8 | Annual Updates to Program Reviews | Revisit Committee Charge | Review last years' cycle and evaluation. |
| Weeks 9-12 | Joint Division workshop to Assess ILOs | Revisit Goals and Commitments to Action | Review Budget Timeline, Adjustments and Recommendations from OPC |
| **Winter** Weeks 1-4 | Submit Reflections on SLOs assessed in the previous quarter | Review updated Department Program Reviews | Dialogue on Campus Climate/Student Services Surveys |
| Weeks 5-8 | Submit Resource Requests and Cover Sheets for next Academic Year | Prioritize Department Resource Requests | Approval and Updates of Accreditation Self Study and Educational and Strategic Master Plan<br><br>Dialogue on ARCC Report |
| Weeks 9-12 | | Finalize Commitments to Action for next Academic Year | Mid Year Budget Timeline, Adjustments and Recommendations from OPC |
| **Spring** Weeks 1-4 | Submit Reflections on SLOs assessed in the previous quarter | Evaluate last year's commitments to action/planning agendas<br><br>Develop criteria to evaluate this year's commitments to action/planning agendas | Prioritize Resource Requests from SIP groups<br><br>Reaffirm College Mission Statement, Vision, Values<br><br>Assess Governance Structure<br><br>Reaffirm Governance Handbook |
| Weeks 5-8 | Assess Resource Allocation, Program Review, and Planning Processes | Assess Resource Allocation, Program Review, and Planning Processes | Assess Resource Allocation, Program Review, and Planning Processes |
| Weeks 9-12 | Assess ILOs – graduating students | | End of Year Budget Timeline, Adjustments and Recommendations from OPC |
| **Summer** Weeks 1-4 | Update forms for Program Review | Update Resource Request forms | Update Calendars |

# Acceleration of Institutional Learning Outcomes

- Winter 2010 Convocation: February
- Continue nurturing the teaching and learning journey
- Assessing student work with peers across disciplines
- Making it thematic and fun
- A Test-Run for Spring workshops

# Culture is REAL: How would yours respond to a demand for extraordinary effort?

Take a moment to look at what you wrote on the Pretest.
What would you do to Accelerate?

# Responding to ACCJC within our Culture

- Shared Purpose
- Coherent Vision
  - It's all connected
- Sense of Play
- Two –Way Communication
  - Workshop design
  - Newsletters
  - Convocation programs
  - Listening & Asking
- Be Present
- Celebrate!

# Shared Purpose

*It IS actually about learning AND teaching*

A Closer Look

January 2009

Office of Instruction & Institutional Research

## On Learning

by Katie Townsend-Merino

Thank you all for the warm Foothill welcome I received last week. If I have not yet had an opportunity to meet you, I am sure we'll have an opportunity to say hello soon. I clearly have hours of listening and learning ahead of me and I certainly need to hear from everyone. Please consider emailing me at townsendmerinokatie@foothill.edu or calling at x7209 at any time.

In my first weeks here, I have spent hours discussing how Foothill has been working on the Student Learning Outcome and Assessment Cycle (SLOAC) with our outstanding faculty SLO Coordinator Rosemary Arca and Project Director Lucy Rodriguez. I am deeply impressed with the work done so far and we are now planning a highly interactive February Convocation on February 27. Given the importance of this work to our successful accreditation, I thought this would be a good time for me to articulate my philosophy on the assessment of student learning.

In sum, it is about teaching!

Reflecting upon my experience as a faculty member, not that long ago, I recall feeling offended as the new standards were announced. Faculty don't assess learning? That IS what I did for a living! Who was claiming that I was not doing my job? Would there be MORE forms to fill out? More bureaucracy? What would this data be USED for anyway? I certainly understood then exactly how faculty up and down California were feeling.

Then in January 2008, Cañada College and many other colleges were placed on Warning by ACCJC, in part because of a lack of progress in the development of a proficient Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Cycle (SLOAC). At that point in time, fewer than 20% of Cañada courses had developed SLOs and fewer courses still had assessments attached to their outcomes (although they had developed a set of six Institutional Outcomes). In order to remain accredited, they certainly had to develop a SLOAC process that would meet the requirements of WASC and the trust of the faculty. I was asked to lead, with a new faculty coordinator and committee, the development of a new process to increase the number of courses with Student Learning Outcomes and Assessments. But first I had to ask a question: Why had so little been accomplished thus far? What then to do?

I am keenly aware that faculty, as professionals, work very hard because they do want their students to be successful. They already work hard to both assess student learning and change their pedagogy as a result of such assessment. Faculty also consistently lament the limited time they have in their professional lives to discuss teaching with their peers. And now, it seems, they are being asked by ACCJC to do two new things: 1) *articulate* how they assess the learning in their courses and, perhaps more difficult, 2) achieve some consensus with their department colleagues about what is essential for students to learn in each course and how to assess if students HAVE learned what each department deems essential. Still, many faculty are willing to become engaged if the process is the **least bureaucratic we can imagine and is directly meaningful to their teaching.** This essential connection to teaching defines my philosophy of learning and assessment. At its heart any assessment of the student learning cycle that I can believe in is about **providing the impetus for discussions of pedagogy and improving learning across courses and improving programs institutionally** and not about individual accountability.

It's important to note that the process that was developed at Cañada College is unique to Cañada. **No one RIGHT way exists to institutionalize a SLOAC** and each college needs to design its own process—one that fits with that particular College culture (as a Psychologist I really believe in the power of culture, and I have much to learn about our culture at Foothill).

Once we work together to describe that culture, then my office is responsible for providing adequate professional development in SLO writing, assessment development, and reflection about data. More importantly, we will provide the time for faculty to do this work. The really remarkable outcome of the Cañada process was the very high number of positive evaluations of the process—faculty LOVED having large chunks of time dedicated to discussing what was important in their teaching and how to improve learning with one another. Keeping the work close to the classroom made the dialogue, assessment and reflection personally meaningful and professionally useful.

Foothill College
Office of Instruction & Institutional Research
http://www.foothill.edu/staff/irs/

# Focus on Teaching to Market the Process

## SAVE THE DATE: The Winter Convocation

by Rosemary Arca

**Focus on Teaching: Reflecting on What Works in the Classroom**
Friday, February 27, 9:00-Noon*
in the Hearthside Student Lounge across from the bookstore

Join us in a highly interactive, hands-on meeting focused on great teaching and the challenges of the classroom. Using photography and lenses as our theme, we'll talk about focusing our SLOs on what goes on in our classrooms. We'll begin the day with coffee and pastries and hear new Vice President of Instruction, Katie Townsend-Merino describe her vision for SLOs and Instruction.

Next, we'll enjoy images provided by Kate Jordahl and Ron Herman, our own photography experts. They'll explore the strategies they use to "compose" an image and discuss ways they think about focus and perspective when they photograph.

Then we begin our most important work—our Focus on Teaching—this is powered by your concerns, insights and successes. Here's how we're thinking about the morning.

The goals for the day are really simple and are derived from the "Great Teachers Seminar" philosophy that faculty are their own best experts.

- To **celebrate** good teaching
- To **inspire** faculty to venture beyond the limits of their own disciplines and environments in search of the universals of teaching.
- To **discover** realistic, creative approaches to teaching and learning.
- To **stimulate** the exchange of information and ideas within the Humanities and Social Sciences Division by building communications networks among faculty.
- To **promote** introspection and self-appraisal by providing a supportive environment in which participants may seriously reflect on their attitudes, methods, and behavior as teachers—all in a non-evaluative setting.
- To **renew** the commitment to student learning

To meet these goals, we'll be asking you to do TWO things:

It's all about good ideas and pesky challenges in the classroom.

1. Send one challenge you frequently face in the classroom. We'll brainstorm solutions during the meeting.

2. Share one **non-astounding** teaching idea. It could be an idea you use for dealing with the "administrivia" of the classroom/college environment. **Non-astounding** is the key phrase here. We'll collect these in a handout you'll get at the end of the convocation.

Look for an email requesting these comments early in February. This convocation is all about your teaching world. Join us for great conversations about pedagogy and good practice.

*Note the change of time and place and renewed focus on you!

# Winter 2010 Update

## Assessment Cycle Update

**by Rosemary Arca**

### ILOs , Core Competencies, FRAMES: Our Institutional Outcomes Cycle

We're all familiar with the above image and it is an apt metaphor for our learning outcomes cycle as we enter into our next level of assessment. According to ACCJC, the assessment of learning outcomes is a seamless and coherent process where student learning outcomes infuse program review that is rooted in our institutional outcomes, formerly known as **Core Competencies**. And the whole shebang is the context in which we make strategic decisions and allocate resources!

It's this coherence that demonstrates proficiency in the ACCJC accreditation rubric.

That brings us to our final segment of the learning outcomes cycle, the assessment of our institutional outcomes or ILOs. Here's where we complete the circle- from core competencies as the root of our SLOs to program review and now assessing those core competences using the FRAMES rubrics. We'll have come full circle.

**"...it's nearly impossible to see how one Slinky color shades into the next. Similarly, our seamless integration of learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level is the 'gold standard' of accreditation."**

Outcomes or Competencies. They are **Critical Thinking, Computation, Communication and Global Consciousness and Citizenship.** You will decide which if any are addressed in the SLO and check the relevant box(es). That's it. We'll be able to tabulate the numbers of SLOs addressing each of the competencies and that will be **one source of assessment data** for our ILOs.

The second source of data will be the **FRAMES Team Meetings**. You may have been part of this pilot program when Rob Johnstone was at Foothill. Once a quarter we will call for volunteers to join a multi-disciplinary group of colleagues for coffee and conversation. Our topic will be one of the competencies and a **random selection of student artifacts**. Our task will be to review the anonymous artifacts for evidence of that competency and we'll use the

# Our Outcomes

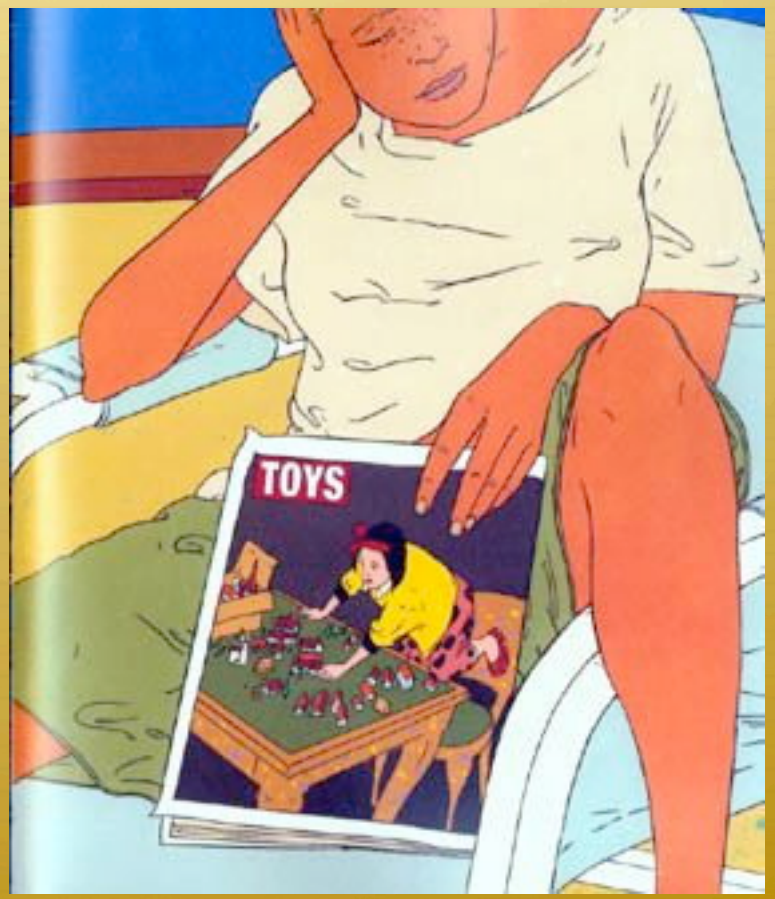
- A Campus Awareness of SLOs
- Accepted Follow Up Report
- Integration into our governance structure
- The foundation for continuous improvement built upon our culture

# Ask, Listen and Support

- Begin by listening
- What would students say they are learning in a particular course.
- Provide CORs for all classes
- Provide Bloom's Taxonomy
- Provide many examples of SLOs for that departments courses
- Provide multiple examples of how to assess an individual SLO
- Provide a Handbook with written support
- Demonstrate how the documentation form will be used.
- Write SLOs!
- 180 person hours in workshops!

# The Big Picture

- ✓ Knowing your Terrain
- ✓ Zooming in for a homegrown cycle
- ✓ Maintaining a focus on the big picture



# Questions?
# (and thanks!)

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