

Winter Update

Jan-Mar 2012

Program Review and Resource Allocation Update

By Kimberlee Messina, Vice President, Instruction and Institutional Research

Welcome back everyone! I hope you had a restful break, and that the new quarter is starting off well. The Office of Instruction has been very busy receiving and reading the program reviews that you completed in December. I want to thank all of you for your hard work. The program reviews that I have read so far have been thoughtful and well presented. I have learned quite a bit about the excellent instructional programs, student service area and administrative units we have here at Foothill through your program reviews.



Photo by Monica Sain

Many of you had completed your program learning outcomes assessment, and provided excellent reflection on the implications you identified for your instructional programs. Some programs see a need to expand offerings in distance education, other programs identified that students needed more time on task, or increased laboratory time or other curricular revisions. Others reflected on the transfer model curriculum, or other potential changes to the degrees or certificates. We here in the Office of Instruction are pleased to be your resource as you work on implementing these changes.

For those of you who have not yet assessed your Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes, and would like some assistance, please feel free to contact our office, or your Student Learning Outcomes Coordinators, Gillian Schultz and Carolyn Holcroft.

The next big project for instruction is to facilitate the resource allocation process. Your divisions should be meeting soon to prioritize requests, which will be followed by a meeting with the deans and the vice presidents who will make recommendations to OPC and PaRC.

Thanks again to all of you for your efforts as we all navigate this revised program review process, and all good wishes for the Winter Quarter. ■

Why Course Grades Aren't the Most Meaningful Option for SLO Assessment

by Carolyn Holcroft and Gillian Schultz, SLO Coordinators

Why Not Grades?

Recently, in the process of helping faculty with Student Learning Outcomes an old question was raised anew: "Why can't I just use my course grade as my assessment for my SLOs?" Or, to put it slightly differently, if your students are passing your course with an A, B or C, isn't that enough evidence that they've mastered your SLOs?

Although there are a few faculty who have designed their courses and SLOs in such a way that there is no possibility the student could pass without mastering the course SLOs, in the vast majority of instances the course grade **isn't an authentic assessment of SLO mastery** because faculty factor things into the course grade besides the SLOs... such as participation, overall improvement or the ability to regurgitate a list of facts. Other possible issues include the differences between grading policies of instructors teaching the same course or even assigning grades with different rigor.

Finally, there are often topics in our courses we are required to teach from the Course Outline of Record to appease transfer schools, but this content might not be what you as the Foothill faculty thinks is "**big picture**" SLO-worthy. In a nutshell, the course grade is based on assessment of many things besides just your SLOs.

(Even Though it's Probably Perfectly Legal) What Happens in Class STAYS in Class.

Student learning outcomes serve two major purposes:

- 1) they help faculty articulate to students (and the public) the big picture of why their course is important in "the real world" and
- 2) they help faculty to evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching – how well they're helping students get that big picture.

Most faculty spend a lot of time carefully deliberating about what to include and how best to help students learn it. For all our effort,



though, sometimes it's apparent that even though a student passed or even aced your class they truly "don't get it" – that despite their "A+", they cannot apply their knowledge in a meaningful way outside the classroom, which was **the point of the SLOs in the first place**. Conversely, sometimes we have students who demonstrate deep, global thinking and understanding of the subject matter but this is not reflected in their B or C grade.

Finally, as course grades are the sum of overall performance in the class, **they do not provide an instructor with feedback about which skills and knowledge the students found difficult to master**.

The only way to make course grades meaningful as assessment tools for SLOs is to separate out the contributing components of the grades based upon the knowledge and skills required in different assignments to inform the instructor's understanding of the students strengths and weaknesses. This might require a rubric for each assignment that evaluates its assessment value for each SLO and then scoring students on their level of mastery of that outcome. Instead, it seems to us that it would be far less onerous and more meaningful to use specific assessments that are directly relevant to each outcome. Whether you agree or disagree, we'd love to have you **join us for some brown bag lunch discussions this quarter** – stay tuned for dates and times. ■

Reminder: Enter your Course-Level SLO reflections into TracDat by January 27th

Curriculum Update

by Cori Nunez, Administrative Assistant

Your Curriculum Office is busy this time of year processing all your changes to course outlines to prepare for the **2012-13 Catalog**. There are **430 Course Outlines of Record (CORs)** ready to be reviewed by The Office of Instruction, and 200 have already been completed and are ready to be moved into next year's catalog.



Thank you to all for your hard work! This year's cycle has presented some new challenges as the state is becoming more and more involved in the minutia of curriculum, and we're being asked to provide documentation for many

of our procedures. So, **the heat is on!** We must carefully track every course. For example, is it part of a State approved degree or certificate and if not, do we have an approved Stand Alone Application on file? Is the course delivered via distance education and if so, do we have an approved Distance Learning Application on file? Does the course have Student Learning Outcomes entered in TracDat? Does the Need/Justification statement tell us the course's role in the Foothill curriculum offerings?

All these items are "hot topics" for the State and it's all in addition to the "normal" checks we must do with our CORs. Whew, and you wondered why you were exhausted! I would like to personally thank all of the authors of CORs for their quick responses to all my questions and requests for more information while I'm preparing the CORs to be published. Finally, thanks for your patience as this part of the process is done by one person and it takes considerable time. ■

Does Articulation Matter to Students?

by Bernie Day, Articulation Officer

In 2010, Foothill College articulation agreements for CSU and UC campuses were accessed on ASSIST, the statewide articulation repository of articulation agreements **244,802 times!**

For 2011-2012, the articulation office secured UC approval for **56 additional courses**, CSU GE/Breadth approval for **26 additional courses**, and IGETC approval for **13 courses**. Last month, 18 courses were submitted for CSU GE approval and 16 courses were submitted for IGETC approval. The results will be available in April.

Transfer Degrees and C-ID

Faculty interested in helping shape future transfer degrees and lower division major course descriptors are encouraged to sign up for one of the discipline-specific statewide faculty listserves at <http://www.c-id.net/listserv.html>. Faculty interested in providing input regarding the proposed statewide transfer degrees in Biology, Computer Science and Journalism are encouraged to offer feedback at the following C-ID page: <http://www.c-id.net/degreereview.html>

UC Course Transferability Deadline

Creating a new course for which UC transferability is desired? Courses must be formally approved no later than June 1 in order to be submitted by the June deadline. Please contact Bernie Day for more details. ■

Honors Updates

by Bernie Day, Articulation Officer

Welcome New Faculty

The Honors Institute welcome Isabel Seligo Sperry, who joined the ranks of our Foothill honors faculty this quarter. Isabel is teaching ENGL 1BH. Her students will write a minimum of 8000 words, 2000 words beyond the 6000 required for ENGL 1B.

New Honors Courses

Students will have more choices to complete an honors science class with the addition of ANTH 1H and 1LH. Many thanks to Dr. Sam Connell and Dr. Kathryn Maurer and their adjunct anthropology department colleagues for their work in developing this much-needed course.

Thanks also to Dr. Falk Cammin for her work in creating a new humanities honors seminar which will be offered Spring 2012. Her course, entitled, "Art and Transgression: The Holocaust in the Literary Imagination" will explore how art (and in particular literature) has shaped our understanding of the Holocaust and explore how art mediates our encounters with history. Specifically we will ask if art is complicit in utilizing the Holocaust for national and political interests or if art can provide a space that affords us to behold a realm beyond reason.

Honors Research Symposium

Honors students are busy writing abstract proposals for the annual Bay Area Community College Honors Research Symposium, which will be held at UC Berkeley on Saturday, April 28. Please encourage students with outstanding research to submit a proposal to present at the symposium. The Honors Institute is presenting an abstract-writing workshop to interested students on Wednesday, January 25 from 12-1. The abstract submission deadline is February 14, 2012.

Honors Students in the News

Congratulations to current honors student Dor Carpel, who was recently featured in a San Jose Mercury News article about a decline in UC transfer applications. The article is available online at http://www.mercurynews.com/education/ci_19729998

"Honors Connection" Student Organization

Seeking to make connections with other motivated students outside of class, honors students formed an official student organization over the summer. The Honors Connection is open to any Foothill students. Students meet weekly for study sessions, plan educational excursions and conduct workshops. The elected officers met over the winter break for a planning retreat.

Where Are They Now? Focus on Two Former Honors Students

Brian Armstrong, Honors Scholar (2008) graduated Summa Cum Laude from UCLA in June, 2011 with a major in English literature and a minor in Film, Television, and Digital Media. While at UCLA, he was President of the Film and Photography Society and the Senior Arts Editor of Westwind, the university's journal of the arts. He is the founder of Crux Imaging, a multimedia design firm.

Dani Hayes, Honors Scholar (2003) was a high school dropout who completed the Honors Scholar program, transferred to UCLA, completed an M.A. at Columbia University, a M.S. at the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently completing a Ph.D. program at the University of Cambridge in England. She wrote us:

"My time at Foothill taught me the importance of community colleges, and honors programs...I am writing to thank all the staff in the honors program for providing me with endless support, rigorous course work, and a community where I finally belonged. Not bad for a 'high school dropout,' with a Certificate of Proficiency.... I am 100% confident that without Foothill College I would never have been as successful as I am today. I felt compelled to write all of you and provide my sincerest thanks. Foothill College gave me a great education, and the Honors Program, provided me with an even more rigorous one...without it, I have no idea where I would be today. I now believe the sky really is the limit."

Faculty interested in teaching or creating new honors courses are encouraged to contact Bernie Day daybernie@foothill.edu for more information. ■