SLO vs. SUO in Student Services

There are times that outside of class learning occurs for students across the campus. This is proper for a college. But to document those incidences through the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes process requires that such occasions carry a consistent commitment to student learning by a program or service unit.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** are the specific measurable goals and results that are expected subsequent to a learning experience. These outcomes may involve knowledge (particular areas of disciplinary or professional content that students can recall, relate, and appropriately deploy), skills (learned capacity to do something), or attitudes (in beliefs or development of certain values) that provide evidence that learning has occurred as a result of a specified course, program activity, or process. A Student Learning Outcome refers to an overarching goal for a course, program, degree or certificate, student services unit or the library, one that asks students to synthesize many discreet skills using higher level thinking skills and to produce something that asks them to apply what they’ve learned. SLOs usually encompass a gathering together of smaller discrete objectives through analysis, evaluation and synthesis into more sophisticated skills and abilities.

**Service Unit Outcomes (SUOs)** are specific measurable goals and results that identify critical and central service activities and processes that are expected of a college’s program or service unit. They are designed to provide evidence for program or unit’s actual functioning in attainment of the program and institution’s mission in direct or indirect support of the college’s curricular programs (process) and for client reaction (satisfaction) of the service experience. These statements are very similar to SLOs in that they examine the result of an experience but SUOs deal exclusively with non-instructional services provided to students or other members of the campus community.

There must be a clear differentiation between the instances of truly educating students and informing them when determining whether a service is a SLO or SUO. Typically co-curricular professionals inform students as to bureaucratic processes, regulations, policies, and procedures the college requires. However, those times of true educational interaction outside of the classroom must be a regular occurrence and a standard part of a professional-student interaction for a program and not just happenstance by selected employees. This would be a SLO. But be advised that such a SLO must embrace the following.
• *Learning* is the particular levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end of engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences and it must have occurred and be able to documented through assessment.

• *Learning Assessment* refers to a process where methods are used by a program to generate and collect data (evidence) for evaluation of the quality of a program with the ultimate purpose of evaluating overall educational quality and improving student learning. This type of assessment must primarily generate quantitative data.

• *Evidence* includes artifacts or objects produced that demonstrate and support conclusions, including data, as opposed to intuition, belief, or anecdotes. It is obviously related to the questions the program has investigated and it can be replicated, making it reliable, representative of what is, not just an isolated case, and it is information upon which a program or service unit can take action to improve.

Such consistency of effort then calls for a SLO rather than a SUO. But be advised that identifying outside of class SLOs holds the program and its personnel responsible for that student learning with the majority of interactions and the majority of the time. There are times, “teachable moments” in the common vernacular, that occur outside of a classroom around a college campus that co-curricular professionals may have an opportunity to truly educate a student. Taking advantage of those instances is part and parcel of the mission of an educational institution and should be encouraged within its structure and culture.