From Idea to Assessment

Crafting Program Learning Outcomes

May 15, 2019

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Assessment Background

- Faculty assessment leader at Guilford Technical Community College
  - Facilitated revision of general education learning outcomes
  - Coordinated assessment efforts of 86 transfer and career technical programs
  - Developed and led Assessment Day activities for over 330 full-time faculty

- Led assessment initiatives through two successful SACSCOC 10-year reaffirmations
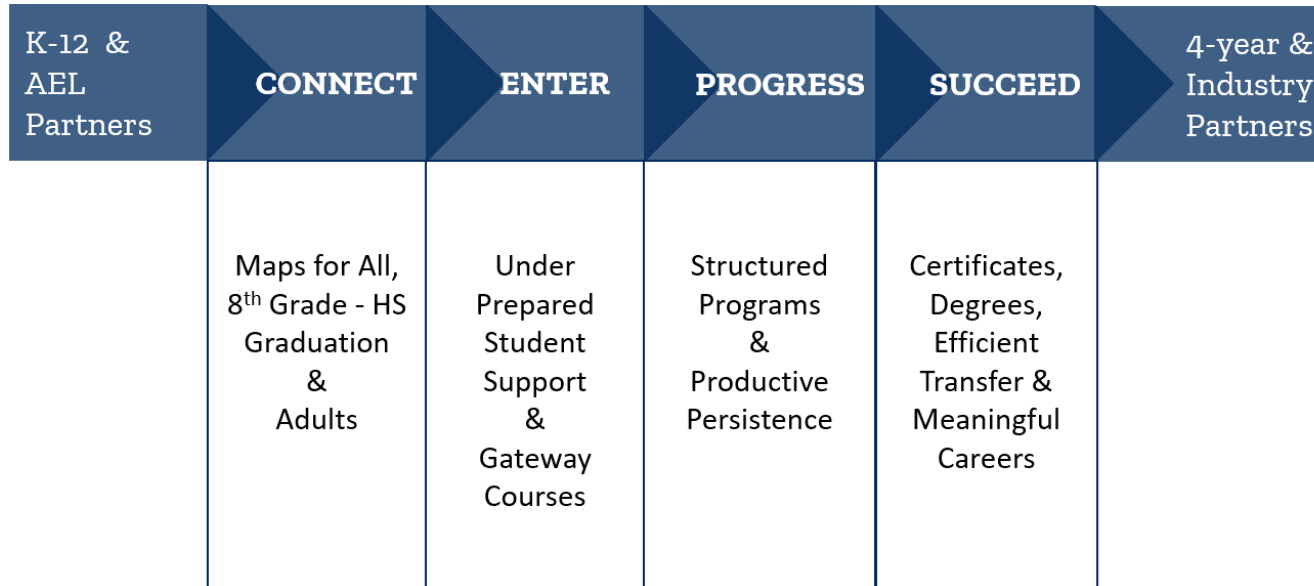
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Session Agenda

- Identify key stakeholders to be involved in the development, writing, and assessment of program learning outcomes (PLOs)

- Review best practices for how the craft quality, measurable PLOs

- Learn how to scaffold PLOs to ensure they are integrated with course, general education, or institutional outcomes

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Connection to Guided Pathways

- Ensuring students are learning
  - Program learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements for success in the further education and employment outcomes targeted by each program
  - Faculty/programs assess whether students are mastering learning outcomes and building skills across each program, in both arts and sciences and career/technical programs

Quality PLOs Lead to Success

K-12 & AEL Partners	CONNECT	ENTER	PROGRESS	SUCCEED	4-year & Industry Partners
	Maps for All, 8th Grade - HS Graduation & Adults	Under Prepared Student Support & Gateway Courses	Structured Programs & Productive Persistence	Certificates, Degrees, Efficient Transfer & Meaningful Careers	

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Reflection

- Prior to every meeting at St. Edward's someone provides a reflection piece
  - Quote, story, scripture, etc.
  - Focuses the meeting and take the negative energy out of the room

- "Perfection is the enemy of progress." –Winston Churchill

Getting Involved in PLOs

Connecting with External Stakeholders

- Prior to the development of PLOs, reach out to as many external stakeholders as possible
  - 4-year colleges and universities (transfer programs)
  - Local industry leaders (technical and transfer programs)
  - 3rd party accreditors (technical programs)

- External feedback should not drive the development of the PLOs, but should help inform their focus

Engaging Faculty

- All full-time faculty in a program should be engaged during the crafting and adoption of PLOs
    - Department or programmatic meetings
    - Assessment Days or retreats
    - Possible committee formation for larger programs
    - Opportunity for junior faculty to take leadership role

- Engagement of part-time faculty is not required, but can be effective under the right circumstances
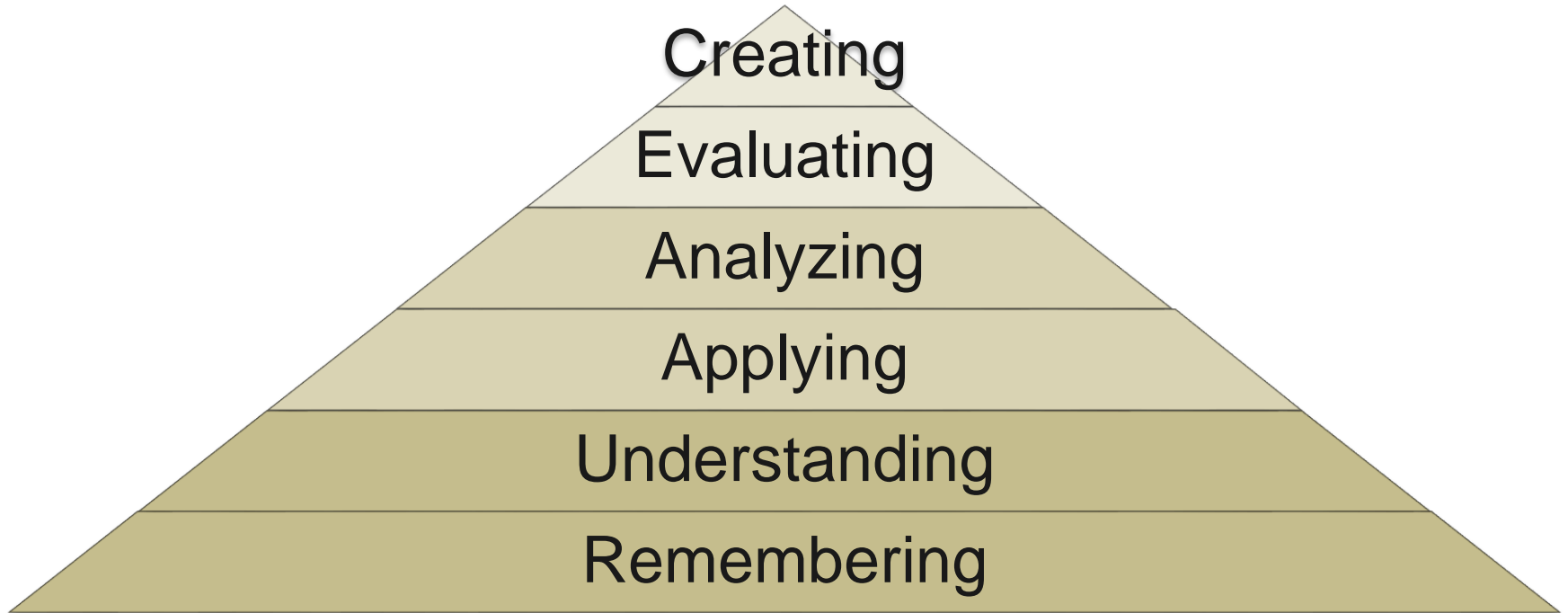
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Crafting Quality PLOs

Finding Common Themes

- Analyze external stakeholder feedback to find commonly mentioned skills or knowledge

- Review all course-level SLOs within the program to identify skills or knowledge that are emphasized throughout the curriculum

- Ask faculty what they want their students to know upon graduation from the program

Crafting Outcomes

- Once common themes have been identified those crafting the PLOs should consider the level with which those skills or knowledge should be mastered
  - Bloom's Taxonomy
  - Continue to use external feedback

- PLOs should be properly aligned with course-level SLOs

Bloom's Hierarchy

Creating

Evaluating

Analyzing

Applying

Understanding

Remembering

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Comparison of University PLOs

St. Edward's University	Texas State University
Apply critical and analytical thought to evaluate political phenomena	Ask relevant research questions pertaining to political science in research papers and internships
Compose written work that is analytically sound, clear, and stylistically sophisticated	Evaluate assumptions and implications in their research papers and internship experiences
Analyze major concepts and theories that inform all of political science	Examine and evaluate different sides of an issue in their research papers and internship experiences
Conduct research on political phenomena relying on primary and secondary sources	State and defend a thesis that is clear, direct, and substantive in the area of political science.
Appraise the concepts and limitations of major methodological approaches in political science	Use a variety of appropriately cited sources
Identify opportunities for civic engagement and participation in political processes	Demonstrate substantive knowledge of concepts and facts relevant to political science

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Measurable Outcomes

- PLOs should be clear, concise, and have proper context

Bad example	Better example
Deploy a variety of occasion-appropriate techniques and use posture, movement, volume, vocal expressiveness, rate of speaking, and eye contact to engage the audience through authentic demonstration of confidence and command of material	Employs effective communication techniques in a professional setting through reports and presentations
Appreciate critical thinking	Demonstrates critical thinking skills in the delivery of patient-centered care to well and ill patients

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Amount and Nature of PLOs

- Best practice is to have between ***four and six outcomes*** unless otherwise dictated by a 3rd party accreditor or state/federal agency

- Outcomes should be constructed to ensure students are able to achieve them no matter the sequence or choices made in program electives

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Mapping PLOs

- Once PLOs have been formed they should be mapped onto the required curriculum of the program

- All PLOs should be...
    - Introduced
    - Reinforced
    - Mastered

- The introduction, reinforcement, and mastery of PLOs should ideally take place over multiple courses in a program

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Developing a PLO map

	Requirement 1	Requirement 2	Requirement 3	Requirement 4
PLO #1	I	R	R	M
PLO #2		I,R		M
PLO #3	I	R	M	
PLO #4	I			R,M

- PLOs 1 and 3 are appropriately spaced throughout the entire required curriculum

- PLOs 2 and 4 exhibit signs of being rushed or being too spaced out during the curriculum

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Continued Refinement

- After crafting and mapping PLOs there may be a need to revise elements of the curriculum or rethink programmatic objectives

- The outcome and assessment process is about continuous improvement, which means the work is never done

- It is okay that PLOs may not be perfect after being initially crafted as the assessment process will bring to light potential gaps

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Scaffolding PLOs

Scaffolding Outcomes

General Education SLOs	• Reflects college priorities • Integrative	
Program SLOs	• Broader knowledge • More skill-based	
Course SLOs	• Specific content • Knowledge-based	

The Process of Scaffolding

- Review course-level SLOs to ensure they are adequately preparing students for the PLOs

- Review PLOs to ensure they are aligned and integrated with GELOs in terms of skills or competencies

- General education and programmatic curriculum should ultimately reinforce one another and support the student's educational journey through the college

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Questions?

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Thank you for your time

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