

Student Learning **OUTCOMES** @ South Mountain C.C.

Helping our students climb higher

Issue 1 April 2009

“Ten years, with no focus visits and no monitoring reports . . .”

The recommendation of the Higher Learning Commission’s consultant evaluators echoed through the Student Union building. These were the exact words that so many had worked so hard for the past two years to hear! But the visitors did point out some areas of needed improvement, some of which, as expected, were focused on academic assessment. They found no evidence that data drives improvement of student learning. The consultants pointed out that we must develop outcomes for our courses, programs and the institution and put into place effective strategies to assess those outcomes. The data from those assessments must be used in making decisions to improve processes that impact student learning.

*So when 70% of institutions get a focus visit or monitoring report, and 70% of those are “dinged” for assessment, how did we manage to escape such a fate? The answer is likely found in our decision to participate in the HLC’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. A team of five went to Chicago in February to join with eleven other institutions in a four-year cohort program to improve student learning on our campus. The team designed a plan to develop outcomes for our top FTSE-generating courses that would map to our General Education outcomes. Read more about the plan in this first issue of **OUTCOMES** . . .*

An overview of the plan . . .

Gen Ed and the Top 10/10 Courses

The Higher Learning Academy Team saw several issues needing attention in our assessment practices. 1.) We have lacked defined general education outcomes specific to our college. In 2008, the APRASL committee suggested five general education outcomes and convened faculty subcommittees to further define each outcome. The result was semantic confusion, overlap between outcomes, and general animosity toward the process and the results. 2.) A long-standing process of formative and summative course review has focused on individual sections of courses, but true across-the-sections evaluation of courses has been lacking on our campus. 3.) Our curriculum (decided at a district level with input from ten colleges) focuses on subject-matter competencies/objectives rather than student learning outcomes.

As a result of our participation in the Academy Roundtable (February 2009), we simplified the general education outcomes for SMCC as:

- **Critical and Creative Thinking**
- **Quantitative Analysis**
- **Information Literacy**
- **Written and Oral Communication**

These will be left as broad sweeping areas without further restrictive definition.

Our primary project will be for the faculty of our the top ten college-level enrolled courses and our top ten developmental courses to write course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) that can be mapped to our general education outcomes, and then to develop, implement, and evaluate course-level assessments of student achievement with regards to these outcomes. The assessments for each course would be deployed across all sections (probably as summative activities, though some could be embedded projects), with the data collected being anonymous as to the section/instructor. The data will be used in continuous curriculum improvement, and in decisions regarding our budgeting process as well as the allocation of resources.

Secondary projects:

“The SMCC Experience”, in essence a fifth general education outcome, will focus on student personal growth, student satisfaction and engagement in learning and personal development both in and outside the classroom. It will address empowering the learner, verifying readiness for the next step after graduation, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, ethical courses of action,

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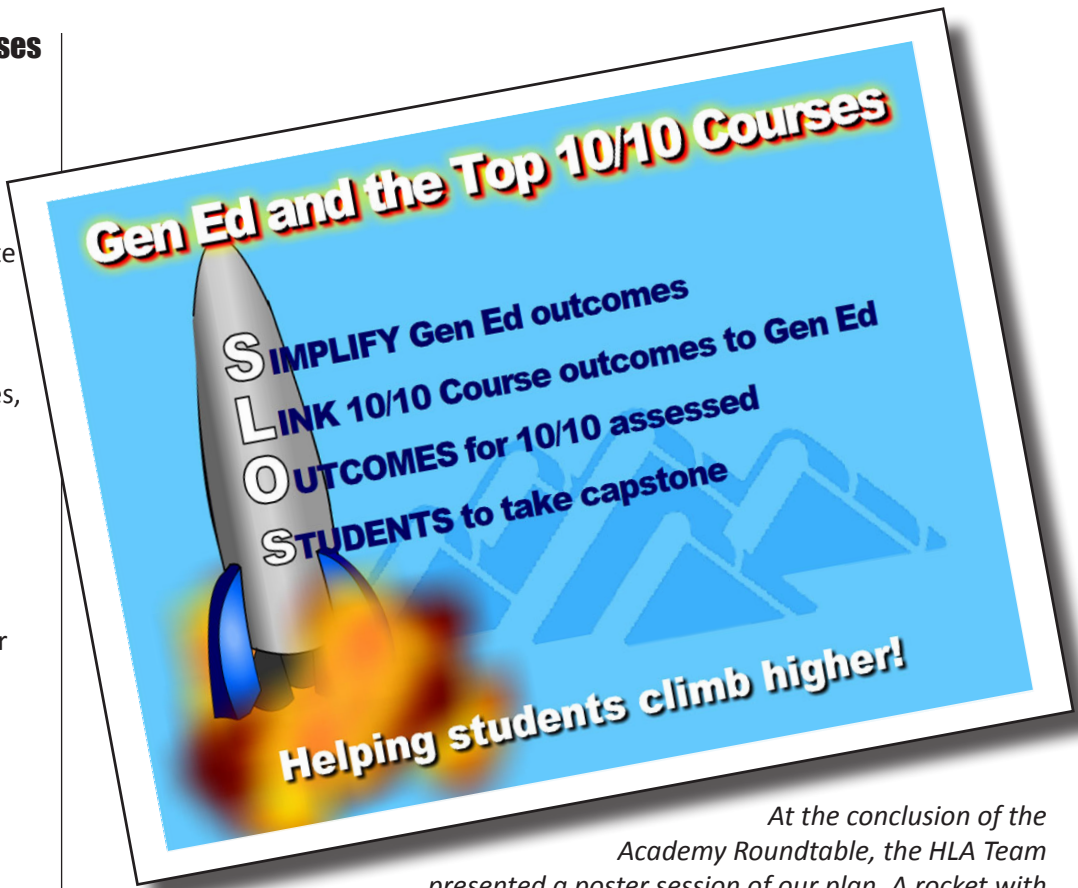
Gen Ed and the Top 10/10 Courses

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civic responsibility and setting educational, personal and career goals. Assessment instruments will include both direct and indirect measures and incorporate both academic departments and divisions, as well as all areas of student affairs (registration, financial aid, advisement, facilities, etc.)

A capstone Humanities course will be developed and delivered in Spring 2010. The creation and delivery of this course will be facilitated by Dr. Matthew Cooper and will seek to engage students in demonstrating that they have attained the student learning outcomes that we value. A focal project of the class will serve as a summative assessment of our general education outcomes.

We are aiming to increase faculty dialog and awareness of student learning issues and assessment practices. These discussions will be conducted at monthly Faculty Senate meetings, brown bag lunch discussions, department/division meetings, and special training workshops. The newsletter (which you are now reading!) will be produced by the HLA team and APRASL to help create a focal point around Student Learning Outcomes.



At the conclusion of the Academy Roundtable, the HLA Team presented a poster session of our plan. A rocket with the letters "SLOs" as an acronym for Student Learning Outcomes was the visual theme. Each letter identifies a key to our plan. Why a rocket? It's futuristic, implies progress, ties into the "climbing higher" tag line and connects with the excitement of Sian Proctor's quest to be the first SMCC astronaut!

What are the Top 10 College-level and Top 10 Developmental courses at South Mountain?

The table below shows our top college-level and developmental course, based on 45th day enrollment data from the past two academic years.

The Higher Learning Academy Team is comprised of:

Mr. Stephen Hustedde
Dr. Linda Lujan
Dr. Terry Leyba Ruiz
Dr. Matthew Cooper
Ms. Amy MacPherson

If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, talk to any one of us! This initiative should involve the entire campus, so we welcome your feedback and ideas!

COLLEGE LEVEL	
CLASS	FTSE
ENG101	347.6
ENG102	278.2
MAT122	260.6
MAT120	214.7
PSY101	202.8
MAT151	159.7
CIS105	145.6
CRE101	134.4
BPC110	115.2
BIO201	114.4

DEVELOPMENTAL	
CLASS	FTSE
MAT091	193.6
ENG071	123.0
RDG091	117.2
MAT082	84.4
RDG081	58.0
ENG061	43.2
ESL011	31.8
RDG008	26.6
ESL031	26.8
ESL021	24.4