

Essential Learning Outcomes

Stockton University

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Stockton Incorporates ELOs in Its Residential Curriculum

Melissa Cleary, Complex Director

The Office of Residential Life updated its Residential Curriculum this Academic Year to improve assessment measures of our departmental goals and learning outcomes. The Residential Curriculum is designed to answer the question, “What do we want our students to learn as a result of living in our residential communities?” Stockton’s Residential Curriculum learning outcomes complement and support the University’s Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Changes to the Residential Curriculum in recent years encourage Resident Assistants (RA) to incorporate learning outcomes and goals into their programming initiatives so that they can create intentional and meaningful learning communities for Stockton students. The Residential Curriculum uses Stockton’s ELOs to ensure that students are learning the skills they need to be well-rounded and successful adults.

Gabriella Marrone is a first-year graduate student studying Communicative Sciences and Disorders, and she serves as the Graduate Manager for the Office of Residential Life. Gabriella is also a former Stockton RA. As the Graduate Manager, Gabriella oversees all program proposals and evaluations submitted by the RAs and is very familiar with the programming efforts within the residence halls. She states, “Every program focuses on building community and teamwork. Residents want to get together and get involved, and RAs collaborate with other offices.” Gabriella specifically highlighted an event designed by RAs to introduce first-year students to the Office of Student Development and Stockton’s Greek Life. Gabriella is also proud of the program collaborations that include community partners, such as “Breast Fest,” a program she coordinated with the Keep a Breast Foundation.

As the Graduate Manager, Gabriella receives all RA program proposals. She noted that the proposal requirements are different this year: RAs are required to list three learning outcomes on their written proposal, so that they have these goals in mind as they conduct the program. RAs are encouraged to create multi-faceted programs that focus on key areas, such as Effective Community Engagement, Interpersonal Development, Cultural Competency, and Academic Success.

Gabriella discussed the role of passive programming in the residence halls, particularly initiatives like strategically placed interactive bulletin boards. Gabriella says, “Passive programming is great because it is on-going: It is happening every day in our residence halls.” Gabriella described her success with Stockton’s ELOs as a student leader, “I see how I achieved some of the ELOs, such as *Communication*, through being a leader. I was very shy as a freshman, but now I’m not afraid to voice my opinion. There’s nothing holding me back.”

Sara Fanning, a sophomore majoring in Psychology and Education, serves as secretary for the Residence Hall Association (RHA), an organization within the Office of Residential Life that works to create social and educational programming for residents. As Sara describes it, “RHA’s purpose is to create a ‘home-y’ experience for students by building a safe and fun environment.” Sara states that RHA complements Stockton’s ELOs with programs such as “Messed Up Mario Kart,” when RHA and the HERO Campaign co-partner to teach students about alcohol awareness and drunk driving, and “Play Things for Pups,” a recent program that encouraged community service by having students donate materials to make pet toys for a local animal shelter. “RHA sponsors programs that are social, community service oriented, or educational to help students learn how to deal with real life issues.”

Sara cited RHA’s Building Battles as an event that brings together several of Stockton’s ELOs, specifically, *Adapting to Change* and *Teamwork & Collaboration*. Building Battles is a field day competition among different residential areas that occurs during Welcome Week at the start of the fall semester. “Building Battles helps everyone connect right off the bat, especially the new freshmen, since they are just getting used to what it’s like being at Stockton,” she said. Sara also pointed out how RHA helps students achieve the ELOs by offering plenty of opportunity for experiential learning. “We have multiple meetings each week and lots of opportunity to build your skills, like communication and working with others.”

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Courtney Clemens is a junior Liberal Arts major and a first-year RA. This academic year, Courtney experienced the "Super 6" as an RA. The Super 6 is an RA programming initiative that occurs during the first six weeks of the semester, when RAs emphasize community interaction and programs to get to know residents and build relationships. Courtney says, "We do the Super 6 to make it easier to actively create a community and openly communicate with residents. Through the Super 6, you have no choice but to interact with your neighbors." As one of her Super 6 activities, Courtney and her new residents attended Stockton's Day of Service, then went

to dinner afterward. "It really helps with adapting to each other and the new environment. We all jumped into being good friends."

Courtney emphasized how the Super 6 helps promote communication among residents, stating that it "encourages getting to know each other on a personal level." Courtney went on to explain that, while the Super 6 complements Stockton's ELOs for residents, she also feels that her leadership positions on campus have helped her personally to achieve the ELOs.

Faculty Member and Stockton Student Co-Present on ELOs and Eportfolios at 2016 Day of Scholarship

A Good Student is More than Just a High GPA: The Use of Eportfolios in the Sciences

Joseph Trout, Assistant Professor of Physics

AND

Alexis DiMercurio, Stockton student

Presentation at
Stockton's Day of Scholarship
April 1, 2016

Excerpt from -- Integrating and Assessing Essential Learning Outcomes: Syllabus and Formative Feedback

Susan Cydis (EDUC), Mary Lou Galantino (PHTH), Carra Leah Hood (Asst. Provost), Mary Padden (NURS), Marc Richard (CHEM)
(under review by *The Journal of Excellence in College Teaching*)

Stockton University is entering the sixth year of an initiative in which the institution is focusing on ten Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) aimed at integrating curricular and co-curricular student learning experiences to support student competence with the skills necessary for academic, professional and personal success. The goal of this faculty-driven initiative is to create a coherent and intentional curriculum with clear objectives, pathways, and outcomes designed to promote the competence students need for personal and professional success in the 21st century. An important component of this initiative has been the development of a faculty led learning community for the purpose of collaboration and professional development. Faculty collaborated and worked diligently to define the essential skills a student might demonstrate to achieve one of three levels for each of the ten essential learning outcomes.

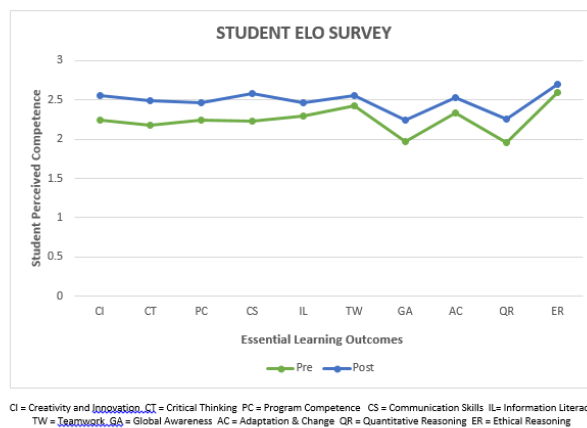
Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) provide opportunities for Stockton students to develop the intellectual and marketable talents needed to prepare for personal and professional success in the 21st century.

The research in the field that supports this initiative is plentiful, however one of the most notable sources is a public policy and campus initiative known as Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. This initiative promotes the idea that learning needs to occur across a broader set of outcomes. The use of robust, meaningful learning experiences can enrich teaching and the depth of student learning.

During the first two years of the learning community, facilitators shared evidence-based research with participants and guided the integration of ELOs and significant learning experiences (SLEs) (Fink, 2013) into course design and articulating those learning experiences in course syllabi. Faculty introduced students in their courses to ELOs through the SLEs. Facilitators collected data from students during the semester to gauge student learning outcomes resulting from the integration of ELOs into course projects and as well as faculty experiences with ELO integration. The data collected included student pre and post self-perception surveys, faculty focus groups, student reflective statements, faculty interviews, faculty post-syllabi, and a faculty survey.

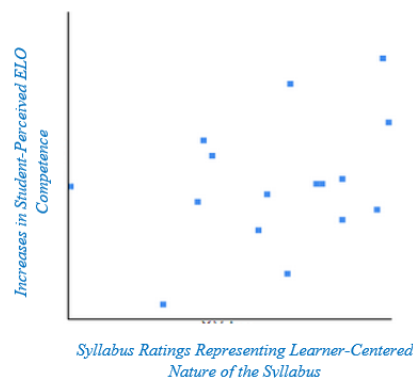
Results revealed that several themes of ELO integration support ELO competence in students. The use of intention and facilitation were found to be ELO integration themes identified and referenced by faculty as those that were used to support student competence with ELOs. Students demonstrated growth in self-perceived competence with all ten ELOs over the course of the semester, yet little to no correlation was found between learner-centered syllabi and student reported ELO competence.

Outcome of Student ELO Survey.



Although faculty awareness of ELOs may be the first step in ELO integration, and syllabus articulation may indicate intentional support for ELO competence, researchers found that it is necessary to go beyond this step to effectively promote competence in students. Because the syllabus is intended for multiple audiences, for example faculty colleagues, program coordinators or chairs, Deans, faculty evaluation committees, and accrediting agencies, in addition to students, this may be one of the reasons why little correlation was found between content-centered syllabi and student reported gains in ELO competence.

Scatterplot Representing Correlation between the Learner-Centered Nature of the Syllabus and Increases in Student-Perceived ELO Competence.



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What does this mean for instructors of students in higher education? While the content of a course is always most important, we can support student understanding of that content on a deeper level by promoting students metacognitive awareness and making connections between what students are learning and how the concepts connect to the essential skills and competencies they need for success in the real world.

We can begin to facilitate the connection between student learning and essential competencies by intentionally articulating how essential learning outcomes emerge as a natural outgrowth of the content we teach in any given course and include this information explicitly in our syllabi. Doing so, helps to facilitate student awareness of their own competence as it relates to these essential skills. Furthermore providing students with the opportunity to reflect on the confidence they develop, deepens and enhances awareness of how they possess these essential skills.

Although there should be a clear connection between course outcomes and what students are expected and advised to do to attain them, the results of this study showed that this may not be enough to promote student learning. The instructor needs to go beyond simply including course outcomes in the syllabus (Habaneck, 2005). Research supports a process in which instructors may need to articulate a process that includes, clear communication of the intended outcomes, make stated outcomes accessible and public, and use assessment results to improve and align instruction (Driscoll and Wood, 2007), and while research supports the notion that students may need to have clear expectations and understanding of the purpose of instruction and have progress determined by achievement of learning outcomes, this study also suggests that communicating those outcomes via syllabi actually had no effect on students' developing ELO competence. The syllabus did not appear to communicate to students in a substantial way, and although instructors might make assumptions about the role of syllabi in relation to pedagogy and learning, these assumptions might not be as certain as initially thought. This study supported the notion that the relational dynamics and formative experiences of the classroom carry the most weight in student learning. Although syllabi might be quite significant when communicating to other audiences it may not be as significant for students, and supporting the development of essential learning outcomes.

As faculty engage in practices that intentionally integrate ELOs into the curriculum students have the opportunity to develop competence. The intentional practice of ELO integration is more likely a combination of factors including an intentional stance on the part of the instructor and, facilitation of ELOs experiences. However doing so does not mean that this intentional stance and facilitation happens in the form of the design of the syllabus. It might actually be an interdependent dynamic of various features that include not only intention on the part of the instructor and facilitating the learning process, but also supporting awareness on the part of students, creating utility of the essential skills, and creating opportunities for reflection as those features that actually promote competence. It isn't necessarily the simple articulation of ELOs in the syllabus that promotes student competence, but rather a synergetic dependent relationship and formative experiences that are key components to supporting ELO competence in students.

References

- Driscoll, A., & Wood, S. (2007). *Developing Outcomes-Based Assessment for Learner-Centered Education: A Faculty Introduction*, 1st edition. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.
- Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, 2nd edition. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Habaneck, D. V. (2005). An examination of the integrity of the syllabus. *College Teaching*, 53(2), 62-64.

Data from the ELO Survey, conducted in April 2016

151 Stockton teachers took the ELO survey.

- 28% of full-time faculty members took the survey.
- 40% of professional staff who teach took the survey.

82% of Stockton teachers incorporate ELOs into courses or programs.

54% of those who incorporate ELOs into courses and programs do so in General Studies as well as program courses.

Stockton teachers incorporate ELOs into courses and programs by:

- using ELO language in class lessons (34%)
- mentioning ELOs on syllabi (65%)
- connecting ELOs to course goals (67%).

What Students Say about ELOs

Students who participated in a focus group (March 2015) after having taken a course in the fall 2014 and the fall 2015 ELO pilot had the following to say:

ELO Pilot, Fall 2014 and Fall 2015
Student Focus Group

	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
ELOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection was useful because it gave students a chance to look back on their work, see their progress, and consider it again. When professors included a chart with course/program goals and ELOs, students found that helpful; they said they would not know the connection otherwise. Students liked assignments that mentioned ELOs. Student liked the ELOs; they also liked that the ELOs were broad because then they could relate them to many courses and could track their progress. Students felt that working with ELOs was a step to becoming professional. ELOs helped students to build confidence because they could really see themselves developing a fluency with ELOs they encountered in multiple classes. Students felt that ELOs could go on their resumes and in cover letters when applying for jobs. Some students had a number of courses that participated in the pilot; when professors included ELOs, the students felt a connection from one course to the next. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students had a number of courses that participated in the pilot, when a professor did not have ELOs as part of the course content, the students felt a disconnect.
ELO Graduation Requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When asked about ELOs as a graduation requirement, students didn't balk; they said that ELOs and portfolios should be introduced to students at orientation and in their first-year courses. 	No negative comments.
Eportfolios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digication was intuitive and user-friendly. Students liked the directions on the eportfolios. Students really liked it when the eLearning folks came to their classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not always remember their UN and PW to Digication; they suggested that the professor send them emails reminding them to go into their portfolios throughout the semester. Blackboard portfolios were more difficult to use and not intuitive. Students did not use the videos for the eportfolios.

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What Faculty Say about ELOs

2015 ELO Pilot
Faculty Focus Group and End-of-Semester Reflections

Comments on the eportfolio

- I felt the students went through the motions with this – having a basic understanding of its purpose and usefulness.
- Students benefited from creating eportfolios early in the semester.
- Students found the creation of the eportfolio quite simple; however, they were not inspired to upload additional artifacts or to continue it on their own beyond the class.
- Students had a mixed reaction to the eportfolios.
- I thought the portfolio was more valuable to the student than they did.
- I felt more with the eportfolios, but students are clearly the experts.
- It's important to introduce students to the portfolio early in the semester.
- Had difficulty teaching the portfolio and suggest that students are introduced to the eportfolios during orientation and that there are eportfolio support experts available to students around campus.

Integrating ELOs

- I saw the integration of the ELOs as a painless process.
- I had no difficulty incorporating the ELOs into my class because, essentially, they are my class.
- ELOs are very teacher/student friendly.

Pedagogy with ELOs

- It was easy to point out the connections between course goals and Stockton's ELOs.
- Incorporating ELO course objectives in the class definitely helped me create significant learning experiences, which students found beneficial.
- The pilot made me more closely and align them with specific assignments more obviously. I think this has made me develop assignments with more agency and discard assignment that did not further ELO development.
- ELOs made for a useful language to talk about what are normally three major themes of my course.
- Having introduced the ELOs at the beginning of the semester, I reiterated that this is a skill not just for this class and my assignments, but it is to become a habit of mind.
- Going forward, I would review the ELOs with students periodically and incorporate more ELO-specific language to help student get accustomed to a vocabulary they will be using for the next few years.
- My approach with the students was to introduce each ELO as it aligned with course assignment.
- The students received details about every ELO within the syllabus and on blackboard in the assignment links as well as verbal explanations.
- The ELOs helped provide relevance and meaning to the different assignments and enabled students to make the connection between the what of the task and the why of the task.

- I tried to make sure that every assignment was lined up with one or more ELO, and I made sure to let the students know which ELOs would be developed with each assignment.
- I will ask students to align the major assignments to ELOs themselves.

Impact on students

- Students have benefited from understanding the ELO initiative.
- Students seemed receptive to thinking about their progress and discussed how they could see all of the assignment working toward larger goals outside of our class.
- I am not entirely sure that the ELOs facilitate student learning, beyond reflective writing.
- Students can see the purpose of the assignments when I use ELOs and are more likely to buy-in to the assignment and its importance.
- Students appreciate having a common language in which to talk about major course concepts and the promise that this language will carry forward throughout their education at Stockton.
- I believe if students achieve proficiency in the ELOs during their college years, they will be very marketable in their chosen professions.
- ELOs showed me that students really do know what they are doing.
- ELOs act as a kind of cognitive reinforcement of the assignments.
- Impact saw future value in the ELOs.

Impact on faculty member

- I plan to continue using the Digication eportfolios and the ELO-based reflective prompts in the future.
- I will continue to use ELOs in both undergraduate and graduate courses because they provide a framework and rationale for student learning.
- The ELO pilot was extremely enlightening.
- I noticed that I had already been teaching ELO-type skills but had not gone out of my way to explain to my students what each assignment would help them accomplish.
- I will be updating my other syllabi to reflect ELOs.
- The ELO pilot turned out to be a very useful tool in my classes.

In their reflections at the end of the fall 2015 pilot, students made these comments:

Fall 2015 Pilot: Students' Comments on ELOs

The Value of ELOs to Stockton Students
Students who participated in the fall 2015 ELO pilot were overwhelmingly positive about ELOs and the pilot experience. In fact, not one student reflection contained negative comments about either ELOs or the pilot. Students seem to understand ELOs, comprehend the value of ELOs both in and outside of the classroom, and appreciate the opportunity to develop ELOs throughout their time at Stockton. Below are some representative comments from students who participated in the pilot and completed a reflection.

Understand ELOs	Comprehend the Value of ELOs both in and Outside of the Classroom	Appreciate the Opportunity to Develop ELOs Throughout their Time at Stockton
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I think the point of these ELOs is to help us to see the bigger picture and to see how our work in this course and other aspects of our work. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that the essential learning outcomes are helpful, but also something that I have had to do in the past. The essential learning outcomes have helped me to see how my work in this course and other aspects of my work are connected. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. The ELOs are very helpful in that they give me something to focus on when going through this course. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. 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I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. 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I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I am glad to see that I have more control over my ELOs than I did before. Overall, I think that the pilot was a success. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. I think that it's important to have a clear idea of what we are doing and why we are doing it. 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