Tacoma Community College Degree Learning Outcome Revision Recommendations

December 2016

# Process and timeline

In Fall 2016, the Student Learning Improvement Council (SLIC) was tasked with reviewing the verbiage of Tacoma Community College’s Degree Learning Outcomes (DLOs). The committee reviewed all DLO task force projects from the previous 5-year cycle (2011/12–2015/16), as well a report from the Global Learning Task Force (2016).[[1]](#footnote-1) In particular, committee members considered whether or not all aspects of a given DLO were measured (or *could* be measured) by the task force for that particular DLO. Committee members also considered any recommendations made by each of the task forces.

SLIC also reviewed the responses from an assessment survey created using SurveyMonkey by the Instructional Assessment Steering Committee (IASC) in Fall 2016. Question 11 asked, “Are any of the following Degree Learning Outcomes (DLO) problematic for your discipline? Choose any that are problematic and in the comments section specifically describe why with as much detail as possible.” Of 111 respondents, 72 (64.86%) selected the “DLOs are not problematic for my discipline;” 15 (13.51%) selected “Core of Knowledge (COK);” 14 (12.61%) selected “Responsibility & Ethics (RES);” and 13 (11.71%) selected “Living and Working Cooperatively/ Valuing Differences (LWC).”[[2]](#footnote-2)

It also should be stated that while SLIC highly values knowledge and skills that are not easily measurable, the intent of assessment is to provide evidence that leads to curricular improvement and increases student success.[[3]](#footnote-3) In addition, demonstrating this constant cycle of improvement is a requirement of accreditation.

## SLIC members:

Gavan Albright, Biology

Analea Brauburger, Curriculum & Assessment Coordinator

Heather Gillanders (Chair), Library

Corinne Jarvis, Health Information Technology

Sonia Llacer, World Languages

Lee Sledd, Communication & Transitional Studies

# Recommendations

The following is the verbiage for the current introductory statement and DLOs. Recommended changes are highlighted after each section/outcome.

**Introductory Statement:**

TCC has a responsibility to the larger community to guide its students toward becoming thoughtful, skilled, contributing citizens. To that end, we have developed outcomes (listed below) that we expect every degree recipient to meet. Yet much of what we hope students learn is not easily measurable, nor is it necessarily completed when they acquire a degree here. Intellectual curiosity and creativity, appreciation for a broad education, respect for self and others, a strong ethical conscience, resourcefulness in the face of change - these are qualities that may take time to develop, and may be attained beyond TCC in communities, workplaces, and other institutions of higher learning. We take seriously our role in nurturing these qualities while students are here and we try to cultivate in our graduates an awareness that the degree they earn here is not the end of their learning, but a beginning.

**Recommendations:** None. Keep introductory statement as is.

**Rationale**: While the DLOs must be measurable, SLIC values knowledge and skills that are not easily measurable and believes that this introductory statement is an important acknowledgement of that fact.

**Upon completing a degree at Tacoma Community College, students will be able to:**

**Degree Learning Outcomes**

**Core of Knowledge (COK)**: Demonstrate a basic knowledge of each of the distribution areas (Written Communication, Humanities, Quantitative Skills, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences; or, as applicable, specific professional/technical programs), integrate knowledge across disciplines, and apply this knowledge to academic, occupational, civic and personal endeavors.

**Recommendations:**

Rewrite as:

Demonstrate a basic knowledge of each of the distribution areas (Written Communication, Humanities, Quantitative Skills, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences) or, as applicable, specific professional/technical content, and program-level content and apply this knowledge to academic endeavors.

**Rationale:**

The primary recommendation of the COK Task Force was “to consider the COK concept itself and eliminate confusion and redundancy in either of two ways:”

1. Refine the verbiage to clarify the definition of Core of Knowledge. The inclusion of occupational, civic, and personal endeavors in the definition is problematic. Also integration and application are not necessarily included in all PLOs.

2. Drop COK altogether from the list of Degree Learning Outcomes. Core of knowledge is already inherent in the Program Learning Outcomes of each department or program, given this fact, stating that “basic knowledge” is a DLO is redundant. It is also potentially confusing because each program has a distinct knowledge core which is not shared across the college.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Based upon these recommendations, and the fact that DLOs are what we expect *all* degree seeking students at TCC to achieve, SLIC chose to retain this DLO for the sake of continuity but to revise the verbiage. Since integration is not something that we necessarily promise to all students and because occupational, civic, and personal endeavors are not easily measurable, these terms were removed from the DLO.

**Communication (COM)**: Listen, speak, read, and write effectively and use nonverbal and technological means to make connections between self and others.

**Recommendations:**

None. Keep COM as is.

**Critical Thinking & Problem Solving (CRT)**: Compare, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas, and use sound thinking skills to solve problems.

**Recommendations:**

Rewrite as:

Compare, analyze, and evaluate information and ideas to solve problems.

**Rationale:**

Comparison, analysis, and evaluation are inherent in using “sound thinking skills” to solve problems, therefore this additional verbiage was removed for clarity and concision.

**Information & Information Technology (IIT)**: Locate, evaluate, retrieve, and ethically use relevant and current information of appropriate authority for both academic and personal applications.

**Recommendations:**

Rewrite as:

Locate, evaluate, retrieve, and ethically use relevant and current information of appropriate authority for academic or, as applicable, specific professional/technical applications.

**Rationale:**

The IIT task force did not measure students’ ability to do this in personal applications,[[5]](#footnote-5) and it would be difficult to do so in the future.

**Living & Working Cooperatively/Valuing Differences (LWC)**: Respectfully acknowledge diverse points of view, and draw upon the knowledge and experience of others to collaborate in a multicultural and complex world.

**Recommendations:**

Rewrite and rename as:

**Intercultural Collaboration & Diversity (ICD)**:

Demonstrate successful application of an interdependent, diverse, and multicultural worldview through collaborative engagement.

**Rationale:**

SLIC felt that the verb ‘acknowledge’ in the current outcome is weak, indicating only tolerance rather than a willingness to critically consider other points of view. In addition, the Global Learning Task Force made the recommendation to “replace the broad Living and Working Cooperatively DLO with a more narrowly focused Diversity and Intercultural Responsiveness (DIR) DLO.”[[6]](#footnote-6) They proposed two potential wordings of this new DLO after soliciting feedback from faculty, which included:

Diversity & Intercultural Responsiveness (DIR): Demonstrates, through collaborative engagement and socially responsible behavior, valuation of an interdependent, diverse, and multi-cultural world. Articulates how individual and group interactions, influences, and inequalities shape and impact self and society.

or simply, in keeping with the brevity of existing DLOs:

Diversity & Intercultural Responsiveness (DIR): Demonstrates, through collaborative engagement and socially responsible behavior, valuation of an interdependent, diverse, and multi-cultural world.[[7]](#footnote-7)

SLIC felt that words such as ‘responsiveness’ and ‘valuation’ lack clear operational definitions and metrics and are therefore subjective and difficult to measure. In addition to difficulty in definition, there is a general logistical challenge in measuring behavior. When essential for a program, behavior can be elicited via role play, simulations, and peer-rating schemes; but administration of these methods can be cumbersome, and their authenticity could be questionable. Thus the verbiage of this DLO was edited to be measurable.

**Responsibility & Ethics (RES)**: Demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes responsible and ethical behavior toward individuals, the community, and the environment.

**Recommendations:**

Keep RES as is but consider adding the environment to our mission/vision/strategic plan the next time strategic planning occurs.

**Rationale:**

The RES Task Force indicated in their report that while students met the 75% benchmark for the individual (87%) and community (85%) portions of the DLO, they did not meet this benchmark for the environment (52%) portion.[[8]](#footnote-8) Further, the Task Force wrote in their recommendations for the future that “Questions pertaining to the environment are not currently reflected in TCC’s Student Code of Conduct…. If ‘environmental responsibility’ remains part of the RES DLO, then the college may want to consider including this in the mission/vision/strategic plan.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Bibliography

Core of Knowledge Task Force. “Core of Knowledge Degree Learning Outcome Assessment.” Report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016.

COM/IIT Task Force. “Degree Learning Outcome Communication-Information/Information Technology (DLO COM/IIT) Assessment Task Force.” Report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2012.

Global Learning Task Force. “Global Learning Task Force Recommendations.” Report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016.

Instructional Assessment Steering Committee. “TCC Assessment Survey Data.” Survey data, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g38cEo3iC9S9Vv5I8hUF2e-lpiUc398QVgnaxhE2T1E/edit?usp=sharing>.

Responsibility and Ethics Task Force. “Degree Learning Outcome – Responsibility & Ethics (DLO RES) Assessment Task Force Report.” Report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016.

1. All DLO projects from the last 5-year cycle can be found in the TCC Instructional Assessment Canvas course: <https://tacomacc.instructure.com/courses/1299967> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Instructional Assessment Steering Committee, “TCC Assessment Survey Data” (survey data, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016), Q11, [https://docs.google.co006D/spreadsheets/d/1g38cEo3iC9S9Vv5I8hUF2e-lpiUc398QVgnaxhE2T1E/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g38cEo3iC9S9Vv5I8hUF2e-lpiUc398QVgnaxhE2T1E/edit?usp=sharing). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. SLIC is open to reconsidering the inclusion of some terminology we are recommending be cut, if it can be demonstrated to be measurable. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Core of Knowledge Task Force, “Core of Knowledge Degree Learning Outcome Assessment” (report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. COM/IIT Task Force, “Degree Learning Outcome Communication-Information/Information Technology (DLO COM/IIT) Assessment Task Force” (report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2012), Part I. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Global Learning Task Force, “Global Learning Task Force Recommendations,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Responsibility and Ethics Task Force, “Degree Learning Outcome – Responsibility & Ethics (DLO RES) Assessment Task Force Report” (report, Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA, 2016), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)