Simplifying SLOs & SCOs: Clear Outcomes for Student Affairs

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Today's Agenda

- What Are SLOs/SCOs and Why Are They Important?
- How Do I Pick the Right SLOs/SCOs?
- How Do I Write Clear SLOs/SCOs?

I was Today's Years Old When I Learned...

- **People use the terms "assessment" and "evaluation" interchangeably, but they actually refer to different processes.**

What are SLOs and SCOs and why are they important?

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) describe fundamental competencies students should know or be able to demonstrate upon completion of an academic program (major, emphasis, certificate program, etc.)
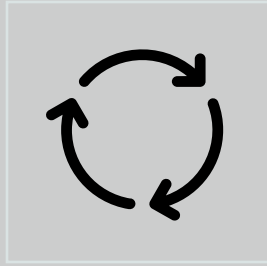
Student centered outcomes (SCOs) describe the results or products of co-curricular programming.

Source: University Assessment - Grand Valley State University

Aligning outcomes with university or divisional goals helps students and staff focus on what matters most.

Outcome Alignment Rubric for Student Affairs

Alignment with Goals: Does the outcome directly support a specific university or divisional objective?

Yes: Fully aligned with a clear goal.

Somewhat: Partially supports a goal but could be more focused.

No: Does not connect to any identified objective.

Relevance to Students and Staff: Does the outcome address an area of importance or impact for students and staff?

High: Clearly addresses a significant need or priority.

Moderate: Addresses a less critical but still relevant area.

Low: Impact is unclear or unrelated to key goals.

GVSU STUDENT AFFAIRS LEARNING DOMAINS

Engagement & Belonging: Students engaged in Student Affairs programs, services, and activities will experience increased feelings of belonging, characterized by a sense of acceptance, value, and inclusion within the community.

Health & Well-being: Students engaged in Student Affairs programs, services, and activities will develop/deepen understanding about their own health, well-being, and happiness (and that of others) and connect their goals to their overall life satisfaction.

Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Students engaged in Student Affairs programs, services, and activities will cultivate an appreciation for cultural diversity, involving respect and celebration of differences in others, effective collaboration with diverse individuals, and awareness of actions promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Success After Graduation: Students engaged in Student Affairs programs, services, and activities will develop their ability to synthesize and apply their academic, relational, career, and civic engagements at GVSU toward their personal and professional short and long-term goals after graduation.

Basic Co-Curricular Learning Map

Co-curricular Learning	Learning Experience/ Activity/ Program	Learning Experience/ Activity/ Program	Learning Experience/ Activity/ Program
Learning Outcome 1	X	X	
Learning Outcome 2		X	
Learning Outcome 3	X		X

Table 2: Co-curricular learning map

Co-curricular Learning Map Connected to CAS Standards

Institution Mission	CAS Outcome Domain	CAS Dimension	Learning Outcome	Program
Mission statement element	Related outcome domain	Related dimension	Student affairs unit specific learning outcome	Program or programming that addresses the learning outcome

Table 6. CAS Standard mapping within student affairs units

Criteria for SLOs/SCOs- Be SMART!

Be **SPECIFIC**: Audience and Program/Service

Successfully **MEASURE**: Define your Criteria for Success

Be **ACTIONABLE**: Include an Action Verb (Bloom's Taxonomy) in a Learning Statement (What students will know, do, or value)

Be **RELEVANT**: It should be connected to larger university/divisional goals

TIMEBOUND: Detail when

Example #1a

- "By the end of their first year, students will demonstrate mastery of cultural competency, conflict resolution, leadership in diverse settings, financial literacy, and holistic well-being through active participation in at least 10 campus programs and measurable impact in their respective communities."

Why is this SLO/SCO so problematic?

- **Overly Ambitious**
- **Too Broad**
- **Unclear Metrics**
- **Unrealistic Participation Expectations**

Example #1b

- "Students will be able to develop leadership skills through campus involvement and demonstrate cultural competency in diverse group settings."

Say no to Double-Barreled SLOs/SCOs)

- A double-barreled Student Learning Outcome (SLO) combines two distinct skills, concepts, or goals into one statement.

Challenges with this type of SLO:

- Unclear in focus. What takes priority?

- Each element requires different methods of measurement

- Difficulty in determining success or failure.

- Challenges in interpretation.

- Inconsistent data for improvement.
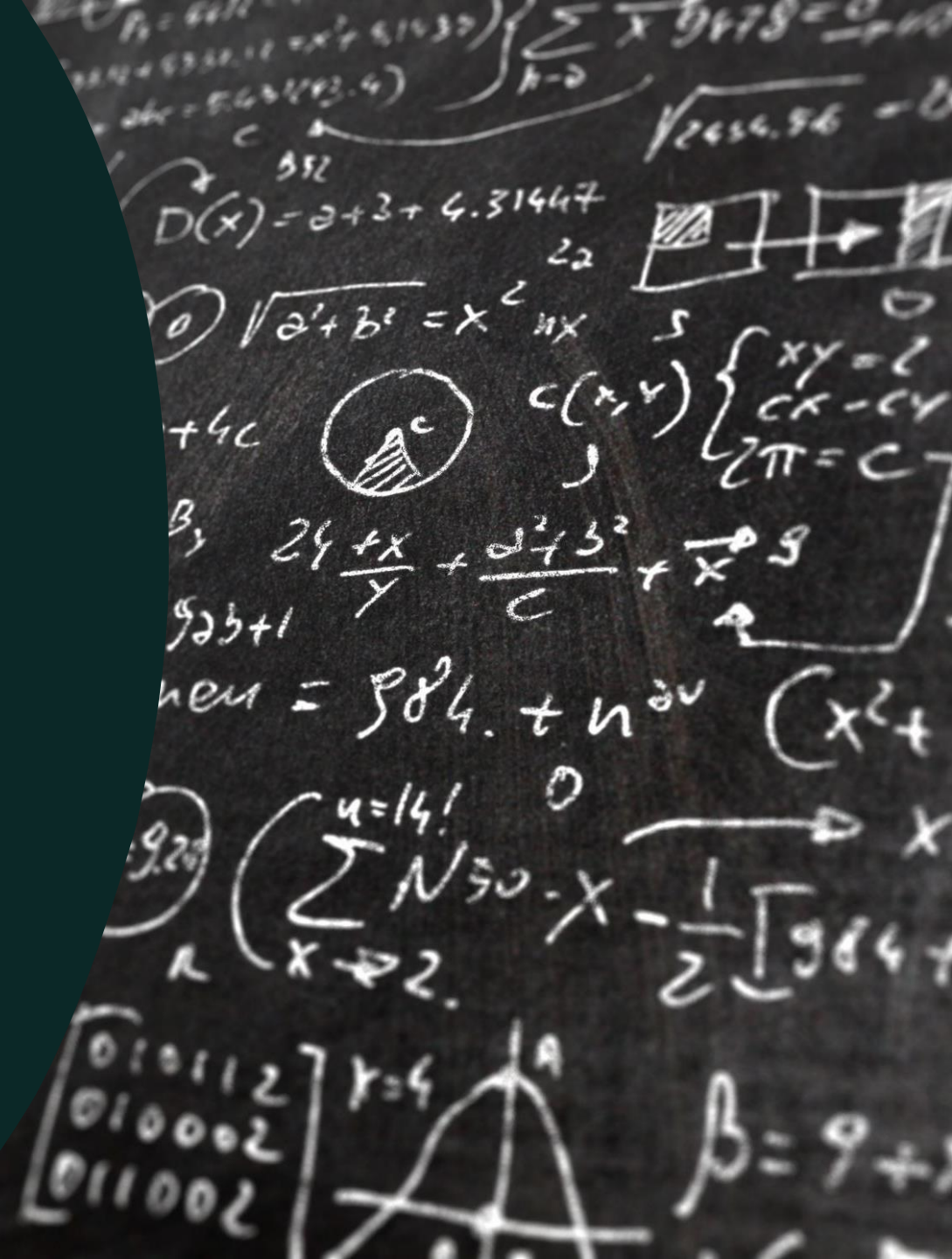
The Basics of SLOs/SCOs

- Key Characteristics:

  Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Relevant, Time-bound (SMART).

- Pitfalls to Avoid:

  "Everything and the kitchen sink" approach
  Double barreled statements
  --> less is more.

Example #2

- "By the end of the academic year, student employees in the Office of Student Life will demonstrate growth in cultural competency by attending one training, scoring at least 80% on a post-training assessment, and providing one specific example of how they will apply a concept from the training in their work."

Example #3 Real World @ GVSU

- "By attending the student veteran orientation, students will demonstrate an increased understanding of campus resources, as measured by a pre/post survey and a mid-semester check-in, with 90% of students reporting improved awareness and usage of available support services."

Example #4 Real World @ GVSU

"Students who participate in counseling services will demonstrate a significant reduction in the overall level of psychological distress in one or more areas. "

Description: This SCO aligns with the Division of Student Affairs learning domain of Health and Well-Being. Students will complete a brief symptom measurement (CCAPS-34) at the beginning of each counseling session. We will compare the differences between symptom severity ratings (as measured by the CCAPS-34) between a student's first and last session to determine the significance of change in symptoms severity in each of the 8 domains measured. Data will be collected at both in-person and virtual sessions.

Example #5

- During the Fall semester, Intramural officials will demonstrate at least two officiating techniques learned in training and apply them during games, with performance evaluated by a supervisor's checklist, scoring at least 80%.

Why These Work

- **Practical Application**
- **Concise and Clear**
- **Measurable and Achievable**
- **Relevant**

What could be improved with this SLO/SCO?

- "By the end of the Fall semester, peer health educators will improve their ability to communicate health information effectively to their peers during workshops."

A corrected version

- "By the end of the Fall semester, peer health educators will improve their ability to communicate health information effectively to their peers, **as measured by a supervisor's evaluation, where they will score at least 85% on a rubric assessing clarity, engagement, and accuracy during workshops.**"

What could be improved with this SLO/SCO?

- Fraternity and sorority life leaders will demonstrate knowledge of inclusive leadership practices by designing and facilitating a workshop for their chapter members, with at least 80% of participants reporting an increased understanding of inclusivity on a post-workshop survey.

A corrected version

- "**By the end of the academic year**, fraternity and sorority life leaders will demonstrate knowledge of inclusive leadership practices by designing and facilitating a workshop for their chapter members, with at least 80% of participants reporting an increased understanding of inclusivity on a post-workshop survey."

What could be improved with this SLO/SCO?

"Upon completion of a stress management workshop, students are able to identify 3-5 stress reduction techniques."

A corrected version

"By the end of the stress management workshop, students will be able to accurately identify and describe 3-5 specific stress reduction techniques they can apply in their daily lives, **as measured by a post-workshop survey/quiz.**"

SMALL GROUP WORK

Simple Rubric to ensure SMART outcomes

- ☐ SPECIFIC: Audience and Program/Service: Clearly states who the students are and what program or service they are involved in.

- ☐ MEASURABLE: Criteria for Success: Explains how success will be measured.

- ☐ ACTIONABLE: Action Verb: Uses a strong, measurable verb that fits the learning goal.

- ☐ RELEVANT: Connects to a university/divisional/dept objective.

- ☐ TIMEBOUND: details when it should happen.

- ☐ Learning Statement: Clearly states what students will know, do, or value.

Hands on Practice: Draft an SLO/SCO #1

- Create an SLO/SCO for Academic Advising Graduate Assistants who will lead time management workshops for first-year students. The GAs will attend a training session on time management strategies, then facilitate a workshop where they apply these strategies.

Possible SLO/SCO:

- By the end of the semester, Academic Advising GAs will demonstrate their understanding of time management by facilitating a workshop for first-year students, incorporating at least two strategies learned in training, and achieving a score of at least 85% on a supervisor's evaluation rubric assessing content accuracy, strategy integration, and presentation skills.

- A university's Office of Diversity and Inclusion is hosting a workshop titled "Cultivating Inclusive Leadership." The goal of the workshop is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to foster an inclusive environment in student organizations and group projects.

Possible SLO/SCO:

- By the end of the "Cultivating Inclusive Leadership" workshop, students will be able to identify at least three strategies for promoting inclusion in group settings and demonstrate their application through a role-play activity, as evaluated by facilitator feedback and a participant reflection form.

Hands on Practice: Draft an SLO/SCO #3

- A Career Services office is offering a workshop called "Mastering Interview Skills" to help students prepare for job interviews. The workshop covers topics such as answering common interview questions, using the STAR method (situation, task, action, result) for behavioral questions, and understanding nonverbal communication.

Possible SLO/SCO:

- By the end of the "Mastering Interview Skills" workshop, students will be able to effectively construct responses to at least two behavioral interview questions using the STAR method, as demonstrated in a mock interview session evaluated by peer and facilitator feedback.
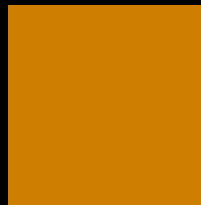
Closing and Takeaways

✓ Key Points Recap: SLOs/SCOs should be specific/clear, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time bound.
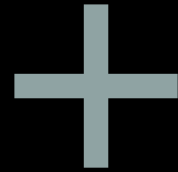
+ Use the streamlined criteria for simplicity and focus.

■ Ensure outcomes align with university or divisional objectives.