

# Effective Design and Implementation of SAOs

Approaching SAO work as a research process

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# Defining Acronyms

## **Used to assess courses in all disciplines:**

- SLO: Student Learning Outcome
- CSLO: Course SLO (each course has these)
- PSLO: Program SLO (each degree and certificate has these)

## **Used to assess Student Service Areas** (such as Counseling, Library, Veteran's Center, etc.)

- SAO: Student Area Outcome

# Why do we assess learning outcomes?

## LPC Mission

*Las Positas College provides an inclusive, learning-centered, equity-focused environment that offers educational opportunities and support for completion of students' transfer, degree, and career-technical goals while promoting lifelong learning.*

We report out to ACCJC in our accreditation cycle how we are accomplishing our Mission. The accreditation team then evaluates how well we are doing this.

The central mission of Las Positas College is its commitment to **student learning**. To further that mission, the college recognizes the importance of evaluating progress towards that goal.

- We do this at the course, program, and institutional level.
- We do this with the student services, which are vital in supporting our students.

# Why do we assess SAOs?

Measuring **quantitative** SAO data facilitates objective analysis of student service areas, and moves us away from “**gut feelings**” based on anecdotal information and subjective perceptions.

Results from SAO assessment can be used to modify or improve the Student Service Area to better accomplish the desired outcomes.

# The Big Picture

The process of collecting useful SAO data is like running a research experiment.

As SAO coordinators, we help frame the question, design the experiment, facilitate data collection and analysis, and lead the discussion of the results.

Each step of the process has its own unique challenges. Today we will cover all steps of the process and try to address common challenges.

## SAOs as a Research Process

### 1 | Question

Determine a question your student service area is interested in answering.

**Example Questions:**

- *Are there gender gaps in degree attainment?*
- *Does student academic performance improve after attending a (student success, financial aid, transfer) workshop?*
- *How does student self-scheduling of a counseling appointment affect no-show rates?*

### 2 | Methods and Design

- What SAO data is necessary to answer the research question?
- Do my current SAOs and 3-year-plan give me these data?
- *If not, you may consider updating your SAOs or revising your 3-year assessment plan.*

### 3 | Data Collection

- Communicate the 3-year assessment plan to department personnel.
- Assess planned SAOs.
- Record numerical data and store in Excel, eLumen, or other electronic service.

### 4 | Data Analysis

- Organize relevant data into tables and/or graphs (run eLumen reports if applicable)
- Send data to department personnel before group discussion.

### 5 | Discussion

- Meet annually to discuss SAO results
- Summarize SAO data and your interpretation in Program Review
- Determine the *Question* for next year, and return to Step 1

# The Big Picture

All of the details of this process (including how to use eLumen) are available in the **SLO Coordinator Handbook**, which can be found on the [LPC SLO Website](#).

## SAOs as a Research Process

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# 1 | Developing a Question

The first step in collecting useful data is to determine a question your student service area is interested in answering.

Here are some example questions:

- Is there a difference in student experiences with counselors between online and face-to-face?
- Are there gender gaps in degree attainment?
- Does student academic performance improve after attending a (student success, financial aid, transfer) workshop?
- How does student self-scheduling of a counseling appointment affect no-show rates?

# 1 | Developing a Question

**Activity:** Consider the student services offered by your department. Brainstorm a list of possible questions you might be interested in getting data for.

Ideas to consider when developing questions:

- Which areas of the student support that you provide are not working as well as desired? What factors might affect their efficacy?
- Are there any places in your student service area where there may be equity issues?
- Has the transition to increased use of online resources affected student interaction with your service area?



# 1 | Developing a Question

Ideally, SAO coordinators would discuss possible questions with department personnel and come to a consensus.

At the very least, the question should be communicated to the relevant personnel in your service area prior to assessing the SAO.

## 2 | Methods and Design

Once you have decided on your question, the next step is to determine what SAO data is necessary to answer the question.

- What data is necessary to answer my question?
- What method should I use to obtain the necessary data? (IR data, survey, interviews, etc.)
- How often should I assess the SAOs to get a large enough sample of students?
- Does my current 3-year-plan give me the data I need?
  - If not, you may consider updating your SAOs or revising your 3-year assessment plan.

## 3 | Data Collection

### **The SAO Coordinator should:**

- Collect the relevant data during the appropriate time frame
- Work with department personnel to facilitate data collection (when necessary)
- Record SAO data and store electronically using Excel, eLumen, or other digital service of choice

## 4 | Data Analysis

Before the student service area can meet together to discuss SAO results, the SAO coordinator should:

- Organize the relevant data into relevant tables and/or graphs, using Excel, eLumen, or other digital software
  - Sometimes it is helpful to convey your results in a few plots on Powerpoint Slides
  - The more easily readable your visuals, the more likely your colleagues will look at them, and the more powerful the results will be
- Send the data to department personnel before the group discussion

## 5 | Discussion

Annually (or once per semester) each student service area should meet to discuss the SAO results. During the meeting:

- The SAO coordinator presents the data and moderates the discussion.
  - End goal of discussion: How can faculty use the results to improve the student service area?
- All department personnel should attend (if possible)
- The group should determine how they wish to proceed with SAOs in the future
  - Will we change to a new research question?
  - Will we stick with our current 3-year plan or change it?

## 5 | Discussion

The purpose of SAOs is to provide *data* to answer your research question.

**When you meet as a group to discuss SAO results, it is important to frame your discussion around the data itself.** (i.e., don't ignore the graphs and jump to a department discussion based on anecdotes or personal experience.)

## 5 | Discussion

If you find that the graphs of numerical SAO data are not useful for answering your research question, then you should figure out how to improve the design or implementation of your research process, or change your research question.

Some possibilities to consider:

- Can the SAO wording be improved or clarified?
- Is the assessment we designed giving us the information we want from it?
- Are there outside factors influencing the data in such a way that we can't tease out the information we want?

## 5 | Discussion

After the department discussion, the SAO Coordinator should **summarize SAO data, findings, and resultant changes annually in Program Review**. This serves as documentation for the college's accreditation process.



Questions?

# FLEX Day Feedback Survey

Please fill out this survey after the session ends:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd4CXo6RK0NQ1-17H7j6Y7XNpNf-oBRi7E8scS\\_evts6qHI-Q/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd4CXo6RK0NQ1-17H7j6Y7XNpNf-oBRi7E8scS_evts6qHI-Q/viewform)