



Undergraduate Learning Outcomes Executive Summary 2.24.2017

SUMMARY

This proposal defines nine Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs) for adoption by MSU Denver. It also includes a careful plan for developing and implementing assessment of these ULOs following the given guiding principles. Fully assessing these ULOs would happen in Fall 2019 at the earliest. In the meantime, the 9 ULOs would serve as a framework for other assessment redesign efforts at MSU Denver.

OVERVIEW OF ULOs

Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs) represent important indicators of institutional quality that are tied to the University's strategic mission. They help guide institutional improvement by:

- Providing a consistent framework for assessment of all academic and co-curricular programs.
- Organizing learning activities for improving institutional effectiveness and accreditation reviews.
- Supporting strategic planning at each level of the university.
- Demonstrating accountability to university stakeholders, funding sources and government agencies.

The nine ULOs (see the end of this document) communicate to University constituents (students, businesses, community leaders, and graduate schools) the abilities and competencies every MSU Denver graduate possesses. The breadth of knowledge in the undergraduate learning outcomes goes beyond any one discipline. MSU Denver graduates achieve these outcomes through general studies courses, major/minor programs, choice of electives and through co-curricular activities. Ultimately, truly meaningful ULOs embody and express a shared vision of learning, integrating academic and co-curricular undergraduate learning experiences in intentional and coherent ways.

LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT:

Assessment of ULOs is different than all other assessment currently occurring at MSU Denver. The distinguishing characteristic of ULOs in comparison to other identified learning outcomes is in both the focus on an individual graduate (rather than the focus on a specific program or course) and the level of achievement.

(NEW!) Undergraduate learning outcomes are abilities considered important for graduating students to be able to demonstrate at the capstone level. Possessing the abilities at the capstone level is the essence of what it is to be an educated person and prepares students for the workforce, postgraduate education and lifelong learning. Ideally, all other outcomes and assessments at a university flow from the guiding framework of the ULOs.

Program-level assessment measures all student's cumulative learning across courses within a program to determine if the outcomes associated with a particular program of study are being met. Program outcomes are assessed over multiple courses which contribute to the overall program-level learning outcomes.

Assessment of General Studies measures all undergraduate students on general studies program outcomes at the foundational level. Possessing the general studies skills at the foundational level provides students the groundwork of what it is to be an educated person and prepares students for their program of study.

Course-level student learning in a course measures an individual student's mastery of a particular course's objectives and outcomes. This is the level of assessment at which grades provide feedback to students about their progress.

Co-curricular learning outcomes are assessed to measure what students learn from their experiences outside the classroom and how the co-curricular programs and services offered at MSU Denver contribute to student's educational experience. Co-curricular learning outcomes are linked to the university's mission, goals and educational learning outcomes.

In creating these nine ULOs, the University Outcomes Task Force (UOTF) utilized both internal and external sources. Internally, the UOTF drew extensively from the work completed by MSU Denver's General Studies Outcomes Task Force and University Outcomes Work Group. Externally, the UOTF examined the undergraduate outcomes framework created by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U's) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP). Additionally, the UOTF considered the processes and products of comparable institutions engaged in efforts to draft, develop, and/or refine undergraduate learning outcomes. Importantly, the UOTF drafted surveys designed to gather input around MSU Denver undergraduate outcomes from multiple stakeholders: students, faculty, staff, alumni, and business leaders. The results of these surveys were then vetted in five public "town-halls" for additional feedback. Together, the research, surveys, and open forums provided the basis for drafting and refining the nine ULOs.

Transparency has been the operating principle behind the processes and products of the UOTF. Across all of its deliberations, the UOTF incorporated previous work undertaken by faculty, conducted a public survey, offered open-invitation workshops, and made available various iterations of the ULO drafts (e.g., presentations at Faculty Senate). Every aspect of the transparent development process and public presentation of ULO drafts has reflected the UOTF's consistent efforts to encourage and gather comment and feedback.

DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF AN ASSESSMENT PLAN

Guiding Principles

Creating a plan to assess the nine ULOs will be constrained by a few guiding principles:

- The information needed to assess ULOs is already taking place at the program level. A perusal of a number of program SLOs across the university reveals an existing alignment with the proposed ULOs.
- No new assessment artifacts will be created.
- There will be minimal impact on faculty in collecting and combining the necessary information.

Timeline

Summer and fall 2017:

- Convene a team of 6-10 partners and champions of the assessment of MSU Denver's ULOs consisting of faculty, co-curricular administrators and support staff. This team will develop a meaningful assessment plan, working from the stated guiding principles.
- Deliverables at end of fall 2017: This team, along with the University-wide Provost's Assessment Committee (UPAC), will have produced the rubrics, surveys and identified the voluntary pilot test participants.

Spring 2018

- A test-run of the assessment plan will be done by pilot program faculty volunteers solely as a means for testing the process and collecting feedback. The resulting data will not be official, or used beyond testing procedures.
- Training will be developed in consultation with pilot program volunteers.
- Additional pilot participants will be recruited for Fall 2018.

Fall 2018

- Assessment of assigned ULOs by pilot participants.
- Feedback on the process and assessment tools will be solicited from the pilot test participants. This feedback will be incorporated into any possible revisions to the process and tools.
- If assessment goes well, the team will seek 6 to 10 additional participants. If the process needs to be revised the pilot test will not be expanded.

Spring 2019

- Analysis of Fall 2018 pilot results will be completed by the Director of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and UPAC.
- Feedback on the process and assessment tools will be solicited from the pilot test participants. This feedback will be incorporated into any possible revisions to the process and tools.
- If the pilot is to continue, additional willing participants will be trained, otherwise the plan will be revised.
- If the pilot is deemed successful, full implementation could occur in Fall 2019.

UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Undergraduate Outcomes Task Force (UOTF) recommends the adoption of nine undergraduate student learning outcomes (ULOs). They are:

Critical Thinking

Ability to use complex cognitive skills such as analyzing evidence, applying the scientific method, thinking historically, asking questions, making judgements and reaching decisions.

Creative Thinking

Ability to use and devise creative solutions and to demonstrate the fluency, flexibility and originality of thoughts and ideas.

Quantitative Reasoning

Ability to use numbers, data and mathematical concepts to explain or justify beliefs, facts, actions, events, judgments and conclusions.

Qualitative Reasoning

Ability to use descriptions, observations, various sources of information or ideas to explain or justify beliefs, facts, actions, events, judgments and conclusions.

Professional Behavior

Ability to recognize, articulate and apply ethical and professional principles in various academic, social or personal contexts in order to be civic-minded and engaged, inclusively aware and to promote the common good.

Oral Communication

Ability to communicate in speech effectively, appropriately and ethically with diverse audiences, in different settings and through various media.

Written Communication

Ability to communicate in writing effectively, appropriately and ethically with diverse audiences, in different settings and through various media.

Collaboration

Ability to work with and lead others to realize shared goals and mutual interests in ways that promote supportive climates and win/win solutions.

Intercultural/Global Awareness

Ability to identify intercultural and global differences while also recognizing human commonalities.