

Philosophy on Assessment and Student Learning Outcomes

Adopted by the Academic Senate on February 14, 2006

Allan Hancock College is committed to excellence in learning, in teaching, and service in order to enable students to reach their educational goals. Student success is the highest priority at Allan Hancock College. Working with students and the community, all campus constituencies collaborate to provide innovative and comprehensive programs and services to ensure student achievement and meet community needs. (AHC Philosophy and Vision Statements).

Thus, the primary goal of assessment at Allan Hancock College is the improvement of student learning. Learning is more than simply acquiring knowledge; it entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom” (AAHEA Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning). The entire campus, seeking input from the greater community when appropriate, works together in a spirit of continuous improvement to support student growth and development for lifelong learning.

Students learn best when they assume ownership of and responsibility for their own learning; it is Allan Hancock College’s goal to provide an environment that best facilitates that learning. Therefore, outcomes assessment not only monitors what and how well students learn, but also measures the success of the institution in providing effective learning opportunities. Outcomes assessment occurs in both instructional and student service settings. The keys to the process are well-defined student learning outcomes and student support strategies implanted in an environment of high academic standards.

The Academic Senate has primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining the general standards for outcomes assessment at Allan Hancock College. Central to assessment at Allan Hancock College is the emphasis on faculty-led student services- and classroom-based assessment (whether in face-to-face or virtual learning environments) to ensure a direct focus on learning. Specific assessment standards and methods for courses, programs, and student services are the responsibility of faculty members within individual departments. In recognition of the increase in faculty workload that outcomes assessment beyond the course level represents, it is the responsibility of the administration to support these efforts by providing sufficient resources and by developing incentives.

Overall, such an ongoing student outcomes assessment process works to improve institutional effectiveness. Assessment at Allan Hancock College will be based on valid, reliable, and relevant assessment procedures whenever appropriate; programs and services will be assessed using multiple measures, and every effort will be made to collect both quantitative and qualitative information. The data will provide evidence for curriculum and program review, planning, process enhancement, resource allocation, organizational leadership, and staff and student development. Ultimately AHC assessment will lead to institutional accountability and improvement of teaching and learning. The assessment process, however, is not a part of faculty evaluation, which is addressed separately in board policy and the Faculty Association contract.