Equity Minded Practices in the SLO Cycle

How does your department implement equity-minded assessment throughout the assessment cycle?

Program Review question "C" asks departments to describe how equity-minded assessment is used in the SLO assessment cycle. Remember that the assessment cycle involves 1) developing or modifying SLOs, 2) assessing SLOs, 3) analyzing and discussing SLO data, and 4) creating and implementing action plans for improvement.

Below is a list of specific strategies and practices, developed by the Outcomes Committee, to encourage equity-minded assessment in each stage of the SLO cycle. This is not meant to be a finite list of practices, but it —hopefully—outlines several ways to engage in our never-ending journey towards equity-minded assessment.

1)Develop/Modify SLOs

- Use appropriate student-focused language that considers cultural perspectives and/or assumptions in SLO statements. This will help to ensure students understand what is expected of them.
- Ensure that department members understand equity and equity-minded assessments to help them re-evaluate the SLOs in intent or language.
- Give students an opportunity to review, discuss, and give feedback about SLOs and assessment rubrics, and take actions based on their feedback.
- Consider the pros and cons of current SLOs. Do they represent the critical skills/knowledge students need to have at the end of the course or program? If a student petitioned to skip your course or program, what would you expect them to know and/or be able to do before you approve their petition? The answers to this question should be in your SLOs.
- Make sure Course SLOs map to the Program SLOs. To ensure students in a specific program learn what we say they will learn, all courses in a degree or certificate should help students gain knowledge and skills that lead to mastery of the Program Learning Outcomes.

2) Assess CSLOs

- Discuss SLOs at the beginning of each course, and let students ask questions about them. Make sure to help students understand any discipline-specific language they may not be familiar with.
- Assess language skills and content knowledge separately when possible. For example, students may be able to verbally summarize their knowledge and/or demonstrate their skills, but they may not have the language for communicating their knowledge/skills in writing.

- When designing assessments, consider the background knowledge and/or life experiences assessment questions assume students have. For example, if you are teaching probability and you give an example with a deck of cards, consider that some international students may not have experience with playing cards. Instead, strive to use varied examples which connect to the background knowledge of all your students.
- Analyze test questions and other assessments for possible bias that may privilege some students' learning while marginalizing others.
- Analyze our own (teacher) biases, experiences, and "pet peeves," and reflect on how our perspectives and world views may affect our subjective assessment of student work.
- Use formative assessments before summative assessments so students have a chance to learn and practice skills before high-stakes assessments. For example, use low-stakes or no-stakes assignments, participation activities (i.e. Jamboards, online discussions), surveys, collaborative assessments, formative quizzes without time-limits, before giving high-stakes exams and assignments.
- Establish collaborative criteria/standards for meeting CSLOs in multi-section courses
- Use multiple assignments to assess mastery of a particular outcome

3) Analyze/Discuss Data

- Disaggregate data to check for equity gaps, and devise plans of action aimed at closing equity gaps
- Give students access to their data and help them understand what the data means. For example, if you use Canvas to track CLSOs, you might make a video or use class time to explain each SLO, show how it is assessed, and illustrate how the student will know if they met the SLO.
- Make sure that groups of faculty and instructional staff within the discipline or area have consistent opportunities to review and reflect on the SLO data and equity-minded assessment practices.

4) Action Plans for Improvement

- Examine and reflect on our own intersectionality and biases and determine how we might infuse culturally responsive teaching practices into our work.
- Examine our curriculum to ensure it is culturally responsive to our student populations.
- Consider equity gaps that may appear in our SLO data and devise strategies to improve teaching and learning for specific student groups.
- Consider implementing an idea from the lists above into your action plan for improvement.
- Engage in professional development designed to foster equity-minded assessment, and then apply the suggested practices to your work with students.