

Developing Learning Outcomes in Student Affairs by Del Suggs

Student learning outcomes are truly the first step in intentional programming and assessment. Yogi Berra said it best: "If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up some where else." Student learning outcomes help you to know where you're going.

Whether you're embracing *Learning Reconsidered* or following the **CAS** standards (**Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education**), you'll find learning outcomes to be a valuable road map. It's a simple matter to develop them for your programs. Here are some basic guidelines.

First, remember your **ABC's**, and sometimes **D**. That stands for "**Audience**," "**Behavior**," "**Condition**," and "**Degree**." These are the four components of a learning outcome. In their simplest form, they go together like this: "**Condition-Audience-Behavior-Degree**."

Here's an example.

"After seeing the film 'Snow White' (*the condition*), the students (*audience*) will be able to name (*behavior*) five of the seven dwarfs (*degree*)."

Note that "**degree**" isn't always necessary, and a perfectly fine learning outcome could be: "**After seeing 'Snow White' (*the condition*), the students (*audience*) will be able to name the seven dwarfs (*behavior*)."**

Degree just gives you some wiggle room regarding the level of learning that you expect to occur.

That's pretty straightforward. Of course, nothing is truly easy, or at least we all seem to believe that. So keep these ideas in mind while you're developing your learning outcomes.

1. Start small. Don't try to develop learning outcomes for your entire schedule of events at once. Select one or two to begin with, preferably reoccurring traditional events. That way you can use those learning outcomes every year.

2. Make a list of what students should know or be able to do or demonstrate after a specific program. Turn that list into learning outcomes.

3. Don't over think. Learning outcomes can be basic, like the "Snow White" example.

4. Keep them assessable. Don't use behaviors like "will understand" or "will appreciate" because they may be too difficult to assess. Use behaviors like "will identify" or "can list" because that is a behavior you can assess simply.

5. Finally, relate your learning outcomes to the larger objectives and outcomes you are seeking. Whether it's *Learning Reconsidered's Seven Student Outcomes*, the six **FALDOs** of the **CAS Standards**, or your own campus' goals and objectives, make sure your outcomes are in line.

More information is available at my website:

www.DelSuggs.com

Click on the link labeled "**Ed Resources**" and scroll to the bottom of the page for additional Higher Ed material. I've even posted a copy of "**Learning Reconsidered**," along with a few more useful resources. Please help yourself to the information-- that's why it's there!

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