Improving Learning Outcome Statements: Using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy as a Base Map

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It’s All about the Students . . .
and ensuring that their participation in a high-impact learning experience in CCE will prepare them for careers as community engagement professionals or for success in graduate degree programs that emphasize publicly engaged scholarship.

The Challenge
We never anticipated that the 2016 CCE program learning outcome statements (PLOSs) would be so prominently in the online Syracuse University undergraduate program catalog starting in 2017. We also did not realize how difficult PLOSs would be to assess and change. After three assessment cycles, we have learned that wording matters. Furthermore, buy-in matters. PLOSs serve as advertising, inspiration for student performance, and a framework for cohesive instruction and course innovation.

Finding Better Words . . .
means having collective conversations about our program and courses. CCE’s engagement strategy draws on social science research techniques in textual analysis and concept mapping. It starts with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment’s required program curriculum map and enhances it with information about course learning objective statements (CLOSs). Do PLOSs and CLOSs “fit”? The strategy then uses a standard protocol for writing learning objectives/outcomes based on Iowa State University’s interactive model of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of Educational Goals (Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, n.d.). The Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy Model can also serve as a “base map” for better understanding how CCE instructors have emphasized specific knowledge, as well as cognitive process dimensions in their syllabi and course assignments. Our strategy, therefore, is to have PLOS conversations by interrogating a set of maps that reflect the language students see in their syllabi and assignment rubrics.

The Strategy:

On Our Way to Improved Learning Objective and Outcome Statements
This process helped us understand both our current PLOSs and CLOSs, their interrelationships, and their limitations. The Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy Model encourages even more faculty reflection and conversation about elemental cognitive and knowledge dimensions that are, or should be, built into the CCE learning experience.

MAP 1: Standard Curriculum Map

MAP 2: Enhanced Curriculum Map

MAP 3: PLOSs

MAP 4: CLOSs

MAP 5: AADs

MAP 6: Suggested Wording and How it Maps

MAP 5 correlates every Course Learning Objective Statement (CLO) listed in a CCE upper-division course syllabus with its PLOSs and presents an overview of how easy or difficult it is to fit. **MAP 6** correlates every PLOS with its CLOS and presents a framework for clearer map. This version of the learner map comes from the Iowa State University Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching website.

MAP 6: Suggested Wording and How it Maps

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References

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