

## **CAS Learning and Development Outcomes**

### **CAS Contextual Statement**

Learning outcomes continue to serve as a way to satisfy the increasing demands for accountability in higher education. These statements, meant to identify the aspects of learning experienced by students through engaging with programs, disciplines, or other learning opportunities, are typically paired with assessment techniques in order to effectively measure their magnitude (AAC&U & NLC, 2007; Bowman, 2013; CHEA, 2003). In a brief published by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), Bresciani (2011) states that assessment is the only way to demonstrate accountability for student learning.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) promotes standards to enhance opportunities for student learning and development from higher education programs and services. CAS supports the integration of learning and development outcomes and assessment tools to guide practice and create quality programs for student learning.

#### **The Role of Student Affairs**

The initial emergence of formal learning outcomes in higher education was centered on academic affairs and educational disciplines (AAC&U & NLC, 2007; Adelman, 2015). However, the philosophy on learning has since shifted from classroom-specific to a more holistic student learning and development approach, a view championed by the American Association of Colleges and University's (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Initiative. This initiative defines holistic learning as "liberal education," or "a comprehensive set of aims and outcomes that are essential for all students because they are important to all fields of endeavor" and encompasses curricular and co-curricular components (AAC&U & NLC, 2007, p. 4). This more holistic view is not new in student affairs; in fact, one of the earliest documents in the field argued that a primary task of higher education was to

...assist the student in developing to the limits of his [sic] potentialities and in making his contribution to the betterment of society...This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider the student as a whole...It puts emphasis, in brief, upon the development of the student as a person rather than upon his intellectual training alone.  
(American Council on Education, 1937/1994, p. 68)

With an increased focus on the whole student experience comes an increased responsibility for student affairs professionals to join faculty in developing outcomes and measuring student learning. While the contribution of student affairs to student learning and development has sometimes been, according to Schuh and Gansemer-Topf (2011), "overlooked and underutilized" (p. 3), the authors present three ways to showcase the contributions of student affairs to student learning:

1. Link the student affairs mission to the institutional mission, purpose, and strategic plan
2. Foster partnerships with faculty
3. Share existing expertise on student learning and development

By incorporating learning outcomes and assessment as a routine part of student affairs work, a more balanced understanding of the elements impacting student learning and development can be achieved.

## **CAS Standards and Outcome Domains**

CAS illustrates support for student affairs professionals' documentation of their contributions to student learning by incorporating the use of learning outcomes as a general standard for all functional areas. To comply with CAS standards, institutional programs and services must identify relevant and desirable learning from specific domains, assess that relevant and desirable learning, and articulate how their programs and services contribute to domains not specifically assessed.

CAS historically had listed desirable outcomes of programmatic efforts, but in the early editions of the book, they were simply examples such as intellectual growth, clarification of values, and achievement of personal goals. Then, in response to the increased focus on student outcomes, CAS in 2003 articulated sixteen domains of learning outcomes, with associated "examples of achievement indicators." Finally, after the publication of *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004), and *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006) and other outcomes related literature, CAS reviewed the learning outcomes it had promoted and decided an integration of multiple learning outcomes models would enhance the profession's efforts in promoting student learning and development. Consequently, CAS hosted a "think tank" involving writers of *Learning Reconsidered* and *Learning Reconsidered 2*, CAS directors, and prominent practitioners and faculty members in student affairs to make recommendations for a revised learning outcomes document.

The revised student learning and development outcomes model includes six broad categories (called domains): knowledge acquisition, construction, integration and application; cognitive complexity; intrapersonal development; interpersonal competence; humanitarianism and civic engagement; and practical competence.

This learning outcomes model further defines or clarifies each of the six domains by identifying more specific learning outcome dimensions within each domain. Offering dimensions of learning allows for a more focused assessment approach and more opportunities for alignment with institutional mission and priorities. For each of the dimensions, CAS also offers examples illustrating achievement of the student learning outcomes.

The CAS Board of Directors reviewed and approved the six domains, learning outcome dimensions, and examples of learning and development outcomes at its October 2008 meeting. The domains and learning outcome dimensions are embedded in each functional area standard within the 'Program' section, demonstrating that the identification, facilitation, and assessment of student outcomes must be an integral part of the work in every program and service.

## **Additional Resources**

While CAS promotes the incorporation of learning and development outcomes centered on these domains, CAS also recognizes the existence of several other related resources. Among these are AAC&U's LEAP (2011), *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004) and *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006), learning outcomes detailed by academic accrediting agencies (Drechsler Sharp, Komives, & Fincher, 2011), and the *Degree Qualifications Profile* (DQP) (Adelman, Ewell, Gaston, & Schneider, 2011),

which focuses on the knowledge and skills students should have upon degree completion. Each of these resources offers learning domains similar to those promoted by CAS, as detailed in the following chart:

CAS Domains	LEAP (AAC&U)	Learning Reconsidered	Disciplines	Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, &amp; application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Human Cultures &amp; the Physical &amp; Natural World</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge acquisition, integration, &amp; application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge bases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized Knowledge; Broad and Integrative Knowledge</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive Complexity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual &amp; Practical Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive complexity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual Skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrapersonal Development</li> <li>• Interpersonal Competence</li> <li>• Humanitarianism &amp; Civic Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal &amp; Social Responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal &amp; intrapersonal competence</li> <li>• Humanitarianism</li> <li>• Civic engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrapersonal attributes and competencies</li> <li>• Interpersonal relations with diverse others</li> <li>• Ethics</li> <li>• Management &amp; collaborative leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic and Global Learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical Competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative &amp; Applied Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical competence</li> <li>• Persistence &amp; academic achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional skills</li> <li>• Life-long learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied and Collaborative Learning</li> </ul>

Similarities in themes and values are easily recognized across these resources, with word choice being the primary difference. Adelman (2015) advocates for the adoption of a common language for learning outcomes, but no such agreement currently exists. Regardless of specific terminology, CAS advocates for incorporation of learning outcomes, generally, in efforts to enhance the work of student affairs and create quality programs for student learning and development across higher education.

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Integrating CAS and *Learning Reconsidered* Outcomes<sup>1</sup>

Student Outcome Domain <sup>2</sup>	Dimensions of Outcome Domain	Examples of Learning and Development Outcomes
<b>Knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application</b>	Understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines	Possesses knowledge of human cultures and the physical world; possesses knowledge of [a specific] one or more subjects
	Connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences	Uses multiple sources of information and their synthesis to solve problems; knows how to access diverse sources of information such as the internet, text observations, and data bases
	Constructing knowledge	Personalizes learning; makes meaning from text, instruction, and experience; uses experience and other sources of information to create new insights; generates new problem-solving approaches based on new insights; recognizes one's own capacity to create new understandings from learning activities and dialogue with others
	Relating knowledge to daily life	Seeks new information to solve problems; relates knowledge to major and career decisions; makes connections between classroom and out-of-classroom learning; articulates career choices based on assessment of interests, values, skills, and abilities; provides evidence of knowledge, skills, and accomplishments resulting from formal education, work experience, community service, and volunteer experiences, for example in resumes and portfolios
<b>Cognitive complexity</b>	Critical thinking	Identifies important problems, questions, and issues; analyzes, interprets, and makes judgments of the relevance and quality of information; assesses assumptions and considers alternative perspectives and solutions <sup>3</sup>
	Reflective thinking	Applies previously understood information, concepts, and experiences to a new situation or setting; rethinks previous assumptions
	Effective reasoning	Uses complex information from a variety of sources including personal experience and observation to form a decision or opinion; is open to new ideas and perspectives
	Creativity	Integrates mental, emotional, and creative processes for increased insight; formulates a new approach to a particular problem
<b>Intrapersonal development</b>	Realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect	Assesses, articulates, and acknowledges personal skills, abilities, and growth areas; uses self-knowledge to make decisions such as those related to career choices; articulates rationale for personal behavior; seeks and considers feedback from others; critiques and subsequently learns from past experiences; employs self-reflection to gain insight; functions without need for constant reassurance from others; balances needs of self with needs of others
	Identity development	Integrates multiple aspects of identity into a coherent whole; recognizes and exhibits interdependence in accordance with environmental, cultural, and personal values; identifies and commits to important aspects of self
	Commitment to ethics and integrity	Incorporates ethical reasoning into action; explores and articulates the values and principles involved in personal decision-making; acts in congruence with personal values and beliefs; exemplifies dependability, honesty, and trustworthiness; accepts personal accountability
	Spiritual awareness	Develops and articulates personal belief system; understands roles of spirituality in personal and group values and behaviors; critiques, compares, and contrasts various belief systems; explores issues of purpose, meaning, and faith
<b>Interpersonal competence</b>	Meaningful relationships	Establishes healthy, mutually beneficial relationships with others; treats others with respect; manages interpersonal conflicts effectively; demonstrates appropriately assertive behavior
	Interdependence	Seeks help from others when needed and offers assistance to others; shares a group or organizational goal

		and works with others to achieve it; learns from the contributions and involvement of others; accepts supervision and direction as needed
	Collaboration	Works cooperatively with others, including people different from self and/or with different points of view; seeks and values the involvement of others; listens to and considers others' points of view
	Effective leadership	Demonstrates skill in guiding and assisting a group, organization, or community in meeting its goals; identifies and understands the dynamics of a group; exhibits democratic principles as a leader or group member; communicates a vision, mission, or purpose that encourages commitment and action in others
<b>Humanitarianism and Civic Engagement</b>	Understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences	Understands one's own identity and culture; seeks involvement with people different from oneself; articulates the advantages and impact of a diverse society; identifies systematic barriers to equality and inclusiveness, then advocates and justifies means for dismantling them; in interactions with others, exhibits respect and preserves the dignity of others
	Global perspective	Understands and analyzes the interconnectedness of societies worldwide; demonstrates effective stewardship of human, economic, and environmental resources
	Social responsibility	Recognizes social systems and their influence on people; appropriately challenges the unfair, unjust, or uncivil behavior of other individuals or groups; participates in service/volunteer activities that are characterized by reciprocity; articulates the values and principles involved in personal decision-making; affirms and values the worth of individuals and communities
	Sense of civic responsibility	Demonstrates consideration of the welfare of others in decision-making; engages in critical reflection and principled dissent; understands and participates in relevant governance systems; educates and facilitates the civic engagement of others
<b>Practical competence</b>	Pursuing goals	Sets and pursues individual goals; articulates rationale for personal and educational goals and objectives; articulates and makes plans to achieve long-term goals and objectives; identifies and works to overcome obstacles that hamper goal achievement
	Communicating effectively	Conveys meaning in a way that others understand by writing and speaking coherently and effectively; writes and speaks after reflection; influences others through writing, speaking or artistic expression; effectively articulates abstract ideas; uses appropriate syntax and grammar; makes and evaluates presentations or performances; listens attentively to others and responds appropriately
	Technological competence	Demonstrates technological literacy and skills; demonstrates the ethical application of intellectual property and privacy; uses technology ethically and effectively to communicate, solve problems, and complete tasks; stays current with technological innovations
	Managing personal affairs	Exhibits self-reliant behaviors; manages time effectively; develops strategies for managing finances
	Managing career development	Takes steps to initiate a job search or seek advanced education; constructs a resume based on clear job objectives and with evidence of knowledge, skills, and abilities; recognizes the importance of transferrable skills
	Demonstrating professionalism	Accepts supervision and direction as needed; values the contributions of others; holds self accountable for obligations; shows initiative; assesses, critiques, and then improves the quality of one's work and one's work environment
	Maintaining health and wellness	Engages in behaviors and contributes to environments that promote health and reduce risk; articulates the relationship between health and wellness in accomplishing goals; exhibits behaviors that advance the health of communities
	Living a purposeful and satisfying life	Makes purposeful decisions regarding balance among education, work, and leisure time; acts in congruence with personal identity, ethical, spiritual, and moral values

<sup>1</sup> This document is an adaptation of *Learning Reconsidered* and the CAS Learning Outcomes

<sup>2</sup> Categories adapted from *Learning Reconsidered (2004)* and Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin Gyurmek (1994)

<sup>3</sup> These examples are adopted from the George Mason University *Critical Thinking Assessment Report (2006)*

## References

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