Developing Learning Outcomes

If you are new to writing student learning outcomes, the best way to start is to keep it simple: develop a list of perhaps three things your students should know (knowledge), be able to demonstrate or explain (skills and abilities) by the end of the course or program.

One suggestion to kick-start your effort is to write about your course or program by beginning each sentence with:

By the end of this course (or program), students will be able to...

The action words you select are important, and will make a difference in terms of the measurement process. Try to focus on actions that are observable when writing your outcomes. Bloom's Taxonomy might come in handy here, but even from that list, try to focus on the most descriptive action words that appeal to you. For example, stating that a student should be able to explain a concept might be more observable--and therefore measurable--than that a student should understand it (even though "understand" is on Bloom's list).

Many faculty want to instill beliefs and values in their students, and those are terrific goals. But very challenging to measure, at least in the short run in the community college setting. Avoiding words like "appreciate" in your outcome statements can help with this potential pitfall.

Useful Links:

- **Vanderbilt University's page on Bloom's Taxonomy (cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/)**
- **IUPUI's page on Assessment of Student Learning (ctl.iupui.edu/Resources/Assessing-Student-Learning)** -- contains a variety of related resources