

South Dakota State University  
Overview of Co-Curricular Assessment

As SDSU works toward a stronger culture of inquiry around student learning, a need exists to expand assessment efforts to include co-curricular activities and units. It is critical that the university community recognize and act on the understanding that the responsibility for student learning is shared across campus. Learning is not restricted to the classroom with many valued outcomes being met as a result of experiences outside the classroom.

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has recognized the importance of co-curricular activities and units in the student learning process. It is an expectation of HLC that co-curricular activities be of high quality and well staffed. Co-curricular activities are also now being recognized in academic program accreditation standards. Therefore, assessment of these activities and units is an important addition in order to determine effectiveness of such activities and units and for continuous quality improvement. Selected examples of HLC Criteria for Accreditation that address co-curricular areas are outlined below.

Criterion Three: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support.

3.C.6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

3.E.1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.

Criterion Four: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement.

4.B.2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

4.B.3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

4.B.4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practices, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

At South Dakota State University, co-curricular activities promote, encourage and support student learning and success. In partnership with academic curricula, such activities educate the whole student, preparing each student as a life-long learner, an engaged professional, and a citizen of the world. Co-curricular activities typically occur outside of the formal classroom.

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Several methods of assessing the effectiveness of co-curricular units and activities are

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Co-curricular domain 1. Knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application

Through participation in co-curricular activities, SDSU students expand their knowledge, not only in their own discipline but in a range of disciplines and experiences. Students

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## Co-curricular domain 2. Cognitive complexity

Throughout their education, SDSU students gain skills in critical, creative, and reflective thinking. Co-curricular activities support student development in cognitive complexity through problem solving, creativity, and exposure to multiple perspectives.

### Domain dimensions:

- Critical thinking
- Reflective thinking
- Effective reasoning
- Creativity

### Example student learning outcomes:

- Students will:
  - Analyze and integrate multiple sources of information when reaching a decision or forming an opinion
  - Recall and apply previously learned information and personal experiences in new situations
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### Co-curricular domain 3. Intrapersonal development

Through participation in co-curricular activities, students gain the ability to be aware of their emotions, establish identity, clarify personal values, act with integrity, and make personal choices that promote individual growth and development.

#### Domain dimensions:

- Realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect
- Identity development
- Commitment to ethics and integrity
- Spiritual awareness

#### Example student learning outcomes:

- Students will:
  - Demonstrate the use of strategies to manage emotions in a socially acceptable manner
  - Discover and embrace knowledge about themselves and integrate aspects of their identity into a cohesive whole
  - Articulate personal values and beliefs in developing a self-identity
  - Apply personal values to decision-making
  - Critique and learn from previous experiences
  - Act with honesty and integrity
  - Express personal values and beliefs with civility and respect

Suggested assessment methods: Reflective writings, self-assessment, surveys, interviews, focus groups

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Co-curricular domain 4. Interpersonal competence

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