Articulating Learning Outcomes in the VCCS
Which Courses and Why?

The VCCS Articulate Learning Outcomes (ALO) reengineering initiative is a faculty-led project that reflects the VCCS Achieve 2015 strategic plan to improve student learning, increase transfer rates and award attainment, and control costs. From Fall 2010 through Fall 2011, VCCS faculty and administrators have been provided updates and their input has been solicited at every peer conference; at meetings of the Chancellor’s Faculty Advisory Committee, the Council of Deans and Directors, the Academic and Student Affairs Council, the Advisory Council of Presidents, and the State Board for community Colleges; at the New Horizons conference, and through the rethink.vccs.edu website. In Fall 2011 the ALO Workgroup, chaired and majority staffed by faculty, used the agreed upon outcomes, deliverables, and process for ALO to develop a detailed How-To Guide for articulating learning outcomes. A survey of faculty in November 2012 assisted the workgroup’s deliberations and informed the selection of the first three courses to engage the ALO process beginning in Spring 2012.

Which courses?
PSY 200 will be the first course to engage the ALO process in Spring 2012; in Fall 2012 the ALO process for BIO 101 and ACC 211 will commence.

Why these courses?
Feedback from faculty and other VCCS stakeholders provided the foundation for the course selection criteria which centered on maximizing impact on student success. When reviewing the selection criteria, including student success rates, for PSY 200, BIO 101, and ACC 211, it is important to note the relationship of the criteria to student achievement, resources, and transfer and graduation rates.

- The student success rate for each of these three courses ranks in the bottom 15 percent of the 312 highest enrolled VCCS courses.
- Even modest improvements in student success rates will have a large impact on resources. For example, raising the 2010-11 BIO 101 success rate from 77.93 to the VCCS average of 84.27 for the top 312 enrolled courses would conserve over $750,000 in student tuition annually; this does not include the conservation of funds expended by federal, state, and local governments and organizations.
- The average success rate for each course masks significant variability among and within colleges. Simply increasing the student success rate in sections with rates below the average for all sections of a course will significantly affect student achievement and resource conservation.
- The VCCS Achieve 2015 strategic plan is not just about course completion; rather, course completion fits into the broader goals for successful student transfer and award attainment. PSY 200, BIO 101, and ACC 211 are courses that many students encounter early in their academic careers. Thus, improving student success and persistence in these early courses will positively affect transfer and graduation rates.
For more information on these topics, please refer to documents posted on the ALO page of the rethink.vccs.edu website, including the ALO Workgroup Final Report, the Survey Results Executive Summary, and the Getting Started: ALO Resources documents.

Table 1. Enrollment and Student Success Data for the First Three ALO Courses, 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Enrollment Rank*</th>
<th>Course Enrollment</th>
<th>Course Success Rate</th>
<th>Success Rate Rank*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSY 200</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10,966</td>
<td>77.14</td>
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<td>ACC 211</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11,550</td>
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<td>BIO 101</td>
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<td>77.93</td>
<td>268</td>
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</tbody>
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*Rank out of 312 courses.