

# Student Learning Outcomes

## Why The Controversy?

Presentation to the MPC Board of Trustees  
November 25, 2008

## First Things First

### What are SLOs?

**ACCJC:** Knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of collegiate experiences.

**MPC:** An SLO is a measurable or evaluable description of what students are expected to be able to “do” as they successfully complete a course. The word “do,” in this context, could mean “perform,” “paint,” “analyze,” “demonstrate,” “synthesize,” “use the scientific method,” or any number of verbs appropriate for a particular course.

**But there’s more.....**

## First Things First

### What is the SLO-Assessment Model?

Expectations of student learning.....

Assessment.....

Analysis.....

Dialog.....

Planning

- Shifts the focus to student learning
- Integrates the assessment results into all aspects of institutional planning and resource allocation

## Hoped-for Outcomes of this Presentation

Knowledge of SLO controversy will lead to....

Board members being able to...

- Act with a deeper insight into the pulse of the faculty
- Read and endorse the self-study with more historical insight

## SLOs: So Why the Controversy?

- Evaluation
- Workload
- Standardization/Academic Freedom
- Bureaucratic waste of time because
  - We already do it
  - Doesn't value the individuality of students
  - Doesn't value the complexity of teaching and learning
  - Can't possibly be of any value
  - It's a fad...Nobody cares
  - We should spend our time teaching

Not suggesting these objections are...

- prioritized
- valid
- Or that we agree.
- Only that they exist.

It is my job to present the pulse of the faculty

## SLO Controversy

### Evaluation

- From the ACCJC Standards, in the HR section:  
**“Faculty and others directly responsible for student progress toward achieving stated student learning outcomes have, as a component of their evaluation, effectiveness in producing those learning outcomes.”**
- Faculty evaluation is negotiable issue, not a directive of an accrediting agency.
- CTA parent investigating legal action.
- Could lead to low-level learning....Can you spell E-a-r-t-h?

## SLO Controversy

### Faculty Evaluation Criteria

Is a negotiable issue,  
not a directive of an  
accrediting agency.

Accrediting  
agencies should  
help define  
evaluation criteria

Diversity of faculty opinion

Who should establish faculty evaluation criteria?



Strongly Agree

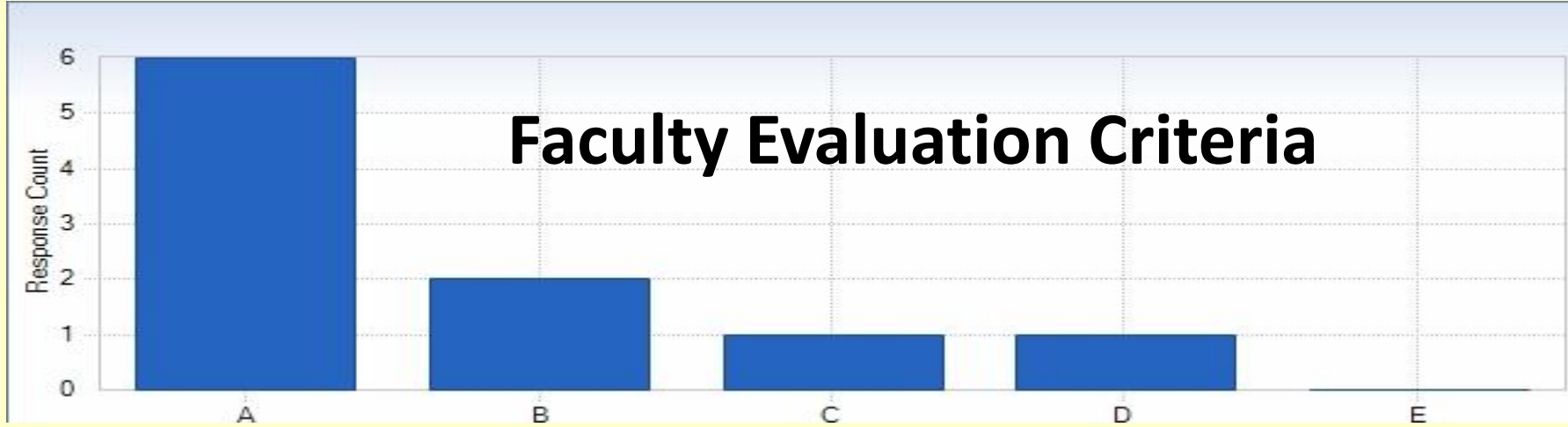
Somewhat Agree

Neutral

Somewhat Agree

Strongly Agree

## Faculty Evaluation Criteria



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## **SLO Controversy**

### **Workload**

Developing SLOs.....evaluating them.....analyzing the results..  
...talking about them.....planning what to do next....

**All take time.**

How much time will this take?

**A lot, to do it well.**

**It's why we're all so busy.**

## SLO Controversy

### Work Load

SLOs are...

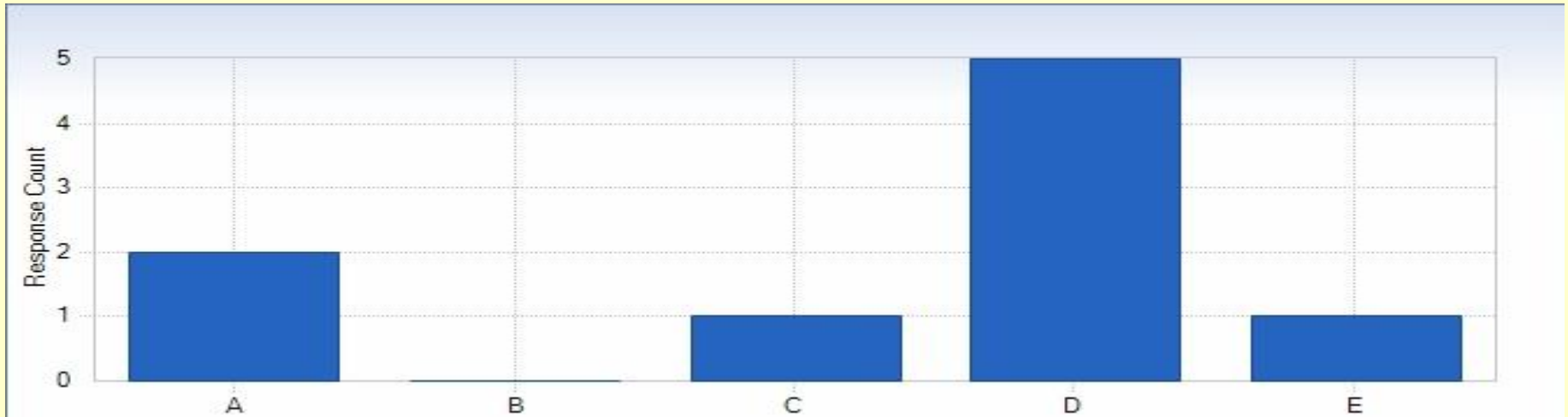
An un-negotiated addition to our workload.

An over-riding framework for what we already do as faculty.

Diversity of faculty opinion

Developing SLOs.....evaluating them.....analyzing the results..  
...talking about them.....planning what to do next....

## Work Load



An un-negotiated addition to our workload.

An over-riding framework for what we already do as faculty.

SLOs are...

## SLO Controversy

### Standardization/Academic Freedom

- Tension between Academic Freedom and Standardization
- Students' access to a diversity of views and opinions.
- This diversity is intellectual pluralism, the marketplace of ideas, the foundation of our Academic Freedom policy.

➤ Or are SLOs a framework for ensuring consistency between courses?

## SLO Controversy

### Standardization/Academic Freedom

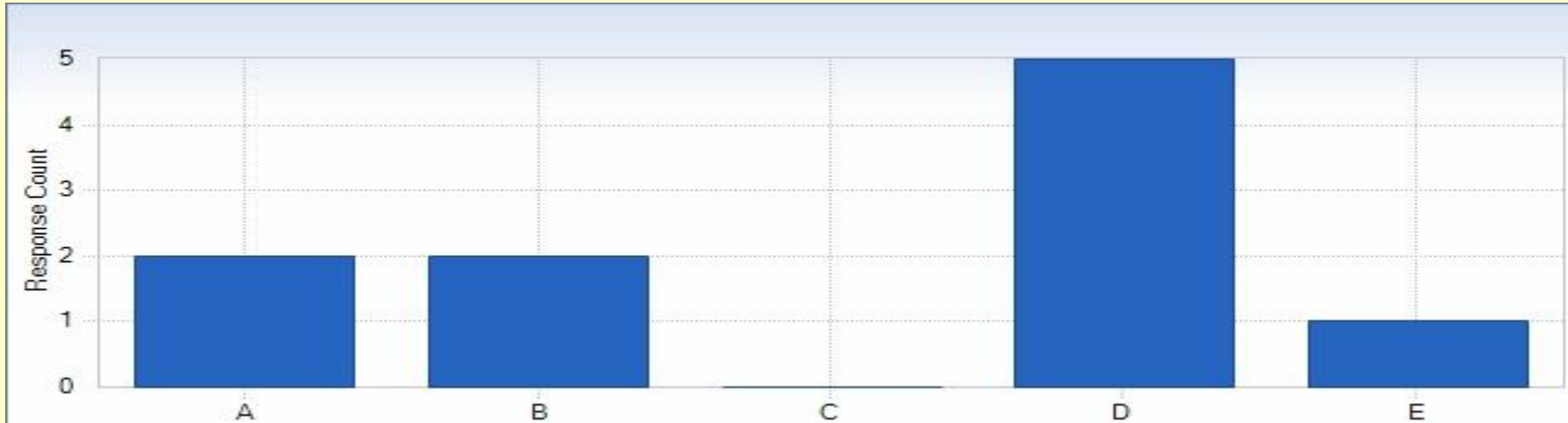
Yes. Intellectual Pluralism  
compromised, and  
standardized curriculum  
coming soon

No. Just another  
framework for course  
consistency and  
curriculum alignment.

Diversity of faculty opinion

Do SLOs compromise Academic Freedom?

## Standardization/Academic Freedom



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Do SLOs compromise Academic Freedom?

## SLO Controversy

### Standardization/Academic Freedom

This is  
No Child  
Left Behind

Means to defend  
against No Child  
Left Behind

Diversity of faculty opinion

What are SLOs again?

## SLO Controversy

### Standardization/Academic Freedom

This is  
No Child  
Left Behind  
  
CTA State  
Leadership

Means to defend  
against No Child  
Left Behind  
  
State Academic  
Senate

Diversity of faculty opinion

What are SLOs again?

## SLO Controversy

### Standardization/Academic Freedom

This is  
No Child  
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CTA State  
Leadership

Lower academic standards  
Can you spell E-A-R-T-H?

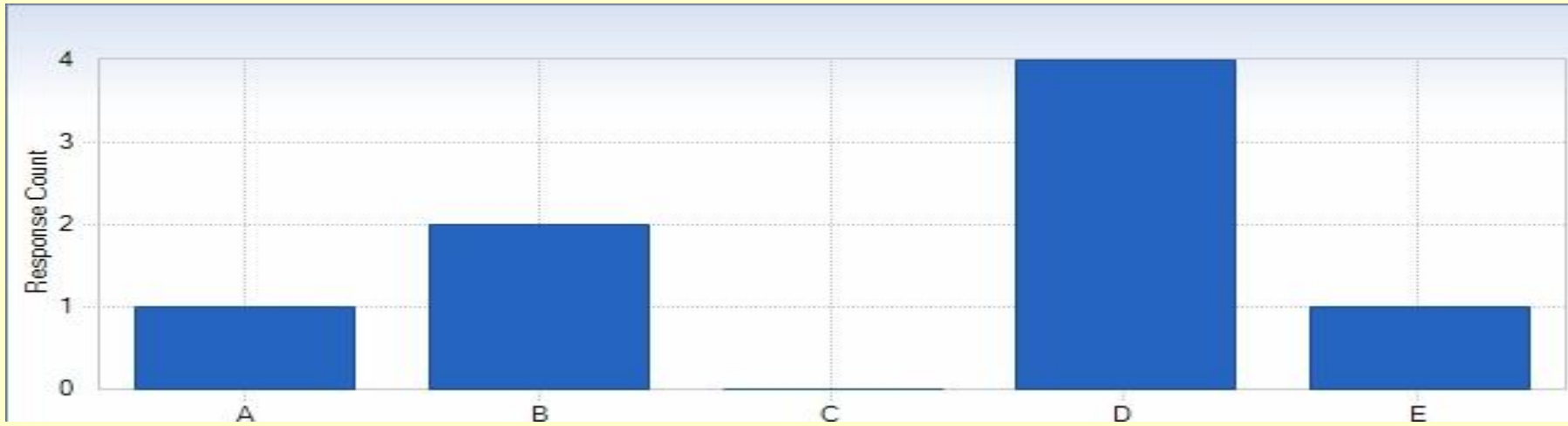
Means to defend  
against No Child  
Left Behind

State Academic  
Senate

Faculty's opportunity to  
set academic  
standards/expectations

What are SLOs again?

## Standardization/Academic Freedom



This is  
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Means to defend  
against No Child  
Left Behind

What are SLOs again?

## **SLO Controversy**

### **Bureaucratic Waste of Time**

**Doesn't value the complexity of topics and teaching.**

- SLOs become overly vague generalizations of what we expect
  - “Use the Scientific Method to investigate the natural world.”
  - In what context?
  - At what complexity?

**Doesn't value the individuality of students.**

- Students learn differently
- Have chaotic lives
- Respond/learn in many different ways to our courses
- Not always captured in pithy statements

## **SLO Controversy**

### **Bureaucratic Waste of Time**

**We already do this.**

- Course Outline of Record
  - State Mandated through Title 5
  - Objectives (=ACCJC SLOs)
  - Assessment Methods
- Informally with Colleagues

**Can't possibly be of any value**

**It's a fad.....Nobody cares about them**

**We should spend our time teaching**

- What should we eliminate, to complete these SLO tasks?

## SLO Controversy

### Bureaucratic Waste of Time

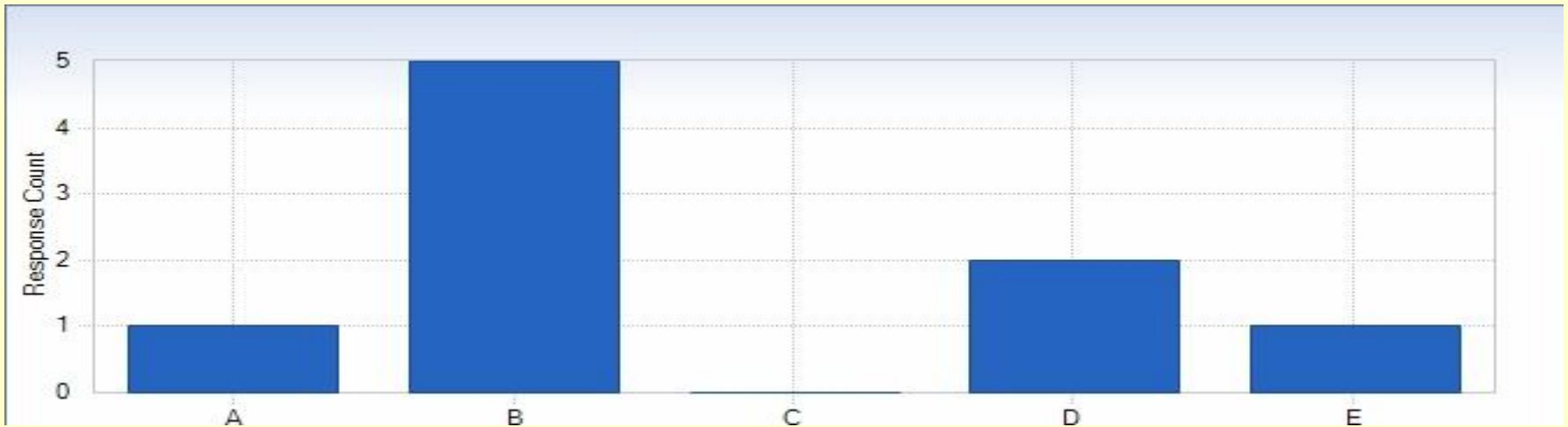
Extra work  
better directed  
elsewhere

We already  
do this

Diversity of faculty opinion

Why don't we want this again?

## Bureaucratic Waste of Time



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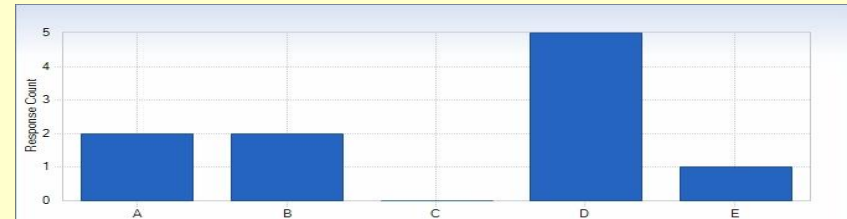
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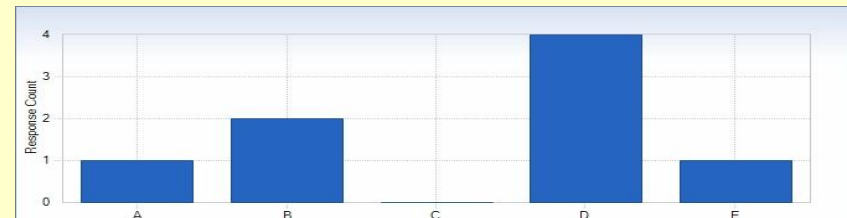
Yes

No

➤ Standardization/  
Academic Freedom  
Problems



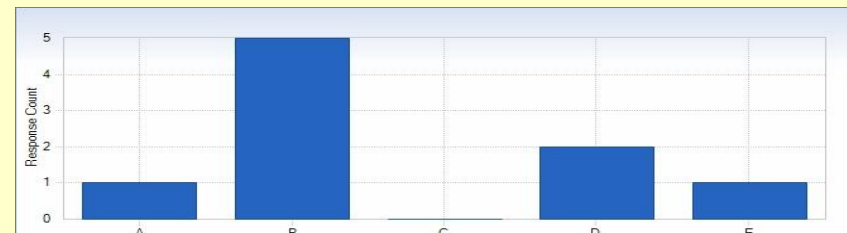
➤ No Child Left Behind



➤ Un-negotiated Higher  
Work Load



➤ Bureaucratic waste of time



## SLOs Controversy

- Standardization/Academic Freedom
- Evaluation
- Work Load
- Bureaucratic waste of time

Do ALL faculty worry about these things?

**YES!**

**But to varying degrees –  
--from hardly at all..... to a whole lot.**

**And we all believe in accreditation.**

## **SLO Controversy**

### **Why has there been such controversy?**

No clarity from ACCJC

No agreement on what SLOs represent or should be used for.

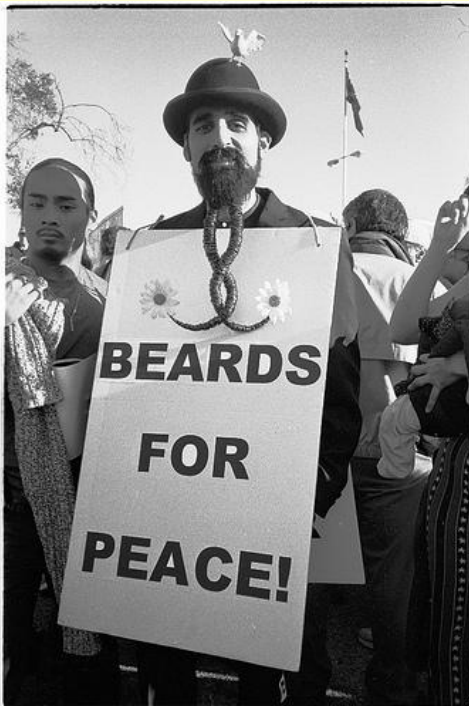
Lack of experienced leadership at MPC

## SLO Controversy

### No clarity from ACCJC

“General education has comprehensive learning outcomes .....including the following:

- A recognition of what it means to be an ethical human being and effective citizen....”



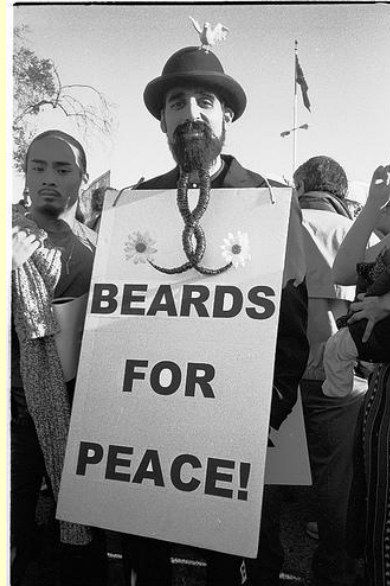
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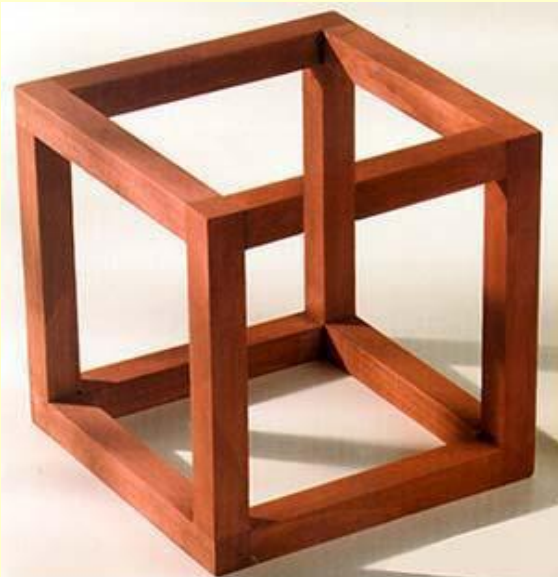
- “The willingness to assume civic, political, and social responsibilities locally, nationally, and globally.”



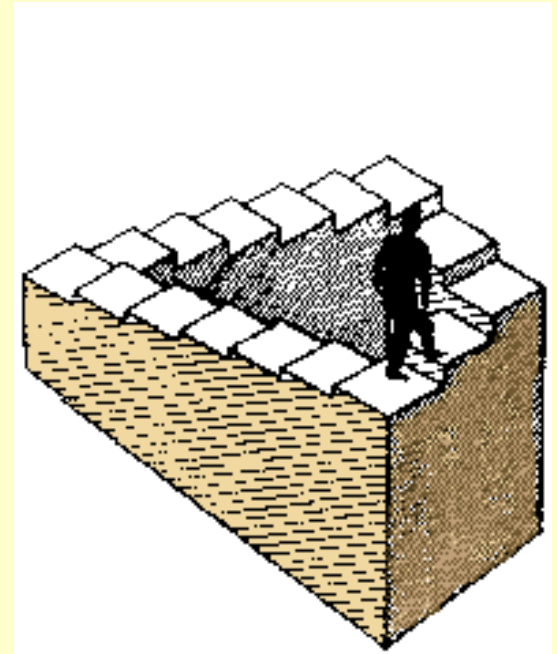
## SLO Controversy

### Lack of experienced leadership at MPC

SLOs are a multi-faceted and complicated



SLOs are new;  
no agreement on  
how they should be  
used



Lack of common definitions  
leads to incompatible visions  
and confusion

## So what has the Senate accomplished?

- “Articulating SLOs for MPC”, Nov 2007
- Faculty primacy in setting standards and assessing student learning
- Student learning assessed by classroom instructors, not a committee.
- The Form to record course-level assessement.
- Starting on General Education program SLOs (GEOs)

# What does my cloudy crystal ball say?

Our day-to-day activities:

Not much change.

How the quality of our institution is evaluated:

Has changed, a lot.

SLOs become a framework for ensuring and demonstrating quality.

**On behalf  
of the  
Academic  
Senate...**



**Thank  
You**