Greetings from the ASLO Chair

By Kim Anderson

The drumbeat of the Outcomes Assessment Process persists and I am using this forum to gently remind fellow faculty of the aggressive, but doable, goals and deadlines that are before us. The ASLO Subcommittee has worked diligently to establish a structure for faculty to utilize in this development process. Attention and action is always appreciated.

Course Assessment Plans

The current assessing Outcomes Assessment efforts are focused on the development and submission of course assessment plans. Please note that every active course, whether scheduled regularly or not, must have an assessment plan. The ASLO Subcommittee has addressed faculty concerns about infrequently offered courses, as well as unassessable SLOs. You can find specific statements to use in the Course SLO Assessment Plan Directions and Suggestions document on the SLO Course Level page at the Outcomes website. There too is the Course Assessment Plan Template that we are requesting faculty use. Please don’t delete the embedded prompts because of the automatic upload system being used to increase efficiency.

These plans should be emailed to slo@lbcc.edu with the course identified in the subject line. The college has a clerk who has been uploading all course assessment plans into TracDat (the database for outcomes and program review) and will be doing the same for program assessment plans. However, assessment plans must be emailed in quickly because of the limited budget for this position. The uploading of the plans is truly clerical work and taking advantage of this opportunity will pay dividends back to you in the near and long term.

The faculty has contributed to the substantial progress in meeting our May 14, 2010 goal. Very nearly 65% of course assessment plans have been submitted. It has been my experience that our professional community does meet such deadlines and this is anticipated and valued. The recent efforts of the following departments and programs should be acknowledged in this endeavor.

Assessment Tools

Once a department has addressed the course assessment plans final refinement of the assessment tool(s) should be undertaken if needed. Please visit the SLO Assessment page to view information on rubrics and portfolios. There is also an expansive sampling of rubrics for your reference and use. Common exam questions, if used, should be determined. Please note that if you have a course that is due for Course Review in 2010 then evidence for course assessment should start being collected this semester.

Program Assessment Plans

The progression from here is to address your department’s instructional programs. Every program needs to develop an assessment plan. Very similar to course assessment plan development, there are a variety of approaches suggested depending on the discipline. You may view this template, the directions, Program Review cycle, and suggestions on the SLO Program Level page or contact an ASLO Subcommittee member for guidance. If all of your program’s courses are submitted then go ahead and develop these plans and submit as you did for course plans. The May 14 benchmark is requested. Again, let the clerk do the uploading for you.

If you or your department needs help, please contact me at kanderson@lbcc.edu so that I can make time to visit. I can come to a department meeting, work with small groups, or one-on-one with any faculty member. Just let me know.
Service Unit Outcomes

By Eva Bagg
Associate Dean of Institutional Effectiveness

Commencement of a college-wide Outcomes Assessment Process will afford administrative and student support units the opportunity to revisit their Service Unit Outcomes (SUOs) and to obtain information about the processes and client satisfaction of services. This summer will be an opportune time to take some time to discuss results and actions that should be taken to refine and improve services. That means the collection of evidence, based on the plans should be on your radar.

Each unit is advised to identify a point person to encourage unit members responsible for the assessment of specific SUOs to follow-up on the assessment activities documented in their assessment plans. Organization and awareness of timelines will be helpful to schedule time to not only collect assessment data but also to discuss and develop summary reports as part of this process.

Since we are all new to this process it would be reasonable that refinements to the actual SUOs and assessment plans would be appropriate action steps. Everyone pulled together last summer to develop appropriate plans. With some time and experience take a fresh look at these plans to determine if they are “meaningful, measurable, and manageable”.

We are anticipating that there will be summer sessions to support and assist colleagues in this task. But also you might want to take a look at the newly updated SUO page on the Outcomes website. A specific SUO Assessment Plan Template for SUOs is now available as well as the Service Unit Outcomes (SUOs) and Assessment Overview document.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ASLO course AND program submission deadlines are FRIDAY, MAY 14TH!!
- ASLO Subcommittee Members are available to answer questions and assist with assessment course and program plans
- The ASLO Subcommittee wants to know what you DON'T know so we can address the confusion together!!
- Sample rubrics, course AND program assessment plans are available on the Outcomes Assessment (SLO & SUO) link
- Courses coming due for Course Review in 2010 should be collecting outcomes assessment evidence NOW! Questions? Contact an ASLO Subcommittee Member
- That just when you thought you were done ... PROGRAM assessment plans are ALSO due FRIDAY, MAY 14TH!!
- WE are all in this together!

SOME BASIC INFORMATION

It has come to our attention that some of us don’t know how to FIND some BASIC info ... so here goes!

To find SLO/SUO General Information:
Go to LBCC homepage; click on Faculty/Staff link; scroll down and find Outcomes Assessment (SLO & SUO) link; go to the gray column on the left side of the page and find—

- SLO information – you can find course and program level links. Within these you can find sample plans and rubrics and almost anything you need to help complete YOUR plans
- SUO information – click on the general information link to find just about anything you ever wanted to know about SUOs
- Resources & Links – click on this to access the newsletter and other important resources

Information is EVERYWHERE! If you still can’t find what you need ... ask an ASLO Subcommittee Member
The Way We Are

By Karen Kane, ASLO
Subcommittee Member and Newsletter Editor

Purpose = Motivation = Success. Like many of you, I have been struggling with motivation in regard to assessments/outcomes/course and program plans. Seriously....I have more pressing things to deal with. I want to be a good person and meet deadlines (usually serves as my motivation...being “good” and “meeting deadlines”) but I also want to feel inspired by the work I am doing. Admittedly, finding inspiration and anything resembling joy in this process has been lacking for me. I can be inspired when there is an accreditation team coming; I can be inspired when I think my efforts will help us retain our accreditation; I can even be inspired if I feel that my colleagues and I are making progress, but, other than that......this process just isn’t high on my list, or a big “whoop-de-do” in my life!

We are currently occupied with some important, life altering events. Budget, lay-offs/furloughs, changing schedules, elections, negotiations, bunnies, etc., are all far more important and talked about than the “faculty driven assessment process.” And let’s be honest, there is still quite the groundswell thinking that that this whole thing might be “illegal” (yeah..we need to get over that one) and that the ever elusive “they” is out there “doing this to us.” And so, I explored motivation for this process through the very powerful emotions of disgust and resolve. Could our disgust with “them” and the process, and our resolve to “show them” who we are be our purpose, our catalyst to once and for all get us more focused? I sat down to write this entire article on those two emotions.....our disgust with all that is happening around us will cause us to throw down the gauntlet and say “We’ve had it! It’s time for us to take our destiny and courses and programs in our hands and show our worth!!” Our resolve, backed by powerful disgust would then allow us to be inspired to see this process through. I sat down to write, but nothing flowed. This isn’t who we are. We can be disgusted and angry and even disillusioned---who wouldn’t be in these times? But, we are so much more than that. We have a far greater purpose.

Our purpose, in the midst of this chaos, is to continue to create the best educational experience for our students. Our purpose is to communicate with our students in such a way that they become more reflective on their experiences as learners, so they start to see the why and how of education as it translates into knowledge and skills. Jo Allen, PhD, writes, in the article Helping Students Understand Intended Learning Outcomes (Teaching and Learning, 1/21/10) “With intended learning outcomes stated for the students, a number of shifts in the student/faculty relationship can take place, paving the way for a better educational experience. She writes that with clearly stated, intended outcomes:

*Faculty can more clearly talk about the “why” of the curriculum.

- Students can see more clearly that their faculty have their best interests at heart.
- Once students understand the intended outcomes, they can more readily talk with their professors about their progress in a course, beyond just completing an assignment.

- Students can begin to see the faculty member as their coach or mentor on this journey.
- Students can better understand the breadth of expertise their faculty actually hold, beyond being good in whatever discipline they teach---they will begin to see faculty as experts in learning.

And the light bulb came on. I was reminded why. Why I chose this profession; why I walk on campus each day. The students. If this outcomes assessment process translates to more transparency, that leads to more student trust in the learning process, that leads to enhanced learning through deep, meaningful engagement, then, I am “all-in.” How can we call for more transparency in every area of this college, and not expect the same from ourselves? And what are we afraid of exactly? Look around. We are awesome at what we do. We should be proud to display our work. Our colleagues are amazingly talented, devoted professionals who produce phenomenal results. If we embrace our purpose, and work together, this process can help us rediscover the joy in what we do each day, and give our students a more secure footing in their educational lives, in spite of the massive uncertainty that surrounds us.

Purpose/Students = Motivation/Success/Trust = The Way We Are.
The Clock Is Ticking ...

Excerpts from:
The Clock is Ticking
November 6, 2009
By: David C. Paris

It's time for higher education to take ownership of the key questions of improving student learning. Are our students developing the skills and knowledge required to be productive, competent citizens? How do we know, and how can we show the public that we are being effective? How do we organize the higher education community to do so?

The best way to confront the critical challenges facing higher education is to push to demonstrate that we are assessing and improving student learning:

Stalled achievement: Achievement of postsecondary degrees in the United States has been level for at least a decade. Other nations are now surpassing us in completed degrees, especially for younger segments of the population. The Obama administration has set a very ambitious, laudable goal of leading the world by 2020 in percentage of the population with some form of postsecondary credentials and degrees.

Whatever level of degree or credential attainment we achieve, the point of a more educated population is lost if these credentials don't reflect real skills and knowledge appropriate for work and citizenship in the 21st century. And research indicates that supportive learning environments and persistence go hand in hand. Moreover, in counting postsecondary credentials as well as degrees we must avoid a new system of tracking that will not provide either adequate opportunity or what society needs. Credentials (and degrees) should signify the development of both technical and broader skills and knowledge.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) goals http://www.aacu.org/leap/goals.cfm are a good example of the kind of broad education we should aim for throughout the system. The quality of both credentials and degrees must be rooted in a view of education that creates, in Benjamin Barber's felicitous phrase, "an aristocracy of everyone."

K-16 Alignment: Low rates of retention and completion, particularly at community colleges, often reflect a lack of readiness for college, a failure to align precollege work with the demands of higher education. Recently, the governors of forty-eight states have agreed to set clear, common standards for high school completion with an eye to assuring readiness for postsecondary work.

A comparable effort is needed in the postsecondary sector to help define readiness in a way that is linked to appropriate postsecondary goals. K-12 standards for readiness will do little to enhance alignment without clearer assessments of what real postsecondary success looks like. The broad and vague consensus on goals for "our underachieving colleges" cited by former Harvard President Derek Bok needs articulation in ways that indicate to students at both the secondary and postsecondary levels what real achievement is.

We haven't done so yet. A recent survey by AAC&U indicated that while the vast majority of administrators claim that they and their faculty members could articulate their goals for undergraduate study, less than five percent believed that their students were aware of or understood them.

So what is to be done? The good news here is that we increasingly know what produces effective, quality undergraduate education. We increasingly know, too, how to measure it, and are taking steps to do so. The Voluntary System of Accountability is taking the first steps toward some common measures of critical thinking. A fairly long research tradition has established the "high impact practices" which produce good results.

Several decades of work on assessment has produced and is producing more and more useful measures of outcomes, from the standardized measures in the VSA to more complex measures under development in terms of portfolio assessment such as the AAC&U's VALUE project. The tools are increasingly available to measure quality and effectiveness and use these to improve our work and report on it to the public. We are also taking steps to organize the higher education community to form an "Alliance" to develop a collective, coherent, and systematic pursuit of quality in higher education.

The bad news is that what we know is not being put to use. Estimates of students experiencing high impact practices are below, in some cases well below, 50 percent. Despite increasing emphasis and attention on assessment and accountability, including in the accreditation process, many and perhaps most faculty members are unaware of these issues or simply reject serious consideration of them. Moreover, the autonomy within and among institutions that is so highly prized has not promoted - - indeed it has often stymied -- efforts to use what we know in a systematic, coordinated, and coherent way.

The whole is less than the sum of its parts. At the last reauthorization, Senator Lamar Alexander put the matter bluntly, "If colleges and universities do not accept more responsibility for assessment and accountability, the federal government will do it for them." Indeed, the government may be beginning to do so. There has been considerable federal pressure on the accreditation process and, again, requirements on reporting outcomes attached to stimulus money. The next reauthorization may witness increasing demands for regulation. The threat of regulation is a good reason for responding to the challenges of quality and learning, of assessment and accountability. A better reason is that failing to meet these challenges would keep us from serving our students and the nation as we should.

The clock is ticking.

David C. Paris is executive director of the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability, senior fellow at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, senior adviser at the Council of Independent Colleges, and professor of government at Hamilton College.

Assessments need to be:
Manageable
Measurable
Meaningful