As the story goes, in the late 1930’s, Dr. John L. Lounsbury, Long Beach Junior College's first Chief Administrator, insisted that a fireplace be built in in the newly constructed English lounge in the building we now label with the letter “P.” His explanation for this insistence was “You cannot properly study English literature unless done in front of a fire.” Dr. Lounsbury felt that the sound of the crackling fire and the light and warmth of the flame were catalysts to encourage discussion and trust. During the early years of our college, in addition to literature classes, the Faculty Council (which later became the Academic Senate) would light the fire, and hold discussions, gatherings, receptions and Faculty Honors Lectures. It was in front of that fireplace that students, faculty and administrators gathered to determine the direction and purpose of the evolving junior college.

Unfortunately, those times of bow-tied academicians gathered around the fire to debate teaching techniques, issues of curricula, current events, college direction and purpose, are not a part of who we are anymore. As surely as the fireplace in the “P” building is now a non-working facade, many people feel that sadly, gone too are the days of open discourse, sharing of ideas, trust, and sense of collegiate community. Fortunately, our faculty leadership realized this and determined to facilitate change; to facilitate open dialogue regarding issues of importance to all of us in regard to the ASLO process. In November, our Academic Senate President, Curriculum Chair, Faculty Professional Development Chair, and ASLO Sub-Committee Chair, convened two separate meetings, one at each campus, providing an opportunity for faculty to discuss challenges, obstacles, issues and successes with the ASLO process. Minus the fireplace, heavy leather books and bow ties, those present resembled a faculty of old; a faculty that openly shared thoughts and ideas across disciplines, a faculty that expressed apprehension, laughter, dedication and triumph. Out of the gatherings came several over-arching themes in regard to the outcome and assessment process. (For those of you who were unable to attend, an open forum on the internet is available for your comments and discourse: http://forums.lbcc.edu/weforumAuto/index.asp?course=Academic_SenateWE&module=m1)

The over-arching themes were:

**Who is making us do this?** I kind of thought we had answered this many times over, but it seems to be a lingering theme and question. So, let’s get this clear...... in 2002 Accreditation Standards were changed for Institutional Effectiveness and written to include Program Review, Planning and Student Learning Outcomes. The answer to this could include discussion of accountability and responsibility, but suffice it to say, this process is a part of accreditation. At LBCC, we did not start systematically in 2002. We basically did a lot of talking and developed a voluntary process. Within the last three years, we have as a faculty, out of necessity, made a
huge push to move forward in an attempt to catch up and establish a systematic process. It seems like we have put in a lot of work the last few years—or as some feel, had the process “shoved down our throats” the last few years—and in a way we have, as we try to gain ground to make up for lost time.

I hear conflicting information regarding faculty evaluation and SLOs. This topic seems to be the big “elephant in the room” as we attempt to not cross academic and professional matters with union issues. Let’s just be clear that there is language that is a bit ambiguous and is being cleared up in negotiations. This doesn’t mean that there is an open question of “Should we work this ASLO process?” but rather “How do we get this done in a meaningful way?” And discussion for another time might include the question of “When did evaluation become a negative process?” When did evaluation change from a time to take a good look at how and why we do what we do, to a process that connotes great fear and anger? Something as professionals we really need to explore.

This is a lot of work and has caused us to look at ourselves differently. There is no question that this process involves a lot of work. All faculty need to be engaged to make the work meaningful and manageable. The problem lies in departments and areas where only SOME of the faculty have embraced the process. Change is difficult. Because we were, as a group, initially resistant to change, we are now on a steep learning curve towards accomplishment. In departments and programs where faculty have diligently managed the ASLO process and are now evaluating assessment results, the consensus was that they are noticing a real difference in the way the learner engages with the instructor and vice versa. As the faculty in these areas openly talk about results, they are realizing new ways of delivering information, talking about different teaching methodologies and modalities, sharing ideas, and as many of them said….having FUN! The process becomes more meaningful as they invest time and energy together, and they see students become more “dialed in” to the courses. And, of course, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the brave souls who shared their areas were having problems discussing the ASLO process civilly. If you are in a department or program that is experiencing the “dark side” of this process, SLO Officers are available to work across disciplines. Perhaps someone unfamiliar with the “family squabbles” inevitable in departmental relationships can help facilitate appropriate discussion to move the area forward positively. We are in this together. And we are learning to look at what we do, and who we are as we dis-pense knowledge, in a whole new way. Content expertise and teaching expertise need to merge meaningfully for us to accomplish student learning in a successful way.

Will we reach proficiency by 2012? The best and only answer to this is, as a group we are and MUST continue to move diligently forward toward proficiency. As a reminder, proficiency level on the ACCJC rubric states:

- Student learning outcomes and authentic assessment are in place for courses, programs and degrees
- Results of assessment are being used for improvement and further alignment of institution-wide practices
- There is widespread institutional dialogue about the results
- Decision-making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward improving student learning
- Appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned
- Comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed on a regular basis
- Course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes
- Students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled

We have a long way to go on this never ending outcome assessment journey. I’m sure that the LBJC faculty who bravely shaped our community college, never imagined, when they gathered around that English Building fireplace in the 1930’s and 40’s, the LBCC we know today. Their willingness to share ideas and thoughts, to imagine and dream, to come together as a group, one group, for the good of the student, and the future student—most unimaginable to them, has given us a path and road map to emulate. We must gather together and get down to the business of discussing our outcome and assessment results in a real, honest, open and trusting manner. Who has the match? Let’s Light the Fire.

Special thanks to Janice Tomson, Charlotte Joseph, Lynn Shaw and Kim Anderson for their efforts to provide open forums for faculty discussion and learning.
Kudos
Renewed efforts have been made to address missing assessment plans and those for newly approved curriculum. The subcommittee acknowledges the efforts of the Art, Allied Health, Associate Degree Nursing, English, Interior Design, and Learning and Academic Resources Departments who have completed all of their assessment plans.

Last academic year (2010-11) was the first time that course assessment plan results and actions were due. We are pleased to report that an average of 70% of those courses reported out into TracDat. This is a tremendous first step in making ASLO an ongoing process at the college. A special congratulations goes to those faculty and SLO Officers who worked collaboratively with this inaugural effort.

Progress
The ASLO Subcommittee was invited and did contribute to the college's accreditation Midterm Report. Noting the robust development of course and program assessment plans accomplished by faculty, the road to proficiency by fall 2012 still mandates attention and effort with the ongoing implementation of these plans.

October 2011 saw the first submission of Program Reviews under the new format. Questions 4 and 6 specifically request the analysis and evaluation of ASLO information. One-third of the programs were scheduled to submit their Program Reviews and those are now obtaining feedback from the Program Plan/Program Review Subcommittee.

Planning
Courses due this year (2011-12) for course review are also due to report out ASLO results and actions. It is suggested that results be collected through the end of this fall semester and faculty analysis of the evidence occur in early spring 2012, perhaps on a Flex Day, so the SLO Officer can upload the results and actions into TracDat by the end of the spring 2012 term.

Programs due next year (2012-13) for program review should be following their program assessment plans and be collecting evidence now. In early spring 2012 these results should be analyzed and any actions taken identified so the SLO Officer can upload this information into TracDat by the end of the spring 2012 term. Course and program assessment evidence is necessary to complete program reviews.

SLO Officers
Your area has a SLO Officer assigned to assist you with the ASLO process. Beyond contributing to this process as all faculty do, these individuals provide organization, planning, suggestions, support, communications, and information uploading for participating colleagues. The SLO Officers have been meeting in their school teams recently. Information about reporting of course and program results/actions, assessment plans, and this year’s curriculum mapping activity were all discussed. The SLO Officers have also been updated about your area’s current status so please contact and collaborate with your area’s SLO Officer for any needed guidance and support with this process and any planning needs.

Institution Level Assessment
General Education Outcomes (GEOs) are statements that define the knowledge, skills, and perspectives acquired by students who satisfy the College’s general education requirements. The GEOs arise from the most general and universal educational goals of the institution. Therefore, they are an indication of the College’s collective educational values as reflected in the mission statement. Regardless of major, all students who complete an instructional program’s requirements should share common educational experiences, as they attain those attributes found in an educated person. Consequently, the assessment of GEOs will provide faculty an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness and relevance of the general education curriculum for our students.

This GEO assessment protocol consists of a four-phase process with contributions from interdisciplinary faculty work groups essential in each.

1. Development of rubric, identification of student artifacts, and verification of sampling.
2. Collection of student artifacts from sampled course sections.
3. Assessment of student artifacts by interdisciplinary faculty participants.

Further details as to this assessment protocol and the timeline can be found on the Outcomes Assessment website: http://outcomes.lbcc.edu/InstitutionLevel.cfm

Current Status:
The ASLO Subcommittee has begun the coordination of General Education Outcomes (GEOs) assessment. Cross-disciplinary faculty work groups for the Communication and Civic Engagement GEOs met this summer to develop GEO assessment rubrics, student artifact identification, and course sampling verification.

Currently the writing and reading interdisciplinary work groups have finalized their course.

(Continued on next page)
sampling frameworks that allow for the collection of student artifacts this semester. Student work will be collected from multiple course sections from multiple departments for each GEO’s component. Faculty volunteers from these departments will develop assessment work groups. These faculty assessment groups will convene in spring 2012 to assess the student work and discuss the results with recommendations for the general education curriculum in these areas.

The primary departments that contribute to the Oral Communication subcomponent of the Communication GEO have determined that an alternative assessment model is necessary. Representatives from these departments and the ASLO Subcommittee will be revisiting this area and will ascertain assessment evidence from their course and program SLO assessments and achievement data from the Educational Master Plan to extrapolate these results to this subcomponent of our general education curriculum.

The Civic Engagement GEO consists of two subcomponents: Democracy and Cultural Sensitivity/Diversity. The recent work of these two inter-disciplinary groups has set the stage for student artifact collection in spring 2012. This will begin the assessment process for the 2012-13 academic year.

There will be upcoming opportunities for faculty, both full-time and adjunct, to participate in this GEO assessment project. Department heads of disciplines contributing to these GEOS will be contacted in the future with the details and a request to solicit representatives from the department faculty for this ongoing collaborative assessment of our general education curriculum. If you are interested please let your department head or an ASLO Subcommittee member know.

If you treat SLO assessments merely as a necessary evil, you are missing out on a valuable opportunity. SLO assessment is a growing reality in higher education. But set your expectations too low, and you’ll miss valuable opportunities to make improvements in student learning, to celebrate successes, to share best practices, and to demonstrate accountability. You don’t want your students to slide by doing the bare minimum that is required. You shouldn’t tolerate that of your assessments, either. Get the most out of this process through the use of smart, efficient, and effective SLO assessments. And once SLO assessments have begun you can still make the changes necessary to keep these assessment tasks and the results relevant to your program, your students, and your outcomes. Getting more usable data and evidence doesn’t always require doing more assessments. It usually requires doing more with the assessments you already use.

The ASLO Subcommittee has created a website just for you. There you will have access to information to:
- Differentiate between SLOs and learning objectives;
- Simplify assessment tools and strategies;
- Determine the true costs and benefits of assessment activities;
- Sync assessments at various levels to maximize efficiency and minimize the intrusion;
- Review and improve how assessments are used;
- Analyze assessment results and actions needed to improve student learning;
- Identify audiences for assessment results;
- Identify tools to keep the outcomes assessment process sustainable.

SLO assessment can help leverage unique insights, foster collaboration, and build momentum for relevant change. The Outcomes Assessment website provides step-by-step instructions for generating productive discussions and thoughtful reflection. You also have access to guidelines for continuing the conversation with colleagues both in and out of your discipline, implementing strategies discussed, and creating a feedback loop for sharing best practices and challenges, and obtaining results-oriented ideas you can immediately implement within your program.

The ongoing nature of outcomes assessment affords faculty the opportunity to review your assessment efforts, to identify what has worked, what hasn’t, and why. You’ll also learn what you can do to get better results next time. Outcomes Assessment, as part of the Program Review process, can also contribute to making better budgeting decisions, refine goals and strategic operations, and demonstrate accountability.

Student Learning Outcomes assessments can do all that and more. Really, they can. Check out the website: http://outcomes.lbcc.edu/
Scantron Site Project for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Introduction
Approximately 33% of the course student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the current curriculum have identified a version of examination and/or quiz as the assessment task. Whether it is an entire exam/quiz, selected embedded questions, or a final examination, these assessment methods could benefit from electronic data collection for the measurement of student responses. These assessment processes may also use a Scantron. New Scantron software (called ParScore), sensitive to the burgeoning needs of outcomes assessment in education, has been developed to manage the results of such exams and the more detailed disaggregation of these results to provide meaningful analysis (e.g. class response, item analysis, field sorting, mastery reporting, score distribution, subtest summary, class report, etc.). This could facilitate the outcomes assessment process for a significant number of the college's courses across a variety of disciplines.

The ASLO Subcommittee, upon review of the course assessment plan information, has determined that faculty could benefit from this new software. Assessments completed on a Scantron bubble form and disaggregated through ParScore could provide meaningful data to faculty for deeper analysis. The ASLO Subcommittee in coordination with the Title 5 Oversight Committee and in consultation with the Associate Vice President of Instructional and Information Technology Services (IITS) has procured Scantron machines and the ParScore software to assist with these SLO assessment tasks.

Site Locations
Nine slightly used machines have been purchased for the college. Each school with such an outcomes assessment need will eventually receive one of these machines and access to the ParScore software. Consequently, a primary workstation configuration will be needed in each school. This will require the identification of a central location that has easy faculty access, space for the Scantron machine and a computer (provided by IITS), as well as access to the campus network.

There will be a phased rollout of this project and initial implementation will be limited to four locations in order to gain a best use understanding of its functionalities. Data suggests that the Schools of Creative Arts, Trades and Industrial Technologies, Health and Science, and Business and Social Science would have a current primary need. Eventually each school will receive one workstation.

Implementation Coordination
Training: The Scantron Company will provide a one-day, on-site, “Train the Trainer” training covering the operation and assessment scope of this product. Personnel from Instructional and Information Technology Services, Institutional Effectiveness, the ASLO Subcommittee, SLO Officers, and selected faculty and staff from those areas with high scanner assessment usage will be invited to participate. Participants will attend identified modules of this training that align with their responsibilities. Attendance for the entire day will not be necessary. Faculty participants will receive Flex credit for up to six (6) hours of training.

Score sheets: This particular scanner system requires specific ParScore test forms. The configuration of the forms available provide for a variety sizes, number of questions, and types of responses. Auxiliary Services has been consulted and will support this requirement. They have assured us that ParScore forms are comparable in price to existing forms students use. It has been determined that ParScore form F-289-PAR-L is equivalent to the traditional Scantron form 882 while ParScore Form F-14507-PAR-L is similar to Scantron form 815. These are the two most popular forms utilized at the college. These ParScore forms will now be available in the Bookstore. If your testing situation requires another type of form configuration please contact the Merchandise Manager. Students will need to be directed to the purchase of the needed ParScore test form if this scoring system is to be used. The ParScore forms can be flagged in the Bookstore upon request for a particular class or situation. Considering that the emphasis of this scoring system is for outcomes assessment these specialized scoring sheets might only be needed for SLO assessment tasks and not for every test or quiz in a course.

Communication: It is recommended that programs that rely on Scantron-type tests take full advantage of this new SLO assessment support system. Communication to faculty and classified personnel within instructional departments about the scope, advantages, and purpose of this project is requested. Leadership groups should inform colleagues about the location, function, and availability of the new workstations for assessment purposes prior to their becoming operational. Any general comments or questions should be directed to the ASLO Subcommittee.
Economists have been much maligned recently for our failure to agree on how to get the economy moving again. Yes, we may disagree on short-term prescriptions, but we speak in a clear, unified voice about at least one issue: Innovation is essential to long-term prosperity. We also agree that research universities are key players in inventing and developing the creative ideas that fuel the economy’s long-term health.

Yet universities neglect an important source of potential innovation: the cross-fertilization of ideas that comes from productive conversations across disciplines. Although people outside of universities seem to think that faculty members talk to one another across their fields of study (after all, they work in the same place, don’t they?), in fact, substantive conversations are infrequent. Particularly at large research universities, scholars and researchers in different disciplines don’t often interact, and when they do—for example, on university committees—they rarely say much about their work.

Many university administrators would like to remedy this situation. Over the past 10 years, numerous research universities’ strategic plans have called for increased interdisciplinary work. Nonetheless, there is little evidence that it is happening.

The three common explanations for a lack of faculty interest in interdisciplinary work are that the academic reward system militates against it (hiring, promotion, salary increases, and most prizes are controlled by single disciplines, not by multiple disciplines), that there is insufficient funding for it, and that evaluating it is fraught with conflict. These are significant barriers.

However, while doing research for my new book, Interdisciplinary Conversations: Challenging Habits of Thought, I found an even more fundamental barrier to interdisciplinary work: Talking across disciplines is as difficult as talking to someone from another culture. Differences in language are the least of the problems; translations may be tedious and not entirely accurate, but they are relatively easy to accomplish. What is much more difficult is coming to understand and accept the way colleagues from different disciplines think— their assumptions and their methods of discerning, evaluating, and reporting “truth”—their disciplinary cultures and habits of mind.

The book is based on interviews with a sample of faculty members who participated in six seminars at three private research universities in the United States. The purpose of the seminars was to encourage dialogue across disciplines, with the hope that participants would eventually create new interdisciplinary courses and research proposals. Although many people I interviewed reported positive personal outcomes (new intellectual insights and new relationships with scholars in other fields), several of the conversations between colleagues were stormy, and none resulted in interdisciplinary collaboration. Several participants’ observations provide a sobering prospect for those interested in doing, encouraging, and paying for interdisciplinary work.

In one of the seminars, an economist was blunt and forthright, in typical economist style, while criticizing a mathematician’s presentation on game theory. But a participant from religious studies chastised him, saying she found his comments disparaging and offensive. The economist responded by leaving the room, and he never rejoined the group. Whatever intellectual insights might have been gained from an interdisciplinary discussion were lost.

In another seminar, several participants said its humanities-oriented approach, with an emphasis on critique of texts, was uncomfortable. A drama professor found the critical approach in grave conflict with her own training, which taught her to “try on” ideas, believe them, empathize with them. In a similar vein, a professor of studio art said that when it was her turn to present, she was shoehorned into a humanities format. She was asked to provide readings in advance and then show slides of her work. “I hate showing slides,” she said. “Things go by—people don’t even notice what’s in the paintings. They can’t even see them.”

She requested that seminar participants come to her studio and “read” her paintings with her. But her colleagues said there wouldn’t be time to walk all the way across campus to her studio. To them, showing slides seemed more efficient, and it was certainly more familiar. After all, don’t art historians regularly show slides?

Finally, a mathematician in one seminar said he never spoke when the group met because its pace was too fast
for him. He was trained to think deeply about an idea, but in the interdisciplinary seminar, once he had finished thinking deeply, the group was on to some other idea. It never slowed down enough to benefit from his thoughts.

Two lessons stand out. First, engaging in productive interdisciplinary dialogue is neither easy nor intuitive. When scholars from different disciplines come together to learn from one another, they need help recognizing their own habits of mind and disciplinary cultures, and they need assistance in learning to listen with an open mind to their colleagues’ ideas. Academics have ample training in doubting new ideas; indeed, often the hallmark of a scholar is insistent doubting, questioning, and criticizing. But to be successful at interdisciplinary dialogue, we need to learn new skills. We must become adept at postponing doubt, concentrating instead on patiently seeking to understand and “try on” others’ ideas and methodologies and experience their cultures.

Second, successful interdisciplinary conversation requires strong leadership. Facilitating conversation among faculty from multiple disciplines is a tough job, requiring not only awareness of one’s own disciplinary bias, but also the ability to manage power dynamics among highly successful and often egotistic participants. Expert leaders expect power conflicts and know how to work through them to create trust. They excel at finding the right balance between productive and destructive conflict. They also structure conversations tightly, and they specifically encourage participants to explore syntheses of divergent views, for it is precisely through such exploration that creative initiatives arise.

No doubt, the debate about barriers to interdisciplinarity is highly polarized these days. Mark C. Taylor, a Columbia University religion professor, has written that disciplinary departments fatally impede interdisciplinary communication. His solution? Abolish departments. Sharply countering that view, the University of Pennsylvania sociologist Jerry Jacobs argues that making sure ideas flow across disciplinary lines requires little more encouragement than that which already exists.

My work suggests that neither of these views is correct. We should not abolish departments and the disciplinary training they provide. Innovative research and scholarship require immersion in the details of a disciplinary dialogue and, despite the fact that they are often fragmented into subdisciplines, departments help scholars remain current in their fields. But universities need to provide many more opportunities, incentives, and rewards for faculty members to talk with one another productively across disciplines, providing training for leaders of such conversations and creating a culture where participants interact with respect and seek mutual understanding.

The problems that beset us in the 21st century do not abide by disciplinary boundaries. Creating more sustainable sources of energy, building peaceful relationships with other nations in a badly fractured global economic system, designing humane rules for containing health-care costs—all require innovation by experts who collaborate across disciplines. Academics, as well as those outside academe, should invest in the process of fostering interdisciplinary conversations. Our long-term national well-being is at stake.

Myra H. Strober is emerita professor of education and of economics at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University. Her new book, Interdisciplinary Conversations: Challenging Habits of Thought, was published in the fall by Stanford University Press.

You can access more information about SUOs and Student Support Services and administrative unit plans and assessment results at http://www.lbcc.edu/ProgramReview/SSAdmin.cfm

The LBCC outcomes and assessment website contains more information than you will ever need to be successful! http://outcomes.lbcc.edu

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IMPORTANT DATES

End of Fall 2011

• ASLO collection of data completed for courses due 2011-12 and programs due 2012-13

Spring 2012

• Faculty discuss, analyze and document assessment results for current course review (2011-12) and begin preparation of program review draft (2012-13)

• Curriculum mapping development, discussions, analysis

• Finalization of course outline review due April 30, 2012

• SLO assessment results and actions (designated courses and programs) uploaded to TracDat by SLO Officer by May 2012

• Curriculum mapping information uploaded to TracDat by SLO Officer by May 2012

• Program Review completed by September Flex Day 2012

• Finalized Program Review (2012-13) uploaded into TracDat by October 1, 2012