For the past three years, we have worked earnestly toward the development and implementation of the outcomes assessment process. It has been an incredible journey with quite inauspicious beginnings. From feeling like “they” imposed what must be an “administration-centered”, uninspired, anxiety-inducing exercise, to remembering that curricular matters are faculty purview and therefore this faculty driven process was “ours” and should be “worked” to yield meaningful results, has taken time, patience and a willingness to embrace change.

It’s been a bumpy road. Our reaction to implementation by department and program has been as predictably unique as the individuals housed in each area. But, for the many of us who chose to take the journey, overall consensus is that this collegial, collaborative process has been creative, clarifying, eye-opening, full of “aha moments,” and most unexpectedly……fun.

And so, instead of the requisite slide show and pictures that accompany the end of the year’s “trip” (and really, there is no end….we’re signed on for one of those never-ending journeys!) we instead highlight some of what we have learned thus far.

1. Think big: Make the assessment process meaningful. Thinking small or simply trying to just “get an assessment on paper” yields no lasting benefits. As we stopped treating assessments like a chore, the ability to see the potential for outcomes assessment to further the department/program and college goals became evident. Curriculum mapping further highlights the integration of all we do from classroom to program to institution. If we work this process meaningfully, the ability and potential for learning more about whom we are what we do and why we do it, are available to us.

2. Recognize the limits of assessment—but recognize the potential range of assessment methods, as well. While we know and have learned that the assessment of student learning outcomes proves to be a worthwhile practice, we understand that not every skill or value that faculty members want students to take from the course or program can be reduced to a performance that is easily measured or assessed. Recognizing the value of measuring some outcomes does not require us to devalue or lose sight of other outcomes that cannot readily be measured. However, it will be up to us to advance and utilize creative objective assessments as well as advancing informed judgment assessments of student work. We must continue to work together to discover and develop meaningful assessments.

(Continued on next page)
3. Be patient and be willing to have difficult conversations. Change is never easy and usually most uncomfortable. After dancing around this process for several years, we had no choice but to get serious. Beginning in 2009, with three years until our “Proficiency” report, patience with the people hanging around the back of the bus, or those that refused a boarding pass, wasn’t always an option. Social psychologists would have had a “field day” documenting our process as we went through the “Stages of Change” Model. We seemed to stay stuck for quite a long time in the “Pre-contemplation and Ambivalence” stages. From denial to ignorance to conflicted emotions, we exhibited all of that and more. And yet, we finally moved through these difficulties almost unscathed to concentrate on teaching and learning in a most focused way. The SLO Officers and the ASLO Subcommittee are to be commended for their patience in extreme conditions. As we journey forward, we realize there are still treacherous paths ahead and difficult conversations waiting to challenge us in new ways.

4. It’s time to take on some new passengers. We know this is a faculty driven process, and always will be, yet we have reached a critical juncture in the road. The need to have all areas of the college involved has become evident and imperative. After three years of intense faculty work, it is now time for all internal stakeholders to join the journey by jumping onboard. We have seen and felt the support of administration and staff as they ran alongside the road with us the last few years; now it’s time to “scoot over” and make room for them on the bus. We have taken the journey to the point where it is now time for all of us to be riding together, holding hands and singing songs on the way to our next destination. For this process to be truly meaningful, we must see the big picture vista ahead, collaborate and allow our assessment data to guide department, and college planning and practices.

5. We discovered the “Contrarian Educator.” Most often the adjective “contrarian” sits in front of nouns like “investor” or “leader.” The contrarian has views that differ from conventional wisdom, has the ability to spot and recognize trends way ahead of others, and is willing to stand alone in his/her beliefs. As a whole, educators tend to fall into different self-identified or categorized groups, nothing that anyone would ever call “contrarian” in nature. It’s not really popular or comfortable to stand alone, disagree or have a vision that differs from the majority. In the last few years, as most of us refused (or still refuse) to believe that the public has removed educators from our pedestals, it was refreshing to be associated with the contrarian among us. The contrarian educators paid attention to numerous warnings, studies and books such as “Academically Adrift,” and heeded the cries from the public for accountability. We must recognize that this new economy dictates the necessity for a new era in higher education. The necessity of a college degree, and the validity of what we do, is being attacked by celebrity entrepreneurs, our students, politicians, and nearly all our external stakeholders. The contrarian faculty embraces change and develops strategies, while looking further ahead with anticipation to the value these new ideas and ideals will add to our students’ learning and to our academic lives.

Perhaps what we have learned along the way about ourselves, our colleagues and our institution has moved us far beyond any assessment or measure of our work. If, at the end of this three year benchmark in our journey, we talk more meaningfully about teaching and learning in our department and program meetings, we have succeeded. If we engage across disciplines about assessments and pedagogical styles and methods, we have succeeded. If we have documented and articulated areas of excellence and areas that need change, we have succeeded. If our courses and programs align with our institutional goals, we have succeeded. If our students can articulate what they learn in each course, and how it relates to their overall plan, we have succeeded. If we realize and understand that it should never have taken an outside body, or public outcry or commission for us to engage in and accomplish this important work……..we have succeeded.

The ASLO subcommittee wishes to acknowledge and thank outgoing SLO co-ordinator, Kim Anderson, a TRUE Contrarian Leader. Kim’s vision, unwavering faith, incredible work ethic and willingness to stand alone when very few were able to see what lay ahead, propelled this college forward from complacency to action. With determination, patience and the end goal in mind, Kim challenged us to be our best. We thank you Kim for doing the hard work. You laid the firm foundation for us to build further SLO efforts.
Kudos
Renewed efforts have been made to address missing assessment plans or plans for new curriculum. The subcommittee acknowledges the efforts of the **Communication Studies, Electricity, Fashion Design, Music, Physical Science, and Life Science Departments.**

### Course and Program Assessment

Collection of assessment evidence should be in process for courses due this year for review (2011-12) and for programs due next year for review (2012-13). Please coordinate with your area’s SLO Officer for upcoming analysis and discussion about these results.

### Curriculum Mapping

Curriculum mapping is an opportunity for faculty to objectively assess curriculum design and program alignment. There are two mapping processes that should be addressed: course to program and program to institution. A course to program map can visually indicate where specific learning takes place and at what level of engagement within the structure of your instructional program while a program to institution map can illustrate how your instructional program’s learning outcomes align with the institution’s goals and outcomes. Directions and templates are available on the Outcomes Assessment website. Please contact your SLO Officer to coordinate this assessment effort this semester.

### Institution Assessment

General Education Outcomes (GEO) assessment is commencing with several of the GEOs as planned. The current status of inter-disciplinary GEO assessment processes:

**Communication GEO**

- The Writing GEO subcomponent has collected student artifacts and compiled an assessment team to assess this student work. These results, with support from the Research Office, will be compiled for analysis and development of recommendations in fall 2012.

- The Reading GEO just begun the collection of student artifacts as too the solicitation of volunteer faculty participants on the assessment team. The assessment and analysis of results is scheduled to proceed in fall 2012.

- The Oral Communication GEO will be addressed solely by the Speech Communications Department as the Foreign Language Department has chosen not to participate. That work group has assessed and analyzed previously videotaped student work this semester. Those findings and recommendations are part of the Communication GEO Assessment Report.

**Civic Engagement GEO**

- The Cultural Sensitivity/Diversity and Democracy GEO subcomponents have begun the collection of student artifacts and solicitation of volunteer faculty participants for actual assessment. The assessment and analysis of results is scheduled to proceed in fall 2012.

**Aesthetics and Creativity GEO**

- The Aesthetics & Creativity GEO is finalizing the creation of a faculty team to develop a local scoring rubric for this GEO. This rubric, identification of appropriate student artifacts, and the verification of student sampling will be this group's task in spring 2012. Fall 2012 is scheduled to obtain the student artifacts and develop an assessment team from faculty from the contributing disciplines.

As you can see there will be upcoming opportunities for faculty, both full-time and adjunct, to participate in these ongoing GEO assessment projects.

### Contract Education & Distance Education

The subcommittee worked in concert with the Dean of Educational Resource Development and Director of Distance Learning to develop informational documents about these two programs’ relationship with ASLO. Distance Learning - ASLO Subcommittee endorses the Distance Learning Guidelines in relationship to the outcomes assessment process. That is, a distance learning course's outcomes assessment task will be comparable to the course's established assessment plan. The purpose of ASLO as a continuous process of collecting, evaluating, and using information to determine how well learning expectations are being met in a course, demands the utilization of equivalent assessment tasks for all offerings regardless of delivery mode. Contract Education – Accountability of these types of courses have been established through Title 5 and ACCJC regulations. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Accordingly, outcomes assessment efforts involve people from across the
Outcomes Assessment Update

educational community and are a sustainable process that “assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution”.

Scantron & ASLO
This new equipment system allows faculty to have access to enhanced software that can manage the results of bubble-type exams and provides automatic calculations for the more detailed disaggregation of test results, which provides more meaningful ASLO analysis. The purchase and support of this new system stemmed from the information faculty provided in their course assessment plans and is an example of evidence-based decision making. It is recommended that programs that rely on Scantron-type tests take full advantage of this new SLO assessment support system.

Workstation locations have been identified, initial training has occurred, the Campus Stores have available the special test forms, and subsequent training for college personnel is being scheduled for late spring and early fall 2012. The first four stations for the Schools of Creative Arts, Health/Science/Math, Trades, and Business/Social Science will be completed in the near future. Installation of the remaining workstations will be completed by fall 2012.

E-Portfolios:
Electronic portfolios have developed a broad-based architecture that can incorporate learning and assessment centered functions. E-portfolios embody the potential to support educational assessment and student learning that fit with the trends in education toward “high-impact educational practices” and in students’ life toward building a professional digital identity. Recent improvements in functionality and user interface are captured in the LBCC Electronic Portfolio Report that was recently presented to the ASLO Subcommittee. This was a joint effort by members from the Distance Learning Plan Task Force and ASLO Subcommittee. As with the Scantron/ParScore project this is an option for the future to assist students and faculty with SLO assessment through the use of technology.

Bookmarks
The ASLO Subcommittee is cognizant that one of the proficiency standards for accreditation is students’ awareness of course and program SLOs. This semester the subcommittee will be trying a new approach of outreach to students. Bookmarks designed for students with course specific SLO information have been created. A random sampling of courses has been identified and these bookmarks will be distributed to instructors of record in the near future. The subcommittee is requesting that they take a moment to distribute these bookmarks to their students.

SLO Officer Project
The SLO Officer Project was the college’s initial efforts to decentralize the Outcomes Assessment Process for the instructional programs. This approach has distributed the workload, established a system-embedded quality control at the department level to better produce meaningful results and actions, alleviated added responsibilities on the Department Heads, and helped to protect confidentiality of both individual students and faculty. The ASLO Subcommittee has reviewed this project’s implementation and results for the past two years. Compelling reasons for the continuation of this program are the current, vital sustainability phase in the ASLO process, the integration of ASLO into the Program Review process, and the long-established support mechanisms for similar college-wide processes. Consequently, the ASLO Subcommittee strongly recommends that the SLO Officer Project be continued for an additional three (3) years.

ACCJC Rubric
In 2007, The Accrediting Commission of the Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) approved and disseminated a Rubric for Evaluating Institutional Effectiveness to help colleges assess their progress to meeting the standards for program review, planning, and student learning outcomes assessment. Applying the general language of the rubrics to individual colleges has been an elusive endeavor. So the Commission outreached to the field through a task force to discover the common difficulties that they were experiencing using this instrument. The discussions resulted in four additions to the existing language of the rubric elements; all of these were in the SLO assessment component. The Commission approved this revised rubric in October 2011.

Of particular interest for many colleges is the Commission’s anticipated use of the SLO component of the rubric in Fall 2012 when full adherence to the student learning outcomes elements of the standards is expected. Recommendations to colleges from this past spring’s Commission actions directed colleges to use the rubric as a tool for 2012.

Any question about whether the rubrics will be part of the self-evaluation process has also been put to rest. The rubrics are front and center in the ACCJC’s new Manual for Institutional Self-Evaluation. LBCC’s Self-Evaluation Report will be due in 2014.

(Continued on next page)
Outcomes Assessment Update

The rubric has four levels or stages of outcomes assessment progress: awareness, development, proficiency, and sustainable continuous quality improvement (SCQI). By Fall 2012, all colleges are expected to be “proficient” at SLO assessment. Recently the Commission has directed LBCC to file a report by the beginning of fall 2012 validating the ASLO implementation level of the college.

ACCJC Reports
Midterm Report:
The recently submitted Midterm Report includes a narrative analysis and evidence that demonstrates how deficiencies have been resolved, describes progress on recommendations for improvement, and identifies the status of improvement plans from the most recent Institutional Self Evaluation. Addressed in that report are the major components of accreditation as described in the ACCJC Rubrics for Planning, Program Review, and Student Learning Outcomes.

Annual Report:
The required annual report, that includes SLO progress information, has a new deadline of March 30. Previously these reports were due in June. Information has been gathered from the midterm report and evidence that is currently in TracDat. This SLO information will also be provided in the ASLO Subcommittee’s end of the year report.

Student Guide to Learning Outcomes

In an effort to assist students in their awareness of the goals and purposes of their courses and programs in which they are enrolled (aka SLOs) the ASLO Subcommittee has developed a student website with information about the ASLO process at LBCC. This website is specifically geared for students. It describes student learning outcomes (SLOs) and provides answers to common questions about SLOs. Faculty can refer students to this website or use it as a teaching tool.

This website is now located on both the Outcomes Assessment website and the Student Services page in the Academic Course and Program Information area. An enthusiastic thank you goes to Loan Ngo, IITS, C.C. Sadler, ITDC, and Mike Birong, Student Services, for their assistance and contributions to the development of this informational site.

Collaboration with many individuals is essential for the ASLO Subcommittee to be able to meet its charge. A big THANK YOU to the following colleagues for their generous support and contributions to the work of outcomes assessment at LBCC.

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Mike Birong, Student Services Support Technician
Camille Bolton, Public Relations Coordinator
Lynn Blankenship, Graphic Design Specialist
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Laura Complian, Academic Administrative Assistant
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Outcome-ings & Goings Newsletter

By Eva Bagg
Associate Dean, Institutional Effectiveness

In 2002, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) added student learning outcomes assessment and improvement as important components to the required institutional processes of evaluation, planning and improvement. To assist the Commission in determining compliance with the new Standards, in 2006 it began requesting that colleges provide, as part of its annual reporting requirement, updates on progress in improving student learning through the process of student learning outcomes assessment. In the following year, ACCJC provided colleges and visiting teams a rubric for evaluating institutional effectiveness in light of the new Standards. The purpose of the rubric was to provide common language that could be used to describe a college's status vis-à-vis full adherence to the Standards, as well as to provide a developmental framework for understanding each institution's actions toward achieving full compliance with the Standards. In 2007, the Commission communicated that by fall 2012 all accredited colleges needed to achieve “proficiency” as defined by the rubric for student learning outcomes assessment.

LBCC faculty has led discussions about student learning outcomes since prior to the implementation of the 2002 Standards and has worked hard to advance assessment work at the course, program and institution levels. Now is the time when it must demonstrate, as do all member colleges, that it has reached the developmental level of proficiency in student learning outcomes assessment. On April 5, 2012, Barbara Beno, President of ACCJC, sent to all member CEOs and Accreditation Liaison Officers explicit instructions on how colleges are to report progress in implementing the Standards about student learning outcomes assessment. Colleges were notified of the due date assigned to them for submission of their College Status Report on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation; Long Beach City College's deadline is October 15, 2012.

The required report is divided into sections representing the characteristics of the proficiency implementation level on the ACCJC rubric. Colleges are asked to interpret their implementation level through the lens of the accreditation Standards cited for each characteristic, proving a brief narrative analysis as well as quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrating the status of implementation for each characteristic. There are seven characteristics from the rubric to address:

1. student learning outcomes and authentic assessments are in place for courses, programs, support services, certificates and degrees;
2. there is widespread institutional dialogue about assessment results and identification of gaps;
3. decision making includes dialogue on the results of assessment and is purposefully directed toward aligning institution-wide practices to support and improve student learning;
4. appropriate resources continue to be allocated and fine-tuned;
5. comprehensive assessment reports exist and are completed and updated on a regular basis;
6. course student learning outcomes are aligned with degree student learning outcomes; and
7. students demonstrate awareness of goals and purposes of courses and programs in which they are enrolled.

The final section of the report requests a narrative self-assessment of the overall status of the college in relationship to the proficiency level, indicating what plans are in place to mitigate any noted deficiencies or areas for improvement. Although no visits will be required as part of the special assessment, the Commission has clearly stated that it may use an institution's report to take action to require follow-up for purposes of assuring institutional compliance with Accreditation Standards. This means that recommendations, including sanctions, may be imposed on institutions based on the Commission's evaluation of institutional performance as documented by the report and the attendant evidence.

All programs are encouraged to use the remaining weeks of the spring semester to document assessment results, faculty dialogue about the results and improvement plans implemented. Eva Bagg, LBCC's Accreditation Liaison Officer, and Kim Anderson, SLO Coordinator, will be working with the ASLO Subcommittee and the SLO Officers to gather as much evidence as possible for inclusion in the College Status Report on Student Learning Outcomes Implementation due October 15, 2012. The support of faculty and staff is greatly appreciated in fulfilling this institutional requirement. Questions about the report are welcome and may be directed to Eva at ebagg@lbcc.edu or 562-938-4736.
Why Do I Like Assessment? Let Me Count the Ways

From the Chronicle of Higher Education
By Theodore C. Wagenaar

OK, I admit it: I like assessment. I like it because it encourages faculty members to think more carefully about what they do, how they do it, and why they do it that way. I like it because it helps raise questions about how our teaching strategies affect learning outcomes. And I like it because in the process, we discover more about how our teaching fits in with programs and curricula beyond our own courses. Good-quality assessment simply asks about our goals, our instructional procedures, and the link between both of those and learning.

However, my experiences as an external reviewer, workshop leader, and member of many campus program-review and program-assessment committees have made it clear to me that most academics resist assessment in general and on principle. Some professors dislike the scrutiny. Others feel that assessment reflects corporate encroachment and a threat to academic freedom. Still others fear a homogenization of the educational experience.

True, many campus-level assessment efforts are flawed—often because they don’t engage faculty members and don’t carefully examine faculty work and its connection to learning. In my experience, many of the letters that administrators write to departments after a program review are brief, lack a nuanced understanding of the department under review, and inadequately address curriculum quality and coherence. Many departments receive little institutional support for surveying students, and all too often, anecdotal evidence is relied upon as fact.

So some skepticism on the part of the faculty is healthy. It can, for example, prevent institutions from moving too quickly on a new strategy. Indeed, many a professor has lived through an assessment venture—often plopped onto campus with little background work—that was initiated by an administrator who left soon thereafter. The result? Heightened faculty cynicism and reduced commitment to future assessment efforts. But too much cynicism is unwarranted. Most administrators I have met are hungry for faculty engagement and indeed fear that too few faculty members are interested. Besides, given the often short tenure of many administrators, the faculty must play a central role in making assessment part of the campus culture. If professors lend their expertise and experience, and engage in discussions about assessment early on (both formally and informally), they can help create meaningful programs capable of getting useful results.

The fact is that there are several good reasons for assessment. The most important, of course, is that it can and should improve our teaching and students’ learning. But too many assessment programs focus more on input than output, and they rely too...
heavily on student opinion. We need to look more carefully at what students can do using course and student portfolios.

Executed well, assessment encourages faculty members to articulate their course and assignment goals more clearly and to develop sound rubrics. That helps them think more broadly about overarching program goals, and how to measure students’ success in reaching those goals. That, in turn, typically leads to greater faculty interest in how classroom activities connect with academic performance. Asking what is important leads us to ask about what works, and both contribute to good-quality assessment, better teaching, and greater learning.

Take one common preassessment scenario: Most of the students in a given department are unable to identify key program goals. For example, many sociology students I have interviewed stumble when I ask them to link three of their program goals to anything happening in the world today. And professors who teach senior-level courses are often disappointed with the inability of many of their students to make substantive and cumulative connections across their courses. At many institutions I’ve visited, assessment quickly showed that program goals noted in the handbook failed to materialize in individual courses. At one college, the stated goals emphasized the skills that students would gain for dealing with real-world problems—but interviews and reviews of student papers indicated that while the students were doing volunteer work, they were failing to use their disciplinary knowledge to analyze and critique their experiences. A review of that department’s internship course, too, showed a weak focus on connecting program goals to real-world experiences.

Assessment can help. It can teach faculty members to work together to teach and assess those learning goals. For example, many sociology programs stress the role of research methods across courses, but my interviews with students suggest that students generally fail to apply their knowledge of those methods in other courses. In part that happens because instructors do not reinforce such knowledge and skills. Assessing both the courses and students’ knowledge will highlight such gaps and help transform their cumulative experience by encouraging instructors to improve both individual courses and the learning gained across courses.

The entire department would benefit as all courses became part of a well-thought-out whole. Professors gain classes full of prepared students, and students report their highest levels of satisfaction and learning in departments where faculty members collectively assume responsibility for the entire curriculum and its assessment. It takes a village of engaged faculty to raise successful students. That same village can provide better assessment than can one designated person, and can make better use of the results.

So what are the most essential elements of quality assessment?

One is student engagement. We usually leave students out of discussions of policies and initiatives that affect them. That’s a mistake. Students can tell us how and why certain courses and programs are successful (or not), and can provide insights on how to improve their teaching and assessment. Focus groups with our students showed how the clarity of the syllabus enhanced their ratings of how well their learning was assessed. Another is the use of effective rubrics. Rubrics help students see the organization and goals of a course more clearly, and help others assess the course and student learning more accurately. Students in program-review visits I’ve led have told me that they frequently hear about critical thinking, but are seldom instructed on how to do it, and even more rarely evaluated on it concretely. Students can and will provide useful, explicit feedback if we ask and then demonstrate that we use their answers to enhance their learning.

Measuring critical thinking is hard. We can’t just ask students if they feel that they’ve learned how to think critically—almost all of them will say yes, because we constantly tell them it is important. A good model exists in an innovative program at Washington State University, which approached the problem by describing discrete elements of critical thinking that could be applied across disciplines, then gave specific examples. Such successes can lead to conversations with colleagues both on and off campus, and help promote a collective responsibility for teaching and assessing critical thinking as well as other general-education and disciplinary goals. Over time, that can help us discover how teaching and learning strategies are connected with students’ progress.

Academic responsibility must complement academic freedom. Faculty members prize their independence and autonomy, and they are quick to label any “outside” influences—especially assessment—as an infringement on their academic freedom. But that independence can sometimes be detrimental to students, because it diminishes a collective responsibility for student learning. Assessment brings into focus what students should learn in courses and programs and how successful we are as individual teachers and as faculties. Let’s not do assessment just because it is mandated. Let’s not do it to make accreditation agencies happy or because everyone else is doing it. Let’s do it to improve learning.

Theodore C. Wagenaar is a professor of sociology and a faculty associate in the Center for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching, and University Assessment at Miami University of Ohio.