Let’s Talk Turkey

By Karen Kane,
ASLO Subcommittee Member and
Newsletter Editor

LET’S TALK TURKEY

Every November, turkey talk abounds: To brine or not to brine; Once you’ve gone “deep fried” apparently you never go back; to stuff or not to stuff; How long to cook; what temperature is best. (I just heard about someone who cooks their turkey at 500 degrees for one hour, then turns the oven off and lets the turkey remain in the oven for another 4 hours to continue “cooking!”) And then there is the debate regarding if turkey is even still appropriate for Thanksgiving. Maybe we should be serving fish?

The Thanksgiving meal requires an incredible amount of planning. Where will we have the meal this year? Who will bring what? What time will dinner be served? Are there enough serving spoons and dishes? If there are too many of us, should we put the kids at a kid’s table and the adults at another? Do we have to tolerate Aunt Ora’s Jell-O mold again? Will there be enough dessert?

And then we sit down to eat, and somehow, all the planning, preparation, arguing and angst melts away as we sit and gaze at the people around the table sharing the meal with us. Whether we sit with family or friends or both, there is something about sitting down to that Thanksgiving meal that erases a lot of the hurts and sins of the past, and reminds us that we really do have a lot to be thankful for. For better or worse, we are family and the people we eat this Thanksgiving meal with are the ones who support us, encourage us, correct us, hold us accountable, and in the end, celebrate this life with us. Somehow, this simple act of sitting down together, reminds us that while we inherently know it’s the journey of life that is important, sometimes we get lost in the detailed minutia. Sitting down together with an expectant attitude of gratitude sets us back on the right path. Sitting down together reminds us that the destination of life and the lessons learned along the way are of utmost importance.

And so it is with the ASLO process. Outcomes talk abounds at LBCC, all over the state, and in education institutions throughout the US. Everyone has an opinion, a question, a point to debate. Does it work? Will it work? It is too much work!

This process has required an incredible amount of detail and coordination. How does it fit in, where does it fit in, and who exactly again is making us fit it in? How do we do this, why do we do this, and will we have to tolerate the acronym ASLO forever? This has been the dialogue during our year of writing outcomes and assessments for courses and programs. Despite the many roadblocks we have, at times, set up for ourselves, we have accomplished an incredible amount this year. And now, it is time for us to sit down at the table together, look at one another, let the dust settle, see where we are, and who we are.

We have been through a lot of preparation and planning to get us to the assessment phase of this process. But, we can be thankful that we have gotten ourselves there. True, there are those we have had to drag kicking and screaming to the table, and there are those who still don’t quite believe it is necessary, but, somehow, together, we are there.

It is our time to bring our work on teaching and learning and assessments together.

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Let’s Talk Turkey

It is our time to remember that this journey isn’t about the angst of implementation, separate egos or additional workload. It is about giving our students the best possible education. It is our time to sit down together and look across the table at our LBCC faculty and friends and be grateful that we have moved the process to this point. We argued and fought and laughed, and went back to the drawing board several times, to get us to this assessment table. But we are here. The majority of us are here and we are celebrating. And for those of you that are still at the “kid table” and not quite at the “adult table” we will wait for you to grow up, and we will extend our love and support to you until you can join us.

And as we begin the assessment phase in earnest, we will find ourselves on a new journey where there may be the same issues and adversities. But, we will remember the way it feels to come together, sit down and look at each other with satisfaction over a job well done. We are the LBCC faculty, and we have earned the right to be proud of our efforts, and to be thankful we are doing the best for our students. Before we begin the next phase, we need to celebrate our ASLO milestones, remembering where we have been, where we want to go, and what legacy we will leave, as we continue to define the learning process and the Way We Are.

If it is to be … it is up to ME!

All faculty are needed and responsible to make valuable contributions to our Outcomes Assessment Process!

JOB WELL DONE!

Congratulations
to Ann Mitchell, Larry White and the entire Art/Photography department! They were the first department, based upon established criteria to submit all of their PROGRAM assessment plans.

For their efforts, they will receive an incentive grant from the LBCC Foundation in the amount of

$250.00

This grant will provide instructional materials and supplies. Thanks to the Foundation and congratulations to the Art/Photography Department!

~Our apologies to Larry White, as your name was inadvertently omitted from the October 2010 newsletter~

DID YOU KNOW?

- Courses coming due for Course Review in 2010-11 should be collecting outcomes assessment evidence NOW!

- Programs coming due for Program Review in 2011-12 should be collecting outcomes assessment evidence NOW!

- The deadline to submit all program assessment plans is WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1ST !!

- 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 & SUD) link.

- WE are all in this together!

Please direct all questions to an ASLO Subcommittee

DON’T FORGET!!

Course SLOs should now be included on your syllabi!

All faculty are needed and responsible to make valuable contributions to our Outcomes Assessment Process!

ASLO Subcommittee Members and SLO Officers are available to answer questions and assist with assessment course and program plans ... Contact them today!

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Greetings from the ASLO Chair

By Kim Anderson

Transitions

LBCC has been experiencing transitions over the past few years when it comes to the Outcomes Assessment Process. The concept of outcomes assessment, for some, is a transition on how learning is perceived (i.e. from what teachers teach to what students learn). Then came the reality of the assessment plan itself and the documentation of course and program assessments. Next will be the actions for “closing the loop” to establish an ongoing Outcomes Assessment Process. Throughout these transitions has been the need, in particular with the instructional component of the college, of technological and clerical support to establish this necessary and ongoing process. Consequently the hiring of a “limited term employee” position was suggested by the Process Oversight Group and approved by management in late spring 2009.

As the Outcomes Assessment Process transitioned this support became integral for noticeable progress based on the Outcomes Blueprints approved by the Academic Council in April 2009 and April 2010. Therefore, this position was extended through October 2010. The three individuals who filled this position did so with dedication and purpose. Carolyn Sanford began the uploading of SLOs on the course outline of record and established initial protocols while Amy Jennings completed the uploading of these SLOs and refined procedures and reporting. Both ladies were instrumental in the project’s initial success of providing technological support to faculty and to establish SLOs on course outlines of record. This calendar year Diandra Porter transitioned to the uploading of assessment plans into the newly acquired TracDat database, which required her to learn that software program and maintain and expand the expected organizational protocols, set by her predecessors. Her contributions cannot be overstated.

The use of an individual in a limited term employee position to assist with the uploading of SLO and Assessment Plan information into the College’s databases was a successful faculty support mechanism not only in regards to the time factor but too for the establishment of quality information. Now the College is transitioning from this centralized approach to that of a more decentralized nature with the SLO Officers. In this way departments now will have more intimate knowledge, control, and access to their SLOs, assessment plans, and assessment information. All of this will benefit the integration of this information with the Program Review process that will commence in Fall 2011. All of this extraordinary support and exceptional progress was only possible through the collaborative work between administration and faculty.

This is another transition point for the faculty as we engage with the Outcomes Assessment Process. Now the department faculty are taking the reins of the SLO process for courses and instructional programs. We are managing the assessment plans. We are following these assessment plans and collecting evidence to see what it tells us about student learning. We are engaging in collegial dialogue about the results and taking actions to improve student learning. We are transitioning to a more ongoing, systematic, consistent, collaborative, and documentable process than individual efforts may have been in the past.

Current Status

Course Level

Currently 92% of course assessment plans have been submitted. Please email the course assessment plans to your SLO Officer. The recent efforts of the following departments and programs should be acknowledged in this endeavor. Congratulations to: CBIS Program, Honors Program, and Culinary Arts Program (as of October 29, 2010).

Those remaining course assessment plans should be submitted to their department SLO Officers. The collection of assessment information is now in full swing and faculty should be managing the internal process so results can be analyzed and reported in Spring 2011.

Program Level

Every program needs to develop an assessment plan (don’t forget the program mission statement too) and submitted to your SLO Officer for uploaded into TracDat. You may view this template, the directions, Program Review cycle, and suggestions on the SLO Program Level page or contact an ASLO Subcommittee member or your SLO Officer for guidance.

The faculty has contributed to the noticeable progress in this area too. Currently 68% of program assessment plans have been submitted. Program assessment plans are due by December 1, 2010. Your department’s SLO Officer is ready to assist with department faculty with this task.

The recent efforts of the following departments/programs should be acknowledged in this endeavor.

Congratulations to: Advanced Transportation Program, Child Development Department, Culinary Arts Program, English Program, and Public Services Department (as of October 29, 2010).
Taking a Pulse on the Status of Assessment at California Community Colleges
By Janet Fulks, Kate Pluta and Marcy Alancraig

It’s been three years since the WASC accreditation standards were completely revamped, going from 10 Standards to 4 and requiring Student Learning Outcomes and assessment at course, program, and institutional levels. When the new standards were first proposed, the debate was intense throughout the state. The State Academic Senate dedicated more resolutions to this topic than any other in the history of the senate. Where are we, as faculty, colleges, and a system with respect to Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment?

A recent conference, “Doing Assessment that Matters,” organized by faculty in conjunction with the Research and Planning Group of California, provided some answers. Representative from approximately 31 different California Community Colleges (as well as the Marshall Islands College and the Education Director at the Aquarium of the Pacific) came together to evaluate their own expertise in Student Outcomes and Assessment, to define issues, and to problem solve the challenges they were facing as they attempt to meet these standards.

The results were somewhat surprising. In keeping the Academic Senate recommendations, most of the colleges attending had identified a faculty leader as a campus assessment chair, with reassign time. Many institutions had been deeply involved in researching assessment and training their faculty in preparation for a campus-wide strategy. Some schools began assessment training and planning before the WASC standards were even in the news (Cabrillo College, Palomar College); some schools had suffered fits and starts; but many were on the fast track to instituting faculty-led assessment (Skyline College, Canada College, Pasadena City College, San Francisco City College, Sierra College). Common to all other aspects of the California Community College system, the methods, planning and timeline were very individualized to the college mission and culture. Those campuses that researched models to use agreed that the research provided insight, but no models that could be adopted outright. Instead, campuses were developing culturally appropriate strategies, resulting in an assortment of very individualized and creative assessment plans, to meet individual campus needs and vision.

Campuses reported varying degrees of success and involvement. Those schools associated with starts that were dependent on individuals, or organized and run outside of local Senate support, seemed to have the most difficulties. Many campuses reporting successful participation and positive results from dialogue and SLO development shared a common strategy which included faculty led training and initiatives, assessment chairs, with reassign time, and senate approved committees (Bakersfield College, Cabrillo College, Mira Costa College, Riverside College, and San Mateo College). Basically, the similarities stopped there. Campuses reported creative methods and variable strategies of training. Some began at course level assessment (Riverside Community College, Cabrillo College, and Bakersfield College), others started a program level (Chaffey College), and still others tackled institutional outcomes first. In some cases the institutional approach involved defining core competencies or defining general education outcomes (Cabrillo College, Mira Costa, Santa Ana College, and Santiago Canyon College).

Many campuses reported a positive payoff in the early stages of SLO training (LACC). The payoff arose as a result of collegial discussions, interdisciplinary dialogue, and curriculum review and renewal. Outcomes and assessment provided a good source of student feedback and an opportunity to address campus issues using evidence. Faculty reported that classes and programs that more clearly communicated overarching themes and outcomes supported improved student learning. Discussions about embedding authentic assessment that simulates the skills and knowledge students need when they exit the academic world were considered very positive and tangible benefits for students.

There were many challenges discussed concerning the implementation of outcomes and assessment. Some of the toughest challenges include integrating outcomes in the planning process and using assessment information as evidence to make better decisions; such as, developing processes that linked assessment information and improvement of student learning of the budget and planning processes. Many concerns focused around the need to embed assessment within everyday college activities. Some institutions had integrated outcomes into existing processes such as class assignments; curriculum and program review, and in a variety of different ways that worked best for their campus culture (Cabrillo College, Sierra College). Most schools spoke eloquently about the struggle to fund theses outcomes an assessment activities, particularly when it involved assessment coordinator reassign time, stipends for pilot projects, and training. The participants agreed that inclusion and payment of adjuncts for their training and time, was essential.

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Ultimately, a few principles were highlighted as various institutions shared their stories.

- This process requires cooperation between faculty, administration, research staff, and classified—all have important roles.
- Successful implementation is dependent upon faculty involvement and leadership.
- Academic senate leadership is essential, particularly in sustaining the process over the long term.
- Healthy efforts are characterized by involving many people and many conversations in the planning; this includes instructions, student services, and other support areas of the college.
- Agreement on assessment principles and purposes can help campuses respond proactively to areas of concern, such as how the data will be used and what the impact of assessment will be, if any, on individuals.
- Successful strategies center on the existing campus culture and use of governance processes that already work to enhance campus-wide success.
- Keep it SIMPLE. This is a learning process and the simplest attempts yield useful information. Start simple and enjoy the process.

Janet Fulks and Kate Pluta, faculty, Bakersfield College and Marcy Alancraig, faculty, Cabrillo College, were part of the leadership of the Assessment Worth Doing Institute sponsored by the RP Group and the California Assessment Institute held earlier this month at UC Berkeley. The Institute was a five day intensive attended by 62 faculty and staff mostly from the California Community Colleges. Emails for the writers are:

Janet (jfulks@bakersfieldcollege.edu);
Kate (kpluta@bakersfieldcollege.edu);
Mary (malancra@cabrillo.edu).

**One good thing**

*Good things are happening all over the college as a result of the ASLO process! Here’s what people are saying:*

**Rudy Besikoff:** the ESL department has more than a 97% completion of outcomes listed on faculty syllabi.

**Beverly Curl:** the Public Services Department has come together in working on this project and the biggest involvement has been by the part-time staff. I think this process gives part-timers a good chance to participate in "the big picture" at the college.

**Speech and English Department:** outcomes developed by these two departments were used at several Student Success state-wide conferences as examples of well written, manageable, meaningful and measurable outcomes!

**Wil Shaw:** as a result of the ASLO process, the Physical Education Department is discovering new ways to share coaching and teaching strategies and practices that cross athletics and classroom teaching methods.

**What’s happening in your area? Let us know!**