PHILOSOPHY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

General Education takes its character from an extensive list of disciplines whose integration generates a broad field of common knowledge that is indispensable to students. General Education concerns itself with how disciplines form and reform their basic conceptualization and how these basic conceptualizations then link with one another to create this general field of understanding. In so doing, General Education justifies its course of study by the foundation of knowledge it imparts, which becomes an essential preparation for specialization as students move into their major fields of study. This ongoing process of forming, reforming, and integrating these basic conceptualizations allows students to achieve a synthesis of skills, comprehension, and information about oral and written communication, physical and natural sciences, humanities, the arts, and the social sciences, health, and wellness, and such process is contemporary with any age.

The disciplines that introduce students to the variety of courses through which people comprehend the past, present, and future world coincide with the general education courses that teach oral and written communication, the physical, natural, and social sciences, the humanities, arts, health, and wellness. These selections of classes reflect the conviction of Long Beach City College that those who receive an Associate Degree should possess in common certain principles, concepts, and methodologies of the various disciplines defined by this philosophy. The general education experience should enable students to use this knowledge when evaluating and appreciating the physical environment, the arts, various cultures that make up the world, and the society in which they live. Most importantly, since education is a life-long process, general education should lead to better self-understanding and the capacity to adapt, respond, and grow in a changing world.

In its general education program, Long Beach City College strives to create coherence and integration among its separate requirements. Furthermore, through this program, the college involves students in examining the values inherent in proposed solutions to the major social problems that surround the average adult living within our society. Accordingly, Long Beach City College expects that those students who finish their general education requirements should have at their command the knowledge, skills, and perspectives common to all the classes taught as representative of the disciplines named above and should be evident in Long Beach City College’s Student Learning Outcomes at the course, program, and institution levels. This means that all general education courses should also be of an introductory or survey nature. In addition, a non-survey course may qualify as a general education course only if its student learning
outcomes and content, as indicated by the course outline of record, is designed to substantially integrate the basic principles and methodologies of a discipline designated as introductory or survey.

Keeping these principles in mind, the faculty at Long Beach City College (LBCC) prepares its General Education lists by selecting courses that both prepare students for their majors and conform to a specific set of regulations that limit and shape the types of classes that can be submitted to our Curriculum Committee. Any course submitted for consideration must meet several conditions before it can receive General Education credit: first, this course must comply with the requirements set in Title 5 and the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community College System; second, this course must be consistent with the mission statement listed in the college catalog, which defines the educational goals of a specific community college; third, alignment with the College’s general education outcomes as these define the knowledge, skills, and values acquired by students who satisfy our general education requirements; fourth, such a course should be transferable to a four-year institution so that a student can earn an Associate Degree and prepare for the possibility of a Baccalaureate Degree without having to do extra work, even though the committee does review non-transferable courses for General Education credit; and fifth, if transferable, this course must meet the specific requirements for General Education as outlined in the executive orders and criteria set forth by the receiving four-year institutions. These requirements, as well as the definition of General Education offered above, determine what can be described as the “Philosophy of General Education” as offered by LBCC.

Accordingly, the conditions that define LBCC’s philosophy include our Mission Statement as found in our College Catalog, Title 5 and the Chancellor’s Office specific requirements as interpreted by the Office of Academic Services, Executive Order 1033 from the California State University (CSU) System, and the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) requirements, and yearly updated notes, that define the University of California (UC) and CSU common core curriculum for General Education. These six sources have limited and shaped General Education at LBCC throughout our history, and have led us recently to develop a strategy known as the A, B, C Plan.

The A, B, C Plan accomplishes all of the tasks set by our Missions Statement, general education outcomes, Title 5, the Chancellor’s Office, Executive Order 1033, and IGETC Requirements and Notes in a single stroke. The A, B, C Plan is found in the College Catalog, which sets forth how we define and distribute General Education courses to meet
Associate Degree requirements while preparing students for transfer to the UC and CSU systems. The strategy behind the A, B, C Plan is to introduce students to the various disciplines identified in the definition of General Education as cited above, such as the arts, literature, the physical and natural sciences, history, the social sciences, health, and wellness, while also complying with those regulations that allow us to certify our students before they transfer.

The certification process lies at the heart of Plan B and C of the A, B, C Plan. Certification is defined as a process by which LBCC verifies that a student has completed all the General Education courses that are required by the CSU or UC system. The CSU certification process identifies 39 units prescribed by Executive Order 1033, which are distributed by discipline into broad areas defined as English Composition, Analytical Thinking, Communication Skills, Mathematics, Natural Science, Physical Science, Humanities, Arts, Social Science, and Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development. Following a similar category pattern, the IGETC allows LBCC to certify 34 units for the UC, but requires nine (9) extra units: three (3) of Oral Communications and six (6) of US History and Government to meet the CSU graduation requirements. When certification occurs, LBCC is in compliance with Executive Order 1033 and the list of instructions found in the IGETC Notes. In both cases, once certification has occurred, our transfer students know that their General Education requirements have been met, and that the receiving CSU or UC schools will not review these units. Hence, if we do our job well, our students will receive effective and efficient service.

Plan A is the list of requirements we offer in compliance with Title 5 and the Chancellor’s Office. Plan A sets the requirements for the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science Degrees. The unit requirements for these two degrees vary because the Associate of Science Degree accompanies programs that require so many units to complete their certificates and/or core major requirements that this science degree limits the General Education requirements to the minimum prescribed by Title 5. Accordingly, the Associate of Science Degree also is the one most commonly earned by our higher unit academic and career and technical education programs. Those students who complete the Associate Degree, and who later choose to transfer have to make up the difference in units between Plan A and Plans B or C when they move to a four-year institution. Plan A, however, is designed so that a student may select courses to meet the Associate Degree requirements while completing as many units as possible that are also located on the CSU and UC
patterns. Hence, all three plans are designed to complement each other and minimize the total unit load of our students.

Having met the requirements as set by Title 5, the Chancellor’s Office, and the receiving CSU and UC institutions, LBCC is then free to define what philosophy drives our General Education program. This philosophy and our Mission Statement shape what we, as professionals, believe define an educated person. Besides this philosophy and our Mission Statement, another major consideration that has determined courses selection for our General Education lists includes the strategy used to define our “breadth requirements.” The LBCC Committee on Curriculum and Instruction has created General Education lists that offer a broad exposure to the various disciplines to allow a student to develop some understanding of the whole range of human knowledge and creativity, while limiting course options on each list to create a sufficiently concentrated set of classes to produce a common focus to the educational experience. This doubled-edged strategy allows for an Associate Degree to represent both a common and a broad exposure to the general college curriculum. Hence, the General Education lists developed in this fashion allow all the disciplines to be represented, provide a variety of choices to appeal to individual student tastes, and yet restrict the selection sufficiently so that when students graduate from LBCC, they have had a common, high quality educational experience.

**PHILOSOPHY OF GENERAL EDUCATION FOR TRANSFER**

Plan B will prepare students for transfer to the California State University system. Plan C will prepare students for transfer to either the University of California or California State University systems. Each plan is designed to achieve transfer in the most efficient way. At the request of the student, each plan includes the certification process that secures the total number of units that meet all lower division General Education requirements for both the UC and CSU systems. Certification also ensures these General Education course requirements so that no four-year institution in the UC or CSU system may challenge these units.

The design of both Plan B and C matches the design of Plan A so that a student may transfer, earn an Associate Degree, and complete a career and technical education certificate all at the same time. To benefit from Plan B and C, a student should regularly consult with a counselor to select courses from a valid CSU or IGETC certification list that is annually updated. Thus, if a student regularly consults a counselor, develops an Education Plan, and carefully selects courses, he or she may accomplish several degree and
career goals at once. In this fashion, the faculty of LBCC seeks to provide effective transfer under the Master Plan of 1960 and offer access to the job market in the most efficient manner possible.

**CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION GENERAL EDUCATION STRATEGY**

General Education that accommodates transfer is as much a part of career and technical education as the academic programs. Yet, the General Education requirements for career and technical education are different because of the way these courses fit into a career and technical education program. Career and technical education students need a general education program that prepares them for the workforce and/or transfer to a four-year institution. Such preparation has to take into consideration three basic facts: career and technical education programs are high-unit majors; the academic nature of general education needs to fit into a training program that prepares a student for work; and the quality and intensity of such college courses should help to build the scope of knowledge and self-confidence of a career and technical education student.

Since the certificates being offered assures an employer that a student is prepared to take up full-time employment in a skilled occupation, the average unit load for a career and technical education student usually exceeds 18 college credits. Also, since such education is taken at a two-year institution, the expectation is that a student will finish in a reasonable length of time. This expectation suggests that units taken above the certificate requirements should take into consideration the total time needed to complete both an Associate Degree and the certificate.

Many career and technical education students follow an educational career that reveals an awareness of the need for academic as well as professional training. The student begins class seeking a certificate, then shifts to seeking an Associate Degree, and finally discovers that they want to transfer to a four-year institution after he/she has begun a new job based on his/her career and technical education. Thus, the philosophy that shapes General Education at LBCC must have sufficient flexibility to meet all three factors.