General Education Outcomes
Assessment Initiative

Overview

PURPOSE

General Education (GE) is designed to introduce students to the variety of disciplines and courses through which people develop a comprehension of the world. General education takes its character from an extensive list of classes whose integration generates a broad field of common knowledge that is indispensible to students, their sense of themselves, and their understanding of their place in the world. General education concerns itself with how disciplines form and reform their basic conceptualizations, and how these basic conceptualizations then link with one another to create an integrated field of comprehension that is based on an acquired set of skills and valuable knowledge which complements a student's major.

General Education Outcomes (GEOs) arise from the goals General Education seeks to achieve. These goals conform to the stated purpose of General Education as found within the definition cited above, as well as within an institution’s Philosophy of General Education and its Mission Statement. General Education Outcomes, therefore, are the educational objectives embedded in the coursework a college establishes within its General Education Plans, which sets out to achieve its Mission Statement, its philosophy of general education, and the integrated field of knowledge it wishes its students to carry away once they have left this institution.

All students that complete a degree at an institution of higher learning should not only master the requirements of their chosen major, but also receive the full benefit of understanding the world from the multiple perspectives offered by General Education. General Education Outcomes serve as an objective assessment strategy to measure the success achieved by this institution as it tries to align its coursework with its General Education Philosophy and its Mission Statement.¹ The combination of General Education and assessment will allow a college to demonstrate that it delivers what its sets out as its instructional goals. Hence, a process must be devised to achieve these objectives.

¹ By strategy, this document means the stated purpose of all three: GEOs, GE Philosophy, and Mission Statement.

Derived from Mt. SAC, Palomar, State University of New York, Thomas A. Angelo, and Association of American Colleges & Universities
Approved: GEO Work Group, AD/GE, ASLO Subcommittees, February 9, 2010 and Curriculum Committee February 17, 2010
### General Education Outcomes:

- Civic Engagement
- Wellness
- Communication
- Aesthetics & Creativity
- Critical Thinking

### General Education Areas (Plan A):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Engagement</th>
<th>Wellness</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Aesthetics &amp; Creativity</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American History, Political Science, and Social Science</td>
<td>Physical Fitness/Wellness, and Health Education</td>
<td>English Composition, Communication &amp; Analytical Thinking, and Writing/Reading/Information Competency Proficiencies</td>
<td>Humanities and Arts</td>
<td>Natural Science, Social Science, and Mathematics Proficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Programs & Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Political Science</th>
<th>Social Science: Anthropology</th>
<th>Child Development</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Fashion Design</th>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Health Education</th>
<th>Psychology</th>
<th>Public Administration</th>
<th>Sociology</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Art</td>
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### The Process: History and Outcomes Tasks

Long Beach City College’s GEOs align with its General Education Philosophy as this philosophy aligns itself with the College’s Mission Statement. In these alignments, General Education is a component of the Associate Degree’s requirements as well as the transfer strategies that the College has devised to facilitate students moving on to four-year institutions; both follow the General Education goals stated above. These General Education requirements are found in the college’s catalogue in the A, B, C Plans; these three plans identify all the courses.
the college has evaluated for the Associate Degree, for transfer to the CSU system, and for transfer to the CSU or UC systems. Each of these courses conforms to the standards imposed on our institution by the State in Title 5, by the CSU system in its Executive Orders, and the CSU and UC systems in their Intersegmental General Education Core Curriculum Notes. The intent of this discussion of GEOs, however, focuses solely on Plan A since this plan alone deals with the Associate Degree.

Plan A imposes a minimum of 24 units for the Associate of Arts Degree and a minimum of 18 units for the Associate of Science Degree. The reason for the difference in these minimum unit amounts is discussed fully in the LBCC Philosophy of General Education and is not part of the process proposed here. All the GE courses in Plan A are grouped into seven areas, while students must complete a selection of courses from each area and maintain a “C” average, or better, in their choices. Once completed, these minimum unit requirements meet the purposes of General Education as cited above and in the College’s GE Philosophy and Mission Statement.

The College will assess its stated GEOs for Plan A on a periodic basis in order to meet its commitment to General Education as stated above. To this end, the assessment of Plan A’s GEOs will involve cooperation among the College’s various disciplines, which serve to house all the courses on Plan A. All departments with courses on Plan A will be requested to participate in some or all aspects of the GEO Assessment task. Through this participation, faculty will not only have an increased understanding of the purposeful nature of GE at LBCC, including the vital role these courses play in the philosophy of General Education, but also in serving the College’s Mission Statement. Hence, GEO assessment will indicate that the breadth requirements for Plan A serve our students in a manner designed to help prepare them to become educated individuals.

In the Fall of 2009, a joint work group of the Assessment of Student Outcomes (ASLO) and the Associate Degree/General Education (AD/GE) subcommittees of the Curriculum Committee began to meet. Their purpose was to design an overview of the GEOs by area in Plan A and link the results to the College’s Philosophy of General Education. The product of that work is embedded in the purpose statement that serves as an introduction to this document. Having succeeded in that task, the work group then received a sanction from the Curriculum Committee to continue in its efforts by developing and implementing a initiative for assessing GE at LBCC. With this new responsibility, this work group (from this point forward, this work group shall be known as the GEO Work Group) now seeks the collaboration of LBCC’s faculty through the appropriate committees.
and subcommittees to develop a GEO assessment strategy that can be put into place within one year; this strategy must fulfill the purposes as stated above.²

THE PROCESS: A STRATEGY TO ASSESS GEOs IN PLAN A

An essential element of GEO assessment is curricular alignment. The GEO Work Group determined that an efficient method of assessment was the development of curriculum maps. A curriculum map is a graphic organizer that illustrates how Plan A contributed to the overall General Education of students seeking the Associate’s Degree. Such a graphic organizer can visually indicate where specific learning takes place and at what level of engagement such learning occurs. By mapping what is essential to a discipline versus what is secondary to that field of study, the College can discern how each course serves the GE component of Plan A and ultimately the student. Curriculum maps, therefore, are a valuable means to produce objective evidence that can guide the College toward fulfilling its responsibilities to GEO assessment.

The GEO Work Group members, with department, discipline, and faculty input, will use the curriculum mapping process and the course outline of record to distinguish clearly how each class will fulfill its promises as a subject of study within a particular discipline. If this alignment then conforms to the stated purposes in this document, the Philosophy of General Education, and the College’s Mission Statement, then the institution will have an effective, objective standard to evaluate a student performance in a GE class as it fits into Plan A. Taken all together, the curriculum map, the assessment of a course’s role within the purposes of Plan A, and the alignment of these purposes with the College’s intent as seen in its Philosophy of General Education, will fulfill the goals of Student Learning Outcomes at the Institutional Level. Hence, the next step in developing GEO’s is curriculum mapping.

Consistent with the goals of curriculum mapping and the LBCC Philosophy of General Education is the integration of all classes taken on Plan A as a transforming experience; this is what makes our students educated individuals. This is also the meaning of “General Education” itself and thus requires a cross-discipline assessment strategy. Cross-discipline assessment recognizes that all General Education courses share common intellectual techniques that must become part of the arsenal of thinking our students have acquired when they leave LBCC. The GEO Work Group must devise a plan to assess this storehouse of intellectual skills to

² This document reflects “The GEO and Plan A Alignment” developed by the GEO Work Group, with the oversight by the Curriculum Committee, as reported to that committee during the September 16, 2009 meeting and in the Long Beach Community College District Follow-Up Report to ACCJC of October 15, 2009, and during the Accreditation meeting of November 10, 2009.

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demonstrate objectively the validity of our GE philosophy. The use of standard rubrics, which contain the most common and broadly shared criteria, or core characteristics considered critical for judging the quality of student work in that outcome area, will afford an interactive process to measure instructional success among these like disciplines. This assessment process identifies, articulates, and measures fundamental criteria for each GEO, highlighting core expectations and evidence of learning regardless of a course’s discipline. The establishment of such a cross-disciplinary academic dialogue serves as a preliminary step that addresses essential learning among the GE areas and will provide evidence of the curricular integrity of Plan A. Simultaneously, this strategy will emphasize the shared responsibility of GE and offer an opportunity to develop initiatives aimed to ensure that every undergraduate student experiences a quality general education curriculum at LBCC.

**CONCLUSION**

This GEO Assessment Initiative will accurately measure the success LBCC will attempt to achieve as an institution interested in graduating and transferring well-educated individuals. Simultaneously, this GEO Assessment Initiative will sustain an academic dialogue about the shared responsibility our college has toward fostering student achievement at LBCC. While this is a daunting task there are several reasons to believe that both goals are achievable.

The development of a clear set of GEOS is invaluable in that it establishes a uniform set of expectations amongst the faculty for the purpose of general education at our College. The initiation of a GEO assessment process that is well thought out, comprehensive, and collaborative serves the multiple functions of evaluation, improvement, and accountability, while placing an emphasis on all three as a means of developing student success at the highest level of instruction; at the same time, LBCC can maintain and justify the integrity of its curriculum. Furthermore, LBCC acknowledges the role it plays as an institution of higher education that receives public funds to educate as wide an audience as possible. Such funds need demonstrative proof that our college is capable of meeting the expectations of its various stakeholders while fulfilling its stated educational goals. When this GEO Assessment Initiative is embedded effectively within our larger institutional systems, the outcomes assessment we have achieved will help us focus our collective attention on the examination of our assumptions, and help us develop a shared academic culture truly dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education at LBCC.