



*Communication Matters: The NCA Podcast* | **TRANSCRIPT**  
Episode 44: NCA's Learning Outcomes in Communication Project

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\*\*Please note: This is a rough transcription of this audio podcast. This transcript is not edited for spelling, grammar, or punctuation.\*\*

**Participants:**

LaKesha Anderson  
Dave Bodary  
Elizabeth Goering  
Lynn Disbrow  
David Marshall

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**Introduction:**

This is *Communication Matters, The NCA Podcast*.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Hello, I'm LaKesha Anderson, Direction of Academic and Professional Affairs at The Communication Association, and I'm your host on *Communication Matters*, the NCA Podcast. Thank you for joining us for today's episode.

When students complete a program of study in communication, what should they know, understand, and be able to do? Today's episode of *Communication Matters: The NCA Podcast* addresses NCA's Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC) project, which sought to answer this question. In 2015, supported by a Lumina Foundation grant, NCA convened a group of 30 faculty leaders from around the nation to engage in a collaborative process to identify and articulate a set of learning outcomes for communication based on their extensive discussions about the discipline's core, career pathways for students, and feedback from stakeholders. More than five years later, LOC project participants David Bodary, Elizabeth Goering, Lynn Disbrow, and David Marshall join me to discuss the legacy of this project. First, a bit about today's guests.

David Marshall is a Professor of English and Director of the University Honors Program at California State University San Bernadino. In addition, Dr. Marshall is a Senior Scholar at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and has written on how to develop discipline-specific frameworks for creating impactful learning experiences for students. Marshall is a nationally known speaker and writer on higher education reform, design of coherent learning environments, and meaningful creation and use of learning outcomes, as well as a scholar of Medieval Literature and Medievalism in Popular Culture. Hi, David, and welcome to *Communication Matters*.



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**David Marshall:**

Thanks, LaKesha. It's a pleasure to be here.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Lynn Disbrow is Professor in the School of Communication and Media at Kennesaw State University. Dr. Disbrow served on NCA's Presidential Task Force on Competencies in Introductory Communication Courses and was Director of the association's then Educational Policies Board. In 1999, Disbrow was the recipient of NCA's Michael and Suzanne Osborn Community College Outstanding Educator Award. NCA's Lynn M. Disbrow Advisor of the Year Award recognizes a faculty advisor for the association's Sigma Chi Eta student organization who exemplifies Disbrow's dedication to students. Hi, Lynn, and welcome to the podcast.

**Lynn Disbrow:**

Thanks for having me.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Elizabeth Goering is Professor, Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Director of the "Human Communication in a Mediated World" online certificate in the Department of Communication Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Dr. Goering teaches a variety of courses including health communication and intercultural communication. Many of Goering's courses also incorporate service-learning opportunities that allow students to give back to the broader community. Goering has co-authored *Understanding Patients' Voices: A Multi-Method Approach to Health Discourse*. Hi, Elizabeth, and welcome to the podcast.

**Elizabeth Goering:**

Thanks, LaKesha.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

David Bodary is Professor in the Department of Communication and Service-Learning Coordinator in the Center for Teaching and Learning at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. Dr. Bodary has taught public speaking, interpersonal communication, small group communication, business communication, and more. Bodary is co-author of both *The Speaker's Compact Handbook*, 4th Edition, and *The Speaker's Handbook*, 10th Edition. In addition, Bodary was the recipient of NCA's 2015 Michael and Suzanne Osborn Community College Outstanding Educator Award. Hi, Dave, and welcome to the podcast.

**Dave Bodary:**

Thank you so much. It's just wonderful to be here.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

Thank you all. Okay. So let's get started. The first question is that all of you participated in the development of the Learning Outcomes in Communication (or LOCs). I would love to hear a bit from each of you about your perspective on the process.

**Lynn Disbrow:**

Well, I guess I'll jump in and start. The process was equal parts terrifying, exhilarating, and really rewarding. It's got to be an interesting journey when you get 30 communication scholars in a room to try to hash out these types of questions. And people bring their passions and they bring their biases and they also bring their real love for the discipline. And so when I think back through the process, I have to give David Marshall huge, huge, huge amounts of credit because he was able to keep us focused and corral us. And looking back over these materials of the culmination of the project again, I have to say they hold up like really well, and that's partially due to his leadership. I think much of that is part of his leadership. But I think also it really had to do with the commitment that people brought to this project and the desire to really do something that would be applicable across our various sectors of the discipline and different types of institutions, etc. So it was really very memorable, and I'm very, very proud that things have held up as well as they have.

**Elizabeth Goering:**

I totally agree with you, Lynn. I saw it as a real privilege to be part of that team. And one of the things I really valued was the diversity of the teams. There were people from research institutions, from two-year colleges, from liberal arts colleges, different regions of the country. And I think that diversity is partly what accounts for that strong product that we ended up producing. When I teach conflict, sometimes we talk about how compromise often not being the win-win situation that we think it is. It's often lose-lose. Nobody gets what they want or what they need. But I don't think that was the case here. I think we did compromise, we did create something that has enough flexibility to it that it allows different departments to sculpt and mold it into something really useful. I remember, David, you talked, I think it was the armature as a metaphor that you use and every department has to make it their own. And I borrowed that a lot when I was talking about it with my department. And I think that that diversity contributed to making it that strong, long-lasting project.

**Dave Bodary:**

I agree with you as well. In fact, I agree with both of you. The other thing I'm thinking about is kudos to the NCA staff. LaKesha, I think you were part of that, but I think Brad Mello was part of that and others. Because it isn't just about bringing people together. There is a process, and they helped us to sort of first get together but then also to become comfortable with one another. And of course, there were all those different groups represented. And as you suggested, Elizabeth, research one institutions but then there were community colleges, there were small universities, small colleges, they were all of this mix. And David's use of the metaphors, and the other metaphors



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I heard him use all the time and I kept drawing pictures in my head, was this idea of tuning. And I'm thinking, do we have an understanding of what tuning means? Because I'm thinking from a musical perspective and trying to find that note in the right way. That's tuning. But how does that relate to what we were doing? And yet David did such a beautiful job of helping us to come to that common understanding.

**David Marshall:**

I guess first I would say you are all far too kind. On my end of it, it felt an awful lot like kind of making things up as we went or as I went and just trying to make sure the conversation remained kind of forward moving and productive. And I have to say that was very easy to do. I was sort of the outsider in the rooms, not being a specialist in communication. And I learned a great deal, not just about your discipline but I learned a great deal about your community. It was one of the most collegial groups I've ever been able to participate in a project with. And the degree of thoughtfulness and respect that came in every exchange was downright inspiring, and I think it was that eagerness to work together as a kind of collective, as a team to produce something meaningful that really yielded the outstanding results that the LOCs project produced.

The LOCs project for NCA was really something of an experiment. Lumina Foundation recognized that tuning was geared towards creating discipline specific learning outcomes as I've already talked about. And they had the degree qualifications profile, the DQP, which described what a student should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of two years, four years, and six years or associates, bachelors, and masters. And what they recognized is that they were doing something similar. DQP even had a column for specialized knowledge that perhaps the results of tuning could plug into. And their question was, what kind of synergy can be produced if you put the two together, tuning in the DQP? And so NCA came along and said, well, why don't we try it? And we put together a kind of quasi-experimental approach where we split the group into three teams, and each team used a different sort of approach to pulling, tuning the DQP together. So it was really a kind of energizing experience for me to see a very different kind of approach to things or three very different approaches to things. And I think it went exceptionally well and produced outstanding results.

One of the interesting things that emerged out of that though is that my 30 colleagues in communication decided that whereas tuning would typically produce outcomes at the end of two, four, six years like the DQP does, they felt like the outcomes were really common across degree levels, and the difference was really in how you help students develop proficiency in those outcome areas and that that's what differentiated different levels. So they didn't create the kind of articulated model that the DQP used. They felt that was more about curricula and assignment design and that sort of thing and pedagogy.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

I think it's funny, Dave, you mentioned do we really understand what tuning means and trying to just figure out what that looks like. And I remember sitting in on sessions where people were literally trying to draw like what the hierarchy looked like and as far as like, here's the DQP and here's tuning and here's LOCs and what does all this look like together. I just remembered that. I had completely forgotten about that. But were literally trying to draw it out so we could understand it. But that actually leads us into our second question which is for David. Part of the process for developing the LOCs was mapping learning outcomes, or "tuning the discipline." So David, as a scholar with the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, you've written about "tuning." Can you talk a bit about what tuning involves and how the Degree Qualifications Profile (or DQP) framework guided the development of the LOCs?

**David Marshall:**

Absolutely. So fundamentally, tuning is asking the question, what do students know, understand, and what are they able to do as a result of completing a degree program? As we put together degree programs, we make an implicit claim that if students take a set group of courses, they lead up to some coherent meaningful whole. And I think what tuning asks those who engage in it to do is make explicit what that meaningful whole is, right? And it does so in terms of writing basically outcome statements that say, these are the core pieces of learning that we think our students need to have as they transition away from us and into further education or into the workforce. And so it's really a process of defining what that learning is and then allows faculty to work collectively to define what the learning experiences will look like to help students get there. And I think the key in all of this is that the learning outcomes like the LOCs project produced are not intended to be mandated for departments all across the country to use. Rather, again, I'll go back to the metaphor that Elizabeth referenced of an armature. It's really about creating kind of a skeleton that we can all basically agree on with some degree of consensus that is kind of what the discipline is really all about. And from there, a department can kind of make it their own and they can shape it and they can shape it based on what they perceive their strengths to be, what resources they have at their disposal, the particular kinds of students they serve. Dave is going to serve students at a very different level than somebody teaching at the master's level. And so we need to be cognizant of that. We need to think about how the curricula will differ in light of those different students that are being served. And so again, it's really about providing, as Cliff Adelman used to describe the outcomes from tuning, reference points that faculty can use to think about how their programs do things, right? And to that end, they become really effective design tools for thinking about how we want to put together curricula or revise curricula, and they can also be very useful in terms of figuring out how we're going to assess the degree to which what we're doing is having success with student strength and student learning.



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**LaKesha Anderson:**

Lynn, you have a strong background in curriculum development. How did you imagine the LOCs would be used to guide a department's conversations related to curriculum? How did you imagine the LOCs would be used to guide a department's conversations related curriculum, assessment, and assessment goals?

**Lynn Disbrow:**

I really love that question because you talk about guiding the curriculum. And as David just pointed out, these are not mandates, these are not requirements, but they're really suggestions hopefully based on expertise and care that we can carry into our departments. And one of the things I think we've all experienced is curriculum meetings where people can't get off the ground level. And by that, I mean they're very, very lovingly mired in the courses that they teach or even more lovingly mired in courses they may have designed. And it's difficult to get folks to move out of that particular frame. So one of the important things I think that the LOCs do for us is it gives us a 50,000-foot level, a very neutral, a very safe place from where to begin these conversations and talk about what's happening across the discipline and what may or may not be happening in our particular degrees. While I don't know that NCA would be super comfortable with me saying that they are considered an authority organization, I think they certainly are considered an important national organization, and I think they are treated by many departments and people as an authority on our particular discipline. And so again, it lifts the onus off of individual faculty members, it lifts the onus off of department chairs or school directors, and it gives a really safe, kind of elevated place to begin these conversations and then to work back down from that 50,000-foot level to our ground level where we're really putting these ideas into practice.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

So going from that 50,000-foot level, I'm going to ask Elizabeth to kind of hone it in a little bit on something that she's been doing in her program. Elizabeth, I've had the opportunity to learn from you in the past about what your undergraduate program at IUPUI is doing with the LOCs and how you're incorporating those into the undergraduate program. I think it's a model that could be used in many universities. But for everyone else, can you tell them a little bit about how your program utilizes the LOC? And can you talk a little bit about the portfolio program and what you feel students take from that process?

**Elizabeth Goering:**

Sure. We took advantage of the 2016 LOC convening that NCA hosted at IUPUI to begin this conversation and to begin using the LOCs to guide an intentional revisit of our curriculum. And we ended up agreeing on 10 program level learning outcomes that we wanted our majors to have when they left. You'll notice that's one more than what NCA gave us to work with. We added another one to it. But anyway, these are the things we think our students graduating from an urban



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university in the Midwest should know if they say they're communication majors. And we decided to couple it with e-portfolios. And so what we do is we use the e-portfolios as a tool to help students track and showcase their learning related to the competencies, and we build it in throughout the entire curriculum. So we have four core classes that are required in the major. In the gateway course, students are introduced both to the learning outcomes and to e-portfolios, and they're sent to workshops where they're taught to create e-portfolios. We use CN. That's the platform we use. And they create an e-portfolio and create folders for each of the LOCs that they are then supposed to populate with the evidence, with artifacts that demonstrate their learning related to those learning outcomes throughout their course of study. In the 200 and 300 level core classes, one is a theory class, the other is a research methods class. Their signature assignments that they're required actually to upload into their e-portfolios. In their elective classes, they're invited to try to upload and make use of the assignments that they're doing to continue to explore how am I accomplishing these goals, right? How am I attaining these competencies? In the capstone course, which is the final of the core required classes, the attention shifts to showcasing, and what we do is we ask students to pick three of the competencies and develop showcases that really demonstrate or prove their attainment of that competency. And so it might be related to their ability to design messages or it might be related to their ability to do research or it might be related to their understanding of diversity and how that affects communication processes. So they can take any of the of the learning outcomes and showcase their expertise in that.

The last part of your question is what I think students take from it. I think that the process is really beneficial to students for a couple of reasons. I think, first and foremost, it helps them become more aware of what it is they know and it helps them see how it all fits together. This really comes out a lot in the student feedback that we get. One comment sticks in my mind where a student wrote, that it helps me connect the dots of my education. And I think it also has the potential to help students transition into whatever comes after graduation. Because a digital resume like this that an e-portfolio provides is basically a written resume with proof, right? Because you've got the evidence there that shows I'm not just saying I can do this. Here, look, this is it. This is me doing it. And so I think it is a powerful tool in that regard, and not only being beneficial to students. It's really beneficial to us because it allows us to continue our ongoing program review. We can go back and look at our curriculum and see well, what are the learning outcomes that they're not getting. And then we can ask ourselves, is that because we're not teaching it to them or is it because we need to help them frame it differently, right? And so it allows us to have those conversations that are important to the department and to the program as well.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Dave, as a service learning coordinator at your institution, can you talk a bit about how faculty can incorporate LOCs into experiential learning and how that translates beyond the classroom?



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**Dave Bodary:**

It's exciting to me to be involved in the project because I began to see how well what we were doing at the community college level could fit into what was happening at the four-year level. And I'm thinking that both curricularly and co-curricularly. And in my head as a service learning coordinator, there's this continuum that I began to understand that kind of runs from students who do service work voluntarily, right? Unrelated to curriculum or their coursework, to students that are asked to do service projects curricularly, service learning perhaps, to then internships, co-ops, practicums, all of these things. And yet the learning outcomes in communication can be connected to all of those experiences, both co-curricular and curricular experiences. And so I thought that that was really useful. And you all will remember as we got into the later stages of the learning outcomes, we were struggling a bit with, I think it was number nine, influencing the public discourse. And so through that, I think we all began to understand that communication isn't just the set of bits of knowledge that we have to acquire, but it's how do we demonstrate it, how do we use it, how do we then change the world in which we live through our understanding and use of it. And so in many ways, that's exactly what service learning experiences allow us to do. I was lucky in my early years to sit near a faculty member who was very engaging with lots of highly engaged learning activities. It wasn't necessarily service learning. They didn't go outside the classroom. But they were doing games or projects or activities that got them very actively involved. And so then they would have to apply the knowledge. I got to watch that in a regular way and began to understand the connections, right? Between the curricular, those things that we're talking about in the classroom and the way in which then that begins to be applied in the internships and the co-ops and the service learning experiences. So I thought the LOCs really helped us to make those connections and helped us to have those conversations about how they could work together.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

So we've talked a bit about what students get from incorporating the LOCs into both the classroom and outside the classroom. But Elizabeth, we know that sometimes others don't necessarily understand what the value of our degree is. So how can the LOCs help students better explain the value of the communication degree, for instance, to their parents who often want to know if their student will be employable with a particular degree or to potential employers who may not immediately understand the value of a communication degree?

**Elizabeth Goering:**

I think the LOCs, especially coupled with e-portfolio, can be very useful in this regard because it gives students a chance to show to their parents or potential employers what they have learned and the competencies they've acquired. And they're such practical the way, they're written, I mentioned a few of them when I was talking before. It's designing messages. It's understanding diversity. It's being able to think through the ethical implications of communication. It's being able





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to work collaboratively in a team. It's being able to do research. It's being able to formulate what you're doing in theory are grounded in theory. Those are all really useful things. And when parents and employers hear that your students can do it, I think that's persuasive to them. And the e-portfolio and LOC together gives them a language to talk about it. And the e-portfolio I think works in combination with the LOCs when you have students reflect on what they have learned and if you teach them effective storytelling strategies. Because essentially what they're doing is telling the story of who they are as an emerging communication professional. And so we intentionally embed that or integrate that into our courses so that they're learning how to reflect and then reflect their reflection in the way they tell the story. And that's I think what makes it work in terms of communicating to other audiences what communication studies majors can do.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Great. So we've talked a lot about how students can benefit from the LOCs and how as faculty, we can incorporate the LOCs. But Lynn, I wanted to get your perspective as both someone who has experiences both as a professor and a dean, what is your perspective on how faculty and department chairs can use the LOCs to better advocate for their programs to administrators?

**Lynn Disbrow:**

Thanks for that question, LaKesha, because even though six years is in an incredibly long period of time, a lot has happened in higher education over those six years, right? And so there are really three sets of information data or metrics you can use, whatever word you like, that deans are very concerned about when it comes to allocating resources and even promoting programs and disciplines. Our retention, how are we retaining our students? How are our students progressing? So our progression. And then the last one is placement, which Elizabeth just talked about, right? So those three metrics are really important to deans, and they're important to deans because it allows us to advocate to upper administration for things that we need, be it faculty lines, be it other types of resources, even research space, software, you name it, that all of those metrics contribute to that. So bringing it back to the question about the LOCs. So the LOCs do a couple of things for us. The first thing that it does is allows us through assessment to identify any places where we may have curricular gaps that would allow learning to lapse for our students. And I hope that NCA still has these materials because there's just an awesome assessment matrix in the body materials. I'm going to put a plug out there. Like everybody should contact the national office if you don't have a copy of the packet, be it digitally or hard copy. Get it because it's really good, right? So there's a good assessment matrix that takes these LOCs and looks at them from an introductory development or mastery level and allows, just as an example, not as a mandate, and allows a department to really look at those and plug in their courses and see what type of learning journey they are charting for their student in this way.



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And then, as I mentioned, identify the lapse where that might be falling apart. Those lapses or those ellipses in learning is really what begins to drive the conversation. Because when a student becomes disengaged, when they don't see the relevance, when they don't see a connection, when they aren't led to increasingly difficult curriculum, no matter if it's a two-year degree, a minor, a major, a master's program, that's when you lose them. That is when you lose them. So not only will you not retain those students, you also won't to allow those students to progress. Now the second thing, that little placement piece of information is important too. You can make sure that a student is truly learning and integrating what you value as an institution, as a community, and as a department as they go through their degree. But as Elizabeth already pointed out for us, if a student can't demonstrate how it becomes relevant in the real world of work, they're going to find themselves to be very frustrated, and that can have a backlash, right? Against a student's life, against the institution, and against the major in many ways. And I think we're doing our students a huge disservice if that relevancy and importance isn't really made clear to them. So helping us follow these LOCs on a map to present back to an administrator here's why this part of our program is so strong, here's where these learning lapses are occurring, this is what we really need to make sure that our students have the ability to very relevantly use, what we are teaching them in the workplace, right? In their career path.

Those are the types of arguments that will resonate very well. But it requires work. It really requires work on behalf of the department to sit down and have these conversations and analyze things and do assessment in a real way. And personally, and this is the views of Lynn Disbrow and nobody else, right? We run into trouble when we allow software or management systems to really guide the way we approach assessment and the way we approach the development of learning for our students. The student experience, learning should be at the heart of everything we do as educators no matter the discipline. And it's one of the things I think I'm most proud of with this LOC project is learning is at the heart and continues to be at the heart of every conversation we have about the students. It's our job to help them discover knowledge, and this project allows us then to do that in a very, as I said, not in a defensive way but in a way that keeps students at the heart of it. So as a former dean, that's the way I would love to see every single department use learning outcomes and assessment, dovetailing together to address those three metrics that we have to address.

**LaKeshia Anderson:**

Dave as a community college professor, you have the opportunity to prepare students both for transition to the four-year institution or perhaps for entering the workforce. Can you talk to us a little bit about how you help LOCs prepare students for those transitions and specifically to the four-year environment?



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**Dave Bodary:**

Well, I'm not sure that my students are ever going to understand the impact that the LOCs may have had on their transfer or even into their career unless we don't do it well. Because they're going to realize, they get to that four-year school, that they're well prepared and that they're jumping right in. And I think that's what our research suggests is that students who have graduated from a community college in large part are better suited than the majors that arrive as freshmen to those university campuses. And I think Lynn's ideas about the retention, the progression, and the placement play into that as well, right? Because here are students who are a little bit older, they certainly have a better sense of what they want to do, they've made a choice about their major. And so they're less likely probably at the four-year school now to transition or change that. And so that helps in terms of their progression and also in terms of their eventual placement. But where it does help, helping me as a chair to have a conversation with either the curriculum person at a transfer institution, as we sort of sit down, maybe it's with the chair of a four-year school, as we sit down to take a look at our transfer agreement and say, all right, here's the courses that we offer, here's the outcomes that we're attempting to achieve, how well are we matching up with what your needs are. And that's where the conversations between chairs at those respective institutions I think have really been, have the opportunity anyway to really be better informed and to match up. And it's been really cool for me to be able to understand that you know what? We're doing a fine job helping our students get ready, and in fact, they are being successful as they transfer into those regional or state or even private institutions that my students in Dayton, Ohio might be accessing. So I think the LOCs are really helpful. It's the coherence that we're moving and we're progressing in an intentional way. And while the students may not realize it, I think as faculty, as chairs, as deans, we have been intentional about it, and I think it's working pretty well. It has the potential to work better if I could plug, like Lynn did, more people to access those learning outcomes through the NCA office and begin to reflect on how are we using these and how could we help to ensure effective transfer articulation of credit from one institution to another.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

So I also want to talk a bit about the future of the LOCs and projects like it. David, how has the DQP been revised and how might we look at revamping or revitalizing our LOCs given the changes coming up with the third iteration of the DQP?

**David Marshall:**

Okay. So in terms of the DQP and the DQP going forward, the degree qualifications profile is currently under review and revision, and it's being given to review boards that are considering it in light of how it's been used over the last several years and the results that have that have come from it and it's been used very widely in very many different ways. And so all of the feedback that's come from that is being taken into consideration as work is being done to update it. As far as what kinds of changes we might expect, I'll take my lead from three of the four authors of the



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DQP. Cliff Adelman unfortunately passed a few years ago. But Paul Gaston, Carol Geary Schneider, and Peter Ewell are all still with us and working with Lumina. And they posted a series of blogs over the summer where they each sort of thought a bit about what might need to be considered in a revision, and each author considered one aspect. Paul Gaston suggested that while the DQP had been mindful of kind of alignment to employability and employment spaces, it wasn't explicitly so. He suggests that the revision really needs to be much more explicit in thinking about how the kinds of learning that are described in the DQP are preparatory for transition into the workspace and the building of careers. And that is a function of application of knowledge and application of learning.

And application of learning is what Carol Geary Schneider writes about as well. But her interest is really in, and her recommendation is really in doing some revision and updating in terms of preparation for participation in democracy. And she sort of looks at our current moment and the sort of strains that our democracy has been put under in the last several years and has thought that maybe there needs to be much more explicit thinking about the ways in which learning and knowledge described in the DQP can be applied in the civic square in order to produce a healthier democracy. And so Paul and Carol are really thinking about application in different spaces and wanting to see the DQP be more mindful of application in those spaces.

Peter Ewell is really sort of inspired by the strain that higher education was put under by the pandemic in his blog and thinking about the degree to which online and asynchronous learning can be thought about with the DQP and how it might inspire the DQP to kind of expand its vision a little bit. And he's very interested in thinking about competency-based programs. He mentions College for America, which is a program by Southern New Hampshire University, that really sort of works with competency-based learning. And if you're not familiar with competency-based learning, it basically awards some college credit based on assessed competency in particular learning areas. The DQP, he says, can be a tool for defining those areas. And then it also provides learning experiences that are assessed for competency as a means of building knowledge and building learning towards the awarding of a degree. And so he would like to see the DQP be more mindful of these kinds of programs because there's a, I think on his part, a tacit recognition that the traditional two or four or six-year model of learning doesn't work for everybody. And so we may need alternative modes of higher education for people for whom traditional modes don't work. And so the competency-based approach really becomes a means of addressing that need.

So those are three of the sort of core areas that they recommend seeing revision. Now as that relates to the LOCs, I'm really intrigued by how my colleagues might respond to those three recommendations by those three DQP authors. Might the LOCs be revised in a way that really highlights alignment to workplace proficiencies? Might it be revised in ways that really emphasize participatory democracy? And are there ways in which it could be framed as being attentive to



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alternative modes of higher education like competency-based learning? So on some level, I think that that's a part of this question I can't really answer, being a medievalist and not a specialist in communication. So I think I would have to leave it to my colleagues to address that final part.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

So I have one final question to wrap things up. And that is what do you feel the value of having LOCs is to the discipline and how do the LOCs show that communication matters? I'll let each of you take a crack at that.

**Dave Bodary:**

LaKesha, it's a great question. And I think that communication clearly matters, and I think to those true believers among us, it doesn't take much effort to convince us. But then how do we convince others? And that's where, as I look at the national news and I see what's going on civically across the nation, I begin to ask myself, well, what are those learning outcomes in communication and why do they matter? All right. Well, let's just take a look at some of them, right? So we're talking about employing communication theories, engaging in communication inquiry, creating messages appropriate to the audience, to the purpose, to the context, critical analysis of messages. I mean these things seem to be pretty darn relevant, and I've only got halfway through the list. So as we begin to think further, issues relating to self-efficacy, to ethical communication. I'll try not to pause long there but yeah. And then also as we consider embracing difference and the way in which that has become such a central part of the conversation of what does it mean to be an American right now and what is my responsibility to not just myself but to my neighbor as well and then obviously, what are we doing to influence the public discourse? There's a whole lot of things that are relevant here, and we got a lot of work to do as I would see it. And I think the LOCs help us to focus in on what that work that needs to be done.

**Elizabeth Goering:**

I will go ahead and jump in. I really was taken by what David was talking about in terms of these three ways of revisioning DQP. And I see the LOCs as being so relevant in terms of every single one of them. And what Dave Bodary was just talking about, you can see in terms of proficiency in the workplace, in terms of participatory democracy, in terms of re-envisioning higher education, all of those competencies that you were listing are critical to being able to have those conversations and to make that happen. So my plug would be when you put that together with e-portfolio which gives students an opportunity to reflect on those connections and to showcase those connections, they can begin to see it and then they become the strongest army that we can have in terms of getting the word out that communication matters. And they would be able to do it within a framework of being able to articulate why and what the specific competencies are that are making them make a difference or allowing them to make a difference in the world.



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**Lynn Disbrow:**

And I'm going to follow with what Elizabeth and Dave have both presented and kind of moving from that 50,000-foot level that we talked about and Elizabeth brings us kind of to the 10,000-foot level. And I'm and I'm going to bring it down a little bit further and in a slightly different direction. Even though we are a discipline that's been around for thousands of years, depending on where your discipline is placed in an institution, people may only understand a small sliver or can only envision a very, very small skill-based set of what communication really is. And in that way, I think in some places, our discipline and our students are done a great disservice because there isn't a way an easy way to demonstrate the beauty of the breadth of what we do and to be able to express the value not only that we hold as people and that our discipline holds but also the more extrinsic value of what we provide across an institution and in any major, any other discipline being able to couple with them and to find synergy in how we're bringing things along. So when I really think about the value of the LOCs to the discipline, it allows us to in a very orderly way lay out exactly what we stand for and what we do. And if you think about, these things are so part and parcel of our training as academics and as members of higher ed, they're kind of second nature to us, but they're quite revelatory to those who haven't really thought about our purpose and why we've been able to thread back the study of human communication thousands of years, right? We all communicate. So everybody thinks it's easy. And it's one of the things that I've really loved so much being back in the classroom after a few years is hearing students say, I never thought about that before, I've never had to consider that before. And many administrators and in general, administrations need to have that same light bulb moment. I was not aware that all of this was happening in your discipline. For a while it was, I thought it was only public speaking or I thought it was only looking at search engine optimization in a program, right? They have such a narrow view. But it lays out the landscape so beautifully and in such a non-threatening way that it helps really promote us well and to promote our ability to move an entire institution forward as opposed to only moving a small department forward. And that's what I see as a value.

**LaKesha Anderson:**

Thank you for joining me today on *Communication Matters*. I hope that this episode has offered some insight into the value of a degree in communication and how you can incorporate LOCs into your work with students. To learn more about the LOCs, visit [natcom.org/LOC](http://natcom.org/LOC).

**NCA News:**

In NCA news, if you're working on your syllabi for the Spring semester, be sure to check out the recently updated and expanded teaching and learning section of NCA's website. The section includes syllabi for both undergraduate and graduate communication courses, sample statements that can be included in your next syllabus, and more. Explore NCA's teaching and learning resources today at [natcom.org/teaching-and-learning](http://natcom.org/teaching-and-learning). Also, in NCA news, we hope to see you next week in Seattle for the NCA 107th Annual Convention. As you prepare to attend the



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convention, visit NCA's recently updated Convention and COVID-19 webpage to learn more about the precautions that NCA is taking to ensure an experience that is as safe and rewarding as possible. If you haven't yet done so, please upload your vaccine verification at [natcom.org/Convention-and-COVID](https://natcom.org/Convention-and-COVID) to save time during the registration process. And please bring a mask and backups. Wearing a mask is required in accordance with the Washington state renewed mask mandate that requires everyone to wear a mask indoors even, people who are fully vaccinated. Finally, listeners, *Communication Matters* will be taking a short break through the end of the year. We look forward to sharing new and exciting episodes in 2022, and we wish you and yours a happy, healthy holiday season.

**Conclusion:**

Be sure to engage with us on social media by liking us on Facebook, following NCA on Twitter and Instagram and watching us on YouTube. And before you go, hit subscribe wherever you get your podcasts to listen in as we discuss emerging scholarship, establish theory and new applications, all exploring just how much communication matters in our classrooms, in our communities and in our world.

The National Communication Association is the preeminent scholarly association devoted to the study and teaching of communication. Founded in 1914, NCA is a thriving group of thousands from across the nation and around the world who are committed to a collective mission to advance communication as an academic discipline. In keeping with NCA's mission to advance the discipline of communication, NCA has developed this podcast series to expand the reach of our member scholars' work and perspectives. *Communication Matters*, organized at the national office in downtown Washington DC, is produced by Assistant Director of External Affairs and Publications Chelsea Bowes with writing support from Director of External Affairs and Publications Wendy Fernando and Content Development Specialist Grace Hébert. Thank you for listening.

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