Measuring Up
Quantifying the quality of an Emory education

It is a rallying cry to the crisis in U.S. higher education. Or it is a ridiculous right-wing parody of social science. It will expose a generation of college graduates lacking even the most basic skills and knowledge. Or it will impose the kind of stifling, lockstep testing regimen on higher education that the No Child Left Behind Act brought to K through 12 education.

Even though the words “student learning outcomes assessment” might elicit more blank stares than impassioned defenses, it is a hot debate in academe. And it is heating up at Emory.

Arguing that colleges and universities are not held accountable for the quality of graduates and that the U.S. system of higher education is slipping in global competitiveness, the U.S. Department of Education and others have pushed for an accreditation process that emphasizes cost, efficiency, productivity, and standardized measures of how much students are learning, rather than “inputs” such as resources, faculty quality, and facilities. Calls for greater accountability from organizations like the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, the growing emphasis on measurement with the influence of the U.S. News and World Report...
nothing at stake for the students, but they complete a series of questions and tasks that do test knowledge and skills in their discipline. It’s for colleges to examine themselves, not so much to examine the students.”

Others say it’s not so simple. “I’m not afraid of assessment,” says Wendy Newby, assistant dean for undergraduate education in Emory College and director of faculty resources for inclusive instruction. “But when it comes to a liberal arts education I’m not sure any of us can define it in a way that is easily or even adequately measurable. How do you define what you will measure? The question eventually becomes, What is the goal of a liberal arts education and, when measuring components, are you capturing the essentials of the experience?”

A growing number of standardized surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), attempt to frame a response. Emory College took part in the NSSE, which gauges nationwide student participation in learning and personal development activities, for the first time in 2006, and Oxford College began participating every other year in 2005. Teodorescu says one assessment tool Emory might consider is the CLA (which aims to test reasoning and written communication skills by having students analyze complex material), but he adds that it is costly and does not gauge critical skills such as creative thinking and the ability to collaborate. “I don’t think we should invest too much in standardized tests,” he says. “The main benefit is they allow you comparison with other institutions.”

Bauerlein emphasizes, however, that they also offer a longitudinal view of student development. With the NSSE, for example, “Emory should be able to look at its freshmen scores from four years ago and then look at the seniors and see how the same group changed its habits. Do they read more books on their own as seniors? Or did the number go down? Do they go to more performing arts events? It’s not to test students; it’s to see how we are changing the intellectual lives of these kids from the time they get here to the time they leave. And the results may not be very nice.”

Such revelations notwithstanding, many balk at the notion of measurable standards for qualities that are tough to quantify. “Can any art history departments agree on a defined set of fundamental facts that have to be known?” asks Associate Professor of Biology Bill Kelly. “What biology departments are going to completely agree on such a set? Do we want to start teaching how to take a standardized test at the collegiate level? That’s what’s happening at the high school level.”

Psychology professor Steven Nowicki adds, “My background is measurement, and I learned from the very get-go that there are certain things you cannot measure objectively. To me, it’s the difference between online education and face-to-face education. Online education is probably a much more efficient way to convey facts. But when you’re face to face with somebody, there’s teaching that goes on nonverbally between members of a class and a teacher. I don’t think that can be easily captured in a test.”

Indeed, write Richard Shavelson and Leta Huang of the Stanford University Education Assessment Laboratory in a 2003 Change magazine article, “The common one-size-fits-all mentality is likely to reduce the diversity of learning environments that characterizes and gives strength to our national higher education system.”

Some Emory administrators are encouraging a compromise approach that would keep assessment local, but that would also place much responsibility for it on faculty. “Departments need to go back and look carefully at what they’re doing,” Newby says. “They need to discuss what they
think they want their students to know, which courses are really lending themselves to that kind of exploration, and how to measure the outcome. What is the capstone experience going to be?”

“The faculty should be the owners of this process,” Teodorescu says, “because they are the ones who will use the results to improve teaching. It should be a continuous, sustainable process, and to be sustainable you have to have some champions in each program—faculty who like to innovate and test hypotheses related to their teaching.”

But not without support, Newby and Teodorescu are both quick to add. “Ideally, there will be a center for teaching and learning staffed by professionals who can help examine both curricula and instructional practices with faculty” Newby says. “Not a large professional force, but experienced professionals who could facilitate discussions of what we could do better.”

**JUST THE FACTS?**

What exactly, then, is up for scrutiny with assessment of learning outcomes? There is no easy consensus. “I think it’s important for students to know a lot of facts, figures, dates, stories, biographies,” says Bauerlein. “Rote memorization. I have seen too many students—too many people—come into a room and start talking in abstract, conceptual, theoretical terms about subjects, and when...”

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### Selected Results, 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement

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* Nineteen public and private universities that share Emory’s 2005 basic Carnegie classification

Emory responses First-years 300; Seniors 140 * Carnegie Peer responses First-years 9,500; Seniors 10,000

NSSE total responses First-years 118,000; Seniors 120,000

Continued on page 11
Our goals are so complex that learning outcomes assessment will measure only a small part of what takes place while our students are with us.

—WENDY NEWBY, ASSISTANT DEAN OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION, EMMORY COLLEGE, AND DIRECTOR OF FACULTY RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE INSTRUCTION

Academic Exchange: What does learning outcomes assessment mean to you?

Wendy Newby: Many people in the academy resist or fear assessment, but it can become an opportunity to re-evaluate and set clear goals for our purposes as educators. We are experiencing many changes at Emory, including striking changes in our student body, which is increasingly extraordinary and diverse. Many students in my freshman advising group are entering as second-term freshmen or even sophomores. They consider themselves to be ready to choose majors because they have been awarded credit for many general education requirements. Faculty discussions of learning outcomes assessment should lead to lively interchanges on how to shape the students we touch and how we might prepare them for the world they will enter. What can our liberal arts education offer these highly accomplished individuals? How can it enrich their lives? What are the tools that the next generation will need, and how do we teach those effectively? Some in the academy have chosen to use standardized assessment tools that measure particular components: writing, reading, or research skills. All of these are important, but I would prefer to see each department or program develop a capstone activity that incorporates the skills embedded in the rich disciplinary and interdisciplinary experiences of our college curricula. Each learning outcomes assessment would be unique to each division.

Learning outcomes assessment might also allow us to address some areas that have gone unnoticed until recently. Emory has not thought of itself as a setting where students need remediation.

I think it’s important for students to know a lot of facts [and] figures. . . . If you haven’t acquired that basic, empirical knowledge, the structure of reflection you build upon collapses.

—MARK BAUERLEIN, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, FORMER DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, 2003-2005

Academic Exchange: What got you interested in learning outcomes assessment?

Mark Bauerlein: The first thing was getting out of academia. If you are a professor, you never have to deal with broad data. You have a very small slice of students to deal with. You never have to look at admissions figures, average SAT scores, rates of applications and acceptance, the skills students have, their knowledge, their habits. You only encounter that with your twenty or thirty students per semester. It’s such a contained, miniscule experience, and let’s face it, you have no incentive for trying to understand those students in a wider context, because doing that is not going to get you a better salary increase, it’s not going to get you accepted for delivering a paper at a conference, and it’s a kind of service study that simply has no career benefit for you.

I had to start looking at a lot of these questions statistically, looking at big numbers, a national population. And that is quite a different picture from what you get when you walk into an Emory classroom.

AE: Do you advocate standardized testing of all undergraduates?

MB: What I would advocate, quite simply, is that we have low-stakes exit exams, ‘low stakes’ meaning they’re anonymous—nothing at stake for the students, but they complete a series of questions and tasks that do test knowledge and skills in their discipline. It’s for colleges to examine themselves, not so much to examine the students. It’s more about self-examination of college curriculum and college teaching, general education requirements, grade inflation.
And yet our retention rate in the college is somewhat lower than peer institutions. The retention committee appointed by [Emory College] Dean Bobby Paul and led by Dean Tom Lancaster is examining why this is true. One direction to look is at resources for faculty and students that will directly affect learning outcomes. Our emphasis has been on teaching so far and not on learning. I hope that our plans to develop a center for faculty that incorporates teaching and learning will come to pass. We need it now more than ever.

**AE:** *How is learning outcomes assessment different from the existing required coursework and exams?*

**WN:** Coursework and exams are essential structures for learning. It would be helpful, though, for the object of the learning experience to be defined and contextualized, so that if the question is asked, *Why is this an essential part of your curriculum?*, faculty can explain the value of each activity within the whole of the curriculum they have established. It is not uncommon for there to be gaps in the overall learning experience. One example was shared at a recent conference on learning assessment. When faculty at another institution examined the curriculum, they found they were not teaching a course in ethics for their science majors, something they felt was very important. Their assessment led to an essential change.

**AE:** *What’s the next step?*

**WN:** Right now I think we need to enter into a community discussion, and it needs to start at the departmental level. The SACS review is in 2014. This gives us a wonderful opportunity to plan ahead. Ideally, there will be a center for teaching and learning staffed by professionals who can help us examine both curricula and instructional practices with faculty. Not a large professional force, but experienced professionals who could facilitate discussions of what we could do better. In the meantime, we need to develop a core of interested faculty who will lead such discussions.

I believe we could benefit from further definition of what we want our students to learn and to become. Some of this has been described in our strategic plan, but those are aspirational goals, and we need to determine how they can be put into practice. Many of the outcomes of the educational experiences of our students are recognizable to those of us who trace their progress, but not measurable, such as emotional growth and personal development. Our goals are so complex that learning outcomes assessment will measure only a small part of what takes place while our students are with us. But a discussion of learning outcomes and their assessment by departments, by programs, and ultimately by the college together will provide us with a better sense of our mutual purpose and how to achieve it. That would be the best possible outcome.

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The impression a lot of people have is you’re strapping someone into a chair, giving them a number 2 pencil to fill in the blank, and asking the most minute, factual, trivial questions. Now, I think it’s important for students to know a lot of facts, figures, dates, stories, and biographies. Rote memorization. I have seen too many students—too many people—come into a room and start talking in abstract, conceptual, theoretical terms about subjects, and when you ask them about basic facts, they can’t answer the question. If you haven’t acquired that basic, empirical knowledge, then I think the structure of reflection you build upon collapses. I try not to cringe when people talk about developing higher-order thinking skills or critical thinking; you can’t do much critical thinking about rights in America if you don’t know the rights contained in the First Amendment. And you don’t stop there, of course. You build upon those facts and revise them.

Facts can change. But the majority of facts are pretty firm these days; it’s at the edges that things get fuzzy. That is one portion of how knowledge gets assessed. Some tests will show a picture of a theater on a street, and underneath a sign saying “colored entrance,” and ask students to explain this. That’s asking them to say something intelligent about an entire social system at the time.

Finally, another side is habits and attitudes assessment. By that I mean surveys that ask questions about what people like to do or what they have done in class. Put it this way: 80 percent of undergraduates read 4 books or less in a year. Those could be any books. This goes to the general intellectual climate of the campus. Emory should be able to look at its freshmen scores from four years ago and then look at the seniors and see how the same group changed its habits. Do they read more books on their own as seniors? Or did the number go down?

Do they go to more performing arts events? It’s not to test students; it’s to see how we are changing the intellectual lives of these kids from the time they get here to the time they leave. And the results may not be very nice.

**AE:** *Has the report of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education (the “Spellings Report”) influenced your thinking?*

**MB:** I don’t think the Spellings Report is going far, but assessment isn’t going away. The push is probably going to come from the private sector, corporate America, businesses, manufacturers. People are worried about schools not performing. Employers are complaining that graduates are coming into their workplaces and need to be retrained because their reading and writing and math skills are so poor. Colleges need to start examining their own graduates because college graduates are going into the workplace unprepared.
The New Curriculum
Medical student education in the twenty-first century

GORDON CHURCHWARD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MICROBIOLOGY AND IMMUNOLOGY; CHAIR, FOUNDATIONS OF MEDICINE STEERING COMMITTEE

INTERVIEW DAY. Another smartly turned-out youngster comes into the interview room. Her academic accomplishments are a given (we aren’t supposed to peek at the grades until after the interview). His personal statement (which, like all the others, is strangely unrevealing) catalogues an impressive record of accomplishments in community service, sometimes local, sometimes international. But as the interview proceeds, we nearly always get beyond this carefully constructed façade, and an image of the real person emerges—bright, engaged, compassionate, caring. Life-long passions are revealed—dance, literature, art. Keen interests are discussed—fantasy football, soccer, the contrasts between baseball and cricket. Moral dilemmas are exposed—how involved should I become in my sibling’s battle with addiction; how should I relate to the parent who walked out on the family. At the end of an hour (I often run late), I am thinking that this person could make the kind of physician that I would want to take care of me. At the end of the day, I have to rank the candidates according to a scale—talk about a Lake Wobegon effect. And the best will come to Emory School of Medicine.

How do we educate these extraordinary young people and help them develop their potential to become leaders in their chosen profession, while maintaining the very best of their personal characteristics that will enable them to be caring, ethical physicians who can empathize with their patients? Medical education in the United States has, for the last hundred years, followed the plan laid out in the Flexner Report. (A non-technical account of Flexner and his impact on medicine in this country appears in John M. Barry’s description of the 1918 flu pandemic, *The Great Influenza.*)

Medical schools are affiliated with institutions of higher learning. Medical school training consists of basic science education followed by clinical training. At each step along the way the students are monitored for basic competency by grueling examinations administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). The educational activities of medical schools are closely monitored by their accrediting organization, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).

Since the Flexner Report was published, the science underlying the practice of medicine has undergone a series of revolutions due to discoveries in physiology, biochemistry, molecular biology, and genetics. Our understanding of ourselves, from the organism level to the cell and molecular level, increases at an extraordinary rate. Yet the time available to impart this knowledge to our students has remained unchanged. The NBME examinations act as a curriculum straightjacket, reducing education to “Will it be on the test?” Our knowledge of the scientific basis of human disease, albeit incomplete, makes the division between scientific and clinical training obsolete. Social pressures shape the practice of medicine. How are physicians supposed to care for, as opposed to process, patients in an era of the fifteen-minute office visit? How will today’s students be trained to deal with the anticipated increase in demand for geriatric services?

Many schools have grappled with these kinds of issues. The LCME has promulgated standards intended to address some of them. In addition to their general standards, LCME insists on training in community health, end-of-life care, family violence, multicultural aspects of medical practice, nutrition, and preventive medicine. In addition, schools have changed the way they teach students. Organ system-based curricula, in which basic science content is integrated into discussions of pathology and pathophysiology affecting each of the major systems of the body, have become increasingly common. Some schools still rely heavily on didactic lectures, while others have moved to problembased learning in small-group discussion formats.

Our approach has been to examine other schools’ responses and to reflect on how we can combine the best ideas with the extraordinary resources that exist at Emory to design a new curriculum that will serve as a model for the twenty-first century in the same way that Flexner’s ideas served as a model for the last century. Our goal is to create a learning environment that fosters creativity, sustains curiosity, and leaves abundant opportunity for our students to pursue their own interests. We want our students to learn their trade from our master clinicians. We want to emphasize clinical care throughout the curriculum. We want to escape the confines of a curriculum solely dictated by the NBME examinations. We want to break
from the stultifying grind of endless lectures. Above all we want to foster an environment where the students are partners in their own education and we, as faculty, take on the role of guides rather than instructors drilling students for the test.

To accomplish these goals, the medical school’s Dean Tom Lawley set up a committee whose charge was to examine and make recommendations about all aspects of the education mission of the school. A plan evolved from these deliberations. The curriculum would consist of four phases. The first eighteen months, the Foundations phase, would begin by presenting a subject surprisingly much underrepresented in medical school curricula—human health and what it means to be healthy—followed by an integrated organ system-based presentation of human disease. Clinical training coordinated with curriculum content would begin in the third week and continue throughout the eighteen months. After a break for preparation, NBME examination, and recovery, the students would begin the second phase, the year-long Applications phase. This phase would include the major clinical rotations. Following the Applications phase, the students would enter the Discovery phase, in which every student would be expected to carry out a scholarly investigation in a field of particular interest to them. This might, depending upon the student, be extended to permit the student to follow a degree program in another discipline. Finally, the students would reassemble for the final Translation phase, in which they would undergo training to permit them to excel in their chosen residencies. This would include a capstone summation of their medical training.

So what is new? First, in the Foundations phase, there is a large reduction in the number of lectures, compared with the current curriculum, and increased time available for faculty- and self-directed independent study. Second, we have instituted a system of faculty mentors so that small groups of students meet with a mentor twice a week for both instruction and mentoring. These groupings will continue throughout the students’ time at Emory. This system formalizes the student-mentor relationship, and it ensures that all our students have a mentor to guide them through the sometimes-turbulent currents of their training. Third, all students will be expected to engage in scholarly activity. Graduation from Emory will mean more than facility at preparing for the exam. Finally, training in the clinical years will include further advanced instruction in the relevant basic science, at a time when the students are better equipped to appreciate its significance.

So what are the problems? When asked about their efforts at curriculum reform, colleagues at other schools use phrases like “blood on the floor.” No blood has been spilled yet. It is understandably difficult for everyone to accept the need for extensive change when, by any objective measure, our current curriculum yields outstanding results. The NBME scores of our students are as good as any in the nation, and an astonishing fraction of our students gain their first choice of residencies. But we are a collegial faculty and, despite sometimes significant differences of opinion, I have yet to meet anyone who, when challenged, does not admit that we could do better by our outstanding students.

So what has been the effect of the reform? There has been a tremendous engagement on the part of both basic science and clinical faculty members. People who were not aware of one another’s existence a short while ago are talking. The teaching mission of the School of Medicine has been a given a new prominence. For me, one of the most impressive aspects of the reform has been the willingness of outstanding faculty to devote enormous amounts of time to make sure that we grasp this opportunity and make it a tremendous success.

So are there other critical factors? There is one. The new School of Medicine building is open for business. We could not hope to succeed without this extraordinary new home. It has state-of-the-art facilities for student training using standardized patients (role playing actors). It has a complete operating theater and ICU recovery suite set up for simulation training and observation. It is the best facility for medical education in the country. And, architecturally, it is stunning.

So where are we? At the time of writing, the first-year class is about to begin its fifth week of the new curriculum. They have spent a week in orientation being jabbed and poked and doing all the online training required for them to set foot on a ward. They have spent a week shadowing health care teams in the hospitals and have discussed this experience with their mentors as their transition from patient to doctor begins. They have listened to a series of presentations from eminent Emory faculty about different aspects of health care and have begun to learn how to take a patient’s history and perform a physical examination. They have finished their first week of coursework and taken their first test. They have heard from their friends at other schools who have gone from being anxious and apprehensive to being more anxious and overwhelmed. They, on the other hand, seem relaxed and are enjoying themselves while getting down to the work of becoming a caring, ethically grounded physician. It looks like all the hard work is going to pay off.
Practicing Diversity in the Academy
Uncovering and engaging Emory’s racial past and present

LESLIE HARRIS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY; DIRECTOR, TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY PROJECT; CHAIR, AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES; AND JONELL (JODY) USHER, CO-DIRECTOR, TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY PROJECT

How can we be a better community? How can we talk more honestly and openly about race—both incidents of racial insensitivity and racism, but also positive aspects of racial difference and diversity, and what race means at Emory, and in our lives? And how can we move from honest conversations and dialogue to actions that will help us transform the way we see and move through the world at Emory and beyond?

A series of difficult events in Emory College in 2003-2004 inspired several groups of people to begin asking these questions, giving rise to the Transforming Community Project. The project is a five-year program to provide spaces in which members of the Emory community (staff, faculty, students, administrators, alumni) can come together to deliberate on and develop creative responses to issues of race on Emory’s campus—both issues that come up in our day-to-day work lives, and the long history of race at Emory, and how that history impacts this institution’s identity.

To that end, a year-long planning process in 2004-2005, during which several hundred faculty, staff, students, and alumni weighed in on the shape of the project at various points, resulted in the dual prongs of the Transforming Community Project: Exploration of racial issues in “Community Dialogues” that cross racial and hierarchical lines; and the recovery of Emory’s racial history. The project, part of the university’s strategic plan, is funded through the “Creating Community, Engaging Society” initiative.

The Community Dialogues are currently the most popular aspect of the project and the main engine of its work: small groups of Emory community members commit to eight meetings over meals to learn about parts of the university’s racial history, to discuss the impact of race on their lives at Emory today, and to work towards individual and collective leadership and action that will build on the positive aspects of racial diversity, addressing areas where Emory can still grow. These groups are moderated by members of the Emory community who have already participated in dialogues and who themselves demonstrate diversity—so you might have a student-staff, male-female, white-black pairing.

To date, more than five hundred individuals have participated in the two years of Community Dialogues; we expect to have had close to one thousand participants by the end of summer 2008.

The second area of the project is the recovery of Emory’s racial history. Emory community members can sign up for Gathering the Tools, which meets on the same schedule as the Community Dialogues. Groups receive basic training in archival research and oral history as well as an introduction to Emory’s racial history and help with formulating a research project. The goal of these research projects can be to publish an essay in a traditional format, but often participants go for more creative choices. At the moment, individuals or small groups are planning to write a play about the history and mystery behind Kitty, the slave woman whose controversial ownership by Bishop Andrew of Oxford College led to the northern-southern split in the Methodist Church; a public art installation that will identify specific places on campus with signal moments in Emory’s racial history; and a project based on the StoryCorps idea tentatively titled “Story Stream,” in which participants will enter a booth on campus and relate their experiences of race at Emory.

In addition to Gathering the Tools, the TCP has worked with the summer Scholarly Inquiry and Research Experience program to
Uncovering the Past, Looking to the Future
Experiencing a community dialogue at Emory

Kate Sweeney, Director, Educational Research, Emory College

The only physical reminder that part of Emory’s Atlanta campus was once a slave-owning plantation is a small graveyard tucked in a corner of the Clairmont campus. Hidden among the new buildings, this graveyard represents part of our unmarked and often unknown past.

Like our physical environment, much of Emory’s history has been removed or paved over. This erasure has left a general lack of understanding within our community of the past and its connection to the present. Like the graveyard on the Clairmont campus, however, there are often pieces of information that either remain in view or are not far from the surface. If we dedicate time to drawing out our history, the hidden past may inspire change. The Transforming Community Project (TCP) has helped reveal some of the history of our institution, allowing me to both acknowledge our past and strive for a greater understanding of it. I have been able to start the process of tracing those connections between Emory’s history and our current environment—physical and mental, positive and negative.

My own scholarship on social stratification and the systems that keep inequities in place led me to join a TCP Community Dialogue (CD) group in summer 2006. Having a group of faculty, staff, and students come together from a variety of academic and personal backgrounds and discuss race created a chance to reflect on my own position as a white female, administrator, instructor, and newly minted Ph.D. As a sociologist and race scholar, I am familiar with race as a social construct. Yet the experience
of the CD made me think further about what this social construction means for me in particular and my interaction with the Emory community. It led me to investigate how I perpetuate stereotypical ideas about race through my daily actions—for instance, assuming the way I do things is the correct, best, and only way. Or not recognizing the many benefits I’m receiving in daily life by merely being white, like not having to wonder whether the people I work with will take me seriously when I bring up a concern.

Completing graduate school here at Emory and moving from student and part-time staff member to full-time administrator advanced my interest in how Emory as an educational institution perpetuates and dismantles disparities between groups. When the call came out from TCP for the summer faculty pedagogy seminar, I took advantage of the opportunity. The seminar brought together faculty from all areas of the university (several college departments, Oxford, the medical school, law school, and Grady) to learn about Emory’s history and discuss how best to incorporate the information into our own classes. While I had thought that our history must be linked to slavery—like that of most educational institutions at that time, particularly in the South—I didn’t know the specifics, nor had I looked for them. The day-to-day activities of university life often consume me, as I imagine they do most people on our campus. Dedicating the three hours a day for two weeks to the TCP seminar provided the time to dig further than I had before.

One question we explored is how unconscious racism bubbles through even work aimed at social equity. TCP introduced me to Andrew Sledd, a professor at Emory around the turn of the twentieth century. Sledd, a theologian, witnessed the lynching of Sam Hose, which led him to write an article, “The Negro: Another View,” for the Atlantic Monthly in 1902. The article condemned the treatment of African Americans in the South and later led then-president of the university James Dickey to ask for Sledd’s resignation. I found it important to learn about whites who challenged racism during their time, but I also recognized that Sledd’s actions were not completely commendable. While the article stressed that African Americans have inalienable rights, it also upheld white supremacist ideas and stereotypical images of black people as inferior to whites. Although this introduction to Sledd and other parts of our history removed a layer of dust, it also left me with unanswered questions about Emory’s racial past and present.

What struck me most during our discussions was that the stories we choose to tell perhaps reveal more about how we wish to remember the past than the actual events. The story of Kitty, which we discussed with anthropologist Mark Auslander during our visit to Oxford College, illustrates this phenomenon. Kitty was enslaved by Bishop Andrew, a supposed unwilling slave holder who inherited her when she was twelve. Historical records and folklore passed down through generations in the small town make it clear that she had some special status, but the meaning of that status is disputed. Two specific landmarks memorialize Kitty in the white Oxford community. One is “Kitty’s Cottage,” and the other is a cemetery stone strategically located in the racially segregated Oxford cemetery. The building named Kitty’s Cottage is actually a recreated slave living quarters with what appears to be little attempt at historical accuracy. It consists of two rooms—which, as the historians in the group pointed out, is much larger than any slave home would have been at that time for a family, let alone one person—with a mis-match of furniture from various historical periods, and white siding and shutters on the exterior. (It is unclear whether the structure was actually ever her home.) In addition
to the cottage, a large stone was placed at the entrance of the white portion of the Oxford cemetery in the late 1930s with the story of Kitty engraved on it. It recounts the same story that is on a plaque in front of the cottage, which is the legend that whites in Oxford tell—the same story told in Gary Hauk’s coffee table book, *A Legacy of Heart and Mind: Emory Since 1836*, distributed across Emory as the history of the university. The story states that Bishop Andrew had Kitty as a slave by default and that she was given the option to go to Liberia or stay with the Andrew family. She “chose” to stay in Oxford with the Andrew family in 1841, and, according to folklore, lived as if she were free. Even if she had been given these two options, however, there would have been little actual choice between moving to a country where she knew no one or staying with her friends and family in Oxford. In addition, the idea that Bishop Andrew was a reluctant slave owner neglects the fact that he was indeed a slave owner: while the memorials of Kitty portray her as living as if she were free, she was still an enslaved person without the rights of a free person. Kitty became a symbol used to uphold a romanticized view of slavery, loyalty, and family values. While I cannot possibly do this story or the history behind it justice, multiple sources show that version of Kitty’s story displayed in the graveyard and at her cottage and the meaning behind it is disputed (see Mark Auslander’s working paper, January 2001, Center for Myth and Ritual in American Life, www.marial.emory.edu/pdfs/kittydoc.pdf).

I continue to be struck by the legends that we as institutions, communities, and individuals tell. What are our other Kitty stories, and why do we tell them? Why do we work so hard to keep them alive? How does the history on the surface and the hidden past influence us today on the Atlanta campus? While the Oxford cemetery and the stories of Kitty are a part of our history, they are kept at a distance—part of Oxford’s history that has been neatly separated from our own here in Atlanta. Yet the history of Oxford and our ties to it continue to influence us, because our history shapes who we are today as a community and institution. As an institution we are connected to a disgraceful history and a record of often-misplaced academic endeavors. The TCP process for me has emphasized the need to acknowledge our past as a starting point to discuss, confront, and challenge our present.

Where do we go from here? I left the TCP seminar with more questions than I went in with, but also with an enthusiasm to discover the answers. The fact that racial inequality and social inequities stem from such an extensive, complex history often interferes with attempts to change systems within our own communities and institutions. TCP is one way to document our history while dispelling myths, providing knowledge, challenging ideas, and sparking change on at least the individual level. Following the lead of the TCP seminar, I will incorporate the history of our own institution into the courses I teach. Whether students are learning about race relations, medicine, identity, or language, it is important for them to know the history behind current circumstances. Recent incidents at our own campus and across the country indicate that many students do not know the history behind blackface or why affirmative action was implemented. With individual efforts in the classroom, continued dialogue in the public arena, and additional support and resources at the institutional level, I think Emory has the opportunity to use our position as an educational leader to uncover our history, link it to our present, and use it to construct a path towards increased recognition in the future.

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you ask them about basic facts, they can’t answer the question. If you haven’t acquired that basic, empirical knowledge, then I think the structure of reflection you build upon collapses. I try not to cringe when people talk about developing higher-order thinking skills or critical thinking; you can’t do much critical thinking about rights in America if you don’t know the rights contained in the First Amendment.”

On the other hand, the facts can be slippery. “My students might not go into psychology, but they might be able to go into a completely other set of disciplines and be successful because they’ve learned a way of thinking and approaching problems, not because they have the facts you learn in psychology,” Nowicki argues. “I mean, the facts change every five years. What do we do then? The best teaching I do is generally when I’m walking with some kid after class, and we’re talking, and he sees the way I think, and I see the way he responds to something, and it has nothing to do with what’s going to be on the final.”

For Newby, the question of “outcomes” leads back to the greater social purpose of education. “How do you turn people into self-motivated learners who enjoy reading, who pursue knowledge for enjoyment and its value to society? You assume that after students have gone through certain classes that they have learned certain facts and information and can apply them in specific situations. Ultimately our goal is to create individuals who can solve tomorrow’s problems. And you do that by helping them develop strategies for lifelong learning and values toward those goals.”

Either way, Teodorescu says, “The departments should be given the flexibility to set their own methods. Assessment should not be solely driven by SACS accreditation requirements. It should be for improving teaching. The main benefit is better knowledge about your program and how well your students are learning.”—A.O.A.
The Great Rebellion
In CE 70, when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, they produced a trauma of unspeakable magnitude. [That structure] was recognized as one of the most magnificent treasures of the ancient world—smashed, burned, and leveled. For the Jews this was devastating beyond words. . . . The Jews had dared to revolt against the rulers of the Mediterranean and paid for it. Roman punishment for that act of rebellion was harsh, brutal. Why did the Jews rebel? The Romans had tolerated or at least were indifferent to a whole range of religions and cults and deities. Was it the outcome of longstanding and deep-seated anti-Semitism? Comments [of Roman writers] concentrated on peculiar Jewish traits and customs. . . . The Jews somehow seemed to strike them as especially weird. They viewed the Sabbath as an obvious example. Pagans regarded keeping the Sabbath as folly. In fact it was considered a colossal waste of time. The stoic philosopher Seneca made a crack that by observing the Sabbath, the Jews used up one seventh of their lives in idleness. The historian Tacitus went further. He speculated that the charge of laziness not only induced the Jews to do nothing every seventh day, but prompted them to create the sabbatical year, spending every seventh year doing nothing but lolling around. Academics continue to suffer from that bad rap.

—Erich Gruen, Gladys Rehard Wood Professor of History and Classics, 
University of California at Berkeley, from his talk, “The Seeds of the Great Rebellion: anti-Semitism, Roman Repression, Jewish Recalcitrance, or None of the Above?” September 11, 2007, sponsored by the Michael C. Carlos Museum

Life of the Mind Lecture Series: Fall 2007
A new monthly lecture series will showcase Emory’s many gifted faculty members. Framed in a way that non-specialists can understand, the lectures are designed to appeal to a broad audience of faculty, staff, and students as well as the wider community. The series was created by the Office of the Provost and the Faculty Council in response to calls for more interdisciplinary communication at Emory.


Nov. 7: David Lynn, Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Chemistry and Biology, “On the Origins of Evolution”


Lectures will be held at noon in the Jones Room of Woodruff Library. Locations are subject to change; for details contact the Office of the Provost at 727-6055.