



Toolkit

The Nuts and Bolts Newsletter from

ASSESSMENT

SERVICES

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Gloria Rogers to Visit NIU

On the afternoon of Tuesday, June 3, NIU has the honor of hosting Gloria Rogers, PhD, as the featured presenter of **Portfolio 101: Principles, Lessons from Experience, Promise and Pitfalls.**

Dr. Rogers will cover the basics of portfolio design, as well as the evolution of portfolio use at her home institution, Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (RHIT). Additionally, Dr. Rogers will discuss a web-based electronic portfolio system developed at her home institution.

Dr. Rogers' presentations are known for being fun and engaging as well as practical and informative. At the recent

Higher Learning Commission annual meeting in Chicago, her



Dr. Gloria Rogers currently serves as Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

with a seating capacity of 200 to overflow.

Dr. Rogers currently serves as Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment at RHIT. She has served as a review panel member for the National Science Foundation and has taught invited assessment workshops in Japan, Italy, and several other countries.

Faculty wishing to attend **Portfolio 101** should contact Amy Deegan at the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, 753-0595, or email facdev@niu.edu.

**PREREGISTRATION
Deadline May 15!**

presentation drew a standing-room-only crowd, causing a room

We'd like to hear from you!

What features of *Toolkit* do you find most helpful? What would you like to see?

Submit your feedback or assessment story to:

Donna Askins
daskins@niu.edu
753-0816



Pre-registration Deadlines! Aaah!

**Preregister
NOW for
these
summer
programs
by**

**contacting
facdev@niu.edu !!**

**Creating an Effective
Online Syllabus**

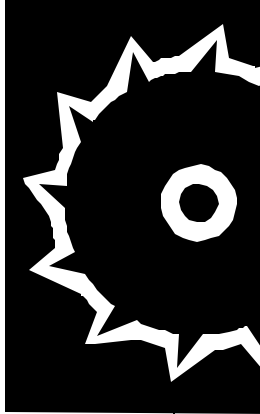
**Preparing Students
for Online Learning**

**Blackboard Overview
Redesigning Course
Materials for Online
Delivery**

ENJOY!!!

FAQ: Why Aren't Grades Valid Assessment Tools?

Many faculty members grade their students according to demonstrated mastery of course content. Why, then, aren't grades useful in assessing student learning outcomes?



The answer is threefold.

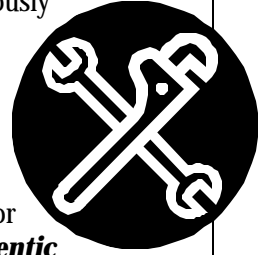
First, grades may take into account extra effort or extra credit on the part of the student. Such effort may well be worthy

of a grade increase — or decrease, if the converse is the case — but at that point, the grade is no longer a pure reflection of learning outcomes.

Second, grades inevitably vary by teacher. Every student knows that the same class is not the same class if it is taught by a “tough” teacher versus an “easy” one. Department chairs sometimes experience this phenomenon as grade inflation. Essentially, student grades may suffer or soar in part due to poor inter-rater reliability.

Finally, and most

importantly, grades are often a “kitchen sink” measure because they simultaneously take into account multiple learning objectives.



For true, **authentic assessment** to occur, each course learning objective must be delineated into a measurable component that can stand alone. Outcomes must clearly show to what degree *each* objective has been met.

“Grades are a ‘kitchen sink’ measure because they simultaneously take into account multiple learning objectives.”

Beyond Confusion: An Assessment Glossary

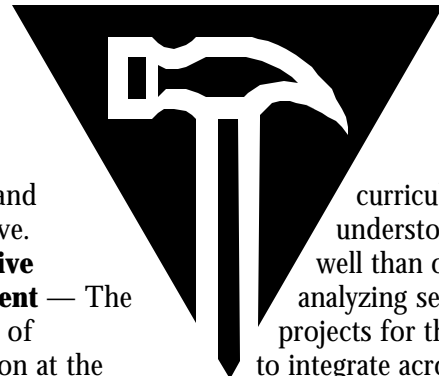
This feature is the second in a series designed to clarify common assessment terminology.

Formative Assessment — The gathering of information about student learning—during the progression of a course or program and usually repeatedly—to improve the learning of those students. Example: reading the first lab reports of a class to assess whether some or all students in the group need a lesson on how to make them

succinct and informative. **Summative Assessment** — The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. When used for improvement, impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program. Examples: examining student final exams in a course to see if certain specific areas of the

curriculum were understood less well than others; analyzing senior projects for the ability to integrate across disciplines.

— Dr. Andrea Leskes, Vice President for Education and Quality Initiatives of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. *Reprinted with permission from Peer Review, Volume 4, Number 2/3 (2002). Copyright held by the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#).*



Assessment for the Lay Person: Some General Advice

At the Higher Learning Commission annual meeting in April, [Dr. Ken Ryalls](#) of the College of St. Mary presented *A Handbook for the Assessment Layperson*. The [Handbook](#) offers several helpful features, among them, some General Assessment Advice:

1. **Keep it as simple as possible.** Assessment is not, and should not, be your full-time career. Keep goals focused, and keep assessment efforts reasonable. If every faculty member is analyzing every paper written by every student in order to assess writing skill you're working too hard. Take a random sample – it's much easier.
2. **Assessment is everyone's responsibility – treat it as such.** Spread the workload around to faculty in your area, or even to multiple related areas.
3. **Assessment is necessary to make a case for budgetary issues.**

"Take a random sample — it's much easier."

Assessment data can provide evidence to make the case that you need a certain piece of equipment or an extra budget line to effectively do your job.



4. **Communicate effectively.** Everyone needs to know when you're doing assessment and why you're doing it. It is critical to make sure everyone pulls their weight – if they don't, critical data are lost for that year making the whole process difficult and cumbersome.

5. **Do not have knee-jerk reactions to data.** Data naturally fluctuate, so wait for patterns of evidence to emerge before implementing an action plan to fix a perceived problem. Suppose 95% of your students pass a state-mandated test this year, and the next year only 91% pass. Should you panic? No. Performances vary based on many factors and fluctuations in data should

be expected. On the other hand, a drop from 95% to 42% should raise a few eyebrows and be acted upon quickly.

6. **Work within the constraints of the current system.** One of the most common comments we see as to why something is not being done in the area of assessment is that the current system is faulty. The budget is inadequate, the faculty overworked, or the support staff stretched too thin. All of these are usually legitimate complaints but unfortunately are not going to get you out of doing assessment. Your job is to do quality assessment given the constraints currently in place, so if you can't afford some national standardized test then use something else.

7. **Ask the Assessment Committee.** If you have a problem or question, ask. We're here to provide guidance to you.

— *Used with permission.*



An Assessment Two-Step

At San Juan College in New Mexico, faculty and administration keep decision-making simple by consistently asking two questions:

1. How does this [effort, initiative, program, decision] improve or enhance the student learning experience?

2. How will we know?

From *Continuous Quality Processes and Quality Results*. Contact [Dr. Carol Spencer](#) for further information.

Need Help?

People to call at NIU include:

[Craig Barnard](#), Assessment Coordinator 753-7120 or 753-8659

[Donna Askins](#), Editor-in-Chief of *Toolkit* 753-0816

Internet Resources: *Have You Tried...*

American Association for Higher Education - <http://www.aahe.org/assessment/web.htm>

The American Evaluation Association — <http://www.eval.org>

Assessment Update — <http://www.hoosiers.iupui.edu/paiimain/auflyer.htm>

Center on Teaching Excellence — <http://www.dean.usma.edu/cte/ctews3.htm>

ERIC's Clearinghouse on Assessment and Education — <http://ericae.net>



The [Office of Assessment Services](#) assists NIU academic programs, learning centers and student services units in developing their assessment plans. Its mission statement focuses on excellence and continuous quality improvement.

AAHE Conference **Seattle, Washington**

[Dan House](#), Director of Institutional Research, and [Craig Barnard](#), University Assessment Coordinator, have submitted and have been accepted to present at the American Association of Higher Education Conference, scheduled for June 22-24. Their poster session is entitled “Assessing the Effects of Student Characteristics and First-Year Experiences on Student Growth and Achievement.”

Congratulations to these to NIU 'ers!