

Toolkit

The Nuts and Bolts Newsletter from

ASSESSMENT

SERVICES

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Assessment in Action: ACCESS

[Shevawn Eaton](#), Director of Access to Courses and Careers through Educational Support



Services ([ACCESS](#)), feels that assessment is an important part of her program.

Involved in serving NIU students in ACCESS for a number of years, Shevawn has also served multiple terms on the University Assessment Panel.

As a part of ACCESS' assessment plan, Shevawn sought funding from the University Assessment Panel to have a telephone survey conducted to assess the NIU alumni

who had been admitted through the Deacon Davis CHANCE program from 1968-2002. The 2002 survey results included responses from over 500 alumni representing students from the 34 years that the program has existed.

As reported in her paper "A Chance to Succeed: The CHANCE Program Alumni Survey," results from those interviewed "...found attending NIU

to be a very positive experience, and felt that the university provided them with a quality educational experience in a diverse environment

with outstanding resources that they would not have had otherwise." Additionally, the survey found that 40% of the graduates went on to further their education after graduating from NIU, and 28% had completed master's, doctoral or professional degrees with "...many more in progress."

—Shevawn Eaton,
Director
ACCESS

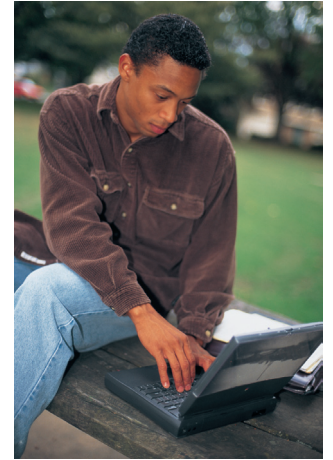


DID YOU KNOW?**Your First College Year Survey Results**

The Your First College Year (YFCY) survey is administered through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI).

The YFCY survey is given to all NIU freshmen to obtain data about the students' total college experience during their first year at NIU. The results of the latest survey show that:

- 82% of NIU respondents reported that they were very satisfied with on-campus computer facilities.
- 83% indicated that if they had it to do over again, they would enroll at NIU.
- 73% of NIU students were very satisfied with their overall college experience.
- 85% indicated that they frequently studied with other students.
- 73% indicated that their courses inspired them to think in new ways.

**HOW TO:****Indirect Assessment**

Strong assessment plans use multiple sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to demonstrate the attainment of student learning outcomes. The use of multiple sources of evidence makes the assessment “snapshot” a deeper and richer insight, as well as a better overall measure of learning. Faculty should choose the methods of

gathering evidence most suited to the discipline, as

well as those methods that best reflect student learning.

In an earlier edition of *ToolKit*, examples of **direct** assessment methods were discussed. Here are some examples of **indirect** assessment methods:

- Alumni and employer surveys
- Student satisfaction questionnaires
- Exit interviews with graduates
- Focus groups
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Retention and transfer studies
- Job placement data

- Information from advisory boards
- As seen in these examples, indirect assessment methods can provide valuable information that illuminates aspects of what direct evidence tells us about student academic achievement. Although indirect assessment methods are excellent sources of data, they are **never** adequate as the sole measure of a learning outcome, and **always** must be used in conjunction with direct assessment methods.

Strong assessment plans use multiple sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to demonstrate the attainment of student learning outcomes.

Articulating Assessment

How can I add assessment to the list when I'm already so busy teaching?

If you have a passion for teaching, if you have a focus on your students, if you want to make sure students are getting the most that they can out of your courses, then you are already doing assessment.

That's right, you are already **DO**ing assessment. If you are checking out what the students know at a base level, if you are looking to see how they can apply what they have learned, and if you are looking at their ability to synthesize concepts from learning activities – you are assessing the attainment of learning outcomes.

*So, if I'm already doing assessment, how **DO** I express that process so that I can have concrete evidence?*

What you are asking about is the process of articulating assessment. The best way to look at that process is to answer these questions (order is important):

- 1) What do I want the students to be able to **DO** by the end of my course? (knowledge, skills, abilities, demonstrated competency)
- 2) How will I make my expectations of what the students' need to **DO** known? (syllabi, grading rubrics used, check lists,

performance standards)
 3) How do I measure what students are able to **DO**? (methods of evaluation, lab practicals, test, embedded assessment, reports, portfolios)
 4) When I review the results that tell me what the students can **DO**, what should I **DO** with the results? (how do you use the data to make effective changes in the course to achieve even better results for students?)

Contact the [Office of Assessment Services](#) if you would like further assistance with articulating your assessment processes.

Assessment in Sixty Seconds



[Better quality](#)



[Faster transmission](#)

Click either link, above, to hear Dr. Christine Sorensen's assessment philosophy. Windows Media Player is necessary to view this file. Download [Windows Media Player](#) for free.



FAQ:**Portfolio Assessment**

Q: What are the characteristics of effective portfolio assessment?

A: Portfolio assessment is a multi-faceted process characterized by the following recurrent qualities:

- It is continuous, providing both formative (i.e. ongoing,) and summative (i.e. culminating) opportunities for monitoring students' progress toward achieving essential outcomes.

- It is multidimensional, reflecting a wide variety of artifacts and processes demonstrating various aspects of students' learning process(es).
- It provides for collaborative reflection, including ways for students to reflect about their own thinking processes, their approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, and their emerging understanding of subjects

and skills.

Source: Paul S. George, (1995). *What is Portfolio Assessment Really and How Can I Use It in My Classroom?* Gainesville, FL: Teacher Education

Resources

**Feedback on Alumni Performance**

The NIU Alumni Survey reflects data points that can be used to evaluate alumni performance, including preparation for current job.

Information on alumni performance is an important part of the program review process at NIU; it also provides valuable information included in assessment plans/status reports as a measure of alumni preparation and

performance in a real-world setting. Obtaining feedback directly from

alumni employers via a survey is one way to measure alumni preparation and program effectiveness; however, the return rates from these kinds of surveys are typically minimal.

Other sources of information serve as a part of the larger picture that can address this assessment issue. Using available information, a construct can be created from available data that shows a response pattern that contributes to understanding and

substantiating alumni performance.

One source of information is the annual [NIU Alumni Survey](#). The survey results reflect data points that can be used to evaluate alumni performance. Specific items include salary, satisfaction with current job, and preparation for current job.

For more detail and examples of departmental and university-wide indicators of alumni performance, visit the [Assessment Services](#) website.

BEYOND CONFUSION: An Assessment Glossary

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

Assessment of Individuals—Uses the individual student, and his/her learning, as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value added, and used for improvement. Would need to be aggregated if used for accountability purposes. Examples: improvement in student knowledge of a subject during a single course; improved ability of a student to build cogent arguments over the course

of an undergraduate career.

Assessment of Programs—Uses the department or program as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value added, and used for improvement or for accountability. Ideally program goals and objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment.

Assessment of Institutions—Uses the institution as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value

added, and used for improvement or for accountability. Ideally institution-wide goals and objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment. Example: how well students across the institution can work in multi-cultural teams as sophomores and seniors.

— Dr. Andrea Leskes,
Vice President for
Education and Quality
Initiatives of the
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Colleges and Universities
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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.

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