



# Toolkit

The Nuts and Bolts Newsletter from

ASSESSMENT

SERVICES

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## Sharpen Your Pencil: Online Assessment

So... you give a lot of multiple choice assessments, and you're tired of grading them...you've gone the "opscan" (color in the dots) route, which helps, but you still have to enter the grades... and tracking the students (who's doing well and who needs help) is, well, sometimes a distant thought. Is there anything out there that will help?

There is, and it exists in a variety of formats to fit individual instructional needs. Often called "computer aided assessment" or "computerized testing," software programs exist that can make assessment administration, the administrative record-keeping process, and student tracking/assessment system much easier. Many of these programs allow input of

items and direct answer choices – in essence, your exact assessment appears on the computer screen. The student's answer choice to a given question is recorded for that student's individual record (compiled by student id number). Up to that point, the process isn't much different from the paper/pencil methods. What happens next, however, is.

Once the student scores have been entered, the scoring program can immediately post that score directly to an electronic grade book. It can also email the student concerning the results of her efforts, progress in the course, and areas within the exam (by subtopic) where the student has had success and difficulty with the examined material. Instructors can create standardized statements of progress, and can also

enter individualized comments as appropriate. Instructors can also access aggregate student performance by sub-category as well as across the discipline (see earlier *Toolkit* article on "embedded assessment").

Hardware requirements vary with each program, and there is a significant time involvement in readying the computerized items. Those who use this type of system are often dedicated converts. For additional information, you may want to look at some of the major assessment companies' websites ([ACT](#), [ETS](#), [PAR](#), etc.). It's also wise to contact colleagues to see what progress and problems they have encountered.

*Next Issue: Computerized Adaptive Assessment.*

## Assessment Institute 2004

OCTOBER 8 is the deadline to register for the [2004 Assessment Institute](#). Hosted by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the Institute takes place October 31 – November 2 at University Place Conference Center & Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana.

All faculty and administrators are invited and tracks will be available for engineering

technology and student affairs professions. Participants may register online at [www.universityplace.iupui.edu](http://www.universityplace.iupui.edu) but should do so quickly as space is limited.

The Best Practices Fair will feature assessment instruments, methods, and approaches from test developers and successful assessment approaches and instruments currently in use on campuses across

the country. Other Institute topics include: assessment in the major, general education, surveys, data collection, electronic assessment tools, and assessment plans. There will also be in-depth sessions with national assessment leaders, many of whom regularly serve as consultants at colleges and universities across the country.

See the Institute website for more details.

### PROFILES IN ASSESSMENT

## Gip Seaver, Office of the Provost

Dr. Earl (“Gip”) Seaver, Vice-Provost at Northern Illinois University, is very knowledgeable in the area of assessment. He is involved in assessment at many levels, including involvement with the Unit Assessment Committee/process (Education) and the General Education Committee (GEC).

Prior to becoming Vice-Provost in the summer of 2003, Gip was active in assessment issues in the Communicative Disorders Program, where he served as Chair.

For detailed information regarding his philosophy of assessment, click on one of the pictures below.



Better quality



Faster transmission

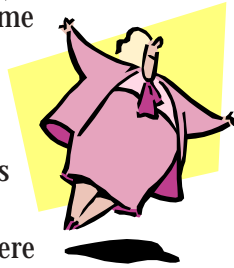


Click either picture, above, to hear Gip Seaver’s assessment philosophy. Windows Media Player is necessary to view these files. Download [Windows Media Player](#) for free.

**DID YOU KNOW?****Graduate Alumni Survey Results**

The Office of Assessment Services conducted NIU's 2002 Graduate Degree Recipient Alumni Survey one year after this group's graduation. Respondents said that they ...

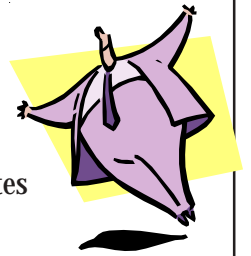
- have a positive attitude toward their graduate degree major (95%);
- possess a positive attitude toward NIU (94%);
- would select the same degree/major once again (79%);
- were satisfied with registration procedures (72%);
- thought faculty were thorough in their treatment of



course material (92%);

- thought faculty were academically supportive and helpful to the graduates (92%);

- believed their graduate degree prepared them adequately or better for their current job (96%);
- had completed their degree in 4 years or less from time of admission to NIU (79%);
- were employed full time (92%);
- perceived required courses as relevant and not repetitive (87%);
- and...*
- would recommend NIU to their friends and family! (93%)

**New Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs**

At the start of the fall semester, Dr. Donna M. Simon joined the NIU Student Affairs staff. Serving as Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Simon reports to new Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Brian O. Hemphill.

At NIU, Dr. Simon is responsible for Student Affairs assessment, as well as strategic planning, research, marketing



communication, diversity initiatives, and professional staff development. In addition, she serves as an advisor to the Vice President for Student Affairs in the areas of development, implementation, and evaluation of goals, policies, procedures, programs, and budgets. As a part of her assessment role, Dr. Simon will be a continuing member of the University Assessment Panel (UAP).

Dr. Simon shares that assessment in NIU Student Affairs for this school year will bring a concentration on student learning outcomes, as well as a standardization of assessment as an integral part of the strategic planning process.

Welcome to NIU!



## FAQ: Student Retention

FAQ: *What information is available about “student retention” at NIU?*

There are many activities and operations in place at NIU to assess retention of the student body. The following are two examples of the ongoing assessment of student retention.

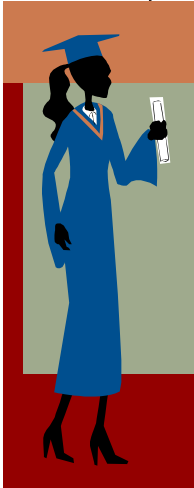
Campuses around the nation are required to track student progress and submit results about annual retention rates. These findings provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of

university academic and support programs. The [Office of Institutional Research](#) (IR) is directly involved in that process at NIU. One member of the Office of Institutional Research team, Julia Olsen,

annually conducts longitudinal studies of undergraduate student retention. As a part of the analyses, Julia has examined the relationships between students’ college experiences and subsequent graduation outcomes. One important finding is that students who earn a grade of “C” or higher in their first mathematics course at NIU were more than *twice* as likely to graduate than students who earned a lower grade (74% versus 32%).

Another project conducted by IR is an annual assessment of the academic performance and retention outcomes of students enrolled in the UNIV 101 first-year orientation course. These analyses, conducted for over a decade by IR staff

member Beling Xiao, typically show these students as having higher persistence rates for their second year at NIU. Recent analyses of students over a five-year period indicate that about 81.1% of students who completed UNIV 101 subsequently returned to NIU for their second year, while 76.9% of students who did not take the course returned. Similarly, students who took UNIV 101 earned significantly higher mean first semester GPAs (2.54) than students who did not take the course (2.42), even after controlling for the effects of entering academic characteristics.



## Contributions Solicited!

Contribute to *Toolkits*’ newest feature, “Sharpen your Pencil: Assessment Tips from the Inside” or any of our other regular features. We’re looking to share the wisdom that we each develop at home, making the work of assessment more productive. If you’d like material to be considered for inclusion in a future edition of *Toolkit*, submit a Word document of no more than 300 words as an email attachment to [barnard@niu.edu](mailto:barnard@niu.edu)

Thanks to Murali Krishnamurthi of the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, who suggested the following Internet site

<http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox>

as a place to visit for good descriptions and examples of rubrics, and other assessment tools.

## COMING THIS SPRING NIU Portfolio Workshop

With a working date of March 4, 2005, planning is underway to offer a one-day, multi session portfolio conference.

The design of the workshop includes a keynote speaker in the morning, as well as live demonstrations and exhibits of portfolio software and portfolio exhibits.

The morning sessions also will have the option to attend sessions in one of three tracks; portfolio

basics, electronic portfolios, and curricular areas (including general



education portfolios and teacher certification portfolios). After a provided lunch, tracks will

be available for portfolio assessment, best portfolio practices, and portfolios: institutional support. The day is to be capped with an interactive panel discussion on hot portfolio topics including institutional issues and emerging trends in portfolios.

Mark your calendar now with this tentative date and watch for a formal program announcement!

ASSESSMENT SERVICES

*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.*

*Toolkit is brought to you by the Office of Assessment Services:*

*[Craig Barnard](#), Assessment Coordinator*

*[Donna Askins](#), Editor-in-Chief*

*[Joyce Rossi](#), Assessment Secretary*

*and George, Amy, and Lohita, the Assessment Research Assistants.*