University Assessment Plan

prepared by

Northern Illinois University

for

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
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Northern Illinois University, founded in 1895, has become a multipurpose educational institution as it moves into the second century since its establishment. The central mission of the university, as set forth in its Mission and Scope statement, is “the transmission, expansion, and application of knowledge through teaching, research and artistry, and public service.” In fulfilling that mission, the university is responsible for providing high quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs to serve the citizens of the 23-county region in northern Illinois extending from suburban Chicago to Rockford and beyond. As the major public institution of higher education accessible to the 5.5 million residents of the region, NIU serves more than 25,000 full- and part-time students, both on campus and at regional sites. Approximately 30 percent of its students are minorities, and slightly more than half are women.

NIU offers more than 120 degree programs in the Colleges of Business, Education, Engineering and Engineering Technology, Health and Human Sciences, Law, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts. The university’s academic programs are currently accredited by 25 separate regional and national agencies. The university awards more than 5,000 degrees annually.

The NIU Mission and Scope Statement addresses the institution’s goals for its graduates:

Recognizing that students will need to learn throughout their lives, the university provides them with the opportunity to become more competent in analytical thought, informed judgment, and effective communication and to develop an appreciation for the life of the mind. In its instructional activities, the university conveys an understanding of the organization of knowledge and the means of inquiry. It aims to develop a respect for rationality, a tolerance for ambiguity, and an appreciation of diversity. It fosters the capacity to explore the unfamiliar, to use the intellect in the process of discovery and the synthesis of knowledge, and to become familiar with new technology and its implications. It strives to enhance the imagination, sensibility, and creative talents of each student. It believes that all students should attain a level of academic and professional competence sufficient for productive employment and citizenship and that many students should be able to undertake the advanced study required for leadership in their chosen professional fields and academic disciplines.
Northern Illinois University's academic programs have articulated their learning outcomes, tying them to this mission. The support units within the Division of Academic and Student Affairs also support this mission by providing services, activities and learning experiences outside of the classroom that enrich students' NIU experience. The University Assessment Plan is a coordinated set of centralized and decentralized activities that is designed to assess how well these outcomes are being met in the academic programs and in the academic- and student-support units.

**HISTORY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

In the late 1970s, the provost initiated a campus-based program review process conducted under his direction by the university's Academic Planning Council as a means of systematically evaluating the quality of instructional programs, their processes and outcomes, and their resource allocations and needs. These program reviews are also used as the basis for reporting to the university's governing board and to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which were created in the 1960s as the state-level oversight agency for higher education. Since its inception, the program review process has undergone numerous modifications to meet the changing needs of the university's academic planning processes and the requirements for reporting to external constituencies. Based on reporting requirements to the higher board, the cycle for program review changed from a five- to a seven-year cycle, then to the current eight-year cycle. The criteria for the review of programs have continuously evolved, shifting emphasis from processes and inputs to program and student learning outcomes.

In the 1980s Northern Illinois University initiated the development of formal assessment plans initially for its undergraduate programs, and later for its graduate and professional programs. The provost created the position for and hired an assessment coordinator to provide support and assistance to programs in the development of their plans and to coordinate assessment practices within the Division of Academic Affairs. The assessment plans were developed by the faculty in the academic programs, and then were reviewed and approved by the college curriculum committees and the appropriate university level curricular bodies: a subcommittee of the Undergraduate Coordinating Council for the undergraduate program plans, and the curriculum subcommittee of the Graduate Council for the graduate and professional programs.

In the 1990s the departments and schools initiated the assessment plans for their programs, and began to incorporate the findings from the assessment activities into processes for improving learning outcomes. Funding from the
provost’s office was made available for specific program-based assessment activities. The Office of Assessment Services also began working with the General Education Committee to develop methods for assessing the general education program. During this period the reporting line for the assessment coordinator was changed from the associate provost to the assistant provost for academic planning and development to create a clearer articulation between assessment activities and program review. In addition, the administration of the undergraduate and graduate alumni surveys became a coordinated effort between the Office of Assessment Services and the Career Planning and Placement Center. This change was made to meet the need of the university to better track alumni satisfaction with their programs and experiences at NIU, and to develop a process for the university’s participation in the statewide alumni survey coordinated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which issues an annual report on the composite results of the alumni surveys. Ultimately, the responsibility for the alumni surveys was assumed by the Office of Assessment Services.

In 1996, higher education in Illinois moved from a system of coordinating boards to individual boards for each of the public universities, and the NIU Board of Trustees was created. The NIU Board of Trustees exercises broad oversight of the university’s human and fiscal resources, operations, programs, and faculty and staff. Based upon the board’s analysis of the university’s existing governance structure, a newly designed organizational model was implemented, creating four divisions: Academic and Student Affairs, Administration, Finance and Facilities, and Development and University Relations.

In 1997 the provost commissioned a taskforce to define the roles and responsibilities for a university-level committee to provide oversight of assessment practices for the newly created Division of Academic and Student Affairs. The interdisciplinary University Assessment Panel, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, was initiated in 1998. Since its inception, the University Assessment Panel assumed responsibility for the review of the assessment plans for the academic programs, recommends funding to support the implementation of assessment initiatives, and approves proposals for participation in periodic portfolio workshops and the creation of capstone courses. In 2000 the panel developed a process for the systematic review of the outcomes of the academic- and student-support units in collaboration with the vice provost, the vice provost for student affairs, and the assistant vice provost for academic support services. As a result of the redesigned program review process initiated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the panel revised its requirements and the schedule for the review of the assessment plans and status reports from the academic programs and the general education program. The panel also reviews the findings from the university’s centrally administered assessment
projects, and makes recommendations for the development of the university’s annual Results Report to the higher board.

The Results Report, initiated in 1999 by the higher board, provides the university with the opportunity to identify the ways in which initiatives that fulfill the university’s mission also contribute to the six goals of the statewide plan for higher education, the Illinois Commitment. Through this mechanism the university reports on best academic and financial/administrative practices, the programmatic outcomes achieved during the fiscal year, and its plans for achieving additional outcomes of import to the university that also contribute to the statewide goals for the upcoming year. The findings from the university’s review of its academic programs are appended to the Results Report each year. The findings from the institutional Results Reports are used by the higher board to develop its annual statewide Results Report.

FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Assessment practices at Northern Illinois University are based on a framework that has at its core the improvement of measurable outcomes. The framework is comprised of the cycle of assessment that occurs within external and internal environments of driving and restraining forces. The cycle has five components that are reflected in the assessment plans for each program or unit: identifying outcomes, establishing methodologies to assess the achievement of outcomes, gathering and analyzing the evidence by implementing the methodologies, sharing the results of the analysis, and making evidence-based improvements as needed. Improvements may not be needed if evidence confirms that outcomes have been achieved. The cycle continues by reaffirming or modifying outcomes as needed.

Within this framework terms are defined as follows:

- **Outcomes** refer to the knowledge and skills students demonstrate at the completion of their academic programs, and to the programmatic results for the academic- and student-support units of the Division of Academic and Student Affairs. Outcomes are stated in measurable terms and are defined by the programs and units.
- **Methodologies** refer to those direct and indirect approaches selected by the programs and units to determine the extent to which each outcome has been achieved. These methodologies are implemented systematically, within the timeframes defined by the programs and units.
- **Evidence** refers to the data that substantiate whether or not outcomes were met.
Analysis of the evidence refers to systematic appraisal of the findings in the context of the desired program or unit outcomes.

Sharing the results of the analysis refers to communicating with key members of the programs or units as a basis for decision making.

Evidence-based improvements refer to those changes needed to ensure that outcomes are achieved or to confirming that outcomes have been achieved. The cycle continues by revisiting the outcomes, reaffirming or modifying them as needed.

Driving and restraining forces refer to the elements of the environment in which the assessment process is conducted. Forces may be internal or external to the university, and can impact the assessment process in positive or negative ways.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

The University Assessment Plan is comprehensive and multifaceted, and was constructed within the context of the NIU mission. It includes departmental components outlining assessment activities for degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels; activities for assessing general education; activities for the units within the Division of Academic and Student Affairs; and centrally administered assessment initiatives. The plan is centrally coordinated through the provost’s office by the assessment coordinator.

The primary focus of activities for the assessment of student learning is at the program level because the university believes that the faculty are the experts who should determine the learning outcomes for students, prescribe discipline-specific curricula, and construct the means for determining that students have achieved the learning outcomes. The primary focus for activities for the assessment of academic- and student-support is at the unit level, where staff experts determine the outcomes for the services they provide, and develop the programmatic initiatives in their units. Assessment at the program and unit levels is augmented by centrally administered assessment initiatives to provide additional information to programs and the support units. These initiatives are conducted by the Office of Assessment Services, the Office of Institutional Research, the Graduate School, the Career Planning and Placement Center, the Orientation Office, and other units that engage in periodic assessment initiatives.

In this integrated assessment process, the evidence gathered through assessment activities is used in several ways:

- Faculty use the evidence to update and improve curricula, either in content or methodology
- Degree programs use data in periodic program reviews and ongoing curriculum development to ensure that the program outcomes for student learning are being met
- Colleges use the information to set priorities for resource allocations and to monitor the contribution of degree programs to the college mission and goals
- Professional staff use the evidence to modify existing services or to create new approaches for delivering services to students
- University administrators use the information to assess the quality of the degree programs and support services provided to students and the effectiveness of the university in carrying out its mission

There is a two-way flow of information on assessment activities and their results between the provost’s office, the colleges, and individual programs.
or units. Programs report the results of their assessment activities via the college, to the University Assessment Panel. The panel provides feedback to the programs and colleges, and makes recommendations for funding assessment initiatives, if requested. Programs use assessment evidence to improve their curricular offerings, and in program review and discipline-based accreditation processes. Similarly, the support units report the results of their assessment activities to the University Assessment Panel via the academic officers to whom they report. The panel provides feedback to the units and the academic offices, and makes recommendations for funding assessment initiatives, if requested. The support units use their findings to improve the quality of the services they provide for students, as well as accreditation if applicable. The programs and support units submit reports on the initiatives funded through the panel. These reports inform the members of the panel on the results of the initiatives, and how the programs and units used or plan to use the evidence for improvement.

The evidence from centrally administered assessment initiatives is distributed to a variety of university committees, colleges, departments, programs and support units (see Appendix A). This evidence provides the opportunity for dialogue on a variety of primarily undergraduate students’ perceptions of their experiences at the university, and has served as the impetus for the examination of existing practices, faculty development programming, and additional assessment initiatives.

The University Assessment Panel
The University Assessment Panel, chaired by the associate vice provost for academic planning and development, has oversight for all assessment activities for the academic programs. The panel is comprised of two faculty representatives who serve on the Academic Planning Council, the Undergraduate Coordinating Council, and the Graduate Council. Each council elects a representative to the panel to serve a term of two years. The executive vice president and provost appoints a second representative from each of the councils to serve a one-year term, which can be renewed. The dean of the College of Law appoints one representative to the panel. Other members of the panel include a representative from student affairs, a representative from the academic support units, and a representative from the curricular deans. The director of the Office of Institutional Research, the director of the Office of Testing Services, and the assessment coordinator serve as ex officio members of the panel. The duties of the panel are outlined below:

- Review the university mission statement, other statements of university objectives, and state-level policies as a context for assessment. Provide advice on performance measures and benchmarks to be used in new state approval and review processes.
• Integrate assessment activities for undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and academic support areas. Work with the General Education Committee and the Committee on Initial Teacher Certification on assessment activities in the general education program and in initial teacher certification programs.
• Promote campus-wide assessment activities to improve learning outcomes.
• Review departmental assessment activities in coordination with the eight-year program review schedule, and support departments preparing for program review.
• Make recommendations for funding support for expanded assessment activities in departments and colleges.
• Support departments and colleges preparing for the assessment component of discipline-specific accreditation reviews.
• Review and update the university assessment plan.
• Help position the university for the next NCA reaccreditation process and assist with the preparation of the self-study.

The Office of Assessment Services
The Office of Assessment Services is staffed by a full-time assessment coordinator, a full-time secretary, and two full-time (20 hours per week) graduate research assistants. The office is managed by the assessment coordinator, who reports to the associate vice provost for academic planning and development. The office is responsible for coordinating assessment initiatives within the Division of Academic and Student Affairs; providing staff support for the University Assessment Panel; maintaining all files related to assessment initiatives and correspondence; serving as a repository for assessment plans, status/other reports, and assessment resources; producing the electronic newsletter, Toolkit; providing data for program review and other initiatives; maintaining the office's website; conducting and/or coordinating a variety of centrally administered assessment projects; and preparing and distributing the reports of those initiatives to university constituencies (see Appendix B).

The Coordination of Assessment Activities
All areas directly involved in the delivery of the curriculum at the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels, as well as the units providing academic- and student-support services, report to the Office of the Provost. The provost designated the assessment coordinator to coordinate assessment activities within the Division of Academic and Student Affairs. The coordinator works with a number of university committees, deans, chairs, directors, administrators, and individual faculty and staff to carry out this responsibility. The coordinator also serves as a resource person to all units within the division regarding assessment, and as a liaison among units for sharing information about assessment planning,
for data gathering and analysis, and for curricular review and planning related to the assessment findings. To facilitate communications concerning assessment initiatives, the coordinator works closely with the Academic Planning Council, the General Education Committee, the University Office of Teacher Certification, and the University Assessment Panel.

Appendix C includes a table that documents the contact persons at the college and department levels who are assigned responsibility for assessment functions within their units. The table also indicates whether or not a formal statement within each unit’s governance document designates a committee with responsibilities for assessment activities.

**Resources**

The Office of Assessment Services is located in the University Honors Program suite in the Campus Life Building. The space within the suite assigned to the office includes an office for the assessment coordinator, an office for the graduate research assistants, and space within the reception area of the suite for the office secretary. All individuals in the office have personal computers equipped with printers and Microsoft Office Suite XP, and have access to the Internet and email services. Other software packages and ancillary computer equipment support the work of the office. The assessment coordinator and office secretary also have telephones with voicemail capabilities.

The central assessment budget is administered by the associate vice provost for academic planning and development. The budget supports the staffing and operations of the Office of Assessment Services, and centrally administered assessment initiatives, including but not limited to: the conduct of the university’s annual follow-up surveys of alumni and several national surveys, the portfolio workshop, and the writing project. The budget also supports the funding requests for assessment activities from the academic programs and the division’s support units submitted to the University Assessment Panel, as well as other assessment initiatives. A research associate position assigned to the Office of the Provost is also funded from the assessment budget. The research associate devotes approximately 25 percent time to the implementation of assessment initiatives in the University Office of Teacher Certification that support the university’s assessment of its teacher certification programs. The research associate also serves as the editor-in-chief of the Office of Assessment Services’ electronic newsletter, Toolkit, contributes to the development of other initiatives, and participates in activities associated with the preparation of university reports to the NIU Board of Trustees, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Higher Learning Commission, and other entities.
The assessment activities included in the plans of the academic programs and the support units not funded from the centrally administered budget are supported from their general revenue budgets. Funding specific to the implementation of assessment activities in the academic programs and support units has not been appropriated by the state. Even modest costs for software, duplicating or postage can strain the budgets of some programs and units. While not all assessment activities require funding per se, they do require faculty and staff time and effort to implement, and little funding is available for compensation from program and unit budgets.

**Guidelines for Assessment Planning in Degree Programs**

The guidelines for the assessment of undergraduate degree programs were developed by the Assessment Subcommittee and approved by the Undergraduate Coordinating Council in May 1994. In 1994-95, the Graduate Council Standards Committee adopted a set of guidelines similar to those developed by the Assessment Subcommittee of the Undergraduate Coordinating Council. The guidelines for all degree programs were updated and approved by the University Assessment Panel in 1999 and 2002. The guidelines are presented in Appendix D.

**Assessment in Undergraduate, Graduate and Professional Programs**

Each academic program is required to have an approved assessment plan. Prior to 2002, programs were invited to submit a current assessment plan and status report, which could include a funding request to support assessment activities, one, two, or three years prior to program review. This invitation was accepted by some programs but not by others. As the program review process shifted focus to an outcomes orientation it became clear that the systematic assessment of student learning outcomes was not uniformly implemented and that not all programs could report on learning outcomes. This finding resulted in the University Assessment Panel’s review of its policy on the submission of assessment plans and status reports, and in 2002 the panel revised its policy to require that all programs submit assessment plans and status reports in the fourth year of the program review cycle. The findings of the panel’s review of the plans and reports is sent back to the respective programs and is also included in the materials reviewed by the Academic Planning Council subcommittees in the program review process.

In FY03 the University Assessment Panel conducted a review of all assessment plans using its evaluation rubric for assessment plans and status reports to ensure that they are current and meet the university’s requirements for the assessment of learning outcomes (see Appendix E). Feedback was provided to the programs about any additional action needed in relation to the plans.
Beginning in fall 2004 each program will also be required to submit to the panel an annual update on assessment findings and actions taken on those finding. These updates will be used by the university to apprise the Illinois Board of Higher Education about the status of the academic programs in meeting learning outcomes. The assessment plans, annual updates, and mid-cycle status reports will be used by the Academic Planning Council in its review of the programs as evidence of the attainment of learning outcomes.

Each **assessment plan** includes:

- the identification of student learning outcomes;
- an explanation of the direct and indirect methods used to evaluate the achievement of outcomes;
- a description of which methods are used to assess each of the outcomes;
- a timeline for the implementation of the methods;
- the identification of the individual(s) responsible for coordinating data collection

Each **status report** includes:

- a description of findings from assessment data;
- the conclusions drawn from the findings indicating that the evidence supports students’ attainment of the outcome(s) or the need for changes to improve outcomes;
- plans for changes to improve outcomes, if needed;
- identification of gaps in data, if appropriate.

The status report may also include a request for funding to support the implementation of direct assessment methods included in the plan or for a pilot project to gather additional evidence. The assessment status report format for academic programs is located in Appendix D.

Each **annual update** includes:

- findings from assessment activities conducted during the current year
- outcomes assessed by assessment activities
- action(s) taken on findings
- plans for changes/ follow-up

**Assessment in Academic- and Student-Support Units**
The academic- and student-support units within the division directly or indirectly support curricular activities. In 2000 the University Assessment Panel, in collaboration with the vice provost, the associate vice provost for
academic support services, and the vice provost and associate vice provost for student affairs, developed a set of guidelines for the development of assessment plans and a five-year cycle for the review of assessment activities and outcomes in the support units.

Each assessment plan includes:

- the identification of objectives' outcomes;
- an explanation of the direct and indirect methods used to evaluate the achievement of the outcomes;
- a description of which methods are used to assess each of the outcomes;
- a timeline for the implementation of the methods;
- the identification of the individual(s) responsible for coordinating data collection.

Each status report includes:

- a description of findings from assessment data;
- the conclusions drawn from the findings indicating that the evidence supports attainment of the outcome(s) or the need for changes to improve outcomes;
- plans for changes to improve outcomes, if needed;
- the identification of gaps in data, if appropriate.

The status report may also include a request for funding to support the implementation of assessment methods included in the plan or for a pilot project to gather additional evidence. The assessment status report format for student- and academic-support units is located in Appendix F.

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT PLAN CENTRAL INITIATIVES – BACCALAUREATE LEVEL

As one component of the University Assessment Plan, the Office of Assessment Services conducts a number of assessment initiatives for the university. The Office of Institutional Research also conducts assessment initiatives, either in conjunction with assessment services, other offices, or independently (see Appendix A).

In discussions with the University Assessment Panel and in other venues it became evident that the division did not have a clear picture of all of the centrally administered assessment initiatives in place or how the information was being used. In an effort to unify, track, and monitor these activities, it became evident that the creation of a model would be helpful. As a result, the “Backbone Model” was created. As shown in the diagram...
that follows, the Backbone Model creates a timeline for centrally administered assessment initiatives, and portrays the flow of information to and from program assessment activities.

The following is a synopsis of these initiatives, presented as current initiatives and proposed initiatives (see Appendices A and G).

**Current Initiatives**

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshman survey is administered to all entering freshmen during the freshman orientation program. The university receives a detailed profile of entering freshmen as well as national normative data for students in similar institutions. The resulting information, known as campus profile reports, provides important data that are useful for institutional research, studies concerning student retention, and other assessment activities.

Data from the First Year Initiative (FYI) Survey, created by Educational Benchmarking, Inc., assesses several categories of questions, called factors, and provides both a mean score and a comparison among six peer institutions, chosen for their overall similarity to NIU and for similarities in new student orientation programs. The six peer institutions are Bowling Green State University, Kent State University, University at Buffalo, University of Akron, University of Oklahoma, and University of Toledo. NIU is also compared among its 23 Carnegie classification universities, and among all 85 schools participating in the study.

At NIU, the Offices of Admissions and Institutional Research have collaborated on an assessment of students who applied to the university and were admitted but elected not to matriculate. This assessment initiative has been conducted for a decade and, at different times, both prospective students and their parents have been surveyed. A locally developed survey is distributed every other fall semester (1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, and 2001) asking respondents to evaluate NIU and the school chosen on each of 25 factors that are typically considered when making a college choice. These 25 factors include items that ask about financial aid considerations, prestige and reputation of the universities, academic factors, the quality of several types of services, size of enrollment and average class sizes, intercollegiate athletics, and special events.

The Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey has been designed to provide colleges across the nation with comprehensive information on the academic development of first-year college students. This survey collects information on a wide range of cognitive and affective measures, providing comprehensive data for analyses of persistence, adjustment, and other first-year outcomes. Additionally, the survey was designed as a follow-up survey
University Assessment Plan

Undergraduate Level—Central Initiatives—The "Backbone" Model

Freshman Year

Sophomore Year

Junior Year

Senior Year/Fifth Year

CIRP

YFCY

CAAP Critical Thinking

Junior Level Writing Project

Portfolio Assessment

Capstone Assessment

Non-Returning Students Survey

Gen Ed Assessment

University Writing Assessment

University Multicultural Assessment

UNIV 101

Undecided Students

Non-Matriculated Survey

Non-Returning Students Survey

CSS

University Technology Skills Assessment

University Quantitative Skills Assessment

Strong Interest Inventory/MBTI

CIRP for Transfer Students

Gen Ed Assessment

University Information Skills Assessment

Employer Feedback

Program Assessment Activities

FEEDBACK

ORIENTATION

GRADUATION

Alumni Surveys

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to the annual Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, which is administered during the freshman orientation program; both surveys contain a common set of core questions that provide data for longitudinal studies that help to shape the university’s knowledge of the student body.

A project to assess the critical thinking skills of NIU students was first offered in 2000-2001. Using the Critical Thinking section of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), this assessment was carried out using faculty who volunteered to have their students included in the test cohort. Students from six colleges participated. Results were received from ACT and distributed to the cohort by mail. In spring 2003, this project was offered again, this time specifically to a cohort made up of junior/senior level students in the College of Business. Results have been correlated with results of the earlier administration. Overall results have been prepared and forwarded to the College of Business.

Designed by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, the College Student Survey (CSS) is used to help institutions respond to the needs of assessment and accountability by providing information on a broad range of student outcomes. In addition, this survey can be used with the CIRP Freshman Survey to study student growth and change, as is currently done at NIU. The College Student Survey provides NIU with valuable feedback on students’ academic and campus life experiences—information that can be used for student assessment activities, accreditation and self-study reports, campus planning, and policy analysis. In the survey, students rate their overall satisfaction with 28 different aspects of their college experience, including coursework, interactions with faculty and staff, administrative services, extracurricular experiences, and campus life. A “time diary” provides information about how much time students spend in academic, social, work, and recreational activities. To assist in understanding students’ values, attitudes, and goals, the survey also assesses the importance students place on a rich array of personal goals and values such as: materialism, altruism, need for recognition, and interest in social change and community service.

The Junior Level Writing Project is an authentic assessment project designed to measure students’ ability to write clearly and effectively at the junior level. The purpose of the original project conducted in 1999 included a comparison of NIU students to a national norm group and a comparison of the nationally normed scoring to a locally developed rubric for scoring student writing. In subsequent years (2000-2003), writing performance has been gauged internally using a campus-developed prompt and a rubric developed by the faculty in the Department of English. Students who participate in the project receive a letter with a score, an
explanation of his/her performance, one of three types of certificates, and recommendations for continued writing support services.

The Office of Assessment Services conducts a workshop designed to train faculty in the design of portfolio projects at the course and program level. At a specified time, faculty apply for consideration to be included in the portfolio training. The proposals from faculty are reviewed by the University Assessment Panel for content and substance, and approved as appropriate. A stipend supports faculty training for the portfolio project, which involves attendance at a week-long, intensive, hands-on workshop that includes presentations from both on-campus and nationally known experts. Workshop time is infused with information on traditional and electronic portfolio methods. Completers share their knowledge with their home program faculty, and often contribute their results to the following year's workshops.

As a part of the university's authentic assessment activities, the University Assessment Panel funds a limited number of capstone course development projects. Applicants submit a plan to develop a capstone course, which is then reviewed by the panel. Approved plans are funded, and faculty submit a report after the initial offering of the resulting capstone course.

The gathering of information from NIU alumni is a continuing project. During the spring and summer of each year, alumni surveys are prepared for administration to undergraduate and graduate alumni one year post-graduation. On a revolving basis, undergraduate students graduating five- or nine-years out are also surveyed. The surveys have undergone several iterations, but generally include questions on current employment; preparation for employment; and satisfaction with the university, program major, and a variety of university services. The surveys of undergraduate alumni also contain questions related to skills developed through the general education program, and a set of core questions included in the surveys of all Illinois public universities that are reported to the Illinois Board of Higher Education for compilation in a statewide alumni survey.

Records indicate that from 1984-2000, all surveys were administered in hard-copy format and were mailed; results were processed on the university mainframe and hard copy reports were sent to the colleges/programs/departments. Since survey year 2001, the surveys have been conducted in three formats: on-line, in hard copy, and by telephone survey. The institution of the three formats has increased the survey response rate from below 20 percent to a current response rate in the 30 percent range. In the 2002 survey, 47 percent of the responses were obtained from the telephone survey format. Data are processed and tabulated by program, and are distributed electronically and on compact disc to the colleges, programs and
student affairs areas, who share the results internally. Selected evidence from the surveys is also incorporated into the program review documents prepared by the departments.

**Proposed Initiatives**

It is well known in the literature that students who have not declared a major most often fail to continue their college educations, because they lack the focus of career direction. Beginning in the fall of 2003, a pilot study was begun in one section of UNIV 101, Freshman Orientation. One class of 22 students was given the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and participated in one-on-one career counseling sessions. The students’ academic choices (declaration of majors, course grades, enrollment patterns) will be traced over the next several years to ascertain the possible effect of these career-related activities on their education. Another group of undecided students enrolled in UNIV 101 who did not complete the instruments or receive career counseling in conjunction with the course will also be followed, as will a group of students who designated undecided majors, but did not elect to enroll in UNIV 101.

In a joint effort between the Office of Assessment Services and the Office of Institutional Research, a survey is planned to track the reasons expressed by students who have chosen not to return to NIU after their first semester. This survey is in the process of development and will be administered for the first time in spring 2004 to those students who were enrolled and completed the fall semester 2003, but did not re-enroll for the spring semester 2004.

Beginning in the spring 2004, the possibility of administering the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshmen survey, or a sample of questions from the survey (with permission) to junior-level community-college transfer students is being explored. Administering the survey in this way will allow NIU to collect baseline data on its large constituency of transfer students, helping to provide important data that are useful for institutional research, studies concerning student retention, and other assessment activities.

The General Education Committee is currently discussing additional ways in which the general education program goals may be measured across the campus to augment existing initiatives for the assessment of the program. The committee is currently exploring the options of on-line measurement tools/ surveys, and how information obtained from these types of instruments would furnish authentic assessment evidence. Data obtained from the proposed university-wide assessment projects in writing, technology, quantitative skills, information skills, and multicultural
assessment will also contribute to overall general education assessment. Additional discussion of the General Education Program is presented below.

The University Writing Assessment Project is being developed to replace the Junior Level Writing Project, which was conducted between 1999 and 2003. The focus of this new initiative is to measure students' abilities to write in their chosen discipline and in general education courses to measure their written communication skills across curricula. The proposed design involves obtaining writing samples from typical classroom assignments, photocopying and returning the writing samples to instructors, then having those assignments assessed by a panel of trained faculty selected from across the university.

The use of technology in instruction at NIU has grown dramatically over the last several years. In addition to the instructional use of technology, it has become apparent that it is necessary to measure students' abilities and skills in using technology within the sphere of their educational experiences and disciplinary preparation. Discussions with campus constituencies are planned to explore possible approaches for assessing students' attainment of skills in the use of technology.

An appreciation for multiculturalism is a goal embedded in the general education program. For more than a decade the university has engaged faculty in the redesign of their courses to address multicultural topics by conducting an annual Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute. Faculty evaluate the effectiveness of the institute and submit evidence of the ways in which their courses have been transformed to include multicultural content. At present, these are the only indicators available to assess students' multicultural experiences. Initial steps have been taken to identify additional ways to assess the perceptions of faculty and students on several aspects of multiculturalism (see Appendix H).

Students' skill in searching for, evaluating, and using information is an area that has not been previously assessed. The University Assessment Panel and other campus constituencies will be engaged in discussions to identify possible methods for assessing information skills.

On review of the University Assessment Plan, it became apparent that students' abilities to demonstrate competence in quantitative skills have been measured at the course level but not at the university level. This is one of the areas where NIU plans to focus an initiative in the near future.

To seek information that could be used to assess NIU students' abilities in general education core competencies, the Office of Assessment Services has
partnered with the Career Planning and Placement Center to survey on-campus recruiters in relation to the aforementioned skills. Recruiters will be asked to rate the quality of skills exhibited by the group of students they interviewed. The survey was initiated for the 2003-2004 school year.

OTHER CENTRALLY ADMINISTERED ASSESSMENT INITIATIVES

Several other centrally administered assessment initiatives are ongoing, in place, or planned. This section provides an overview of those initiatives and their dispositions.

Assessment in the General Education Program

The general education program at Northern Illinois University is designed to help students attain a sound liberal education and to acquire sufficient general knowledge and intellectual versatility to enable them to become informed and resourceful members of society. The program is comprised of course work in core competencies, and distributive studies in four areas: humanities and arts, science and mathematics, social sciences, and interdisciplinary studies. The four broad learning goals of the general education program are that students will develop:

- Habits of writing, speaking, and reasoning necessary for continued learning
- An ability to use modes of inquiry across a variety of disciplines in the humanities and the arts, the physical sciences and mathematics, and the social sciences
- An understanding of the interrelatedness of various disciplines by integrating knowledge from several disciplines and applying that knowledge to an understanding of important problems and issues
- Social responsibility and preparation for citizenship through global awareness, environmental sensitivity, and an appreciation of cultural diversity

To achieve the goals of the general education program, students are required to demonstrate competency in the core content areas of mathematics, English, and communications. Additionally, students are to complete a minimum of 29 semester hours chosen from the four distributive studies areas: humanities and arts, science and mathematics, social sciences, and interdisciplinary studies.

The General Education Committee is responsible for the oversight of the General Education Program. The voting members of the committee consist of a constituency of faculty members from all NIU colleges with undergraduate degree programs, and three undergraduate students. As part
of its responsibilities, the committee reviews and revises the program goals as needed. In addition, the committee selects courses for the program that are consistent with the above-stated program goals. For inclusion in the program, courses must be submitted for a comprehensive review by the committee, using either the General Education Course Submission Form or the General Education Course Resubmission Form, as appropriate. Information required and particular details of the assessment of stated general education goals are inherent in these documents. Rubrics for the evaluation of these assessment activities are also available at the General Education Committee website.

The impact of course work in core competencies and the distributive areas of the program on the development of students' knowledge and skills has been a challenge to assess. Several factors contribute to this difficulty: students select courses from a broad “cafeteria style” menu of courses, particularly those in the distributive areas; students may take courses that apply to the program at different times during their baccalaureate experience; and students may take these courses at more than one institution.

To assist in addressing these challenges, a tiered approach to assessment in the general education program was adopted: within-course assessments, across-course assessments, and program- or university-wide assessments. The first tier involves assessment at the course level (within-course), which is addressed in the (re)submission criteria and process. The department proposing the course for the program is responsible for these assessments, and for providing the committee with evidence of the attainment of learning outcomes. The second tier or across-course assessment is conducted by the committee. Across-course assessments involve the determination of how all of the courses in the program match with the general education goals. The committee uses a matrix to show which of the courses address each program goal(s), and to determine if a sufficient number of courses are available for students to meet all of the program goals. This information is used in the evaluation of new course submissions for the program. The third tier, program/university-wide assessment, was established in 1999 by the Office of the Provost to determine whether the general education goals associated with core competency courses are being met and at what levels. The third tier assessment projects include the junior level writing project, the critical thinking project, the capstone project, and the portfolio project described in the Backbone Model.

**Smart Classroom/Online Course Survey Projects**

During fall 2000, a survey was conducted to evaluate the performance and the use of “smart classrooms” at NIU. Both faculty and students were surveyed, and the responses included data representing six colleges in the
university. This project may be continued periodically. At present the Office of Assessment Services and the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center are working on a pilot project to assess students’ satisfaction with the technology support provided to them in online courses. The results of the pilot are expected to be reviewed in spring 2004.

Pew Charitable Trusts Assessment Project
NIU is currently participating in a project funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and coordinated in the state by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. This project has been designed to measure learning in core competency areas among current college-level seniors. Another phase of the project assesses the attitudes and opinions about their college experiences among a sample of graduates from the class of 1998. Aggregate results will be released to participating universities for both projects in the summer of 2004.

Committee on Initial Teacher Certification
Each academic unit offering an initial teacher certification program submits an assessment plan for its program to the Research and Assessment Committee, a subcommittee of the Committee on Initial Certification. This committee carefully reviews the plan and, if necessary, makes recommendations for improvement to insure that all of the components for a good plan are included. Each plan must include a description of initial teacher certification program objectives, student outcome objectives, multiple assessment methods, a time line for gathering of assessment data, results obtained from the assessments, and clear statements regarding the use of the assessment results in regard to both internal and external audiences. Once having been reviewed and approved by the subcommittee, the assessment plans are reviewed and approved by the committee, and then submitted to the University Assessment Panel for approval.

The Research and Assessment Committee is also in the process of exploring ways to assess the teacher certification programs at the university level. One project related to this goal has already been implemented. Survey instruments outlining the state standards for teachers were distributed to teacher candidates, the supervising classroom teachers, and the supervising faculty members in spring 2003. Comparisons of the perceptions of these three groups on the teacher candidates’ ability to demonstrate competency on each of the standards were made on the cohort of students as a whole and for the respective groups of students in each of the certification programs.

Committee on Advanced Professional Certification
The basic purpose of the Committee on Advanced Professional Certification is to serve as a coordinating body regarding policies,
curriculum, and procedures pertaining to advanced professional certification programs at NIU. The responsibilities of the committee include reviewing and advising on the preparation for and coordination of external accreditation reports, as well as periodically reviewing the assessment plans and the curricula specific to advanced professional certification programs. The committee is currently in a formative stage in regard to assessment, and is considering what kinds of data should be reported to indicate how students are meeting internal and external objectives and standards.

**Assessment in the University Libraries**
The primary mission of the University Libraries is to provide access to scholarly information and literature in support of undergraduate and graduate programs, and faculty and student research. Collection development priorities are regularly monitored and adjusted based upon national comparisons and information derived from locally-created databases. The libraries faculty implemented a variety of assessment procedures for evaluating their efforts in the areas of collections and services, which are reported in the Self Study chapter on libraries, museums, and galleries. The libraries are in the process of developing a formal assessment plan, which will be reviewed by the University Assessment Panel in 2004-2005.

**Assessment in the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center**
The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, created in 1998, provides support faculty and academic supportive professional staff with a variety of programs, activities, and resources that support the university's mission of teaching, research, and scholarly activities. In addition to providing programming for faculty, the center assists the university's Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute Taskforce, and has devised a model for the assessment of the university's multicultural objectives discussed above (see Appendix H). The center also provides programming to address the needs of faculty in the areas of assessment practices, student learning styles, active learning, and engagement, among others, that have been identified by a variety of assessment initiatives in which the university engages. The assessment plan for the center was developed and approved by the University Assessment Panel in 2001-2002.

**Assessment in the Division of International Programs**
The new executive director of the Division of International Programs was hired in fall 2002, and a search for a new director of the International Student and Faculty Office was initiated in 2003. The division is in the process of developing a formal assessment plan, which will be reviewed by the University Assessment Panel in 2005-2006.
Assessment in the Graduate School

At the present time, the Graduate School does not engage in assessment activities defined within the model of the University Assessment Plan. Approaches for establishing assessment procedures for the offices that provide direct services to students will be discussed with the new vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School.

The Graduate School does have a long history of providing support for the assessment of dissertations in conjunction with the program reviews of doctoral programs. A sample of dissertations completed during the program review period is sent by the dean of the Graduate School to external experts within the discipline for review. The reports of these external reviewers are evaluated in the Graduate School, the Office of the Provost, the office of the college dean, and the department as one component of the assessment of doctoral program outcomes during the program review process. In addition, the dean designates a university faculty member from outside the students’ major departments to review the dissertation and attend the dissertation defense. The findings from the reports of these individuals are compiled by the Graduate School, and used in the assessment of programs in conjunction with the program review process.

EVALUATION

The review of the current and proposed university assessment activities shows a rich opportunity to design and implement a more systematic approach for closing the feedback loop of the assessment process and disseminating information from assessment initiatives. Careful attention must be paid to the follow-up on actions that should flow from assessment findings. Methods for creating this systematic process will be discussed at the University Assessment Panel, and with the Council of Deans, Institutional Research, and other key constituencies.

As a means of evaluating NIU’s University Assessment Plan, the university compared its plan to the patterns of evidence provided for each of the Higher Learning Commission’s Levels of Implementation. This comparison showed that NIU is clearly making progress in implementing assessment programs. The purposes, advantages, and limitations of assessment are understood, although for some constituencies the limitations are perceived to outweigh the advantages. The academic programs consistently work to improve student learning and have developed or are in the process of refining assessment plans. The assessment of general education skills is moving forward, and strides are being made to improve assessment of the general education program. NIU has developed systematic processes to integrate assessment into the work of its academic- and student-support
The use of evidence from assessment activities to improve services in many of these units is exemplary.

The NIU Mission and Scope Statement expresses the value that the institution places on student learning, and each college has a mission statement consistent with that of the university. The majority of the university’s academic programs have measurable learning objectives, and have identified and implemented both direct and indirect measures of student learning. The University Assessment Panel, the Academic Planning Council, and the General Education Committee have become more knowledgeable about assessment practices, and have implemented processes for systematically providing feedback on assessment activities to improve learning. The Office of Assessment Services provides consultation to the academic departments on the development and use of assessment methods, and uses its electronic newsletter, Toolkit, as one means of informing the university community of good practices, and providing explanations of assessment methods and the results of assessment initiatives. Collaborations across several university offices and units on assessment initiatives provide the opportunity for the further integration of assessment into the planning and decision-making processes. The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center provides programming related to student learning and the assessment of learning outcomes, and faculty and staff have been provided with support to attend national conferences and meetings related to assessment practices.

Students are becoming more knowledgeable about the university’s assessment program. As students participate in central assessment initiatives, they are clearly informed about the value of their participation and the purposes of the assessment. Graduate and undergraduate students are also a part of the institutional assessment process with roles as voting members of university committees including the University Assessment Panel. At the program level, students are increasingly engaged in authentic assessment activities, presenting oral, written, or other artifacts of their work.

The university has retained its commitment to supporting assessment activities that improve student learning within the bounds of available funding. A central budget supports numerous projects at the university level and program and unit assessment initiatives. Resources are allocated to support the development of faculty in the use of portfolios and in the development of capstone projects. Budget rescissions have recently limited the university’s ability to support participation in national meetings, but the university continues to encourage faculty and staff to make presentations at national meetings on the methods and outcomes of their assessment initiatives.
The future provides many opportunities for implementing assessment activities that demonstrate the quality of the university's programs and students' attainment of learning outcomes. Of particular focus will be assessment initiatives in the areas of general education, writing, technology skills, quantitative skills, and information skills. Continuing opportunities will focus on working directly with programs to revise and improve program assessment plans. Additionally, a need for an expanded institutional feedback mechanism has emerged. Considerable program-level data about student and program performance are available, but individual units vary widely in the degree to which they systematically use this information to improve the quality of student learning and the educational experience. Changes in the criteria for program review and reporting on the outcomes of assessment activities are expected to facilitate a more systematic approach to the documentation of how evidence is used for program improvement.
APPENDIX A

Central Assessment Initiatives — Baccalaureate Level
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Initiative</th>
<th>Origination</th>
<th>Primary Data Reporting Lines</th>
<th>Other Data Reporting Lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIRP: Cooperative Institutional Research Program</td>
<td>Institutional Research</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Advising Deans Curricular Deans Vice President for Student Affairs Vice Provost</td>
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<td>FYI: First Year Initiative Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Matriculated Survey</td>
<td>Institutional Research/ Registration and Records</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Advising Deans Curricular Deans Vice President for Student Affairs Vice Provost</td>
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<td>YFCY: Your First College Year Survey</td>
<td>Institutional Research</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Advising Deans Curricular Deans Vice President for Student Affairs Vice Provost</td>
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<td>CAAP Critical Thinking Project</td>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Vice Provost</td>
<td>College/ Program/ Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS: College Student Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior Level Writing Project</td>
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<td>College/ Program/ Department</td>
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<td>Portfolio Assessment</td>
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<td>Capstone Assessment</td>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel College/ Program/ Department</td>
<td>College/ Program/ Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Surveys</td>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Vice Provost Illinois Board of Higher Education</td>
<td>Career Planning &amp; Placement College/ Program/ Department</td>
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<td>Central Initiative</td>
<td>Origination</td>
<td>Primary Data Reporting Lines</td>
<td>Other Data Reporting Lines</td>
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<td>Undecided Students Initiative</td>
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<td>Strong Interest Inventory/ Myer-Briggs Type Indicator</td>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Orientation Office Vice President for Student Affairs Advising Deans Curricular Deans Vice Provost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Returning Students Survey</td>
<td>Institutional Research/ Assessment Services</td>
<td>University Assessment Panel Orientation Office Vice President for Student Affairs Advising Deans Curricular Deans Vice Provost</td>
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<td>CIRP – Transfer Student Cooperative Institutional Research Program</td>
<td>Institutional Research/ Assessment Services/ Orientation Office</td>
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<td>General Education Assessment Initiative</td>
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<td>College/ Program/ Department</td>
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<td>University Writing Assessment Initiative</td>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
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<td>University Technology Skills Assessment Initiative</td>
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<td>University Multicultural Assessment Initiative</td>
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<td>University Information Skills Assessment Initiative</td>
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<td>University Quantitative Skills Assessment Initiative</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

Assessment Coordinator Job Description
ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

I. Centralized Assessment Activities

A. Coordinate the university-wide plan and revise it as needed to maintain currency with national trends and practices by

• Assisting in setting priorities for campus-based assessment initiatives

• Providing leadership and expertise in all phases of the development of assessment plans, the implementation of assessment programs and activities, and the analysis of data to determine if the university mission is reflected in outcomes objectives and if those objectives are being met

B. Coordinate and support campus assessment activities by

• Serving as an ex officio member of the University Assessment Panel, providing administrative support for its activities, preparing agendas, recording minutes, and recommending the distribution of assessment funds

• Working directly with Student Affairs and Academic Support Services staff to promote their development of assessment activities and to create synergies in the assessment activities of the academic and student affairs units

• Serving on the General Education Committee, and working closely with the committee to refine program goals, objectives, and comprehensive plans for assessment

• Serving as a consultant to the Committee on Initial Teacher Certification research subcommittee to refine goals, objectives, and comprehensive plans for assessment in programs offering initial teacher certification

• Attending meetings of the Academic Planning Council to support the review of academic programs

• Attending other university committee meetings at the request of the Associate or Assistant Provosts when relevant assessment issues are discussed
C. Facilitate the review of academic programs by

- Working with the University Assessment Panel to establish longitudinal practices that will allow systematic data gathering and documentation of program excellence
- Working with colleges, departments, and programs to implement longitudinal assessment practices that support the documentation of their objectives for student learning
- Working with colleges, departments and programs to incorporate assessment plans, processes, and findings into the program review documents
- Participating in program review meetings
- Working with the Associate Vice Provost to revise and improve the assessment portions of the program review documents for transmittal to the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)
- Providing support for the analyses and interpretation of data for use in reporting and planning activities

D. Manage alumni surveys by

- Developing survey instruments in consultation with the University Assessment Panel
- Coordinating preparation of components of surveys (e.g., instruments, mail labels, cover letters)
- Coordinating activities in departments and the Graduate School to distribute surveys in a timely fashion
- Supervising the production, mailing, and returns of one-, five-, and nine-year out surveys
- Analyzing data from all alumni surveys
- Disseminating findings from all alumni surveys to appropriate campus units
• Utilizing significant findings from alumni surveys in reports for Provost, Board of Trustees, and other campus offices, such as Public Affairs

• Preparing data and transmitting annual information from alumni surveys to the IBHE

• Representing the university at meetings with the IBHE concerning the alumni surveys

E. Manage the longitudinal student database for research purposes by

• Running computer programs on a periodic basis to update files from Registration and Records

• Creating periodic reports from the database to insure accuracy of extracted information compared to incoming data

• Providing subsets of data to faculty researchers involved in assessing student outcomes

• Developing data based reports required by the Provost, other members of the Provost’s staff, and other campus units

• Merging data with other student information for state reports

F. Disseminate additional information on assessment by

• Preparing reports and other materials on assessment programs and activities

• Giving formal presentations both on and off campus

• Providing training sessions on assessment practices

• Working informally with the campus network of faculty and staff who are interested in assessment

G. Maintain resource materials by
• Monitoring national and state trends and practices in assessment programs

• Surveying databases maintained at the library, through the Internet, and through professional connections

• Gathering current data, available reports, sample questionnaires, information on designing surveys, sampling, training exercises and materials, sample documents from other universities, or addresses where this information may be obtained

• Keeping orderly files on the information gathered and keeping an updated list of all resources available

II. Direct Service to Campus Units

A. Expedite departmental participation in undergraduate and graduate assessment activities through

• Consulting with unit administrators to support the development of assessment programs that facilitate the periodic review of academic programs and accreditation studies by insuring that all program objectives have sufficient documentation of student achievement

• Providing consultation to departments on assessment design and implementation

• Assisting departments, when appropriate, in developing assessment methodologies for general education courses as well as major degree programs

• Assisting departments in obtaining financial support for assessment activities

• Serving as a liaison between departments and the University Assessment Panel in the evaluation and recommendations regarding assessment activities and in requests for support

• Helping departments coordinate complementary undergraduate and graduate assessment activities for efficiency and cost effectiveness
B. Encourage academic support units and student services participation in assessment activities through

- Consulting with unit administrators to promote the value and importance of the role of assessment in higher education, to develop an awareness of data collection needs and advocating for those needs within the campus community

- Identifying unit assessment requirements by establishing rapport with unit members and developing understanding of their support function perspective

- Providing consultation to units on assessment design and implementation

- Corresponding with units concerning their assessment plans and implemented activities

- Disseminating information to units from centrally generated assessment data and resource materials

- Encouraging use of available campus services and resources for data collection, data analysis, and data utilization

III. Additional Service Activities

A. Provide other sources of information to the Provost and members of the Provost’s staff by

- Conducting or coordinating other studies at NIU (e.g., withdrawing student survey, general education surveys)

- Participating in and acting as campus liaison for studies conducted between NIU and other institutions
• Compiling data for and assisting with the preparation of the Underrepresented Groups Report

• Providing information for other required or requested reports to the Board of Trustees, the IBHE, and other bodies

B. Promote other areas of curriculum and assessment program development by

• Participating in training workshops for faculty in freshman year experience course

• Consulting with the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center to encourage the use of classroom assessment techniques to enhance the teaching-learning environment

• Co/teaching UNIV 101 on a regular basis

C. Prepare media materials regarding assessment for the Provost, Associate and Assistant Provosts, or other university staff and disseminate information electronically as well as in printed form to audience on and off campus

D. Maintain professional and technical knowledge by

• Attending professional training sessions

• Reviewing professional publications

• Establishing personal networks

• Participating in professional societies

E. Contribute to team efforts undertaken by the Provost, the Associate Provosts, and the Assistant Provosts as appropriate
IV. Reporting

Demonstrate accountability in meeting position requirements by

• Preparing an annual report by 1 June of each year

• Developing performance goals in consultation with the Associate Vice Provost annually
APPENDIX C

Assessment Responsibility at NIU
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Committee Assessment Responsibility</th>
<th>Codified</th>
<th>Undergraduate Contact</th>
<th>Graduate Contact</th>
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<tr>
<td>College of Business</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td>Accountancy</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Rowene Linden</td>
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<td>Operations Management and Information Systems</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sue Goad</td>
<td>Nancy Russo</td>
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<td>Finance</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
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<td>Shannon Gates</td>
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<td>Management</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td>College of Education</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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<td>Counseling, Adult and Higher Education</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Educational Psychology and Foundations</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Jean Pierce (EP)</td>
<td>Wilma Miranda (Foundations)</td>
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<td>Educational Technology, Research and Assessment</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Kinesiology and Physical Education</td>
<td>Undergraduate Professional Studies, Graduate Studies</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Paul Carpenter</td>
<td>Laurie Zittel</td>
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<td>Literacy Education</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Norm Stahl</td>
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<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>ECS area – Early Childhood Studies, Steering, Other - None</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>College of Engineering and Engineering Technology</td>
<td>College Senate/ Curriculum</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Promod Vohra</td>
<td>Nouredine Boubekri</td>
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<td>Electrical Engineering</td>
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<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Simon Song</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
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APPENDIX D

Assessment Status Report Format for Academic Programs
Assessment Status Report
Format for Academic Programs

In preparation for program review or accreditation, departments are asked to submit a brief status report through the appropriate college committee to the University Assessment Panel prior to the accreditation visit or full program review by the Academic Planning Council. The report should include information on each degree program offered by the department. The University Assessment Panel will review the report and, if necessary, make recommendations for additions or improvements in the department’s reported set of assessment activities to insure that sufficient evidence of student outcomes is included. The department may request funding for continuing authentic assessment initiatives or new assessment activities to address identified gaps or problem areas. The department may consult with the panel and revise the schedule of activities, as needed. An example of an assessment report for a hypothetical degree program is attached.

The status report should include:

1. Student Learning Objectives. A list of specific objectives (stated as outcomes) unique to each degree program.
2. Methods. An explanation of how evidence is gathered to determine whether the outcomes are being met, including systematic methods for gathering quantitative and/or qualitative data as well as anecdotal information, with a clear indication of which outcome or outcomes each method addresses.
3. Evidence. The information gathered through the department’s assessment activities that shows the extent to which learning outcomes are being met.
4. Use of Results. A description of how the evidence that has been gathered is used systematically to make programmatic improvements, and how the results could answer questions about how the program is relevant to the institutional mission and how the program activities contribute to the goals of the Illinois Commitment.
5. Further Information Needed. An analysis of results to uncover gaps in current information or problematic findings that indicate a need for further study.
6. Timeline. A timeline for collecting additional information.

Departments may request resources to support ongoing authentic assessment initiatives or new assessment activities. The request should include:
1. Justification for the requested funding, making clear what the activities will add to the department's information about program outcomes
2. A budget
3. A timeline for completing activity and submitting a final report on the funded initiative

Submit to: Craig A. Barnard, Assessment Coordinator, Office of Assessment Services, 111 Campus Life Building. Please also forward an electronic version (Microsoft Word is the preferred format) to Joyce Rossi, Secretary, Assessment Services at jrossi@niu.edu or on 3.5” disk.
The Relationship Between Assessment Activities and Program Review

Northern Illinois University is accountable for demonstrating the quality of its academic program outcomes to internal and external constituencies. The two major initiatives that enable the university to demonstrate its accountability are program review and program assessment. The Academic Planning Council (APC), which is responsible for conducting the program reviews, and the University Assessment Panel (UAP), which reviews assessment plans and status reports and recommends funding for assessment initiatives, have developed a coordinated review cycle to ensure that programs can consistently demonstrate their quality, identify ways to improve programs, and establish a record of successful improvements.

Funding* to support assessment activities may be requested through the UAP at any time during the review cycle in consultation with the assessment coordinator. However, if funding is available, priority will be given to programs imminently in need of evidence to support an internal or external accountability process, such as accreditation, or year four of the program review cycle. The assessment coordinator is available to the programs for consultation at any time during the review cycle. The schedule that follows shows the relationship between the review cycle and assessment reporting and possible funding for assessment initiatives.

The program’s assessment plan, status report/ funding request, and annual assessment updates become part of the record reviewed by the APC in conducting the program review, and documentation by the UAP that the University Assessment Plan is being implemented. For those programs that are accredited, these documents assist faculty preparing for the program’s self-study and site visit. The annual assessment updates and the status report also provide the university with evidence of systematic, continuous program improvement in its reporting to external entities.

*A report of the major findings from funded initiatives must be submitted to the UAP within one year of funding.
### Coordinated Cycle for Program Review and Program Assessment

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<td><strong>Years 1 and 2 - Years following program review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Annual assessment updates submitted to associate dean</td>
<td>The program will continue to gather evidence on how it is meeting its objectives and begin to make comparison of the findings from the evidence collected since the program review to ensure that all objectives are being assessed. The program will evaluate this evidence to identify the changes needed to improve the program’s outcomes, and will develop a plan for program improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 3 - Five years prior to program review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Annual assessment update submitted to associate dean</td>
<td>The program will continue to gather evidence on how it is meeting its objectives and conduct a thorough review of its assessment plan using the rubric for assessment plans as a guide. The assessment plan will be refined, as needed, to ensure that it is current, provides the evidence the program needs to demonstrate that its objectives are being met, and reflects the plan for program improvement. The program will begin drafting its status report to the UAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 4 - Four years prior to program review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Status Report submitted to UAP</td>
<td>Status Report. The program will submit to the UAP its current assessment plan and a status report on the assessment of program outcomes, and how the results from assessment activities have been used to meet program objectives and improve outcomes since the program review. The UAP will review the report and provide feedback to the program. The UAP may request an interim status report in year 6 of the review cycle. <em>Funding may be available for assessment activities.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 5 - Three years prior to program review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Annual assessment update submitted to associate dean</td>
<td>The program will continue to gather evidence on how it is meeting its objectives and to make comparisons of the findings from the evidence collected since the program review. The program will evaluate this evidence and will continue the implementation of its plans for program improvement. <em>If the program received funding from the UAP in year 4, a report on the major findings from the funded initiative will be submitted to the panel in year 5.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 6 - Two years prior to program review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Annual assessment update submitted to associate dean</td>
<td>The program will continue to gather evidence on how it is meeting its objectives and to make comparisons of the findings from the evidence collected since the program review. The program will evaluate this evidence and will continue the implementation of its plans for program improvement. Interim Report. The program submits an interim report on the implementation of the assessment plan to the UAP, if requested.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 7 - Preparation of the program review document</strong>&lt;br&gt;Annual assessment update submitted to associate dean</td>
<td>The program review, including a copy of the assessment plan, status report, and annual updates, is submitted to the provost’s office and discussed with the provost’s staff. The review document is revised based on input from the provost’s staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 8 - Review of the program by the APC</strong>&lt;br&gt;Program Review</td>
<td>Program Review. The program review is distributed to the APC subcommittee, which prepares its report for discussion with the full APC. The final report on the program is prepared, and outcomes and recommendations from the review are reported to the NIU Board of Trustees and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.</td>
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Revised April 2002
Examples of Assessment Activities
A assessment programs use multiple sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, for each outcome objective since any single type of evidence reflects only a part of student learning outcomes. Departments should select methods of gathering evidence most suited to their disciplines, and the methods that best reflect student learning may be implemented on a periodic basis.

Direct evidence of student learning: the results of

- locally developed objective and essay tests
- the capstone experience (e.g., course, thesis, field project)
- portfolios of student work (based on stated protocol, including the contents and criteria for evaluation)
- oral examinations and defenses
- essay questions blind scored by faculty across the department, division, school, or college
- standardized and nationally normed tests, if the examinations measure the specific learning expected in the program
- performance on national licensure, certification or professional exams
- qualitative internal and external juried review of comprehensive senior projects
- externally reviewed exhibitions and performances
- external evaluation of performance during internships based on stated program objectives
- course-embedded measures other than tests used for course grades

Indirect evidence of student learning: information from

- alumni and employer surveys
- student satisfaction questionnaires
- exit interviews with graduates
- focus groups
- graduate follow-up studies
- retention and transfer studies
- length of time to degree
- graduation rates and transfer rates
- job placement data
- information from advisory boards

The North Central Association (NCA) consultant-evaluators note that indirect sources of data are inadequate evidence of student outcomes if used alone. However, when used to supplement direct evidence, the indirect evidence provides information that may illuminate aspects of what the direct evidence tells us about students' academic achievement. NCA
staff have also provided examples of information that does not provide evidence of learning.

Non-measures of student learning include:

- questionnaires asking students if their personal goals for the course or major or program have been met
- data on the quality of the curriculum and other aspects of a program
- faculty publications and recognition
- the kinds of courses or majors students select, including course enrollments and course profiles
- faculty/student ratios
- the percentage of students who study abroad
- enrollment trends
- the percentage of students who graduate with the baccalaureate in five years
- the diversity of the student body grades and GPAs

NCA evaluators regularly stress that neither grades nor GPAs are adequate or reliable evidence of student learning across an undergraduate major or graduate/professional program of study. Alexander Astin, in his 1991 work *Assessment for Excellence*, states that course grades and GPAs “tell us little of what the student has actually learned in the course” and “very little about what a student actually knows or what that student’s competencies or talents really are” (p. 11).

**Use of Assessment Results**

A department should develop a variety of indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, of how well its degree programs are meeting their objectives for student learning. The kinds of information that may emerge from assessment activities include:

- how well students score on an objective test compared to a national norm group
- how well students score on an objective test when they exit the program as compared to when they entered the program
- how much growth occurs as a result of program specific initiatives that may be reflected in locally developed evaluations
- what students and alumni think of the degree program as they enter the institution, as they leave the program, and years after graduation
- the degree to which students can synthesize information from a number of courses to complete capstone projects or develop portfolios
- the degree to which outside reviewers believe that the program is meeting its objectives and that these objectives are appropriate for this discipline
• the degree to which employers feel that the program prepares students for experiences in work settings
• the degree to which the program prepares students for graduate education
• the degree to which the graduate education prepares students for professional positions

A degree program should implement multiple methods for gathering evidence in order to provide a balanced portrayal of the program. A program should be sure that it collects evidence that could be used to improve teaching and learning processes and curricula; identifies departmental mechanisms and processes for using results to improve programs; has feedback loops related to university processes (for example, planning, curriculum review, program review); and creates mechanisms to communicate results to faculty and to explain processes to students.

Sample Assessment Report

REPORT TO THE UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT PANEL
HYPOTHETICAL BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN BUSINESS

1. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
Graduates of the program will be prepared for successful professional careers in business, government and nonprofit organizations by demonstrating (1) their knowledge in XX, DD, and ZZ; (2) leadership skills; (3) an awareness of and commitment to ethical business practices; (4) computer skills; (5) effective written and oral communication skills; (6) effective quantitative reasoning skills; (7) an understanding of the principles of XX and their application in business practice; and (8) being prepared to enroll in advanced degree programs. The following chart lists the methods to be used, as well as a description of each method, a timeline for implementation, the person responsible, and the objectives each method addresses.
## 2. EXPLANATION OF METHODS

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<td>Capstone Course</td>
<td>Evaluation of projects by faculty outside the course and from peer programs at other institutions will be used to evaluate students' overall preparation in the program.</td>
<td>Spring semester, senior year</td>
<td>Director of Undergraduate Studies</td>
<td>1,2,4,5,6,7</td>
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<td>Standardized Testing</td>
<td>A sample group of students beginning the program and near the end of the program will be tested with the Major Fields Examination in XX. Our students' scores will be compared to national norms as well as cross validated against courses, projects, etc., completed locally. Students will also be tracked longitudinally to determine if there are gains in knowledge.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Department chair will assign faculty to supervise testing.</td>
<td>1,3,6,7</td>
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<td>Alumni Survey</td>
<td>In addition to the university alumni survey, students in the XX program will be asked more specific questions about their experiences at NIU and their perception of how well the program prepared them for their careers. A sample questionnaire is appended.</td>
<td>One, five, and ten years after graduation, to coincide with university survey</td>
<td>Graduate student assigned to department curriculum committee</td>
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<td>Internship Performance</td>
<td>Evaluations from instructor and site supervisor and student self-evaluation will be analyzed.</td>
<td>Fall semester, senior year</td>
<td>Field supervisors will collect and forward to curriculum committee</td>
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<td>Employer Survey</td>
<td>Employers of graduates will be asked to evaluate the extent to which graduates are prepared for their professional roles.</td>
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<td>Curriculum committee will supervise survey; graduate student will analyze.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Survey</td>
<td>Faculty will review syllabi relative to student competencies and changing needs in “real world” applications.</td>
<td>Each summer</td>
<td>Full faculty</td>
<td>1,4,5,6,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement Information</td>
<td>Information on graduate school acceptance and/or employment status will be collected.</td>
<td>Each summer</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Advisory Board</td>
<td>Alumni who work in the service region will convene to discuss how well the program prepared them, changing professional needs, and suggestions for curricular improvements.</td>
<td>Late fall semester annually</td>
<td>Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies</td>
<td>1,7,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. AVAILABLE DATA

This is the third year of implementation of the assessment process for the undergraduate business degree in Department YY. We made progress on a number of our methods for evaluating the program objectives.

Capstone Course. Last year’s activities. The capstone course was already in place but the evaluation of projects had been conducted only by faculty teaching the course. During the year the faculty and students developed criteria for evaluating projects based on course and program objectives, and these criteria were pilot tested by asking three faculty who did not teach the course to evaluate the projects. Findings. There was low inter-rater reliability among the three faculty, and it became clear that the criteria needed to be rewritten with greater clarity and specificity, as well as with examples of good, fair, and poor attainment of the specific objectives.

Standardized Testing. Last year’s activities. In the fall a group of incoming sophomores were tested using the Major Fields Examination in XX. Findings. Preliminary results indicate that our students did not perform as well on accounting tasks as did the national norm group.

Alumni Survey. Activities over the last three years. A supplemental survey was developed specific to the program objectives and was mailed to one-
Findings indicate that the recent graduates are satisfied with the program and that more than 90 percent feel the degree prepared them well for their current position, and that specific skill areas were adequately addressed by the curriculum.

Internship Performance. Last year's activities. Last year the evaluation forms from instructors, site supervisors, and students were forwarded to the curriculum committee. Findings. The committee found that some of the evaluation materials had not been reviewed in a number of years and were, in some cases, not particularly related to course or program objectives.

Employer Survey. The planned employer survey has not yet been conducted. While working with the other assessment activities, the faculty concluded that it would be premature to survey employers without first arriving at a consensus on the program objectives and the specific criteria for determining how well the program meets those objectives. More examination of internship reports as well as more discussion on the curriculum committee will clarify those issues.

Faculty Survey. Last year's activities. This spring the department held a retreat to review the curriculum. In the process, the program objectives were discussed and reaffirmed. Individual courses were fit into a matrix to determine if all the program objectives were adequately covered and if all courses were relevant to the program. Findings. It was agreed that all the skills areas were more than adequately covered by the courses but that there was only limited exposure to leadership training and to advanced computer usage. As a group, we then developed plans for incorporating those areas into the curriculum in ways that will not compromise the skills and content areas of the courses.

Placement Information. Last two years' activities. Information was gathered from existing sources on campus. Feedback on GMAT performance for business students applying to graduate school was obtained from Testing Services. Employment status was obtained from the baccalaureate alumni survey. The Career Planning and Placement Center provided lists of employers of recent graduates of the program. Exit surveys were conducted with students to determine their career and/or educational plans for the next year. Findings. It was found that a surprising number of our students have jobs by the time they graduate, as a result of their cooperative education and internship experiences. Of those who indicated a desire to go directly to graduate school, 84 percent were accepted into the institution that was their first choice. Of the remaining 16 percent, half did not meet the requirements for admission to the school of their choice, and the other half got into their second-choice school.
Alumni Advisory Board. Last year's activities. Last year faculty developed a list of alumni who might be invited to participate in an advisory capacity to the program. During spring semester a number of graduates were contacted until we had an agreed upon number (8) of affirmative responses. Due to scheduling problems the group did not convene in the spring semester. Findings. None.

4. USE OF RESULTS

Faculty in Department YY compiled all assessment results for the previous academic year during the late summer months. The departmental curriculum committee is in the process of evaluating the results and recommending curricular improvements based upon the information available. At the first faculty meeting in the fall, these recommendations will be discussed and voted upon by the full faculty, and any changes will then be implemented. At this time the faculty in Department YY will determine what evaluations are necessary to determine if the changes are effective, and will discuss the next steps in the ongoing program assessment process. During the fall and spring semesters, ongoing assessments will be continued, if appropriate, and new assessments will be initiated. When departmental advisers hold the group advising session with majors in the program each fall, discussions will be held concerning program objectives, the department's curriculum design to meet those objectives, methods of evaluating learning, and current findings. By understanding the rationale for the inclusion of courses in the program students can develop a greater appreciation for the value of the courses and their educational relevance, as well as becoming more active participants in the assessment process.

Information from the alumni survey indicates that recent graduates feel the degree prepared them well for their current position, and given that 94% of the respondents are currently employed in business positions within Illinois, our assumption is that this degree helps sustain economic growth in the state. Further, 17% of last year's program graduates were African-American, 10% were Hispanic, and 4% were Asian-Americans, indicating that the program contributes to the diversity of citizens completing education programs. Having 84% of applicants accepted into their graduate school of first choice is a clear indication of the high quality of the program. This year data from the Employer Survey and feedback from the Alumni Advisory Board will enable the program to address the Illinois Commitment more thoroughly.
5. GAPS IN CURRENT DATA

Using the findings from last year’s activities, several assessment methods should be revised and improved.

Capstone Course. Revise criteria based on objectives.

Standardized Testing. Another cohort of students should be tested before making a final decision.

Internship Performance. Revise forms to reflect learning objectives.

Employer Survey. Implement.

Alumni Advisory Board. Implement.

6. TIMELINE FOR COLLECTING ADDITIONAL DATA

Capstone Course. This fall we will ask three other faculty to read a sampling of the projects. If we conclude that the criteria are clear, we will then ask off-campus readers to review next spring’s projects.

Standardized Testing. The curriculum committee agreed that this should be monitored for another year with a second group of students to determine if the findings are consistent. If a second group falls below the national norm on this area, steps will be taken to improve the curriculum in this area. Also, the first group will be tracked longitudinally to determine if coursework during the junior and senior years enhances students’ abilities in the areas in which they displayed weaker skills.

Alumni Survey. This year, in addition to the one-year-out survey, questions will be developed for graduates from five years ago. The curriculum committee felt no other action need be taken at present; the data will be compiled over time to determine if there are trends in alumni responses.

Internship Performance. The format for internship reports is currently being revised to relate it more directly to the program objectives for student learning. A draft will be shared with site supervisors for their feedback. A final version will be ready in late fall when the fall semester evaluations have to be completed.

Employer Survey. The curriculum committee will use the information from other assessment projects to create a list of specific criteria for the program objectives. These will be transformed into a survey format and will be piloted with a small group of employers who are closely associated with the
program. After getting their feedback, the department will send the survey to a broader audience in the spring semester.

Faculty Survey. The new components will be introduced into certain courses this fall, monitored by the faculty, and discussed next spring and summer.

Placement Information. We will continue to gather information on placement and monitor the findings for significant trends.

Alumni Advisory Board. The Alumni Advisory Board will meet this fall with the department chair and the director of undergraduate studies.

7. RESOURCES NEEDED

The department requests support to extend the standardized testing pilot project for an additional year so that enough data can be compiled to determine if the XXX exam is appropriate for our program. The cost of examination booklets and scoring will be $980.00 (x number of booklets x $$ each). The department will cover all other costs including printing, postage, testing materials, and costs associated with a reception for the advisory board.
APPENDIX E

Evaluation Rubric for Assessment Plans/Status Reports
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Overall Plan</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped</td>
<td>No or unclear outcomes; none are student learning focused and/or outcomes-oriented</td>
<td>Methods are not clearly stated; not related to outcomes; inappropriate for outcomes; no use of multiple measures</td>
<td>Plan lacks information on methods, procedures, timelines, and responsible parties; the plan has not been implemented</td>
<td>No data for any outcomes are reported</td>
<td>No analysis of findings related to outcomes is provided</td>
<td>No plan either to change or maintain program outcomes is reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Some outcomes are clearly stated; some are student learning focused and/or outcomes-oriented; a number of outcomes may be inappropriate and/or are at lower levels of achievement (See Bloom)</td>
<td>Some methods are clearly stated and are related to outcomes; some are appropriate to assess outcomes; some are authentic; some outcomes are measured using multiple methods</td>
<td>Methods, procedures, timelines, and responsible parties are partially developed; some elements of the plan have been implemented</td>
<td>Data are reported for some outcomes; some outcomes are assessed using multiple measures</td>
<td>Incomplete analysis of findings related to outcomes is provided; some analyses compare/contrast findings from multiple measures</td>
<td>A partially developed plan to change or maintain outcomes is reported; plan is not clearly connected to the analyses of student outcome achievements and/or evaluated for feasibility and/or assessed for the likelihood of program improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>The majority of outcomes are clearly stated; student learning focused and/or outcomes-oriented; the number of outcomes is appropriate; the majority reflect higher levels of achievement (See Bloom)</td>
<td>The majority of methods are clearly stated and appropriate to assess outcomes; most outcomes are assessed using multiple measures and/or using authentic assessment</td>
<td>The majority of methods, procedures, timelines, and responsible parties are in place and clearly stated; the majority of the plan has been implemented</td>
<td>Data are reported on each outcome; the majority of outcomes are assessed using multiple measures</td>
<td>Analysis of findings related to the majority of outcomes is provided; the majority of analyses compare/contrast findings from multiple measures</td>
<td>A plan to change or maintain the majority of outcomes is reported; the plan is connected to the analyses of student outcome achievements and/or addresses aspects of feasibility and/or includes some assessment of its likelihood for program improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>All outcomes are clearly stated; all are student learning focused and outcomes oriented; the number of outcomes is appropriate and all outcomes reflect higher levels of achievement (See Bloom)</td>
<td>All methods are clearly stated and appropriate to assess outcomes; all outcomes are assessed using multiple methods and authentic assessment</td>
<td>All methods, procedures, timelines, and responsible parties are in place and clearly stated; the plan has been fully implemented for more than one year</td>
<td>Data are reported on all outcomes; all outcomes are assessed using multiple measures that include authentic assessment</td>
<td>Clearly developed and well thought out analyses are reported; findings are reported on all outcomes comparing/contrasting findings from multiple measures that include authentic assessment</td>
<td>A thorough plan to change or maintain all outcomes is reported; the plan reflects the thoughtful use of the analyses of student outcome achievements and includes an evaluation of its feasibility and its likelihood for program improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Assessment Status Report Format for Student- and Academic-Support Units
Assessment Status Report
Format for Student- and Academic-Support Units

In preparation for the next university re-accreditation by the North Central Association and for submission of the university’s Results Report to the IBHE and budget reallocations, units/ departments that provide academic- and student-support services are asked to submit a brief status report on their assessment activities through the appropriate assistant or associate provost to the University Assessment Panel. The report should include information on each unit/ department. The University Assessment Panel will review the report and, if necessary, make recommendations for additions or improvements in the unit/ department’s assessment plans to insure that sufficient evidence of student outcomes is included. The unit/ department may request funding for new assessment activities or identified gaps or problem areas. The unit/ department may consult with the panel and revise the schedule of activities, as needed. An example of an assessment report for a hypothetical unit is attached.

The status report should include:

1. Objectives. A list of specific objectives (stated as outcomes) unique to each unit/ department. Some outcomes will be student outcomes while others, depending on the unit/ department mission, may not be directly related to students.

2. Methods. An explanation of how evidence is gathered to determine whether the outcomes are being met, including systematic methods for gathering quantitative and/ or qualitative data as well as anecdotal information, with a clear indication of which outcome or outcomes each method addresses.

3. Evidence. The information gathered through the unit/ department’s assessment activities that shows the extent to which outcomes are being met.

4. Use of Results. A description of how the evidence that has been gathered is used systematically to make programmatic improvements, and how the results could answer questions about how the unit/ department relates to the institutional mission and how the activities, services, or events contribute to the goals of the Illinois Commitment.

5. Further Information Needed. An analysis of results to uncover gaps in current information or problematic findings that indicate a need for further assessment.

6. Timeline. A timeline for collecting additional information.

Resources to support new or expanded assessment activities may be requested from the University Assessment Panel, but new resources will not be allocated by the University Assessment Panel for maintenance of
ongoing activities. Continuing assessment tasks should be incorporated into the unit/department's ongoing activities. The request should include:

1. A justification for the requested funding, making clear what the new activities will add to information about the unit/department's outcomes
2. A budget
3. A timeline for completing the new activity

Submit to: Craig Barnard, Assessment Coordinator, Campus Life 111. Please also forward an electronic version (Microsoft Word is the preferred format) to Joyce Rossi, Secretary, Assessment Services at jrossi@niu.edu or on 3.5” disk.
**Schedule for Department or Unit Review of Assessment Activities**

Academic support and student services units/departments are central to student success in the university and play a crucial part in the delivery of academic programs that make up the university experience. As part of the larger university plan for assessment, all academic support and student services units should engage in assessment to: demonstrate the quality of their programs and activities; identify ways to improve programs and activities; and establish a record of those activities and successful program improvements. The evidence compiled across the Division of Academic and Student Affairs will assist the university in demonstrating accountability to its internal and external audiences. Funding to support new assessment activities may be requested through the University Assessment Panel at any time; however, priority will be given to programs.

| Year 1 - Four years prior to unit review of assessment activities | The unit or department will begin the cycle by reviewing its assessment plans for clarity of program objectives and appropriate methods to document success in meeting those objectives. The unit should begin or continue to collect longitudinal evidence to demonstrate that objectives are being met. Funding requests may be made if programs identify special needs. |
| Year 2 - Three years prior to unit review of assessment activities | The department or unit submits a Status Report to the UAP on all assessment activities, with special emphasis on types of evidence collected and gaps in or additional indicators needed to evaluate all programs and activities. A format for the report is provided. The UAP will review the status report and provide information to the unit for possible refinements. If funding is requested, the panel will make recommendations for funding new assessment activities. |
| Year 3 - Two years prior to unit review of assessment activities | Units or departments will continue to gather evidence of outcomes and refine assessment activities to insure that all department or unit objectives are supported by evidence. Opportunities for funding are available if a department needs to add to its data collection activities. |
| Year 4 - One year prior to unit review of assessment activities | Assessment activities are ongoing. Funding may be available for new assessment activities. |
| Year 5 - Unit Review of Assessment Activities | Summary Report to UAP on Assessment. During this year the unit or department will provide a report on its five-year cycle of assessment activities, with emphasis on: program objectives, methods used, analysis of findings, and how results have been used to improve programs. |
imminently in need of evidence to support an internal or external accountability process, such as accreditation or program review.

**Examples of Assessment Activities**

Assessment programs utilize multiple sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, for each outcome objective since any single type of evidence reflects only a segment of student outcomes. Units/departments should select methods of gathering evidence best suited to their missions, and determine the most appropriate frequency to implement different methods. Not all units/departments will be able to use multiple methods of direct measures and may depend to a greater extent on indirect measures. In some cases, documentation of processes in place may substitute for more elusive long term outcomes when the actual student outcomes may not be determined during the time the student attends the university.

**Direct evidence of student outcomes:** the results of

- locally developed objective and essay tests, especially at the end of specific programmed activities
- pre-tests/post-tests
- standardized and nationally normed tests, if the examinations measure the specific student outcomes expected in the program
- performance on national licensure, certification or professional exams, if relevant to the program
- external evaluation of performance based on stated program objectives, such as recognition of outstanding student achievement related to programs and activities
- evidence from accreditation or re-accreditation results

**Indirect evidence of student outcomes:** information from

- alumni and employer surveys
- student satisfaction questionnaires
- exit interviews with graduates
- focus groups/discussion groups
- program evaluation forms
- graduate follow-up studies
- retention and transfer studies
- length of time to degree
- graduation rates and transfer rates
- job placement data
- information from advisory boards

The North Central Association (NCA) consultant-evaluators note that indirect sources of data are inadequate evidence of student outcomes if
used alone. However, when used to supplement direct evidence, the indirect evidence provides information that may illuminate aspects of the direct evidence of students' academic achievement and their university experiences.

**Use of Results**

A department should develop a variety of indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, for how well its programs are meeting their objectives. The kinds of information that may emerge from assessment activities include:

- how much growth occurs as a result of program specific initiatives that may be reflected in locally developed evaluations
- what students and alumni think of the program as they enter the institution, as they leave the program, and years after graduation
- the degree to which outside reviewers believe that the program is meeting its objectives and that these objectives are appropriate for this discipline
- the degree to which outside accreditation bodies believe that units meet their national standards for serving students
- how well students score on an objective test compared to a national norm group, if the test is intended to measure specific skills addressed by the program
- how well students score on an objective test when they exit the program as compared to when they entered the program

Each program should implement multiple methods for gathering evidence in order to provide a balanced portrayal of the program in its budget requests or re-accreditation self-study. A program should be sure that it collects evidence that can be used to improve processes; identifies departmental mechanisms and processes for using results to improve programs; has feedback loops to related university processes (for example, planning, curriculum review, program review); and creates mechanisms to communicate results to staff and to explain processes to students.

**Sample Assessment Report**

REPORT TO THE UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT PANEL
HYPOTHETICAL PROGRAM FOR
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER CENTER*

1. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

The Center is the liaison between NIU and Illinois public community colleges. Its objectives include: (1) assuring that community college students have the most current transfer information; (2) recruiting high quality community college students to NIU; (3) facilitating a smooth
transfer of community college students to NIU; and (4) reinforcing retention of community college transfers at NIU. The following chart lists the methods to be used, as well as a description of each method, a timeline for implementation, the person responsible, and the objectives each method addresses.

2. EXPLANATION OF METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Objectives Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from transfer directors at community colleges</td>
<td>Evaluation of activities and information provided to community colleges will be evaluated by the transfer directors of the community colleges.</td>
<td>Spring semester</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer rates</td>
<td>Information on rates will be collected through Registration and Records. Comparisons will be made among community colleges utilizing statewide data.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Graduate assistant</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT and HS rank of transfers</td>
<td>Information on ACT and high school rank (used as measures of quality) of transfers will be compiled through Registration and Records as students enter NIU.</td>
<td>Every semester</td>
<td>Graduate assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of community college students</td>
<td>Community college students will complete short exit surveys on a variety of topics at the end of transfer sessions with NIU staff.</td>
<td>Every semester, ongoing</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey of transfers to NIU</td>
<td>Transfers will be surveyed at the end of their first term at NIU on satisfaction with transfer process, facility in moving to NIU, services provided to promote retention.</td>
<td>Each semester</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention and graduation rates of transfers</td>
<td>Information on retention rates and graduation rates will be collected through Institutional Research.</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Graduate assistant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement information</td>
<td>Information on graduate school acceptance and or employment status will be collected through Career Planning and Placement.</td>
<td>Every summer</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>3,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Advisory Board</td>
<td>Alumni who work in the service region will convene to discuss how well the center helped them, provide information on changing professional needs, and suggestions for program improvements.</td>
<td>Late fall semester biennially</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Borrowed heavily from documents from the NIU Office of Community College Relations but may not reflect their actual planning document.
OUTCOMES BY METHODS - table demonstrating which outcomes are addressed by each method of assessment. The table assures that multiple methods are in place for each outcome and reflects that each method may address more than one outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CC Directors Feedback</th>
<th>Transfer Rates</th>
<th>ACT and HS Rank</th>
<th>Survey of CC Students</th>
<th>Survey of NIU Transfers</th>
<th>Survey of NIU Graduation Rates</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Advisory Board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recruitment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. AVAILABLE DATA

This is the third year of implementation of the assessment process for the Community College Transfer Center. We made progress on a number of our methods for evaluating the program objectives.

Community College Directors’ Feedback. Last year’s activities. The evaluation form was in place and was used systematically by the community college directors. However, there were new concerns that arose in the area of articulation of major degree programs that were not covered on the survey. Findings. Most transfer center directors were satisfied with the quality and amount of information they received from NIU. However, they advised NIU that as more major degree programs become fully articulated, the course equivalencies for NIU should be available to their students on the NIU web site.

Transfer Rates. Last year’s activities. Each semester the number of transfers and their school of origin is calculated. Findings. Preliminary results indicate that our transfer rates are holding steady, and that schools that have been targeted for more intensive recruiting activities have increased transfers to NIU by 5%.

ACT and High School Rank. Activities over the last three years. Data has been kept every semester on the ACT scores and high school rank of our transfer recruits. Findings. Findings indicate the mean ACT score for our transfer students has not risen but for those schools targeted for recruiting
activities, the ACT scores have shown a significant increase. High school rank has remained steady.

Survey of Community College Students. Last year’s activities. Last year the survey of community college students was expanded based upon feedback from the first cohort of students who completed the first form of the survey. Findings. Students have been generally satisfied with the quality and amount of information provided on site at the community colleges. However, they reported discontent with the low number of faculty available to answer questions at open houses at the university.

Survey of NIU Transfer Students. The planned NIU student survey has not yet been conducted.

Retention and Graduation Rates. Last year’s activities. Each semester Institutional Research provided the Center with information on retention and graduation rates by community college of origin. Findings. It was found that high school rank and ACT scores were more predictive of graduation than college of origin. However, students transferring from Waubonsee Community College persist from first to second year at a higher rate than transfer students from other colleges.

Placement Information. Last two years’ activities. Information was gathered from existing sources on campus. Feedback on GRE, MCAT, and GMAT performance for students applying to graduate school was obtained from Testing Services. Employment status was obtained from the baccalaureate alumni survey. The Career Planning and Placement Center provided lists of employers of recent graduates of the program. Exit surveys were conducted with students to determine their career and/or educational plans for the next year. Findings. It was found that a surprising number of our students have jobs by the time they graduate, as a result of their cooperative education and internship experiences. Of those who indicated a desire to go directly to graduate school, 84 percent were accepted into the institution that was their first choice. Of the remaining 16 percent, half did not meet the requirements for admission to the school of their choice, and the other half got into their second-choice school. For transfer students the number who had jobs prior to or by graduation was significantly higher than for students who had begun their baccalaureate careers at NIU.

Alumni Advisory Board. Last year’s activities. Last year faculty developed a list of alumni who might be invited to participate in an advisory capacity to the program. During spring semester a number of graduates were contacted until we had an agreed upon number (8) of affirmative responses. Due to scheduling problems the group did not convene in the spring semester. Findings. None.
4. USE OF RESULTS

The Director, Assistant Director, and research assistant compiled all assessment results for the previous academic year during the early summer months. The full staff is in the process of evaluating the results and recommending programmatic improvements based upon the information available. Steps will be taken to implement changes and a process will be in place to determine whether the changes are effective. Early fall semester, the staff will discuss the next steps in the ongoing program assessment process. During the fall and spring semesters, ongoing assessments will be continued, if appropriate, and new assessments will be initiated. When staff meet with representatives and students in the community colleges, they will discuss the current findings and plans for implementing changes. Feedback from the constituent groups can help determine which new processes should be given priority status.

Information from the surveys of community college students and alumni indicates that the Center is meeting its objectives. The Center has been particularly successful in providing students with current information to help them make the right choices in picking a senior institution in which to complete their degree as well as in choosing an appropriate major program. The Center has been particularly successful in targeting specific schools and cohorts of transfers to recruit highly qualified community college students. Better recruitment promotes better retention and more satisfied graduates. Recent graduates feel their degree prepared them well for their current position, and given that 94% of the respondents are currently employed in positions within Illinois, our assumption is that this degree helps sustain economic growth in the state. This year data from the Survey of Transfer Students and feedback from the Alumni Advisory Board will enable the program to address the Illinois Commitment more thoroughly.

5. GAPS IN CURRENT DATA

Using the findings from last year’s activities, several assessment methods should be revised and improved.

- Community College Directors Feedback. Revise questions to address items of current interest.

- Survey of NIU Transfers. Implement.

- Alumni Advisory Board. Implement.
6. TIMELINE FOR COLLECTING ADDITIONAL DATA

Community Colleges Directors Feedback. This fall we will provide summary information from last year’s findings, ask additional questions to target specific issues in the articulation of major degree programs, and share those results with curricular deans within NIU.

Transfer Rates. Data will continue to be gathered in the same way.

ACT and HS Rank. Data will continue to be gathered in the same way. In addition, the fall transfers will be tracked longitudinally to determine whether coursework during the junior and senior years enhances students’ abilities in the areas in which they displayed weaker skills.

Community College Students Survey. We will continue to survey students as they complete advising or information sessions with NIU transfer coordinators.

NIU Transfer Students Survey. The survey will be implemented this year. Last year staff limitations did not allow the Center to implement all the methods.

Retention and Graduation Rates. The new components will be introduced into certain courses this fall, will be monitored by the faculty, and will be discussed next spring and summer.

Placement Information. We will continue to gather information on placement and monitor the findings for significant trends.

Alumni Advisory Board. The Alumni Advisory Board will meet this fall with the Director and Assistant Director of the Center.

7. RESOURCES NEEDED

The department requests support for a one-time “kickoff” meeting with the alumni advisory board. We plan to meet with them in the metropolitan Chicago area for the first meeting, and need a small budget for space rental and refreshments. The anticipated budget is $425.00.
APPENDIX G

Schedule of
University Assessment Plan Central Initiatives —
Baccalaureate Level
Schedule of University Assessment Plan Central Initiatives – Baccalaureate Level

2003-2004
- Univ. 101-Strong Interest Inventory (SII)/MBTI Pilot Project (Fall)
- Non-Returning Students Survey (biannual)
- Employer Feedback Survey (pilot)
- Alumni Surveys (annual) 1 and 9 year out
- CIRP for Transfer Students Project (annual)
- CIRP (annual)
- FYE (biannual)

2004-2005
- Univ. 101 SII/MBTI Project (small scale)
- University Technology Skills Assessment Project (every 4th year)
- Employer Feedback Survey (annual)
- Alumni Surveys (annual) 1 year out
- General Education Assessment (biannual)
- CIRP for Transfer Students Project (annual)
- CIRP (biannual begins)
- YFCY (biannual)

2005-2006
- Univ. 101 SII/MBTI Project (biannual)
- University Writing Assessment Project
- Employer Feedback Survey (annual)
- CSS (biannual)
- Alumni Surveys (annual) 1 and 5 year out
- Non-returning Students Survey (biannual)
- CIRP for Transfer Student Project (biannual begins)
- FYE (biannual)

2006-2007
- University Quantitative Skills Assessment Project (every 4th year)
- Employer Feedback Survey (annual)
- University-wide Portfolio/Capstone Assessment Project (every 4th year)
- General Education Assessment (biannual)
- Alumni Surveys (annual) 1 and 9 year out
- CIRP (biannual)
- YFCY (biannual)
2007-2008

Univ. 101 SII/MBTI Project (biannual depending on analysis of initial project)
University Multicultural Assessment Project (every 4th year)
Alumni Surveys (annual) 1 year out
Non-returning Students Survey (biannual)
FYE (biannual)
CIRP for Transfer Students Project (biannual)
CSS (biannual)
APPENDIX H

Multicultural Initiatives
Scope of Multi-Cultural Initiative at NIU

Faculty

Staff

Students/Alumni

Administration

Diversity Studies Centers/Programs (e.g., Black Studies, Women’s Studies, etc.)

Academic Departments (e.g., Sociology, History, etc.)

Support Units (e.g., AADR, Faculty Development, etc.)

Taskforces/Commissions/Committees/Groups (e.g., Presidential Commission on Minorities, etc.)

Grant Programs (e.g., Dept. of Education Grants on Disabilities)

Development Programs (e.g., MCTI, Dialogue on Race, etc.)

Curricular Programs (e.g., Minors in Black Studies, Latino & Latin American Studies, etc.)

Awareness/Celebrations (e.g., Black History Month, Women’s History Month, etc.)

Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Initiative
Initial Focus of Assessment of Multicultural Initiatives at NIU

- Pre-Assessment of Knowledge/Experience and Needs (F1)
- Institute Evaluation (F2)
- Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute
- Multiculturally Transformed Courses

Possible Comparisons for Analysis:
- F1 and F2 with S1 and S2
- F2 and F3 with S2 and S3
- F1 and F3 with S1 and S3
- F3 and F4 with S3 and S4

Faculty

Non-Participants of MCTI

Students

Incoming Freshman Survey (S1)

General Multicultural Assessment (S2)

Alumni Survey (S4)

Multiculturally Transformed Courses

Post-Assessment after a year (F3)

General Multicultural Assessment (F4)