Student and Academic Support Services
Assessment Information Packet

Assessment Plan and Status Report Format for Student and Academic Support Services
Review Schedule
Examples of Assessment Activities and Use of Results
Assessment Plan and Status Report (Sample)
Evaluation Rubric for Student and Academic Support Services
Assessment Plan/Status Report Checklist: Student and Academic Support Services

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Prepared by
Office of Assessment Services
Northern Illinois University
753-7120
assess@niu.edu
Assessment Plan and Status Report Format
for Student and Academic Support Services

In preparation for the next university re-accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission 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 associate provost or vice president 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 programs to ensure 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.

The status report should include the following:

1. **History.** A brief history of the unit/department which provides a solid contextual background in which to understand the mission of the unit and the information in the assessment report.

2. **Mission, Goals, and Objectives.** A stated mission which is logically linked to the goals and specific objectives (stated as outcomes) unique to each unit/department. Some outcomes will be student learning outcomes while others, depending on the unit/department's mission, will be related to program effectiveness. Objectives should include stated targets for performance.

3. **Methods.** An explanation of how evidence is gathered to determine if 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. Samples of assessment tools should be included as appendices (e.g., surveys, rubrics, etc.). Also include a Data Collection Timeline Table (example on page 6) and Outcomes by Methods Matrix (example on page 7) in this section.

4. **Evidence.** The information gathered through the unit/department’s assessment activities that show the extent to which outcomes are being met and indicate which data address which objective.

5. **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.

6. **Further Information Needed and Timeline.** An analysis of results to uncover gaps in current information or problematic findings that indicate a need for further assessment. A timeline for collecting additional information is presented.

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:

- a justification for the requested funding, making clear what the new activities will add to
information about the unit/department’s outcomes

- a budget
- a timeline for completing the new activity

Submit to the Associate Vice Provost for Academic Outcomes Assessment. Please also forward an electronic version (Microsoft Word preferred) to assess@niu.edu. Questions regarding funding guidelines may also be directed to the Office of Assessment Services.
Review Schedule

Academic support and Student Affairs 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 program for assessment, all academic support and Student Affairs 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 imminently in need of evidence to support an internal or external accountability process, such as accreditation or program review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1  (four years prior to review of assessment activities)</td>
<td>Unit or department will begin cycle by reviewing its assessment programs for clarity of program objectives and appropriate methods to document success in meeting 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years 2 and 3 (three and two years prior to review of assessment activities)</td>
<td>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 department needs to add to its data collection activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 (one year prior to review of assessment activities)</td>
<td>Assessment activities are ongoing. Funding may be available for new assessment activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Year 5 (review of assessment activities) | **Summary Report to UAP on Assessment (Assessment Plan and Status Report)**
During this year the unit or department will provide a report on its five-year cycle of assessment activities, with emphasis on program history, mission/goals/objectives, methods used, evidence from analysis of findings, use of results, and further information needed. (See Appendix II.) |
Examples of Assessment Activities
and Use of Results

Assessment programs use 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.

Examples of Assessment Methods

Direct evidence of student outcomes or program effectiveness: 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
- direct observations
- 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
- reflective journals
- portfolio reviews
- benchmarking (e.g., student learning activities)
- retention rates
- evidence from accreditation or re-accreditation results
- internal and external reviews
- focus groups/discussion groups

Indirect evidence of student outcomes or program effectiveness: information from
- alumni and employer surveys
- student satisfaction questionnaires
- exit interviews with graduates
- focus groups/discussion groups (may possibly provide some direct evidence too)
- 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
- benchmarking (e.g., program standards)
The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) 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 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, future planning, reporting to the Illinois Board of Higher Education and to external accreditors); and creates mechanisms to communicate results to staff and to explain processes to students.
1. HISTORY

The Northern Illinois University Transfer Center opened on March 10, 2003. Formerly, there was an office called Community College Relations. The Coordinator of Community College Relations worked primarily as a liaison between Northern Illinois University and community college personnel (advisors and counselors). The Coordinator reported directly to the Vice Provost.

After the retirement of the Coordinator, the Office of Registration and Records revised the goals of the former Community College Relations Office to make it a Transfer Center. The goal was to make the office accessible to not only community college personnel, but also to transfer students.

The Transfer Center became part of the Office of Admissions in September 2005. In August 2007, the Transfer Center relocated to the third floor of Williston Hall on the northeast wing. The staff includes three Assistant Directors and an Associate Director/Transfer Center Coordinator that reports to Director of Admissions. The goal is to have staff with a high-level of transfer training and to ultimately enhance and expand transfer services. More detail on the history of the Transfer Center can be found in Appendix A.

2. MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Mission. The Northern Illinois University Community College Transfer Center strives to provide outstanding service in a professional and friendly manner. We serve our students, community college colleagues and the NIU community in a team-oriented environment that is first and foremost student-centered.

Goals and Objectives. The Center is the liaison between NIU and Illinois public community colleges. As such, the goal of the Center is to aid students in achieving a smooth and successful transfer to NIU. Its objectives include (a) assuring that community college students have the most current transfer information; (b) recruiting high quality community college students to NIU; (c) facilitating an efficient and seamless transfer of community college students to NIU; and (d) reinforcing retention of community college transfers at NIU.

Measurable Objectives and Targets:

(1) Assuring that the community college students have the most current transfer information
   a) NIU transfer information will be effectively disseminated to community college advisors and students.
      1. 100% of community college advising offices will regularly receive appropriate information about NIU and receive notice of changes and new information in a timely manner
      2. 100% of potential students are contacted and provided with information within 30 days of
their communication with the university

3. 90% of NIU transfers will report satisfaction with communications with the transfer office prior to admission

4. 90% of community college students who interacted with NIU personnel at fairs or other sessions will report satisfaction with information gained

(2) Recruiting high quality community college students to NIU
   a) An effective system of recruitment is in place to recruit and admit the best cohort of transfer students each year.
      1. 80% of CC recruits with CC GPA’s of 3.00 or higher will enroll at NIU
      2. NIU will strive to receive 4 transfer student applications for each admitted
      3. Each transfer cohort will have an aggregate ACT and HS Rank that exceed that of matriculating students for the same cohort year
      4. 90% of transfer directors for CC’s will list NIU in its top 3 recruiting institutions

(3) Facilitating an efficient and seamless transfer of community college students to NIU
   a) Transfer students will receive adequate orientation programs, staff support, referrals and information to transition successfully to NIU
      1. 85% of CC students who transfer to NIU will report that their transition was “excellent” or “good” when surveyed
      2. 85% of CC students will participate in a transfer student orientation at NIU. When surveyed, 100% will report that the orientation was “excellent” or “good”.
      3. 85% of CC students will report that their meetings with staff for advising on courses and referrals were “Excellent” or “good”.
      4. 85% of students who participate in orientation will attend classes at NIU that semester
      5. 85% of alumni surveyed will indicate that the transition to NIU was “excellent” or “good”

(4) Reinforcing retention of community college transfers at NIU
   a) Retention and graduation rates of CC transfers will be the same or higher than the rate of NIU matriculates
   b) 90% of transfer admits will graduate in the major in which they enrolled at transfer

3. METHODS

Data Collection Timeline. 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Outcomes 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 semestr</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 by using statewide</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Graduate assistant</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>Person Responsible</td>
<td>Outcomes Addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</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 hanging professional needs, and offer suggestions for program improvements.</td>
<td>Late fall semester, biennially</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes by Methods Matrix.** The table below demonstrates which outcomes are addressed by each method of assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<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>Retention and Graduation Rates</th>
<th>Placement Information</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>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>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Transfer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. EVIDENCE**

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 (see attached form in Appendix B).
However, there were new concerns that arose in the area of articulation of major degree programs that were not covered on the survey. **Findings.** Ninety-five percent of the 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 are calculated. **Findings.** Preliminary results indicate that our transfer rates from community college recruits are stable at 60% (30% below our target rate). However, schools that have been targeted for more intensive recruiting activities have increased transfers to NIU by 25%.

**ACT and High School Rank.** **Activities over the last three years.** Data have 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 except for those schools targeted for recruiting activities; the ACT scores have shown a significant increase of 20%. High school rank has remained steady; 90% of transfer students were in the top 50% of their high school class.

**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 (see Appendix C). **Findings.** Students surveyed reported having been generally satisfied with the quality and amount of information provided on site at the community colleges (85% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement). However, 50% of the students 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 but the survey has been developed (see Appendix D).

**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 U.S. colleges at a rate of 85%.

**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 (see Appendix E). **Findings.** It was found that a surprising number of our students, 70% 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.
5. 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 if 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 meets 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 also been successful in targeting specific school 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.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION NEEDED AND TIMELINE

Findings from last year’s activities indicate that 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

Following is a 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.

- **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.

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

The department requests support for a one-time “kickoff” meeting with the alumni advisory board. We need a budget for a consultant who will hold a workshop with the board to address issues specific to outcomes and assessment (see consultants’ resume in Appendix F) and to support a half-time graduate assistant for two months to undertake the logistics in setting up the meeting and conduct follow up analyses in data collected during the workshop from the advisory board members regarding assessment. The anticipated budget is $2,500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultant’s fee and travel</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-time GA (2 months)</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stages</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary</td>
<td>History provides a solid contextual background in which to understand the mission of the unit and the information in the assessment report; history provides opportunities for UAP members to envision collaborations with the unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>History provides a solid contextual background in which to understand the mission of the unit and the information in the assessment report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Description of history provides relevant background and some connection to the mission of the unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped</td>
<td>Description of history is missing or too vague to understand the mission and purpose of the unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Plan/Status Report Checklist
Student and Academic Support Services

Unit/Department:

Structure of the Plan

___ Met ___ PM* ___ Unmet A history of the unit/department is included.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The mission, goals, and objectives are stated.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet All assessment methods are listed.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet All assessment methods are briefly described.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet Targets for attainment of the objectives are specified.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet A timeline for implementation of each of the assessment methods is stated.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The individual(s) responsible for each of the assessment methods is identified.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan shows which of the assessment methods are used to assess each outcome.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan contains an outcomes-by-methods matrix.

Content of the Plan

___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet Each of the outcomes is stated in measurable terms.
Outcome(s) not meeting this criterion:

___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet Each of the outcomes is stated as a student learning outcome or program effectiveness outcome.
Outcome(s) not meeting this criterion:

___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet All of the methods reported are accepted assessment methods.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan includes both direct and indirect assessment methods.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet Each outcome is assessed by at least one direct and one indirect method.
Outcome(s) not meeting this criterion:

___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan includes at least one method for soliciting employer or other external feedback.

Content of the Status Report

___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The report provides a summary of the data from each assessment method.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The report demonstrates that assessment methods were implemented as described.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan includes a report of how the findings were used to improve the program.
___ Met ___ PM ___ Unmet The plan is fully implemented.

*PM=Partially Met
U:/assessment/UAP/Documents/2012-2013 Standalone Documents/Student and Academic Support Services Assessment Information Packet