

Progressive Measures

Mission Statement:

“The University Assessment Office is responsible for conducting a variety of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes using qualitative and quantitative research techniques, providing support services to other units engaged in such assessment, and sharing best practices for and results of assessment activities.”

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From the Director

Change is in the season! Along with the changes in the hour and the weather that come as part of the fall season, there have also been plenty of changes going on at the University Assessment Office during this fall semester. For one, I would like to take this moment to introduce myself. My name is Renée Tobin, and I am serving as the acting director of the University Assessment Office. I am also an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and had previously served as the faculty-in-residence at the UAO last year.


I would also like to acknowledge some of the recent accomplishments made by the UAO staff over the past summer. The UAO wrapped up the 2009 Alumni Survey and produced reports used by departments and schools to learn more about the experiences of their alums. In conjunction with ISU’s Preview, the UAO also conducted the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), providing valuable data on the needs and experiences of incoming freshmen.

It is now my pleasure to guide the UAO in its mission of assisting the Illinois State community in addressing its assessment needs. We are not only here to promote the importance of assessment on campus, but we also strive to make it happen! Look inside the present issue of the *Progressive Measures* newsletter to read more about the variety of new resources the UAO has made

available to help campus units with assessment activities ranging from conducting surveys, producing reports, developing assessment plans, and preparing for program review.

Learn about the basics of assessment in the article “Assessment 101” and what the UAO can do for you in the article on planning resources that lists the free tools that are available to help departments and schools develop program-level assessment plans. Several useful tools are accessible on the UAO website. For example, the new Assessment Plan Tutorial provides a step-by-step guide for developing assessment plans and offers examples, terminology, and other practical suggestions. Read more about another essential service the UAO provides in “SelectSurvey serves up more options,” which describes the new software the UAO is using to help campus units create online surveys. We also share some of the major findings from the Alumni Survey in articles on student satisfaction and other survey highlights.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us at 438-2135 or uao@ilstu.edu with your questions and assessment requests. Remember that the UAO is here to serve! I look forward to working with you.



*Acting Director - University Assessment Office
& Associate Professor of Psychology*



Assessment 101

S.J. Chang, Ph.D., Associate Dean, College of Business

Assessment continues to be a high priority for Illinois State University. Well, it should be because in theory every educational institution should be committed to meeting its goals and objectives in terms of learning outcomes. After all, whether the institution delivers what it purports to deliver should be the foremost concern for its stakeholders, i.e., faculty, staff, students, parents, state governments, and taxpayers. Still, some stakeholders' attitude and approach toward assessment in general seems to be rather unclear, uncomfortable, or at times even unfriendly. So, perhaps we need to assess our own understanding of assessment. With that in mind this article presents some of the salient points that we should take heed of in regards to assessment in general. While drawing from the assessment standards and guidelines set by the AACSB International, the most highly regarded accrediting body in the area of business education, the following discussion is provided to the extent that it is believed to be relevant across the disciplinary boundaries.

What is assessment?

Assessment, a.k.a. assurance of learning, is essentially a curriculum management process that involves defining learning goals, measuring and evaluating student achievement for these goals, and utilizing what is learned through evaluation to continually improve curricular programs.

We first define our learning goals by asking, "What will our students learn in our program? What are our expectations?" Once those goals are defined we align our curriculum with the goals by asking, "How will students learn them?" We then identify instruments and measures to evaluate student learning by asking, "How will we know they have learned?" We further collect, analyze, and disseminate the assessment data for continuous improvement by asking, "What will we do if they have not learned it?"

It may sound and appear daunting but it is not.

Consider the following points about assessment that people may have misunderstood:

- Assessment measures student learning, not faculty teaching.
- Assessment is a curriculum function, not a course function. Therefore, learning goals are typically defined for each program (or major), not for the entire college or a specific course.
- Learning goals typically include both general and discipline-specific knowledge and skills. For example, learning goals of an accounting program include specific accounting knowledge/skills as well as general knowledge/skills such as ethical reasoning ability or multicultural understanding.
- No one approach to assessment is prescribed, but it should include direct measures of learning. Course grades are not program assessment measures since they are typically aggregate measures on multiple dimensions.
- How many learning goals for each program? — It depends on the breadth and depth of the program. AACSB International suggests four to ten goals for each program.
- Assessment must evaluate student performance on learning goals systematically and routinely, but it does not require that every student be assessed. Sampling is



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acceptable as long as an appropriate and representative sampling methodology is used. Also, every goal specified does not have to be assessed every semester, just in a systematic fashion.

- Each learning goal must have its own performance standard, but a common assessment task can be used to gather data on more than one goal. For example, case analysis may address analytical thinking as well as writing skills, or a presentation may address oral skills and disciplinary competence.
- Typically there is no mandated minimum performance standard for student learning. This is determined by schools and departments consistent with their missions.
- Assessment results must be analyzed, disseminated, and utilized by the faculty toward curriculum planning. Schools and departments are expected to show how assessment results subsequently impacted their curriculum planning.

- Assessment should be a faculty-owned process. Faculty are expected to be actively involved in all stages of the assessment process including defining goals, curriculum alignment, developing appropriate measures, implementing course-embedded measures, and improving the curriculum.

In a nutshell,

An effective assessment program should:

- Be mission-driven and faculty-owned
- Address all key learning goals
- Evaluate student learning directly
- Have adequate support
- Lead to a continuous stream of refinement and enhancement of both curricular programs and the assessment process itself.



10th Annual University-Wide Symposium on Teaching and Learning

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

8 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. with Reception to Follow

The Marriott Hotel & Conference Center, Normal, IL

Organized by the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology

Please go to <http://www.teachtech.ilstu.edu/programs/tlsymp/regFormJan10.php>
to access the registration form.

UAO Offers Program Assessment Planning Resources

Matt Fuller, Assistant Director, University Assessment Office



The University Assessment Office offers many resources to guide programs in the development of assessment plans. You may be familiar with some of these resources. Others are new and have been created by faculty serving on the Assessment Advisory Council and UAO staff. All are offered to support academic departments' efforts to assess the kinds of

learning they hope to instill in students. Here are just a few resources the UAO can offer faculty and staff in assessment planning:

Assessment Plan Tutorial – This helpful, new online guide walks you through the process of creating a program-level assessment plan. This tutorial describes many of the key aspects of an assessment plan, offers a worksheet for engaging in the planning process, and provides examples of assessment plans from various ISU units. The tutorial is easy to use and supports program planning and review efforts. The tutorial can be found online at:

<http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/tutorial/>

Process for the Review of Academic Assessment Plans – PRAAP allows academic departments the opportunity to incorporate faculty feedback on their assessment plans into their departmental assessment efforts. Eighteen months before the Program Review reports are submitted, faculty and staff on the Assessment Advisory Council offer academic departments feedback on their assessment plans. This feedback is helpful in devising more meaningful and manageable assessment plans and putting together Program Review documentation.

Annual Update Form – Each Spring, programs complete the Annual Update form. This short form takes only a few moments to complete. However, as

programs complete this form across many years, the Annual Update forms document the program's efforts to assess student learning and decisions made from program data over time. This documentation is especially helpful to departments for planning purposes, accreditation and program reviews, and assessment efforts in general.

Example Assessment Plans – All degree programs at ISU are required to maintain an appropriate plan to assess student learning. The UAO website serves as a clearinghouse of these assessment plans as well as a medium through which good practices can be documented. To see examples of assessment plans log on to

<http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/program/>

SelectSurvey – The UAO offers academic departments a free service for hosting online web surveys. For more information please see Mr. Jon Laird's article on pages 7-8 or email him at jwlaird@ilstu.edu.

Alumni Survey – Each year the UAO coordinates the ISU Alumni Survey and seeks responses from ISU graduates on a core set of questions. However, academic departments can develop additional questions for just their alumni. The UAO staff produces reports and data files for each department/school in July of each year. Faculty or administrators looking to include additional questions to their alumni on this survey can contact the UAO at uao@ilstu.edu to receive examples of questions and more information.

Assessment Library – Many books and journals have offered examples of good practice in student learning assessment. In addition to holdings found in Milner Library and the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology, the UAO offers many titles that faculty and administrators can check out for an extended period of time. Contact the UAO at uao@ilstu.edu for a listing of titles or to see if a specific title is available.

Accreditation Processes – Many professional organizations now require assessment processes as a part

UAO Offers Program Assessment Planning Resources

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Matt Fuller, Assistant Director, University Assessment Office

of their accreditation efforts. The UAO staff has experience in many accreditation processes and can support departmental efforts with site reviewing efforts. Additionally many of the aforementioned processes can be used to document a commitment to assessment, which many agencies now require.

Consultation – The UAO staff is trained in a variety of assessment and research-related methodologies. We can assist you with everything from planning for assessment efforts to hosting focus groups. UAO staff also offers expertise in statistical analyses,

qualitative methods, and using assessment data to improve programs.

The UAO staff is committed to helping ISU programs plan for and implement assessment processes that are meaningful and manageable. These and other resources are free to all ISU academic departments and can make program-level assessment efforts easier to implement.

If the UAO staff can be of any assistance in leveraging these resources, please do not hesitate to contact me at mbfulle@ilstu.edu or 309.438.2135.

Student Satisfaction and Alumni Survey Composite Reports

Derek Herrmann, UAO Graduate Assistant for Marketing and Research

Every spring the Alumni Survey is administered to the graduates of Illinois State University. The Alumni Survey is administered to all undergraduate and graduate alumni who graduated during the past calendar year as well as those who graduated five years ago. For example, this past spring, all alumni who graduated in 2008 (May, August, and December) and in 2004 (May, August, and December) were sent invitations to complete the 2009 Alumni Survey, which was administered through the Select Survey program here at Illinois State. Alumni answered questions regarding different aspects of satisfaction with their major degree, educational effectiveness, education after Illinois State, employment, and overall satisfaction. They also were given an opportunity to write specific comments about the strengths and weaknesses of their specific degree program.

This spring and summer I not only had the opportunity to work on the preparation and production aspects of the Alumni Survey, but I was also able to work on creating composite reports of the Alumni Survey. For these reports, I compiled the data across several years of survey administration into one document. The data below come from one of these reports, and they represent the responses

from the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 Alumni Survey administrations. The responses include graduates (both one year since graduation and five years since graduation) from the years 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, and 2008. There were 5700 undergraduate alumni (81% of the sample) who responded to the Alumni Survey, and there were 1,336 (19% of the sample) graduate alumni who responded.

One of the items on the Alumni Survey asked, “How do you rate the quality of your education relative to that of colleagues who graduated from other institutions?” The frequencies and percentages of the responses from undergraduate and graduate alumni are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of responses to present attitudes of Illinois State and degree major by undergraduate and graduate alumni

Response	Undergraduate alumni		Graduate alumni	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Superior	869	15.3	249	18.8
Above Average	2861	50.5	689	52.2
Average	1769	31.2	351	26.6
Below Average	143	2.5	28	2.1
Inferior	27	0.5	4	0.3
Total	5669	100	1321	100

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Student Satisfaction and Alumni Survey Composite Reports

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Derek Herrmann, UAO Graduate Assistant for Marketing and Research

The last two items on the Alumni Survey before the open-ended questions asked alumni about their present attitudes toward both Illinois State University and their degree major. The frequencies and percentages from undergraduate and graduate alumni are presented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Table 2: Frequencies and percentages of responses to present attitudes toward Illinois State and degree major for undergraduate alumni

Response	Undergraduate alumni			
	Toward Illinois State		Toward degree major	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Positive	2617	46.46	2361	42.09
Positive	2186	38.81	2031	36.2
Somewhat Positive	562	9.98	753	13.42
Somewhat Negative	156	2.77	281	5.01
Negative	66	1.17	112	2
Strongly Negative	46	0.81	72	1.28
Total	5633	100	5610	100

According to these results, 65.80% of undergraduate alumni reported that their education at Illinois State was above average or superior to that of their colleagues, and only 3.00% of undergraduate alumni reported that their education was below average or inferior. In addition, 95.25% of undergraduate alumni have an overall positive attitude toward Illinois State University, and 91.71% of undergraduate alumni have an overall positive attitude toward their degree major.

These results also indicate that 71.00% of graduate alumni reported that their education at Illinois State was above average or superior to that of their colleagues, and only 2.40% of graduate alumni reported that their education was below average or inferior.

In addition, 97.12% of graduate alumni have an overall positive attitude toward Illinois State University, and 95.17% of graduate alumni have an overall positive attitude toward their degree major.

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of responses to present attitudes toward Illinois State and degree major for graduate alumni

Response	Graduate alumni			
	Toward Illinois State		Toward degree major	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Positive	603	45.61	607	46.51
Positive	542	41	478	36.63
Somewhat Positive	139	10.51	157	12.03
Somewhat Negative	24	1.81	36	2.76
Negative	11	0.83	20	1.53
Strongly Negative	3	0.24	7	0.54
Total	1322	100	1305	100

These responses from the alumni of the past eight years indicate that close to 70% of Illinois State graduates believe that their education, whether undergraduate or graduate, was better than the education that their current colleagues received at their respective institutions. In addition, close to 96% of all alumni have a positive attitude toward Illinois State, and close to 93% have a positive attitude toward their degree major. Overall, the students who graduate from Illinois State University reported that what they learned in their years here helped to give them an edge in whatever they have been doing since graduation. They indicated that they are very satisfied with the education that they have received and have recognized the superiority of their education in the real world beyond the campus of Illinois State University.



SelectSurvey Serves Up More Options

Jon Laird, UAO Coordinator

For multiple years, the University Assessment Office has offered online survey support for campus units wishing to assess their programs in a quick, easy, and environmentally friendly manner. Previously, this service was provided

through StudentVoice, an external vendor that has supported institutions such as University of Michigan and Virginia Tech. By moving to SelectSurvey, the University Assessment Office is able to handle all online surveys through cross-departmental support without the extra step of coordinating projects with an external vendor.

The move to SelectSurvey has also allowed us to greatly expand the functionality available to users. Some of these functions include:

Embeddable files — Project requestors can submit files that they would like to have embedded in their survey as part of questions or as stand-alone items. These documents may include: Microsoft Word documents, Microsoft Excel documents, PDF files, picture files, video files, and audio files. This functionality has allowed the University Assessment Office to completely redesign its PRAAP data collection process. This is one of the new features about which we are most excited, and we think is likely to have the greatest influence on survey users!

Custom headers — In order to align with unit homepages with which campus constituents may already be familiar, project requestors can opt to have a survey

includes the graphic header from their unit's webpage.

Webpage redirects — There is one unifying goal of all campus units: “Getting the word out” to those who use its services! When requesting a project, a project requestor may also ask that survey participants be redirected to a particular website upon the completion of a survey. For example, as more units find that creating unit accounts on social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace helps with outreach to students, some SelectSurvey users have asked for survey completers to be re-directed to their unit's social networking webpage. By default, this is set to the unit's homepage.

Easy-to-read survey links — Survey links distributed by e-mail are easily identifiable as referring to a webpage hosted by Illinois State. Typically, links to surveys will begin with “<http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/survey/>” and followed by the name of the requested survey.

Excel or SPSS data format — Some units may need to conduct statistical analysis beyond the functions offered in many spreadsheet programs. To assist in this effort, project requestors may choose whether they would like their raw data to be formatted as an Excel document or as an SPSS file. Results will be provided as an Excel file, unless otherwise specified in the Project Details form described below.

More customizable reports — On occasion, a bar graph may not be the best choice for graphically displaying quantitative survey results. Reports handled through SelectSurvey may be edited to provide pie charts as another option for visually presenting data. For graphs beyond bar graphs or pie charts, it is suggested that project staff members use spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel, etc.) or statistical analysis software (SPSS, etc.).

To support the functionality of the new survey software, the University Assessment Office has begun a project request process for campus units wishing to distribute an online survey. Project requestors are

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SelectSurvey Serves Up More Options (continued from page 7)

Jon Laird, UAO Coordinator

asked to complete and submit a Project Request form to the University Assessment Office. This form will provide details such as survey start and end dates and the unit's project contact person. After being assigned a project number, the requestor will then be asked to complete a Project Details form. This document provides the University Assessment Office with additional information about the project, such as how the unit would like the invitation e-mail to be worded, how the unit would like their raw data to be formatted, and whether the unit already has a participant list prepared.

Upon receiving this information, as well as any supporting documents such as survey drafts and any participant lists, the University Assessment Office will begin crafting the online survey.

Once this draft survey is completed, the project contact person will be asked to review the survey and provide final distribution authorization. The University Assessment Office will handle all distribution of e-mail invitations for survey participation, and will provide project contacts with reports and raw data once the survey closes.

As with StudentVoice, consultation and creation of the survey in SelectSurvey are free services provided to all campus units. Campus units interested in learning more about how online surveys may benefit their programs can visit the online survey page at http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/activities_services/onlinesurveys.shtml, or may contact Jon Laird at 438-7325 or jwlaird@ilstu.edu.

Assessment-Related Conferences

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
General Education and Assessment: Maintaining Momentum, Achieving New Priorities
Network for Academic Renewal Conference
February 18-20, 2010
Seattle, WA

Texas A&M University
10th Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conference
February 21-23, 2010
College Station, Texas

NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
2010 NASPA Annual Conference
March 6-10, 2010
Chicago, IL

Higher Learning Commission Annual Meeting
2010 HLC Annual Meeting
April 9-13, 2010
Chicago, IL

Atlantic Assessment Conference (AAC)
Collaboration in a Changing World
April 11-12, 2010
Cary, N.C.

Association for Institutional Research (AIR)
50th Annual Forum: Charting Our Future Education
May 29-June 2, 2010
Chicago, IL

Highlights from the 2009 Alumni Survey

Derek Herrmann, UAO Graduate Assistant for Marketing and Research

Every year, the Alumni Survey is administered to all alumni who graduated during the previous year and five years ago (see the article on pages 4-5). Here are some of the highlights from the 2009 Alumni Survey:

- 97.2% of all alumni have a positive attitude toward Illinois State University, and 53.1% of all alumni have a *strongly* positive attitude toward Illinois State University.
 - These are both **higher** than the percentages from all Illinois institutions, as 96.3% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni of Illinois institutions have a positive attitude toward their institution, and 43.4% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni of Illinois institutions have a *strongly* positive attitude toward their institution.
- 94% of all alumni have a positive attitude toward their degree program, and 45.9% of all alumni have a *strongly* positive attitude toward their degree program.
 - These are both **higher** than the percentages from all Illinois institutions, as 92.4% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni have a positive attitude toward their degree program, and 36.2% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni have a *strongly* positive attitude toward their degree program.
- 29.5% of all alumni are pursuing additional post-secondary degrees (full-time and part-time).
 - This is **higher** than the percentage from all Illinois institutions, as 23.2% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni are pursuing additional post-secondary degrees (full-time and part-time).
- 83.5% of all alumni currently have a job that is related to their degree program.
 - This is **higher** than the percentage of all Illinois institutions, as 76.3% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni of Illinois institutions currently have a job this is related to their degree program.
- 68.8% of all alumni believed that their degree program prepared them well for their career.
 - This is **higher** than the percentage from all Illinois institutions, as 59.3% of all 5-year undergraduate alumni of Illinois institutions believed that their degree program prepared them well for their career.

Thank You!

The University Assessment Office bids farewell and best wishes to Dr. Mardell Wilson who served as director of the UAO from March 2005 to August 2009. She is now the Assistant Vice President for Academic Fiscal Management here at ISU. In her new position, Dr. Wilson manages the budget for the Office of the Provost, oversees funding for academic departments at ISU, and directs Summer Session. Through her leadership of the UAO, Dr. Wilson helped improve current projects and initiate new ventures with great enthusiasm and expertise.

Among her many accomplishments with the UAO, Dr. Wilson saved time and money by streamlining the Alumni Survey from a paper survey to an efficient online version; helped develop the General Education Institutional Artifact Portfolio process from the pilot phase to campus-wide enactment; managed the FOCUS and PEP grant programs which supported faculty projects; and increased awareness of the importance of assessment activities at ISU by revamping the UAO Web site and the *Progressive Measures* newsletter. She also chaired the Assessment Advisory Council and represented ISU at numerous assessment conferences across the country.

We thank Dr. Wilson for her guidance and dedication. We wish her the best in her new position and appreciate that she is nearby and willing to provide ongoing input to optimize the functioning of the UAO!



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