

**University Assessment Office  
Illinois State University  
Annual Report 2001-2002**

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**UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT OFFICE  
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002**

**OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS**

**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.

**Goals, Objectives and Outcomes**

**Goal 1:** To plan, implement, analyze, summarize results, and write reports for institution-wide surveys for students at critical points in the educational experience (entering freshman, end of first year for both native students and transfer students, graduating seniors)

**Goal 2:** To serve as co-researchers on select assessment projects of college and university programs, such as: Foundations of Inquiry, General Education, *Educating Illinois* strategic plan, Junior/Senior Experience, etc.

**Goal 3:** To advise faculty and staff on purpose, design, methodology, and use of formative assessment projects at all levels of the university, in cooperation with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT), the Office of the Provost, and the office of Institutional Research:

- a. Classroom level assessment
- b. Departmental projects
- c. Interdisciplinary approaches
- d. Student affairs and developmental learning outcomes
- e. Accreditation activities

**Goal 4:** To engage in outreach activities, including:

- a. Publish and distribute widely an assessment newsletter at least four times per year
- b. Create and maintain an assessment Web site
- c. Co-sponsor workshops on assessment project development and implementation
- d. Present results of assessment research to appropriate campus constituencies
- e. Manage an annual grant program for assessment project as funds are available

**Goal 5:** To work with other units to increase cooperation and coordination of assessment on campus.

- a. Serve on appropriate campus committees related to assessment
- b. Disseminate data from assessment projects to campus constituencies

**Goal 6.** To maintain a level of expertise in higher education assessment through staff development activities.

- a. Read current literature in the area of higher education assessment
- b. Attend appropriate assessment conferences and skills workshops, as budget permits
- c. Present and/or publish assessment-related research in regional or national conferences and publications

The following were the **major objectives for FY02**. These objectives **expand upon and compliment the FY01 objectives** of building a “culture of assessment” on campus and increasing the support for and,

thus, the quantity and quality of, classroom and program assessment. In addition, the objectives support the more general goals stated above.

1. Increase development and support for the scholarship of teaching and learning, including classroom assessment and research, at Illinois State University.
2. Increase breadth of users of CAT and UAO services (from more disciplines, more senior faculty, more TAs, more staff).
3. Increase the visibility, value, and support of teaching and assessment on campus.
4. Conduct a needs assessment of faculty and staff members to better determine the type and scope of services offered by the UAO.
5. Organize and co-sponsor an event with a nationally or regionally recognized speaker (assessment-related topic for faculty & departmental representatives).
6. Mount all institutional summary reports from the campus-wide surveys and department assessment profiles, and explore the development of a data query system on the UAO web site.
7. Initiate and implement a graduate internship program in UAO.

These major objectives for FY02 directly assist in the achievement of the **Educating Illinois** goals of building a distinctive research agenda and providing essential support for faculty and staff, and indirectly contribute to improving commitment to general education and strengthening the junior/senior experience.

**Productivity measures will include** external recognition of our efforts (awards, write-ups, compliments from outside sources, outside funding), increases in the number of Scholarship of Teaching/Learning and assessment presentations/publications by faculty and staff, involvement of faculty/staff in CAT and UAO services who have not been involved previously, and changes in teaching behaviors (interviews, surveys).

### **Significant Outcomes in 2001-2002**

Please see the detailed and complete list of UAO services and activities for 2001-2002 in the Appendix after the Summary portion of the annual report.

1. TracDat Assessment Software – In collaboration with the Provost's Office, the UAO coordinated the purchase of a web-based software designed to assist academic departments and other units in their organization and documentation of program assessment plans. A maintenance agreement and 50-license package was purchased from Nuventive Corporation. Departments on campus were offered the opportunity to participate in a pilot project for the implementation of the software; departmentally-based site licenses were available for a one-time cost of \$150. Seven academic units and two units within the Division of Student Affairs have begun working with the software.
2. Departmental learning outcomes web site – A new web page was built within the UAO site that documents the learning objectives and on-going assessment plans for every academic unit on campus ([www.assessment.ilstu.edu/program](http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/program)). This "electronic portfolio" is part of a three-year plan in response to a mandate from the IBHE to have documented assessment plans in place by Fall 2004. Department chairs or their designees are responsible for submitting the learning objectives, assessment plans, and descriptions of how results are used for curricular improvement. Staff from the UAO are available for consultation and assistance at the request of the academic departments.
3. Assessment of *Educating Illinois* – The director of the UAO was invited to join the Coordinating Team for the institution's strategic plan, *Educating Illinois*. Discussions and planning have begun of finding ways to assess the impact and effectiveness of the action items in the strategic plan, especially in anticipation of next year's update and revision of *Educating Illinois*.

4. Budget cuts – Reductions in operating dollars resulted in the loss of the graduate assistantship in the UAO. Reduced dollars had a major impact on the number of small grants available to faculty wishing to conduct classroom research projects, as well as the opportunity to travel to assessment-related conferences and outside workshops. Budget cuts also impacted the number and scope of projects conducted by the UAO and the number of newsletters developed and printed for resource material.

### **Ideas for 2002-2003**

The following are major objectives for FY03. These objectives expand upon and compliment the FY02 objectives of promoting a culture on campus that supports assessment activities resulting in improved programs and services, conducting student learning outcomes research, and increasing the support for and, thus, the quantity and quality of classroom and program assessment. In addition, the objectives support the more general goals stated above.

1. Administrative separation from CAT – In order to respond to the expanding role and scope of the office, the University Assessment Office should be moved out from under the auspices of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching to a direct report to the Associate Provost.
2. TracDat - develop an awareness of the utility of TracDat and increase the number of departments and units using it by holding demonstration sessions and promoting it in meetings, newsletters, and listserves. Develop a thorough training schedule to meet user needs and coordinate a TracDat user group.
3. Assume role as Chair of the ACC – The Assessment Coordinating Council (ACC) has been chaired by Associate Provost Betty Chapman for the last two years. Since she will be retiring this summer, and since the UAO may be elevated to a higher organizational position within the Provost's Office, it is recommended that the Coordinator of the UAO assume the role as Chair of the ACC starting in fall 2002.
4. Mount report results on the web – In an effort to provide campus decision-makers with better and more complete access to data, the staff of the UAO should expand the UAO web site to offer survey results that can be accessed via database query tools.
5. NCA Self-Study Steering Committee – A staff member of the UAO should be represented on the steering committee for the North Central Association self study project, starting sometime during the 2002-03 academic year.
6. General Education Support - Increase the support for the assessment activities associated with General Education and FOI by assisting with the design of surveys, data analysis, and the interpretation of institutional surveys as they apply to General Education.

These major objectives for FY03 will directly assist in the achievement of the *Educating Illinois* goals of building a distinctive research agenda and providing essential support for faculty and staff, improving commitment to general education, soliciting input from our students about their educational experiences at Illinois State and presenting the data to decision-makers in ways that are useful, meaningful, and likely to result in change and improvement.

### **Long-term Plans**

1. As roles and responsibilities expand and are increased, there will be a need for a full-time position within the UAO with expertise in education research of a statistical nature (i.e., retention studies, predictive designs for academic success), as well as expertise in the area of web applications and design for electronic surveys and database management.
2. The UAO should also increase the number and scope of educational and professional opportunities for graduate students

## **Administrative Structure**

### **Staff**

In 2001-2002, the staff at the center consisted of a full-time Coordinator, a full-time Research Associate, and a full-time Chief Clerk. In March 2002 a part-time Research Assistant was hired to provide expertise in the area of psychometric design and statistical analysis. The Research Assistant has benefits at 55%, works 20 hours per week, and is on contract from August 1 – May 31 each year.

## APPENDIX- DETAILS OF SERVICES, EVENTS, ACTIVITIES

### Services

#### **Support for Special Groups**

A variety of services are targeted at members of specific campus groups as part of our effort to enhance the effectiveness of the educational experience.

Chairpersons and Departments. The UAO coordinator and research associate are available to meet with faculty and staff to help develop assessment plans and activities at the classroom and program levels. Additionally, under the guidance of the Associate Provost, the UAO staff assisted in the second year of a three-year schedule to document the assessment plans of each degree program.

Division of Student Affairs. The UAO coordinator and research associate led one full-day retreat for the staff of the Division of Student Affairs as their major self-study project moves into the “benchmarking” phase. The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) framework was used to assist the staffs of each unit in the development of the self-study and subsequent assessment plans.

Activities. The UAO staff, along with a practicum student from Educational Administration and Foundations, undertook a project to find out effective ways to disseminate institution wide survey data to students and to then implement those methods. A series of focus groups were held with students, faculty and staff in order to gather their opinions and reactions to survey data and to solicit ideas for disseminating data to students. Information gathered from these meetings was used to design and implement dissemination methods.

#### **Individual Consultations**

Requests for individual assistance varied in scope and purpose. In academic year 2001-02, the coordinator and research associate consulted with more than 50 faculty and staff members either once or on a longer-term basis about their assessment-related activities. Some were part of assessment committees developing ways to find evidence of impact within their programs. Others were faculty members who were interested in the effectiveness of current or new instructional strategies, such as the use of technology in the classroom. Staff members within student affairs consulted with the UAO staff in the creation of assessment instruments and processes to help gather useful data for program improvement.

#### **Electronic Support**

We maintained and expanded our Web site at <http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu>.

### Events

#### **First-Year Faculty Summer Institute**

This year’s institute for first-year tenure track faculty was held on May 21-23, 2002. Entitled “Classroom Assessment and Classroom Research,” the sessions focused on what faculty can do to better assess and research student outcomes, how faculty can receive more formative feedback from students, and other topics related to student learning. Ten faculty members participated and engaged in collaborative and focused discussions during the three-day workshop. All participants received a packet of materials, including the book “Classroom Assessment Techniques” by Angelo and Cross (1993).

**Campus-Wide Workshops, Panel Presentations, Brownbags, and Discussion Hours** (facilitated by Wendy Troxel and Jamie Young, unless indicated)

**September 2001**

**"Illinois State Students Respond: A First Look at NSSE Results"**

Thursday, September 21, 2001

3:00 - 4:30 p.m., ITDC 103B

During the spring of 2001 Illinois State University participated in the second pilot administration of the "National Survey of Student Engagement" (NSSE). This national instrument is intended to assess the extent to which students participate in educational practices that are strongly associated with high levels of learning and personal development. Staff from the University Assessment Office (UAO) presented preliminary results from the responses of the sample of Illinois State 2nd-semester freshmen and 2nd-semester seniors on the five benchmarks (level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty members, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment), including national emerging trends in the data.

**"Campus Conversation on Active Pursuit of Learning"**

Thursday, September 28, 2001

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., Circus Room, Bone Student Center

According to very recent National Survey of Student Engagement data, 70% of Illinois State freshmen and 80% of seniors surveyed said Illinois State "emphasizes spending significant time studying, reading, writing, rehearsing and other activities related to their academic programs." How much time, outside of class, do Illinois State students spend engaged in these learning activities? Freshman - 9 hrs/week. Seniors - 10 hrs/week (compared to 14 hours per week nationwide). According to our Educating Illinois values, we believe in the "active pursuit of learning." What examples do we have of that value in action? All interested members of the campus community are invited to join the conversation. Refreshments will be provided. This event is co-sponsored by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Graduate Student Organization, Student Affairs, Student Government Association, University College and the University Assessment Office.

**October 2001**

**"An In-Depth Look at the Role of the Moderator in Conducting Focus Groups"**

Thursday, October 18, 2001

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m., ITDC 103B

Focus groups have become an increasingly popular method of gathering assessment information from students. Although focus groups seem relatively simple to conduct and can elicit a wealth of in-depth information, few understand how crucial the role of the group moderator is in the process. Come join us as we explore the role of the moderator in conducting focus groups. This session will be interactive with opportunities to work in small groups and participate in your own mock focus group discussions.

Facilitators: Jamie Young and Wendy Troxel, University Assessment Office; Lucinda Beier, Director, College of Arts and Sciences Research Office and the Applied Social Research Unit.

**November 2001**

**"The Impact of Learning with Technology"**

Thursday, November 14, 2001

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m., ITDC 103B

The use of technology to support the teaching process has increased dramatically in recent years. But does its use really have an impact on the depth and breadth of student learning compared to more "traditional" modes of delivery? Join us as we explore the use of technology as an instructional strategy, including a look at some options for setting up an action research study in your course. Beyond a brief examination the current issues in the use of technology in the classroom, Klaus Schmidt will share the methodology and preliminary results of a recent study comparing student learning in two 3-week units of instruction. Both traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction and online, interactive instruction was featured within each unit this Fall. Come ready to brainstorm!

Facilitators: Wendy Troxel, University Assessment Office and Klaus Schmidt, Department of Technology

Co-sponsors: Faculty Technology Support Services and the University Assessment Office

**"Curricular Mapping Tools for Program Assessment"**

Four Sessions Available (all held in ITDC 103B):

Thursday, November 15, 2001, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Thursday, November 15, 2001, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 15, 2001, 2:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Friday, November 16, 2001, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Year 2 of the three-year project to submit academic assessment plans to the IBHE requires departments to document how student learning objectives are taught and assessed within the program. This session will offer a model for mapping the curriculum to the departmental learning objectives submitted last June. This session is designed for academic department chairs, curriculum committee chairs, and departmental assessment team members.

Facilitators: Wendy Troxel, University Assessment Office and Jan Shane, Office of the Provost  
Co-sponsored by the University Assessment Office and the Office of the Provost

**January 2002**

**"Classroom Action Research: The Path to Teaching, Learning, AND Publications!"**

Wednesday, January 9, 2002 (University Teaching Workshop session)

Classroom Action Research is a way of finding what works best in YOUR classroom in order to help you make informed decisions about your instructional strategies. It is also a form of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning when you share your findings with colleagues through presentations and scholarly publications.

**"Survey Planning and Methodologies for Assessment"**

Thursday, January 17, 2002

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m., ITDC 103B

Planning on conducting a survey or a focus group as part of your assessment plan? Need some tips on how to get started? Come join us as we discuss the major issues involved in planning and designing surveys and focus groups. Bring your examples and project ideas for discussion!



**"You Were Saying?" The Use of Focus Groups for Program Assessment"**

Thursday, January 31, 2002

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m. , ITDC 103B

Some research questions require a more interactive approach than survey or similar methodologies allow. While surveys can provide valuable information about a problem, focus groups offer the opportunity to engage participants in a guided discussion that elicits a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the question at hand. Come join us as we take you through the steps involved in planning, conducting, and analyzing focus groups, and how the data can enhance the scope of your assessment results. Be sure to bring your examples and project ideas for discussion!

**February 2002**

**"The Use of Longitudinal Data for Assessment and Planning"**

Thursday, February 28, 2002

12:00 noon - 1:30, ITDC 103B

Data from the five institution-wide surveys (entering freshman, end of first year, second-year student, and senior) will be examined to explore the ways that departments and units can use the results to inform the review and planning process. Discussion will center on the ways that the University Assessment Office can serve the unique needs of various campus constituencies through systematic and specific dissemination methods.

**March 2002**

**"Follow-up Breakfast for Graduates of the FY Faculty Institutes, 2000 & 2001"**

Thursday, March 21, 2002

8:15 - 9:30 a.m., Professional Development Building 213

**April 2002**

**"Program Assessment Follow-up for Academic Departments"**

Friday, April 26, 2002

12:00 noon - 1:30, ITDC 103B

An opportunity to review assessment plan models in preparation for the June 1, 2002 deadline.

Facilitators: Wendy Troxel, University Assessment Office; Betty Chapman and Jan Shane, Provost's Office

**"Demonstration of TracDat Assessment Software"**

Tuesday, April 30, 2002 (two identical sessions)

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., ITDC 103B

12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m., ITDC 103B

For an assessment program to be effective, all phases of the assessment process must be addressed, including planning, data storage, data analysis, data utilization, and follow-up. TracDat is a software solution that provides academic departments and co-curricular units with an efficient and reliable mechanism for managing the assessment process.

**May 2002**

"Effective Grading through Scoring Rubrics: Beyond *'It Looks Like a B'*"  
Thursday, May 16, 2002 (May University Teaching Workshop)  
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., ITDC 103B

This interactive session explored the development and use of scoring rubrics used to assess any student performance or portfolio of student performances (written, oral, clinical, artistic, etc.). Attendees examined Primary Trait Analysis (PTA) as a method to state criteria consistently and explicitly.

Presenters: Claire Lamonica, English; Cheri Simonds, Communication; Kathy Keenan-Takagi, Music; Penny Kolloff, Curriculum & Instruction

### **Institution-wide Research Projects**

The UAO coordinated Illinois State's involvement in two national projects related to the assessment of the undergraduate program: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the First Year Initiative (FYI) survey.

### **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**

The National Survey of Student Engagement is a project supported by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. This survey project was in its full year of implementation and is under the direction of George Kuh at Indiana University. Illinois State participated in this project for the first time during spring 2001 along with approximately 250 other colleges and universities. The purpose of this project is to obtain information from colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for learning and personal development. During the Spring of 2002, this survey was administered to a random sample of 1000 Illinois State freshmen and 1000 seniors during spring 2002. The institutional report was available in early August 2002.

Response rates were as follows:

Freshman students	398
Senior students	396
TOTAL	794 (41%) - up 3% from spring 2001

### **Your First College Year (YFCY)**

This survey project, administered by the Higher Education Research Institute and the Policy Center on the First Year of College, is also in its pilot phase. This survey (similar to our own Sophomore Survey) is designed as a follow-up to the CIRP survey to assess change and development during the first year of college. This survey contains many items that are also found on the CIRP survey thus allowing comparisons to be made between the two. Illinois State participated in this survey for the first time during spring 2001. A random sample of 500 second semester freshmen were asked to complete this survey; the report was available in August 2001. A total of 104 students responded to the survey, for a response rate of 21%.

### **Co-sponsored Events & Partnerships**

#### **Carnegie Foundation**

The staff from the UAO assisted CAT in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Campus Program, and Illinois State's study of student engagement through secondary analysis of data from our freshman, sophomore, and senior surveys looking at variables related to engagement over time.

### **Illinois State University Units**

*Graduate Student Practicum Program.* The UAO continued its program designed to support the experience of graduate students planning a career in college administration or teaching. The practicum is a partnership between the UAO, the student's department, and the student. The UAO agreed to facilitate individual meetings with the practicum student(s), to assist with a learning contract, and to oversee the development and completion of a major project related to an assessment activity.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, the UAO partnered with the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations to offer a graduate practicum experience to a College Student Personnel student. Partnering with the student, a project was undertaken to find out effective ways to disseminate institution wide survey data to students and to then implement those methods. A series of focus groups were held with students, faculty and staff in order to gather their opinions and reactions to survey data and to solicit ideas for disseminating data to students.

Focus groups held with students gave students a chance to learn about available data and to suggest ways to disseminate findings. As a result of student suggestions, articles containing survey data were placed in numerous student related publications such as the Daily Vidette, Greek newsletter, Volunteer newsletter, etc. In addition, survey data was given to the University Center for Learning Assistance to supplement trainings and workshops held for students. Many other ideas for dissemination were generated from this project. These strategies and others will be used to distribute data to students in the future.

### **Funding Opportunities**

During the 2001-2002 academic year, the UAO partnered with CAT to advance funding opportunities for faculty members, staff members, and graduate students. A total of \$8390 was awarded to twelve projects (see CAT annual report). Recipients of these grants must share what they have learned through a campus presentation and/or an article in *the CATalyst* or *Assessment Effects* during the year following the grant.

### **Staff Service Related to UAO Activities and other University Service**

Wendy Troxel, Coordinator, taught one section of Foundations of Inquiry during the fall 2001 semester, and served as a member of the following campus committees:

- Assessment Coordinating Council (ACC)
- A/P Grievance Panel
- Council on General Education (CGE)
- General Education Coordinating Committee (GECC)
- *Educating Illinois* Implementation Teams
  - Coordinating Team
  - Successful Transitions (chair of 16A subcommittee, member of 4 other subcommittees)
  - Recruiting According to our Values
- Member, College of Education Task Force for Program Assessment (in preparation for new NCATE standards)

Jamie Young, Research Associate, served as a member of the Connections Advisory Council, the Assessment Coordinating Council, the Executive Committee for Diversity and the Passages Publications Committee. She also served as a Connections seminar leader during the 2001-2002 academic year, and assisted the campus as a volunteer for the Passages program.

### **Start-up of TracDat**

During the spring of 2001, Illinois State University purchased a new web based assessment management tool called TracDat. The University Assessment Office is coordinating the pilot implementation of this software which is available for units and departments on campus. This software can help users effectively manage various aspects of the assessment process.

The UAO intends to develop an awareness of the utility of TracDat and increase the number of departments and units using it by holding demonstration sessions and promoting it in meetings, newsletters, and listserves. The UAO will also develop a thorough training schedule to meet user needs and coordinate a TracDat user group.

### **National and Regional Presentations on Behalf of Illinois State University**

External Presentations by UAO Coordinator:

*Window of Opportunity: Comparative Assessment Strategies for a New General Education Program.* Presented at the 2002 AAHE Assessment Conference, June 21-24, 2002, Boston, MA.

*Using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for Assessment, Institutional Improvement, and Public Accountability.* Invited panelist at the 2002 AAHE Assessment Conference, June 21-24, 2002, Boston, MA.

*Teaching, Research, and Service: The Role of University Assessment Staff in Institutional Improvement.* Presented at the Consortium for Assessment Planning and Support Annual Conference, March 7, 2002, Fullerton, CA. Presented at the Pacific Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research Conference, May 24-28, 2002, Honolulu, HI.

*Defining and Assessing Student Engagement: The CASTL Project at Illinois State University.* Presented at the Consortium for Assessment Planning and Support Annual Conference, March 7, 2002, Fullerton, CA. Presented at the Pacific Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research Conference, May 24-28, 2002, Honolulu, HI.

*Connecting New Students to Illinois State University: Collaboration Between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.* Presented at the 2001 Students in Transition Conference, October 28, 2001, Oak Brook, IL. (Developed and facilitated presentation, which also included 3 others from Illinois State University).

*Win-Win Scenarios: Linking Faculty Development Initiatives with Institutional Planning.* Presented at the 2001 POD Network Conference, October 13, 2001, St. Louis, MO.

*Encouraging Faculty Involvement in Discipline and Core-Curriculum Assessment.* Panelist at the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (Collegiate Assembly) Annual Meeting, June 30 – July 1, 2001. Providence, RI.

*Listening to the Learner: A Toolbox of Classroom Assessment Techniques.* Presented at the Illinois State Teacher Recertification Conference (K-12), July 18, 2001. Normal, IL.

Offices held in professional organizations:

- Consortium for Assessment and Planning Support (CAPS), 2000-current. Member of the Board of Directors:
  - University/College Representative, 2001-02, 2002-03
  - Website Coordinator, 2002-current (<http://www.caps.ilstu.edu>)

External Presentations by UAO Research Associate:

*Survey Planning and Design for Assessment: A Brief Overview.* Presented at the Consortium for Assessment Planning and Support Annual Conference, March 7, 2002. Fullerton, CA.