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ILLINOIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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ASSESSING STUDENT OUTCOMES:  
A PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

University-Wide Assessment Committee  
April 2000

## Executive Summary

In fall 1999, Provost Goldfarb convened the University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) with the charge of assessment planning and coordination for Illinois State University. To begin our work, we focused on the definition, philosophy, practices, and recommendations for assessment at Illinois State. These actions were the basis for a proposed model to enrich a culture that already values, supports, and rewards assessment.

Our planning assumptions behind our model are two-fold. One, for this (or any) assessment plan to be successful it must be part of the institutional culture, dedicated to looking at “where we are” and “where we need to go.” The assessment of student learning and development must be viewed as continuous rather than episodic and it must be viewed as a campus-wide process to understand the nature and needs of the community and identify those aspects of the environment that facilitate student learning and development. Two, assessment is a critical process that provides vital information. Through education, information, and consultation, assessment processes will continue to be streamlined, fully integrated throughout support services, and viewed as both non-repetitive and non-burdensome by faculty and staff. Our challenge *is not* to create a culture that supports assessment, but one to streamline operations, given the finite nature and often-competing demands placed on faculty and staff time and resources.

### **Definition, Philosophy, Practices, and Recommendations of Assessment for Illinois State University**

After reviewing documentation from campus committees, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, *Academic Plan 1999-2004, Illinois Commitment*, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, and the American Association of Higher Education, we recommend that a general university statement that values, supports, and rewards assessment be developed. There are no contradictions in the documents reviewed. However, assessment is a construct that could, presently or in the future, have different meanings to different people. Therefore, we offer the following draft statement that should be shared via campus governance systems, rewritten if necessary, and presented as an Illinois State University Board of Trustees (BOT) resolution.

Assessment is and shall continue to be a high priority for Illinois State University. The institution is committed to valuing, supporting, and rewarding assessment-related activities that are led by the complementary and collaborative activities of university faculty, staff, and students. The actions of assessment, specifically defined below, are complementary to institutional goals and those established by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Assessment is a continuous process at all levels of the institution of systematically collecting, interpreting, and using qualitative and/or quantitative information to guide the improvement of student learning and development, as well as the formation and achievement of institutional priorities.

Moreover, the basic purposes of assessment are improvement (formative) and accountability (summative). When the intent is improvement, assessment efforts involve gathering and using information about student learning and other outcomes. When the intent is accountability, assessment is the collection and use of information to demonstrate the extent to which the institution is achieving its mission and priorities.

We view assessment as a continuous process of gathering and using information about student learning and development. To remain effective, student learning outcomes assessment data should

be *used* internally to guide curricular, co-curricular, environmental, and institutional improvement. For both internal and external audiences the intent *is not* evaluation of an individual or program. Instead, it is the demonstration of the extent to which the department, unit, college, division, and/or institution is achieving its mission and priorities. The beneficiaries of assessment are students; the institution's understanding of the learning process is continually enhanced.

Through the same procedures used to adopt the *Kellogg Statement: A Statement of Principles to Guide Academic Reform*, we recommend that the Board of Trustees (BOT) adopt our definition of assessment coupled with the American Association of Higher Education's (AAHE) *Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning* as general guidelines for assessment at Illinois State University. The *principles* are displayed on page 2 of this report. To remain both effective and accountable, assessment must be defined by procedures of shared governance and supported at all levels of the university, from actions implemented by faculty and staff to policy established by the BOT.

Adoption of our general statement on assessment leads to the action item of implementation. It is our recommendation that the Provost develop or charge an administrative designee or the UWAC with the responsibility of developing more specific policies on student learning outcomes assessment. Specifically:

- Policies and procedures on student/faculty/staff access, storage, and sharing of university-level assessment data (Cooperative Institutional Research Program, Sophomore Survey, and Senior Survey) should be developed.
- Statements regarding the acknowledgement and reward of assessment work in faculty and staff annual evaluations should be developed.
- As part of coordinated university-wide planning, departments and units should submit assessment plans every three years. The brief update, which could include excerpts from existing documents, should include a summary of intended actions and a description of how assessment is used for curricular and/or programmatic improvement.
- Procedures on how assessment results and interpretations will be used in budgeting, review, etc. should be developed.
- Procedures to ensure adequate financial support for assessment efforts should be developed.
- Procedures to ensure adequate faculty and staff development in terms of assessment should be developed.
- There should be clarification on Institutional Review Board policies and faculty, staff, and student responsibilities relevant to assessment.
- The Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs should evaluate the feasibility of publishing statements/expectations of assessment in Catalogs and Student Handbooks. Other institutions do so to demonstrate institutional commitment and expectations.

### **Inventory of Current and Future Assessment Practices at Illinois State University**

As previously documented, there is a strong and established history of departmental and program autonomy and a commitment to student learning and discipline-based assessment exists throughout the institution. Therefore, we seek to enrich a culture that already values, supports, and rewards assessment. We see this as a three-step process. Our recommendations are both conceptual with regards to what assessment should be at Illinois State and advisory with regards to the current and future roles and functions of the Provost's Office, the UWAC, and the University Assessment Office. Because assessment is a continually developing process, we recommend that the role of the University-Wide Assessment

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Committee change from ad hoc and advisory to permanent focusing on implementation. At that point, the committee should have responsibility for developing and reporting on specific outcomes of the recommendations contained in this report. We also recommend that membership be expanded to include representation and consultation from the Academic Senate and other forms of shared governance (e.g., member from the Student Government Association, Graduate Student Association, etc.).

### Step 1: Build on Assessment Efforts

The UWAC should:

- Request permission by April 2000 to give a briefing of the UWAC at a President's Staff meeting and disseminate hard copies of this report.
- Provide copies of this report, the *Assessment Inventory*, and *Assessment Statements* to members of the campus community via the web by May 2000.
- Work in cooperation with the University Research Office after receipt of the *Annual Report* to publicize external funds received for assessment projects related to improved teaching and learning.
- Actively contribute to the University Assessment Office's existing newsletter by adding features related directly to student learning outcomes assessment at Illinois State and nationally.

The Provost's Office should:

- Build upon the quality and frequency of departmental assessment initiatives by funding an Assessment Institute analogous to the State Farm Teaching Technology Faculty Fellows Program. The UWAC has requested \$77,000 in annually renewable operating funds from the Provost for the funding of a three-year (Fiscal Years 2001 through 2004) pilot Assessment Institute. If funding is received, the UWAC will proceed with the schedule described in the *Proposal for an Assessment Institute* (copy attached).
- Support the review and continued implementation of the Small Grants for Assessment program sponsored by the University Assessment Office, Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Illinois State University Foundation. (Small Grants partially support new or current department or unit assessment projects related to student learning and development).
- Allow a spokesperson to provide an overview of the UWAC and the University Assessment Office (UAO) at new faculty orientation sessions.
- Develop or charge an administrative designee and/or the UWAC with the responsibility of developing more specific policies on student learning outcomes assessment, as defined in the bullet points on page ii of this report.

### Step 2: Use Assessment Results

The UWAC should:

- At the beginning of every semester, meet with the Provost to develop a list of priorities for the term. This information should be shared with members of the campus community via the web. Likewise, at the end of every academic year, the UWAC should publish a brief update of accomplishments.
- In collaboration with the University Assessment Office and/or Planning and Policy Studies, offer assistance in determining measures of progress and student learning to departments and units receiving Small Grants for Assessment.

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- Consult with the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and International Education to determine what assessment-related information should be provided to the Graduate School by the UWAC and/or departmental chairs given that graduate-level assessment is decentralized.
- Use information from the *Assessment Inventory* to develop and publish a combined Program Review and accreditation calendar for the University.
- Consult with the Director of Diversity and Affirmative Action to determine what assessment-related information should be incorporated into Illinois State University's annual *Underrepresented Groups Report* and *Plan for Diversity*.

The Provost's Office should:

- Through Program Review, address student learning outcomes assessment and how each program/department contributes to Distinctiveness and Excellence (D&E) and the *Illinois Commitment*.
- Infuse assessment into D&E. Assessment methodologies should link measurements of student learning and institutional progress with actions implemented as a result of priority decisions in D&E. At least one member of the UWAC should serve on any future institutional teams designed to assess the progress of D&E.
- Infuse assessment into the Capital Campaign. Similar to D&E, assessment activities should link measurements of student learning and institutional progress with actions implemented as a result of priority decisions in the Capital Campaign. In spring 2000, expand membership of the UWAC to include a liaison from University Advancement to determine what assessment results are necessary for Capital Campaign planning and implementation.
- Identify a Steering Committee and subcommittees for NCA Self Study and Accreditation. Membership on the Steering and subcommittees should include individuals from the UWAC and university faculty and staff who have expertise and/or experience in assessment and accreditation. NCA Self Study should begin no later than fall 2002. We also recommend that the Provost's Office allocate funds to hire a graduate assistant to support the accreditation process.
- Evaluate the advantages, disadvantages, and feasibility of tighter couplings between Program Review and discipline-based accreditation.
- Assure that Illinois State University's annual *Results Report* is a function of coordinated planning, budgeting, and assessment and contains summaries of the previous year's Program Review. To document continuous, quality improvement, the summary should include measures of student learning outcomes, program strengths, areas of improvement, and actions taken.

### Step 3: Provide Assessment Coordination

The UWAC should:

- Continue to serve on the Small Grants for Assessment Review Board.
- Provide direction and feedback for current and planned activities of UAO.
- Develop a resource directory of faculty and staff with expertise/interests in assessment, and display the information on the UAO's home page.

The Provost's Office should:

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- Identify UWAC committee member(s) to serve as consultant(s) and liaison(s) to the Council for Teacher Education, Graduate Council, and other appropriate assessment-related committees. UWAC members currently serve similar roles on the Council for General Education and General Education Coordinating Committee.
- Appoint a member of the UWAC to serve on the Task Force on Performance-Based Assessment during academic year 2000-01.

The University Assessment Office should:

- Serve as consultants and the clearinghouse of assessment-related information for the University.
- Consult with faculty and departments regarding the Office's newsletter, web page, workshops, and other assessment related activities.
- Supplement standardized, longitudinal institutional surveys (CIRP, Sophomore Survey, Senior Survey) to address both departmental and institutional needs.
- Develop and disseminate a resource directory to colleges and departments addressing frequently asked questions about institutional resources for assessment.
- Expand collaborative efforts with institutional programs that represent interdisciplinary approaches to student learning (e.g., learning communities, Foundations of Inquiry and other General Education courses) to augment current assessment efforts.
- Work with the UWAC to build collaborative relations with University Advancement, the University Research Office, and faculty and staff in all units to increase knowledge of the availability of external funds for assessment and to write grant applications.

**Preface**

In fall 1999, Provost Goldfarb convened the University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) with the charge of assessment planning and coordination for Illinois State University. The Committee, whose membership is reported in Table 1 (attached), focused on nine specific goals.

**Building on Assessment Efforts**

Goal 1: Develop a plan for building on already successful assessment efforts in departments and programs to spread the success more broadly among departments and to inform general education assessment, junior/senior year efforts, and graduate education.

**Using Assessment Results**

Goal 2: Determine how best to use the assessment data to improve teaching and learning and to inform external constituencies.

Goal 3: Build bridges with Student Affairs in order to assess a broad range of student experiences and their impact on learning outcomes.

Goal 4: Determine how assessment results can/should inform Distinctiveness and Excellence and the Capital Campaign.

Goal 5: Develop a plan to meet and exceed both North Central Association (NCA) and Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) expectations for assessment.

**Providing Assessment Coordination**

Goal 6: Serve in an advisory capacity to the University Assessment Office (UAO).

Goal 7: Develop a plan to coordinate the faculty and department support services that the UAO will be providing with the institution-wide assessment efforts of the Office of Planning, Policy Studies, and Information Systems (PPSIS).

Goal 8: Develop a plan to seek external funds for unique assessment efforts.

Goal 9: Work in coordination with the Teacher Education Task Force on Performance Based Assessment, Council for Teacher Education, Council for General Education, General Education Coordinating Committee, Graduate Council, and other campus entities, as appropriate.

To begin our work, the Assessment Inventory Subcommittee and the Policy Review Subcommittee surveyed current assessment statements, procedures, and practices in Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and other units that support student learning and development. Our research revealed that a strong and established history of departmental and program autonomy and a commitment to student learning and discipline-based assessment exists throughout the institution. Undoubtedly, maintaining program quality through student assessment learning outcomes is essential for student recruitment, retention, and learning, as well as program accountability, donor support, grant activity, and alumni placement.

**Context, Definition, and Purposes of Assessment at Illinois State University**

Assessment is a continually developing process and a commitment demonstrated by the faculty and staff of Illinois State University. For continued growth and development in a largely decentralized institution, it is essential that assessment intentions and uses are operationally defined and shared across the community. A common understanding leads to increased communication, collaboration, and coordination -- basic charges of the UWAC. Therefore, we recommend the Provost implement the following actions.

First, after reviewing documentation from campus committees, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, *Academic Plan 1999-2004*, *Illinois Commitment*, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, and the American Association of Higher Education, we recommend that a general university statement that values, supports, and rewards assessment be developed. There are no contradictions in the documents reviewed. However, assessment is a construct that could, presently or in the future, have different meanings to different people. We offer the following draft statement that should be shared via campus governance systems, rewritten if necessary, and presented as an Illinois State University Board of Trustees (BOT) resolution.

Assessment is and shall continue to be a high priority for Illinois State University. The institution is committed to valuing, supporting, and rewarding assessment-related activities that are led by the complementary and collaborative activities of university faculty, staff, and students. The actions of assessment, specifically defined below, are complementary to institutional goals and those established by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Assessment is a continuous process at all levels of the institution of systematically collecting, interpreting, and using qualitative and/or quantitative information to guide the improvement of student learning and development, as well as the formation and achievement of institutional priorities.

Moreover, the basic purposes of assessment are improvement (formative) and accountability (summative). When the intent is improvement, assessment efforts involve gathering and using information about student learning and other outcomes. When the intent is accountability, assessment is the collection and use of information to demonstrate the extent to which the institution is achieving its mission and priorities.

Second, through the same procedures used to adopt the *Kellogg Statement: A Statement of Principles to Guide Academic Reform*, we recommend the BOT adopt our definition of assessment coupled with the American Association of Higher Education's (AAHE) *Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning* as general guidelines for assessment at Illinois State University. To remain both effective and accountable, assessment must be defined by procedures of shared governance and supported at all levels of the university, from policy established by the Board of Trustees to actions implemented by faculty and staff. In accordance with AAHE:

- The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.

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- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
- Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experience that leads to those outcomes.
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
- Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
- Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
- Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is a part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
- Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Adoption of our general statement on assessment leads to action item implementation (see Goal 1, Priority 6). Throughout the remaining recommendations in this paper, we seek to enrich a culture that already values, supports, and rewards assessment. We see this as a three-step process.

### **Step 1:** **Building on Assessment Efforts**

Goal 1: Develop a plan for building on already successful assessment efforts in departments and programs to spread the success more broadly among departments and to inform general education assessment, junior/senior year efforts, and graduate education.

Priority 1: Communicate existing assessment efforts across the campus community.

Action 1: Advise members of the campus community of the availability of the *Assessment Inventory*, which summarizes assessment practices in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Similar notebooks will be housed in the University Assessment Office, Undergraduate Studies, the Graduate School, Student Affairs, and Planning and Policy Studies.

Priority 2: Build upon the quality and frequency of departmental assessment initiatives by funding an Assessment Institute analogous to the State Farm Teaching Technology Faculty Fellows Program used by Academic Affairs to imbed technology within the classroom. Open to all members of the campus community, the “State Farm Model” illustrates how successful decentralized models are and that they can be applied to General Education assessment, upper division assessment, graduate-level assessment, and other university priorities with coordinated communication.

Action 1: In March 2000, the UWAC will request \$77,000 in annually renewable operating funds from the Provost for the funding of a three-year (Fiscal Years 2001 through 2004) pilot Assessment Institute.

Action 2: If funding is received, the UWAC will proceed with the schedule described in the *Proposal for an Assessment Institute* (copy

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attached). The UAO and the UWAC, with assistance from Planning and Policy Studies and other staff colleagues, will provide primary staff support for the organization, planning, and implementation of the *Institute*.

Priority 3: Encourage and fiscally support additional and existing faculty and staff development activities for assessment.

- Action 1: The Provost should support the review and continued implementation of the Small Grants for Assessment program sponsored by the UAO, Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Illinois State University Foundation.
- Action 2: Periodic workshops will be presented by University Assessment Office staff to address assessment methods and activities.

Priority 4: Educate and inform members of the campus community regarding current practices and statements about assessment at Illinois State University.

- Action 1: By April 2000, the Chair of the UWAC or a designee should request permission to give a briefing of the UWAC at a President's Staff meeting and disseminate hard copies of this report to the President, Vice Presidents, Direct Reports, Deans, Directors, Department Chairs, and Unit Heads.
- Action 2: By May 2000, the UWAC will provide copies of this report, the *Assessment Inventory*, and *Assessment Statements* to members of the campus community via the web.
- Action 3: By summer 2000, the UWAC should have a page on the University Assessment Office web site. Our page will include historical background of the UWAC, the definition for assessment, this report, the *Assessment Inventory*, *Assessment Statements*, and a summary of current and planned projects for the Committee. After the web site for the UWAC is created, its availability will be announced via the *ISU Report*.

Priority 5: Increase awareness of assessment opportunities and resources for faculty and staff colleagues interested in using assessment data to improve teaching and learning.

- Action 1: Beginning in fall 2000, a spokesperson should provide an overview of the UWAC and the UAO at new faculty orientation sessions.
- Action 2: The UWAC should work in cooperation with the University Research Office after receipt of the *Annual Report* to publicize external funds received for assessment projects related to improved teaching and learning.

Priority 6: The Provost should develop or charge an administrative designee or the UWAC with the responsibility of developing more specific policies on

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student learning outcomes assessment. When approved, and if applicable, each should be placed on the University's policies web page.

- Action 1: Policies and procedures on student/faculty/staff access, storage, and sharing of university-level assessment data (Cooperative Institutional Research Program, Sophomore Survey, and Senior Survey) should be developed.
- Action 2: Statements regarding the acknowledgement and reward of assessment work in faculty and staff annual evaluations should be developed. Reward also includes the availability of travel funds to attend assessment-related conferences, workshops, and symposia.
- Action 3: As part of coordinated university-wide planning, departments and units should be required to submit assessment plans every three years. The report should include a summary of intended actions and a summary of how assessment is used for curricular and/or programmatic improvement.
- Action 4: Policies on how assessment results and interpretations will be used in budgeting, review, etc. should be developed.
- Action 5: Procedures to ensure adequate financial support for assessment efforts should be developed.
- Action 6: Procedures to ensure adequate faculty and staff development in terms of assessment should be developed.
- Action 7: There should be clarification on Institutional Review Board policies and faculty and staff responsibilities relevant to assessment.

Finally, as this plan has alluded, assessment results are collaborative. Environmental scanning is a critical feature of student learning outcomes assessment.

Priority 7: Monitor the national assessment scene for best practices and innovations.

- Action 1: Beginning in fall 2000, the UWAC should actively contribute to the University Assessment Office's existing newsletter by adding features related directly to student learning outcomes at Illinois State. Collaborative assessment involves learning about what other institutions are doing and advocating and promoting activities at the University.
- Action 2: The UAO's newsletter should be posted/archived on its web site, and include examples of best practices from comparable institutions throughout the country.
- Action 3: Leadership across divisions should support travel to regional and national assessment conferences for teams of faculty and staff.

**Step 2:**  
**Using Assessment Results**

Assessment, by definition, is a continuous process of gathering and using information about student learning and development. To be effective, as is the practice at Illinois State University, student learning outcomes assessment data should be *used* internally to guide curricular, co-curricular, environmental, and institutional improvement. For both internal and external audiences the intent *is not* evaluation of an individual or program. Instead, it is the demonstration of the extent to which the department, unit, college, division, and/or institution is achieving its mission and priorities. The beneficiaries of assessment are students, as the institution's understanding of the learning process is continually enhanced.

Identified in the *Academic Plan 1999-2004*, Illinois State University is committed to providing the premier undergraduate education in Illinois, premiere graduate education in selected areas, and an academic atmosphere that nurtures intellectual activity within the University community. Therefore:

Goal 2: Determine how best to use the assessment data we have to improve teaching and learning and to inform external constituencies.

Priority 1: Assessment data should continue to be used to determine the effectiveness of opportunities for students to increase their capacity for inquiry, logical thinking, critical analysis and synthesis, and to apply these abilities in the pursuit of one's discipline.

Action 1: Consistent with the *New General Education Program for Illinois State University*, adopted by the Academic Senate in 1997, the Director of General Education should be responsible for programmatic assessment in consultation with the Council on General Education, the General Education Coordinating Committee, and faculty participating in the program through the General Education Faculty Development Seminars.

Action 2: Members of the UWAC should be available for consultation with department chairs, unit directors, and other faculty and staff in regard to the uses of assessment data described in Priority 1.

Action 3: Assessment of both curricular and co-curricular programs and services should determine the extent to which students increase their understanding of global and national interdependence and expand knowledge and understanding of other cultures in the context of a multicultural society.

Priority 2: Members of the UWAC should serve the campus community as requested through consultation and advisement of assessment-related methodologies and projects.

Action 1: The University Assessment Office with help from the UWAC should offer assistance in determining measures of progress and student learning to departments and units receiving Small Grants for Assessment projects.

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- Action 2: As part of the Assessment Institute described in Goal 1, Priority 1, the University Assessment Office with help from the UWAC should offer workshops on specific methodologies related to student learning outcomes assessment.
- Action 3: The UWAC should consult with the Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and International Education to determine what assessment-related information should be provided to the Graduate School by the UWAC and/or departmental chairs given that graduate-level assessment is decentralized.
- Action 4: The UWAC should use information from the *Assessment Inventory* to develop and publish a combined Program Review and accreditation calendar for the University.

Priority 3: Program Review should address student learning outcomes assessment and how each program/department contributes to Distinctiveness and Excellence and the *Illinois Commitment*.

- Action 1: Program Review should demonstrate how curricular and programmatic changes build upon the strengths of the program and build upon the unique mission of the college/department and the goals of the *Illinois Commitment*.
- Action 2: Academic Affairs should evaluate the advantages, disadvantages, and feasibility of tighter couplings between Program Review and discipline-based accreditation.
- Action 3: Academic Affairs should continue to provide Program Review summaries as an information item to the Illinois State University Board of Trustees prior to submission to the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

The successful use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning assumes that student learning and development occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. This, as identified by the *Academic Plan 1999-2004*, supports the goal of Illinois State University to provide co-curricular activities, programs, and services that augment the formal education of students and maximize their involvement in the educational process. Therefore:

Goal 3: Build bridges with Student Affairs in order to assess a broad range of student experiences and their impact on learning outcomes.

Priority 1: Faculty and staff from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs should collaborate to develop appropriate learning outcomes and assessment procedures.

- Action 1: Broadly stated, assessment procedures should include institutional goals and identified student goals. Experiences inside and outside of the classroom must be assessed as they relate to student learning and development and the attainment of desired outcomes. Finally, comprehensive learning outcomes

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should include both cognitive/intellectual aspects as well as measures of career satisfaction and interpersonal competence.

Priority 2: Continue with implementation of the 1999 *Division of Student Affairs, Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan* and share results with faculty and staff across the University.

Action 1: Continue to use assessment tools to measure the effectiveness of services, policies, and programs.

Action 2: Continually assess changing student needs and develop programs and services to meet those needs.

Action 3: Assess programs and services in terms of user satisfaction and critical aspects of student life, learning, and personal development.

Action 4: Utilize results from unit, division, university, and/or external assessments to improve or discontinue existing programs or services and develop new programs or services.

For this (or any) assessment plan to be successful it must be part of the institutional culture, dedicated to looking at “where we are” and “where we need to go.” Furthermore, the administration, faculty, and staff of the University must continue to be responsive to assessment requests of external agencies. The assessment of student learning and development must be viewed as continuous rather than episodic and it must be viewed as a campus-wide process to understand the nature and needs of the campus community and identify those aspects of the environment that facilitate student learning and development. Therefore:

Goal 4: Determine how assessment results can/should inform Distinctiveness and Excellence (D&E) and the Capital Campaign.

Priority 1: Infuse assessment in D&E. When published, the *Action Plan for Distinctiveness and Excellence* will define institutional priorities. Assessment methodologies should link measurements of student learning and institutional progress with actions implemented as a result of priority decisions in D&E. Information from assessment activities can/should be used to prioritize, make program modifications, and inform internal and external constituencies of progress and success.

Action 1: At least one member of the UWAC should serve on any future institutional teams designed to assess the progress of D&E.

Priority 2: Infuse assessment into the Capital Campaign. Similar to D&E, assessment activities should link measurements of student learning and institutional progress with actions implemented as a result of priority decisions in the Capital Campaign. Information from assessment activities can/should be used to make priority for program modification and to inform internal and external constituencies of progress and success.

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- Action 1: In spring 2000, expand membership of the UWAC to include a liaison from University Advancement to determine what assessment results are necessary for Capital Campaign planning and implementation.
- Action 2: At each stage of the Campaign, the UWAC should offer consultation to University Advancement in terms of planning and assessment.

Goal 5: Develop a plan to meet and exceed both North Central Association (NCA) and Illinois Board of Higher Education expectations for assessment.

Priority 1: Plan for NCA accreditation in fall 2003.

- Action 1: The Provost should identify a Steering Committee and subcommittees for NCA Self Study and Accreditation. Membership on the Steering and subcommittees should include individuals from the UWAC and university faculty and staff who have expertise and/or experience in assessment and accreditation. NCA Self Study should begin no later than fall 2002. The Provost should allocate funds (\$5,400 for a nine-month contract) for a graduate assistant to support NCA accreditation.
- Action 2: The Vice Presidents should encourage their divisions to continue to use assessment results as the basis for change. The *Assessment Inventory* lists how assessment results have been used at Illinois State University.
- Action 3: Follow-up with actions stated in Illinois State University's *1993 NCA Self-Study*. (1) The Provost should assure that General Education assessment proceeds. (2) Program Review, the institution's largest coordinated assessment activity, should be revised to focus on institutional priorities and student learning outcomes. (3) The role of the UWAC should change from advisory to implementation. Recommendations for specific activities of the committee are presented at the conclusion of this paper. To assure that members of the campus community are advised of the status/progress of UWAC, at the beginning of every semester, the UWAC and the Provost should develop a list of priorities for the term. This information should be shared with members of the campus community via the web. Likewise, at the end of every academic year, the UWAC should develop and disseminate a report of accomplishments.

Priority 2: Consistent with Goal 5 of the *Illinois Commitment*, Illinois State should hold itself accountable for the quality of academic programs and the assessment of student learning.

- Action 1: Each July, Illinois State University's annual *Results Report* should include performance measures and progress towards full

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implementation of the six goals of the Illinois Commitment. Results reported should be a function of coordinated planning, budgeting, and assessment.

- Action 2: Illinois State University's annual *Results Report* should contain summaries of the previous year's Program Review. To document continuous, quality improvement, the summary should include measures of student learning outcomes, program strengths, areas of improvement, and actions taken.
- Action 3: In spring 2000, the UWAC should consult with the Director of Diversity and Affirmative Action to determine what assessment-related information should be incorporated into Illinois State University's annual *Underrepresented Groups Report* and subsequent editions of Illinois State University's *Plan for Diversity*.

### **Step 3:** **Providing Assessment Coordination**

Assessment coordination, as demonstrated throughout this paper, occurs across colleges, departments, units, and divisions. This last section focuses on proposed coordination for the University Assessment Office and the University-Wide Assessment Committee as we serve the campus community as information providers and consultants.

Goal 6: Determine how the UWAC will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to the University Assessment Office (UAO).

Priority 1: The UWAC should provide direction and feedback for current and planned activities of UAO.

- Action 1: Members of the UWAC should continue to serve on the Small Grants for Assessment Review Board.
- Action 2: Members of the UWAC should advise the UAO as they help identify opportunities for external funding in the area of assessment. The identification of external funding opportunities should be done in conjunction with the University Research Office and college research offices.
- Action 3: As the UAO develops a web site, portions of UWAC meetings should be dedicated to formative feedback of the new home page.
- Action 4: The UWAC and the UAO should share information regarding assessment studies, practices, conferences, etc. With assistance from the UWAC and faculty and staff, the UAO should serve as the clearinghouse of assessment-related information for the campus community.

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Action 5: The UWAC should give formative feedback and advise the UAO regarding new and different student learning outcomes assessment projects related to the institutional mission and priorities.

Action 6: Members of the UWAC with particular areas of expertise should be called upon to assist the UAO in consultation with student learning outcomes assessment-related projects and workshops.

Goal 7: Determine how to coordinate the faculty and department support services that the UAO will be providing with the institution-wide assessment efforts of the Office of Planning, Policy Studies, and Information Systems (PPSIS).

Priority 1: Increase collaborative efforts between PPSIS and UAO.

Action 1: Staff from both offices should continue to meet on a monthly basis to conceptualize, discuss, and implement assessment-related projects.

Action 2: In spring 2000, each office should provide reciprocal links on their homepages.

Priority 2: Increase collaborative efforts between the UAO, departmental chairs, directors, and unit heads to coordinate support services.

Action 1: The Assessment Inventory subcommittee, with representation from UAO, should have follow-up meetings with departmental chairs, directors, and unit heads to discuss the *Assessment Inventory* and information needs.

Action 2: Standardized, longitudinal institutional surveys (CIRP, Sophomore Survey, Senior Survey) administered by the UAO should continue to be supplemented to address both departmental and institutional needs.

Action 3: In spring 2000, the UAO should develop and disseminate a resource directory to colleges and departments addressing frequently asked questions about institutional resources for assessment.

Goal 8: Seek external funds for unique assessment efforts.

Priority 1: The UAO should expand collaborative efforts with institutional programs that represent interdisciplinary approaches to student learning (e.g., learning communities, Foundations of Inquiry and other General Education courses) to augment current assessment efforts. Efforts may be used to seek external funds for unique assessment efforts.

Priority 2: The UAO and the UWAC should continue building collaborative relations with University Advancement, the University Research Office, and faculty

## DRAFT #4

and staff in all units to increase knowledge of the availability of external funds for assessment and to write grant applications.

Action 1: University Advancement's and the University Research Office's representatives to the UWAC should advise the committee on the potential availability of funds for assessment-related research. The UAO should post this information on its web site.

Action 2: In fall 2000, the UWAC should develop a resource directory of faculty and staff with expertise/interests in assessment. This information should be added to the UAO's home page.

Goal 9: The UWAC should work in coordination with the Teacher Education Task Force on Performance Based Assessment, Council for Teacher Education, Council for General Education, General Education Coordinating Committee, Graduate Council, and other campus entities, as appropriate.

Priority 1: Maintain collaborative relationships between the Task Force on Performance Based Assessment.

Action 1: A member of the UWAC should continue to serve on the Task Force and remain responsible for information sharing and reporting.

Action 2: Performance based measures from the Task Force will be included in the *Assessment Inventory*.

Action 3: The UWAC home page should contain a link to the Task Force's home page.

Priority 2: Identify UWAC committee member(s) to serve as consultant(s) and liaison(s) to the Council for Teacher Education, Graduate Council, and other appropriate assessment-related committees. UWAC members currently serve similar roles on the Council for General Education and General Education Coordinating Committee.

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Table 1  
Membership of the University-Wide Assessment Committee

Margaret Haefner, Chair, Provost's Office  
David Barone, Psychology  
Robert Broad, English  
Deborah Gentry, College of Applied Science and Technology  
Abiodun Goke-Pariola, Presidents Office  
Mathew Hesson-McInnis, Psychology  
Patricia Klass, Educational Administration  
Susan Kossman, Mennonite College of Nursing  
Bonnie Laesch, Undergraduate Studies  
Doug Lamb, Student Counseling Services  
Ann McGuigan, University Research Office  
Kathleen McKinney, Center for the Advancement of Teaching  
Pat Meckstroth, Milner Library  
Liz Mullenix, College of Fine Arts  
Edgar Norton, College of Business  
Erika Rasch, Graduate Assistant  
Joe Rives, Planning and Policy Studies  
Steve Rosenbaum, Honors Program  
Norma Stumbo, Undergraduate Studies  
Wendy Troxel, University Assessment Office  
Jeff Waple, Graduate Assistant