

Spring 2016

IlliAAC Assessment Committee Newsletter

Upcoming Events:

*ILACADA Annual
Meeting, May 20, 2016
@ ISU*

Welcome to the first IlliAAC Assessment Committee Newsletter! It is the committee's intention to provide opportunities for the advising community to learn about assessment and to facilitate sharing assessment activities across campus. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and look forward to hearing your feedback.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) @ Illinois – Staci Provezis, Assistant Provost for Assessment, Office of the Provost

The University of Illinois has offered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) on a regular basis since 2003 with the last administration being in Spring 2015, when it was sent to all first year and all senior students. Nearly 3,000 students participated in the survey for a response rate of 19%. This survey allows the University to learn more about the time and effort that students put into their studies and about student involvement in learning opportunities offered on campus. The survey also allows for the University to compare Illinois' students with students at peer institutions.

High Impact Practices. From the survey, we learned that about 9% of the first-year students participate in more than one High-Impact Practice (i.e. Learning Community, Service-Learning, and Research w/Faculty), which is slightly lower (5%) than peer institutions, but by the time Illinois students are Seniors, 69% of the students have participated in more than one these activities, which is higher (7%) than students at peer institutions.

Perceived Learning Gains. Our seniors indicate that Illinois has most contributed to their learning how to think critically and analytically, to work effectively with others, to analyze numerical and statistical information, to acquire job-or work-related knowledge and skills, and to write clearly and effectively.

Satisfaction. Eighty-nine percent of the first-year students and 90% of the senior students rate their experience as "excellent" or "good," which is higher than peers' students, which rate their institutions less excellent or good by 4-5%. By similar rates, Illinois students are more likely to say that they would "definitely" or "probably" attend this institution again. Overall, Illinois students appear to be satisfied with the quality of education that the University of Illinois offers.

Academic Advising. During the 2015 NSSE administration, the campus added a topical module on Academic Advising to learn more about our students' perceptions of advising and how they compare to students' at other institutions.

“By their senior year, Illinois students rate their advisors higher than students at other universities do.”

Illinois students visit an academic advisor on average twice a year, or an average of 2.4 times for first-year students and 2.3 times for seniors. Knowing that students receive advising from several places, the survey asked, “During the current school year, which of the following has been your primary source of advice regarding your academic plans? (Select one).” The chart below shows the responses of Illinois students beside the responses from all institutions that also selected to administer this module.

	First Year Students		Seniors	
	% Illinois	% Other Institutions	% Illinois	% Other Institutions
Academic advisor(s) assigned to you	29	29	26	29
Academic advisor(s) available to any student	16	9	10	10
Faculty or staff not formally assigned as an advisor	5	9	15	18
Online advising system (degree progress report, etc.)	5	3	8	7
Web site, catalog, or other published sources	7	6	6	6
Friends or other students	22	17	22	12
Family members	11	18	7	9
Other, please specify:	1	1	1	2
I did not seek academic advice this year	4	7	6	7

Illinois students appear to receive advice from their friends and other students more so than students at other campuses do. In the general NSSE survey, we find that Illinois students also ask other students to help them understand course material at rates higher than at other campuses.

The students were asked: “to what extent have your advisors done the following,” and the table below shows their mean responses. The questions used a scale of (1) very little, (2) some, (3) quite a bit, (4) very much, and not applicable. The arrows in the table indicate if the difference between Illinois’ students’ responses and other institutions’ students’ responses were statistically significant; an arrow pointing up means Illinois has a statistically higher mean than other institutions, while an arrow pointing down means Illinois has a statistically lower mean than other institutions.

	<i>First Year Mean</i>	<i>Senior Mean</i>
Been available when needed	3.0	3.1 △
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	3.0	3.0 △
Informed you of important deadlines	2.8	2.8 △
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	2.7 ▽	2.7
Informed you of academic support options (tutoring, study groups, help with writing, etc.)	2.6 ▽	2.4
Provided useful information about courses	2.9	2.7
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	2.5 ▽	2.5
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internship, research projects, etc.)	2.6 △	2.6 △
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	2.5	2.7 △

Illinois students feel that advisors are most helpful when providing information on special opportunities. Receiving such information may be why the students participate in a high number of High Impact Practices. First-year students mostly have an average experience with advising, and they may need more support in understanding academic rules and policies as well as knowing more about academic support options. By their senior year, Illinois students rate their advisors higher than students at other universities do. The areas where they are most satisfied include being available when needed, listening closely, informing them of deadlines, helping them get information about special opportunities, and discussing post-graduation plans.

For more information on the NSSE administration or results, please contact Staci Provezis, Assistant Provost for Assessment (sprovez2@illinois.edu).

Illini Success: Sharing the Story of Illinois' Graduates – Julia Panke Makela, Associate Director for Assessment and Research, The Career Center & Project Lead for Illini Success

*The Illini Success
website is now live,
with enhanced data
portals coming in
AY16-17!*

The demand for evidence of student success after graduation has never been higher. Prospective students and families are asking “what can I do with this major?,” “how soon will I have a job after graduation?,” “what kind of graduate schools will I get into?,” and “what difference will my U of I degree make?” Accreditors are requiring graduation outcomes data as a measure of academic program and institutional quality. Federal and state governments demand more information about the value of a college education, tying that evidence to calls for “students’ right to know” and a College Scorecard that can be used to help students make college comparisons, and potentially even be tied to funding of higher education institutions. The stakes are high for universities to know where their students go after graduation.

Illinois recognized our need to do a better job of telling a unified story of where our students go after graduation. The urgency of the issue led to quick action. The Illini Success initiative at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was initially spear-headed by The Career Center in January 2014, but within months it grew into a campus-wide effort. The project has support from the Office of the Provost, the Division of Management Information, the Office of the Registrar, the Institutional Review Board Office, the Council of Undergraduate Deans and administration in all undergraduate Colleges, the Career Services Council, and many more partners.

Campus-wide graduate outcomes data were first collected for the August 2014 graduation cohort. Graduates from all undergraduate degree programs were invited to participate. Since then, a number of graduate degree programs across campus have also joined the project.

In April 2016, we launched the Illini Success website (<http://illinisuccess.illinois.edu>) which introduces the initiative, providing access to:

- 2014-2015 annual reports for the Campus and undergraduate Colleges
- success stories, written by graduates from each undergraduate College, and
- additional contacts for related resources and information across the University.

The 2014-2015 annual reports demonstrate that Illinois bachelor’s degree graduates have much to share and celebrate. Of the 7,701 graduates invited to participate in the survey, graduate outcomes data were collected for 5,737, representing 74% of the graduating class. A total of 84% reported securing a first destination – defined as employment (70%), continuing education (29%), or a volunteer or service position (1%) – within six months of graduation. Success rates were strong across all Colleges, ranging from 77% in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to 95% in the School of Social Work.

Of those graduates who were employed, 70% chose employment within the State of Illinois, while an additional 10% chose employment in Midwestern states (excluding Illinois). International locations, with 27 countries reported, were chosen by 1% of respondents. Across campus, the average salary for full-time employed graduates was \$55,390.

Furthermore, the report shows that 83% of respondents indicated participating in experiential learning activities during their studies at Illinois (such as internships, co-operative learning, assistantships, student teaching). These experiences help students connect classroom knowledge to the world in which they live and work. In doing so, students explore interests, develop transferable skills, expand networks and references, and strengthen their portfolios as they prepare to transition beyond their bachelor’s degrees. In fact, 37% of graduates who participated in internships

indicated that they received a full-time job offer from their internship. The same was true of 29% of graduates who participated in co-operative learning (co-ops).

Finally, relationships are shown in the reports between attaining employment and the time that a job search is started. Those who started their job search early (e.g., 6 or more months before graduation, 3 – 5 months before graduation) were more likely to have attained employment at graduation than those who waited. This data is used to suggest the importance of starting one’s job search early.

There is much more to be gained from the 2014-2015 All Campus and College-Level Illini Success reports. We encourage you to visit the Illini Success website (<http://illinisuccess.illinois.edu>) to view the reports and to read the graduates’ stories. I hope that you find the insights available here as exciting as we do. We are inspired by our graduates’ accomplishments and reflections, as well as motivated to dig deeper into the possibilities that this dataset creates for students, staff, and faculty alike. In the 2016-2017 academic year, you can look forward to data portals that will allow customizable queries of aggregated data at the college, department, or major-level. This will allow you to dig deeper into the dataset than what is available in the static reports.

At this point, we hope you are wondering, how can I get involved in the Illini Success initiative? How can I help ensure that we get a great response rate from graduates of my College or department so that I can benefit from the knowledge gained? I’m glad you asked!

Experience demonstrates that the highest response rates are achieved with departments and schools that make a local push to assist with data collection. Some strategies include setting up computer stations near convocation ticket pick-up locations, providing response time in capstone courses, and sending targeted emails from local contacts. The Illini Success team has resources to help you establish any of these strategies, or to help you brainstorm ideas unique to your graduates. Contact Julia Makela at jpmakela@illinois.edu to learn more.

Additionally, our greatest opportunity to reach graduates across campus occurs at cap and gown distribution between May 11 and May 14, 2016. Graduates respond particularly well to visiting with academic advisors and career services professionals from their colleges at this event. When a familiar face invites them to fill out the survey, they are more likely to take the time to do so. Please join us. You can sign up for a time at www.volunteersignup.org/4R4BL. Information packets on this event will be sent to volunteers by Monday, May 9, 2016. We hope you can join us there to congratulate our graduates and wish them well as they take their next steps.

“...I have begun to use assessment as one way to connect with students and help them relate more meaningfully to their educational experience on this campus.”

Self-Assessment and Building Connections – Adrienne Pickett, Academic Advising and Skills Specialist, College of LAS, Student Academic Affairs Office

When I became an advisor, I didn’t realize assessment would play an important role in my work. As my understanding of advising deepened over the years, I found myself increasingly looking for ways to improve the overall educational experiences of students, as well as finding causes for students’ academic difficulties. On the latter point, I found myself constructing survey and interview questions to gain student feedback on why they underperformed during a given semester. Although I am still learning best practices, I have begun to use assessment as one way to connect with students and help them relate more meaningfully to their educational experience on this campus.

In late Fall semester 2015, the advising team in the LAS Student Academic Affairs Office revised the student self-assessment form typically sent only to first-time freshmen on probation and expanded its use to include continuing students. Our office intern, LAS senior in Communication Madeline Mortensen, was indispensable to the project for her work on revising our then-current student self-assessment form. She researched peer institution examples, and then drafted a version of the self-assessment that the advising team then revised and later sent out to all LAS probation students in January 2016 following Fall semester grade audit.

This new self-assessment form has been an important tool for advising team members to use during our discussions with students on academic probation. It has provided us a basis for conversation to find out what happened academically and personally to our students during the previous semester that negatively impacted academic performance. With questions ranging from the nature of the personal and course obstacles students experienced to the difficulties with college transition and approaches to studying, we used the self-assessment as a starting point to ask additional questions during our actual sit-down meetings. The general information provided in the self-assessment gave us opportunities to ask additional questions (e.g. question: “why were you sleeping only four hours a night?”) and to find out more information (e.g. answer: student professes to have a gaming addiction) in order to point students to helpful resources.

The challenge with using assessment tools is figuring out what to do with the large amount of data collected. Madeline skillfully analyzed responses to student surveys during the Spring 2016 semester to determine the existence of trends among major disciplinary clusters in STEM, Humanities, Social/Behavioral Sciences, and General Curriculum and to compare the findings between fields. We presented findings to the faculty and advisors who conduct LAS Student Success Workshops in an effort to provide data about the areas where our students who might attend their workshops experience most academic difficulty.

I continually remind myself that the self-assessment is merely a tool, and a starting point on which to build a conversation during my sit-down meetings. When students on probation meet with me, I review reported responses with them, and make it my goal to reconnect them to the institution from which they are attempting to earn a degree. The self-assessment reminds me that students are indeed fallible and in need of guidance. As the advising team continues to revise the self-assessment form, my hope is that we continue to improve our efforts to help students reconnect to the university and that we also continue to find ways to connect with our students.

University 101 Research – Trent Nelson, Academic Advisor, College of Media

“A final surprising data point that emerged from the study was the amount and frequency of terms those students with a grade of C+ ended on probation.”

In the Fall of 2013 a question came up in our advising unit; we wondered whether there was a correlation between student grades in the College of Media orientation course (MDIA 100) and future academic success. Advisors anecdotally felt students who struggled with the orientation course even though it is an easy course to get an A or B, also appeared to struggle in other courses. So we went ahead and started looking at the student data.

Convinced the data was pointing to something, we wrote an IRB research protocol. We started by looking for students that were enrolled in the course from Fall 2010 until Fall 2012. We pulled out any student that received a C+ or below for the grade in MDIA 100 and used them as our subject group. We also pulled the next three semesters to look at student progression. Then we set up a control group for each year as well. We found that a B+ was an average grade for those semesters so we pulled a random number of B+ students from each semester to match up with subject group.

With IRB and DGS approval we used GS 101 as a comparison for MDIA 100 data. Once we received the information we matched DGS students with exact grades to the students to MDIA 100 group; the matching process was done through random selection. We also looked at the following three semesters to compare student progression.

After reviewing all of the data from both MDIA 100 and GS 101 we found several trends arose. First, after doing a correlation between orientation grade and the students 1st semester GPA was at a strong correlation of a 0.61; when taking out the orientation grade from the equation the correlation dropped to 0.54 but still shows indication of academic performance. We also did other correlations which showed that there was a strong connection between the orientation grades and 4th semester grades and a connection between 1st term GPA and 4th term GPA.

A second finding was the disparity in the GPAs of the students in the subject and control groups. We compared the term GPA of the study group to the control group and for their 1st semester. The study group had a GPA one full point below the control group. The study group GPA improved by the end of their fourth semester but it was still on average a half point below the control group.

		1st Semester GPA	4th Semester Cumulative GPA
2010	Study	2.25	2.58
	Control	3.38	3.26
2011	Study	2.13	2.79
	Control	3.11	3.22

A final surprising data point that emerged from the study was the amount and frequency of terms those students with a grade of C+ ended on probation. 58.5% of the students that earned a C+ or below in either MDIA 100 or GS 101 would have at least one semester that put them on academic probation. The incidences of probation were found to be higher among underrepresented minority and international students.

UNIV 101 Probation Percentages by Race and Gender					
Student with grade C+ or Below					
	Total Students	Number on Term Probation	Percentage	Number on Cumulative Probation	Percentage
Females	116	55	47.4%	46	39.7%
Male	296	185	62.5%	149	50.3%
Asian	46	26	56.5%	23	50.0%
Black/African American	58	46	79.3%	39	67.2%
Hispanic	54	42	77.8%	36	66.7%
International	61	37	60.7%	32	52.5%
Multi-Race	15	7	46.7%	6	40.0%
NHPI	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%
Unknown	1	1	100.0%	1	100.0%
White	176	81	46.0%	60	34.1%
Total	412	241	58.5%	195	48.1%

The findings from this research have led to a couple of changes for us in the College of Media. First, MDIA 100 is being used as an early alert system for our advisors. If students are doing poorly in the course not attending class, skipping or turning assignments in late, then we reach out to those students to see if we can find out if there are any transition issues. The second was that we introduced more graded feedback earlier in the course. This would allow advisors to see if there are any troubling patterns and provide advisors opportunities to reach out to students sooner.

Results are summarized from 55 online surveys and 3 focus groups of approximately 10-12 people each.

Summary of SP 2016 IlliAAC Assessment Survey and Focus Groups – Karin Readel, Education Coordinator, Illinois Informatics Institute

At the March 2016 IlliAAC General Meeting, the Assessment Committee conducted focus groups to find out what advising assessment activities were currently being done on campus and what types of assessment resources IlliAAC should develop for its members. This was followed by a short online survey which was distributed to the campus advising community. A summary of the major findings from both follows.

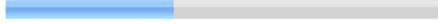
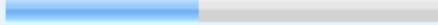
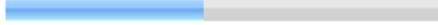
A total of 55 online surveys were submitted, up from 27 in 2012, the last time such a survey was conducted. Advisors were asked to rate their assessment knowledge/ experience on a scale of 1 (no experience) to 5 (lots of experience). The average rating was 2.95, with 53% of respondents rating themselves as a 3. Relatively few people indicated that they had lots of experience.

1. Please rate your experience/ knowledge level regarding assessment on a scale of 1 (no experience) to 5 (lots of experience).	Percent	Count
1= no experience	7%	4
2	18%	10
3	53%	29
4	16%	9
5= lots of experience	5%	3

Advisors were then asked to indicate what types of assessments their office currently engage in. The two most common assessments reported were advisor professional evaluations (51%) and senior/exit surveys (45%). This was followed by individual program assessments (35%), advising appointment evaluation (25%) and “other” (22%). Eighteen percent of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of any assessment activities in their office. The assessment knowledge/experience self-rating for those respondents was slightly lower (2.7), but generally mirrored that of the whole group. Based on these results it appears that lack of knowledge or experience is not the only barrier to engaging in assessment activities.

Most of the data that is currently collected is being used internally to evaluate office services and perceptions of staff, and to improve student programs. It also is used to determine any training gaps, to improve advising overall. In rarer circumstances the data are being shared with a broader community, in annual reports to the administration.

The vast majority (98%) of respondents indicated that they were interested in learning more about assessment, with 24% saying that they were strongly interested in learning more. There was substantial interest in all of the assessment workshop topics that were suggested with the most popular one being learning what to do with your data after it is collected.

4. Which of the following workshops regarding assessment would you be interested in attending? Please mark all that apply.		Percent	Count
Learning how to construct a survey		60%	33
What to do with your data after you collect it		69%	38
How to run focus groups to access student perceptions of services		55%	30
Campus wide assessment and its impact on the advising community		38%	21
Learning how to develop an advising syllabus		44%	24
Drafting student learning outcomes for advising		45%	25
Time efficient assessment techniques		58%	32
None of these are of interest to me		4%	2

The focus groups yielded similar results with several prominent themes. Advisors are very interested in learning how to design good surveys, and then learning what to do with the data once it has been collected. Several people suggested that it would be good to have more resources on the IlliAAC website, with links to a bank of sample survey questions, best practices, data analysis information, etc. Sharing assessment tools (and data) across campus was also a key point. It was suggested that IlliAAC look at bringing in some experts (from CITL, NACADA, etc.) to run workshops on designing surveys, and analyzing data. Additionally, several advisors mentioned that it would be good to have an IRB workshop to understand the process of obtaining IRB approval, so the survey results could be shared outside of campus (at an ILACADA or NACADA meeting for example). Finally, advisors are interested in assessment metrics and benchmarks: Are we all measuring the same thing? Should we be measuring the same thing? How do we compare with our campus or national peers?

Advisors were also asked about their greatest concern about the assessment of advising. Overwhelmingly advisors listed time as their number one concern: the time needed to draft good questions (to move beyond student satisfaction), to conduct the survey and then to analyze the results. Advisors feel strongly that any surveys should be goal-oriented, comprehensive, and should result in useful information (vs. just being a platform for student whining). Another concern held by many was “what to do with the data?”. This included everything from “how to analyze the data?”, to “who should we be sharing our data with?”, to “what steps do I need to take to share data outside of campus?”. Some advisors questioned whether the resources were present to enact any changes that need to occur, based on the data collected. There was similar apprehension about the data being used punitively or how it might be used by people who don’t value advising as much. Finally, there was general recognition of survey overload for students and how to navigate their needs along with the need for assessment.