# HOW SHOULD COMPLEX ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITIES BE ASSESSED?

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## I

In my previous presentations in summer conferences in Samos, I have demonstrated the teaching model we use in the Undergraduate Center Learning Community of Triton College, which is a comprehensive two-year community college in the near western suburbs of Chicago. The model offers courses which transfer for baccalaureate completion, and courses which can complete certificates translatable into local employment. [1]

To summarize all this briefly, for the past thirty-one years, I have been a teacher in a freshman entry-level interdisciplinary learning community in Triton College called the Undergraduate Center, which offers transfer courses in the liberal arts, social and behavioral sciences, which are part of the College's "general education requirements." We make the uncertain claim in our department that the Undergraduate Center is the oldest learning community of its type out of all community colleges in the United States. It may be that there is an older one, but to date we simply have not been able to find one that pre-dates Triton's. The basic model we offer attempts ongoing curricular integration and team-teaching in semester long face-to-face and online "packages." If I were forced to compare it, I might say that it resembles in a few respects the New Collegiate Division of the University of Chicago of the post-Hutchins era.

In the Undergraduate Center, students may register into classes offered in an interdisciplinary format in what amounts to a "college within the college" to complete their "General Education Requirements." For more than three decades, the program has offered only the first year of "Gen. Eds.," and a course or two from the second year.

Courses in sociology, psychology, history, English literature, rhetoric and composition, philosophy, and the laboratory sciences are among the courses in the mix. Courses are offered on campus, online, and in both modalities. The courses are integrated in as many ways as possible. At this precise moment, the teachers are all senior-level, tenured Ph.D.s with expertise in multiple disciplines. Their specific mandate is to collaborate to co-ordinate disparate areas of knowledge; to show interdisciplinary connections when they exist; to disclose in what areas the disciplines may not be related; and to offer explanations of the ultimate relationships of areas of knowledge.

Besides teaching the same material that would be taught in a traditional course which "stands alone" by itself, unconnected to other courses, the purpose is to give students "the big picture." A unified and coherent understanding may not always be possible, but the effort to attain one brings much into focus. Whether it fits the overall puzzle or not, the intended outcome is to serve the purpose of achieving general education. The Undergraduate Center in its structure of faculty collaboration, attempts to fulfill the objectives of the North Central Association Higher Learning Commission guidelines for online education.[2]

The way we have always given this theory an objective form is in a community of learners.[3] Students work together in many ways, for example, on in-class or online projects; or, they might collaboratively submit group written work; or, sometimes they critique materials that student groups present in class; or they participate in a group discussion in an online Discussion Board. Group work is usually graded.

Our belief has always been that this "packaging" of concepts and subject matters and getting students to work collaboratively pays off for students by breaking down the barriers between areas of knowledge, which enhances their understanding of the technical details confined within the discrete, fact-based disciplines.

The department always has claimed to "unlock" more knowledge confined within disparate disciplines, which eventually makes its way into a wider general understanding revealed within a more "student friendly" learning

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[1]  Allen Salzman, "Teaching and Learning Online and On Campus," Proceedings of the First Annual ICIETE Conference, Research and Training Institute of the East Aegean, Samos, Greece, 2000.

Allen Salzman, "Stone Soup": an Online Humanities Course Created From Multiple Contributors Across Multiple Colleges in Illinois," Proceedings of the Second Annual ICIETE Conference, Research and Training Institute of the East Aegean, Samos, Greece, 2002.

[2]  See the NCA website: http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/electronic_degrees/

[3]  Here is an excellent site which offers insight into the conception of learning communities http://learningcommons.evergreen.edu/

community. We substantiate the claim by pointing to our internal retention statistics.

"Retention," as a technical term used by the college administration, is traditionally understood as the number of students who continue from one semester to the next. For most public community colleges, considerations of enrollment, such as retention, dominate most other concerns.

In most semesters over several decades Undergraduate Center retention has been the consistently higher if our courses are compared with traditional courses taught outside our department which "stand alone," i.e., not connected with each other in a learning community. In actual fact, if our data are correct, the retention rates are actually vastly higher than the college's at large, and at similar institutions around the state.[4]

Since 1998 the Undergraduate Center has offered an online variation of the in-class components of the program described above.

Starting in 2002, we reconceptualized the program and its existing form. Using WebCT as our platform, a project we called "Removing the Boxes" referred to revolutionary sets of options offered to students in the second semester of their freshman year. Specifically, students now may come to class every day, and do some of their work in an "enhanced" online format by participating in our interdisciplinary online learning community. Or, secondly, they may opt to do all of their work in a completely online environment, participating online with their in-class coevals, and never come to class. Or, thirdly, they may choose a "seamless" combination of both, coming to class as necessary, or when the spirit moves.[5] Such flexibility has proven especially popular with students with work, health, and family issues. [6]

### II

Within the past half decade, the most recent fashion in American undergraduate and high school education has been to recognize and to institutionalize what the Undergraduate Center has been involved with on a daily basis for thirty one years. So-called "learning communities," what they are for, how to create them, how to make them work, and how to evaluate and assess them is now vigorously debated throughout American higher education. If you Google assessment community college you will get an astounding number somewhere in the vicinity of 41 million hits. About one half of the small number that are worth anything at all will be assessment pages from individual community colleges; the rest more or less debate best assessment strategies and practices.

Since the time of the "Removing the Boxes" project, it has undergone some extensive changes. The changes have involved the place of the Undergraduate Center within the structure of the College, and new course offerings which are departures from traditional courses.

First, there has been an administrative commitment eventually to turn what was an exclusively freshman program into a full two year, four-semester, degree program. I will come back to why that has happened.

Secondly, as a result of the first point, we are broadening our course offerings to include the laboratory sciences and math. For example, we now offer Adult Psychology (PSY 228) in a team-taught interdisciplinary combination that is concurrent with biology (BIS 141). One class is WebCt enhanced, the other is totally online using WebCT. We hope to offer a similar concurrent combination soon of Introduction to Sociology (SOC 100) or Social Problems (SOC 131) with a course in elementary statistics (MAT 170) ; College Algebra (MAT 110); or Finite Math (MAT 124).

Thirdly, the Undergraduate Center now offers brand-new individual online courses via WebCt / Blackboard, approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in 2004, which can be multi-purpose. For example, IDS 101 and 102, "The Arts of the Western World, Parts I and II" may be designated on a student's transcript as completing either the Fine Arts or the Humanities requirement—it is the student's choice. It is an innovation to permit a course to swing like a door on a hinge in more than one direction with respect to General Education requirements. At the very least, it marks the recognition that perceiving areas of connection and coordination between and among specialized disciplines can serve as an organizational framework of a single course. At most, it means that the government of a state recognizes interdisciplinary education is itself a specialization, and not the opposite.[7]

Fourthly, the Undergraduate Center has always had teachers whose credentials and expertise cross disciplinary boundaries. For example, the department's speech and drama professor has earned enough graduate hours to qualify her to teach courses in psychology also. But in a recent development, with the fully integrated online component, one of our teachers is even able to team-teach courses from two separate disciplines with himself. This individual teaches an online survey course in U.S. History which specializes in the American Civil War. In the same WebCt / Black-

board shell, he also teaches Introduction to Fiction, using novels and short stories of the Civil War era. The two are combined. Students write essays about fictional works, complete group projects in the Discussion Board, and bring in historical facts from the history survey course to the discussion of what makes fiction good or bad. In the current Summer semester, 2005, a variation is offered, with one teacher teaching both U.S. History and Rhetoric and Composition in one shell. [8]

### III

As costs in higher education have mounted, it has been necessary to justify to the tuition paying students and their families—and to taxpayers—the existence of a non-traditional program such as this, with its expensive senior faculty, separate physical facilities, a separate budget, etc.—but which offers the same courses as traditional departments of the college. Isn't this just a duplication? Why not just close such an expensive "elite" department as a cost-cutting measure?

The arguments that the department has won multiple awards for excellence, has good retention, achieves cutting edge pedagogical breakthroughs are strong justifications which counter such thinking. As things stand right now, it is unlikely that the Undergraduate Center would be phased out—mostly because of the respectable retention over the long term. (Remember: enrollment dominates everything.)

But rather than just keep on in the present mode, this department needs to grow in order to continue. It is a situation of grow or decline. Here is why: While the department usually achieves a solid enrollment for the fall term which can then be retained into the spring, it is only because of the strenuous marketing efforts of the faculty, who are forced to take time off from teaching to go into the high schools to recruit students on a one-on-one basis. The large and well-funded marketing department of the college generally cannot help very much in the ways we need them to. Neither can the office of student advising for the college, whose explicit task it is to enroll students into the departments of the college.

It is not that there is political or personal malevolence on the parts of the support offices directed toward the Undergraduate Center. Quite the contrary, they wish us well and give us their professional best. In my opinion, it is just that these traditional offices are structured to address traditional enrollment tasks. They put Student "A" into a standard math class, and so on until they complete his schedule. The marketing department puts together a public relations campaign or publishes an article to promote the Physical Education Department's new Personal Trainer certificate. Very linear. They cannot think outside the box . Or they can, but not for very long. Their attention span is shortened because there are so many other demands placed on them, and a major demand is to make all courses conform to a traditional schedule structure.

The Undergraduate Center's place in the structure does not help matters. It is a small, complex department, with idiosyncratic requirements for enrolling students. For example, each student in any given class of the "trio" (philosophy, speech, and sociology) for Fall Semester, 2006 needs to be in all of the other classes with which the first class is concurrently coordinated. If it is one of the newer onlines, however, you do not have to be concurrently enrolled in other classes. The College's automated enrollment system cannot handle concurrent enrollment into multiple courses, so each student has to be "manually" enrolled by an academic advisor or faculty member into each section of each linked course. The department Chair is often not sure of what the department offers or if courses are linked, and if so, how. It is a protean structure. If it is too much for him, no wonder it is too much for the support staff!

And yet, as the teachers in the Undergraduate Center continue to take on new tasks, such as the development of new online classes, they need to make

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[4]  John Wager, "Report on In-term Success (Completion Rates) and Retention Rates in the Undergraduate Center, 2002-2003". Triton College, May 24, 2003.

[5]  "Removing the Boxes": http://academics.triton.edu/WebCt_Conference.PPT Incidentally, in case this rings a bell, I did present this model in one of the sessions here in Samos in 2003, but it was submitted by me too late to make it into the printed schedule.

[6]  Several times we have heard people say, "Oh, you do what DeVry does!" Not exactly. De Vry offers you one or the other, but not the option to move back and forth like the Undergraduate Center. From what we have been able to determine, Triton's program is alone in offering this "seamless" structure. See http://www.devryonlinedegrees.com/

[7]  You can access the new course, IDS 102, "The Arts in Western Culture 2" at http://online.triton.cc.il.us:8900/webct/public/home.pl For password: studentview For login: studentview

[8]  For a brief explanation of the Civil War online "duet", see http://academics.triton.edu/uc/BriefDescription.html

their place in the college more secure, and get more visibility and support from the offices whose job it is to help them. They need to rely on these ancillary offices more and more. Above all, they cannot spend time recruiting or working on brochures and advertising or registering students into classes. How do we get on the radar screen of the support offices so that they are more effectively bringing in students?

The suggestion of everyone from the Vice President to the Deans to other teachers is that we need to grow. Get bigger and you will project a larger blip on the radar screen. So this means add more online and more face-to-face classes. Add a second year. Eventually, offer a full-fledged interdisciplinary degree. And, above all, add more faculty.

But none of this can occur unless you can show that you have already grown or are likely to. You certainly will not get authorization for a full-time hire if you cannot show significant demand for what you have to offer. It is a neat Catch – 22. You can only survive if you can grow. You can only grow if you have grown.

Our retention data is respectable, but not conclusive proof that we are positioned to grow in enrollment. Our continued existence for 31 years has weight, but it needs to be supplemented with strong data showing that the college has been getting what they paid for all these years.

In the current era of hard data, colleges want a whole lot more than retention and longevity to justify a larger commitment to a department. They want "assessment". Ten years ago, Triton College did not have a separate, formal administrative position call the "Office of Assessment." But in keeping pace with much of academia, now they do. They want lots of rock-solid and hard-hitting data which can be developed in different ways to offer ample quantitative "proof" of . . . well, of whatever it is that they want to prove. But what they are usually after is a statement of the educational goals of the department, and some indication that the department is moving towards those goals. They need accountability, in other words, so that agencies of government can feel some level of comfort asking taxpayers to contribute to education. That sounds fair enough to me.

Retention data, as we said above, show something. The program is obviously popular with those students who sign up for a semester.

But in this era of precise mathematical models of assessment, with ironclad assessment criteria, something more is desirable than showing that it is popular and fits nicely into a student's comfort zone. This is especially true if one is hopeful that a search committee to hire new faculty is the expected outcome.

The problem comes in the how.

There are ample assessment models for traditional courses in traditional disciplinary areas. Triton College offers a fairly straightforward survey, to be taken by a student for each course he or she is taking online. The rubric is well established by now. But how do you undertake assessment of a complex interdisciplinary program in which each course is comprised of either on-campus or on-line dimensions or some combination of the above? A more fundamental question is: what is the expected outcome, to which the assessment instrument is to be directed, and which the instrument is expected to uncover?

Is it student success in the courses? Then it is a simple matter of looking at course grades. Numbers of students who transfer to four-year institutions and complete degrees? That should be simple too. Presumably, the standard assessments tools should serve. For example, Bloom's taxonomy can be used as a guide. The standard assessment models do help and they are useful up to a point.[9]

But does a standard method of assessment really tell us what we need to know if the courses being studied are placed in the learning community model, with all of the intangibles and variations such a model brings to the learning experience?

Here is another example of a method recently determined to be "standard." In the arcane culture of assessment, one claim often made above all others is that what a college level course should be aiming at is an elusive achieved skill or state of mind or concept called "critical thinking." This should be the gold standard whether you are assessing a traditional or a non-traditional course or program. From what I can tell, there is no consensus about how to assess "critical thinking," or even what it is. Of course it is related to the antinomian philosophical reflections of Jurgen Habermas, but it is not clear how "critical thoughts" translate into or are identical with successful course or degree completion. Do great "critical" thinkers achieve academic success or failure at a greater or the same rate as other non-critical thinkers? How should you classify a non-critical thinker? As a mere thinker? Can mere thinkers succeed too? In a more serious vein, are students in interdisciplinary learning communities better "critical thinkers"? And if they are or they aren't, does it matter either way? What I mean is, should heightened "critical thinking" constitute the objective, the "pay-

off" in an interdisciplinary learning community? Or should it be something else—like the inspired feeling, the passion, that comes with the rewarding social experience of having achieved a personal "breakthrough" while writing a review of a play with other members of your online group? I was often warned by a former dean who played a role in the early days of assessment at Triton College that "feelings are not outcomes" (and so should be omitted in assessment). I admit that I am not an expert in course assessment. I am just a teacher. But what if they are exactly the outcomes you need to achieve? Shouldn't those be the outcomes you measure?[10] Given the level of frustration about this subject which we see rising among those who are involved in the assessment of online learning communities, this is a topic which will continue to be debated in the future. It may be that the real struggle is just beginning.[11]

This brings me to the final part of this paper. In Part IV below have included an assessment survey prepared especially for learning communities developed by Dr. Robert Pastors of Northeastern Illinois University and distributed by the Consortium of Illinois Learning Communities. It attempts to be precise and comprehensive, measuring across a set of responses at course entry and course exit. It is the only one I know of that is specifically directed to experiences and measurement of outcomes in learning communities. We are in the process of automating it and revising parts of it to conform with our various interdisciplinary and online approaches, because it appears to be somewhat flexible and broad. By this I mean it has a mixture of hard-as-nails, empirically verifiable, real-world elements, as well as what I would call more touchy-feely "empathic" qualities. Questions are both open-ended and closed.

Most of the variables the survey instrument attempts to assess do not differ radically from what might be assessed in any course, whether it is considered interdisciplinary or not, and whether the students are in a learning community or not. However, what you will notice is that some of the assessment items are more devoted to intangible elements—so called "quality of life" matters, such as the degree of comfort someone experiences in taking the class, or the amount of personal attention from professors one experiences in the class. These are the elements traditionally found in "student satisfaction" surveys. But the way this one differs is that it asks questions specifically about interdisciplinary issues. For example, it asks the student to complete the following statement:

"Taking this class has helped me in my ability to succeed in _____ Other courses generally; _____ My career; _____ My life"

It also asks students to respond to questions about how comfortable they feel participating in class discussions; working or talking with people of a different background; and the amount of time spent studying with other students. It is our hope that we can revise this to meet our needs.

I began by mentioning Hutchins' reorganization of undergraduate education at Chicago. Let me conclude with something he once observed. To paraphrase Hutchins, if the role of education is the improvement of the human being as such, it is impossible to be educated in anything less than a full lifetime. Noting ephemerally experienced and intangible qualities may be the sum total of what is measurable in and what sets apart an interdisciplinary learning community. But what is thus measurable is less than the sum of the parts. In other words, the great achievement of interdisciplinary learning communities, "thinking outside the box," still defies our best efforts to put it inside a box, place it under a microscope or pin it onto a grid. The deepest part of education, the indefinable connection with ultimate and ineffable things, eludes our greatest efforts to explain it.

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9    For a careful enumeration of the problems associated with technical aspects of educational assessment, go to "Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation" website of the University of Maryland. Search on the Keyword, "collaborative learning". http://pareonline.net/
     Also recommended, *Building Learning Communities in CyberSpace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom,* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1999).
     For a very thorough but slightly dated bibliography about Learning Communities, which includes citations on assessment, see http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/resources/lc/lcbibliography.html

10   Triton College does have a Student Assessment Website which measures "critical thinking." My own informal research shows that Triton's is a well-constructed measure of this "skill" compared to other institutions in Illinois. However, if you look at what is being asked on the survey, it clearly will not approach the levels of subtlety of measurement our department needs to know about. There are simple tests of arithmetic functionality, analogies, syllogisms, etc., reminiscent of measures like the old MAT. For example, Question 1 is "Pencils sell for .73 cents per box. What will 4 boxes cost?"

11   See Edward F. Palm, "No Professor Left Behind," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* Jan. 20, 2006:
     http://insidehighered.com/views/2006/01/20/palm

*NEIU Learning Communities Entry Survey [Fall 2004]*

**Student I D/Social Security Number** _____.

**Are you enrolled as a full-time/part-time student?** ____full-time ____part-time          *Your sex:* ____male ____female

**How many credits toward graduation have you earned already?** _____.

**How old will you be on December 31 of this year? [mark one]**      __16 or younger __17 __18 __19 __20 __21-24

                              __25-29 __30-39 __40-54 __55 or older

**What was your average grade in high school?**      __A or A+ __A- __B+ __B __B- __C+ __C __D

**How active were you in doing things**          very  somewhat  not very  not active

**outside of class in your last school?**          active  active   active    at all

*(extra curricular, student clubs, job, athletics, etc.)*      ____    ____    ____    ____

**Please indicate your ethnic background.** *[Mark all that apply in each column]*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| White/Caucasian | _____ | Mexican American/Chicano | ____ |
| African American/Black | _____ | Puerto Rican | ____ |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | _____ | Other Latino | ____ |
| Asian American/Asian | _____ | Other | ____ |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | _____ | | |

**Who in your family has attended college? [Mark all that apply]**

__Mother __Father __Brother __Sister __Other Family Member __No One

**In deciding to go to college, how important to you was each of the following reasons?**

| | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Important | | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My parents wanted me to go | ____ | ____ | ____ | To make me a more cultured person | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| I could not find a job | ____ | ____ | ____ | To be able to make more money | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| To be able to get a better job | ____ | ____ | ____ | To learn more about things that interest me | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas | ____ | ____ | ____ | To prepare myself for graduate or professional school | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| To improve my reading and study skills | ____ | ____ | ____ | To get training for a specific career | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| There was nothing better to do | ____ | ____ | ____ | | | | |

**Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person** *your age. We want the most accurate estimate of how you see yourself.*

| | Highest 10% | Above Average | Average | Below Average 10% | Lowest 10% | | Highest 10% | Above Average | Average | Below Average 10% | Lowest 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Popularity | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Artistic ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Public speaking ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Computer skills | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Risk-taking | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Cooperativeness | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Self-confidence (intellectual) | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Creativity | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| Drive to achieve | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Self-confidence (social) | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Emotional health | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| Leadership ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Self-understanding | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Mathematical ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Understanding of others | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Physical health | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| Persistence | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Writing ability | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

*Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:* [Mark *one* for each item]

| | Essential | Very Important | Somewhat Important | Not Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Becoming an authority in my field | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Influencing the political structure | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Influencing social values | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Raising a family | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Being very well off financially | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Helping others who are in difficulty | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Becoming successful in a business of my own | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Developing a meaningful philosophy of life** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

Helping to promote racial understanding     _____     _____     _____     _____

*Helping to promote racial understanding* _____ _____ _____ _____
*Keeping up to date with political affairs* _____ _____ _____ _____
*Becoming a community leader* _____ _____ _____ _____
*Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures* _____ _____ _____ _____

*Mark one in each row:*

|  | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *I am able to handle conflict* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I take personal responsibility for my learning achievements* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel that I am a good listener* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel that I am able to see the connections among the courses I take.* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel comfortable participating in class discussions* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel comfortable working in groups with other students* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel comfortable giving oral presentations in class* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I am confident in my research skills* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| *I feel that I know how to study effectively.* | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| I feel that I know how to write effectively. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Below is a set of items related to your personal values. Using a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate how important each item is to your satisfaction in life by circling the appropriate number. (1=Not at all important; 5=Very important)

*Importance to my personal well-being*

**Not at all important**            **Very important**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Forming and retaining friendships* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Enjoying artistic experiences* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Keeping informed about local and national politics* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Spending time with family* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Having financial security* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Working for a political or social cause* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Being physically fit* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Participating in volunteer work* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Engaging in religious observance* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Participating in sports* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Achieving personal wealth* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| *Keeping current about scientific developments* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

*How likely do you think it will be that you stay at Northeastern for your entire undergraduate education?*

    __*Extremely likely*     __*Somewhat likely*     __*Somewhat unlikely*     __*Extremely unlikely*

**NEIU Learning Communities Exit Survey [Fall 2004]**

      **Student I D/Social Security Number** _____ .

**Are you enrolled as a full-time/part-time student? __full-time __part-time**

**How many credit hours are you currently taking? _____**

**About how many total combinedl hours each week have you spent studying for all of your classes this term?**

**5 hours or less ____     6-10 hours ____     11-15 ____     16-20____     21-25____     over 25____**

**Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person**

    *your age. We want the most accurate estimate of how you see yourself.*

| | Highest 10% | Above Average | Average | Below Average | Lowest 10% | | Highest 10% | Above Average | Average | Below Average | Lowest 10% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Academic ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Popularity* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Artistic ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Public speaking ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Computer skills* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Risk-taking* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Cooperativeness* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Self-confidence (intellectual)* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Creativity* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| *Drive to achieve* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Self-confidence (social)* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Emotional health* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| *Leadership ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Self-understanding* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Mathematical ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Understanding of others* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| *Physical health* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | | | | | | |
| *Persistence* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | *Writing ability* | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

*Mark <u>one</u> in each row:*

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *I am able to handle conflict.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I take personal responsibility for my learning achievements.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel that I am a good listener.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel that I am able to see the connections among the courses I take.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel comfortable participating in class discussions.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel comfortable working in groups with other students.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel comfortable giving oral presentations in class.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I am confident in my research skills.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel that I know how to study effectively.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *I feel that I know how to write effectively.* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

*How likely do you think it will be that you stay at Northeastern for your entire undergraduate education?*

__*Extremely likely*   __*Somewhat likely*   __*Somewhat unlikely*   __*Extremely unlikely*

**For each of the items below, please indicate how often they have happened <u>this past term</u>.**

| | Frequently | Occasionally | Not At All |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Was bored in class** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Studied with other students** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Felt depressed** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Asked a teacher for advice after class** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Came late to a class** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Communicated via e-mail** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Used the internet for research or homework** | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Used a personal computer** | ____ | ____ | ____ |

**Please mark one in each row:**

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I feel comfortable taking part in class discussions** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **I feel that I could ask a faculty member for a reference or recommendation** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **I am comfortable talking or working with people of a different background than mine** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Taking <u>this</u> class—** | | | | |
| **Increased the degree to which I studied with other students** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Increased the degree to which I participated in class discussions.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Increased the degree to which I coped with test anxiety.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Increased the degree to which I sought feedback from my instructors outside of class.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Has helped me adjust to the college social environment.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved my understanding of faculty expectations of students.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved my ability to deal with stress.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved my ability to meet new people.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved my ability to establish close friendships.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved the degree to which I was able to see multiple sides of issues.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved the degree to which I was able to evaluate the quality of opinions and facts.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Improved my writing skills.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **reading skills.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **decision-making skills.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **computer skills.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **oral presentation skills.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

**Taking <u>this</u> class increased the degree to which I—**

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Took effective notes.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Reviewed my class notes before the next class.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Completed homework assignments on time.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Prepared for tests well in advance.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Taking <u>this</u> class improved my commitment to completing my degree.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

**Taking <u>this</u> class has helped me in my ability to succeed in—**

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Other courses generally.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **My career.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **My life.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

| | Agree Strongly | Agree Somewhat | Disagree Somewhat | Disagree Strongly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I feel good about how this term has gone.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **My experience at Northeastern, so far, has been better than I expected.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **I feel that I have been constantly challenged in my courses.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **I am likely to stay at Northeastern until I graduate.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **I would recommend Northeastern to a friend.** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

| In this class, how often have you— | Never | Occasionally | Often | Very Often |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *Made a class presentation?* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Rewritten a paper or assignment several times?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Come to class unprepared?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Worked with other students on projects during class?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with faculty members outside of class?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance?* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| **Worked with a faculty member on a research project?** | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *Discussed ideas from your reading or classes with others outside of class. [students, family members, co-workers, etc.]* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *Had serious conversations with other students whose religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values were very different from yours?* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| *Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than yours?* | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

*Would you recommend this course to other students?     Yes ____     No ____*

*What did you like best about this course?*

*What did you like least about this course?*

*What would you change about this course to make it better?*