

# Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

## University Registrar

**Division or Department:** N/A

**Prepared by:** Yvette Ceasar-Williams

**Date:** June 8, 2021

**Approved by:** Barbara Prescott

**Date:** June 8, 2021

**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

**The Registrar** ensures the integrity, accuracy, and security of all academic records of current and former students; facilitates effective student registration and enrollment; builds secure student data files and sets policy and procedures for their responsible use; maintains up-to-date course schedules, catalogs, final examination schedules; manages efficient use of classrooms; and supervises and maintains the Banner and degree audit systems. The Registrar supervises the processes for the articulation of transfer credits, graduation and certification of graduate, baccalaureate, and associate degrees, enrollment and degree verification, production of official transcripts, diplomas, and commencement ceremonies. The Registrar counsels and advises students, faculty, and staff on academic matters; and interprets and enforces policies and regulations of the University, Board of Regents and Supervisors, and FERPA.

**Methodology:** The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and submitted to the Unit Assessment Coordinator.
- (2) The Unit Assessment Coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether or not the applicable outcomes are met.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff, as needed.
- (5) The Unit Assessment Coordinator, in consultation with Unit Coordinators, will determine proposed changes to the measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and any appropriate service changes.

## **Academic Services and Veteran Affairs**

### **Service Outcomes:**

**SO 1.** The Academic Services and Veteran Affairs Unit ensures the timely processing of Veteran Affairs documents and certifications of enrollment each semester for new, transfer, visiting, and continuing VA students; facilitates the class schedule information

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

for access by students and faculty for effective registration and enrollment; and facilitates the commencement ceremonies.

### Source Map:

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs – Education and Training

University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors

Louisiana Board of Regents Legislative Response (Louisiana Military Friendly Campus)

### Measure 1.1 (Indirect - Survey)

The Veteran Services Office coordinates all veterans, dependents, guardsmen, and reservists' benefits for those attending classes and using the G.I. Bill. We will expand our service beyond office visits by using the volume of email communication from VA students. We should reach a volume of 200 emails from VA students by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was met

**Analysis:** In 2019-20, the target was not met. We had a total of 31 out of 50 surveys completed by VA students by the end of fall 2019. This gave a 62% satisfaction rating for fall 2019. When the spring semester began, we had 1 VA student to complete the survey prior to the COVID-19 Stay-at- Home Order in March. We had to revise our method of providing service to our VA students during that time. All assistance was handled by email. We have 465 VA students. The volume of email communication from VA students was a total of 109 which was more than the number for in-person service. Most of the VA students do not reside within the same city as the University's main campus, so this gave us a good view of how many more students we are servicing by email. Although we had to restructure our service method, we were still able to provide sufficient service to our VA students.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We changed our method of service to VA students to volume by email. During the initial COVID period in the spring, this helped us assist more VA students rather than just those who came into the office. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was met. We used the volume of emails received through the VA account as a means to provide service to our VA students. Even though we were operating from the office, we noticed that there were not many VA students coming into the office. This can be attributed to the COVID safety measures in place. For the fall 2020 semester, we had a volume of 823 emails from VA students for which we responded to inquiries and processed needed documents for benefits. With the increasing volume of emails, we can ascertain that more VA students are choosing assistance and submission of documents electronically. These numbers show that we are on target for reaching our goal. For the spring 2021 semester, we had a volume of 859 emails resulting in a total of 1,682 emails by the end of spring 2021. It is apparent

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

that this was a preferable method of assistance for the VA students and an indication of the satisfactory service we are providing to them.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. Each VA certifying official will attend at least five hours of VA training during the year. These trainings will provide pertinent updates and guidance that will allow us to provide more efficient and effective service to our VA students, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward. By the end of spring 2022. the volume of emails from VA recipients will reach 1,700.

### Measure 1.2 (Indirect – Survey)

Academic Services coordinates all aspects of the commencement ceremonies to ensure a successful and memorable experience for the graduates, parents, faculty, staff, visitors, and community. Early preparation of and retrieval of the participants on the program and script, stage and sound preparation instructions, effective communication with the Graduation/Audit Unit on program completion and diplomas/covers, photographer confirmation, confirmation of floral decorations, etc. will minimize problems on the day of commencement. The satisfaction rating of the graduates will increase to 100% by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was not met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was not met. With the calendar being changed by the administration, we were able to determine true graduates from the deans' certifications submitted to our office prior to the printing of the commencement program for the fall ceremonies. Because of this clarity we were able to distribute diplomas to all graduates at the end of both ceremonies. The fall programs given to the candidates and attendees were official programs. We had a total of 685 expected graduates for whom we prepared seating on the arena floor. After both ceremonies, we distributed a three-question survey to each graduate. Question #1 Was the entire ceremony organized to your satisfaction?; Question #2 What is your opinion of the arena (decorations, lighting, etc.) once you entered to begin the ceremony?; and Question #3 What is your opinion of the sound during the ceremony? A total of 373 graduates completed the survey resulting in a 54.5% participation rate. Of the 373 who completed the survey, 366 indicated good/very good for question #1 giving a 98.1% satisfaction rating. A total of 373 graduates indicated good/very good for questions #2 resulting in a 100% satisfaction rating. Only one graduate indicated bad to question #3 resulting in a 0.27% unsatisfactory rating. Seven graduates indicated "No" to question #1 of the survey. One of the graduates who indicated "No" to Question #1 wrote at notation "more information for on-line students please". For the spring semester, the calendar date was adjusted again for the submission of candidate grades which compressed our timeframe to verify final grades for graduates for commencement. We also had to

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

revise our processes for the spring semester due to the COVID-19 social distancing requirement. The commencement ceremony was conducted virtually. Because of this adjustment, we were not able to survey the graduates on commencement day; therefore, we did not meet our target goal. After the dean's certifications were received in our office, all true graduates' diplomas and covers were mailed. There was a total of 993 spring graduates with 1,015 degrees awarded. There were no complaints to our office from the graduates who participated in the virtual ceremony. We also did not receive any complaints afterwards from graduates who received their diplomas and covers by mail. By not receiving any complaints after the virtual ceremony, this was an indicator that they were satisfied with our modified graduation service provided to them.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. Instead of having a survey completed right after each commencement ceremony, we decided to have a drop box for complaints and concerns from graduates placed on our table near the exit doors for graduates to drop off any complaints. Based upon the number of complaints, we could ascertain their satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the ceremony. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was not met. We had to change our plan because of the current status of the COVID pandemic. The governor placed our state in a modified stage 2 category that limited indoor and outdoor gatherings and events. We had to adjust the fall commencement ceremonies. We created 5 separate ceremonies so that we would comply with the 25% capacity guidelines for social distancing for inside events. We decided not to place the complaint/concern forms in the graduates' chairs to avoid contamination of the slips of paper that would have to be handled by multiple persons including our staff. Although we did not have surveys for fall commencement, we did not receive any complaints by phone, in-person, or electronic communication. We were confident that we had successfully met the satisfaction of the graduates. For the spring semester, adjustments were made to have 6 separate commencement ceremonies to comply with the new 75% capacity guidelines for social distancing for inside events as required by the governor's phase 3 mandate. To avoid contamination of multiple persons handling the complaint forms, we decided not to use the complaint box nor place the complaint forms in the graduates' chairs. Following each ceremony, we did not receive any complaints from any graduates, guests, or administrators. We did receive positive feedback from the President and Provost of how well they thought the ceremonies were conducted. Based upon the fact that we did not receive any complaints in-person or by electronic communication, we are confident that the graduates were satisfied with their ceremonies.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. With the current status of COVID social restrictions, we do not anticipate a change for the 2021-22 year. We plan to closely monitor the graduates during the commencement ceremonies to ensure a satisfactory experience. Our staff will be visible and readily available to assist them

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

before, during, and after the ceremonies. At the conclusion of each ceremony, complaint forms will be available on a table for candidates. Complaints from graduates will be no more than 5 by the end of spring 2022.

### **Student Academic Services and Transcript Evaluation**

#### **Service Outcomes:**

**SO 2.** The Student Academic Services and Transcript Evaluation Unit ensures the accuracy of information and assistance provided to current and former students, faculty, and staff, and accuracy of transfer credits.

#### **Source Map:**

University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors  
Louisiana Board of Regents'

#### **Measure 2.1 (Indirect - Survey)**

Student Academic Services is the first point of contact for current and former students, parents, faculty, and other staff. It is essential that accurate information is provided as well as processing their requests within a timely manner. The service we provide to students is our main focal point. The volume of emails received, responded to, or forwarded will reach 5,000 by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was met. We surveyed only students who received services. We implemented the change to have our front office staff randomly hand out surveys as well as having the surveys accessible in our front office area to drive continuous improvement. For the fall semester 25 surveys were placed in the reception area, and 25 surveys were given to both front desk staff for a total of 75 surveys. By doing so, persons who walked away too quickly could still complete a survey on the table in the reception area. The survey consisted of three questions: Question #1 Did you receive the assistance you needed or were you directed to someone who could help you?; Question #2 How was our staff's attitude during your visit?; and Question #3 How would you rate your overall visit today? A total of 75 students indicated "Yes" to question #1 resulting in a 100% satisfaction rating. A total of 75 students indicated very good/good to questions #2 and #3 resulting in a 100% satisfaction rating. For the spring semester, the surveys were distributed in the same manner as in the fall semester. The exception for the spring semester was that we had hired another employee at our front desk area which gave us four employees who were able to assist students in the area. More surveys were handed out during the beginning of the semester. Before the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order, a total of 75 students receiving service had already completed the survey. All 75 of the students indicated "Yes" in response to question #1 resulting in a 100% satisfaction rating. All 75 indicated very good/good to questions #2

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

and #3 resulting in a 100% satisfaction rating. While teleworking from home with only two staff members in Student Academic Services having access to Banner, we primarily communicated with students by email through the Registrar account. All incoming questions, outgoing responses, and documents submitted for processing were handled through emails from students, parents, faculty, staff, deans, administrators, etc. Beginning March 20<sup>th</sup> through May 8<sup>th</sup>, a total of 5,319 emails were received with a total of 5,598 forwards and responses made to those emails. Emails were being monitored 7 days a week from 6 a.m. to Midnight and sometimes beyond. After the semester ended and these numbers were provided from ITS, it was evident of the satisfactory service we were providing to our students in that 8-week time period as well as from the beginning of the semester.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We changed the service method to volume by email instead of in-person service. During the initial COVID period, we were satisfactorily able to provide effective service to students through email. This worked well and also left an easily traceable electronic paper trail.

As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was met. We focused on the volume of incoming emails with questions needing responses and documents needing to be processed. Due to COVID restrictions, most of our interaction with students, faculty, staff, parents, and administrators for fall 2020 were through electronic communications by email or phone. During the fall 2020 semester, we received a total of 7,260 emails regarding documents to be processed such as major changes, address changes, name changes, outgoing transcripts, grade changes, schedule changes, appeals, etc. We sent a total of 21,784 responses to those emails. With this volume of electronic communication, it appears that this service has been working more efficiently and effectively for students during this social distancing restrictive period. For the spring semester, a different IT programmer compiled the report used for our email volume. This report was different than the one for fall. We received and answered a total of 11,668 emails from students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators. These results are an indicator that we are providing efficient and satisfactory services to our students.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. With the university preparing to be back to normal occupancy for the Fall 2021 semester, we have decided to resume the in-house surveys. We would like to know how our in-person service is received by the visitors. Our new survey will inquire of what type of visitor, what the purpose of the visit is, and give the visitor the option to rate their satisfaction of our communications during their visit, knowledge of their questions, and service we provided. We will reach a 75% satisfaction rating by the end of spring 2022 for students, faculty, and staff receiving in-person service.

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

### Measure 2.2 (Indirect – Survey)

Transcript Evaluation is critical in determining admission eligibility, pre-requisite requirements for registration, and degree completion determination. The students are our main focal point for services rendered. Transcripts are received both electronically and by hand-delivery from Admissions. By the end of spring 2021, the volume of transfer credits entered into the system will increase to 3,500.

**Finding:** Target was not met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was met. We changed our focus to the volume of transcripts evaluated into the Banner system. We had an IT programmer generate a report of all students who had transfer credits entered during the fall semester. The report contained each student and each institution from which credits were entered. With the data in the report, we were able to determine how many transcripts were evaluated. During the fall semester, a total of 1,598 credits were entered into the system for 461 students. A total of 1,683 credits were entered into the system for 560 students during the spring semester for an overall total of 3,281 credits. A key factor in our ability to enter more credits during the spring was due to the hiring of another employee at our front desk area. This allowed both evaluators the needed time to enter credits in a quicker timeframe as well as having the new employee assist with verifying the accuracy of the entered credits. During the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order period from March 20<sup>th</sup> through May 8<sup>th</sup>, it was noticeable that there was a decrease in transcripts received from other institutions. From January 7<sup>th</sup> through March 20<sup>th</sup>, a total of 1,585 credits were entered into the system for 521 students. From March 24<sup>th</sup> through May 7<sup>th</sup>, we only entered a total of 98 credits into the system for 39 students. With the onset of the pandemic and minimal staff access, we were still capable of providing timely entry of transfer credits; thus satisfactorily meeting the needs of our students who were able to be quickly advised and registered for the upcoming summer and/or fall semesters.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We acquired additional laptops for two staff members to help verify the accuracy of the transfer credits entered. This helped eliminate errors; thus, resulting in effective advisement for these students' registration in appropriate classes. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was not met. We decided to include the receipt of electronic transcripts from the Admissions Office since this worked very well during the time we were teleworking from home. Receiving transcripts electronically ensures that we receive them in a timely manner for quicker entry of the credits. Once the fall semester began, Admissions reverted back to hand-delivering transcripts to our department for the entry of transfer credits. A difference was noticed between the frequency of electronic transcripts and the hand-delivered transcripts received from Admissions. When the transcripts were previously received

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

electronically, we had to determine whether or not each was official, look up the student's ID number, and the admission term. With Admissions now hand-delivering the transcripts, they have taken care of these extra steps again. We made the adjustment on our end to enter the transfer credits as quickly as possible after receipt from Admissions. Due to COVID precautions, we received transcripts less frequently than normal. In spite of the drop in frequency of delivery of transcripts from Admissions, we were able to evaluate 1,387 transfer credits during the fall 2020 semester. This is slightly down (-211) from last fall's number (1,598) of credits evaluated. This can be attributed to colleges/universities operation under COVID restrictions, teleworking, and U.S. Postal Services delivery delays. Even though all the restrictions exist at this point in time, we are certain that we are satisfactorily meeting the needs of our students because of the volume of transfer credits we are evaluating. In the spring 2021 semester, we received and evaluated 498 transcripts for 414 students. This was a decrease in volume by 889 compared to fall's volume. We had a total of 1,885 transcripts that were evaluated by the end of spring 2021. We have a three-day turnaround time for entering transfer credits from the date of receipt from Admissions. When referencing equivalencies, we use TES (Transfer Evaluation System) which is an on-line system sponsored by CollegeSource. This system aids in our ability to enter the transfer credits quickly and accurately. This system contains other institutions' course descriptions in one place instead of having to look at each institution's catalog. The number of institutions submitting their course descriptions to TES has been increasing. The decline in receipt of transcripts from Admissions can possibly be attributed to more students' decisions to attend college closer to their homes, or some students having balance holds that prevent the release of their transcripts. Although our volume of transfer credits received from Admissions and entered has decreased, it is evident that we are satisfactorily meeting the needs of our students.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will decrease the turnaround time for entering transfer credits and maintain the accuracy through use of TES. Our two evaluators will attend the virtual 2021 CollegeSource Annual Conference. The volume of transfer credits entered into the system will increase to 2,000 by the end of spring 2022.

### **Records and Transcript Production**

#### **Service Outcomes:**

**SO 3.** Records and Transcript Production ensures the accuracy and security of all current and former students' records. The primary focal points are to facilitate effective student registrations and enrollments, generate enrollment and degree verifications, and production of official transcripts. This unit builds secure data files for current and

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

former students and counsels/advises current and former students, faculty, and staff on academic policies and regulations.

### Source Map:

University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors  
Louisiana Board of Regents'  
National Student Clearinghouse

### Measure 3.1 (Indirect - Survey)

Records monitors all students' records daily. Updates and adjustments are made to records using student requests (major changes, residency redetermination, catalog changes), Registration Credits and Graduation Council appeal committee decisions, approved grade change requests, approved academic standing reinstatements, and approved out-of-state waivers from the Scholarship Office. By completing all updates and adjustments in a timely manner, this aids in the students being eligible to register and/or enroll in the appropriate courses for their degree programs as well as having an accurate accounting of tuition and registration fees. By the end of spring 2021, the volume of grade changes and approved resignation appeals will increase to 1,200.

**Finding:** Target was met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was not met. We focused on grade changes processed for each student. By doing so, we were able to determine the students' satisfactory rating with the timeliness and accuracy of their grade changes by the volume of changes made. We had an IT programmer generate a list from the Banner system of all grade changes processed for students during the fall semester. As a result, there was a total of 517 grades changed during the fall semester. We discovered that the students who had appealed through RCGC to resign for the current term or a previous term were included in this count. This was a good thing because it did reflect an update or adjustment to the students' records which can result in an improved academic standing. For the spring semester, a total of 663 grades were changed by an actual grade change submitted by the instructor or by approved appeal to resign. By the end of spring 2020, a total of 1,080 grades were changed. Although we did not meet our goal, it is evident that we are providing a satisfactory service to our students since all grades received were processed. Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We included the Reason Code for each grade change to identify actual grade changes from appeals.

As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was met. We were able to separate grade changes from approved resignations using the coding included on the revised report. For fall 2020, a total of 1,091 grade updates were made on students' records. Out of the 1,091 grade updates, 93 were appeal approvals to withdraw or resign. The remaining 998 were grade changes processed through submission from the students'

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

instructors/department heads totaling 707 as well as the incomplete grade expiration roll process totaling 291. At the end of fall, our volume of grade changes processed has increased. Part of this higher number can be attributed to the incomplete grade provision granted to students enrolled during spring 2020 and given until September 9 to complete their coursework due to the interruption of their studies during the initial COVID-19 mandates. When comparing the grade changes for this fall and last fall, there was an increase of 190 grade changes for this fall. From this increase, we can determine that more students' records are being updated to their satisfaction. During the spring 2021 semester, a total of 1,411 grade changes. We were able to identify that 1,170 were grade changes and 241 were withdrawals from approved resignations or withdrawals. By the end of spring 2021, we had a total of 2,502 grade changes. We exceeded our goal by 1,302. It is evident that we are satisfactorily meeting the needs of our students.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will assist students with having timely grade changes by sending email inquiries to the academic departments when changes are initiated by the instructor. Our volume of grade changes will increase to 2,600 by the end of spring 2022.

### Measure 3.2 (Indirect)

Records ensures that all current students' enrollment data is uploaded every 30 days to the National Student Clearinghouse during each semester, and degree completions are uploaded at the end of each semester. Timely uploading allows for the enrollment data to be accessible for students' self-service enrollment verifications, the National Student Loan Data System' accessibility for students' financial aid eligibility statuses, and employer/prospective employer verification of degree completions. With this information being readily available at the beginning of each semester and making students aware of this service, the volume of on-line self-service for students and employers/prospective employers will increase to 6,400 by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was met. We decided to send an email notification at the beginning of the fall semester to all currently enrolled students (10,899) to inform them of the availability of this verification service. Instead of sending only one notification for the year, we chose to send the notification by semester with the expectation that this would generate more of an on-line demand. We had a total of 2,259 enrollment verifications, 1,146-degree verifications, and 68 dates of attendance processed successfully on-line during the fall semester. Since we are not able to upload the enrollment information until after registration has ended, we had to accommodate the students who needed verifications of current enrollment through our manual process. The date for the initial upload of enrollment data is something that cannot be

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

changed. We did not send out the email notification to students enrolled during spring 2020. We had a total of 1,884 enrollment verifications, 776-degree verifications, and 80 dates of attendance. When comparing both semesters, we could see the difference in not sending out the email notification. However, we did exceed our volume goal by reaching 6,213 on-line verifications which was an indicator that we are providing an effective and efficient service.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We changed our plan to send out email notifications after the census date for fall and spring. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was met. We emailed the notification to all currently enrolled students at mid-point during the semester. With the continued effects of COVID-19 and the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Laura, our enrollment reporting date was extended to September 15, 2020, and thus delayed the dissemination of the email to students. An email notification was sent to 10,149 current enrolled students which excluded those with directory restrictions. We had a volume of 4,220 on-line verification transactions during fall 2020. Of that total, 1,079 were degree verifications; 3,055 were current enrollment verifications; and 86 were dates of attendance verifications. At this point, we can ascertain that we are on the right path to reaching our goal. For the spring 2021 semester, we had a volume of 3,739 on-line verification transactions. Of that total 1,147 were degree verifications; 3,481 were current enrollment verifications; and 111 were dates of attendance verifications. In comparison of the two semesters, there was a decrease of 481 during spring 2021. By the end of spring 2021, we had a total of 7,959 on-line verification transactions. We exceeded our last year total of on-line verifications by 1,746. We can determine from our increase in on-line verifications that we are satisfactorily providing sufficient service to our students.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will add the degree program information to our on-line verification certificates which currently does not appear on the current on-line certificates. By the end of spring 2022, our volume of on-line verifications will increase to 8,000.

### Measure 3.3 (Indirect - Survey)

Transcript Production ensures that all current and former students' official transcripts of their academic work are generated in a timely manner upon request. The validation of each student's record is completed first before generating the transcript whether electronically or a paper copy. Unofficial transcripts are readily available on-line and contain all of the students' academic information. The volume of on-line transcript requests will increase to 8,000 by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was met.

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was not met. We changed our plan to notify all currently enrolled students (10,899) by email at the beginning of the fall semester about the availability of this on-line service. Students requesting official transcripts on-line have two delivery options (electronic or mail). During the fall semester, there were 3,735 transcripts processed on-line. During the spring semester, there were 3,798 transcripts processed on-line for a total of 7,533 transcripts at the end of spring 2020. The decrease in transcript volume was most likely affected by the University's decision to reactivate the Transcript Hold on 10/30/2019 for any student (current or former) owing a previous balance of at least \$5. Students with this hold received an alert message when beginning the on-line process. Many of these students called or emailed us inquiring about the hold message. For those students who completed the process despite receiving the message, their transcripts were not generated, and an automated email notification was sent at variable times (maximum 4) during a 30-day period. After the 30 days and the holds not cleared, the requests expired. There was a total of 263 requests placed on hold because of an outstanding balance (232 expired; 31 pending).

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We posted an alert message on the transcript landing page regarding the minimum \$5 transcript hold. Due to continued effects of COVID-19 and the recent catastrophic events of Hurricane Laura, our enrollment reporting date was extended to September 15, 2020. We did send out an email notification at mid-point of the fall semester informing 10,149 currently enrolled students (excluding those with directory restrictions) of the availability of the on-line transcript service. Our volume of on-line transcript transactions was 3,799 during fall 2020. That is an increase of 64 on-line transactions compared to last fall. This is a good indicator that our notification emails are helping guide students to the on-line service. For the spring semester, we had a volume of 4,265 on-line transcript transactions. The spring volume of transactions increased by 466. As a result, our on-line transactions increased through the email notification to our currently enrolled students. We received some positive replies from students that actually pertained to the on-line transcript service. Such replies included "Thank you for this information! I am appreciative that you considered to send this to me. I will be sure to use it in the future."; "Thank you for the information. I was unaware that those were available to me!"; "Thank you! I was not aware of this. I appreciate your reaching out."; "Thank you for your personalized message."; "Thanks for the heads up, I appreciate that! You have a blessed day."; "I didn't know that. Thank you for the information."; etc. We had a total of 8,064 transcript transactions by the end of spring which was an increase of 531 compared to last year. The increase in on-line transactions was evident that we are satisfactorily meeting the needs of our students.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will revise our transcript landing

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

page to contain clearer information regarding how to appropriately request an official transcript through the on-line service and remove the expiration of digital transcripts. By doing so, this will increase the number of transcript transactions to 8,100 by the end of spring 2022.

### Measure 3.4 (Indirect)

Records ensures that all permanent student records' documents, of current and former students, are scanned into Paperflow, our digital imaging system. Each document type is batch scanned, matched, and merged with the identifying number and name on the Banner system, and indexed to the corresponding data file. These data files can be accessed for retrieval from Papervision. The volume of scanned documents will increase to 80,000 by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was not met

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was not met. We assigned several other staff members to verify the scanned documents which allowed room for more scanning. Unfortunately, during the fall semester the scanner was temporarily broken which slowed us down resulting in less documents being scanned. A total of 24,856 documents were scanned during the fall semester. During the spring semester, we were assigned a new student employee who helped to organize the documents for scanning. This made it easier to scan a large number of documents. From January 9<sup>th</sup> through March 16<sup>th</sup>, a total of 13,884 documents had been scanned. As a result of circumstances beyond our control (COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order), all scanning was placed on hold until being cleared to return to campus. We had a total of 38,740 documents scanned, we did not reach our target goal.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We started off the semester scanning in a steady rhythm for a couple of weeks. As staff continued rotating days in office and teleworking to maintain social distancing for health-related reasons, additional assistance was needed in our front office area to assist students in person and by phone. On August 27, 2020, our parish and surrounding areas were devastated by Hurricane Laura. The University as well as residents were without power for several days. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was not met. We assigned a second staff member to assist with scanning during a timeframe that was outside of her own peak time of normal duties. Efforts were made to organize documents for scanning, others verified images as quickly as possible, but the daily receipt and processing of students' documents continued to increase. There was a total of 6,049 documents scanned during the fall 2020 semester. The primary staff member scanned 5,561 documents, and the aiding staff member scanned 488. From this point, we can see that we are very well below our target. During the spring semester, there were some technical issues with the two scanners. In April, we decided to change the assisting staff member who

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

had a little more availability to scan. Once the assisting staff member began scanning, there were a lot of images scanned in that short period of time. In a three-week time period, the assisting staff member was able to scan 7,235 images. The previous assisting staff member was able to scan 2,688 images during availability between January and April. The primary staff member was able to scan 24,027 images during the months of January through May 4<sup>th</sup> resulting in a total of 33,950 images scanned during the spring. Two primary issues with the main scanner were the difficulty scanning efficiently because of us having to tape the side of the scanner to hold it together and the rollers needed to be cleaned or replaced. After contacting the contract company who supplied our scanners in 2006 and 2011, we were told that we did not have maintenance on the scanners – only on the software. We contacted the contract company to find out prices for maintenance and purchase of new scanners. Even though we did not meet our target by the end of spring, we were able to scan 39,999 images. This was 40,001 below our target.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will purchase new scanners and change our contract to include maintenance on each scanner. By the end of spring 2022, the volume of our scanned images will increase 45,000.

### Graduation and Degree Audit

#### Service Outcomes:

**SO 4.** Graduation and Degree Audit ensures the accuracy of the degree audit system, graduation and certification of graduate, baccalaureate, and associate degrees, and diplomas for the commencement program.

#### Source Map:

University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors  
Louisiana Board of Regents'

#### Measure 4.1 (Direct - Knowledge)

Graduation and Degree Audit updates and maintains the tables in the Banner system that upload data into Degree Works. This data is directly linked to program requirements, compliance, and possible substitutions. Since Degree Works is not a Banner product, the assistance of programmers in the IT Department is needed to complete technical updates to the Degree Works software and batching of data. By updating the Degree Works manual prior to the fall semester, new faculty/advisors and current faculty/advisors can readily access the manual on the web. Graduation staff will be readily available to assist or train any faculty/advisor. This will decrease the number of faculty/advisors who have no knowledge of the degree audit; thus, increasing the percentage of those who have some knowledge. The

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

rating of faculty/advisor who have knowledge of Degree Works will increase to 75% by the end of spring 2021.

**Finding:** Target was met

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was not met. Our plan was to send an email to all faculty and advisors to review the Degree Works manual at the beginning of each semester and follow-up at mid-point with a survey of their knowledge. During the fall semester, the email notification was not sent. A survey was sent to 667 employees that included faculty, advisors, support staff, and other university employees. The survey contained three questions: Question #1 Do you have any knowledge of Degree Works?; Question #2 Do you use Degree Works?; Question #3 Do you need additional training for using Degree Works?; Question #4 Does the Degree Works Training Manual help you with the Degree Works system?; and Question #5 What is your primary role at Northwestern State University? As a result, a total of 195 employees responded to the survey resulting in a 29.24% participation rate.

### Question #1

	Response	Number	%	Response	Number	%
Faculty	Yes	104	80	No	26	20
Advisors	Yes	12	100			
Staff	Yes	9	64.29	No	5	35.71
Other	Yes	25	64.10	No	14	35.90

### Question #2

	Response	Number	%	Response	Number	%	Skipped
Faculty	Yes	90	69.77	No	39	30.23	1
Advisors	Yes	12	100	No			
Staff	Yes	7	53.85	No	6	46.15	1
Other	Yes	18	47.37	No	20	52.63	1

### Question #3

	Response	Number	%	Response	Number	%	Skipped
Faculty	Yes	44	34.11	No	85	65.89	1
Advisors	Yes	5	41.67	No	7	58.33	
Staff	Yes	3	23.08	No	10	76.92	1
Other	Yes	13	33.33	No	26	66.67	

### Question #4

	Response	Number	%	Response	Number	%	Skipped
--	----------	--------	---	----------	--------	---	---------

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

Faculty	Yes	44	35.48	No	81	65.32	5
Advisors	Yes	4	33.33	No	8	66.67	
Staff	Yes	2	16.67	No	10	83.33	2
Other	Yes	11	30.56	No	25	69.44	3

### Question #5

The responses from each participant helped define which University group to place him/her under. A total of 130 were faculty, a total of 12 were advisors, a total of 14 were support staff, and a total of 39 were other employees.

Based upon our analysis, each group of employees have knowledge of Degree Works and its use. Most of the employees in each group indicated that the manual does not help them with Degree Works, but they also indicated that no additional training was needed. Most of those grouped as other had knowledge of Degree Works, do not use it or need training. We were able to identify those in the other group. This group included adjunct instructors, deans, assessment coordinators, student affairs support staff, department heads, administrators, directors, chairs, interpreter, student accounts, coaches. Of this group, some of them more than likely fall within the advisor and/or faculty group or staff group. Even though our participation rate was low, the responses indicate that 20% of faculty have no knowledge of Degree Works (0% for advisors). This was a good indicator to us that those using the Degree Works system have enough knowledge of its use to effectively advise students.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of improvement. We updated the Degree Works manual to provide more helpful information for new advisors/faculty. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was met. The updated manual was placed on the Registrar's Office web page under Degree Works. Those advisors/department heads/deans currently familiar with Degree Works can also reference the updated manual. We sent out a survey to a total of 795 faculty, staff, advisors, and administrators. The intention was to focus mainly on the feedback from advisors and faculty since the majority of degree requirement assistance to students is handled by advisors and faculty. After review of feedback from the advisors and faculty responding to the survey, it was evident that some type training was needed or accessible document such as the manual to help meet their needs. Since advisors assist students outside of normal working hours including weekends and some holiday breaks, having an on-line resource is beneficial to them when graduation staff are not available to answer questions. Those remaining groups may not use Degree Works on a daily basis, but it is important that all users have a working knowledge of Degree Works. We had a total of 283 participants respond to the survey giving a 35.6% participation rating. Of those participating, a total of 161 were faculty and advisors giving a 56.9% participation rating. There was a total of 20 advisors and 141 identified as faculty out of the 161 responses. The total of 161 Faculty/Advisors responded to Question 1 "Do you have knowledge of Degree Works?".

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

Of the 161 responses, 139 responded that they had knowledge of Degree Works which resulted in an 86.34% knowledge rating. Only 22 indicated that they had no knowledge which resulted in a 13.66% rating. For Question 2 “Do you use Degree Works?”, at total of 123 responded “Yes” resulting in a 76.40% rating. A total of 38 responded “No” resulting in a 23.60% rating. A total of 50 responded “Yes” to Question 3 “Do you need additional training for Degree Works?” resulting in a 31.45% rating. A total of 109 responded “No” resulting in a 68.55% rating. A total of 48 responded “Yes” to Question 4 “Did the training manual help you?” resulting in a 30.97% rating. A total of 107 responded “No” resulting in a 69.03% rating. Although we had a low percentage indicating the helpfulness of the manual, our higher percentage of faculty/advisor with knowledge of Degree Works was an indicator that we are providing the needed information for faculty/advisors understanding of Degree Works. Our students’ academic success is dependent upon their knowledge to assist them.

### QUESTION #1

	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%	SKIPPED		TOTAL
FACULTY	YES	119	84.40%	NO	22	15.6	0	0	141
ADVISORS	YES	20	100.00%	NO	0	0	0	0	20
TOTAL	YES	139	86.34%		22	13.66%	0	0.00%	161

### QUESTION #2

	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%	RESPONSE	%	SKIPPED		TOTAL	
FACULTY	YES	104	73.76%	NO	37	26.24	0	0	141
ADVISORS	YES	19	95.00%	NO	1	5	0	0	20
TOTAL	YES	123	76.40%	NO	38	23.60%	0	0.00%	161

### QUESTION #3

	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%	RESPONSE	%	SKIPPED		TOTAL	
FACULTY	YES	45	32.37%	NO	94	67.63	2	1.44%	139
ADVISORS	YES	5	25.00%	NO	15	75	0	0.00%	20
TOTAL	YES	50	31.45%	NO	109	68.55%	2	1.26%	159

### QUESTION #4

	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%	RESPONSE	%	SKIPPED		TOTAL	
FACULTY	YES	39	29.10%	NO	97	72.39	7	5.15%	136
ADVISORS	YES	9	47.37%	NO	10	52.63	1	5.26%	19
TOTAL	YES	48	30.97%	NO	107	69.03%	8	5.16%	155

### QUESTION #5

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

	RESPONSE	NUMBER	%
FACULTY		141	87.58%
ADVISORS		20	12.42%
TOTAL		161	

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. We will update the Degree Works manual to reflect the new changes in Degree Works and offer training to the faculty/advisors who indicate a need for training. We will change our focus to only faculty/advisors. The rating of faculty/advisors who have knowledge of Degree Works will increase to 90% by the end of spring 2022.

### Measure 4.2 (Indirect)

Graduation and Degree Audit ensures that all candidate certifications are received from the deans' offices by the established deadline for each semester. The timely submission of the certifications affects the timely awarding of degrees, the commencement program, and the accuracy of the graduation count. By the end of spring 2021, we will have a 100% timely submission rate for candidate certifications.

**Finding:** Target was not met.

**Analysis:** In 2019-20 the target was met. We worked closely with the deans especially during the fall since we had two new deans and wanted to stress the importance of the due date for candidate certifications. The end-of-semester graduation calendar which includes the certification due date was sent to all deans and advisors at the beginning of the fall semester. As a result, all deans submitted their candidate certifications on time for fall semester. For the spring semester even though we had to make some adjustments in our processes for preparing for the spring 2020 awarding of degrees, the due date for certifications of candidates did not change. We continued to communicate with the deans by email throughout the COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order. All candidate certifications were received on time from all 5 deans' offices resulting in a 100% submission rating. We were successfully able to award 1,015 degrees to 993 candidates for spring 2020.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-20 results we made the following changes in 2020-21 to drive the cycle of continued improvement. We adjusted within our unit by rotating graduation staff in the office to assist advisors and faculty during the governor's directives for COVID-19 social distancing during the fall semester. As a result of these changes, in 2020-21 the target was not met. Our graduation staff was reduced in September by one staff member who transferred to another department on campus. The responsibilities of that staff member had to be delegated among three other graduation staff members. This caused a slight delay in regular processes, but we were able to maintain a consistent flow with candidate

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

data. After the census date, the end-of-semester graduation calendar was emailed to all deans. We had 4 out of 5 deans' offices to submit their fall candidate certifications on time resulting in an 80% timely submission rate. That particular dean's office submitted the certification by the due date but after the designated time. From this one untimely submission, it was evident that we need to assist that dean's office to be sure the candidates are cleared in a timely manner so that the certification can be submitted on time. COVID-19 has caused some adjustments to be made in work environments which can possibly be attributed to their late submission since their past submissions have been on time. In January, we had a second graduation staff member transfer to another department on campus. Job responsibilities were temporarily shifted among the remaining staff until the position was filled in April. For spring graduation, we had 3 out of 5 deans' offices to submit their candidate certifications on time resulting in a 60% timely submission rate. Those two deans' offices submitted their certifications by the due date but after the designated time. One key factor which possibly caused the delay in timely submission was the due date for candidate grades compared to candidate certifications. Candidate grades were due by 4 p.m. the day before candidate certifications were due at noon.

**Decision, action, or recommendation.** In 2020-21 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-21 results we will implement the following changes in 2021-22 to drive the cycle of improvement. The administration will review the upcoming spring calendar to make changes with the two due dates for candidate grades and certifications. We will send reminders to the deans' offices of the established due date for certifications one to two weeks prior to their due date. By the end of spring 2022, we will have an 80% submission rate for candidate certifications.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of seeking improvement based on the analysis of the results.

- We changed our method of service to VA students to volume by email.
- We used the volume of emails received through the VA account as a means to provide service to our VA students.
- We adjusted the fall commencement ceremonies by creating 5 separate ceremonies to comply with the 25% capacity guidelines for social distancing for inside events.
- For the spring semester, we adjusted commencement into 6 separate ceremonies to comply with the new 75% capacity guidelines for social distancing for inside events as required by the governor's phase 3 mandate.
- For both ceremonies, we decided to not place the complaint/concern forms in the graduates' chairs in an effort to avoid contamination of the slips of paper being handled by multiple persons.

## Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021

- Due to COVID restrictions, most of our interaction with students, faculty, staff, parents, and administrators were through electronic communications by email or phone so we focused on the volume of incoming emails with questions needing responses and documents needing to be processed.
- With Admissions resuming the hand-delivering of transcripts, we made the adjustment to enter the transfer credits as quickly as possible after receipt.
- We use TES (Transfer Evaluation System) an on-line system that aids our ability to enter transfer credits quickly and accurately since it contains other institutions' course descriptions in one place versus referencing each institution's catalog.
- We identified and separated grade changes from approved resignations using the coding included on the revised grade changes report.
- We sent out email notifications of our on-line services at mid-point during the fall and after the census date for spring.
- We posted an alert message on the on-line transcript landing page regarding the new minimum \$5 transcript hold.
- We assigned a second staff member to assist with scanning during available time outside of peak time of normal duties.
- We contacted the contract company for the scanners to obtain prices for maintenance and purchase of new scanners.
- An updated Degree Works Manual was placed on the Registrar's Office web page under Degree Works.
- We sent out a Degree Works survey to all faculty/advisors, staff, and administrators.
- We adjusted by rotating graduation staff in the office to assist advisors and faculty during the governor's directives for COVID-19 social distancing during the fall semester.
- After the census date, the end-of-semester graduation calendar was emailed to all deans.

### Plan of action moving forward.

- Each VA certifying official will attend at least five hours of VA training during the year in order to provide more efficient and effective service to our VA students.
- With the current status of COVID social restrictions, we plan to closely monitor the graduates during the commencement ceremonies by being visible and readily available to assist them before, during, and after the ceremonies.
- With the university's plan to return to normal occupancy for the upcoming year, we will resume in-house surveys that will consist of questions related to type of visitor, purpose of the visit, and the option to rate the satisfaction of our

## **Assessment Cycle 2020 – 2021**

communication during the visit, knowledge of their questions, and service provided.

- We will decrease the turnaround time for entering transfer credits and maintain the accuracy through use of TES since more institutions have been added.
- Our two evaluators will attend the virtual 2021 CollegeSource Annual Conference.
- We plan to assist students with timely grade changes by sending email inquiries to the academic departments when changes are initiated by the instructor.
- We will add the degree program information to our on-line verification certificates to be more effective for our students.
- We plan to revise our transcript landing page to contain clearer information regarding how to appropriately request an official transcript through the on-line service and remove the expiration of digital transcripts.
- We plan to purchase new scanners and include annual maintenance on each.
- We plan to update the Degree Works manual to reflect the new changes in Degree Works .
- We plan to change our focus to only faculty/advisors and offer training to those who indicate a need for training.
- We will send reminders to the deans' offices of the established due date for candidate certifications at least a week prior to their due date for fall and spring.