

Title: Implementing assessment tools for library impact on students' academic success

Introduction: The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) Library is seeking \$178,484 for a 2-year Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) National Leadership Grant to enhance the professional competencies of librarians by offering virtual assessment training for 50 libraries (up to 150 librarians) and a guided assessment project for five selected academic libraries (up to 15 librarians) to build their skills using assessment tools to investigate student success and library use. The assessment tools to be used were developed through IMLS funds (FY 2022-2024; LG-252338-OLS-22), which involved exploring students' academic engagement (including library use), psychological factors (e.g., motivation, self-regulation) and its impact on students' own definition of academic success and their GPA. This project falls under the **Implementation** funding category aligned with **Goal 1, Objective 1.1** of the program to develop or enhance replicable library and archives programs, models, and tools to support learning. As the delivery of the workshops expand and more institutions implement the assessment tools, we will significantly impact library-based expertise in assessment, implementation ability, and outcomes across academic libraries in the United States while providing librarians with skills and tools for advancing their understanding of students' participation in academic engagement, library use, and library impact student' success. This project will expand and extend the knowledge and impact of work which began under previous IMLS funding.

Project Justification: Emphasis has been placed on a culture of assessment in libraries, focusing on assessing services, programs and products for quality, impact, and efficiency [[Lakos, 2004](#)]. In addition, continuous assessment of academic libraries' impact on student success provides libraries with data to demonstrate their value to campus stakeholders and to make improvements to spaces, resources, and services that further support students [[Oakleaf, 2010](#)]. However, current evidence points toward a clear need for more librarian training in how to conduct assessment [[Farkas, 2013](#); [Farkas et al., 2015](#), [Nitecki et al., 2015](#), [Fuller, 2015](#)]. The initial findings from UIC have provided unique and interesting insights that help academic libraries understand students' academic engagement in the library context. These results inspired the project team to consider facilitating the implementation of the tools at other institutions. In doing so, other libraries can benefit from findings specific to their own students and develop and apply assessment knowledge simultaneously. The preliminary findings of the IMLS funded assessment tools (academic engagement survey) revealed that students' perceptions of certain abilities or tendencies were associated with their library experience. Specifically, students' perceptions were analyzed on the following statements: 1) being inspired by observing how others study, 2) having hard time setting goals for myself, and 3) easily distracted from my work were positively associated with their physical library use, suggesting that students who reported these perceptions were more likely to use the physical library. Conversely, students' who perceived they were not easily distracted were more likely to use the online library. Regarding students' definition of academic success, our findings expanded our understanding of how students define academic success. Programming around setting goals, sustaining effort, and recognizing personal achievements may contribute to students' sense of academic success. Additionally, framing student interventions, such as library instruction and tutoring, around students' opportunity to gain knowledge in addition to improving their grades may appeal to their definition of academic success. The second assessment tool (online weekly journal) obtained students' demographic information, weekly academic engagement, motivations for engagement, and reflections on their engagement. It also captured internal (e.g., hard to concentrate on their academic studies) and external (e.g., family responsibilities) factors that affected their academic engagement. Key findings from the online weekly journals revealed that socializing with friends, social media involvement, and stress were the top three factors negatively affecting their academic work. The participants overwhelmingly reported that they exceeded or met their own definition of success to some degree.

The team intends to develop and deliver educational workshops and provide consultations with the goal of equipping academic libraries with the necessary knowledge and skills for effectively using the student success assessment tools previously developed by research team. This approach allows participants to learn about student success assessment and be guided through implementation. This concentrated and customized instruction on how to gather and analyze data will enable libraries to assess their own students' academic engagement experiences and expand their understanding of how these experiences influence their students' overall academic achievements. These efforts are particularly crucial given the intricate nature of assessment and barriers that inhibit some academic libraries from engaging in assessment.

Project Work Plan: We will develop and provide virtual workshops to 50 academic libraries on assessment utilizing the student success assessment tools. Participants will deepen their understanding of assessment and create a path to successful implementation. We will further provide consultations and active learning opportunities to the five selected libraries, guiding them through the assessment process step-by-step on how to implement, execute, and analyze assessment data and support their active learning throughout the process. This will advance their knowledge in utilizing the assessment tools and empower the application of their skills in conducting assessment projects. At completion, this

will result in a deeper understanding of their students' needs which they can utilize to implement changes in support of their students' academic success. All workshop materials and data collected will be openly available on the project's website.

Year one: Develop the virtual workshops (full cycle of utilizing the assessment tools) and workshop evaluation tools. Activity 1 during fall 2024 involves planning and developing training workshops on using assessment tools, submitting IRB applications, analyzing data, storing data in a dashboard, sharing the findings with campus stakeholders, and publishing results (Workshop 1: IRB approval; Workshop 2: Survey design and distribution; Workshop 3: Data analysis – quantitative and qualitative; Workshop 4: Report writing, Workshop 5: Sharing results and applying findings). Activity 2 involves developing pre- and post-tests to assess and address knowledge gaps with the participants, pre-workshop exercises, pre-workshop assessments for each workshop to check in on deliverables related to the assessment implementation and potential knowledge gaps within the course, and evaluations for each workshop in the series. Activity 3 during spring 2025 involves call for participation for 50 academic libraries (up to 150 librarians) who are interested in attending the assessment workshops. Up to three individuals can participate from each institution. As part of this process, we will also promote the opportunity for five of these libraries to participate in a guided experience of the assessment implementation cycle based on institutional need (i.e., articulate how librarians will benefit from enhanced skills and/or articulate the need to better understand factors influencing students' success) the following year. Activity 4 during summer 2025 involves delivering virtual workshops to 50 libraries (up to 150 librarians). Prior to each workshop in the series, participants will be sent pre-workshop exercise(s) and complete a pre-workshop survey to measure their knowledge gaps and needs. After each workshop, an evaluation will be sent for feedback on the training to determine areas where expansion and seeking areas for improvement. The workshop materials will be revised based on the feedback. Participants who complete virtual workshops will be eligible for Medical Library Association (MLA) CE credits.

Year two: Provide workshops and consultations on full cycle of utilizing assessment tools to five selected libraries

During year 2, five libraries (up to 15 librarians) out of original 50 libraries will be selected to apply their knowledge and skills in the full cycle of utilizing assessment tools at their own institutions. We will meet with participants synchronously once a month (August 2025 to July 2026) to review the workshop materials and outline the next steps they need to take in their institution. Phase 1: assisting participants in obtaining IRB approval from their institutions and setting up assessment tools at each institution; Phase 2: distributing the survey to undergraduate students and recruitment of 100 students to participate in online weekly journaling for 8 weeks; Phase 3: analyzing the data; Phase 4: writing reports; Phase 5: sharing the findings with their campus stakeholders. Post assessments and evaluations will be sent throughout the duration of year two. Participants will be required to share their data, to add to the generalizability of the findings of the student success assessment tools. Based on the participants' feedback during these phases, workshops will be further revised and shared through the project website.

After completion of this project, we will also develop a plan for offering self-sustaining national workshops that includes additional resources / assessment skills that are identified through the training.

Project results: The primary aim of this project is to develop and present a series of workshops on conducting assessment, using the validated student success assessment tools and facilitating the application of knowledge. The research team will provide consultations and trainings to participating academic libraries, assisting with the entire process (using the validated tools, obtaining IRB approval, collecting and analyzing data, understanding and sharing findings and applications). This will equip the broader academic library communities with knowledge and skills on how to use the tools. Additionally, the knowledge gained from the workshops can be applied to other assessment projects. Our findings will be shared through academic venues, and the recorded lectures and course materials will be shared through the project website.

Project Team: The Principal Investigator will be Dr. Jung Mi Scoulas (UIC, Assessment Coordinator) who holds, a PhD in educational psychology and has expertise in library assessment, research design, consultations and trainings on assessment, and student learning. Dr. Scoulas is currently serving as a Principal Investigator of the developing assessment tools project, previously funded by the IMLS (LG-252338-OLS-22). The Co-Principal Investigator will be Professor Sandra L. De Groote (UIC, Head of the Assessment and Scholarly Communications) who has expertise in the impact of online information systems, evidence-based practice, assessment, research impact and data management.

Budget Summary: The IMLS request of \$178,484 includes indirect costs of \$45,364 and direct costs of \$133,120 over two years. Salaries and fringe for PI/Co-PI: \$89,358 and student salary/wages and fringe: \$30,368. Registering continuing education credit for participants (\$300) and travel for dissemination (\$5,984).