

Assessment Cycle 2025-2026

Career Services

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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 Student Experience Mission Statement. The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating, and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience, and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provide equal access for education to potential students throughout the state and region and promote economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical, and occupational growth. Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

Student Affairs Mission. The Division of Student Affairs prepares students to be productive members of society and to improve the quality of life of students. Student Affairs provides support services in career development and placement, advocacy and accountability, academic support, mental and physical health, disability accommodations, student activities and organizations, student union life, and opportunities in leadership, community service, and programs for new students. Through hands-on involvement in programs and services, Student Affairs promotes personal development in a student-centered environment, which delivers innovative practices in an environment of respect. Student Affairs encourages integrity, diversity, and collaboration with all members of the university community.

Career Services Mission. The NSU Career Center fosters career readiness and lifelong success by empowering students to develop professional habits that lead to meaningful careers. Through vocational guidance, professional resources, and strong employer partnerships, the Career Center supports students and alumni at every stage of their professional journey.

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Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director,
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether 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 required (show cause).
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period, and, where needed, service changes.

Student Learning Outcomes:

SO1 Students will engage in individual career exploration and planning, empowering them to define and achieve their career/life goals and develop a career/academic plan that is specific, achievable, and realistic.

Measure 1.1 Students enrolled in University Experience 1000 and receiving 2 career exploration lessons will be able to verify their personality type, values, and interests and demonstrate how these factors impact their career interest and choice. Success will be measured by an average grade of 70% or higher on the two career exploration assignments.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. The lesson plans for Handshake and Typefocus™ were revised to make the lessons interactive for students. The average score across sections of University Experience classes for the 2 career lessons was 74%. University Experience instructors assigned the lessons. The main factor affecting the average score was not students having low scores due to error, but students failing to complete the assignments.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. A request made to the steward of University Experience to have the career lessons scheduled for dates earlier in the semester. These assignments take more time to complete than some of the easier assignments. Students' time is generally less committed to outside activities and class workloads early in the semester, and they are more motivated to complete

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their assignments.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. The Career lessons for University Experience took place earlier in the semester and were done in-class. The average score across sections of University Experience classes for the 2 career lessons was 70%. University Experience instructors assigned the lessons. The three main factors affecting the average score were students failing to complete the assignments, some instructors not reporting data, and the difficulty of understanding the Handshake assignment instructions.

Decision:

In AC 2025-2026 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Handshake assignment will be re-evaluated for the upcoming year to improve the process for student uploads. Additionally, the reporting for this metric will be changed from average grade per assignment to percentage of students who completed these assignments and a reporting mechanism will be embedded into the course shell to allow for easier data collection from instructors. The new measure will read “Students enrolled in University Experience 1000 and receiving 2 career exploration lessons will be able to verify their personality type, values, and interests and demonstrate how these factors impact their career interest and choice. Success will be measured by a 70% or higher completion rate on the two career exploration assignments.” The Career Center will also host a presentation on student resources for finding a major for those students who are still unsure about career paths and majors, using Typefocus™ and Handshake as tools for career exploration.

These changes will improve the student's ability to understand how their personality, interests, and values impact their choices in career decision making and fields of study and to understand how to use this information in communication (creating profiles on Handshake for employment opportunities and internships, resume writing, interviewing.

SO2 Students will be prepared for the professional job search and present themselves effectively as candidates for employment.

Measure 2.1 Students participating in career development workshops will be assessed for student learning using rubric-based critiques, and/or pretest-posttests, and Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation. Success is defined as a rating of 75% or better on pretests-posttests and the Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation.

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

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In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Due to budgetary changes, the Career Center was unable to implement a new, cloud-based platform that provides a digital, one-stop solution for career services and alumni engagement that is tailored to the specific needs of the university allowing better engagement with students, staff, alumni, and employers. While the new platform was not implemented, the Career Center continued the use of its current platform. The Career Center recruited intern students to assist with delivering resume writing, LinkedIn, and interview skills presentations, along with Big Interview's learning and practice modules to develop students' career readiness. There were four career events to promote employment and internship opportunities for the students. The average grade for the 212 students who completed Big Interview was 86%. Employer evaluation ratings of student preparedness for the Fall Career Fair, Spring Career Fair and Teacher Job Fair and student responses on presentation evaluations were 89%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, the staff implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Career Center partnered with the Office of Economic Development to survey departments about departmental career events being offered on campus outside of the events hosted by Career Services. Through this partnership, campus career events were streamlined to take place at the same time and the Career Center hosted a presentation in the weeks leading up to the various Career Fairs that demonstrated how to effectively present oneself at a Career Fair.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. The Career Center hosted the Engineering Technology Career Fair immediately after the Fall Career Fair. The Career Center also hosted a Career Fair preparation presentation before the Fall Career Fair. The Career Center implemented a "Demon Wears Prada" event before the Spring Career Fair where students were able to obtain career fair appropriate attire before heading to the career fair. The average grade for the 117 students who completed Big Interview was 87%. Employer evaluation ratings of student preparedness for the Fall Career Fair, Spring Career Fair, Education Job Fair was 94%. Additionally, the Career Center participated in several resume and interview workshops to teach students how to present themselves as candidates for employment.

Decision:

In AC 2025-2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Career Center will refine the Demon Wears Prada to make it a bigger event that also includes Career Fair preparation presentations and resume workshops. Additionally, for AC 2026-2027, the wording of Measure 2.1 will be modified to better reflect our survey collection methods. The new measure will read "Students participating in career development workshops and class curriculum will be assessed for employment readiness through average scores for interview assignments, average resume scores,

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and Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation. Success is defined as an average grade of 75% or better on student mock interviews and resumes, and a 75% on Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation (question # 4 on Fall/Spring Graduate Career Fair, Education Job Fair Survey, and Part-time Job Fair surveys).

These changes will improve students' ability to be prepared for professional job search and present themselves effectively as candidates for employment.

Measure 2.2. Design, implement, and analyze the results of a series of systematic qualitative, in-depth focus groups with selected NSU student populations to identify student needs, concerns, and factors that facilitate or hinder engagement with Career Services. Success is defined as the identification of students' perceptions regarding barriers and motivators related to career development, including factors that impact career readiness (professional skill development, career exploration, employment preparation, networking abilities, and career decision-making confidence) and elements that support or obstruct student utilization of career services, appointment scheduling, workshop attendance, and employer engagement opportunities. This feedback will directly inform the enhancement of career programming, strategic priorities, service delivery models, and resource allocation to better serve the NSU student community and strengthen employment and post-graduation outcomes.

Finding: Target was not met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Big Interview was used with career preparation presentations and appointments in a face-to-face or virtual format. *Big Interview Fast-Track and Mastery-Track* learning modules and assignments were implemented with classes who requested interview preparation and mock interview appointments. Success was measured with an average score of 80% or higher. 198 students completed the Big Interview Fast Track module with an average score of 86%. 14 students completed the Mastery Track level with an average score of 88%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the staff implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. Big Interview was used with career preparation in presentations and student appointments in a face-to-face or virtual format. *Big Interview Fast-Track and Mastery-Track* learning modules and assignments were implemented with classes who request interview preparation and mock interview appointments.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was not met. While the Big Interview targets were met,,the Career Center noted that the data reported for this measure is not an accurate reflection of the target goal. Additionally, the Big Interview data that has historically been reported or this measure is redundant as these numbers are already reported for Measure 2.1. Therefore, the Career Center did not conduct focus groups to obtain the measure as listed.

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Decision:

In AC 2025-2026, the target was not met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Career Center will change Measure 2.2 to track numbers that are more relevant to the work being done in the Career Center. This includes measures such as the amount and type of student appointments and attendance at Career Fairs and events. The new measure will read “Design, implement, and analyze the results of a quantitative tracking process of student engagement with Career Services by compiling appointment utilization data, presentation/ workshop participation, and career fair attendance records across academic terms. During the 2026–2027 academic year, the Career Center will establish a baseline for Career Center engagement and presentation participation and aim to serve at least 800 students across all service types.” The Career Center will also research the implementation of AI software that reviews and provides feedback for student resumes and interviews. This software will increase the number of students who can be evaluated for career readiness skills.

These changes will enhance the Office of Career Services by focusing on the areas where students need the most assistance and improving efforts to increase use of the programs offered by Career Services.

Measure 2.3 Design, implement and analyze the results of student satisfaction with career services on *Post-Appointment Surveys* and the *First Destination Survey* to measure student satisfaction with career services. Success is defined as a response rate of 25% or better on the surveys and a score of 75% or better on the student satisfaction questions.

Finding: Target was not met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Re-design, implement and analyze the results of student satisfaction with career services on *Post-Appointment Surveys* and the *First Destination Survey with collaboration on Handshake with Alumni Affairs* to increase student participation on the FDS Survey. Student satisfaction based on post-appointment surveys was 90%. Student satisfaction with career services offerings was collected on the university wide *First Destination Survey* AC 2024-2025. FDS results as of 4/29/25 indicate a satisfaction rate of 89% (34% response rate – 18% increase). The average student satisfaction rate with Career Services is 89%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the staff implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. The staff collaborated with Alumni Affairs and at Grad Fest to assist students in creating Alumni accounts on

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Handshake to measure student satisfaction with Career Services.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was not met. Student satisfaction based on post-appointment surveys was 97% (7% increase) which satisfies the target. Student satisfaction with career services offerings was collected on the university wide *First Destination Survey* AC 2025-2026. FDS results as of 4/29/26 indicate a satisfaction rate of 85% (down 5%), however the survey response rate is at 19% (down 15%), falling below the target goal of 25%. Handshake added “Knowledge Rate” outcomes which uses outside sources to report student employment. The Knowledge Rate percentage indicates that there are 21% of students with known outcomes. Since one of the three thresholds were not met, the target is considered not met.

Decision:

In AC 2025-2026, the target was not met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The wording on the First Destination emails will be re-evaluated to promote survey completion. The Career Center will also regroup with Alumni Affairs to see if there are better ways to encourage student completion such as handing out flyers at graduate fest and career fairs. The Career Center will also communicate with Department Heads to encourage participation in the survey. Additionally, the Career Center will conduct Handshake Best Practice seminars to encourage students to add personal email addresses to accounts.

These changes will promote the students’ status as Alumni on the Handshake platform, improve the students’ ability to connect with Career Services and Alumni Affairs, as well as contribute post-graduation data to the university.

SO3 Ensure employers’ needs are identified and effective career services are developed to meet their identified needs.

Measure 3.1 Employers participating in on-campus recruiting activities and Job Location and Development services will provide feedback regarding career-recruiting services. The resulting data will inform program design, departmental goals, and services to the campus and community. Success is defined as a score of 80% on the *Employer Evaluation: Career Fair (questions 5-9), Job Location and Development Employer Satisfaction Survey*

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis.

In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Career Center staff re-evaluated the survey responses and decided to take a new direction for professional growth.

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The Career Center collaborated with university department heads and local employers to host a discussion panel for students. Students heard from local employers on expectations on first impressions for resumes, interviewing, and career events. Career Services staff collected employer satisfaction surveys and feedback on career events and used it to improve career services and student performance. The average satisfaction score for the combined career fairs data was 91%. (The Fall/ Graduate Career Fair employer satisfaction score was 93%. The employer satisfaction score for the Job Location and Development part-time job fair was 87%. The employer satisfaction score for the Spring Career Fair was 89%. The employer satisfaction score for the Teacher Job Fair was 93%.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 data, the staff implemented the following changes in AC 2025-2026 to drive the cycle of improvement. To better serve both employer and student needs, the university separated the Office of Counseling and Career into two distinct departments, establishing an independent Career Center with dedicated leadership. This strategic reorganization aligns with higher education best practices and research demonstrating that specialized career centers achieve stronger employer relationships and improved student outcomes. The newly independent Career Center staff collaborated with department heads and local employers to host two discussion panels for students—one during the Fall semester and one during the Spring at Leadership NSU. The purpose of these discussion panels is to give students a "first look" at employers' expectations in preparation for entering the workforce. This organizational change enabled more focused attention on employer engagement and career programming while allowing both career services and counseling to concentrate on their specialized professional competencies.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2025-2026 the target was met. The average satisfaction score for the combined career fairs data was 95%. A virtual employer panel series was scheduled for the fall semester in which students registered but did not attend. Two of the breakout sessions for Leadership NSU in Spring 2026 were employer panels designed to prepare students to get hired post-graduation. Additionally, the Career Center added a new Public Service Career Expo to meet the needs of employers and students in Public and Human Service industries. The Career Center will work with departments for individual needs to develop future programming or additional Career Fair events.

Decision:

In AC 2025-2026, the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2025-2026 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2026-2027 to drive the cycle of improvement. The wording on Measure 3.1 will be revised to reflect a more accurate representation of data collection. The new measure will read "Employers participating in on-campus recruiting activities and Job Location and Development services will provide feedback regarding career-recruiting services. The resulting data will inform program design, departmental goals, and services to the campus and community. Success is defined as a score of 80% on the *Employer Evaluation: Fall Career Fair, Spring Career Fair, Education Job Fair and*

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Job Location and Development Part Time Job Fair Employer Survey (Question 1).” The Career Center will work with other campus faculty and staff to evaluate the feasibility of incorporating a professional development badging system for students based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Competencies. NACE competencies are developed as a result of national employer surveys based on desired employee qualifications and are designed to increase students’ preparedness for employment.

These changes will improve the student's ability to increase their awareness of what employer expectations are for resume formatting, interviewing, professionalism and career events.

Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of improvement based on the analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2025-2026. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the AC 2024-2025 results analysis.

Student Outcomes

SO. 1:

1.1: A request was made to the steward of University Experience to have the career lessons scheduled for dates earlier in the semester. These assignments take more time to complete than some of the easier assignments. Students’ time is generally less committed to outside activities and class workloads early in the semester, and they are more motivated to complete their assignments.

SO.2:

2.1 The Career Center partnered with the Office of Economic Development to survey departments about departmental career events being offered on campus outside of the events hosted by Career Services. Through this partnership, campus career events were streamlined to take place at the same time and the Career Center hosted a presentation in the weeks leading up to the various Career Fairs that demonstrated how to effectively present oneself at a Career Fair.

2.2 Big Interview was used with career preparation in presentations and student appointments in a face-to-face or virtual format. *Big Interview Fast-Track and Mastery-Track* learning modules and assignments were implemented with classes who request interview preparation and mock interview appointments.

2.3 The staff collaborated with Alumni Affairs and at Grad Fest to assist students in creating Alumni accounts on Handshake to measure student satisfaction with Career Services.

SO.3:

3.1: To better serve both employer and student needs, the university separated the Office of Counseling and Career into two distinct departments, establishing an independent Career Center with dedicated leadership. This strategic reorganization aligns with higher education best practices and research demonstrating that

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specialized career centers achieve stronger employer relationships and improved student outcomes. The newly independent Career Center staff collaborated with department heads and local employers to host two discussion panels for students—one during the Fall semester and one during the Spring at Leadership NSU. The purpose of these discussion panels is to give students a "first look" at employers' expectations in preparation for entering the workforce. This organizational change enabled more focused attention on employer engagement and career programming while allowing both career services and counseling to concentrate on their specialized professional competencies.

Plan of Action Moving Forward

SO.1:

1.1: The Handshake assignment will be re-evaluated for the upcoming year to improve the process for student uploads. Additionally, the reporting for this metric will be changed from average grade per assignment to percentage of students who completed these assignments and a reporting mechanism will be embedded into the course shell to allow for easier data collection from instructors. The new measure will read "Students enrolled in University Experience 1000 and receiving 2 career exploration lessons will be able to verify their personality type, values, and interests and demonstrate how these factors impact their career interest and choice. Success will be measured by a 70% or higher completion rate on the two career exploration assignments." The Career Center will also host a presentation on student resources for finding a major for those students who are still unsure about career paths and majors, using Typefocus™ and Handshake as tools for career exploration.

SO.2:

2.1: The Career Center will refine the Demon Wears Prada to make it a bigger event that also includes Career Fair preparation presentations and resume workshops. Additionally, for AC 2026-2027, the wording of Measure 2.1 will be modified to better reflect our survey collection methods. The new measure will read "Students participating in career development workshops and class curriculum will be assessed for employment readiness through average scores for interview assignments, average resume scores, and Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation. Success is defined as an average grade of 75% or better on student mock interviews and resumes, and a 75% on Employer/Recruiter evaluations of student preparation (question # 4 on Fall/Spring Graduate Career Fair, Education Job Fair Survey, and Part-time Job Fair surveys).

2.2: The Career Center will change Measure 2.2 to track numbers that are more relevant to the work being done in the Career Center. This includes measures such as the amount and type of student appointments and attendance at Career Fairs and events. The new measure will read "Design, implement, and analyze the results of a quantitative tracking process of student engagement with Career Services by compiling appointment utilization data, presentation/ workshop participation, and career fair attendance records across academic terms. During the 2026–2027 academic year, the

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Career Center will establish a baseline for Career Center engagement and presentation participation and aim to serve at least 800 students across all service types.” The Career Center will also research the implementation of AI software that reviews and provides feedback for student resumes and interviews. This software will increase the number of students who can be evaluated for career readiness skills.

2.3: The wording on the First Destination emails will be re-evaluated to promote survey completion. The Career Center will also regroup with Alumni Affairs to see if there are better ways to encourage student completion such as handing out flyers at graduate fest and career fairs. The Career Center will also communicate with Department Heads to encourage participation in the survey. Additionally, the Career Center will conduct Handshake Best Practice seminars to encourage students to add personal email addresses to accounts.

SO.3:

3.1: The wording on Measure 3.1 will be revised to reflect a more accurate representation of data collection. The new measure will read “Employers participating in on-campus recruiting activities and Job Location and Development services will provide feedback regarding career-recruiting services. The resulting data will inform program design, departmental goals, and services to the campus and community. Success is defined as a score of 80% on the *Employer Evaluation: Fall Career Fair, Spring Career Fair, Education Job Fair and Job Location and Development Part Time Job Fair Employer Survey (Question 1)*.” The Career Center will work with other campus faculty and staff to evaluate the feasibility of incorporating a professional development badging system for students based on the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Competencies. NACE competencies are developed as a result of national employer surveys based on desired employee qualifications and are designed to increase students’ preparedness for employment.