

THE FACULTY

Making an Art Form of Assessment

A small women's college has become a model for determining what students have learned.

BY BURTON BOLLAG



Lydia Nabirye art-therapy major

Ms. Nabirye, who transferred from a larger college with a more conventional education, says frequent feedback from professors and classmates creates a strong sense of community at Alverno.

FOR MANY PARENTS and legislators, the bottom line of a college education is what a student learns. Colleges struggle to find the best way to assess student learning and then communicate the results to outsiders. Increasingly, calls are heard for standardized tests to measure college students' performance and to be able to compare institutions' educations with one another.

As that push continues, Alverno College, a small Catholic women's college here, has been a surprising mecca for assessing what students learn.

MILWAUKEE

Its administrators and professors are regularly invited to colleges around the world to share their approach, and each summer scores of college officials come to Milwaukee for a workshop on the subject.

Princeton University, the University of California at Berkeley, and New York University School of Law have consulted with Alverno, as have the University of South Australia and City University of Hong Kong.

But Alverno is not a proponent of No Child Left Behind-type accountability standards in higher education. In fact, Alverno scrapped grades decades ago. The college has integrated assessment into its entire