Kathleen L. McFadden, NIU College of Business Professor
Department of Operations Management & Information Systems

Kathleen McFadden, a nationally-regarded expert in transportation and healthcare quality, reaches new heights as a scholar-teacher in NIU's nationally-ranked College of Business. McFadden does so by taking a strategic view — sometimes from 35,000 feet — of the relationship between operations management and competitive advantage, focusing closely on the aviation industry and the healthcare industry.

McFadden's research on quality management and service operations management generates substantial interest. Since 1998, McFadden's research on aviation safety has been spotlighted in television, radio, and print media, ranging from ABC News, FOX News, the Chicago Sun-Times, WMAQ Radio (NBC/CNN affiliate) to Aviation Safety magazine. Beyond media interest, McFadden's expertise is also highly regarded within some of the most powerful circles in the United States government. She has served as an expert witness and contract researcher for the Federal Aviation Administration, and previously won two research grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

McFadden is no stranger to collaborating with business executives who endeavor to meld academic theory with emerging business realities. Moreover, McFadden brings those collaborations into the classroom for the benefit of her students. Previously, McFadden was an early participant in shaping the Motorola-NIU College of Business strategic alliance. Currently, she is one of a small handful of key players at NIU developing a multi-college program in Healthcare Policy and Management, which is designed to help leaders in healthcare to think and act more strategically. McFadden also plays an integral role in the IBM-NIU College of Business alliance, through which the college has been named a SSME Partner School. SSME — Services Science, Management, and Engineering — is a new initiative for IBM. Through the SSME initiative, IBM invites only the best institutions that meet specific criteria to partner in the program, such as NIU, Arizona State, Carnegie Mellon, Ohio State, North Carolina State, Maryland, California-Berkeley, and Wharton. The firm's interest in the NIU College of Business was prompted by the college's unique combination of operations and information systems, an area in which McFadden has consistently made inroads over the years.


Quality is McFadden's trademark in terms of the standard of performance she places not only within her scholarly endeavors and industry consultations, but also on her faculty-student relationships and the learning experience. A recipient of several departmental teaching awards, McFadden succinctly defines success in the classroom: “My goal is to instill in students a deep appreciation for quality as it relates to all aspects of what it means to be a business professional. This runs the gamut from successfully applying business concepts to modeling the behavior of a stand-out business leader. This is how NIU students develop the strongest possible competitive advantage for themselves…which reflects back on their alma mater. (2008 entry)