

Online Course Evaluation System: A Pilot Study

Faculty Educational Technology Committee (FETC)
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FETC 2007-2008

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History

- ▶ 2005: The FETC was charged with studying the feasibility of implementing an online evaluation system at the CofC.
- ▶ 2006: A number of concerns were raised in the Senate with regard to implementing such a system and with the language of the proposal.
- ▶ 2006-2007: The FETC attempted to address the concerns that were raised and move forward to assess the feasibility of an online course evaluation system.

Overview

- ▶ **Why are we talking about online course evaluations?**
 - Overview
 - Response rate
- ▶ Pilot study
 - Results
 - Psychology Department

Why are we talking about online evaluations

- ▶ The current procedure relies on a manual multi-step delivery system of paper instruments for dissemination.
- ▶ Lack of security
- ▶ Written comments compromise student anonymity
- ▶ Data are difficult to analyze
- ▶ Paper evaluations are slow
- ▶ It's expensive to generate and distribute paper evaluations

Why are we talking about online evaluations

- ▶ Labor: ~205 hours to print, sort deliver and then pick up the forms
- ▶ Administrative assistants time in the departments: ~16 hours
- ▶ And the forms still have to be returned for additional processing/scanning by IT and AAPA once they've been completed. They also have be copied at the departmental level.
- ▶ ~70,000 forms / year

Response rates

- ▶ Response Rate
 - The current response rate for paper-and-pencil forms is about 70%.
 - The literature shows that student response rates may decrease with an online system (although response rates of over 80% and in some cases 100% have been reported using online course evaluation systems).
 - Response rates generally recover over a period of time, generally thee to four years.
- ▶ Response rate can be encouraged with positive reinforcement incentives.

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Pilot study

- ▶ Faculty participating from the following departments:
 - Psychology
 - Biology, Chemistry
 - Art History
 - Spanish, German
 - Physical Education
 - Sociology, Anthropology
 - Theatre

Pilot study

- ▶ A standardized process was developed with Digital Measures to replicate the paper-based system.
- ▶ The pilot results were successfully merged back into the paper-based results for those that participated.
- ▶ A total of **69 class sections** were evaluated with **1919 students**.
- ▶ The evaluations were available to students from 6 AM to 11:59 PM.

Pilot Study

- ▶ The results from the pilot were e-mailed to faculty immediately after grades closed.
- ▶ Written comments were included in this report.

Pilot study

- ▶ Overall response rate (online): **~40%** (Paper based: **~70%**)
- ▶ Written responses:
 - Not compared between or among courses
 - Unsolicited remarks:
 - "Student's comments were more articulate and less emotional"
 - "The quality of the comments was better than the paper based forms"
- ▶ Psychology courses: Item analysis for 8 courses

Pilot Study

- ▶ Item analysis (Psychology): There was no significant difference between online and paper evaluations for the eight standard questions.
 - The instructor is well prepared.
 - The instructor presents material in an understandable way.
 - The instructor encourages students to express themselves.
 - The instructor is helpful.
 - The instructor provides constructive evaluation of my work.
 - The instructor is an effective teacher.
 - This course stimulates critical thinking.
 - I would give this course a positive rating.

Survey

- ▶ Survey of those participating: **50% responded**
 - How many classes were evaluated online: **2**
 - Were you satisfied with the online course evaluations?
 - **Yes - 64%**
 - **No - 36% (primarily because of the low response rate)**
 - If you were not satisfied, what would you suggest to improve the process?
 - More reminders to students
 - Incentives for students (positive reinforcement)
 - Students should not have access to their grades until they complete a course evaluation.

Survey

- ▶ Did a representative of the FETC visit your class to "sell" the online system?
 - **Yes (47%)**
 - **No (53%)**
- ▶ Would you be interested in participating in another pilot?
 - **Yes (74%)**
 - **No (26%)**

Conclusions

- ▶ We have shown that an online course evaluation system is feasible.
- ▶ This system has the potential to address some of the issues that exist with the paper evaluations system.
- ▶ About 90% of the faculty that responded to the survey were pleased with the online evaluation system.

Want to learn more?

- ▶ In order to provide faculty with access to all pertinent information related to online course evaluations, we have created the following website:
 - <http://www.cofc.edu/fetc/>
- ▶ This site contains all relevant published literature on implementing an online system as well as all other materials that we have gathered over the past two years of studying this system.