On-line Course Evaluation Implementation and Improvement of Response Rates

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Goals of the Session

- Offer suggestions for implementing on-line course evaluations
- Report research results of how faculty can improve response rates in their courses
A short history on implementing on-line course evaluations at Boise State

- Diffused ownership – collaboration of stakeholders from all parts of campus examined viability of the move
- Most departments wanted to participate; some skeptical, needed to see it work on campus
- No university-wide question set; instead, from college, department, and a variety of academic support programs
- Purchased CollegeNet, “WDYT” product
Academic-Oriented Team
Led by Institutional Research

• Teamed with 2 faculty—one in Center for Teaching and Learning, one teaches IT
• Minimized OIT involvement to prepare data source and set up user authentication
• Implementation required:
  – No new FTE resources ("other duties as assigned")
  – Need “sensitive touch” for faculty buy-in and participation
    • To Opt-In
    • To encourage student involvement
    • To trust data for annual performance evaluations
  – OIT lacks faculty or consumer reputation
Implementing On-Line Evaluations in a Streamlined Environment

• Coordinated many hands (and no FTE body) to run on-line evaluations
  – Developed upload files and checked for accuracy
  – Handled help questions
  – Prepared survey calendar each semester

• Recommendations
  – Reduce # of sessions = more sessions = more cycles to support
  – Don’t assume course registration data is accurate
  – Communication is key
  – Who gets access to whose evaluations?
Implementing On-Line Evaluations in a Voluntary Environment

• Opt-In for colleges, departments, academic support programs (down to course level) created challenges for selective loading of course enrollment data

• Solution
  – Developed MS Access Database to check, filter and restructure data flexibly and systematically

• Recommendation
  – Overcomes potential faculty and department resistance to how teaching is evaluated
  – (Optional) common question set should be built through collaboration early in the process
Implementing On-Line Evaluations in a Decentralized Environment

• Questions controlled by colleges, departments, and academic support programs; no university question-set

• Solution
  – Vendor (CollegeNet, WDYT) selected for flexibility to create and bind specific question sets to type of course
  – Centralized question review, assistance, creation in Center for Teaching and Learning

• Recommendations
  – Decentralized requires centralized editing & question support
  – Helps to incorporate academic support programs (Honors? On-line programs? SL?) in on-line evaluations to cut down extra survey demands
Part 2: Improving response rates

The key to good student response rates for on-line evaluations often lie with the faculty

- What does the literature say?
- What do our faculty do?
- How well do different tactics work to raise response rates?
- Are there other factors?
Background and literature review

• Response rates for online evaluations tend to be lower than of pen/paper evaluations (~70-80%/~50-60%) (Avery *et al*., 2006; Dommeyer 2002; many others)

• Likert-type quantitative ratings remain constant even with lower response rates (Anderson *et al*., 2005; Dommeyer, 2004; many others)
Background and literature review

• Qualitative responses tend to increase (Handwerk, 2000; Heath, *et al.*, 2007)

• Institutions and instructors that do something tend increase response rates (Nulty, 2008)

• The more tactics an institution and/or instructor uses, the higher the response rate (Nulty, 2008)
Response Rates and Adoption of On-line Evaluations

* Estimate based on literature
Fall 2012

➢ Online Evaluations
   – 76,172 enrollments (88% of total were online evaluations)
     • 1,134 instructors
     • 3,213 classes

➢ Response Rates
   – Overall: 54.9%
   – Colleges
     • High: 73% in Engineering
     • Low: 52% in Arts & Sciences
   – Departments
     • High: 82% in Construction Mgmt
     • Low: 31% in Respiratory Care
   – Classes: 0% to 100%
University Measures/Tactics

- No iPad lotteries, web advertising, or grade hooks
- Sent 5 student emails
  - Start
  - Reminders (3)
  - End
-Sent 5 instructor emails
  - Pre-eval (enter custom questions)
  - Start
  - Reminder
  - End
  - Results available
Research Methods: Data

1. Studied Fall 2012 evaluation
   – Used individual response rate data
   – Received anonymous data set from vendor

2. Surveyed all 1,134 instructors
   – 678 (60%) instructors responded about tactics used in 1 or 2 classes taught that Fall
   – 1,128 (35%) classes studied
   – Survey asked
     • Tactics used to increase student response rates or otherwise obtain student feedback
     • Basic demographic questions
Research Methods: Analysis

• Applied series of t-tests and ANOVAS on individual variables for statistical differences
• Applied Stepwise Regression for overall importance
Research Questions Addressed

• What tactics do instructors use to improve their response rates?
• Does it help to use more tactics?
• What is the impact of course and instructor characteristics?
• What is the best model for explaining variation in response rates?
• Are there interactions between tactics used and course or faculty characteristics?
Which Tactics Were Instructors Most Likely to Use?

- Reminded students during class (61%)
- Explained to class how I use the results to improve teaching (57%)
- Sent personal emails to students as reminders (33%)
- Posted a reminder or assignment on Blackboard (32%)
- Provided incentives to complete the evaluation (22%)
## What instructor tactics improved response rates?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Used tactic Response rate</th>
<th>Didn’t use Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided incentives</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided time in class to complete</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sent personal e-mails as reminders</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminded students during class time</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained to class how I use the results</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted reminder/assignment on BlackBoard</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did nothing</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Incentives: Does the kind of incentive and approach matter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Incentive</th>
<th>Basis for Awarding Incentive</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>% of class</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78% (n=62)</td>
<td>79% (n=156)</td>
<td>79% (n=218)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other incentive</td>
<td>77% (n=15)</td>
<td>82% (n=18)</td>
<td>80% (n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78% (n=77)</td>
<td>79% (n=174)</td>
<td>79% (n=251)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class-based Incentive Examples

• **Point-based** class-wide rewards
  – If 80% complete the eval, everyone gets 1 point added to final grade
  – If 90% complete eval, all students gain back all participation points

• **Non-Point-based** class-wide rewards
  – If 70% complete eval, instructor will bring cupcakes to final
  – If 90% complete eval, everyone can bring a 3 X 5 notecard to the final
## Impact of threshold on response rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentive threshold</th>
<th>N who used that threshold</th>
<th>Average response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%+</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sliding scale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did using more tactics improve response rates?

![Bar chart showing response rates for different tactics levels.](chart_image)
### Course and instructor characteristics:

Higher response rates were associated with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small courses (&lt;20) vs larger (&gt;40)</td>
<td>64% vs 59%</td>
<td>477 vs 154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person courses vs On-Line</td>
<td>63% vs 50%</td>
<td>955 vs 119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate courses vs Undergraduate</td>
<td>65% vs 61%</td>
<td>153 vs 974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure/tenure-track faculty vs Adjunct</td>
<td>64% vs 57%</td>
<td>748 vs 379</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final model ($R^2=.32$):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Standardized estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provided incentives</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tactics used</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took class time to complete evaluation</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small class</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught on-line</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate course</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taught by adjunct</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction: Number of tactics &amp; undergraduate course level</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response rates based on number of tactics and course level

Number of tactics employed to increase response rates

Response rate

Graduate course
Undergraduate course
Conclusions

• Incentives provide the biggest boost
  – If you use incentives, set the threshold for the class (not individual) and set it at 80% or more
  – If using incentives, best to set high threshold (80% or greater) for class as a whole

• Use multiple tactics (Undergrad = 1-2; Grad = 4-5)

• On-line and large section classes have a built in disadvantage—use even more tactics
Future Changes

• Institutionalize small core set of university-wide questions to enable comparisons
• Pushing grade hook proposal
• Keep expanding use (now 91.5%)
• Explore means to impact response rates for on-line courses
Questions?

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