



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

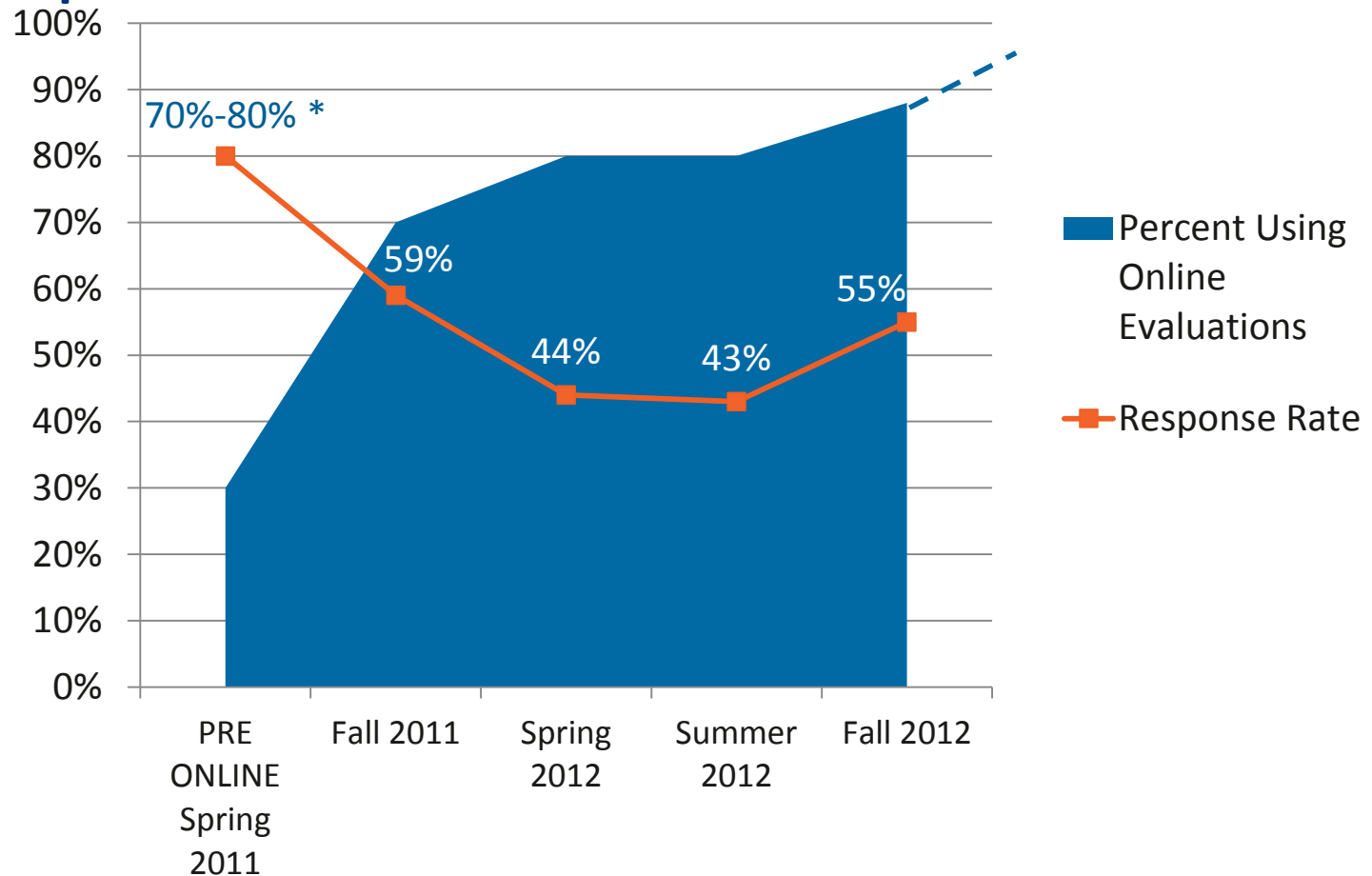
- Response rates for online evaluations tend to be lower than of pen/paper evaluations (~70-80%/~50-60%) (*Avery et al*, 2006; Dommeyer 2002; many others)
- Likert-type quantitative ratings remain constant even with lower response rates (*Anderson et al*, 2005; Dommeyer, 2004; many others)

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?

Tactics	Used tactic <i>Response rate</i>	Didn't use <i>Response rate</i>
Provided incentives	79%	57%
Provided time in class to complete	70%	61%
Sent personal e-mails as reminders	66%	60%
Reminded students during class time	65%	57%
Explained to class how I use the results	65%	57%
Posted reminder/assignment on BlackBoard	64%	61%
I did nothing	50%	63%



Incentives: Does the kind of incentive and approach matter?

		Basis for Awarding Incentive		
Type of Incentive		Individual	% of class	Total
	Points	78% (n=62)	79% (n=156)	79% (n=218)
	Other incentive	77% (n=15)	82% (n=18)	80% (n=33)
Total		78% (n=77)	79% (n=174)	79% (n=251)

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

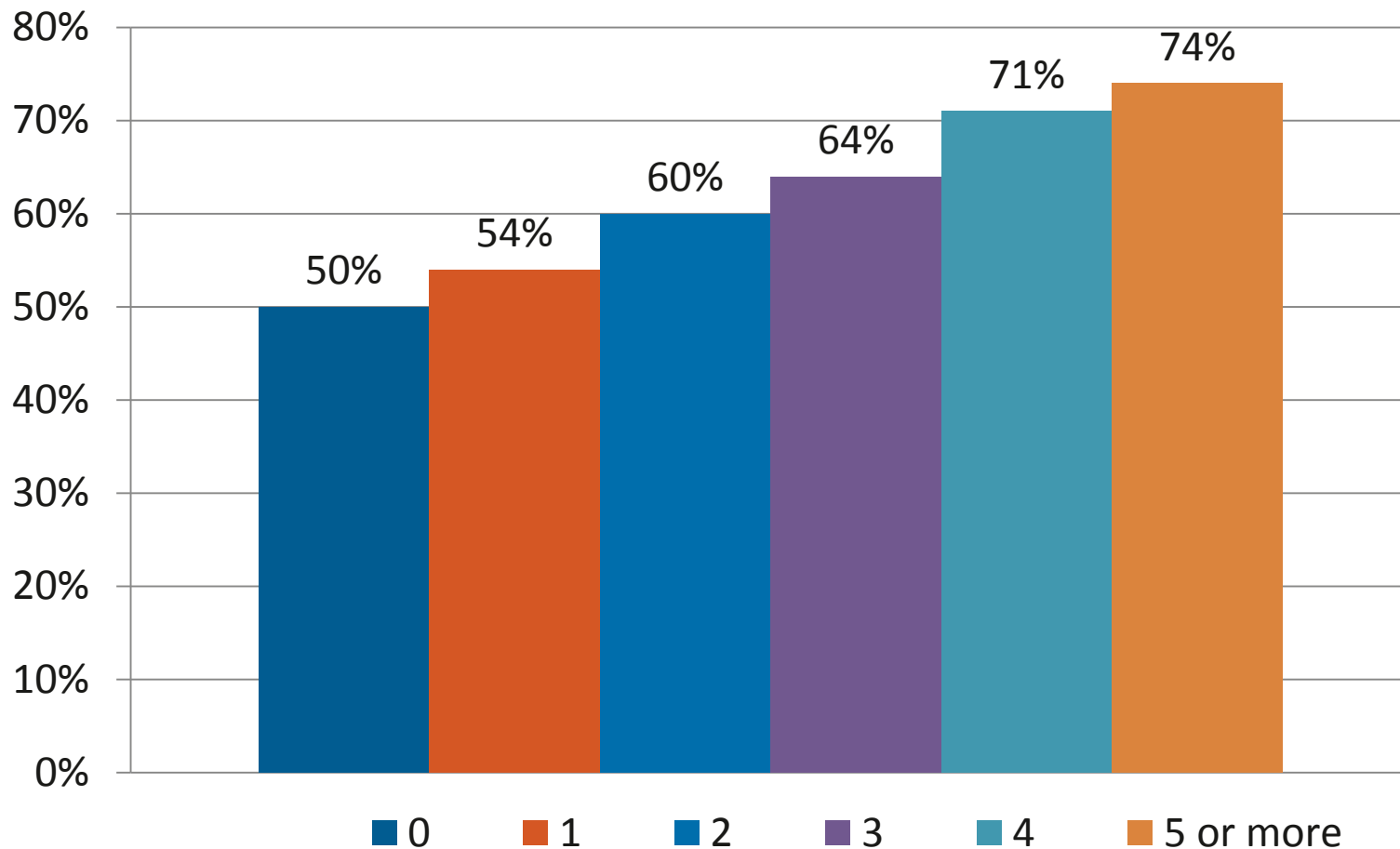


Impact of threshold on response rate

Incentive threshold	N who used that threshold	Average response rate
100%	8	89%
90%+	10	87%
80%+	22	86%
Sliding scale	8	73%
70%+	12	68%
60%+	3	62%
Unknown	9	74%



Did using more tactics improve response rates?





Course and instructor characteristics:

Higher response rates were associated with:

	Response Rate	N
Small courses (<20) <i>vs larger (>40)</i>	64% <i>vs 59%</i>	477 <i>vs 154</i>
In-person courses <i>vs On-Line</i>	63% <i>vs 50%</i>	955 <i>vs 119</i>
Graduate courses <i>vs Undergraduate</i>	65% <i>vs 61%</i>	153 <i>vs 974</i>
Tenure/tenure-track faculty <i>vs Adjunct</i>	64% <i>vs 57%</i>	748 <i>vs 379</i>

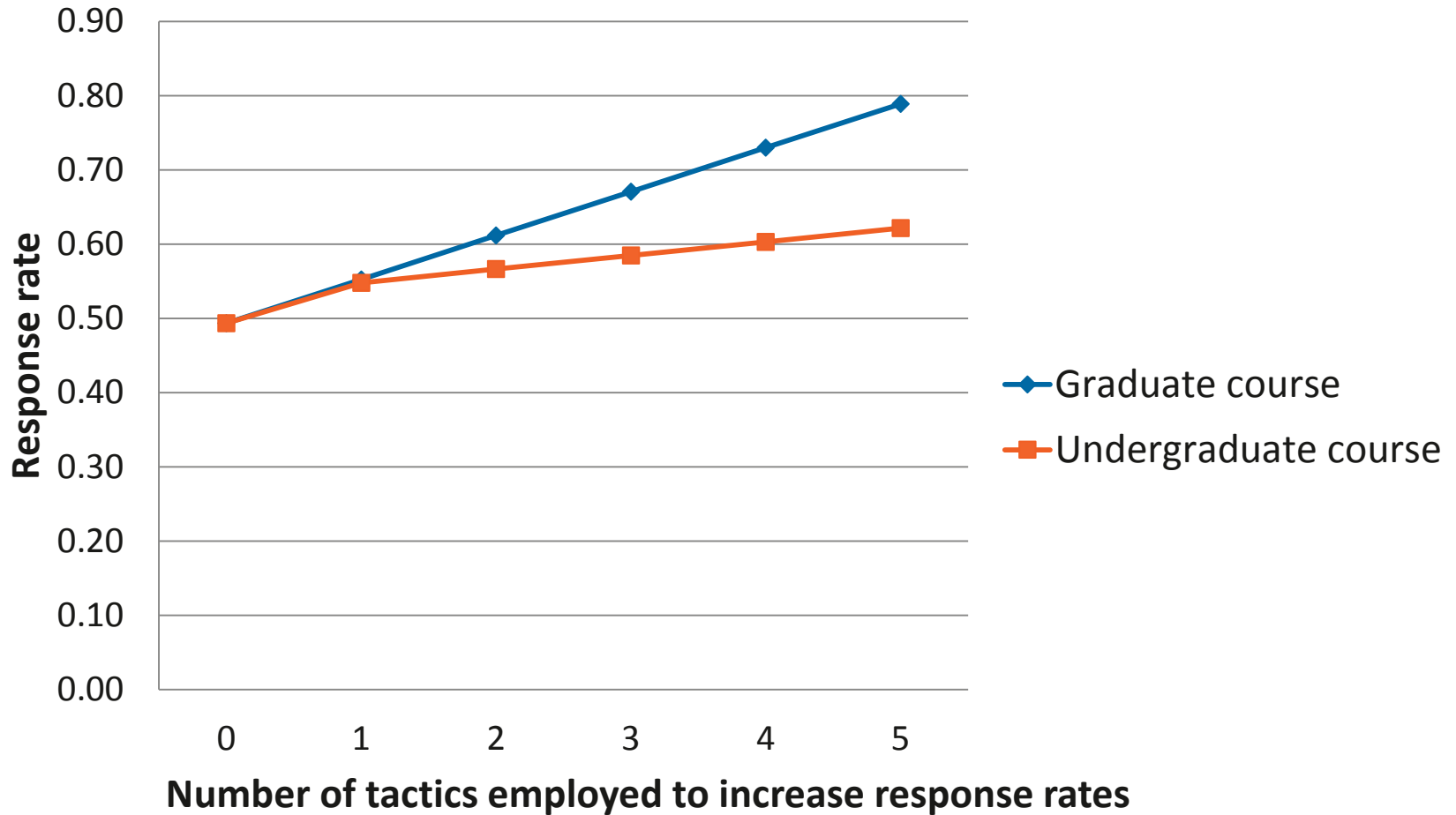


Final model ($R^2=.32$):

Variable	Standardized estimate
Provided incentives	0.41
Number of tactics used	0.43
Took class time to complete evaluation	0.07
Small class	0.09
Taught on-line	-0.09
Undergraduate course	0.04
Taught by adjunct	-0.12
Interaction: Number of tactics & undergraduate course level	-0.32



Response rates based on number of tactics and course level



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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