

Report of the Senate Committee on Evaluations, Merit, Rewards and Workload

2/1/2011

Submitted by Amy Jasperson, Chair

The Senate Evaluations, Merit, Rewards and Workload Committee (in conjunction with the University Committee on Online Teaching Evaluations) met with Ken Pierce (Vice President for Information Technology/CIO) on February 1, 2011 to hear an update on the problems that arose with the online teaching evaluations during Fall 2010 and the solutions to those problems for Spring 2011. Both OIT and the Office of the Vice Provost for Accountability and Institutional Effectiveness /Office of Institutional Research (OIR) are responsible for the administration of the online student evaluations.

Pierce stated that 4 mandatory items will be posted on Bluebook: overall rating of course, overall rating of instructor, is this a required course, and what grade do you expect in the course. The size of the class is currently available (clicking on blue arrow next to the course name), and the response rate will be posted on Bluebook eventually. They are designing the enhancements to include this information, implementation date TBD. Other items can be collected by departments/colleges but they are not posted on Bluebook. Departments have the ability and flexibility to choose additional questions. If faculty members have additional items they wish to include, they need to talk to the department contact person.

Problems with student email notification of course evaluations:

A technical glitch with a participant file caused the problems/delays with the notification emails going out to students in Fall 2010. Steps will be taken to ensure this does not happen again. In the future, students will receive 1 original email with links to every course they are taking during the semester. These links will also appear on ASAP in case the student deletes the original email or has a problem receiving the original email. Students will also receive reminder emails (for each course). They do not expect problems with the emails again and it should take no longer than 1 day to send out all emails to students.

Student drops:

Some students who dropped courses received emails to complete course evaluations because administration used Census Day enrollments. They will attempt to correct this to the greatest degree possible by updating course enrollment information one week before the evaluations are scheduled to begin.

Multiple instructors of record:

Any course that is coded as such by the department will be evaluated and ratings will be provide for the instructor of record. Only 2 instructors of record can be evaluated for each course.

Overall online evaluation response rates:

The overall response rates were in the range of 30+% and varied by college (and course). Administration surveyed students on what factors would help them to complete the evaluations (see figure at the bottom of this report) and they will continue to work on increasing the response rate. Pierce also mentioned that there is an aid for implementing surveys using mobile phones during class time.

Open-ended student comments:

The online evaluations included room for responses to open ended comments (if the departments so requested). If you did not receive these, your department did not ask for such data. There is a move to collect hard copies of comments in the future. Otherwise, such comments are subject to FOIA/open records requests. By collecting comments via hard copy, instructors can still receive this feedback for use in improving future courses. The decision has not yet been made as to whether or not these comments will be shared with Chairs/Deans in the future or stored by the department. Under the IDEA system, the Office of Institutional Research stored comments centrally and hard copies of comments were returned directly to the faculty members in the original sealed envelopes.

Remaining issues needing attention:

The Committee recognizes that both technical and policy issues remain. The following concerns that still need solutions are relevant to technology, policy, or both:

- **Improving the instrument:**

It was noted that there is a need for a greater range of questions on the evaluation form that precede and then “add up” to the overall rating of course/instructor. Furthermore, a concern was expressed by a faculty member about the need for customization to fit particular courses and/or teaching methods and that this process should be enabled without the influence of department politics.

- **Improving response rates:**

The sentiment was expressed that great care must be taken in any decision to incentivize student participation. Pierce mentioned that OIT could assist students in using their own mobile devices for in-class evaluations. Faculty seemed enthusiastic about investigating this method for increasing response rates of students (i.e. one faculty member suggested running a pilot test in spring 2011 with some classes using this along with standard student evaluation).

- **Clarifying the timeframe for evaluations:**

Faculty members want to ensure that the timeframe for evaluations is clearly designated ahead of time (before the semester begins) for faculty planning purposes. In addition, the time frame should be sensitive to the next point below.

- **Using accurate list of eligible student evaluators:**

Faculty want to ensure that those responsible for implementing the survey keep in mind patterns in student drops (often related to student drop policy) in setting the time for evaluations as well as pulling the eligible student survey population so they do not skew the data by including such students in the evaluations.

- **Collecting student comments:**

There is support for collecting comments via hard copy methods. The sentiment was expressed that comments are a communication between student and faculty member and should only be used to improve teaching.

APPENDIX:

1. Link to answers about online course evaluations from Fall 2010.
2. Student survey response -- incentives for participation

Link for More Answers to Questions about Fall 2010 Online Student Evaluations:

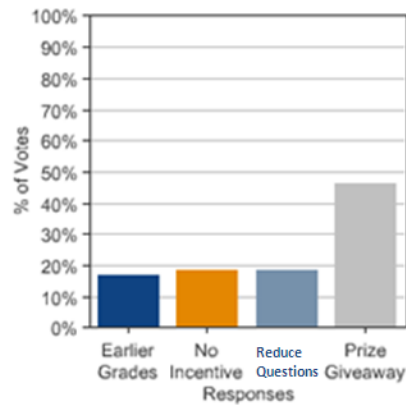
http://neptune.utsa.edu/oit/projects/onlineCourseEvals_Fall2010.html

YOU CHOOSE SURVEY OF STUDENTS:

Student survey about factors that would help them to participate in the online evaluation process:

There were about 2000 respondents.

3. What incentives would make you more likely to participate in end-of-semester course evaluations?



During the Fall 2010 (this current semester) UTSA offered up to 4 iPads for completion of the online course evaluations. We are giving away two iPads this semester, as the response rate was not high enough for four (60% response rate). Our response rate was ~39%. We did have significant issues with this evaluation period which, had they not occurred, produced a higher response rate.

You Choose