Augsburg Course Evaluation Project

First Principles

- We will have opportunity for student feedback.
- Students' participation in the feedback process will be voluntary. Faculty participation is not.
- The reason for doing course evaluation is to sustain and improve the student learning experience.
- The end-of-course system provides an institutional level profile of one aspect of our work as a college.

Topics for Review

- Response Rates
- Content of the Form
- Use of Findings

Recommendation to the Augsburg Faculty Senate February 2009

Scott Krajewski, Director of Information Technology Services & Diane Pike, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning--on behalf of the faculty working group.

Student feedback is part of a comprehensive system of: professional self-analysis, meaningful peer review, and demonstration of the use of evidence-based research in teaching and learning. We make the following recommendations:

1. We should continue the current online system accompanied by a renewed effort to educate faculty and students about a culture of feedback, demonstrate how the results are used to improve the student and faculty experience, and promote and facilitate student response rates.
2. A **department level** form of evaluation should be added, administered either by paper and pencil or online as the department wishes. This form would be created by the department.
3. Individual faculty members should conduct their own formative and summative evaluation and assessments following recommended professional practices.
4. CTL and IT should offer faculty development support and seminars to facilitate department development of customized forms and the interpretation of findings.
5. The evaluation system should be jointly reviewed by Senate and CTL every 4 years.

Email sent to faculty when an evaluation opens

Hello «FIRSTNAME»,

Your students are now able to evaluate your course.
They will be getting 2-3 email reminders pointing them to

http://eval.augsburg.edu

You can increase the usefulness of the evaluation by increasing their response rate. Some suggestions are

- Explain the shared rationale and then offer your individual comments. Be constructive and thank them for taking the time to do this. The statement below is a concise reminder for students of the value we place in their helpful and honest feedback. Please consider using it as a basis for your class conversation.

   * *"The faculty of Augsburg College value the opinions of the students who take our courses, and we try to improve our courses and our teaching in response to their thoughtful evaluations. Please take the time in the next two weeks to complete the on-line evaluation of your courses. Your response will be read by your professors and by college administrators. We appreciate your effort; it helps support the college's dedication to and understanding of excellent and diverse teaching."*

- Remind students twice--once at the beginning of week one and again at the start of week two. Remind students about the multiple locations to access the form: email and on their Moodle site.

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An initial bibliography on online course evaluations

This list is not exhaustive but can serve as a starting point for further exploration.

Anderson, H., Cain, J., Bird, E. (2005) "Online Student Course Evaluations: Review of Literature and a Pilot Study." American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education 2005; 69 (1) Article 5.

The literature review revealed several studies that found no statistically significant differences between delivery modes. Two also noted that students provided more comments in the online forms. Response rates varied widely. The University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy, driven by the faculty's desire for more timely return of results (3-4 months typically), launched a pilot study of online evaluations in 3 courses. The response rates for the 3 courses were 85%, 89%, and 75%. The 9 courses using the paper forms averaged an 80% response rate (consistent with the 2 previous years also about 80%). The comments on the online forms were more frequent and longer than the paper forms. Students liked the online form better than the paper form and thought they could provide more effective and constructive feedback online.

Anderson, J., G. Brown, and S. Spaeth. (2006) "Online Student Evaluations and Response Rates Reconsidered." Innovate 2 (6). http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=301

Synopsis from Innovate: "Many administrators are moving toward using online student evaluations to assess courses and instructors, but critics of the practice fear that the online format will only result in lower levels of student participation. Joan Anderson, Gary Brown, and Stephen Spaeth claim that such a concern often fails to acknowledge how the evaluation process already suffers from substantial lack of engagement on the part of students as well as instructors; the online format, they assert, merely inherits the fundamental problem of perceived irrelevance in the process itself. After addressing the reasons behind this problem and discussing how well-designed online evaluations can still make a positive difference, the authors describe the development and implementation of a comprehensive, college-wide online evaluation survey at Washington State University's College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resources. In reviewing the survey results, they found that class size, academic discipline, and distribution method played a negligible role in student response rates. However, they found that variances in response rate were significantly influenced by the relative level of participation among faculty members and department heads in the original development of the survey. The authors maintain that online surveys can make the process more relevant and meaningful to students, but they conclude that eliciting greater response rates will still require sustained support, involvement, and advocacy by faculty members and administrators."

Ardalan, A., Ardalan, R., Coppage, S., and Crouch, W. (2007) "A comparison of student feedback obtained through paper-based and web-based surveys of faculty teaching." British Journal of Educational Technology. Volume 38 Number 6 2007.

This paper provides a summary of the current research in online vs. paper evaluations as well as results from a student to compare the feedback results. The same form was given to 46 section pairings – one paper and one online. The online response rate was 31% (392 out of 1276 possible responses) and the paper was 69% (972 out of 1415). No significant difference was found in the quantitative ratings between the two methods. They examined the differences on an "overall effectiveness" question in rating for faculty who were above the college average and then for faculty who were below the college average. Faculty who were above the average were scored slightly lower online and the faculty who were below the college average were scored higher online. There was no significant difference in the number of students giving open-ended feedback online however there was a significant increase in the length of open-ended feedback online.

Avery, Rosemary J., Bryant W.K., Mathios, A., Kang, H., and Bell, D. (2006) "Electronic Course Evaluations:Does an Online Delivery System Influence Student Evaluations?" Journal of Economic Education. Washington: Winter 2006. Vol. 37, Iss. 1 p21-38 (ProQuest document ID 973267691).

The Department of Policy Analysis and Management a Cornell University did a study of course evaluation data from 1998-2001. Using the same form, data was analyzed from 29 courses (20 using the paper version, 9 using the online version). The study examined response rates and mean scores between the methods. While specific response rates varied, online was typically lower than the paper form. For example, in fall 2000 paper was 69% compared with 47% online. Using a 5-point scale on their 13 questions, 4 questions had a significant difference in mean scores between methods. This was a greater than 0.10 difference with the web having the higher mean score. The other 9 questions had a less than 0.10 difference in mean scores again with web having the higher means.

Cummings, R. and Ballatyne, C. (1999). "Student feedback on teaching: Online! On target?" Paper presented at the Australisian Society Annual Conference, October, 1999.

Murdoch University School of Engineering ran a pilot in 1999 of online course evaluations using the same form online as on paper. Students found the online form easier, faster, and felt it offered greater anonymity. The school has a 50% mandate for response rate in course evaluations. Typically paper evaluations had a 65% response rate. The online pilot averaged 31% with 4 of the 18 courses over the 50% mandate. The response rate range was a wide 3% to 100%. Because the pilot was inadequately promoted, some faculty didn't know they were using online forms and didn't adequately prepare students. Students noted that they felt no pressure to fill out the online evaluations. The investigators concluded that the quality of responses was the same because they received the same amount of comments online which is what is used most from the evaluation form.

Dommeyer, CJ., Baum, P., Chapman, KS., and Hanna, RW. (2003). "An experimental investigation of student response rates to faculty evaluations: The effect of the online method and online treatments." Paper presented at Decision Sciences Institute; Nov. 22-25, 2003; Washington, DC.

The College of Business And Economics at California State University, Northridge did a study with 16 professors to see how the method of evaluation affects response rate and if online treatments (incentives) affect the response rate. Each professor taught 2 sections of the same undergraduate business course. The same form was used in both methods. Instructors were randomly assigned into 1 of 4 groups using different incentives: 0.25% grade incentive for completion of an online evaluation (4 courses), in-class demonstration on how to do the online evaluation (2 courses), if 2/3 of the class submitted online evaluations students would receive their final grades early (2 courses), or a control group (8 courses). The online evaluations averaged a 43% response rate and the paper evaluations averaged 75%. Looking at just the control group, their average response rate was 29%. In the individual cases the incentives had the effect of increasing response rate (grade incentive 87% response rate, demonstration 53%, and early final grade 51%).

Donovan, J., Mader, C., and Shinsky. J., (2006) "Constructive student feedback: Online vs. traditional course evaluations." Journal of Interactive Online Learning. Volume 5, Number 3, Winter 2006.

Abstract: Substantial efforts have been made recently to compare the effectiveness of traditional course formats to alternative formats (most often, online delivery compared to traditional on-site delivery). This study examines, not the delivery format but rather the evaluation format. It compares traditional paper and pencil methods for course evaluation with electronic methods. Eleven instructors took part in the study. Each instructor taught two sections of the same course; at the end, one course received an online course evaluation, the other a traditional pencil and paper evaluation. Enrollment in these 22 sections was 519 students. Researchers analyzed open-ended comments as well as quantitative rankings for the course evaluations. Researchers found no significant differences in numerical rankings between the two evaluation formats. However, differences were found in number and length of comments, the ratio of positive to negative comments, and the ratio of formative to summative comments. Students completing faculty evaluations online wrote more comments, and the comments were more often formative (defined as a comment that gave specific reasons for judgment so that the instructor knew what the student was suggesting be kept or changed) in nature.

Emery, L., Head, T., Zeckoski, A., and Yu Borkowski, E. (2008) "Deploying an Open Source, Online Evaluation System: Multiple Experiences." Presentation at Educause 2008, October 31, Orlando, FL.

Four institutions, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Virginia Tech, University of Cambridge and University of Maryland, collaborated on an open source online evaluation system within Sakai. Response rates in the various pilots ranged from 32% to 79%. They found the key benefits of online evaluations to be security, validity, efficiency, cost savings, rapid results turnaround and higher quality student comments.

Ernst, D. (2006) "Student Evaluations: A Comparison of Online vs. Paper Data Collection." Presentation at Educause 2006, October 10, Dallas, TX.

The College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota did a study on 314 class pairs (14,154 student evaluations) from fall 2002 to fall 2004. The goals were to see if there is a difference in response rate, a difference in response distributions, a difference in average ratings between the two methods and what are the common perceptions of each method. In the study group the online form averaged a 56% response rate whereas the paper version averaged 77%. Slightly more students responded on the high and low ends of the 7-point scale than did in the middle. There was no significant difference in the mean rating on 4 required questions.

eXplorance Inc., "A Fresh Look at Response Rates." White Paper.
http://www.explorance.com/Education/brochures/A%20Fresh%20Look%20at%20Response%20Rates.pdf
This white paper outlines 9 best practices for moving to online course evaluations. Key benefits to moving online are listed as well as strategies to build response rates.

Fraze, S., Hardin, K., Brashears, T., Smith, J., Lockaby, J. (2002) "The Effects Of Delivery Mode Upon Survey Response Rate And Perceived Attitudes Of Texas Agri-Science Teachers." Paper presented at the National Agricultural Education Research Conference, December 11-13, Las Vegas, NV,

Texas Tech University studied 3 modes of surveying a random group of Texas Agri-Science teachers. The 3 modes were e-mail, web, and paper. No significant difference in the reliability of the responses was found. However the response rates were 60%, 43% and 27% for paper, web and e-mail respectively.

Handwerk, P., Carson, C., and Blackwell, K. (2000). "On-line vs. paper-and-pencil surveying of students: A case study." Paper presented at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Association of Institutional Research, May 2000 (ERIC document ED446512).

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro did a study of using and online version of a feedback survey for determining why students selected or did not select Greensboro. They found the online version generated more comments though had a lower (26%) response rate than the paper version (33%). No significant difference was found in the response content between the two methods.

Laubsch, P. (2006). "Online and in-person evaluations: A literature review and exploratory comparison." Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 2(2). http://jolt.merlot.org/Vol2_No2_Laubsch.htm

The Master of Administrative Science program at Fairleigh Dickinson University performed a study on courses taught by adjunct faculty. The online evaluations received a 61% response rate and the in-class evaluations received a 82.1% response rate. They found that the online evaluations received twice as many comments (counting total words) as the in-class evaluations. On the question about "materials being clearly presented" (focused on the faculty member) the variation in mean scores in online and in-class was 0.33 on a 5-point scale with online having a less-positive rating. This is a statistically significant difference. Administrators noted that both means were better than the "agree" and were not considered poor ratings.

Layne B.H., DeCristofor J.R., McGinty D (1999). "Electronic versus traditional student ratings of instruction." Res Higher Educ. 1999; 40:221-32.

At a southeastern university 66 courses made up of 2453 students did a comparison of response effects between paper-and-pencil and online using the same form. Half did online and half did paper-and-pencil forms. The online response rate was 47% and the traditional group was 60%. Also, 76% of the online forms provided comments compared to 50% of the traditional forms. No significant difference was found in methods.

Liegle, J. and McDonald, D. (2004). "Lessons Learned From Online vs. Paper-based Computer Information Students' Evaluation System" Paper (refereed) presented at 21st Annual Information Systems Education Conference.

Georgia State University College of Business ran a voluntary pilot from 2002 to 2003 using an identical online version of their paper course evaluation form in the Department of Computer Information Systems. Faculty feared an online form would yield lower scores and lower response rates. In particular, the fear was that few students would submit online evaluations, poor students would "take revenge" on the faculty and good students wouldn't bother. The paper form had a 67% response rate and the online form had an 82% response rate. This likely due to the fact that the CIS department had easy access to computer labs for students to take the evaluations online. Using a question on teacher effectiveness, the study found no significant difference between the methods. Good students participated in the same numbers and weaker students did fewer online evaluations.

Lovric, Miodrag (2006). "Traditional and web-based course evaluations – comparison of their response rates and efficiency." Paper presented at 1st Balkan Summer School on Survey Methodology.

The paper presents a short literature review comparing online evaluations with paper. The Economics department at University of Belgrade, Serbia conducted a small pilot in a course of 800 students in May of 2006. Half the students received paper evaluations in class and half were directed to complete an identical online evaluation. The paper evaluation received a 92.5% response rate and the online received a 52% response rate after an incentive was introduced. They found that nearly twice as many students filled out the open-ended question online when compared to the paper group. On the instructor-related questions they found a variation of 0.09 to 0.22 on a 10-point scale. No statistical analysis was done for significance.

Matz, C. (1999). "Administration of web versus paper surveys: Mode effects and response rates." Masters Research Paper, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (ERIC document ED439694).

In a survey of academic reference librarians in North Carolina, Matz found no significant difference in response contents between the methods used. The online form had a 33% response rate and the paper form had a 43% response rate.

Monsen, S., Woo, W., Mahan, C. Miller, G. & W (2005). "Online Course Evaluations: Lessons Learned." Presentation at The CALI Conference for Law School Computing 2005.

Yale Law started online course evaluations in 2001 with a less than 20% response rate. The current 8-question form is run by student representatives and has a 90% response rate. Students cannot see their grades until they fill out the evaluation. Northwestern University School of Law started online course evaluations in 2004. So far they have a 68% response rate which compares to a 70-80% paper response rate. Northwestern is against using any penalties (withholding information from a student until they fill out an evaluation). The University of Denver Sturm College started online course evaluations in 2002 with a pilot of 10 courses. The pilot had an 83% response rate. Continuing into 2003 the pilot expanded to 80 courses (with an 81% response rate) and then expanded to all of their offerings (with a 64% response rate). Currently they maintain a response rate around 70%. Duke Law started online course evaluations in 2003 when their scantron machine broke and the expense of replacing was too great. They proposed a goal of 70% response rate and used the same form online. The first term averaged a 66% response rate (with 29% of the 82 courses reaching the 70% goal). In spring 2004 the average was 60% (with 30% of the 119 courses reaching the 70% goal). In fall 2004 the average was 52% (with 8% of the 93 courses reaching the 70% goal). In spring 2005, after dropping non-law students from the pool, the average was 67% (with 41% of the 117 courses reaching the 70% goal). The school is considering several penalties for failure to fill out an evaluation – withholding registration, withholding grades, or withholding free printing.

Norris, J., Conn, C. (2005). "Investigating strategies for increasing student response rates to online-delivered course evaluations." Quarterly Review of Distance Education 2005; 6 (1) p13-32 (ProQuest document ID 975834871).

This paper reports the findings of 2 studies done at Northern Arizona State University. The first study looked at historic data from 2000-2002 to examine student responses to online course evaluations in 1108 course sections. This group had an average response rate of 31%. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to 50 faculty in the group to explore what strategies improved response rate. These results informed the second study on 39 online course sections and 21 sections of a required freshman face-to-face course. The second study used some basic strategies (no penalty strategies) in the implementation of the online course evaluations: 2 weeks before the end of the course the URL to evaluation was posted in the course management system, an announcement containing a statement of course evaluation value and due date was sent in a method appropriate to the class (email, online syllabus or discussion board), and a reminder email was sent 1 week before the class ended containing the URL and due date. The 39 online course sections averaged a 74% response rate and the 21 face-to-face courses averaged a 67% response rate. In addition, 11 sections of the face-to-face course used paper evaluations and received a 83% response rate. These suggestions are very similar to the emerging findings from the TLT Group's BeTA project.

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, Marquette University, "On-line Course Evaluation Pilot Project at Marqette University." Spring 2008. http://www.marquette.edu/oira/ceval/

Marquette University moved from a copyrighted instrument, IAS, to their own instrument, MOCES. Because of the copyright concerns the new instrument has re-worded items that maintain the intent of the IAS items. In spring semester of 2008 a pilot was conducted in 124 course sections with 3837 students. They evaluated the effectiveness of an online approach versus paper and pencil and the software used to deliver the evaluations. Response rates online were lower in 3 of the 5 pilot departments, comparable in 1 and higher in 1 when compared to 3 semester averages of paper and pencil forms. A "power analysis" of the response rates revealed the rates were high enough of 95% confidence in the results. There was no significant difference in the mean ratings for the 4 core questions between the old IAS form and the MOCES online form.

Sax, L., Gilmartin, S., Keup, J., Bryant, A., and Plecha, M. (2002). Findings from the 2001 pilot administration of Your First College Year (YFCY): National norms. Higher Education Research Institute, University of California.

The YFCY distributed its survey that assesses student development during the first year in college using 3 methods: online, online or paper, and paper. In a pool of 57 schools, 16 used the alternative methods of distribution. The study found no significant difference in responses between the methods. The response rate overall was 21%. The online only method response rate was 17% and the online or paper group had a 24% response rate.

Schawitch, M. (2005) "Online Course Evaluations: One Institute's Success in Transitioning from a Paper Process to a Completely Electronic Process!" Presentation at the Association for Institutional Research Forum, June 2005.

The Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology piloted an online course evaluation in 2002 with a small group of faculty. Over the academic year the pilot had a 70% response rate. 77% of students preferred the online mode and faculty reacted positively to the pilot. In 2003 the entire campus adopted the online form. Over the 3 terms, the online evaluations had response rates of 86%, 78% and 67%. In 2004 the 3 terms had 75%, 71% and 67%. Historically paper evaluations had an 85-87% response rate. They are investigating various incentive possibilities.

Thorpe, S. (2002) "Online Student Evaluation of Instruction: An Investigation of Non-Response Bias." Paper presented at the 42nd Annual Forum of the Association of Institutional Research, June 2002.

Drexel University studied whether significant differences exist in student responses to course evaluations given on paper and online in 3 courses. Response rates in the 3 classes for paper and online (respectively) were 37% and 45%, 44% and 50%, 70% and 37%. In comparing students who responded to the evaluations across the 3 courses the study found that women were more likely than men to respond, students who earned higher grades were more likely to respond, and students with a higher overall GPA were more likely to respond. For two courses the online evaluations had a slightly higher average item rating. For the other course 2 significant differences were found: students doing the online evaluation were less likely to participate actively and contribute thoughtfully during class and to attend class when compared to the paper evaluation group. But the responses overall were not significantly different.

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End-of-Course Evaluation Information and Process

Improving Response Rates

The literature shows that there are three primary methods to improve response rates on end-of-course evaluations: 1) send reminder notices, 2) offer a small incentive, and 3) most effective, make evaluation a part of the course.

Send Reminder Notices

As part of the centrally administered option, two email reminders will be sent to the students through their university email accounts. These will be sent on Monday, December 5, and Monday, December 12. However, faculty are encouraged to remind their own students of the importance of the evaluations and encourage their participation through whatever communication channel you have established for your course.

> "Currently, the principal problem with online evaluations is a potentially low response rate. Response rates to online faculty evaluations have ranged anywhere from 23 to 92%, with the higher response rates associated with surveys that used one or more reminder messages." (Dommeyer, et al., 2004)

Offer a Small Incentive

The literature stated that small incentives will boost the response rates from students. An example that was provided was one-half of one percent grade enhancement. If this is something you are considering, make sure you inform your students of the date they need to have the evaluation completed by in order to receive the incentive. I would suggest by the end of classes, which is Sunday, December 11. This will provide you enough time to request the list of students who completed the evaluation prior to the end of the session on Friday, December 16.

Dommeyer, C. J., Baum, P. Hanna, R. W., & Chapman, K. S. (2004) "Gathering faculty teaching evaluations by in-class and online surveys: their effects on response rates and evaluations" *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 29,* (5) 611-623.

> This study compares student evaluations of faculty teaching that were completed in-class with those collected online. The two methods of evaluation were compared on response rates and on evaluation scores. In addition, this study investigates whether treatments or incentives can affect the response to online evaluations. It was found that the response rate to the online survey was generally lower than that to the in-class survey. Additionally, the study found that online evaluations do not produce significantly different mean evaluation scores than traditional in-class evaluations, even when different incentives are offered to students who are asked to complete online evaluations.

Make Evaluation Part of the Course

The most effective method to maintain high quality response rates is to make evaluation part of your course. By simply administering a mid-semester course evaluation and providing the results and your plan of action based on their feedback to the class, will dramatically improve response rates at the end of the year. This is

because it addresses students' primary complaint about course evaluation - no one looks or even cares about what I have to say about the course. If you show them that their feedback is important, studies show that they will provide that feedback to you.

Chen, Y. & Hoshower, L. B. (2003) "Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness: an assessment of student perception and motivation." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 28,* (1) 72-88.

> Over the past century, student ratings have steadily continued to take precedence in faculty evaluation systems in North America and Australia, are increasingly reported in Asia and Europe and are attracting considerable attention in the Far East. Since student ratings are the most, if not the only, influential measure of teaching effectiveness, active participation by and meaningful input from students can be critical in the success of such teaching evaluation systems. Nevertheless, very few studies have looked into students' perception of the teaching evaluation systems and their motivation to participate. This study employs expectancy theory to evaluate some key factors that motivate students to participate in the teaching evaluation process. The results show that students generally consider an improvement in teaching to be the most attractive outcome of a teaching evaluation system. The second most attractive outcome was using teaching evaluations to improve course content and format. Using teaching evaluations for a professor's tenure, promotion and salary rise decisions and making the results of evaluations available for students' decisions on course and instructor selection were less important from the students' standpoint. Students' motivation to participate in teaching evaluations is also impacted significantly by their expectation that they will be able to provide meaningful feedback. Since quality student input is an essential antecedent of meaningful student evaluations of teaching effectiveness, the results of this study should be considered thoughtfully as the evaluation system is designed, implemented, and operated.

Spencer, K. & Schmelkin, L. P. (2002) "Student Perspectives on Teaching and its Evaluation." *Assessment & Evaluation in higher Education, 27* (5) 397-409.

> The research on student ratings of instruction, while voluminous, has had minimal focus on the perceptions of the students who do the ratings. The current study explored student perspectives on course and teacher ratings as well as some issues related to teaching effectiveness and faculty roles. It was found that students are generally willing to do evaluations and to provide feedback, and have no particular fear of repercussions. However, they have little confidence that faculty or administrators pay attention to the results, and do not even consult the ratings themselves. The students view teaching and advising as the most important roles that should be played by faculty, yet project that faculty, while also viewing teaching as the most important, would rank research about the more student-interactive advising. Canonical correlations among various scales reveal a strong emphasis on such issues of the importance of faculty respect for student views.