Strategies for Student Participation: Increasing SELFI Response Rates

Student feedback is a powerful source of information about how students feel regarding their learning experiences and the quality of instruction at UND

One of the biggest concerns of transitioning to an online course evaluation system is that of response rates. UND is trying to be creative and implement strategies designed to increase response rates. The most crucial element to increasing course evaluation response rates is through creating a campus culture that is aware of the importance of course evaluations in evaluating curricular trends and improving teaching effectiveness. In order to meet course evaluation response rate goals, faculty involvement is crucial.

Some identified best practices that have been proven to be effective at increasing course evaluation response rates include:

Encourage Student Feedback & Show that Evaluation Matters to You, Your Department, and the University as a whole

- Research suggests that frequent reminders and communication with students about your own value for course evaluations and how you will use them is vital to ensuring adequate response rates (Ballantyne, 2003; Gaillard et al., 2006; Norris & Conn, 2005)
  - Tell students of a change you have made as a result of feedback received on a course evaluation or identify something you continue to do (assignment or activity) based on positive student responses.
- Students are more likely to respond if they know how their evaluations will be used and what decisions their responses will influence. The largest factor for not completing evaluations is that students believe the evaluations will not result in change or would not benefit them (Hatfield & Coyle 2013).
  - Let students know that others at UND read and consider their feedback in promotion and tenure decisions, program/curriculum review,

Communicate

- Communicate the value, security, and importance of SELFI with your students
- Announce the online evaluation in class and spend a few minutes discussing it. A conversation about the evaluation can help you establish rapport with your students. Discussing how to provide constructive feedback and what sorts of responses are helpful for you, and why, can help students understand your teaching style and course outcomes and can help improve the usefulness of the results to you and to your teaching.
- Add a paragraph to your course syllabus about the online course evaluation and the include course evaluation dates to your class schedule/course outline
- Create a specific Blackboard announcement about the evaluation

- Send out a personal reminder/request to your students and Promote completion of evaluations during the evaluation period
- Check your response rates by logging in to the system (you will receive an email with log in information), then announce the response rate to your class. This helps encourage other students to complete.
- Instructors should assure students that individual responses on the course evaluations cannot be traced back to them; the online system is designed to protect their anonymity (the responses are separated from their name/email address) and only aggregated summaries are given instructors after final grades have been posted.

Make it easy for students

Faculty now have more options regarding how to "administer" the evaluation. Response rates will be higher if students are given time to complete the evaluations during class. Tell your students when you plan to administer your course evaluation in class and ask them to bring their internet-enabled laptop, tablet, or smartphone to class in order to complete the evaluation; or you may prefer to reserve a computer lab during class time to complete the evaluations

- Pick a day during the open course evaluation dates with peak attendance. Administer at the start of class instead of the end.

Provide an incentive

Response rates improve dramatically when a completion incentive is offered (Anderson, Cain & Bird, 2005)

- Providing extra credit or participation points to those who complete the course evaluation by the deadline.
  - Nulty (2008) found that "when grade incentive [as low as a quarter of 1%] was applied, the response rates for both online and on-paper surveys were high and almost identical (86.67% and 86.99% respectively)" (p. 303).
- Hold additional study/review sessions, if the class response rate exceeds a target.

References

Anderson, H. M., Cain, J., & Bird, E. (2005). Online student course evaluations: Review of literature and a plot study. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 69(1), 34-43.

Ballantyne, C.S. (2003). Online evaluations of teaching: An examination of current practice and considerations for the future. In D. L. Sorenson & T. D. Johnson (Eds.), New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Online students ratings of instruction (pp. 103-112). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Gaillard, F., Mitchell, S, & Kavota, V. (2006). Students, Faculty, and Administrators' Perception Of Students' Evaluations Of Faculty In Higher Education Business Schools. Journal of College Teaching & Learning, 3(8): 77-90.

Hatfield, C. L., & Coyle, E. A. (2013). Factors That Influence Student Completion of Course and Faculty Evaluations. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 77(2), 27. http://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe77227.

Norris, J., & Conn, C. (2005). Investigating Strategies for Increasing Student Response Rates to Online- Delivered Course Evaluations. Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 6: 13-29.

Nulty, D. (2008). The adequacy of response rates to online and paper surveys: what can be done?. *Assessment & Evaluation In Higher Education*, 33(3), 301-314. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602930701293231.