



Online Course Evaluation: If You Build It, Some Will Come

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Agenda

- Brief history of course evaluation at Brandeis
- State of existing service at beginning of project, Fall 2006
- Pilot Spring 2007
- Where we are now
- Challenges for the future



About Brandeis

- Founded 1948; Liberal Arts / Research University
- 3200 undergrads in the College of Arts and Sciences, 2100 graduate students
- 500+ faculty



Course Evaluations at Brandeis

- Began in fall 1985
- Undergraduate courses in Arts and Sciences
- Initially only Instructors were evaluated
- 1994 Teaching Assistant form introduced
- 1996 form to evaluate Physical Education courses and instructors included.



Course evaluations are used:

- By professors to improve their teaching
- By students through the Student Union Course Evaluation Guide to select courses
- By deans, department chairs, and program chairs to evaluate faculty
- By departments and committees to review candidates for promotion and tenure
- By graduate students as they apply for teaching positions



Overview of service - Fall 2006

- Provost asks LTS to bring service online
- 920 courses evaluated each semester
- 525 instructors and 225 TAs evaluated
- 30,000 paper forms scanned each semester
- Newly designed survey instrument
- Temporary database created



Pilot Project - Spring 2007

- Built as a “bolt-on” to our SIS – PeopleSoft
- Classes, enrollment, access - built in!
- Limited pilot
 - 80 classes
 - 50 faculty
 - 1600 enrollment
- Limited to instructor evaluations only



Little bit about design...

- Created flexible data structure to accommodate */any/* survey instrument
- Could be used to conduct other student surveys in PeopleSoft



Pilot project prompted review

- What courses are eligible for evaluation?
- Courses with low enrollment?
- Should graduate level courses be evaluated? Should the decision to evaluate lie within the department?
- Who should have access to individual instructor reports? Department Chairs? Program Chairs?
- What about aggregate data?
- What constitutes a TA?
- Should undergraduate TAs be evaluated as well as graduate Teaching Fellows?



Fall 2007 - first semester fully online

- All undergraduate courses evaluated
- All graduate schools could choose which courses would participate
- Included module courses, Rabb Graduate GPS courses
- Massive PR campaign to encourage student participation



A little bit about our survey instrument...

- Instructor form includes 32 multiple choice questions and three narrative questions
- These questions are broken into 6 categories
 - Course structure and grading
 - Student responsibilities
 - Instructor responsibilities and skills
 - Responsiveness of Instructor
 - Contribution to learning
 - Overall quality of the course
- TA and Phys Ed Forms



A little bit about our reporting...

- Three standard reports
 - An **individual detail report** for instructors, TAs, and Phys Ed instructors
 - **Departmental Mean Summary Reports** – for Instructors and TAs – provides departmental mean for each question
 - **Instructor** or Teaching Assistant **Mean Summary Reports** - summary of each instructor for the six evaluation categories on the form.

Where are we now

- 70% response rate across all schools.
- Course evaluations have a higher prominence.
- The Provost Committee to inform policy.
- Student Union working with LTS to enhance / improve student run course evaluation guide.
- Online course evaluations are:
 - Greener!
 - Flexible
 - Efficient

Upcoming Challenges

- Should we use access to final grades to increase response rate?
- How do we allow faculty members to customize questions while still maintaining a core of data that can be used for comparison purposes?
- How can we provide evaluations for our multiple summer sessions?
- Does a lower response rate have any actual effect on the evaluation data?
- Reporting?



Course Evaluation Office

<http://www.brandeis.edu/course-eval/>

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