

Taskforce on the SAIS / End of Course Evaluation

12/10/14

Background:

Provost Susan Martin formed the taskforce at the start of the fall semester, 2014, and charged the committee with examining the SAIS and other EOCs (end-of-course evaluations) for effectiveness and ease of use by students and faculty.

The creation of the taskforce was prompted by the March 2013 report from the taskforce on teaching evaluation, particularly item #2:

Provide a pared down student assessment system to include good teaching indicators (IV)

- Identify indicators of good teaching from the literature and avoid repetition
- **Revise SAIS (or develop a new system of student evaluations) to shorten number of questions and define terms being measured**

The Taskforce on the SAIS is comprised of Ralph Brockett, Phillip Daves, Erin Hunter, Martin Leamon (student representative), Holly Mercer, Elizabeth Pemberton, Lloyd Rinehart, and Taimi Olsen, chair.

Research:

What we've accomplished:

1. Reviewed the history of the SAIS, and current online implementation (see appendices),
2. Reviewed information on 12 SUG (Southern Universities Group) schools (see appendices). Contacted resources in SUG and POD (faculty developers) for input.
3. Examined the processes and surveys (and often called) the following UT's Top 25 schools: Auburn, Iowa State, Georgia, Michigan, MSU, Ohio, Virginia, and UNC-CH—as well as reviewed information on most of the others in the Top 25 list (see appendices).

4. Held an online meeting with [Campus Labs](#) representative and [IDEA Center](#) representative (with follow-up conversations) about their services, looking closely at the IDEA center options, including reviewing the instrument online. Received a price quote. (See second document).
5. Examined the SALG instrument online (salgsite.org).
6. E. Pemberton conversed several times with staff at the University of Washington to verify that we can change, delete, and add questions to their survey, with notification. Also verified that their new survey is in reality the existing forms in an online delivery system.
7. Looked at research from, and experiences of, other schools on the issue of completion rates by referring to the literature, including the recently published book *Effective Evaluation of Teaching: A Guide for Faculty and Administrators* (Kite, 2012). See references below and appendix 6.

Chair:

- Met with IDEA Center president at the POD (Professional and Organizational Developers Organization) Conference (Nov. 9).
- Also met with Scantron and with [IOTA solutions](#) representatives at the SACS annual conference (Dec 8). Had follow-up emails and conversations with both, including extensive phone conversation with IOTA representative. See second document for information and price quote on IOTA “MyClass Evaluations” and for sample forms. Scantron also has a sample form:

http://ezworkhub.net/Scantron/Leadature/doc/d973/CC_SampleInstructorReport.pdf/).

Findings:

1. The issue of completion rates is not connected to the instrument per se; everyone is wrestling with this issue. The most common approaches are to
 - a. survey students in class (using their own devices)
 - b. to incentivize the process with early access to grades or some kind of “bonus points.”

2. Most schools had surveys of similar lengths and some had longer surveys. On the whole, very few were much shorter.
3. There is no one commercial instrument that is popular; only one SUC school uses SAIS.
4. Many schools have “home grown” instruments and several have moved to allowing colleges—and departments—create their own evaluation forms. Nine SUC schools use “homegrown” instruments. A few of these required four or five “core” questions but otherwise the evaluations were decentralized. Some institutions don’t require a core (UNC, Georgia).
5. The IDEA instrument is interesting because of the focus on course learning outcomes, which IDEA tracks. The other intriguing piece was the “long” form which investigates pedagogical approaches. It might be useful to departments on occasion (for program reviews, for instance) and to faculty approaching tenure and promotion.
6. Many surveys ask students questions about their preparation/motivation for class and ask about student learning outcomes. We have observed that the current SAIS does not—and that some of the questions are more specific than are found on other surveys (such as professor’s speaking voice).

Preface to Recommendations:

The committee recognizes the need for the UTK campus to use a method of course evaluation that is valued by faculty and students and that is useful in terms of course delivery improvement and evaluation. We also recognize the need to address end-of-course evaluations in the least divisive way possible, particularly given the other current demands on faculty, such as re-accreditation.

The “problems” with the SAIS are complex. Although we do not have concrete data, the general concern on campus is that the SAIS is too long and that students are not motivated to fill out the assessment. Also of concern is the lack of a “culture of assessment” among faculty in regards to the use of the SAIS.

A confounding factor is the possible existence of myths as opposed to research-based knowledge not only on this campus but nation-wide. In general, faculty members make assumptions about student attitudes and about the value of student input. In reality, students have a range of attitudes towards the SAIS (according to our student representative, who did a quick polling of peers and discussed this issue with the committee). Many students do recognize their responsibility in giving feedback. Also, the literature is clear that faculty and campus culture can influence students' attitudes positively.

Another concern is with online delivery and completion rates. Several methods are suggested in the literature to address these concerns, but the campus culture may be impacting response rates as well.

A final concern is with the use of, and understanding of, SAIS by faculty and program heads. From our collective experiences, we believe that there are many programs that focus on only the first two numbers (on the course and professor "overall"), to the point of ignoring other questions (see recommendations in Appendix 6). Also, there is no clear pattern of use of student comments. However, these uses of SAIS are at odds with the literature.

After over 2,000 research articles published on student assessment of courses, several researchers have identified two aspects as most important to learning: the "skills" and organization of the faculty member and the connection (the communication and support) of the faculty with the students (Addison & Stowell, in Kite, 2012). These two values are represented in a range of SAIS questions but faculty are not aware of this research.

Finally, it may be that faculty find the form difficult to read and interpret—and apply. One statistics professor translates SAIS into bar graphs so that he can read it more easily. He has allowed the committee to view his graphs (see appendices). At the Tenn TLC, consultations regularly include interpretation of SAIS scores.

Recommendations:

1. **Revise the SAIS in conjunction with other changes.** The taskforce recognizes that continuing to use SAIS would be of benefit to UTK, because there is no charge for the forms, even if it is revised. Also, there would be less disruptive change on campus, if the instrument is kept. However, in our review of other instruments, the committee recognizes that there are weaknesses in the form.

Therefore, **we recommend the appointment of a small group of faculty with specialized knowledge, along with representatives from OIRA, among other units, to suggest additions / deletions for the SAIS, with more emphasis on student learning outcomes.** Other surveys can serve to guide that process. It is possible to conflate some of the SAIS questions about professor presentation skills so that room could be left for those questions, as well as room for departmental questions.

In addition, the committee recommends that a small committee be formed to look further at the delivery and reporting options cited below, either commercial products or in-house changes. Better reporting and analysis of reports will be of great benefit to faculty and departments.

2. **As an alternative, the committee suggests that UT adopt a commercial product. One option is the IOTA solutions, “MyClassEvaluations” product. UTK can revise and load the SAIS forms into this system** or create a new form from their database of questions. This product has different advantages from Campus Labs. It can load student information so that students log on through Blackboard-- thus eliminating demographic questions. The reporting and analysis is excellent, in ways that are different from the IDEA center (below). The graphs are clear and the data is aggregated. Faculty can look at data in several different ways. Plus, IOTA uses an algorithm to analyze student comments. And finally, it also gives a place for faculty to respond. A price quote and

information is provided.

3. **A second product of interest is the Campus Labs/IDEA center product.** There is a price quote provided. The short form could be used and perhaps the long form on occasion. It does allow for a faculty feedback loop, and it asks about student learning. This is a more expensive option (since the SAIS is free, even with some changes) but the advantage is that the instrument does not have to be built and it can be introduced to the faculty as “new.” The IDEA instrument is adapted, somewhat, to the learning goals of each class. The information is also reported in ways that could be useful to faculty. For instance, the scores are adjusted depending on whether it is a required Gen Ed course versus a Majors course.
4. **Another alternative is to create better in-house reporting,** so that faculty can receive more readable graphs and get comparison numbers with their departments, colleges, and the campus. Also a feedback loop—for which the faculty member also comments on the course—would be helpful. According to Director Denise Gardner, this is all possible within her office.
5. **The issue of response rates can continue to be addressed but as a separate issue.** The introduction of a “new” survey—whether a modified SAIS or a new product—can be used as a time to emphasize the role of faculty in this. Rates can be increased if surveys are filled out during class, for instance. Additionally, response rates on campus continue to improve. Elizabeth Pemberton reports that this semester: “we had a 47% overall response rate this semester, which is the second highest response rate ever with online evaluations. Some of the credit goes to the 100% Certificate of Completion (introduced this semester) that students receive when they’ve done all of their evaluations, not just the ones where instructors gave them an incentive to do so. “
6. **We recommend that the Provost’s office or committee, or the Teaching Council and Faculty Senate receive an annual report of the SAIS process.** Perhaps the biggest

problem is that there is no faculty entity on campus that “owns” and oversees the SAIS process. Originally the Faculty Senate and Teaching Council acted in that capacity but turnover and other issues related to teaching resulted in less focus on SAIS. OIRA feels strongly that the role of that office is to act as the facilitator of the process balancing the needs of students, instructors and departmental personnel. It operates on guidelines set by the Faculty Senate and Teaching Council fifteen years ago for a paper-based system.

In conclusion, faculty members need more information on how to use the SAIS for the purpose of self-evaluation as well as for P&T and annual review. We need to work to develop a culture of assessment not only in terms of annual assessment but also in the use of the end-of-course evaluations. Faculty and students need more information about why course evaluation is important. Students will take the process more seriously if they hear from faculty about how it is used.

Selected References

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APPENDICES

Overview of SAIS

Teaching evaluation at the University of Tennessee began in 1987 with an ad hoc committee of the University of Tennessee's Faculty Senate calling for the implementation of a process of reviewing teaching performance. The assessment would consist of two parts. The first would be a survey of students in courses taught by the instructor under review and the second part would consist of a peer component. By February of 1989 a second Faculty Senate committee introduced the original CTEP (Chancellor's Teaching Evaluation Project) form to address the first part of the review of teaching performance. This form had six common "CTEP" questions rating an instructor's effectiveness on a three point Likert scale. While department heads and faculty grudgingly accepted the concept of student evaluation of teaching, the execution of the first few semesters was a disaster due to results being delayed by months. In addition, departments and instructors had the opportunity to conduct similar evaluations using their own questions as well as instruments from the Student Government Association and the Learning Resource Center. The Teaching Council revised the form for Fall of 1991 to include a section that could be used by departments for questions or surveys in addition to the six CTEP questions. The Student Government Association, working with the Faculty Senate, incorporated new questions in 1993, resulting in another revision of the form.

During this time there was much discussion about how the results of this growing evaluative tool would be used. The Faculty Senate stood by the initial goal of assisting instructors in improving their teaching. Since the program was developed as part of a review of an instructor's teaching which was subsequently used for tenure and promotion decisions, administrators saw the value of CTEP results. And when the Student Government Association successfully incorporated their questions into the instrument, their objective of providing students with information about instructors for the purpose of course selection added another duty to the CTEP mission. By 1994 a diverse group at the university began the search for an instrument that would best address the multiple goals of the teaching evaluation process. The decision was made to adopt the University of Washington's Instructional Evaluation System, which consisted of eight forms designed for a variety of courses. At that time the CTEP task force said of the program: "we have located an assessment system that has been expertly designed and validated and has been in use for twenty years at a university comparable in size and type to UTK." While the acronym remained the same, the name was changed to the Campus Teaching Evaluation Program.

When the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees approved a post-tenure review of faculty in June 1998, another examination of the CTEP process was set in motion. This time the task force did a comprehensive review; talking to peer institutions, conducting a survey of faculty and instructors at UTK, meeting with student leaders, completing a literature review of student ratings of instruction and revisiting the University of Washington's Instructional Assessment System (which had made significant changes to their evaluation system). The decision was made in March of 2000 to implement major changes to the program. The name was changed from the Campus Teaching Evaluation Program to the Student Assessment of Instruction System (SAIS) and replaced the old eight forms from UW with the current set of eleven forms. In addition, the practice of including percentile rankings and comparisons with department, college, and university means on the evaluation reports was abandoned and replaced with an on-line database that allows comparison of individual course means with college and university means according to the form used (the form type reflected the basic characteristics of the course and would be a useful comparative tool). (See <http://oira.tennessee.edu/sais/> and click on Comparative Means Archive on the left side of the screen.) The mandate for the online system came from this task force as well. Finally, there were several items relating to educating faculty, department heads and other administrators on the use of SAIS results that have not been successfully addressed eight years later.

Southern Universities Group

Evaluation of Instruction
SUG Responses to Query of March 8, 2011
 Lewis Carson, NC State University

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Institution	What population do you survey?	How do you survey ?	What is the response rate?	Are there incentives or mandates to the students to participate?	If there are incentives are they class based (individual faculty) or university wide?	If there are participation policies or mandates, are they effective?	Does the survey window include the exam period?
University of Southern Mississippi	All classes except those exclusions identified by Department Chair (Dissertation, Thesis, etc)	Home grown - web	84%	Incentives	University-Wide	No Mandates	Yes
Clemson	All classes may be surveyed	Home grown - web based	~50%	Allowed and some disciplines claim they are very effective	Individual faculty incentives are optional	Participation is required of all instructors, but there are no repercussions for failing to participate. The evaluation application has settings for automatic release of evaluations and a large majority of members use this option. However, they still must encourage students to respond	Faculty member controls whether evaluations are available during exams. The official cutoff is after grades are due, but a few even run them after that.
Mississippi State	All classes	In-house paper survey	~60%	No incentives or mandates	NA	All classes are to be evaluated. If the instructor opts out of the evaluation, a letter must be sent to my office explaining why they are not evaluation their class.	No, final exam period is not included.
Alabama	All group instruction courses w/ a minimum of 5 students. Independent study sections are excluded	Web base. UA purchased Blue from eXplorance which I consider a major mistake.	Currently low 40%	Some faculty offer extra credit to students that complete the evaluation, but it is rare	Class-based	No participation policies or mandates	No
Kentucky	All regular instruction classes are eligible. Most faculty members elect to have each of their courses evaluated. However, in their performance reviews, faculty are required only to "include the results of student appraisals for at least one semester per year." The UK IR Office handles the great majority of paper-based and online evaluations for the University, but four colleges in the Medical Center (Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Nursing) and a couple of departments conduct their own online evaluations	Most of our evaluations use paper, but a growing number of our evaluations are conducted online using SNAP survey software. SNAP does not have the functionality that many course evaluation software packages have. Last fall, we conducted a small pilot using BlackBoard (Bb) Outcomes, which is very new to our campus. This pilot had a number of glitches, and we have postponed further piloting of Bb Outcomes until the fall. The Medical Center colleges use CourseEval to administer their evaluations.	The response rate is roughly 68% for paper evaluations and 48% for online evaluations. The issue of poor response rates for online evaluations continues to be a concern on our campus. Two colleges that used our online evaluations last fall have gone back to paper-based evaluations this spring	Currently, there are no incentives or mandates for student participation for the course evaluations coordinated by the IR office. However, the Medical Center colleges require their students to participate in online course evaluations. In a couple of these colleges, students can decline participation by checking an 'opt out' box at the beginning of the evaluation form. To deal with procedural and technical issues involving online course evaluations, we formed a university-wide Committee on Online Course Evaluations last year. The Committee's report is still in draft form, but it is likely that the report will recommend a university-wide drawing and awarding of incentives or prizes for students who participate in online course evaluations. The Committee is unanimous in its opposition to the awarding of extra credit by instructors. However, we do know of instances where this has occurred during the Bb pilot project.	The Medical Center colleges' mandated participation appears to be working. The response rates for 2009-10 ranged from 97% to 100%	The survey window does not include the exam period. About a year ago, we made the mistake of keeping the evaluation open during the exam period. Our thinking was that grades would not be delivered to the Registrar until the following Monday so students wouldn't be able to seek retribution for poor grades by assigning lower ratings to a professor. We hadn't anticipated that some professors would grade final exams and electronically post results several days before the grades were sent to the Registrar. As a result, one department was furious with our office because electronically posting final course grades during the exam period is a common practice.	

Southern Universities Group

Institution	What population do you survey?	How do you survey ?	What is the response rate?	Are there incentives or mandates to the students to participate?	If there are incentives are they class based (individual faculty) or university wide?	If there are participation policies or mandates, are they effective?	Does the survey window include the exam period?
South Carolina	Varies	Varies, Education example is web-based	Varies	Individual by campus and department	Individual by campus and department	Individual by campus and department	Individual by campus and department
West Virginia	All 'regular' UG courses. (not usually labs, recitations, internships, special topics,...)	IT developed in-house, paper-based or electronic forms available	No one has officially measured it but evidence suggests very high response rate	No incentive needed, students look forward to completing the SEI			sometimes (Usually last class meeting --particularly if there is no final, or if exam is a large dept event.)
Oklahoma	All regular instruction classes	Home-grown web-based	56%	iPad random drawing	Currently University-wide, considering college-level	None, N?A	No, close before exams
Texas Tech	All lectures courses but add others at the request of each individual dept	Face-to-face courses: paper; Distance Ed - web.	Face-to-face: 78%	No	N/A	Must be conducted at least once each academic year by each faculty member using the standard university	No, close before exams
Ga Tech	All registered students are surveyed for each course that they are enrolled in (with a few exceptions of independent study, etc.)	Currently: web, in house Moving to: web, Digital Measures this summer	It hovers around 50%	Incentives - students get access to results for classes that have at least a 30% response rate (and at least 5 responses). We phased out more materialistic incentives. No mandates	Some faculty offer incentives if their response rate is over some threshold (like 80% or so).	N/A	Yes
Houston	All courses	All (methods)	varies	Yes in some cases		Yes	Some cases
Florida State	Undergraduate courses with a minimum enrollment of 10; graduate courses with a minimum enrollment of 5.	Evaluation instruments are available in electronic and paper formats, the instructor deciding which format will be employed.	The rate (electronic and paper combined) is 60%	There are no policies regarding either incentives or mandates. Some professors do give a participation point or points for completing the course evaluation online, but we have no way of measuring how many do that or how much credit can thereby be earned.	No	No policies nor mandates for student participation. Administration is mandatory for courses with the enrollments specified above.	No
North Carolina	Departments/Schools self select.	OIRA administers web based instruments (Digital Measures). However, a variety of other methods are used on campus.	High 60's percentile	No	N/A	No policies or mandates for student/faculty participation	Choice of department/school
Louisiana State	All undergraduate classes; most graduate classes	Home-grown paper and pencil and home-grown web-based, college specific	varies by academic department	Allowed but rarely used	Individual faculty incentives are optional	No Mandates	No, close before exams
Florida	Most three and four credit hour course sections	We are piloting some colleges with an in-house online systems, others are using bubble sheets and scanning	Very high for bubble sheets - about 30% to 40% for online		Not yet, but we may need them for the online	We hope to make the online System mandatory next year	No

Southern Universities Group

Institution	What population do you survey?	How do you survey ?	What is the response rate?	Are there incentives or mandates to the students to participate?	If there are incentives are they class based (individual faculty) or university wide?	If there are participation policies or mandates, are they effective?	Does the survey window include the exam period?
Arkansas	All classes with minimum of 5 students	Piloting a web-based evaluation in Marketing Department, a couple of Education Technology web-based courses, and a large Sociology course this term. We have purchased a software system, CourseEval, which has been used by another institution with the same questions we are using (Purdue) and have permission to build in bank of questions which have been used both by Purdue and Univ. of Arkansas for a number of years. We're limiting the evaluation to 18 questions, 3 the same across the entire university, 5 for the entire college, 5 for the academic program, and 5 chosen by the individual instructor. The rest of the campus will be doing the paper version we've been using for many, many years with hopes of moving online in Fall 2011 or Spring 2012	Our response rate on the current paper and pencil evaluation university wide is about 90%. There is concern about lower rates for web evaluations that aren't done in the class	None at present but much interest in what others are doing along these lines	n/a	n/a	The survey window for the current paper/pencil version is the 13th week in order to get forms processed and results to faculty in a timely manner, but give students time to assess full course. This time frame has been the subject of much discussion. I think we'll be factoring this in as we go through the pilot to create the window of response times. Currently, the evaluations are administered in the classroom during this week -- generally speaking.
Tennessee	All courses with more than 5 students enrolled.	Currently web is the default with a paper option, by Fall of 2011 will be all web	Our web response rate varies by course from 0 to 100, but overall is about 45%. We have tried to put some of the responsibility of the response rate on the instructor. They have the ability to monitor response rates (number of surveys that have been completed) while the system is open	Instructors may offer incentives, are currently considering a system-wide incentive of posting grades early for students who have completed their surveys	Please see question 4		For Fall semester it does because we have to factor in the Thanksgiving break, Spring semester it does not
Georgia	All classes	Varies by school and college and instructor	We do not collect this data centrally	Varies by instructor	Class-based	Units are required to include four common questions and may add additional questions using the same scale. See policy: http://provost.uga.edu/index.php/policies-procedures/academic/academic-affairs/4-general-policies/407-miscellaneous-course-policies/407-16-end-of-term-course-evaluations/	No
NC State	All regular instruction classes	Home-grown web-based	~50%	Allowed but rarely used	Individual faculty incentives are optional	No mandates	No, close before exams

Question: can you get a sample of their instrument.

Top 25 List

Information not listed with a name is provided by Elizabeth Pemberton.

1. **Auburn:** (link is to a guide to accessing reports for instructors, may not show all questions)
http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/pdf/AU%20eValuate%20Reports%20User%20Guide.pdf (Ralph Brockett)
2. **Clemson:** <http://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/olli/documents/EvaluationforInstructors.pdf>
3. **Iowa State:** <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/set/effective.html#instruments> (instructions for instruments)
(Holly Mercer)
From the website: ISU uses Class Climate course evaluation feedback system from Scantron. There is a recommended template. It is based on the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Sample Rubric developed by ISU's Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) in 2007. There are course evaluation subunit administrators who assist faculty with implementing the course evaluations. Instructors are not required to use the SET questions. They can also modify them, as the Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering department has done: http://www.celt.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/set/ABE_SEI.pdf.
Online survey example (SET Rubric) http://www.celt.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/classclimate/web_format_ISU_SET_Sample_Questions_Class_Climate.pdf
Instant reporting features http://www.celt.iastate.edu/pdfs-docs/classclimate/ISU_Demonstration_Course.pdf
More about ISU's implementation of Class Climate http://www.celt.iastate.edu/elearning/?page_id=4859
4. **Georgia:** (link is to a guide on creating evaluations for instructors, does not show questions, but instructs faculty to preview program's pre-defined questions and customize the evaluation by adding additional questions)
http://www.coe.uga.edu/oit/files/2012/03/How_to_Create_and_View_Online_Course_Evaluations.pdf
(Taimi Olsen)

<http://provost.uga.edu/index.php/policies-procedures/academic/academic-affairs/4-general-policies/407-miscellaneous-course-policies/407-16-end-of-term-course-evaluations/>

Students must be given the opportunity to complete an end-of-term course evaluation.

Common Course Evaluations and Use of Common Scale

Instructors will include the following items in their end-of-term course evaluations and use a common scale:

1. *Was this course required for your degree?*

(1) No, not required (2) Yes, required

2. *On average, how many hours per week did you devote to this course outside of class?*

(1) 0-1 hours (2) 2-3 hours (3) 4-5 hours (4) 6-7 hours (5) 8 hours or more

3. *Assignments and activities were useful for helping me learn.*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. *This course challenged me to think and learn.*

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Procedure Instructors may include additional items designed to measure teaching effectiveness in their disciplines. All items will use a common scale from 1 to 5, 5 being highest. Items on the questionnaire should be positive statements.

Rationale: One of the Task Force for General Education and Student Learning recommendations (II.2.4) was to establish an online course evaluation system and a uniform set of questions for all University undergraduate courses. The Task Force expressed concern over the lack of uniformity among different departments' end-of-course evaluations and the lack of questions on academic rigor. Establishing comprehensive and uniform end-of-course evaluations, but allowing for course-specific questions, will provide an effective tool to assess undergraduate courses and the degree of academic rigor.

Results of the End-of-Term Course Evaluations

Recommendation:

During the one-year trial period the numerical results for the common questions in end-of-term course evaluations will not be published online. Course evaluation comments will not be published online.

Procedure:

An online process will be developed to facilitate collection of the common questions. The results will be available internally for initial assessment. Results will be available for individual courses but not for individual faculty. After results have been compiled for two semesters, the results will be available to UCC for evaluation and consideration. The UCC will determine how to proceed and whether or not to publish numerical results for the common questions.

Rationale:

The University would like a measure of rigor for all courses and to be able to compare results from the course evaluations with the NSSE results. Students want to be able to see the common course evaluation results.

5. **Michigan State:** (link is to FAQ for departments and instructors) <https://sirsonline.msu.edu/FAQ.asp#id-2>
(Lloyd Rinehart)

From Deborah DeZure, Assistant Provost for Faculty and Organizational Development
Michigan State University

Thank you for writing. There are two sources of information about MSU practices that I would like to suggest: Associate Provost Doug Estry (estry@msu.edu) whose office oversees and tracks the student ratings of instruction forms and Elizabeth Simmons (esimmons@msu.edu) in Lyman Briggs College which developed its own student ratings forms. Both Doug Estry or his designee (perhaps Sandra Walther) and Elizabeth Simmons or her designee (she is currently on an ACE Fellowship) may be able to provide the type of information you seek. I have copied both of them on this email and hope that they can respond or suggest another source of information in their respective units.

6. **Indiana:** (link is to site, question bank can be found in the Multi-Op Manual pdf)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~best/bweb3/services/course-evaluations-2/>

7. **NC State:** <http://upa.ncsu.edu/eval/clev/course-eval/eval-instr>

8. **Ohio State:** <http://registrar.osu.edu/faculty/sei/seiitems.pdf>

(Erin Hardin)

Are there any techniques to improve my response rate?

Instructors have reported that the following techniques have improved their response rates:

- allowing time during class to complete the evaluation
- having electronic devices (computers, phones, etc.) available to do the evaluation
- offering a small amount of extra credit when a defined number of students (e.g. 90% of students) complete the evaluation (note: SEI information is never released at a student level; we cannot tell you which students have completed the SEI)
- explaining how you use SEI information to modify instruction
- explaining the role of the SEI in performance and tenure reviews

9. **Texas A&M:** (link is to manual for evaluation) <http://dars.tamu.edu/dars/files/c8/c82acadb-25e1-4332-b3b0-7cc08f5446b6.pdf>

10. **Purdue:** (link is to question bank) <http://www.purdue.edu/cie/Website%20CourseEval/courseeval/catalog.pdf>

11. **UMD College Park:** https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEval/univ_items.shtml

12. **Pittsburgh:** (link is to site that links to sample surveys) <http://omet.pitt.edu/evaluation-teaching/sample-surveys>

13. **Virginia:** (link is to site that explains process, including seven required questions)

<http://its.virginia.edu/courseevals/>

(Elizabeth Pemberton)

14. **Penn State:** http://www.srte.psu.edu/SRTE_Items/

15. **Rutgers:** (link is to sample online form) <http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/sirs/osirsPreview.html>

16. **UC Davis:** Each department had their own instruments but are in the process to converting to an online site.

They did a similar study, you can click on an institution's logo to see their answers to UC Davis' questions:

<http://ace-comm.ucdavis.edu/results-menu>

17. **UNC Chapel Hill:** <http://oira.unc.edu/files/2013/04/spring-2011-basic-instrument.pdf>

(Philip Daves)

I spoke with UNC's director of assessment, Larry Mayes, who said that they also have terrible response rates-- about 40%, and this response rate ranges all over the map from 0% to 100%. They find that faculty who bug the students over and over get a higher response rate. And any incentives faculty use are small.

They are going to a new system next year in which each department or unit owns the assessment process. Each department or unit will develop and administer its own assessment, with the help of some software their IT department has developed. Their hope is that this ownership will improve the department's interest in getting better response rates, and better more appropriate questions.

18. **Minnesota:** <http://eval.umn.edu/forms/srt.pdf>

19. **UC Santa Barbara:** (links to description of the process, mentions an item pool for instructors to choose from)
<http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/esci>

20. **Illinois:** <http://cte.illinois.edu/teacheval/ices/pdf/questfront.pdf>

21. **UT Austin:** (link to linkable list of forms used) http://ctl.utexas.edu/services/CIS/faculty_staff/survey_options

22. **Wisconsin:** (link to process for evaluations) <http://testing.wisc.edu/onlinecourseevals.html>

23. **UCLA:** <http://www2.oid.ucla.edu/units/eip/online-evaluations/online-evaluation-form-views>

24. **Michigan:** instructors make their own surveys from templates and question banks, we aren't able to access either

25. **Washington:** (this is the same instrument used at UT) http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/course_eval/,
can also preview new IASystem video here:
http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/course_eval/IASystem/iasystem_video_mp4.mp4

26. **UC Berkeley:** Requires two questions (noted below) others are unique to department and/or instructor
- (1) "Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the overall teaching effectiveness of this instructor?"
 - (2) "Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of this course?"

From: [Pemberton, Elizabeth](#)
To: [Olsen, Taimi Anne](#)
Subject: University of Washington
Date: Wednesday, November 20, 2013 1:34:04 PM

Taimi,

I received a letter from the University of Washington yesterday that I am interpreting as giving us the ability to edit the current SAIS instrument.

Here's what it says:

Provided the University of Tennessee (Tennessee) agrees to the following conditions, the University of Washington (UW) grants a limited non-exclusive, non-transferable permission to Tennessee to use the UW Instructional Assessment System Instruments (Instruments) and individual items on the Instruments for its internal non-commercial purposes. The permission includes redacting questions/items from the current IAS instruments to make them shorter as may be needed by the University of Tennessee's SAIS tools as long as Tennessee undertakes to:

1. Attribute the instruments to UW as the copyright owner;
2. Send a copy of the modified instruments to the UW's Office of Educational Assessment for review;
3. Remove the UW attribution if in UW's sole discretion, the modification of the Instrument substantially changes the structure of the Instruments or no longer reflects UW's current thinking or methodology;
4. Allow UW to use any modification of the Instruments for its purposes with no fee and no royalty.

I don't know if that changes the report we send to the Provost, but wanted to let you know that editing is an option.

Elizabeth Pemberton
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
2516 Dunford Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996-4060

Phone: (865) 974-4373

From: [Schumann, David W](#)
To: [Olsen, Taimi Anne](#)
Subject: FW: SAIS Report: Graphic: Better Color Scheme
Date: Monday, November 11, 2013 8:59:12 AM

Taimi,

Ramon has asked that you consider this. I agree with his second point. The current presentation format is very weak and not very helpful.

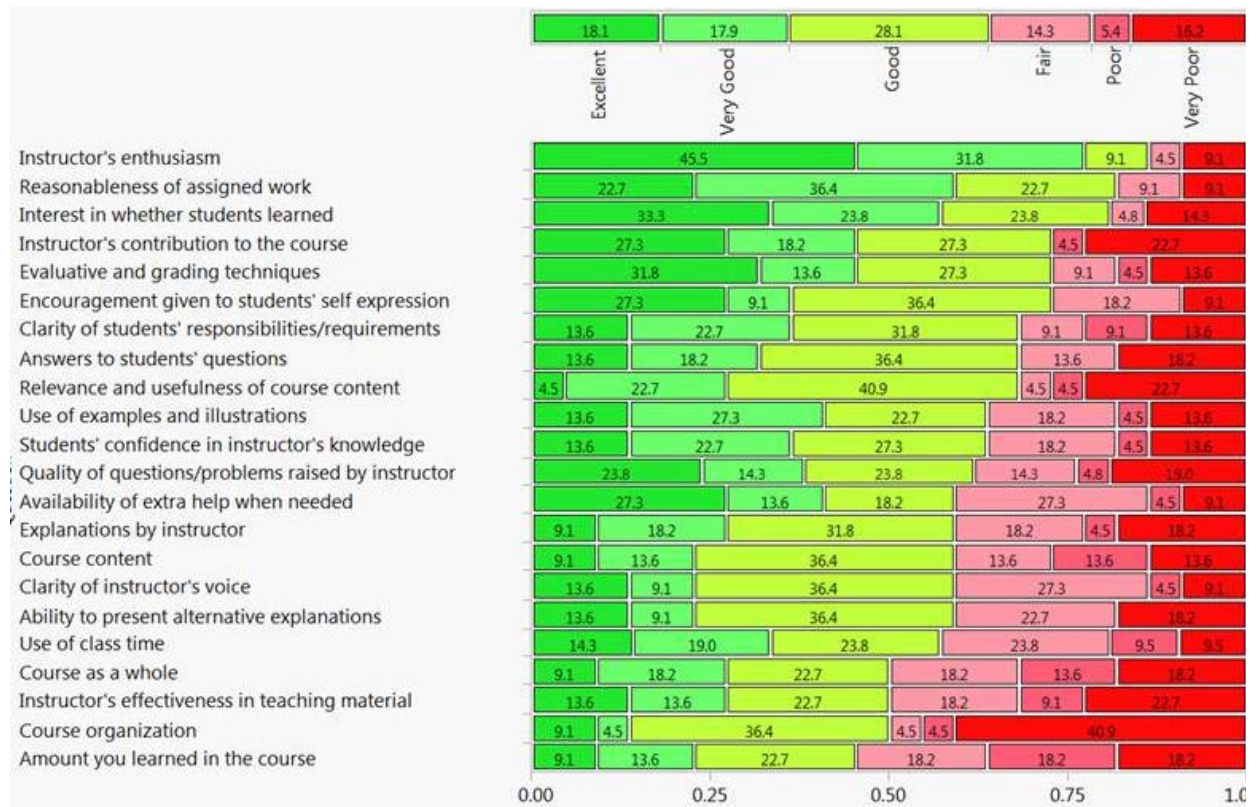
Dave

From: Leon, Ramon V (rleon)
Sent: Sunday, November 10, 2013 8:41 PM
To: Schumann, David W
Cc: Leon, Ramon V (rleon)
Subject: FW: SAIS Report: Graphic: Better Color Scheme

David,

Would you present this graphic to the committee who is looking at the SAIS evaluations? Notice that I am very pleased with the questions that are being asked. I have only two concerns:

1. SAIS does not use effective techniques for increasing the response. A very effective technique would be to raffle, say, five iPads among the students who respond.
2. The data is not presented well. Below is a graphic that Bobby and others love. Since the responses are ordered by the number of Excellent, Very Good, and Good responses it is very easy to see what areas need work: they are the ones associated with the questions at the bottom of the diagram. Further, the green colors represent the positive responses (E, VG, and G). The red color represent the negative responses (F, P, and VP). The green and red color gradations order the exact student.



Thanks,

Ramón

rleon@utk.edu

Cell: 865 773 2245

Guidelines for Interpreting Student Teaching Evaluations

Student teaching evaluations are the most commonly used measure for evaluating teaching in higher education. There are at least two purposes for evaluating teaching: to improve the teaching and to make personnel decisions (merit, retention, promotion). When using student teaching evaluations for either of these purposes, it is essential to follow certain guidelines to ensure valid interpretation of the data. The following guidelines are adapted from Theall and Franklin (1991) and Pallett (2006).¹

#1. Sufficient Response Ratio

There must be an appropriately high response ratio.² For classes with 5 to 20 students enrolled, 80% is recommended for validity; for classes with between 21 and 50 students, 75% is recommended. For still larger classes, 50% is acceptable. Data should not be considered in personnel decisions if the response rate falls below these levels.

#2. Appropriate Comparisons

Because students tend to give higher ratings to courses in their majors or electives than they do to courses required for graduation, the most appropriate comparisons are made between courses of a similar nature. For example, the Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts average would *not* be a valid comparison for a lower division American Cultures course.

#3. When Good Teaching is the Average

When interpreting an instructor's rating, it is more appropriate to look at the actual value of the rating instead of comparing it to the average rating. In other words, a good rating is still good, even when it falls below the average.

#4. Written Comments

Narrative comments are often given great consideration by administrators, but this practice is problematic. Only about 10% of students write comments (unless there is an extreme situation), and the first guideline recommends a minimum 50% response threshold. Thus decisions should not rest on a 10% sample just because the comments were written rather than given in numerical form! Student comments can be valuable for the insights they provide into classroom practice and they can guide further investigation or be used along with other data, but they should not be used by themselves to make decisions.

#5. Other considerations

- Class-size can affect ratings. Students tend to rank instructors teaching small classes (less than 10 or 15) most highly, followed by those with 16 to 35 and then those with over 100 students. Thus the least favorably rated are classes with 35 to 100 students.
- There are disciplinary differences in ratings. Humanities courses tend to be rated more highly than those in the physical sciences.

#6. One Final Point

Teaching is a complex and multi-faceted task. Therefore the evaluation of teaching requires the use of multiple measures. In addition to teaching evaluations, the use of *at least* one other measure, such as peer observation, peer review of teaching materials (syllabus, exams, assignments, etc.), course portfolios, student interviews (group or individual), and alumni surveys is recommended. Contact the Center for Teaching Excellence (310-338-2772) if you need assistance in adopting one of these alternate measures or have any questions about these guidelines.

¹ Pallett, W. "Uses and abuses of student ratings." In *Evaluating faculty performance: A practical guide to assessing teaching, research, and service*. Peter Seldin (ed.). Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing, 2006.

Theall, M. and Franklin, J. (eds.) *Effective practices for improving teaching*. New Directions in Teaching and Learning, no. 48, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

² The following describes how to compute the response ratio for a given set of forms from one section of one course. First, note the number (n) of forms returned and the number (N) of students in the class, compute the ratio n/N, and then multiply by 100% to convert the ratio to a percent. Then, for each question under consideration, from this percent subtract the percent of blank and "Not Applicable" responses. The result is the response ratio for that particular question. If the result does not meet the threshold recommended in Guideline #1 above, the data from that question should not be considered.

Some Guidelines for Creating Good Items for Student Ratings of Professors

(Compiled by Ed Nuhfer and Jackie Dewar. Examples of flawed items contributed by members of POD. Special thanks to Mike Theall and David Langley for advice. Chapter 3 of Ronald Berk's *Thirteen Strategies to Measure College Teaching*, 2006, is highly recommended for writing rating items items.)

Students can offer their authority of experience in

1. Teacher/student relationships experienced by personal performance (including rapport, respect for students, etc)
2. Experience of a supportive classroom environment and the management of that environment
3. Instructional practices they experienced (e.g. organized presentation, feedback, clarity)
4. Issues about the level of student engagement (e.g., amount of effort expended, time spent on studying, workload, and difficulty)
5. Congruence between evaluation measures (tests) and what was taught
6. Accessibility to the instructor
7. Extent to which the syllabus served as a useful guide for the course...

...if the items to elicit their experiences are well constructed.

Faculty have authority of expertise in

1. Content and what is appropriate and sufficiently current
2. Relationship of the course to the overall curriculum or program
3. What they think and feel vs. what others say they think and feel
4. Course design issues such as
 - A. Appropriateness of course objectives & outcomes
 - B. Appropriateness of teaching methodology in relation to content
 - C. Overall presentation sequence and conceptual framework of the course

...so, avoid inviting students to second-guess the faculty expertise.

EXAMPLES

1.) Don't ask students to judge characteristics beyond their experience/expertise.

Flawed Items

- a. The teacher was knowledgeable.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. This teacher respects students.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. The course objectives were appropriate.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

2.) Measure only single constructs with single brief items.

Flawed Items

- a. To what extent did this course advance ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience?
(very much some not much not at all not applicable)
- b. The instructor is punctual in meeting class and office hour responsibilities.

(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

c. Course activities (discussions, small group work, labs, projects, lectures, exams, etc.) were clearly prepared, organized, and sequenced to help students achieve course goals.

(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

3. Avoid items that can lead to ratings without regard to context.

Flawed Items

- a. If your schedule allowed it, would you take another course taught by this professor, or would you recommend the professor to someone else?
(The possible responses are Yes/No with a space to elaborate.)
- b. As a result of this course, I began to challenge the opinions of others.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

4. Avoid items that rate professors based on circumstances they cannot control.

Flawed Items

- a. I liked the time this class was offered. (Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. The classroom was comfortable. (Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

5. Avoid printing poorly crafted items that make little sense.

Flawed Items

- a. The teacher encourage students to ask ideas.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. The course was sensitive to diversity
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

6. Within reason, students should be able to read and understand any item.

Flawed Items

- a. The teacher taught at the appropriate Perry stages for this class.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. The professor's paradigm was parsimonious grading.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

7. Items should solicit first-hand information experienced by the respondent.

Flawed Items

- a. The teacher was available for help between 3:00 and 5:00 a.m.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. Students believe this class is easy.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

8. Items should avoid both nonspecific and absolute terms.

Flawed Items

- a. The instructor usually inspired me to attend class.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)
- b. Every class began promptly on time.
(Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

9. Avoid items that can have double meanings.

Flawed Items

- a. I respect this professor. (Strongly agree 5) 4 3 2 (1 Strongly disagree)

10. Scrutinize any item that does not map to an established dimension of instruction, and plan to use all information you gather for the purpose intended. (Many of the above items fail on usefulness alone. Don't mix survey items about unrelated topics into the faculty evaluation items.)