Developing CourseEvalUM: Our Process, Challenges, and New Directions

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Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment
What We’ll Cover Today
- History of the project
- Decisions made along the way
- Instrument development
- Reporting
- Administration and implementation
- Next steps

Project History
- Decentralized by college and even department
- Students interested in seeing results
- Senate action – committees, task forces, etc.
- Assigned to IRPA to design and administer
- Technical development assigned to OIT

Project History - Timeline
- April 2005: Task Force submits final recommendations to Campus Senate
- April 2006: Implementation Committee submits plan
- December 2006: Items piloted
- Summer 2007: First level of technology piloted
- December 2007: All courses participate
- May 2008: College level & multiple instructors added

Decisions
- Senate task forces envisioned dynamic system with hierarchy for university, college, department, and instructor items
- Lawyers required administrative vs. student views for personnel file reasons
- Comments go to administrators, and instructors see all
- Off-the-shelf products did not have such a system available, could develop for $$
Decisions (cont.)

- OIT heard of an open-source product being designed with these specifics, in Sakai
- Student participation key
  - 70% response rate necessary for course display
  - No access without participation
- Needed a coordinator

Instrument Development

- Senate task force suggested 16 universal items
- Piloted the items to see how they function
  - Partnered with units to replace with or add items to existing systems in Fall’06
- Conducted subsequent pilots to test new technology system

Qualitative Analysis of Pilot Data

- Respondents asked to comment on items which seemed unclear, were hard to answer, or did not seem to apply to them
- Most feedback was positive but some items were identified as problematic
  - Slight changes made to item wording and response options

Example of Item Changes

- Original item: “The grading in this course was fair.” (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)
- Several issues raised by respondents
  - Hard to answer
  - Non-directional
- Revised item: “Based on the quality of my work in this course, the grades I earned were...” (Too Low, Appropriate, Too High)
Quantitative Analyses of Pilot Data

- Descriptive statistics
  Respondents tend to use positive end of scale
- Dimensionality
  Items tap single dimension

Quantitative Analyses (cont.)

- Reliability
  Responses are highly consistent across the set of items
  Student and administrator item sub-sets function the same
  Responses remain stable across administrations

Reporting of Results

- Types of reports currently available
  Course-section reports
  Summary reports
- Calculation and display of results
  Access to results
  Summary measures
- Methodological decisions and challenges

Course-Section Reports

- Display of results depends on item type
  Access to results: student, admin, or instructor
  Focus of the item: instructor or course item
  Response scale: interval, ordinal, or text
  Hierarchy level: university or college-level
Sample Course-Section Report

ADMINISTRATOR UNIVERSITY-WIDE INSTRUCTOR ITEMS: Questions for use by faculty/instructors and for administrative purposes. N/A responses have been excluded from the following calculations.

Instructor: Professor A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FAKE100 0101</th>
<th>COLLEGE COMPARISON*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Responses</td>
<td>% Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructor treated students with respect.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructor was well-prepared for class.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, this instructor was an effective teacher.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average rating for all similarly leveled course sections (e.g., all 200-level course sections) in this college.

AVERAGE OF FIVE ADMINISTRATOR AGREE/DISAGREE QUESTIONS: 3.58 / 4.00
Scaled 0-4: Strongly Disagree=0; Strongly Agree=4. N/A is not in the average.

The standards the instructor set for students were ... (Number of Responses 65)

0% Too Low | 94% Appropriate | 6% Too High

Summary Measures

- Instructor score
- College comparison mean
- Unit summaries
  - Department, college, and university level
  - Results by sub-unit and by course level

Methodological Challenges

- Deciding what to display and how to calculate it
- Specific descriptions and formulas
- Handling NA and missing responses
- Rolling up the data across courses
- Unit of analysis
- Defining a course section unit
- Large-lecture and multiple-instructor courses
Administration and Implementation

Senate interest
“Must be implemented next semester”
IRPA Coordinator as campus “point-person”
IRPA-OIT planning and development team

Administration

College Liaisons
Communication within colleges
On-going communication with IRPA

Schedulers
IRPA Liaison with registration to department schedulers
SIS indicators for Yes or No Evaluation per course and instructor

Administration (cont.)

Advisory Group
Colleges, SGA, GSG, Academic Affairs,
OIT, IRPA, Graduate School
Policy and development recommendations

OIT Help Desk
Responding to issues they cannot address

Student Government and other groups

Implementation

On-going development of application
Sakai development vs. reporting
Open source challenges
Implementation (cont.)
- Student participation challenges
  - About 61-63% overall each semester
  - Confusion over “shadow systems”
    - 2/3 submit and 1/3 did not
- Faculty buy-in
  - Varied by college and unit
  - Individual instructors make the difference

Continuing Development
- Competing desires for enhancements
- Eliminating “shadow systems”
- Acknowledging frustrations with iterative process of development

Data Warehousing
- Need for direct access to data
- IRPA long-term assessment/research interests
- “Local” assessment interests
- Current vs. frozen
  - Users would query current
  - IRPA would use frozen
- Methodological challenges – calculation error

See our CourseEvalUM website:
https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/crs_eval.shtml
Email: course-eval-admin@umd.edu