Course Evaluations Administered Online: A Summary of Progress

Prepared by Institutional Assessment and Research
Progression of Digital Measures Course Response (DMCR) Utilization

Spring 2010: Face-to-Face delivered courses use DMCR

Summer 2010: Course evaluations debut for summer courses

Fall 2010: Online delivered courses use DMCR
Progression of Digital Measures Course Response (DMCR) Utilization

**Spring 2011:**
EWC/Block I and Writing in the Major (WIM) courses receive separate evaluations through DMCR

**Summer 2011:**
Summer courses evaluated on 5-, 6-, 8- and 10-week cycles through DMCR

**Spring 2012:**
Midterm Course Evaluation Pilot
Progression of Digital Measures Course Response (DMCR) Utilization

Fall 2012: Team Taught Course Evaluation Pilot

Spring 2013: Review of instrument by Ad Hoc Committee

Spring 2015: New instrument implemented; online administration only
Definition of Terms

- **Digital Measures Course Response (DMCR):** Evaluations administered through the Digital Measures Course Response online System.

- **Online (DMCR) Response Rate:** Students navigated to DMCR and took some action (e.g., Declined to fill out the instrument, indicated they were taking the evaluation in pencil/paper format) regarding their course evaluation.

- **Online (DMCR) Instruments Filled Out:** Students navigated to DMCR and answered course evaluation questions.
Response Rates
# Pencil/Paper Response Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Pencil/Paper Response Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2009</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2009</strong></td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2010</strong></td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2010</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2011</strong></td>
<td>26%</td>
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In spring 2010, online course evaluations were piloted for face-to-face delivered courses. In fall 2010, course evaluations were available online for all courses at WSSU.
Pencil/Paper vs. Online (DMCR) Response Rate

- **Pencil/Paper Response Rate**
  - Fall 2011: 61%
  - Spring 2012: 59%
  - Fall 2012: 63%
  - Spring 2013: 59%
  - Fall 2013: 68%
  - Spring 2014: 59%

- **Online (DMCR) Response Rate**
  - Fall 2011: 31%
  - Spring 2012: 30%
  - Fall 2012: 36%
  - Spring 2013: 40%
  - Fall 2013: 37%
  - Spring 2014: 34%
  - Fall 2014: 35%
Percentage of Courses that Administered Pencil/Paper Evaluations vs. Instruments Filled Out

- **Percentage of Courses that Administered Pencil/Paper Evaluations (Face-to-Face and Online)**
- **Online (DMCR) Instruments Filled Out Rate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Campus Feedback

- Faculty Survey
- Faculty Focus Groups
- Student Email Comments
- Student Surveys
- Student Focus Groups
Percentage of "1-2" or "3 or more" responses to "For how many courses did you..."

- Administer pencil/paper evaluations?
- Rely on online evaluations?
- Offer incentives (e.g., extra credit) for completing course evaluations?

Source: WSSU Faculty Survey
Percentage of Respondents who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the following statements:

- I prefer to administer course evaluations in a pencil/paper format.
- I wish WSSU would move exclusively to online course evaluations and stop offering the pencil/paper option.

Source: WSSU Faculty Survey
Faculty Focus Group Results

What do you like about course evaluations administered online?
• Cost Efficiency
• Convenience
• Saved class time
• Flexibility
• Faster feedback

What is the biggest challenge with course evaluations administered online? How significant is the challenge? What causes the challenge?
• Insufficient instrument*
• Response rate
• Inconveniences caused by temporary website issues
• Feedback is needed sooner--implement a midterm assessment*
• Team Taught courses
• “Exchange of information” needed so students will be more willing to provide feedback*

*These issues could also serve as challenges with pencil/paper administration
What comes to mind when you think about WSSU moving exclusively to course evaluations administered online (i.e., removing the pencil/paper option)?

• “Take the plunge” and go for it. Deal with issues as they arise.
• The online will not succeed if the pencil/paper option is offered.
• Online evaluations should apply to 90-100% of all courses.
• With budget constraints, continuing with the pencil/paper option would be a waste of money.
• People will adapt.
• Make course evaluations a natural part of the course.
• This makes sense—students are comfortable using technology (e.g., smart phones, etc.)
• Take students to the computer lab to ensure high response rates.
Faculty Focus Group Results

How do you feel about instructor-implemented incentives (e.g., extra credit) as a way to improve response rates? Should they be allowed at WSSU?

• Can be problematic if “incentive wars” occur
• Course evaluations should be part of the course
• Provide students with brief course evaluation feedback to encourage participation
• Give departments incentives for high response rates (e.g., money, prizes, etc.)

How do you feel about a university-implemented policy, such as a grade hold, that would require students to complete their evaluations?

• A grade hold would be okay, but a hold on the student’s account is not acceptable.
• Some students may enter negative opinions or any response just to complete the survey.
• I do not like this idea.
• This would have to be stated in a “non-coercive” way.
• The university needs to do something instead of leaving it all up to the faculty.
Student Email Feedback

• Praise for the Online System
  • “This process was quick and easy. I really prefer this over the paper evals. -- Thank you for implementing this!!”
  • “I love the new digital feedback! It is way better than the actual evaluation sheets and only takes half of the time to complete”
  • “This is a very useful tool to evaluate courses and instructors in their ability to perform their assigned task. Thanks for the opportunity to give positive feedback.”

Source: Emails to course-eval@wssu.edu and feedback submitted to Digital Measures’ “Submit Feedback,” Fall 2010-Fall 2011
Percentage of Sophomore Respondents Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the Following Statements:

- **I prefer completing course evaluations using the online system (Digital Measures Course Response) instead of by pencil-and-paper.**
  - 2012: 79.2%
  - 2013: 82.5%
  - 2014: 88.4%

- **When compared to pencil-and-paper, I feel more comfortable providing course evaluation feedback in an online format.**
  - 2012: 75%
  - 2013: 74.1%
  - 2014: 82.8%

- **I wish WSSU would move exclusively to online course evaluations and stop offering the pencil-and-paper option.**
  - 2012: 72.3%
  - 2013: 69.3%
  - 2014: 74.4%
Percentage of Senior Respondents Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the Following Statements:

- **I prefer completing course evaluations using the online system (Digital Measures Course Response) instead of by pencil-and-paper.**
  - 2012: 72.0%
  - 2013: 81.5%
  - 2014: 83.3%

- **When compared to pencil-and-paper, I feel more comfortable providing course evaluation feedback in an online format.**
  - 2012: 66.8%
  - 2013: 72.4%
  - 2014: 73.3%

- **I wish WSSU would move exclusively to online course evaluations and stop offering the pencil-and-paper option.**
  - 2012: 65.5%
  - 2013: 72.3%
  - 2014: 70.9%
Percentage of Students Who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the Following Statements:

- I prefer completing course evaluations using the online system (Digital Measures Course Response) instead of by pencil-and-paper.
- When compared to pencil-and-paper, I feel more comfortable providing course evaluation feedback in an online format.
- I wish WSSU would move exclusively to online course evaluations and stop offering the pencil-and-paper option.
Student Focus Group Results

What do you like about course evaluations administered online?
• It’s easy.
• I don’t have to do them as often.

What do you not like about course evaluations administered online?
• It’s time consuming.
• You have to take time out of your personal schedule to do them.
• It’s not enticing.
• It doesn’t make a difference.

Follow Up Question: If the evaluations were done in class, would you have a different feeling?
• I like doing them in class. You get the feeling of your professor when she’s there in the class.
• If we did them online in class, they would get done, but technology access could be an issue.
• You’re already doing work, you have a better chance of getting all students, and you’re already in the “teacher mindset” in class.
Student Focus Group Results

Why do you think students don’t login to Digital Measures to complete their course evaluations?

• Laziness, or we’re doing something else [on the computer]. I can do work or course evaluations, and work would win.
• It’s a priority issue. All students can’t afford laptops, and they have to prioritize when they go to the library. [Course evaluations] fall short of the top 10 [of things to do].

Follow Up Question: Would iPads in classrooms be a good process?
• I think so. This would be like pencil/paper, but more efficient.
• I think it would be extremely effective.

…What are some things that WSSU could do to improve the response rate for course evaluations administered online?
• A really enticing email—we get the first email, and we know we’ll see it six more times. We need red letters that say, “Do this now! It’s important!”
• A flyer
• Students need to feel empowered
• Small incentives (e.g., drawing for Wal-Mart or gas card) until the process becomes routine
Student Focus Group Results

If you were in charge of administering course evaluations at Winston-Salem State, how would you structure them?

• Team up with Domino’s to give students printable coupons when they complete the evaluations
• Eliminate evaluations for general education courses
• Have departments go into the classroom and evaluate teaching styles
• Make course evaluations “town hall meeting” style

Follow-Up Question: What would you do to get more people to provide thoughtful feedback and take the evaluations seriously?

• Make students feel empowered
• Have students openly discuss their issues on a particular class, like an “open mic evaluation”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Time Administered and Length Open</th>
<th>Transition Period</th>
<th>Team Taught Courses</th>
<th>Average Online Response Rate</th>
<th>Measures to Improve Response Rates/Incentives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fayetteville State</td>
<td>Online only since fall 2009</td>
<td>Administered when 75% of the course has been completed Open until semester ends</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Results sent to primary instructor</td>
<td>80-85%</td>
<td>Hold on registration and grades until evaluations are completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth City State*</td>
<td>Online*</td>
<td>Administered in the fall before Thanksgiving, spring at the beginning of April Open until the Monday after classes end</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Primary instructor is pulled from Banner</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Email reminders and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Central</td>
<td>Online campus-wide since fall 2010</td>
<td>Administered before finals Open for two weeks, 3 weeks if requested</td>
<td>Law school, business school, pilot studies began in spring 2009</td>
<td>Primary instructor is pulled from Banner</td>
<td>49-50%</td>
<td>Campus radio and campus paper, individual instructors can give incentives if they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina A&amp;T</td>
<td>Online only since fall 2005</td>
<td>Administered 4 weeks before finals Open until the day of the first exam</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Assign multiple instructors within the software</td>
<td>49-50%</td>
<td>Campus radio and campus paper, individual instructors can give incentives if they want</td>
</tr>
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<td>Transition Period</td>
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<td>Albany State University</td>
<td>Pencil/Paper and Online (since Fall 2011)</td>
<td>Administered before finals</td>
<td>None planned—will continue using both formats</td>
<td>12-20%</td>
<td>None—rationale is that evaluations are voluntary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francis Marion University</td>
<td>Pencil/paper</td>
<td>Administered before finals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacksonville State University</td>
<td>Online since fall 2008</td>
<td>Administered before finals</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>~40%</td>
<td>Email reminders, status reports to faculty, IDEA Faculty Professional Development grant awarded to classes with response rates at or above 85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelman College</td>
<td>Pencil/Paper</td>
<td>Administered before finals ideally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY College at Old Westbury</td>
<td>Pencil/Paper</td>
<td>Administered before finals</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Time Administered and Length Open</td>
<td>Transition Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia State University</td>
<td>School of Business online since Fall 2011</td>
<td>Administered the last week of class</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All other schools pencil/paper and hope to move online</td>
<td>Open for one week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>William Paterson University of New Jersey</td>
<td>Pencil/paper except for online courses</td>
<td>Should not be administered until at least half the semester has passed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No written rule on open period length</td>
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Research: Best Practices
Advantages to Online Administered Evaluations

Rapid feedback

Less expensive to administer

Less class time required

Less vulnerable to professional influence

Allows students more time to complete

Gives students multiple opportunities to evaluate faculty members

More student comments

More privacy and convenience
Does the online process provide a sound alternative to pencil/paper evaluations?

Dommeyer et al. (2004) state, “This study and its predecessors demonstrate that gathering teaching evaluations online is a viable alternative to the traditional, in-class method.”

Fike, Doyle and Connelly (2010) found that “conducting online evaluations of teaching is a suitable alternative to the traditional paper-based approach. Scoring patterns for online evaluations are generally consistent with those of paper-based evaluations, thereby providing evidence that the online process is reliable.” Layne, DeCristoforo & McGinty (1999) discovered a similar pattern, and Carini et al. (2003) found comparable results for NSSE administration.
WSSU and Best Practices

• **Push the Survey**
  • Emails are sent to students when the evaluations open, every three days (if all evaluations are not completed), and on the last day to complete the evaluation.
  • Academic Technologies assists in placing a broadcast announcement with the survey link on Blackboard.
  • Response rate updates are sent to department chairs and faculty/staff.

• **Use Rewards or Incentives**
  • Instructors and Departments may use incentives/awards at their discretion.

• **Tell Respondents How Their Results Will Be Used and Ensure Anonymity or Confidentiality**
  • Language is included in the student early warning email from WSSU and all subsequent emails from Digital Measures.

• **Withhold Grades or Release Grades Early and Provide Some Results to Students**
  • No action at this time
WSSU Course Evaluations
Changes in Spring 2015

• New Course Evaluation Instrument
  • One set of core questions for all students in all types of courses.
  • Supplemental questions for WIM and DL courses.
  • Includes all instructors in team taught courses.

• Fully Online
  • View respondents in real time.

• Five phases of administration
  • Accommodates non-traditional courses.
  • Calendar Online (http://www.wssu.edu/administration/assessment-and-research/course-evaluations/course-eval-dates.aspx)

• Reports
  • Pull from Digital Measures Course Evaluation website.
  • Historic reports available, but cannot be merged with new evaluations.
  • Filters available for Face-to-Face, Distance Learning, and Writing in the Major.
  • Phases I-IV available May 13.
    • You may receive multiple emails.
Course Evaluation Progress Report

Spring 2015 Response Rates

Phase I: 35.9%

Phase II: 27.5%

Phase III: In progress

Phase IV: Begins April 13, 2015

Phase V: Begins May 13, 2015
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