STANDARDIZED COURSE EVALUATION
PROJECT PROPOSAL

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APRIL 1, 2016
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Standardized Course Evaluation Project Proposal

April 1, 2016

Project Requestor

The Provost/and Vice President for Academic Affairs Laura Woodworth-Ney requested that Selena Grace, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, investigate the need for a standardized end-of-course evaluation tool for use by the faculty colleges to replace the current system.

Objective 1: Identify issues surrounding the current student course evaluation system used by ISU's colleges.

Objective 2: Increase students’ use of digital response rates and increase ISU’s ability to collect feedback.

Objective 3: Develop processes to implement and measure the progress of the process.

Background

Statement of the Problem

Idaho State University’s (ISU) main campus resides in Pocatello with four additional Centers for Learning located throughout Southern Idaho and online (Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, and Meridian, and eISU). Currently, the University as a whole conducts end-of-course evaluations with many of the colleges using different approaches. This is the first level of assessment in the University’s assessment model. At this level, faculty can make changes that positively affect students.

Currently, the automation used for end-of-course evaluations is Moodle. Moodle has limited capabilities to complete the tasks required for the end-of-course evaluations, but the eISU programmers don’t believe that it is the best option for the future of the University. All colleges utilize Moodle to develop their survey instruments. Once a Moodle survey is created, the faculty then will either hand out a paper version of the evaluation or provide students with a digital site. One program reported that students had to complete manual evaluations because of the students’ lack of access to technology. Once the students fill out the paper or even a digital version of the survey, an administrative assistant manually enters the answers into the program. If students input the answers digitally, the faculty member can go in and review the results, but the administrative assistant must transpose those results into a shared document. Currently, Idaho State University does not have a policy in place regarding the requirements for completing end-of-course evaluations so the faculty that completes them base their survey instruments on the requirements set by their Colleges or Departments.

Besides not having a standardized end of course evaluation process, the University is also lacking a policy that requires the Faculty to administer the evaluations and encouraging students to complete them. An important point to keep in mind, by the time an ISU student finishes their undergraduate degree they could have been required to complete approximately 40 end-of-course evaluations. Many students tire of the requirement and avoid completing the surveys. Some colleges' faculty uses that do may add incentives to increase student participation rates like utilizing the use of course time or giving students extra credit to encourage them to complete the evaluation survey or by providing extra credit, up to five percent of a grade. Even with the...
incentives, the completion results remain inconsistent. Some classes will have had as little as a seven percent return rate while others have reached an 82 percent. As a result, the Faculty does not receive consistent feedback that would allow them to measure their success, adjust course work, identify trends, or understand other areas students may have concerns.

Some of the faculty are excited for the new software while others face some acceptance challenges. Based on faculty feedback, some disagree with the University using a fully-digital tool because they feel students don’t leave adequate responses. One faculty member also identified that students at an outreach course in Blackfoot could not complete the digital surveys because they did not have access laptops. The faculty member provided the students with paper surveys to complete.

**Statement of the Problem**

Idaho State University does not have a standardized end-of-course evaluation software that sufficiently supports the faculty and the Institution’s assessment model. Additionally, the University does not have a policy in place that identifies the requirements for faculty to administer end-of-course evaluations.

A proposed method to collect that feedback is to utilize a standardized end-of-course survey tool. The standardized survey would allow the colleges’ the ability to tailor questions to seek feedback about specific programs. Concurrently, the administration could also address questions to students on a more general level to illuminate student concerns. A centralized collection point would provide faculty and the administration the ability to access the data from their evaluations and to act on their specific areas where students’ feedback identified shortcomings.

**Recommendation**

**Recommendation 1.** A proposed method to collect that feedback is to utilize a standardized end-of-course evaluation tool. The standardized end-of-course evaluation tool allows faculty the ability to tailor questions when seeking feedback about their courses and evaluate data in order to act on specific areas where students’ identified shortcomings as well as highlight achievements. The standardized evaluation tool would also reduce the faculties’ individual methods of collecting and evaluating data.

As a whole, the University would benefit from implementing a digital instrument because it would increase efficiency by eliminating the requirement for administrative staff to have to input the results. The selection of a web-based software is essential because students could utilize their personal data devices, i.e. smartphones, laptops or tablets to answer the evaluation’s questions. A standardized, university-wide system would also provide students with a common interface.

**Recommendation 2.** A second recommendation is to request the Faculty Senate’s policy committee write a policy outlining the University’s requirements for conducting end-of-course
evaluations. This would eliminate the Colleges from setting individual policies and standardize the requirements. As part of the policy, writers should also create a list of acceptable incentives that faculty can use as a way of increasing the student participation rate.

**Recommendation 3.** Upon implementation, the University should monitor the completion rate of the end-of-course evaluation over a four-semester period to see if the changes made have improved the return rate. By evaluating the completion rate in each college, the measures will identify if faculty are using the evaluation tool, are following policy and are adequately supported. If the completion numbers continue to fall or remain stagnant, then additional steps will need to occur.

Implementing a standardized survey tool and a policy requiring faculty to administer an end-of-course evaluations could increase the University’s success in generating feedback and provide the university with opportunities to improve the students’ experience. The standardized evaluation tool, it would reduce the colleges’ individual methods of collecting and evaluating data and allow the supporting administrative departments the ability to utilize the analyzed data to review potential policy or infrastructure challenges. A standardized university-wide system would also provide students with a common interface.

While some colleges may disagree, the University would benefit from implementing a fully digital instrument because it would eliminate requiring administrative staff from having to input the results as well as reduce input inaccuracies. The selection of an web-based software tool is essential because students could utilize their personal data devices, i.e., smart phones, laptops and tablets.

Additionally, if the faculty and administration wish to increase the student participation rate, the leadership will have to agree to implement a policy that authorizes the faculty to use course time to complete the survey. This may result in an increase in the survey completion rate. If the University leadership finds the idea of mandating Faculty administering the end-of-course evaluations unlikely, then a standardized end-of-course survey will only work with emphasis from the Faculty and with the students’ support.

### Project Deliverables

1. At the end of the project data requirements phase, the deliverables will include recommendations on the use of existing or the purchase of a new software system.
2. A proposed purchase date
3. An implementation process that provides training and “go-live” timelines for the first iteration for both faculty and staff.
4. Implementation and training dates
5. A location on a centralized database that stores student feedback and allows faculty and staff access in order for them to create reports and request data.

### Milestone List

This is a list of proposed milestones that support the Standardized Course Evaluation project’s completion. This chart only shows has major project milestones reported, i.e., such as the
completion of each project phase. There are smaller milestones not included on this chart but included in the project schedule. If project delays occur, the project manager will notify the project sponsor and proactive measures will occur to mitigate slips in dates. The project manager will communicate to the project team approved changes to these milestones or dates.

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<th>Phase</th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 1a</td>
<td>Complete Requirements Gathering; project proposal complete</td>
<td>Evaluate existing software to determine if it will achieve the goals of the project.</td>
<td>5/14/2016</td>
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<td>Phase 1b</td>
<td>Demo Comparison</td>
<td>(Tentative) Contact vendors to provide demos to faculty and staff</td>
<td>5/1/2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Purchase software</td>
<td>(Tentative) Purchase software and install</td>
<td>7/31/2016</td>
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<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Develop policy</td>
<td>Create a policy that supports the administration of the end-of-course assessment</td>
<td>12/31/2016</td>
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<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>Implement for 2017 spring semester evaluations</td>
<td>Complete Fall Semester Evaluations</td>
<td>1/16/2017</td>
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<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>Conduct train-the-trainer with Colleges and faculty</td>
<td>Complete train-the-trainer with faculty and staff and provide support where necessary</td>
<td>2/28/2017</td>
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<td>Fall Semester Evaluations</td>
<td>Complete Fall Semester Evaluations</td>
<td>12/16/2016</td>
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Project Assumptions/Constraints

Assumption/Constraint: If the evaluation determines that the University needs to purchase a new software system then Academic Affairs will have to program and acquire funds to support the implementation and the reoccurring maintenance cost of new software.

Constraint: At that point, if ISU does not have funding to support the purchase of the software, then the initiative cannot move forward. In many cases, purchasing a proprietary system requires an up-front cost and reoccurring maintenance costs, but its functionality is exponentially superior to Moodle.

Assumption: The majority of students have a compatible, portable digital device (smartphone, tablet or laptop)

Project Expenses

There are multiple software options available, but they all cost approximately the same price. One important note that impacts the decision: The current automation used for end-of-course evaluations is Moodle. Moodle has limited capabilities to complete the tasks required for the end-of-course evaluations but the ISU programmers don’t believe that it is the best option for the...
future of the University. Additionally, the University is looking into a campus-wide Qualtrics license. One advantage to using Qualtrics’ Survey Solutions program is that the data can transfer to the other Qualtrics application. The cost for the software for end-of-course evaluation software is not included in the price of the campus-wide contract and will cost the University another $25,000, because it is not included in the license.

There are multiple software options available but the cost are all similar to the cost of Qualtrics’. Two other programs under consideration are College Net’s “What do you think?” and Explorance’s Blue. For College Net provided an example of their cost to implement and maintain College Net’s “What do you think?” The company charges $15,000 for the installation and $5,000 quarterly for maintenance. Explorance’s Blue did not provide an unofficial quote. No matter which option the University chooses, to purchase new software, and since the cost is over $10,000, the organization will have to submit a solicitation on the State’s WebProcure purchasing system because the cost is over $10,000; unless the vendor is on an Idaho State contract or the University can utilize an exception.

It is recommended that the University invite the three vendors (CollegeNet (What Do You Think?), Explorance (Blue), and Qualtrics (Survey Solutions)) to conduct demonstrations in Pocatello for the faculty and administration to determine to support a discussion about which version of the software they prefer. This should be done before the middle of May so that faculty who are interested in the software can attend the demonstration before leaving for the summer. If it does not happen before the middle of May, then an alternate date should be set toward the end of September after the fall semester begins.

**Conclusion**

Implementing a standardized evaluation tool and a policy that outlines the requirements for the end-of-course evaluations could increase the University’s success in student participation and its ability to gather feedback resulting in opportunities to improve the students’ experience. Students’ end-of-course surveys are the University’s first-level of assessment in the assessment framework, and because it is the lowest level, it is where faculty and students can affect the most positive change. If approved to move forward, this proposal will be followed by a project plan.

**PROJECT CHAMPION**

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**PRIMARY CONTACTS**

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**SPONSOR ACCEPTANCE**

Approved by the Project Sponsor:

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