Instructions for Office Assistants Regarding IDEA Online Surveys (the view from 50,000 ft)

1. Prompt your department chair/program director for the list of courses to be evaluated, whether long form or short form should be used, confirm local codes for each class, etc.
2. Build the courses on IDEA online website.
3. Send email (and instructions) to the instructors with the link to complete the Faculty Information Form (FIF) online.
4. Distribute FAQs for instructors and FAQs for students.
5. Send links to be posted on Desire2Learn to instructors.
6. Remind instructors when online surveying will begin.
7. Track response rates for each class and report the overall response rate of the class to the instructor once a week.
8. Remind instructors and students when online surveying is “in process”.
9. Communicate directly to instructors whose response rates are below 65% at the halfway point of surveying.
10. After instructors have turned in their grades, email the online student comments to the instructors in an html file.

Some “Sea Level” Details

- When building the courses online, be sure to set the surveying window start/end dates so students complete the survey after the official withdrawal date. For example, for 15 week courses it is recommended that the surveying window open at the beginning of week 14. The surveying window should close and the end of week 15 (the day before finals begin).
- Local codes are very important since dept chairs/program directors order Group Summary Reports(GSRs) every year based on local codes. If the local codes are incorrect, then the GSRs that come back have courses in them that shouldn’t be or are missing courses that should’ve been included. The local code field is now 8 digits, but we only use 4 digits. The four digits should be left justified in the local code field.
- Tracking packets has been replaced with tracking response rates, but tracking is still crucial. We are shooting for an overall response rate of 75% (university-wide) with a bare minimum of 65%. This is why weekly updates are sent to instructors.
- The FAQs for instructors should be given a week or two before surveying begins to prep them for it.
- The FAQs for students should be posted “around the department” on doors and/or bulletin boards etc. We need to get the word out to the students that now is the time to “let your voice be heard”. We are trying to create a culture at Benedictine in which it is expected that students will do this as responsible members of our academic community. Please beat on this drum early and often.
- With respect to sending the FIF email to instructors, timing is important. I suggest you send this out at about the 60% mark of the term. So, for the 15 week semesters, that would be at the beginning of the 9th week of classes. Adjust accordingly for terms of various lengths. This gives the instructor a little time to add any additional questions he/she may wish to include in the online survey.
Once surveying begins, instructors can no longer add or modify the additional questions. They can, however, modify other elements of the FIF after surveying begins, but in general, it’s desirable for the instructor to have completed the FIF before the students begin completing the surveys.

Track the # enrolled and adjust as needed. This will help our numbers with respect to “response rates” because if people who dropped are not taken out of the enrollment number, then the response rate will come back artificially lower than it really is. So, adjusting the number enrolled is one thing that can be done to get an accurate response rate for the class.

The students’ comments will come back from the IDEA Center in paper form. So, eventually we will get a paper copy. It is highly recommended that we save paper by emailing the students’ comments to the instructors in an html file and to do this soon after the final grades have been turned in, since there’s no reason to wait and instructors like getting these open-ended comments from students.

Timing is paramount throughout this process. Going online with the IDEA surveys has shifted the focus away from preparing packets, distributing packets, and tracking packets, to a new focus of tracking response rates and communicating with instructors (at various crucial points throughout the process). It is important to set up some kind of tickler to prompt/remind you when the FIF email needs to go out or when the FAQs need to be distributed. All of these things taken together can have a significant impact on the overall response rate across the university.

Speaking of response rates, the IDEA Center has found over the years, that the single most important factor to increase response rates is for instructors to encourage students to give them feedback via the IDEA surveys. Although offering extra credit can help, this finishes second to instructors encouraging students to “take 10 minutes to do the survey”. Please remind instructors of this as the opportunity presents itself.

With respect to email reminders to students, I’d suggest setting things up so students get two email reminders a week sent to their Ben U email account. If you have a small program and are willing to put personal or work emails into the system, that’s fine but be advised that sometimes servers will send the email reminders to junk email or block them altogether (for various techno reasons). The surest way is to use Ben U email and ask the instructors to instruct their students to check their Ben U email and look for the email from the IDEA Center.

It is recommended that when you build the course, you check the box that requests a link, which can be posted to Desire2Learn, and which gives the students one more way to complete the survey. Posting a link to D2L gets at least as many students as email does, since students generally use D2L more than they check their Ben U email.

The surveying window should be closed “before” students take their final exam. There are a few exceptions to this rule for courses that meet over shortened time periods, but generally speaking, you want to have the surveying done before students take their finals.

When building courses on the IDEA online website, be sure to label the courses according to the convention we’ve adopted, which makes it easier for us to track and process courses once they are completed. See Jennie Kamieniecki for details.

If you are in an area that must use paper surveys – for any reason – please contact Jennie Kamieniecki to let her know you will be submitting paper surveys at the end of the term. This should be the exceptional case. By the way, Jennie is at x6278 and her office is in KN-507.