

## **Report on “Assessment of Electronic Course Evaluation Technology and its Applicability to the University of Alaska Fairbanks”**

### **Executive Summary**

Full Report is posted online at: <http://www.uaf.edu/uafgov/faculty-senate/meetings/2012-13-fs-meetings/#191>

In October 2012, the Faculty Development, Assessment, and Improvement (FDAI) committee together with Dr. Eric Madsen, School of Education, were entrusted by the UAF Faculty Senate to study the current state-of-the-art of electronic course evaluation technology and its applicability to UAF. Early in the study it was recognized that *course evaluation technology is an integral part of a university's overall evaluation process*. Hence, **to recommend appropriate course evaluation technology we need to evaluate all other components of an established evaluation process, including (1) the purpose of course evaluation at UAF, (2) the indicators that we want to use to determine success, (3) and the benchmarks we want to use to evaluate performance.**

With this report, we analyze course evaluation technology as a part of UAF's overall evaluation process and provide guidelines for a step-by-step approach to optimizing UAF's course evaluation philosophy. The main findings and recommendations are summarized in the following:

1. We recommend to formulate a clear understanding of the main purpose(s) of course evaluation at UAF before deciding upon changes in course evaluation technology (see Section 2).
2. If a change in the course evaluation procedure is planned, we recommend to not change technology and question sets at the same time, but instead follow a step-by-step approach.
3. Electronic course evaluation systems have a number of benefits and drawbacks relative to traditional paper-and-pencil technology that need to be carefully analyzed and compared before selecting the most appropriate evaluation technology for UAF (see Section 3.1).
4. While student response rates are an important factor in evaluating the success of a course evaluation system, it is only one of many performance parameters (see Section 3.2).
5. Electronic course evaluation can produce satisfactory student response rates if students are incentivized, if the course evaluation system is easy to use, if faculty and administration actively promote the importance of course evaluation, and if regular reminders of active or upcoming survey periods are provided to faculty and students (see Section 3.3).
6. Nowadays, a large number of highly capable electronic course evaluation systems are available whose capabilities are ever improving (Section 4.3).
7. From our system survey, we conclude that available technology varies widely in aspects including (1) hosted vs. host-yourself solutions, (2) online-only vs. hybrid (paper plus online), (3) University-focused vs. generic survey-focused, and (4) flexible question set vs. fixed survey format. Also the amount of applied data analysis varies widely (see Section 4.3).
8. Three systems were identified that are excellent in their flexibility and functionality and are also well matched with UAF's needs (Section 4.3).
9. We recommend starting a discussion on the development of a culture of course evaluation on campus to improve course evaluation quality independent of evaluation technology.

To further analyze the capabilities of a down-selected group of three electronic course evaluation systems, UAF will continue to examine their suitability in fall 2013. We will coordinate our activities with UAF faculty and administration. Details of the evaluation activities in the fall will be announced.