

UAF Faculty Development, Assessment, and Improvement (FDAI) Committee

Year End Report 2015-2016

Committee members: Franz Meyer (CNSM, Chair), Gerri Brightwell (CLA), Bernie Coakley (CNSM), Candi Dierenfield (CES), Diana DiStefano (CLA), Cindy Fabbri (SoEd), Andrea Ferrante (CNSM), Brian Himelbloom (SFOS), Kelly Houlton (CRCD/Dev Ed), Steven Hunt (RAS), Duff Johnston (CLA), Trina Mamoon (CLA), Channon Price (CNSM),

Ex officio members: Joy Morrison (Office of Faculty Development), Mike Castellini (Dean, Graduate School), Chris Lott (eLearning)

1. Summary of the 2015-2016 period

During the academic year 2015-2016, UAF's FDAI committee was able to make a number of important contributions to key issues of faculty development, assessment, and improvement. As one of its major tasks, the committee led and contributed to the full implementation of UAF's new electronic course evaluation system "eXplorance Blue" (see also Section 2c). The coordination of the UAF-wide implantation between system vendor, UAF administration, students, and faculty was done through the FDAI sub-committee "Electronic Course Assessment Implementation" (ECAI). Under the leadership of ECAI and with the dedicated support of the Provost's Office (Alex Fitts, Sally Skrip), the first full implementation of Blue was accomplished in Fall 2015. To facilitate this implementation, ECAI (under the outstanding leadership of Andrea Ferrante) met regularly before and during the fall semester evaluation period. Regular meetings were also held during the semester break to evaluate system performance (average and distribution of response rates; faculty and student feedback; ...) and to make adjustments for the second implementation in Spring 2016. Other highlights of the year included the discussion and evaluation of the UAF faculty mentoring program, a topic that was assigned to FDAI in Fall 2015 by the administrative committee (see Section 2e). Furthermore, the committee continued its support of the activities of the Office of Faculty Development (OFD; Section 2a) as well as UAF's "eLearning and Distance Education" group (Section 2b). Also, FDAI adjusted its mission statement and committee bylaws (2d), which were approved by the Faculty Senate during its December 2015 meeting.

Meetings of the FDAI committee were held monthly in 222 Bunnell. All meetings were well attended and all FDAI members contributed heavily to the rich range of discussions. All meetings were held with working quorums, indicating the commitment of the committee members to the FDAI mission. Our committee's recorder was Kelly Houlton (her fifth year as recorder), who has once again impressed the committee with her thorough and timely processing of the meeting minutes. During our first meeting in September 2015, Franz Meyer was elected to serve as committee chair for this academic year. Furthermore, Andrea Ferrante was elected as committee co-chair and Kelly Houlton was confirmed as

committee note taker. In October 2015 the FDAI welcomed Mike Castellini back to the committee, who served on FDAI as the representative of the dean's council during AY15/16.

Highlights about the main activities of the FDAI committee during the 2015-2016 academic year are summarized in Section 2 of this report.

2. Highlights of 2015-2016 activities

a. Support of and Communications with the UAF Office of Faculty Development

Joy Morrison of the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) provided monthly updates on her work during the FDAI committee meetings. As during the previous years, Joy was very active throughout this academic period with supporting UAF faculty in many aspects of their work. Besides her usual activities of reaching out to established and new faculty and inviting renowned speakers for guest presentations, she has engaged in the following activities:

- As a major activity at the beginning of the academic year, the OFD held a New Faculty Orientation even though the numbers of new hires was much reduced this year. In October Joy held a Mentoring Luncheon that was attended by new faculty and their mentors. The event featured information on the faculty mentoring process as well as guidelines for successful mentoring relationships. The events were well attended. Faculty mentoring was a focus topic of OFD and FDAI this academic year and OFD was heavily involved in all related activities (see also Section 2e).
- OFD teamed up with various members of UAF administration and faculty to provide training to faculty for the Annual Activities Reporting tool Faculty 180. A total of four presentations on this topic were organized, two in fall and two during the spring semester. OFD also supported presentations and demos for UAF's new course evaluation system eXplorance Blue.
- In addition to faculty mentoring, the OFD also focused on research during AY15/16 and organized a range of research-focused presentations and trainings. For instance, in October 2015, Rich Boone shared his experience from his four years at NSF with UAF faculty. As usual, his presentation was well attended. In November the office of grants and contracts offered a presentation on G-Create – a huge database of grant-funding resources in which UAF has bought institutional membership. Other research-related presentations included training on faculty advising, a series of graduate student mentoring trainings, presentations by representatives of NSF, a training session on interdisciplinary PhD programs, and a seminar series on “Endnote Online for Web of Science Users”.
- Due to limited funds in the OFD budget, only limited travel support could be provided by OFD during AY15/16. Joy Morrison was able to attend the POD Conference in San Francisco, where she organized and participated in two panels on the topics “*How do you become a Faculty Developer,*” and “*Global Comparative Faculty Development*”. Through Joy's commitment and support, several faculty members were able to attend events such as the *Alaska Society for Technology in Education Conference, Anchorage*.
- Joy organized a large number of faculty learning opportunities throughout this academic year. Organized events addressed problems such as *the UAF library system, Bullying – Responding to Toxic Behavior, presentations for faculty from the office of the registrar and the dean of students, Faculty 180, Faculty Mentoring, Grant and Scholarly Writing, Promotion and Tenure*, etc. All activities were

widely announced also through the OFD website (http://www.uaf.edu/faculty_development/) and through regular emails.

b. Communications with the UAF eLearning and Distance Education Group

To be better informed about the full range of faculty development activities that are offered at UAF, the FDAI committee also includes a representative from UAF's eLearning and Distance Education group as an ex-officio member. UAF's eLearning group had been providing a wide range of faculty development training in recent years and the committee believed that its integration into FDAI is beneficial to coordinate between the various faculty development groups at UAF. Chris Lott was appointed by eLearning Director Carol Gering as the FDAI liaison and has been regularly updating FDAI on eLearning and DistanceEd activities. Some of the highlights of the eLearning activities are listed in the following:

- Among the most important faculty development offerings of the eLearning group is the iTeach program. iTeach events are hands-on full-day workshops offered by the Instructional Design Team at UAF eLearning & Distance Education. The workshops are tailored to help faculty, instructors, lecturers, and TAs improve upon everything from how to gather and manage research, to creating course schedules that work. Several iTeach workshops were held during AY15/16, all of which were fully booked.
- In AY15/16, eLearning has been modifying its approach by offering workshops and open labs to get faculty started on exploring technology and other issues before they are teamed up with an Instructional Designer. This concept was picked up well by faculty and will be continued in the future.
- In September eLearning helped organize a "Google Solstice" event, a 3-day training for K12 and Higher Education to learn and Apply Google Apps in the classroom. Approximately 30 UAF faculty participated in the event.
- Also in September eLearning organized a Syllabus Workshop and a training on Flipped Classrooms. Both were 1-day events that were well attended by UAF faculty.
- In addition to "in-classroom" iTeach activities, eLearning is also offering the popular iTeachU online training archive (<https://iteachu.uaf.edu/>). Many resources were added to the iTeachU space during AY15/16.
- Several "Teaching Tips Live" online workshops and iTeach Mini Workshops were offered during this academic year. eLearning's online workshops and seminars were highly successful attracting a 301 participants.
- In AY15/16, eLearning started promoting the Quality Matters program, which provides a diagnostic of the quality of online education using a research-based Rubric. The Rubric is revised every year and research driven. Formal reviews apply only to online courses or the online portion of hybrid courses. eLearning and Distance Education has been completing training of all instructional designers to support faculty who wish to participate. They have also been working to put peer review teams together using certified reviewers from multiple institutions. As of May 2016, about thirty faculty were involved in the Quality Matters process, which is a very satisfying response.

- Finally, eLearning is supporting the faculty community with a wealth of additional online resources such as online training and the weekly “Teaching tips” that are posted at <https://iteachu.uaf.edu/category/teaching-tips/> and distributed via email.

FDAI is supporting the eLearning group in addressing three important issues of faculty development: 1) how to reach all faculty members; 2) how to inform them of faculty development opportunities; and 3) how to get faculty members to commit to the necessary timeframe for both short- and long-form development sessions. The FDAI is looking forward to continuing its collaboration with eLearning during the next academic year.

c. Implementation of UAF’s Electronic Course Evaluation System

After the UAF Faculty Senate recommended adoption of an Electronic Course Evaluation system for UAF in May 2014, a contract was signed with the company eXplorance in Summer 2014 with the goal of implementing the evaluation system eXplorance Blue at UAF. The FDAI committee was entrusted with preparing a pilot implementation of eXplorance Blue for Spring 2015 and a full implementation for the system for the fall semester 2015. In order to meet the timeline requirements associated with this effort, the “Electronic Course Assessment Implementation” sub-committee was formed.

At the time of constitution, the committee was charged with two main tasks: (1) preparing a new course assessment questionnaire for UAF and (2) designing and implementing a pilot application of the software. To successfully address these issues, the ECAI committee was formed to include members of FDAI, representatives of the Provost’s office, members of OIT, experts in questionnaire design, and UAF faculty representing a range of teaching styles (in class; field; lab; online; ...).

Since committee formation, additional future tasks for ECAI have emerged. These include (1) the continued monitoring of response rates of future course evaluation runs; (2) the education of faculty on how to maximize the performance of the course evaluation system; (3) the analysis of response rates for systemic issues and the addressing of identified issues.

During the Fall 2015 semester and under the leadership of Andrea Ferrante, the FDAI sub-committee ECAI was heavily involved in the first UAF-wide rollout of the eXplorance Blue course evaluation system. Significant preparatory work was needed during summer 2015 and throughout the early fall semester to make full implementation possible. ECAI spent considerable time and efforts on advertising the system capabilities and demonstrate the interaction with the system both to faculty and students. During the course evaluation weeks in Fall 2015, ECAI met regularly to track response rates and react to comments and questions by faculty and students. In its work, ECAI was heavily supported by the fantastic staff of the UAF Provost office. Especially Sally Skrip and Alex Fitts were instrumental in the success of the Fall 2015 rollout and deserve the gratitude of FDAI and ECAI for their support. Andrea Ferrante was awarded the 2016 Outstanding Senate Service Award for his exemplary work in leading the ECAI committee.

Throughout the semester break, ECAI continued its work to prepare for the Spring 2016 system rollout. A series of adjustments were made to the system and new advertisement campaigns were developed. More details about ECAI’s extensive work can be found in the full sub-committee report in **Attachment 1**.

d. Development of a Mission Statement for the FDAI Committee

In order to better organize committee assignments and committee work, the Senate Administrative Committee asked all Faculty Senate committees to revise or approve their committee mission statements or develop such a statement should it not be available. As only little information was available in the Faculty Senate Bylaws about the FDAI's mission, the FDAI committee spent time to develop a comprehensive and concise mission statement as well as comprehensive committee bylaws. After several rounds of adjustments and revisions, the FDAI mission statement and committee bylaws were put forward to the Faculty Senate for its consideration. The FDAI bylaws were embedded in a larger motion that was aimed at a general overhaul of the Faculty Senate bylaw structure. The FDAI mission statement and bylaws were approved by the faculty senate during AY15/16.

e. Discussions on Improving UAF's Faculty Mentoring Program

During AY15/16 the FDAI was entrusted by the UAF Administrative Committee with the assessment of the status of the UAF faculty mentoring program. The motivation for this effort was related to the currently challenging economic climate at UAF, resulting in faculty having less time to invest in the faculty mentoring process. Two main questions were addressed by FDAI related to the faculty mentoring program: 1) In a time of tightening budgets, how can we assure that our new faculty will be successful? And 2) should there be a process put in place to give faculty mentoring more structure and to better incentivize mentoring activities?

After an initial gathering of information, FDAI had several discussions on how to proceed in assessing the faculty mentoring program. It was decided to develop and submit a questionnaire to the faculty of UAF that are currently in the faculty mentoring program. The survey included the following questions:

- Where you assigned a mentor in your first semester at UAF? Yes No
- Did you add a second, or third, mentor of your own choosing? Yes No
- How often in each semester do you meet with your mentor? Zero 1-2 3-4 >4
- Who initiates these meetings? You or your mentor?
- How is the mentoring program working for you? If it isn't working well, why not?
- Which activities do you discuss with your mentor?
- Would you say that your mentor has assisted you in your early career at UAF? Yes No
- How would you change the mentoring program at UAF?

To assess both sides of the mentoring program, also a second survey was developed that was sent out to UAF's deans and directors. This second survey was composed of the following questions:

- Do you assign a mentor for each new faculty you hire? Yes No
- Do you follow up on the assigned mentoring relationship?
Frequently Occasionally Never
- Do you consider mentoring for new faculty to be:
High priority medium priority low priority
- How do you incentivize senior faculty to serve as mentors?
I do not ask them; I just assign them

I discuss it with them before assigning them to new hires

I offer them Service or other credits in their workload

I offer a financial incentive.

I offer other incentives (please specify)

- In your opinion, how effective is the mentoring in your school/college/institute?

Both surveys were sent out to email lists by Joy Morrison, OFD, and several reminders were submitted to promote participation. At the time of this writing, about 20 responses were received from the about 60 faculty members that were contacted and a complete set of responses were received from the deans and directors. Joy plans to compile of the results over the summer and will work with FDAI to analyze them. All results and findings will be summarized in a report to the Provost.

3. Outlook into academic year 2015-2016

The committee plans to continue work in all the areas above, supporting the design of a new approach to faculty development, and further exploring other relevant issues involving the development, assessment, and improvement of our UAF faculty. We are working on strengthening a culture of faculty development at UAF, and we thank the members of the FDAI Committee for their dynamic input.

Attachment 1: ECAI Committee Year-End Report 2015 – 2016:

Electronic Course Assessment Implementation (ECAI) Committee Annual Activity Report 2015-2016

Committee members

Andrea Ferrante (CNSM, chair), Christian Beks (OIT – *Fall semester*), Jennifer Carroll (CRCD), Alexandra Fitts (Provost's Office), Kelly Houlton (CRCD/Dev Ed), Duff Johnston (CLA), Chris Lott (eLearning), Franz Meyer (CNSM), Channon Price (CNSM), Sally Skrip (Provost's Office)

Committee affiliates

Ian Olson (PAIR office), Phil Jacobs (OIT), Michelle Renfrew (Marketing and Communication), Sherrie Roberts (Marketing and Communication), Kim Davis (Marketing and Communication)

Summary

During the academic year 2015-16, UAF's ECAI committee has overseen the full implementation of the electronic Blue system provided by eXplorance. The ECAI committee was successful in coordinating course evaluations in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. Moreover, the committee was able to develop a communication plan in collaboration with the Marketing and Communication Department to increase awareness among instructors and students about course evaluation in general and the polling system change.

Meetings of the ECAI committee were held approximately once a month in 304C Eielson. All meetings were well attended and all ECAI members contributed heavily to the rich range of discussions. All meetings were held with working quorums, indicating the intensity of the committee activity during the period covered by this report. Andrea Ferrante was confirmed as committee chair for this academic year, whereas Chris Lott was confirmed as the committee's recorder. Details about the activities of the ECAI committee during the 2015-16 academic year are summarized in the following sections of the present report.

General Background and Timeline

The Electronic Course Assessment Implementation Committee (ECAI) was constituted in November 2014 as a sub-committee of the Faculty Development, Assessment, and Improvement Committee (FDAI). At the time of constitution, the committee was charged with two main tasks: (1) preparing a new course assessment questionnaire for UAF and (2) designing and implementing a pilot application of the software. Those two tasks were carried out during the past academic year.

This preparatory work has set the stage for the full implementation of the eXplorance Blue system at UAF in the fall of 2015. Two pilot phases for eXplorance Blue had taken place during spring and summer of 2015. The overall positive outcome of those two pilots indicated the feasibility of full system change. Most of the Committee's focus for this year has been on coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders to ensure successful campus-wide implementation.

To achieve this goal, the committee has been working in several directions:

1. Finalize the survey tool, create a question bank for instructors' convenience, and ensure user-friendliness of Blue for Question Personalization (QP).

2. Organize a second pilot phase during the summer.
3. Cooperate with the Provost's office for training of instructors and to address issues relative to Blue use and function.
4. Cooperate with the Marketing and Communication Department to develop a communication plan

Finalize the survey tool, create a question bank for instructors' convenience, and ensure user-friendliness of Blue for Question Personalization (QP).

Between the end of the Spring 2015 pilot phase and the summer, the committee fine-tuned the survey and finalized the question bank for the QP task. These questions are divided in categories and they are generic but viable options that instructors may find applicable to their courses. Instructors can add up to eight questions to the base survey, and these can all be imported from the bank, or customized by the instructor, or a mix of the two options.

Organize a second pilot phase during the summer.

A second pilot phase was organized during the summer, involving for the most part Summer Session UAF Courses (i.e. six-week session II and the twelve-week full session of Summer Sessions ending on August 14, 2015), along with few courses offered at the same time but not by Summer Sessions. The overall response rate of this second test phase was 30.3%, and the breakdown is reported in Exhibit 1. During the summer pilot, QP option was tested for the first time, and Blue was completely administered by UAF system administrator.

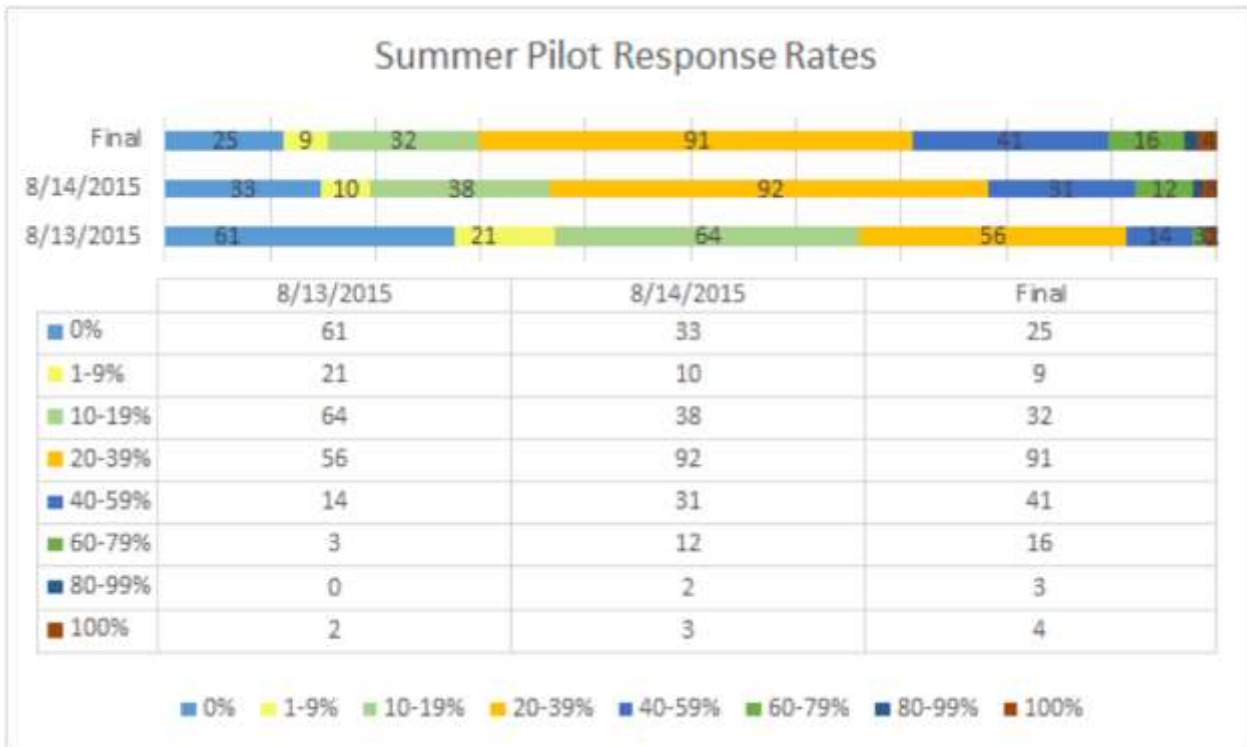


Exhibit 1

Cooperate with the Provost's Office for training of instructors and to address issues relative to Blue use and function.

During the Summer of 2015 and the following academic year the ECAI committee collaborated with the Provost's Office to optimize the system, facilitate its use and address issues raised by instructors who were involved in the pilot phases.

The reports to instructor were also modified from the original layout to rationalize data statistics and edited for clarity.

During the fall of 2015, in keeping with the communication plan suggested by Marketing and Communication (see below), the ECAI committee and the Provost's Office organized training sessions for instructors. One of such sessions held on November 3rd was proposed to all faculty members in collaboration with Joy Morrison and the Office of Faculty Development. Other training sessions were limited to single Departments or Colleges/Schools.

Cooperate with the Marketing and Communication Department to develop a communication plan

A significant fraction of the committee effort has been dedicated on developing a communication plan with the support of the Marketing and Communication Department. The following tactics have been implemented to communicate the value of the online evaluation tool to target audiences.

- **Website:** a branded website has been developed that can be used to house information about the survey and serve as a portal. The URL (<http://www.uaf.edu/inspire-us/>) can be linked to high traffic UAF landing pages that students use: UAonline, Admissions, etc. A pilot webpage containing information to students and instructors about course evaluation was published on the Provost's site and it still operative (<http://www.uaf.edu/provost/blue/>).
- **Customized URL:** a customized URL for the evaluation has been developed that can be used for all marketing purposes <https://uaf.bluera.com/uaf/>.
- **Cornerstone faculty and student newsletter:** Committee has submitted periodic updates to both the employee and student newsletters.
- **Instructor Communication:** the committee has invited every instructor to include key messages in their syllabi and course materials such as Blackboard on the survey and how to access it.
- **Digital Signage:** the URL and website information are displayed around campus on digital signs.
- **Presentations:** Committee members have been giving presentations about the new tool to Staff Council and Faculty Senate, ASUAF, Departmental Faculty meetings.
- **Electronic postcards:** targeted communication to students has been sent several weeks before the end of the semester.
- **Media/Social media:** Communications have been published in the Sun Star and Facebook.
- **Flyers:** half-page/full-page flyers containing info for students and instructors have been developed. These can be printed and posted on departmental boards, delivered to instructors' mailboxes, posted on residence hall doors prior to the end of the semester; alternatively the electronic version can be sent to individual users as electronic postcards.

Results of 2015-2016 evaluations and outlook into 2016-2017 academic year

The first campus-wide implementation of Blue in the fall of 2015 was overall successful, with a final response rate of 41.3%, as shown in Exhibit 2, and a result breakdown as reported in Exhibit 3.

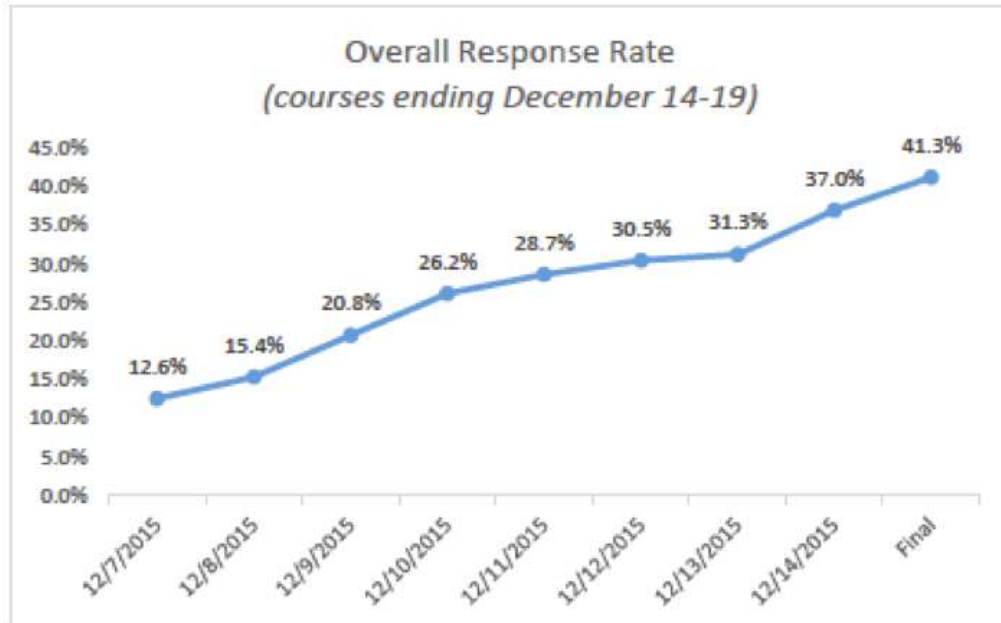


Exhibit 2

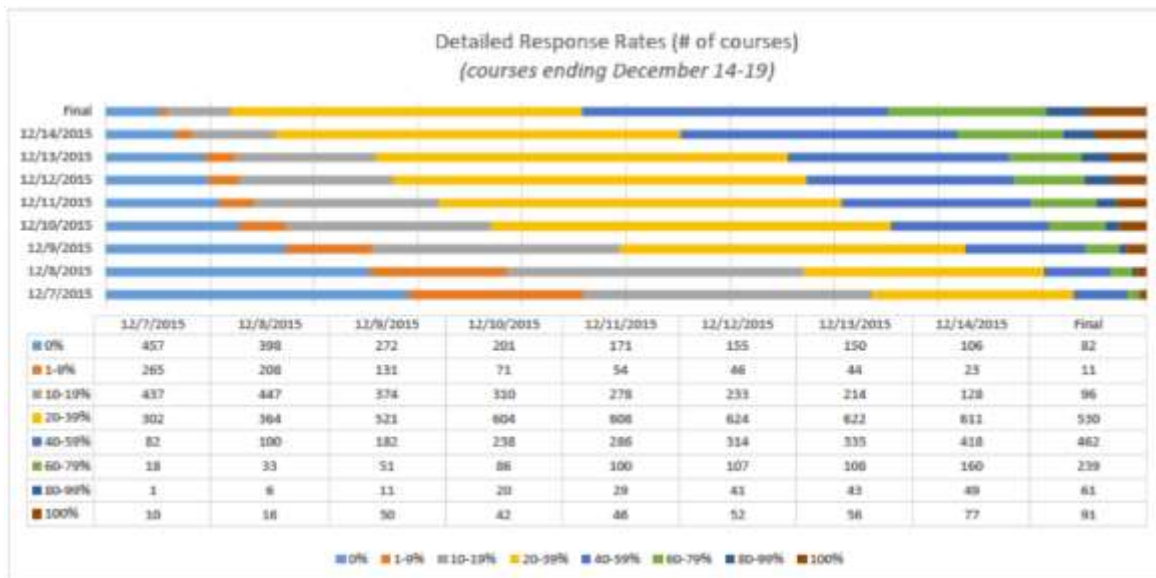


Exhibit 3

Despite the general positive outcome, concerns were expressed by many with respect to perceived low response rate and perceived decreased ratings with respect to paper-based evaluation. In order to address these concerns, the committee reviewed the relevant literature and replied in a document that was shared with all instructors indicating what follows.

Online survey response rates vary significantly among institutions. Even after a long time from implementation, some institutions reported response rates as low as 20%, while others were more successful by achieving response rates that were greater than 70%. Thus, with an overall 41.3%, UAF was not far from the average response rate of ~50% reported in the literature. Moreover, this first result is aligned with published data indicating that the decrease in response rate *at the beginning* of a system change, and without incentives, is in the order of 20-25%. Therefore, the committee has considered the results obtained in the fall semester at the institutional level as acceptable, once compared with other universities or colleges.

A lower-than-desirable response rate had sparked also fears that only those students at the extreme ends of the range of satisfaction with a course had taken the trouble to participate, resulting in low evaluation ratings. One of the goals of the robust communication campaign indicated in the previous paragraph has been to increase interest of students in the online evaluation tool and in the general idea of course evaluation. To the extent that low ratings is associated to low response rates, increasing the number of responses should help capture the opinions of more moderate students, balancing the outcome of the survey. As a part of the communication campaign, a significant effort has been put forth during the spring semester prompting instructors to address their students and remind them of course evaluation and its importance.

The final response rate for the spring semester was ~46%, an increase of ~4.7% over the previous evaluation cycle. The relative result breakdown is shown in Exhibit 4.

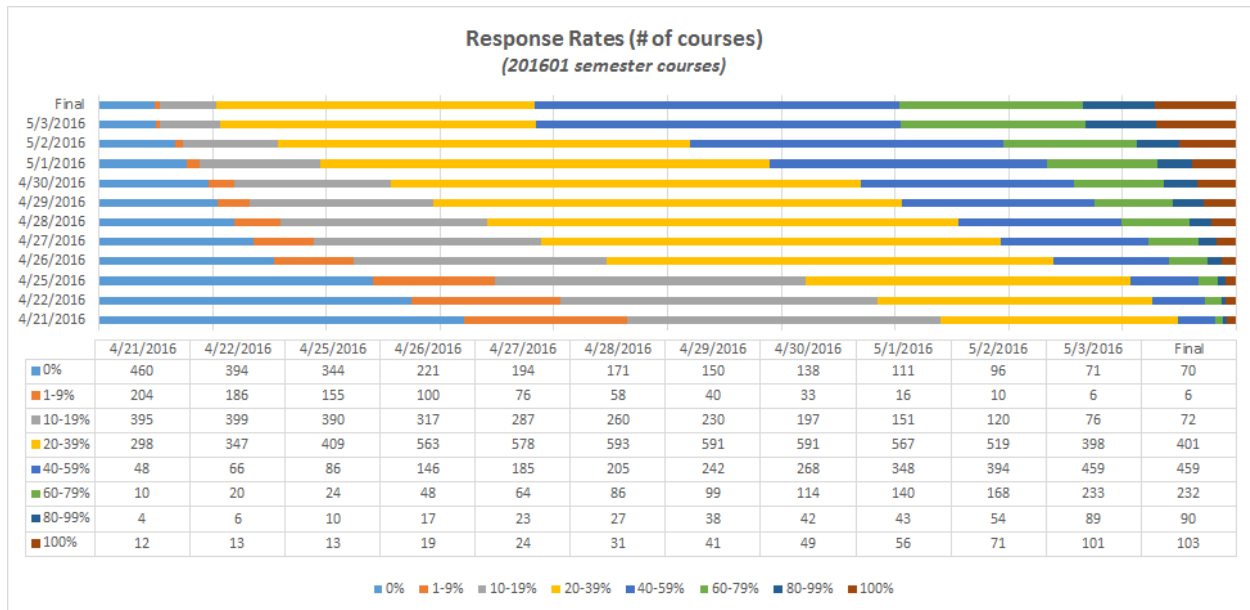


Exhibit 4

While monitoring daily marginal increase in response rates, it became evident that reminders to students had a significant effect, moving from a 2% to a 5% on the day in which the reminder was sent out. From personal communication with faculty, we have also realized that personal

involvement of instructors with students about course evaluation significantly impacts students' engagement with the survey.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the ECAI committee will focus on identifying strategies to increase involvement of instructor before, during, and possibly after evaluation time window. Additionally, the committee will consider performing an analysis of the results from the first two cycles of evaluation and ascertain, if any, correlation between response rates, evaluation ratings (overall and per question), student standing (graduate or undergraduate), college/department. A similar analysis would help identify potential biases important for result interpretation. A third goal would consider outline and potentially pilot a short, mid-term evaluation that instructor might adopt to monitor students' opinion as the course is being offered and fine-tune it accordingly.