

Best Practices for Administration and Use of Student Opinion Surveys

This document is meant to encourage equitable and uniform practices related to the administration and use of student opinion surveys across all NAU units.

Administration of Student Opinion Surveys:

- 1) Student opinion surveys should be accessible to students for a total of two calendar weeks, with the final day of access landing before exam week begins.
- 2) Instructors should encourage students to take the surveys via verbal, written, and/or other course communications; incentives (e.g. extra credit) are allowed and encouraged.
- 3) Instructors are encouraged to describe the purpose of the student opinion surveys to their students, which is to improve course delivery and pedagogy. In that vein, students should view completing the student opinion surveys as an opportunity to develop skills in providing constructive feedback in a professional context.

Student Opinion Surveys and Faculty Evaluations:

- 4) Data resulting from the student opinion surveys can be used as one tool among many to evaluate teaching for annual reviews and tenure and promotion, but only in conjunction with faculty self-evaluations.
- 5) Biases in the raw data of student/course evaluations are well researched and well documented.¹ Data from NAU Student Opinion Surveys, thus, cannot be compared across faculty, courses, or disciplines. Data/results from the quantitative or qualitative portions of the survey cannot be linked to the annual review ratings in faculty evaluation and criteria documents.
- 6) In evaluation processes, faculty are encouraged to provide summaries of data from their student opinion surveys along with relevant explanatory pedagogical information/context within the self-evaluation to appropriately frame the data.
- 7) Important contextual information faculty might provide within the self-evaluation include:
 - a) New assignments, tests, or course activities; reasons for new items
 - b) Changes to course delivery mode; reasons for changes
 - c) Changes to course instructor
 - d) Changes in faculty/student ratios
 - e) Comparisons of previous student opinion surveys
- 8) Important considerations for reviewing the faculty self-evaluations in conjunction with student opinion survey data are:
 - a) How well did the faculty member summarize the student opinion surveys, e.g. were they able to sift through the data to identify important areas of success and areas for improvement?
 - b) How well did the faculty member address/explain any student concerns?

¹ See here for a bibliography of related research: <http://www.rebeccakreitzer.com/summaries-of-research-articles/>

- 9) Data from student opinion surveys should never be reviewed without consultation of the self-evaluation, and, specifically those portions of the self-evaluation that are related to framing of the data from the student opinion surveys.
- 10) Generally, in evaluation processes, emphasis should be on reviewing how faculty respond and adapt pedagogically, rather than on raw data from the student opinion surveys.

Future goal: Write a standard paragraph to be used by instructors to introduce the surveys to students.

Future goal: Create a toolbox of the different methods teaching can be evaluated.