Course Evaluation
Taskforce Update

Academic Senate
January 6, 2011
Agenda

• Background
• Taskforce Recommendations
• Research on Student Ratings of Teaching
• Next Steps
Current State

• The RIT optical scanning service supporting student ratings . . .
  – 38 years old
  – built on outdated, non-supported technology

• Little consistency among colleges and/or departments in . . .
  – definitions of teaching effectiveness
  – evaluation instruments and practices
(5) An effective teacher, among other things, communicates special knowledge and expertise with sensitivity towards students’ needs and abilities. This entails selection and use of appropriate instructional methods and materials and providing fair, useful and timely evaluation of the quality of the learner's work.

(6) Evaluation of teaching must include a conscientious effort to obtain and consider information that relates directly to teaching and learning and makes effective classroom performance possible. This includes the review of student and peer evaluations.
RIT Online Course Evaluation (OCE)

AY 2009/10

- 43% (5,629) course sections
- 103,497 enrollments
- 18,867 unique students
- 1,145 unique faculty
- 55% overall response rate
The Task Force Charge

Recommend a consistent university-wide process for student evaluation of courses and teaching.
Caveats

Consistent Process
- Process consistent across campus and based on best practice in the field related to instrument design, administration, data collection, report format and use of results.

5-7 Core Questions
- Identify a set of 5-7 core questions and bank of formative evaluation questions that adequately reflect the essentials of teaching excellence at RIT.

Appropriate Technology Use
- Appropriate use of technology while exploring products within and external to RIT.
Task Force Members

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ITS: David Hostetter
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Process

- 3 Sub-Committees
  - Three subcommittees: (1) conceptual framework, (2) questions, (3) technology

- Comprehensive Review
  - Comprehensive review of RIT teaching effectiveness language and use of student ratings

- RIT Summary for Core? Content
  - RIT summary of effective teaching and evaluations of teaching used to inform the core question content

- Student Ratings Literature
  - Review of the literature on student ratings

- Technology Needs
  - Technology requirements, vendor assessment
Task Force Recommendations

- Seven core questions common across the Institute
- Tiered level of access
- Bank of questions which may be used/adapted by the college, department or faculty member.
- Online course evaluation system from GAP Technologies
"Please, Ms. Sweeney, may I ask where you're going with all this?"
2,000 Studies

• Student ratings tend to be:
  – statistically reliable
  – valid
  – relatively free from bias

• Student ratings are only one source of data as part of a comprehensive approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness.
Comprehensive Approach to the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: 

**Self**

- Teaching responsibilities, including specific courses, and a brief description of the way each course was taught
- Teaching philosophy, strategies and objectives
- Teaching goals
- Representative course syllabi
- Steps taken to evaluate and improve one’s teaching
- Publications on teaching – any editing, contributions, etc.
- Information on direction/supervision of honors, graduate theses and research group activities
- Curricular revisions – new course projects, materials, course assignments, etc.
Comprehensive Approach to the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: 

**Others**

- Statements from colleagues who have observed your teaching
- Statements from colleagues who have witnessed out-of-class activities such as instructional and curricular development and instructional research
- Student and course evaluations which show improvements in effectiveness
- Department statements on your teaching
- Performance reviews as a faculty advisor
- Outside agencies’ invitations for papers on teaching
- Invitations from other schools to demonstrate effective teaching
- Participation in teaching development within your discipline
- Documentation of teaching development in the Wallace Center
- Teaching research
- Honors, awards, and other recognition
Comprehensive Approach to the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: Products

- Student essays, creative work, lab books, publications, course related work
- Effect of the professor’s courses on student career choices or help given by the professor to secure student employment
- Record of students who succeed to advanced courses in discipline
- Statement from alumni
- Examples of graded student essays showing excellent, average and poor work along with instructors’ comments as to why they were so graded
“Great professor. Dresses kind of odd, though, doesn’t he?”
Which Instructor Variables

- Age
- Teaching Experience
- Gender
- Race
- Personality
- Research Productivity
- Rank
- Expressiveness
Instructor Variables

Not Related
- Age
- Teaching Experience
- Gender
- Race
- Personality
- Research Productivity

Related
- Rank
- Expressiveness
Which Student Variables

- Motivation
- Expected Grades
- Age
- Gender
- Level
- GPA
- Personality
Student Variables

Not Related
- Age
- Gender
- Level
- GPA
- Personality

Related
- Motivation
- Expected Grades
Which Course Variables

- Level of course
- Discipline
- Workload/difficulty
- Class size
- Time of day
Course Variables

Not Related
- Class size
- Time of day

Related
- Level of course
- Discipline
- Workload/difficulty
What Do They Know

• High correlation between course end ratings and those of peers, administrators, alumni

• Teachers rated as effective by students tend to be those whose students perform best on achievement tests
Student Feedback Credible

- Input received from a number of raters (high reliability)
- Ratings are made by those who have consistently observed the teacher over many hours (representative behavior)
- Observations made by those personally affected (face validity) by instruction
Limitations

• Poorly constructed questions unrelated to student learning

• Administration not standardized

• Extraneous influences (motivation)
Draft: The Questions

One Student Self-Evaluative Question

• I had a strong commitment to this course

Required: Seven Core Questions (Institute-wide)

• The instructor motivated me to learn.
• The instructor was organized and prepared.
• The instructor communicated clearly.
• The instructor effectively demonstrated knowledge related to this course.
• The instructor cared about my learning.
• The instructor evaluated my work in a fair and useful manner.
• The instructor was very effective.
Analysis, Reporting and Use: Three Purposes

1. Evaluation of faculty members
2. Continuous improvement
3. Transparency of system to students
Access

• Faculty see, for their own course(s):
  – Summary statistics for each multiple choice item in the core and for all optional questions (mean and standard deviation, or similar; response rate)
  – Raw data, in electronic format
  – Their average scores compared to averages at the department, college and Institute levels
  – Student Comments

• A faculty member’s supervisor(s) sees:
  – The same information as the faculty member

• All other members of the RIT community will be able to access:
  – Summary statistics for a given faculty member for the multiple choice items in the core only, based on data going back no more than three years.
Training

• Interpreting Reports
• Using the Data to Improve Teaching Effectiveness
• Professional Development Plans
• Accreditation and Program Assessment
• Response Rates
• Best Practices
Vendor = GAP Technologies

Key Unique Features

✓ Ability to survey students that drop or withdraw from a class

✓ Ability to identify faculty who excel in an area and could mentor other faculty

✓ Access for students to view university standard questions by course, faculty member

✓ Uses RIT authentication to access evaluation system
Response Rates

Three factors influence response rates [Goal = 65%]
1. **Faculty**: are eager to use the information provided by a good evaluation
2. **Students**: see changes resulting from their feedback
3. **Surveying Instrument**: measures what it is supposed to measure

The literature indicates that the ratings on online evaluations do not differ significantly from the ratings on paper-based evaluations

(Cates, 2002; Heath, et al., 2007; Carini, et al., 2003)
Next Steps

Taskforce report shared with all RIT Faculty for feedback recommendations to Taskforce

Taskforce considers recommendations and makes final report to Provost