OSU Student Survey of Instruction
Instructor Best Practices to Encourage Student Responses

The primary purpose behind the OSU Student Survey of Instruction (course evaluations) is to assist faculty in improving teaching by providing a means for students to give anonymous feedback on the courses in which they have enrolled. To benefit from this feedback, however, students must actually complete such surveys, and encouraging students to complete a survey for every one of their instructors every semester can be challenging. This can seem especially true when surveys are delivered online, as instructors no longer have a paper form they can place directly into the hands of their students during class. Response rates can (and do) suffer for instructors who forget about the survey and do not encourage students to complete it. The good news is that instructors can maintain and even improve upon their response rates if they take the time to convey to students the importance of completing the surveys. The following is a list of suggested “best practices” instructors can employ to help encourage their students to complete the Student Survey of Instruction each semester. Some of these practices lend themselves more toward in-class courses, but most can be adapted for use in an online course. This list is by no means exhaustive, and OSU instructors should not feel limited to these practices.

1. First and foremost, instructors need to make a point to communicate the value, security, and importance of the SSI to their students, be that verbally or through electronic communication (e.g., email, texts, postings to D2L). Instructors should convey to their students that:
   a. Student responses are anonymous, so students are free to provide honest evaluations (comments are typewritten, so there is no identifying handwriting).
   b. The instructor will use the results to improve the course and/or instructional methods in future semesters.
   c. The results matter to the instructor, and he/she will respond appropriately to suggestions.

   Instructors are encouraged to communicate the above information often and in multiple formats (if possible) to help ensure students understand that completion of the SSI is important to the instructor, the student, and to OSU.

2. Face-to-face instructors should show that the SSI is a priority by dedicating class time for students to complete the SSI, and they should prepare students for that day accordingly. Instructors should inform the students well in advance of the chosen class period, providing them multiple reminders to bring an Internet-connected device to class that day. The chosen date could also be listed on the class syllabus/schedule to help convey its importance as a class activity. Some instructors have suggested choosing a day when an assignment is due or when a quiz is scheduled as attendance (usually) is better. It is also recommended that students be given time to complete the SSI at the BEGINNING of a class period (rather than at the end) so that students do not rush their feedback or leave early without providing any feedback.

3. Many instructors feel concern that, with an online survey, the only responses that will come back will be from outliers (i.e., students who greatly liked or disliked the course/instructor) and “middle of the road” students will choose not to complete the survey. However, results from a study at UCLA suggest such biases do not appear even in smaller sample sizes (lower numbers of responses). A link to a webinar discussing this study: "40 is the New 80: Reevaluating the Importance of Response Rates" is available on the SSI website: https://uat.okstate.edu/ssi