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. Response rates can (and do) suffer for instructors who 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. 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, verbally or through written/electronic communication (e.g., email, texts, postings to Canvas, statement in course syllabus). 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. Providing specific examples of course changes made because of SSI feedback can reinforce this message.
    - **c.** The results matter to the instructor and their professional development. The feedback provided is useful in creating improved learning opportunities for students in subsequent semesters.

    Instructors are encouraged to communicate the above information ***often*** and in ***multiple formats*** (if possible) to help 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. Faculty may choose to provide an **incentive** to motivate or reward completion of the course evaluation. If you choose to utilize an incentive it:
    - **a.** Should be inclusive of the whole class so as not to single out individual students for non-compliance. This can be achieved by tracking the response rate for the course in Qualtrics.
    - **b.** Should be low stakes (minimal bonus points or the addition of a bonus question on the final). Even small incentives can be effective in increasing participation
    - **c.** May or may not be related to the course. Some faculty may bring food or snacks to encourage SSI participation or reward achieving the goal completion rate.
    - **d.** Should not be used as a tool to intentionally bias or force student responses.

4. **Many instructors feel concern that, with an online survey, the only responses that 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).