Final Report

Course Evaluation Software

TEAM/COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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1) **Problem Statement – Investigate the Graduate Instructor and online course evaluation software.** The Graduate Education Administrators discussed the campus online course and instructor evaluation system. The topic was raised because the current system, unlike the old Scantron system that preceded it, does not have the capacity to support evaluations of teaching assistants who are not the instructors of record in the courses in which they work. We felt this is in issue because we feel we should be supporting the personal development of graduate staff members by making feedback available to them. David Nelson from CIE discussed the issues, which are complex, but which in many cases seem to boil down to the fact that the current software being used is old, difficult to support, and requires considerable manual labor to implement the functions for which it is intended. I think it would be worthwhile for an OOC group to investigate campus needs for online course and instructor evaluations and alternative software solutions to meet those needs. (Suggested by Jim Lehman 2/14/2014)

2) **Executive Summary** – From a departmental perspective, we couldn’t identify an area having a problem with TA evaluations. In most cases people identify the TAs as the Instructor of Record and then they have a similar evaluation as the faculty. This approach may be suboptimal but is working for the time being. Other limitations with the current software were identified as part of this investigation however we learned the current system is under revision and a new system is expected to be in production by Spring 2016. The new system is expected to address some of the shortcomings and be more flexible than the current system.

3) **Recommendation(s) & Action Items** – Based on this committees finding we recommend nothing be done at this time. The on-line system currently in use is being updated to a new version of the software and should be in production by Spring 2016. This should address
some of the shortcomings of the current system, including securely adding people who are not instructors of record to the system, people designated by the School representative responsible for overseeing evaluations and approved by the Head.

Additional action items for consideration:

1. Consider the student experience of the course evaluation process by commissioning a future OOC committee to look at course evaluations from the student perspective. For some courses particularly those with a lot of TAs, students sometimes end up getting a very repetitive, arduous experience in the evaluation process.

2. Contact purchasing and determine if there is an exit strategy to this contract and if not recommend one be established at contract renewal.

4) Investigation:
   a) Identify Key Stakeholders (Coverage of all associated groups is important).
      i) Explore what departments are doing and if there is a problem with what people are currently using: Mechanical Engineering, Math and Stat, English, Psychology, Speech Language and Hearing Sciences, Management, and Education
      ii) Explore problem from the perspective of the Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE)
      iii) Explore problem from initial submitter, Jim Lehman.

Summary of Findings

Students evaluating their TAs: From a departmental perspective, there does not seem to be a problem with this. In most cases people identify the TAs as the Instructor of Record and then they have a similar evaluation as the faculty. The system has to be tweaked to accommodate evaluation of a TA who interacts a lot with students but who is not the Instructor of Record. Some ability to gather more qualitative feedback would be desirable, rather than just numbers.

Faculty evaluating their TAs: This is usually done using paper and/or face-to-face meetings, rather than electronically. In some departments things are left to the professor to handle in the way they see fit. In other departments this is more formal, and a requirement and the evaluation documentation is put in the graduate student’s file. No-one was pushing for this to be done electronically.

Current System: The on-line system currently in use was not designed for the scale on which it is being used at Purdue. Only instructors of record (in Banner) are evaluated. There were problems with adding people to the evaluation system which affected the “safety, security and accuracy” of the records, so they stopped doing this. CIE also
instituted a process to reduce errors and have worked with the software team at the company to increase the functionality of the software. Most of the questions are now in a database, so are easily added to questionnaires without typos and the number of questions to add each semester is now very small. The system allows Schools to develop and edit their own questionnaires to meet most of their course and instructor evaluation needs. This company's software team is very responsive.

There is an updated version of the software in the works. It should be up and running by Spring 2016. This should address some of the shortcomings of the current system, including securely adding people who are not instructors of record to the system, people designated by the School representative responsible for overseeing evaluations and approved by the Head.

In summary, the current system is secure, safe and accurate. Gives us most of what we need. Not smooth but it is working. The updated version should be even better. It is unlikely that we would find a better software team to work with at another company.

5) Resource Requirements – Not Applicable.