Online ESCI Faculty Survey
Narrative Responses

Please comment on what you specifically like, or dislike about the current system of collecting course evaluation data.

A lot of the comments and selections reflect the difficulty of the course and the amount of reading, rather than an assessment.

This year I asked my students what they thought about having the evaluations available only online at Gauchospace. They uniformly thought it was a bad idea and that they did not think they would fill them out. Has any surveys been conducted to get the students opinions? We should start by using computers in class for exams and essays (as they do in law school)

The most helpful information comes in the written comments, and students don’t always take the time to provide thoughtful feedback. I think they might do that more online.

Like that there is a way for students to provide feedback.
Evaluations should include some info on how much interest and effort each student is putting into the course. Learning should be a contract between student and prof.
Evaluations would be more useful if they came earlier in course allowing for "course corrections."
Narrative comments are most useful. Please add some generic questions such as "What did you like most about this course? What did you like least?"
Ask the students to really provide feedback, not just multiple choice.

Feedback comes after the course is over, which does nothing to help me improve the course while it is ongoing. The survey is basically a popularity contest, and says nothing about what the students actually learned. UCSB administrators should look into all of the education research on sumative and formative evaluations, and longitudinal studies.
The open-ended items are very informative with regard to students' assessment of course topics, the treatment of those topics in lecture and section, and students' relative engagement in course assignments and readings. Along with our department's close-response items (e.g., how well theory is related to "real world" issues), the open-ended items help me in revising my courses.

Any evaluations, especially with written comments, are really valuable. The advantage of electronic is that it might lead to a higher completion rate.
The questions, particular the ones being used for faculty promotions, are those where the ratings get better the easier the course is. Difficult courses, where the students would learn a lot, are at a disadvantage, and the end result is that grade inflation and too easy courses. The questions should emphasize what the students learned not whether the "liked" the course.
Studies have shown that students give high marks to instructors who entertain and do not challenge. ESCIs and narratives support that

Collecting surveys in person has a couple of big advantages. First, it samples the students who actually show up for class, which is the appropriate sampling frame for the ratings (a huge potential for sampling bias arises otherwise). Second, in-class collections ensure that they are performed in a professional atmosphere with the correct individuals completing the surveys.
It generally seems fine.  It depends strongly on which day the survey is given and which students attend.  It's not necessarily bad to limit feedback to those who attend, but how the survey reflects on actual teaching effectiveness is unclear.

Evaluations focus on comparing instructors/classes and student's feelings about the quality of instruction.  Evaluations should focus on more objective measures like the amount of time spent reading/studying and the amount of material they learned.  A question about how well they think they would have done on the final exam without taking the class might address this.  Students who are motivated pro or con a course/instructor are more likely to complete evaluations and praise/slam instructors.

Too much paper.  Time taken away from last discussion/lecture.

I do like that students fill out the forms as a group, and this avoids the likely crafting of negative evaluations alone late at nite after a few beers.  The contextual, in the teaching space timing of the evals I think is crucial to honest assessments.  I benefit MOST from the written comments, so I am somewhat concerned that these will not be as rich in an online version.

The ESCI scores are used only in my personnel case, i.e. when I am evaluated for a merit increase or a promotion—truly.  Since my courses are always between 1 and 2, I don't benefit much from ESCI.  My improvements are in attending to the written comments.

That students are present in the room and do not have to be reminded to complete an online course evaluation.  At the end of the quarter when evaluations are due, students really are so swamped that I'm not sure how strong they would participate, but this is hard to know.  The current system is problematic in collecting and processing the evaluation forms.  The current system is clearly linked to the experience of teaching and learning in the classroom, and completing it in class lends seriousness and encourages reflection -- the input is valuable and often informative in new ways.

I think the specific questions about the teaching should come before the overall question.  The way it is now, the overall question is like a popularity contest.  Instead, students should be reminded about how well or poorly the teacher did in specific areas (did the teacher correct things in a timely fashion?  Did the teacher have convenient office hours?  Was the teacher helpful in office hours?  Was the teacher prepared for class?)  Then, after thinking through those specific jobs of an instructor, the students are more likely to give a score that reflects the job the teacher did, not just his/her personality.

What will motivate the students to log on and do the evaluations?  It is ridiculous.  It tries to test two contradictory things at the same time.  It fails to distinguish between popularity and substance.  It's impossible to tell, without reading through the lines, whether the professor is easy or whether he or she is teaching something.  The tolerant of varied opinions question is a particular case in point.  It might as well read "Will the professor allow you to set up your own standards for the course?"

I like the opportunity to review what we have done in the course and what I think students have accomplished on the last day.  I typically have 100% return rate on my course evaluations.

On other hand, I often wish I had the time spent for course evals for discussion and other things during the last or second to last day of class.

1. Many students do not fill it out.
2. Students who do are sometimes rushing.
3. I have to wait a long time to get feedback. I want to know results of the evaluations as soon as I turn in my grades.
I like the chance to talk with students about the history of student evaluations, tell them that an earlier generation demonstrated and fought to get some say about their education. I find this increases both the volume and the informativeness of their responses on the ESCI sheets. I read each sheet and think about it. I worry that, with an online system, that moment we have, where they learn about the experiences of an earlier generation and enter into the stream of common contribution to their education, may be lost, and the quality of their responses may decline, as it becomes just another online form to fill out.

The current system works pretty well, though we rarely get much detail and it is hard to distinguish how much a student appreciates a course from his or her performance in it. I think that this information should not be used for personnel evaluations but reserved for the instructor and perhaps the department chair to provide a basis for improving the course and for assigning professors to courses.

Questions not tailored to course content and instructional styles.
Likes:
Doing the evaluations in class means that students who are there are forced (since they are already sitting there) to take the time to fill them out, and they write narrative comments. Not sure they’d take the initiative to fill out online evals, except for the students with really strong opinions (good or bad). Doing them in class keeps them in the context of the class, as a way of wrapping up the quarter, and with my own lecture style right in front of them to have in mind. Online evals (depending on how gathered) might produce reactive rants of the moment (e.g., based on just having received a bad paper grade).

Dislikes:
Students are missed who are not in lecture the last day (although I’m not sure how much I care about missing those ones). Lots of students leave when evaluations are handed out in class—not sure which kinds of opinions I’m missing in that case. Whatever I might do or say on that last day may lead the evaluations in a particular direction. Time is already short in lecture, so evals often feel hurried. Paper evals are probably costly and inefficient to process.

I like that the collection of student comments and evaluations demonstrates a commitment to classroom teaching as an important part of the work of the university. I do not like the fact that students view the evaluations as requests about their satisfaction as consumers rather than their growth as intellectuals. I generally get scores better than department and campus norms, but learn next to nothing from the comments. I find that for me and for the files of other faculty members I read that the most frequent comments are about personality (nice, helpful, caring) which is of limited value, about the entertainment value of the course (fun, interesting, funny, not boring) which is of almost no value), or about how the students’ lives could be made easier (less reading, less writing, easier grading standards) which is not only of no value, it makes me embarrassed for our students and their lack of intellectual ambition. That the scores on Questions A and B constitute almost all of the evaluation process compounds the problem when we could be evaluating syllabi, fit between assignments and the skill building goals of the course, and the connection between classroom instruction and emerging research knowledge. It is not that I do not profit from the present system. My teaching is always rated as excellent in reviews. I have won teaching awards. But I think on balance the ESCI process undermines rather than enhances the quality of teaching in the university. The time taken up in class is wasteful.

There is too much incentive for grade inflation in order to please students.
I like the fact that I can tell students on the spot that their opinions matter and that the students feel as if they are making a difference as a cohesive group. I feel that this shared experience encourages students to write more, and more conscientiously.

I dislike the fact that it is difficult (although not impossible, granted) to alter the mix of questions on the form itself. I wind up adding my own questions informally.

Like:
The students who are not serious about the course are not likely to be in attendance when I collect evaluation data in the classroom, so their negative evaluations will tend not to be collected.

Students are a "captive audience" in the classroom, so they may be more likely to fill out the form in the classroom compared to being asked to do it on their computer during their free time. Do you have data about this from other universities? Do they get a higher response rate from classroom-based evaluations or from evaluations done during free time, or is there no difference? In addition to possible differences in response rate, do they get a different mix of students in each setting (e.g., maybe they get more responses from higher achieving students in the classroom, because they are likely to attend class, whereas maybe they get more a more representative sample of high and low achieving students when they respond during free time. When you begin collecting evaluations online, the average scores/ratings may go down because the percentage of low achieving students responding may become higher.

Dislike:
Some students who are serious about the course may not be in attendance when I collect evaluation data in the classroom, so their positive evaluations are not collected.

Student grades should be noted along with their evaluations. There should be a median split of students by GPA, with the aggregate evaluations of the upper half reported separately from the aggregate evaluations of the lower half. High achieving students may like a course more than (or less than) the low achieving students, and this distinction by achievement is important to discover.

Ask students to rate whether they learned a lot in the course. There is no assessment of perceived learning.
I like consistent evaluations across the department. But I dislike the fact that typically many students don’t write any comments. It would be nice to get useful comments, perhaps with some tailored questions.

As department chair, I am very aware of how much staff time the current system takes, in preparation and processing of evaluations. Sometimes things have gotten misplaced or comments not accurately recorded.

Like: Students are given time in class to provide thoughtful written answers. It’s doubtful that students will take as much time in an online survey.
Dislike: Faculty in classes without TA must rely on a student volunteer to collect answers; there are no controls, sometimes responses are lost.
DISLIKE:
Long delay between end of quarter and getting course evals.
Paper wasted on photocopied evals.
Staff time wasted distributing and collecting evals.
Difficulty of collating and storing ESCI scores and written comments
Time wasted in class filling out paper evals.
Poorly worded/designed eval. questions
Biased interpreting of ESCI scores in faculty reviews (poor scores are massaged to seem the result of "high standards" while good scores are taken for granted)

LIKE:
Student written comments (positive or negative), especially when they go into detail.

The current system is unnecessarily labor intensive, so I think the current effort is certainly a good idea. It will also eliminate speculation by reviewing agencies about the number of evaluations turned in, which is even less informative than the ESCI surveys themselves.

Positive: All students present in class complete the multiple choice comments.

Negative: the process is always rushed and it takes up valuable class time. There are very few written comments.

Our department uses only two questions. Sometimes the students' written comments are helpful; sometimes they are not. I think having both multiple-choice and narrative responses important.

I don’t think that students will actually complete the online evals. If the University doesn't release final grades until the evaIvls have been completed, I feel that is strong arming. How early in the quarter the online evaIvls are available to the students for completion is also a big consideration.

Regardless how it is collected, ESCI scores makes us pander to the lowest common denominator in the student body. We need good ESCI scores for our own advancements and there are no incentives to make students uncomfortable at the end of the year (as they should be). Even with specific questions, that ask for ratings, unless the students take the time to comment I don’t have any idea why they gave me the high scores and sometimes the same with lower ones. I don’t think they realize how damaging a lower score with no comment can be when it’s a small class and one low score can bring down the average a lot. In general I don’t think course evaIvls are a very good measure of excellence in teaching even though they seem to be taken very seriously at the time of review. I have no idea how to improve this--I get about 95 to 100% response as it is; I think a on-line system might lower the rate of responses by anyone but the most dissatisfied who want to vent.

I especially appreciate **extensive narrative comments** from students, for which I specifically reserve class time at the beginning of class -- to ensure that students use the time to engage the evaluation -- rather than at the close of class, which may seem to encourage them to leave the room early.

Student narrative responses are important aspects of how my dept addresses personnel cases.

Anything that would reduce students' input is likely to directly impact -- negatively -- merit cases for many faculty in the humanities, by decreasing evidence of excellent, dedicated classroom teaching. Huge waste of time of staff and faculty

Far too many questions (most with little relevance), no place for students to express written opinions.

Please provide information on any other potential benefits that you anticipate from an online course evaluation system.

Allows students more time to answer questions.
What value will the surveys be if the response rate drops to less than 50%?

Saving staff time!

Maybe students will actually provide useful feedback.
Please don’t just add this at the end of the term. Give us a mid-course option or even an option for students to provide feedback when they choose.

Reduces administrative work on our already stressed staff.
Your three items above assume that we can’t already collect narrative responses and thoughtful student comments. Given that my department already does this within the current system, these items seem biased and intended to swat faculty in a direction the administration has already decided to move. It would be more honest if you stated up front what the plan is.

No benefits at all.

Basically just convenience and cost, which do not in my opinion justify changing the sampling frame.
It will be important to arrange things such that students actually do fill them out and do take the time to do them. At present, if there are any students, especially in large classes, who do not attend on a regular basis, they are less likely to be there for the evaluations, and that strikes me as appropriate.

Apart from ease of gathering the data and POTENTIALLY gathering more useful information, I’m suspicious of this “advancement” in evaluations. The more “streamlining” that occurs administratively on the campus, the more work it makes for staff. WE HAVE SEEN THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON STAFF TIME AND MORALE ALREADY IN THE HSSB CLUSTERING!! STOP IT!! If we can get more written comments, as above, this is better and would be a huge benefit.

If it is conducted through Gauchospace, it should be posted soon enough for students to respond before papers and exams are due. It should be very easily accessible to students with an email or two reminders to complete it. It should have separate evaluations for professors and TAs with items tailored to departmental needs, differences in sections, etc.

This series of questions is biased and a sham. Have you ever read a blog, a tweet thread focused on evaluating some identifiable figure or institution?! On-line is not a channel for thoughtful, reflective communication. Indeed, I should think that there would be a lawsuit or two once faculty promotion and retention are based on such student responses. Here’s an idea -- if UCSB can’t do any better than ape "Rate my professor," why not just go to that site, count the smiley faces, and adjust faculty salaries accordingly. UC is in a pitiful state because of the budget; this would advance the condition to terminally laughable.

We find that it is very difficult to get feedback electronically. Unless you give out the paper and have them fill it out before they leave class, they forget to do things electronically. This would be a huge net loss in how beneficial the data is. If only those who are really mad or really happy about the teacher fill them out, you don’t get a clear picture at all. Since these are used so much in the evaluation of instructors, I think it would be very, very unfair. You might as well just look at ratemyprofessor.com (not that I’m suggesting that - also not an accurate picture of what a prof is really like).

The only benefit is that it saves paper and class time
I think the main benefits are implied above - students will have more time to reflect on the course and write comments.
I'm not convinced that the new system will be able to collect more thoughtful student comments. Show me.

I feel that this survey is biased. Whether online course surveys will provide useful information, elicit greater or less student participation, and so on depends entirely on the details of how it is done. It may save money, and it may improve confidentiality, but most places that have tried this have not had it be successful (student participation drops). Given that we use this for personnel evaluations, it is extremely important to set up a system and then evaluate its impact on the responses before implementing it more generally. You could take a few courses at each level that have been taught by the same instructor for several years and try your system on those courses before doing anything else. That would at least give you some insight as to how the responses might be changed when you transfer from the current system.

I'm not sure I agree that student comments would be more thoughtful. The streamlining aspect of this seems to be the greatest benefit.

Are you kidding? How will having students filling out evaluations starting week 6 (as soon as they receive their first midterm grades) in dorm rooms accompanied by roommates who are not taking the course lead to more thoughtful student comments? Do you read the blogs our students write and the flaming they do of each other for no reason? At least the current system permits evaluations from students who actually attend class and fill out the forms surrounded by others attempting to answer the questions productively. The new system will become a performative space for grudges, vendettas, and recreational hate.

Please note that in the above questions, I value those outcomes highly. I just don't believe that on-line evaluations will do anything to achieve them—rather, the reverse. This will make more time available for teaching instead of administering evaluations during class meeting time.

Reduced workload for staff.

Potentially more complete set of evaluations because students who miss class will be able to participate.

The two questions above have a false premise: Chances are that students won't take the time to write narrative answers online, so there won't be much to collect, and thoughtful answers are even less likely. Less paper. Better access to data.

If we are able to easily include custom-designed questions, which is now impractical, we could learn more about what sort of student is providing a given response. As is obvious to any moderately intelligent person, the ESCI score measurement says much more about the student filling out the form than about the instructor.

I see nothing positive out of doing it online. The comments will not be thoughtful - only easier to get - assuming they are done. They might feel freer to express their dissatisfaction/anger online since handwriting will not be an issue at all making them more confident the comments will never be traced to them.

And because typing seems to be easier and faster for lots of students, we might get a higher rate of written comment. But I don't have any idea whether that is a reasonable expectation.

I see none.

Possibility to easily customize it
I suggest

Less work for people concerned, but the response-rate can be low. The period that students are allowed to evaluate, should be no more than 2 weeks.

The secure path argument outlined in the background document is highly compelling; the envelopes with evaluations are not secure from post-survey alterations in our department.

Other than ease os distributung responses and collecting responses, I'm not sure aht the benefits woudl be.

I'm not sure that students will actually log in to rate/evaluate a course on line.

I think CAP pays attention to the response rate of students in a class.

I don't think an online system would necessarily get more meaningful comments.

Only those students with an agenda will fill out the forms; online ESCIs don't help this.

Having the evaluations online will avoid having to use instructional class time for such an activity.

Possible drawbacks:
1. do not send multiple reminders.
2. make it possible to skip having to give feedback
3. I dislike being evaluated by students who might never come to class

Many of the comments would be readable if initially typed.

Again, I end my course with a review and discussion about the course. Unless the students write comments then, I don’t feel the evals will carry as much useful information. Often i can ask my students to comment on a specific text, practice, guest speaker, etc. and that can be easily addressed without a pre-printed eval form.

I have no idea why anyone would think that students would be willing to provide thoughtful narrative comments online. Has no one studied the discursive culture of online restaurant reviews? Why would students set aside time in their days to provide thoughtful feedback on a class when they can barely be bothered to do them in class?

Prevent students from receiving a class grade unless they fill out the form. Coverage is assured, but honesty in evaluation is not.

A revised system MIGHT be able to at least partially address some or all of my concerns with the current system as outlined above, but this is not likely to happen as long as students themselves don’t understand the distinction between "evaluation" and "satisfaction" in terms their responses on these surveys.

It will save a lot of paper and staff time. Having the narrative comments on line will help reviewing agencies in the personnel system enormously. I'm worried about the differences between 10-15 minutes in the classroom to response versus letting survey responses happen in dorm rooms, student apartments, and the like. The kind of comments on "rate your professor" don’t give me a lot of reason to hope that students will be more thoughtful.

Students feel less stressed when doing it so they can provide more thoughtful answers.
student can provide feedback even if they miss the last class
More complete responses. Don't let student receive grade until evaluation is submitted.
very little if any
About 20,000 students take 4 classes 3 times a year: 20,000 x 4 x 3 = about a quarter of a million 2
page evaluations, or half a million pieces of paper generated every year!
I think that it will change who fills out the evaluations. By filling them out in class, only those who attend
class, will fill them out. Do we think that someone who never attends class is really someone we want to
fill out the evaluation.

I use GauchoSpace to do a mid-quarter and end-of-quarter evaluation. It is very valuable.
Mostly efficiency, but given the current budgetary outlook for public universities, this gain in efficiency is
probably absolutely required. Other than that, I don't see major benefits. I am skeptical that old-fashioned
open-ended responses were very suppressed, reading them over the years.

Probably the most useful feature would be to be able to correlate (anonymously) the comments with
particular numerical ratings: what were the main concerns of the people were gave neutral grades? For
example, "students who rated the class with a "2", provided the following comments: ...

about "ability to collect more thoughtful student comments"--this may go either way.
the students might indeed take more time; they may also spend less time on task.

could it be that grades cannot be accessed unless evaluations are filled out?
this may maximize the rate of return of the questionnaires. Some private schools won't release grades
unless evaluations are filled out.

But it may also be used against the instructor. Since "I HAVE TO FILL THIS FORM OUT IN ORDER TO
GET MY GRADE I am going to give the instructor or TA a poor evaluation as FOLKS ARE BUGGING
ME and I am being inconvenienced."

Ability to ask custom questions. (I see you have this below)

Whether it provides any benefits at all remains to be seen. This may yet become another context of
automated information gathering that does nothing to enhance the learning process. But I am not
opposed to it in principle.
Not sue how thoughtful the responses will be - I can see a group of students getting together and
creating a homogenized & homogeneous group response rather than thinking on their own.

All students could participate, even if not in class the day of the evaluations (but, this could also be a
disadvantage, as students who did not attend much class would be evaluating things they even would not
know about.

NONE WHATSOEVER. In fact, online surveys are far more likely to capture unrepresentative or non-
representative responses.

Please list any other enhancements you might like to see developed as part of an
online course evaluation system.
Ask questions that can reveal whether the students have met the educational objectives, not just whether they like the style of the instructor, the course administration, and the grade they expect to receive.

Have you ever heard of the need to maintain consistent items so as to ensure valid and reliable trend data, especially in a high stakes accountability system. Course evaluations count in faculty merits and promotions, so you had better be certain that any changes stand-up to legal scrutiny, especially if you plan to change items on a regular basis. You will need to have very good equating studies to ensure that the data are comparable as you change items.

I would love a midquarter process. But I also fear that then students would expect it, and rate a course partly on if this is performed. The quarters are so short, and it can truly take 11 weeks for a well-conceived, and orchestrated course to take its proper form and meaning, as a totality, for the students. Putting professors in a position where they are constantly (or more frequently) expected to respond and alter course materials mid stream would be detrimental. Good professors know best what their students need to learn, and they need to be in a position to exercise their ability across that short 11 weeks without the typically-uninformed (regarding what belongs in a course) whim and desires of students who are there to learn.

Ability to track and distill results easier.
Most or all of these things could be done with the current set-up; and implementing them carelessly -- as these questions (or are they advertising copy; they are certainly not unbiased instruments for collecting information) suggest would disrupt the time-series consistency on which comparisons rest.
Ability to change the order of the questions

You need a professional pollster who is able to phrase questions in such a way as to get around the sloppy thinking of the individual being polled. Otherwise, these evaluations will continue to be meaningless, at least in their statistical results. The verbal comments are useful because the evaluators betray themselves., but only to a person who reads between the lines.

I imagine this system will make it easier to submit evaluations for faculty reviews.

Is this just another way of moving more labor out of the hands of staff (who will be cut from the workforce) and into the hands of faculty, who will be doing this instead of teaching and doing research? That is not a plus.

Some way to increase the response rate.

NONE, because if every class has a different (customized) or multiple surveys, chances are even less that students will respond at all.
I would like to see evals. made mandatory for each class. Or, at least give instructors the option to make them mandatory-- e.g. final grades cannot be received until students fill out evals.

For the surveys to have any meaning, we must be able to include questions of our choosing, not just questions from some campus pool.

I cannot think why this would be good.

I already do all these things without using an online system (midterm evals; personalized questionnaires etc.).
I see this process as an invented solution to a non-existent problem.

Perhaps a character limit?

Visual analysis of historic trends for a faculty for a given course
Visual analysis of instructor quality as a histogram of the Department
Automatic detection of consistently weak areas for the instructor, with a couple of key suggestions for improvements based on historic data and maybe even language analysis of written comments.

I would like to see a system in which students’ projected grades are taken into account when considering their evaluations. For example, a good evaluation from a student who gets an A should not count as much as a good evaluation from a student who gets a C. A question such as "What do you think your grade is in this course so far" should be included.

I know about other universities in which course evaluations are "normalized" (statistically) against students' grades (or projected grade) so that a good evaluation from a student who thinks is going to get an A in the course does not count as much as a good evaluation from a student who thinks is going to get a C, and the opposite. I know that the University of Washington, Seattle, applies this statistical process to their course evaluations.

I think that if the University is going to change course evaluations to a whole new system, the opportunity should be seized to also reformat the way statistics are applied to the evaluations or at least to acknowledge the projected grade of the students and how they influence their course evaluations.

Students must feel they are not identified by the process - this will be hard to achieve given cookies and other tricks to do just that. I'd like to have the ability to coin a few questions about each class as part of the eval.

Students should not be evaluating courses at the midterm point, before they have even received any grades. Evaluations should not be for instant or "on-the-fly" feedback. Rather, they should assess the narrative arc of the course as a whole.

Midquarter surveys are for mid-course corrections; they should NOT be part of the personnel review system. On gauchospace I set up my own set of 6 narrative questions for students to respond to; I told them it was optional, and a way to communicate more specific things than the standard campus evaluation. In a class of near 300 students, about 30 responded. Only about a 10 of the responses were meaty and thoughtful. I was glad to have those responses, and maybe I don't really need or want responses from the rest if they don't have anything to say to me. But I do worry about getting adequate response rates from something outside the classroom. Even now, in the classroom, a class of 75 students, with maybe 60 to 65 there on the final day of the course, I still only get about 50 or 55 surveys turned it. Students self-opt-out even under these controlled circumstances (unless the class is small, say under 25, and then the peer pressure is great to complete.

Because the questions are so irrelevant I always make my own evaluation form in addition to the campus one. It would be good to be able to add some of those questions to the official form.

If there's a tool that allows for some good data visualization, I'd like to see that used. Things that look at your scores over time and compare across departments.
recommend classes to students based on their ratings, à la Netflix, "Because you like CS 2, we thought you might like Biology 101."

Getting input from students as to what THEY think should be measured. Standardizing as much as possible the conditions under which the questionnaires are filled out.

Ability to hold students responsible for their evaluations. I can change the questions and add new ones now. Mid quarter surveys could be VERY useful - but when do the students (especially in the quarter system) Burn out from questionnaires?

None.

Please list any additional areas of concern that you may have about an online course evaluation system.

I really do think that response rates will fall. Also, I think that if students are not always thoughtful and serious about their responses now, it will be much worse on-line. Note- I always leave the room when evaluations are distributed, but I think that on-line answers particularly when written at the end of the quarter may evoke less reflect answers and are more likely to elicit 'pay back' and be a reflection of worry at the end of the quarter.

I expect that the response will be very low. The advantage of the current system is the students are given time during class; they do not have to find/make the time to fill out the surveys.

One thing that we will lose, unfortunately, is the ability to see whether a student is writing his/her narrative evaluation in an angry out-of-control scrawl or a calm thoughtful manner. I don't take the childishly scrawled comments quite as seriously.

This is one of the worst ideas the campus has come up with to save money. It will send a message to students that UCSB's course evaluation system is no better than "rate my professor.com," so why not just use that system? In fact, why don't you just go to ratemyprofessor.com and see who has smiles and red peppers. Their teaching would be considered exemplary and they could be advanced on that basis. Think of all the time, money and effort that could be saved.

What provisions will be made for on-line security? Also, I don't use Gauchospace because I've heard too many complaints about its inflexibility, and found the complaints to be valid.

An online system might lend itself to systematic manipulation, depending on how it is designed.

I think the opposite will be the case - too many detailed student responses. Before I hand out course evaluations, I remind students of the course objectives and how much students have accomplished and learned throughout the quarter. I tie in assignments to specific objectives so students are better able to synthesize the entire course and not just write about how they feel on the day before finals begin. If I am not there to deliver this information, students will not make those connections.

As mentioned above, it seems like a really bad idea from the perspective of good sampling methodology. There would essentially be no way to know whether the individuals who complete the survey are the same ones who even took the course, and information regarding the sample would be opaque. With respect to the latter, at least now we know that the ratings come from the students who attend class; with the new system the ratings would come from some subset of the sample who are motivated to go online and complete the forms. What are the properties of that subset? A type of self-selection is
introduced that would clearly invalidate any survey as a representative sample (better to contact a random sample from the class, for example). There is self-selection now in the form of class attendance, but that is exactly the sample who actually experienced the class! Just a really bad idea. The above are all concerns that should be taken into account when designing the system, to be sure they are avoided. Students who never attend class will be able to rate our teaching effectiveness. Is there any way to tie responses to records of class attendance and grades? Obviously the instructor couldn’t do this, but maybe this could be done in the aggregate. Being in the classroom where a course is taught and knowing that the process won’t be over for 15 minutes or so probably helps students to think about their experience and respond thoughtfully. In contrast, I know how I respond to electronic surveys that I don’t want to take anyway, click click click....

Student access and ease of completion needs to be high. How about non-representativeness -- or did you leave that out on purpose. Who participates in blogging / tweeting band-wagons? Not a representative sample; indeed a sample of just the sort of people whose opinions you would want to leaven with the more sensible but less mobilized. This is a deeply flawed mechanism for collecting valid evaluations.

I am not clear about the modalities. Will it be required of all class participants? If not it will be like Rate-my-professors.com, namely a place for functional illiterates to vent their ire. You would get more intelligent results if you asked all students who got a "B" or above in the course to express their opinions. Also you would get better perspective on the criticism if you listed the grade the student got in the class (not merely the grade expected) next to the evaluation.

I have no idea whether I would receive lower or higher, or pretty much the same ratings. I would have to look at the details of the studies. Can you tell us something about how the data on this issue sort out?

Not sure why these things might result. I confess I’m worried that online evals will produce the "ratemyprofessor.com" type of mentality--a completely non-representative set of responses, with major rants as well as praises, and nothing in between. At least in class, we can get to a huge number of students who otherwise would not take the time to volunteer their responses online, and those responses would be missed. We would need to provide a lot of encouragement for students to do the evals.

How does an online system ensure that you get only one evaluation from each student, while still preserving anonymity? This must be a KEY feature of any online evaluation system. Students need anonymity to be free to give honest responses, but if there is no way to ensure only one response each, students will quickly figure out that they can artificially inflate or deflate a professor’s ratings (for good or for ill). see above

I feel that students will not fill out on-line evaluations as seriously as they do in class, in a group. Doing this on-line depersonalizes the experience, which is to be avoided. I feel that evaluations would wind up being as irresponsibly done as the comments on "Rate My Professor.com." The classroom is the crucial setting for teaching and learning, so it should also be the setting for feedback.
I am concerned with several aspects of the proposed plan. Having students able to evaluate a course as early as the 7th week of classes can result in an incomplete assessment of a course. Are there any stronger incentives for students, perhaps not receiving a grade until the evaluation is done? Or at least delayed release of a grade until the evaluation is done?

What control will departments have in mandating that all faculty should include certain questions in their ESCI form? The plans calls for faculty to tailor their forms, which could be a good thing. But departments want to have some role in the process as well.

What control will TAs have over their ESCI questions? We (department) currently require an extensive set of questions for TAs that are the same for all TAs.

Will students believe that an online survey is truly anonymous? Doubtful. Access. System should be set up so that faculty can log on and see all their evals. from past quarters.

Any new system needs to come with clear guidelines about how evals are to be used in merit/promotion cases.
I wonder about opening the evaluation process at the 6th week. Do you intend to allow students who have evaluated the course early come back to the form and update it at the end of the class?

Without this feature, I couldn't support the initiative, if indeed, it is intended to open the evaluation process so early on.
I am concerned that the results would be no more meaningful than those we obtain from the current system. ESCI surveys measure the students, rather than the instructors, and in the "B" question, students are asked to evaluate course content, which they are unqualified to do. Though the "B" question may make sense in the humanities, where many courses are developed solely by the instructor based on personal expertise, in the sciences, especially the lower division, course content is completely standardized. Nevertheless, the ESCI "B" scores track the "A" scores in the lower division sciences. The meaningfulness of the "B" question is illustrated by the fact that I have had more than a half-point difference in my "B" question scores for separate identical sections of the same class, taught the same quarter. In case you are interested, my career average "A" score is 1.55 and my average "B" score is 1.85.

Mechanism is important. I have heard that it is planned to hold back grades to get responses, which is a really bad way to get effective feedback. Nothing like tying someone down and then asking about how well you're doing.

As above: since student NARRATIVE (written) responses are very important aspects of personnel cases in my dept, I see no value in 'streamlining' responses in ways that are extremely likely to reduce student engagement and also to reduce the thoughtfulness of student responses.

It should be mandatory ... Perhaps they could check in?

If students respond in a less formal atmosphere, such as their dorm room, etc. one might expect less formal responses in many cases. Students are likely unaware of the serious nature of the use of these surveys in faculty promotion, tenure cases, etc.

Students are also less likely to respond on their own.
Students should enter evaluations before the end of classes (not after the final exam nor after grades have been released).

Takes time to fill out online forms. Students can’t be bothered.

I think this new system has the potential of favoring situations in which only students who have a strong opinion about the course will fill out the evaluations, i.e. only students who are “pissed off” cause they are getting a bad grade or had a bad experience will write an evaluation, or the opposite. If students decide whether or not to fill out the evaluation then only self selected students will do it. I dislike being evaluated by students who might never come to class.

For sure they should not be able to see their final grade before having to fill out their feedback.

I think it is early to tell -- lets try it out. I am concerned that somehow it will cost more - not less to do this.

When evaluations are handed out in class, only those students who actually show up to class get to write them. Now, any student (particularly the surly ones who can’t be bothered to go to class) will express their "opinions" about lectures they don’t even attend.

The current proposal makes me think that there is not much in the way of faculty representation on the planning committee. I worry that this is going to be yet another ridiculous bureaucratic exercise that no one uses (see: iClicker).

A friend at an R1 public institution in the midwest participated in a pilot program for online evaluations and they weren’t able to get over 32% response rate. So there you go.

Also, whoever thinks that students should be bombarded with email messages starting in 5th or 6th week clearly has no idea how to manage a class. And, really, it should be kind of obvious that email is no longer the preferred platform for online communication. Anyone who tried to use umail to find students on a regular basis would know that.

I would hope that the committee overseeing this change in the course evaluation system will include individuals who are well-versed in the assessment of pedagogy.

I’m concerned about a provision in the current plan to allow data collection over 4 weeks. That’s far too wide a time, Students should be doing this at the end of the class, when all but their final exam is done, and ideally when they have gotten teacher feedback on their work (from exams and papers).

system crash on the last day

if you do such evaluations on line, no one will fill it out or take it seriously. I ask the students before they fill out the evaluations how much these mean to the quality of future education at UCSB and how much their feedback improves my future teaching. I think that without this little talk about taking such evaluations seriously, you will have people either ignoring to do it altogether, or being abusive, silly and non-productive in their comments if that do bother to take the time to fill out the evaluation.

Students may well access the system from smart-phones, in which case they may not take "quality time" to respond and it is hard to enter longer responses, so the quality of written comments may decline.
Now, they have 10-15 minutes with nothing else to focus on and they are thinking about the class. If they have to fill in an on-line ESCI to get their grades, their attention may well not be on providing input but getting through the survey.

will students trust that it’s anonymous?
Any issues with students not having access to the proper tools to respond?
Are you proposing a 4-week period for evaluations? That is almost half a quarter. Must make sure that each and every instructor still has at least some identical items in common.

might lead to more rambling

It would seem strange if students can evaluate lectures even if they have never participated in any lectures (although hopefully this would be a very small minority of class). As such, I would be very concerned if each student’s response was required in order to get a grade in the class.

The timing is important:
I believe their comments should be requested before the final exam - not based on how they think their final exam went.
all these things could go either way.

I am sure there has been research conducted that would guide the task force about what trends are most likely to happen on a campus such as ours.

it would be important to have students take ownership for their own learning and ask how many hours they spent reading class material per week.
Also what percentage of the reading they have done.
And having them report the number of time they have missed class. --- It would be helpful to be able to correlate time spent in class and on assignments with grades.
The long window of open response time--I think it is good if students are assessing the same thing--the course at a given point in time. I think most people tend to be prompted to action by anger or annoyance (like in user reviews on the web), and would log on after they were annoyed by a certain lecture they didn’t like.
Fewer people tend to be spurred to action to report on a good experience.

Lower response rates will have to be addressed by things liker "no feedback, no grade posted". Lower ratings will just have to be normed out over time (no one should compare ratings with the old system to those with the new). I am worried that we may get less useful narrative response

We would not know who is really taken the survey.

The one huge problem I envision is students not taking the time to fill out an online survey. Having most of the students available in a class during the last week seems to be the major advantage of paper evaluations. Since faculty merit advances and promotions rely heavily on student evaluations, having a poor response rate could do significant damage to personnel cases.

Students will not complete surveys in confidence but will invite input, suggested wording, or ideas from others to help them complete what should be their own individual thoughts and reactions. Answers will be less spontaneous and valid.
Factors affecting survey online will not be comparable to those collected under old system.

Potential for serious violation of privacy, confidentiality, and reliability and validity. Our students are very busy near the end of the quarter. I’m very concerned that they will not put much time and thought into an online survey.

Please provide any other comments that you think we may find helpful.

I understand that a pilot program will be set up. What are the criteria that will be used to determine if it is successful? I hope it is more than just dollars saved.

As a lecturer, my job is on the line as a result of these surveys and as long as that is the case, I think we should have leeway as to how these surveys are administered. I am completely against this method of administering the scores. It’s like being an absentee defendant in a trial.

The relevant committee should hire someone with expertise in sampling and survey design (at least consult a statistician). This idea is an embarrassment from the perspective of good sampling methodology. I think it also potentially opens the university to litigation from faculty, as job evaluation is based on these evaluations and it would be easy to argue that this system introduces bias.

At the very least, some sort of experiment or quasi-experiment should be performed in order to compare which students are sampled under an online vs. in-person system. That study would have to be very well-designed in order to demonstrate that the sampling would not be distorted, but at least such a study could be a step in the right direction.

A possible middle ground that might achieve cost savings but retain the sampling frame of students who attend class could be the collection of quantitative ratings in class but the collection of narrative evaluations online -- the numerical ratings don’t involve any more processing than a standard multiple choice exam, which does not seem prohibitive. If the narrative reviews needed to be typed up for some reason, though, the costs would seem prohibitive.

Anything to cut down on paper usage is good

Bad plan. The fevered brains in Kerr Hall have once again found too much time on their hands and got into mischief. I’d recommend shelving it or carving out a huge and hospitable space for opting out.

This, if you have not guessed it, is Paul Sonnino ranting George. Good luck!

My main concern with online evaluations as noted above is the response rate. I assume this has been researched, but I haven’t seen any discussion of this. In what may have been an earlier document that we reviewed in the Undergraduate Council, it was suggested that students might be able to complete evaluations weeks before the course ended. I very strongly oppose an online system that would allow students to complete evaluations prior to the last week of classes. As it is, we have only 10 weeks of classes, and in recent years, the first week gets largely taken up dealing with the crowds of students showing up who are wait-listed, hoping to enroll and required to attend the first week.

Concerns were also raised in the UG Council about ensuring anonymity. How will students know that they cannot be identified?
Would we ourselves (faculty and/or TAs) have any control over the timing of the evals? We currently hand them out when WE want to (in my case, I do them on the last day of class, but others may do them differently). I would like to be the one to send out the evals/links to students, with a window of time for completing them (before course grades are submitted). This might minimize the reactivity of students to do their evals in response to some particular event/grade in the course.

In order to increase response rate, I think students probably need to be sent more than one reminder email (with the link to the eval system), including deadline info. I'm not sure what other incentive there might be, as these should NOT be required of students. Whenever you require participation in an online survey, you get garbage data—students just click through it as fast as they can to get it done. Volunteer samples are bad, but required participation is worse.

It is very helpful to have items that every student answers every year, so that course ratings can be compared against other courses taught in the department in the current quarter and over time, and compared against university averages for each item. It's nice to be able to add new items for each course, but I would like to see a core set of items that never change, so comparisons can be made department-wide and university-wide.

How are departmental concerns being assessed, in addition to those of individual faculty?

The 10 day or so timeframe to respond to this survey is rather short, given that the quarter has ended and so fewer faculty are available right now. If students had access to some of the course evaluation data, it might (1) help students in selecting coursework and in anticipating the relative difficulty of particular subjects within a curriculum and (2) stimulate a higher response rate (as students will feel they are playing a role in providing information that can inform future students).

Having a perspective on the perceived difficulty of different courses offered within the curriculum in a particular department may also help students who feel overwhelmed in the sophomore year to evaluate whether courses taken in future quarters can be expected to be more difficult, more fun, worthwhile, etc. That is, providing students with a quantitative assessment (by their peers) of the difficulty and value of various courses could provide a "light at the end of the tunnel" and/or a "warning" about which quarters will be most challenging. This may help somewhat in reducing drop-out rates in particular majors (such as ECE) and may also spark increased interest in particular upperclass coursework (such as capstone projects).

More knowledge is typically a good thing. Although some faculty might dislike having quantitative data from student evaluations openly available, it's hard to argue (I think) this would have a negative impact, overall. An online survey should not be called ESCI, to avoid the misleading impression of continuity. If ESCI is considered too cumbersome, be honest and say it's being discontinued. An online survey would be something new and it needs to be tested out carefully.

You should build into the system a method for public access of ESCI scores, in case they are requested under the California Public Records Act. Furthermore, each time the scores are accessed, there should be a prominently displayed link to the guidelines for interpreting the scores. While the guidelines are very thoughtful and conservative, CAP often ignores them and engages in unjustifiable fine-grained numerology when evaluating ESCI scores.
I personally have no concerns about my ESCI scores. I do fine. In reality ESCI scores are not really useful and only separate really great and really poor teaching. For that, a greatly reduced survey with TWO questions and a comment box will do. I do think too much thinking and resources is wasted on something that does not really help the students (beyond identifying the very worst instructors/TAs).

Aren’t there other ways to spend the new tech fees? Please find a problem that really needs a tech solution and spend the money there (e.g. classroom assignment systems; fixing GOLD; finding a genius programmer to solve the existing problems caused by bad software all over our campus. Please!!!!

Thanks for doing this. ESCI is quite 1950’s. I don’t read mine (instead the Art Dept) gives a supplementary written survey ... Much more helpful)

I know universities in Australia, who open up their on-line student evaluations from around the middle of the quarter to the end. The students then tend to go online on the day they are most pissed off about the lecture and fill it in, rather than as a overall/global evaluation of the course, done at the end of the quarter.

I suspect that online surveys will result in lower ratings for a few reasons:
* people seem to be more brutal in expressing themselves online than on paper
* instructors are not in a position to influence opinions so much (I have seen at least one TA to bring boxes of candy on evaluation day)
* students with poor attendance record usually did not participate in written evaluations but are now able to do so online. They are likely to give negative feedback because (i) they did not get to know the instructor well, (ii) see that as an opportunity to retaliate for their lower grade, or (ii) had an attitude that instructor is an obstacle for a degree to start with.

Thus, it is important to collect and share some information on campus trends when instructor performance is evaluated at the Department or College level. For example, ”Instructor X quality score dropped from 1.2 to 1.8 in 2010-2012 period” sounds bad unless accompanied with a statement that campus average decreased from 1.6 to 2.6 over the same time period.

Don’t do it.

I have for many years been curious about gender variations in course evaluation scores. I saw some data long ago about the relative weight students give to male vs. female authorities and have always been skeptical that the evaluations are very fair...thinking they are biased in these general cultural ways. I would welcome some data that either validates or refutes this concern.
You haven’t explained how/when you would have these evals done.

For such changes to have positive impact on teaching evaluation, I can think of two implementations that may be desirable or necessary (and there are probably many other implementations that I haven’t thought of yet):

1) It may be desirable to implement a program where students are thoroughly introduced to the course evaluation system during freshman orientation with clear explanations of how important it is for them to provide thoughtful feedback on all of their course experiences at UCSB as an important component of their contribution of the intellectual life at UCSB. This might even include some "examples" of how and how not to approach these surveys when instruction ends. If UCSB switches to online surveys, this
would be a good time to inculcate the importance of taking the EXTRA TIME to fill out these surveys after a course ends even they are not required to do so.

2) It would seem important for individual Depts. to craft specific, internally agree-upon, and well-thought-out sets of survey questions that might be added to any customized faculty survey so that some direct comparisons can more easily be made between courses and/or instructors in the same Dept. Otherwise, with each faculty member or course having a customized survey, it might be difficult if not impossible for promotion committees to make meaningful internal comparisons when evaluating the teaching component of promotion cases.

Students should be asked to assess their own performance in the class as well. I always ask about this on my own mid-quarter feedback moments. Are you up in the reading, and if not, why not? Did you take adequate time to study for the midterm or to devote to the paper? These are really important aspects of the learning environment, and they can help make students see that a successful class is determined to a degree by student participation, enthusiasm, and preparation. Giving a lecture on X when no one has done the preliminary reading about X is really hard for a teacher. Good teachers motivate students to do the work, but students also have to do it.

one can require student to submit evaluation or opt out for their courses

As I stated above, this seems like something we have to do, no matter what we might otherwise think about it. Just like on-line "distance learning" will be one day.

The timing of their evaluations would be important - should be before final exams. I have been at UCSB 30 years. I believe teaching evaluations were quite effective for over twenty years. In fact for years I could predict quite accurately the ratings I would receive for a particular course depending on my self-evaluation of the particular course. However, things have changed. I no longer find the evaluations to be an effective measure of the quality of the teaching that happens in the classroom. The advent of technology has changed teaching and learning in significant ways; evaluations also need to be revamped. For example, is a question such as "does the instructor motivate me to do my best thinking?" relevant for today's students?

Should we be looking to introduce new measures of what they actually do "how many hours do you spend researching the web after lecture?" The point is to find a way to measure student leaning on "their own turf" and to find alternative ways of assessing the interest generated by a particular lecture. It is my opinion that today's students do not pay attention unless there are supportive visuals. They no longer seemed to know how to listen to a lecture--no matter how well organized the lecture is. Not using powerpoint is equated with "being disorganized". The way to deal with this is to perhaps return to measuring the particular objectives to be taught/learned in a given course (criterion-referenced evaluation) that would be decoupled with the evaluation of the methods used to communicate the message. Of course, this section of the eval. would be instructor and course specific.

Also, the matter of grade inflation nation-wide is a huge problem. Students tend to rate instructors lower if they feel dissatisfied with their grades. More than students from prior generations, current students feel entitled to higher grades and don't necessarily want to do the work. Coupling their grade expectations with the time they spend on the class might be a way to deal with this matter. For example, the question could read "the instructor evaluated that the reading for the class should take about 15 hours per week, how many hours you spend reading for the class per week?"
"how many hours you spent working on the research for your mid-term and final?"
"how many hours did you spend actually writing the paper after the research and reading were completed?"
"the instructor recommends that you spend at least 10 hrs working on your final paper in order to receive a passing grade, how many hours did you spend writing your paper?
These questions may not be phrased in the best way, however, my point is that it is important to have students TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for the outcome of the course, their grade and their overall learning WHILE THEY ARE FILLING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE. This might be a way to limit the subjective ratings that they tend to give and which unfortunately are too often correlated with their mid-term grades or final grade before the final or how entertaining they feel the instructor is. --- I have even heard that students will give extremely high ratings to instructors who are perceived as easy [that I refuse to believe--if it is true, the task force may try to see how to mitigate this].

VERY IMPORTANT: have students do a self-assessment--how many lectures they've missed, rate the amount of effort they put into the course, the grade they deserve (not expect), etc.
"4. Judging by my effort and the quality of my work, I think my grade should be:"  

The gradual conversion of the academic and learning process into a customer service industry does not help the students concerned. This particular fact is responsible for the egregiously low learning capability of American students viz a viz their counterparts in the developed world. The ESCI system hands over too much power to students despite the fact that such power allows students to unduly negatively affect the professional careers of their professors. It panders to the worst impulses in students and encourages overall laxity.
It is a good idea and will undoubtedly occur - we just need to be flexible in its implementation & interpretation.

It would be useful to have a type of question that ranks qualities. For instance, you give students certain qualities they prefer for their ideal class, and they can ranked them for more important to least important to them (this could be crossed with other evaluation results). Same could be done with a list of qualities they did observed to be most to least prominent in the class.

If you are trying to save money, this is not the way to do it!

**Willing to Help**

John Foran
[foran@soc.ucsb.edu](mailto:foran@soc.ucsb.edu)

no no no no no no!!!

Duane Sears [sears@lifesci.ucsb.edu](mailto:sears@lifesci.ucsb.edu)

Don Lubach
[don.lubach@sa.ucsb.edu](mailto:don.lubach@sa.ucsb.edu)

I do a midterm survey using free online survey tools in several of my courses. Those links have expired (or are only available on my login), but I have older versions in hard copy:  
[http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/133c/133cPrevYears/133c04/133c04MidEval.htm](http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/133c/133cPrevYears/133c04/133c04MidEval.htm)
Here's are two more recent ones that I cloned so the questions can be viewed now:
http://feedbackfarm.com/surveyengine/s.php?i=58s
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L9KZXZQ

I also do an introductory survey to get a sociological-type profile of the course & to give students a feeling for where they fit in individually. Some of those questions are relevant for a final survey as well:
http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/2c/2c09/2c09survey.htm