

Student Survey Overview of Student Comments– Summer 2012 Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI)

To: Carl Creasman, Professor, History
The members of the working group on the SAI

From: Jessica King, Institutional Assessment
Laura Blasi, Director, Institutional Assessment

Date: June 29, 2012

When asked about the SAI, one student explained that the purpose is:

“...to assess the courses taken and provide constructive feedback for Valencia. After all, ‘Best in the Nation’ doesn't happen by itself!”

SAI Student Survey and Report Overview

Launched on June 18th a survey of students regarding their experience of the Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) was sent to all students enrolled in the summer term (25,700.) Within a week the survey had 1,323 responses (or 5%.) We received 900+ comments and this overview report can be paired with the initial report which provided an overview of all responses (dated 6/25/2012.) This report was requested by Carl Creasman to summarize the student responses to two of the SAI Survey open-ended questions: (1) “What is the purpose of the Student Assessment of Instruction?” and (2) “Are there any incentives that would encourage more students to complete the Student Assessment of Instruction?”

I Student Voices

Key Ideas

Several of the student quotes are presented here to provide insights into some of their perspectives. These quotes are followed by a focus on their understanding of purpose and their opinions about ways of increasing participation. When asked about the Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI), students shared their opinions while also providing ideas for how to use the SAI more effectively:

- **About Use:** *“I would hope that it would be implemented in an evaluation/discussion with the instructor to either fortify good techniques or enlighten them as to areas of opportunity ... perhaps in a perfect world but good instructors should be recognized and rewarded. The instructors that are just taking up space should be replaced ... again in a perfect world.”*
- **About Purpose:** *“The purpose of the SAI is to determine how effective a class, and instructor was, or is. And I would also like to believe that it also helps to improve the quality of the given courses. I just wish you guys would take action a lot faster than you tend to do when we the students give our input and recommendations via our responses through the surveys, because if you don’t then we will stop taking the time to reply. Thank you.”*
- **About Motivation:** *“More communication about the surveys from the professors might encourage participation. If a professor told the class how the information is used and that they encourage both positive and negative feedback. I don’t recall any professor last semester even mentioning the surveys. It might make others feel like the information is important and the extra few minutes can help make all the classes better each semester.”*
- **What would you tell a friend?** *“I would tell them that it helps you the most, your learning environment and how you are being taught is important, it helps to inform/encourage the professors to give you the best experience possible.. it’s all for you.”*

II What is the Purpose of the Student Assessment of Instruction? (Question 7)

Summary of Themes

Excluding blank responses, the majority of the 899 responses to this question fall into five major themes:

1. Evaluate Professors
2. Evaluate Courses
3. Improve Instruction
4. Feedback From Students
5. I Don’t Know (approximately 10% of responses)

For Discussion: Student Quotes about Purpose

When asked, students replied that the purpose of the SAI is to...

- a. *"...give valuable feedback to the instructors. Help point them in the direction of what's working and what isn't during class."*
- b. *"...make sure that teachers that are awful (there are many) are held accountable for their teaching styles and techniques."*
- c. *"...help the professor understand what his students like and don't like about the course and the way its taught, so that he can make changes/improvements for the next semester. I assume the SAI is also a good tool for the dean (or whoever is in charge of the teachers) to see how the professor is doing and how the students like them. If a teacher consistently gets really negative feedback in certain areas, I assume the dean would take with that professor about improving those areas."*
- d. *"...allow myself, as a student, rate and comment any of my questions or concerns about Valencia College. Also, for Valencia College to take what I have to say in consideration, in order to become a better College as a whole."*
- e. *"...provide feedback on the material the professor presents, how well this is taught, and what we took away from the class. As we pay for our educations, we should have access to high performing professors and this helps to ensure we are being heard."*
- f. *"...help the instructors with what they can work on or what they are terrific at. It should be a guide for some of the useless texts we use and which ones are keepers. This is probably used as a guide for raises and which ones need help in teaching their classes though."*
- g. *"I know you ask our opinions on the courses we've taken, and even though I answer them, I don't know who reads them. I have to assume the purpose is for the instructor to improve their class instruction techniques, but I am not sure."*
- h. *"The purpose of the SAI I will believe is to make sure students receive the highest level of education by a professional and knowledgeable Instructor that cares about it's student and how they are learning in class. A good instructor understands that every student learns different ways and tries to engage their students into wonder and awe about whatever subject is being taught. He uses his own experiences to be the light to knowledge."*
- i. *"Unsure. I would imagine to understand how well a teacher is doing in respect to his students as well as determining how much should be funded for technology in which classes as some may not use them or be as successful in using them as other courses."*

III Are there incentives that would encourage more students to complete the Student Assessment of Instruction? (Question 14)

Summary of Themes

The majority of the 660 responses to this question fall into three major themes:

1. **Better Distribution of Information** (have instructors emphasize importance; prove to students that the results are read and used; advertising with banners, flyers, emails); compile results into database for students to see (compared to ratemyprofessor.com.)
2. **Restrictive** (make survey mandatory; withhold grades if not completed; make student unable to register for classes until survey is complete; do not allow students to take final exam until survey is completed.)
3. **Compensatory** (prizes/entry into raffle; gift certificates for bookstore, cafeteria; Valencia t-shirts, flash drives, key chains, etc.; copy card credits; raffle for parking spot; early registration; early grade release; extra credit; pizza party; gift cards; electronics; cash.)

For Discussion: Student Quotes about Motivation

When asked about incentives, students replied...

- a. *“Let us know what you derived from the feedback. Maybe showing past results of other surveys and how you actually used the information.”*
- b. *“[Incentives are] not really [needed] in my opinion. It's all anonymous anyway. One would say maybe have prizes or whatever (or maybe give them the ability to register a little earlier), but it feels wrong to have students fill something like this out just for a prize.”*
- c. *“Perhaps a sentence on the assessment informing students how the evaluation will be put to use, in literal terms. For example, who will read it, and what changes it could make.”*
- d. *“Yes, but none that are academically appropriate. The one most students might suggest is payment (a raise/decrease in pay for teachers or a direct income to the student) for each survey. Extra credit could be considered [sic] but would be a terrible incentive to offer as grade should not be interfered with an anonymous survey that bears no meaning to that class. Surveys could be made a requirement to finish a class but that would be an unethical exchange through force. Another alternative could be to make an event out of it. (well, for those attending at the campus). In other words. give out free food or a raffle for students who show up for a determined four or five days to fill out surveys at the student services center or something similar.”*

- e. *“Make the survey mean something, i.e. the instructor gets an annual grade that can be seen by everyone. Bad/poor/lazy instructors need to be weeded out to make room for good instructors. With the high number of adjuncts and few unqualified fulltime faculty I have seen (nothing is in place to make them update their level of knowledge in a subject after 10, 20, 30 years - most degrees are outdated after 10 years, especially involving technology) , something needs to be done to hold them accountable for their real education level, not the perceived level based on their degree. There is a huge difference between a having a degree (piece of paper) and being current - knowing what you are teaching.”*

- f. *“...students want to know that their opinions matter. We discuss the fact that some instructors are more effective than others and that we try to convey this through whatever means of feedback you offer. What we see, however, is the same (ineffective) instructors [sic] teaching the same courses every semester with little change. The majority of our professors are fantastic. If we knew that you had actually responded to our comments by trying to replace the bad ones, we would not require ‘incentives’.”*