ISQ Task Force Report
October 22, 2014

Task Force Participants:

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Context:

In the Spring of 2014, Provost Earle Traynham asked Dan Richard, Office of Faculty Enhancement (OFE) Director, to establish a task force to address questions about the online development of Instructional Satisfaction Questionnaires (ISQ). The Task Force was organized to include representation from across colleges and affected units. The ISQ Task Force met several times in the Spring of 2014 and in the Fall of 2014. Of major concern was the drop in response rates when moving to an online system of administering the ISQ compared to previous rates using a face-to-face administration. Response rates for the face-to-face administration of the ISQ tended to range around 70%. The online ISQ in the Fall of 2013 and Spring 2014 had response rates in the 50-60% range. Faculty expressed concerns that this drop in response rates might affect the overall scores and subsequent interpretation of ISQ results. ISQ results are used as part of annual faculty evaluation and are a required component of materials submitted for promotion and tenure.

Research and Resources:

The Task Force reviewed data from the 2013/2014 administration of the ISQ (online version only) for face-to-face courses and compared the results from the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic years, where the ISQ was administered using a face-to-face method. Information was not reviewed from online administration of the ISQ for distance learning courses, as those ratings are necessarily collected in an online format. Therefore, The Task Force compared ISQ evaluations of face-to-face courses from the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic years, which were conducted using paper forms, with ISQ evaluations of face-to-face courses from the 2013/2014 academic year, which were conducted using an online format.

The full results of the analysis can be seen in the attached Technical Report. The results suggest that there was a significant decrease in response rates using the online format compared to the traditional face-to-face format. Reductions in overall ratings were associated with lower response rates. The reduction in response rates, however, could account for a negligible (approximately .06 score on average) change in ISQ ratings.

Given the association estimated form the analysis, for every change of 10 percentage points in response rate, an additional value of .03 in ISQ rating would be expected. For example, a professor teaching a course with a 90% response rate who received a 4.34 ISQ rating who next semester teaches the same course but whose ISQs have a 70% response rate might expect, all other things being equal, an approximate ISQ rating of 4.28. Because overall response rates dropped from approximately 70% to approximately 55% when online ISQs were implemented, an approximate drop in ISQ rating of .06 might be expected (an expectation that was only partially confirmed by the actual drop of approximately .02 that was seen).

Providing more time for students to respond to the survey in the Spring of 2014 likely increased response rates. There was no evidence that the reduction in response rates substantively affected ISQ ratings. The Task Force concluded that it was more concerned about the use of ISQ results (especially in the absence of other methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness) than about the method of ISQ deployment.

Task Force Recommendations:

Given the results of the data analysis and the discussions of the Task Force, the Task Force offers the following recommendations to the Provost.

a. **University-wide Incentives** – The Task Force recommends that any incentives provided to students for completing the ISQ should be university-wide incentives. Faculty should not be encouraged to provide additional incentives, as this variation in the data collection process might bias the results and might introduce ethical concerns. Marianne Jaffee agreed to remove the instructions about incentives from future communications with faculty about ISQ response rates.

b. **Blackboard Integration** – The task force identified that integration with Blackboard Learning Management System might improve response rates. Faculty could provide links in their courses delivered through Blackboard and encourage students to complete the ISQ measures associated with that particular course. The Task Force felt that this option would encourage students to complete the ISQ. Moreover, accessing ISQs through a specific Blackboard course will remind students which professor they are evaluating and thus might alleviate issues with students attributing ISQ ratings to the wrong professor. The Task Force recommends that a module be created that will allow faculty to include links to the ISQ for a specific course in their created Blackboard courses.

c. **Use of Tools Other than the ISQ** – The Task Force identified the need to provide options for faculty to collect information about effective teaching practices using methods other than the end-of-the-semester ISQ. Some of the options discussed included mid-term or beginning-of-the-semester surveys and teaching observations by Chairs, Deans, other colleagues, and OFE staff. The Task Force felt these options, if made accessible to

faculty, would allow faculty to be more responsive to students and to make adjustments to their teaching practices during the semester. The Task Force noted that many of these alternative measures are listed on the OFE website; however, faculty often are not aware that these techniques exist or are unclear as to how these techniques could be used to improve instruction. The Office of Faculty Enhancement will provide a summary for Chairs to distribute at the beginning of the semester and during the period when faculty are preparing their annual evaluations.

d. **Add Annual Evaluations as part of New Faculty Orientation** – The Task Force recommended that a session be added during New Faculty Orientation regarding the use of the ISQ and other forms of teaching and learning assessments. The goal of this effort would be to support new faculty in selecting a variety of methods to evaluate and improve their teaching. This effort also will encourage faculty to be proactive in collecting evidence of their teaching effectiveness for their annual evaluations and promotion and tenure dossiers.

e. **Chairs Discuss How ISQ Results are Used** – The Task Force recognized that Chairs and Deans use a variety of approaches in interpreting and making decisions based on ISQ information during annual evaluations and promotion and tenure review. The Task Force recommends the Provost meet with the Council of Chairs or ask the Council of Chairs to convene a committee to discuss how ISQ data is used for annual evaluations, how those evaluations might have changed since the online version was implemented, and what recommendations might be provided for improvement. These recommendations should be communicated among Chairs to provide support in the interpretation of ISQ information.

f. **Convene a Committee to Revise the ISQ Items** – The length of the ISQ survey and the number of courses, and the format of the online survey might promote student apathy in completing all of the requested ISQ forms. To address this concern, the Task Force recommends that the Provost convene a committee to review and reduce the number of ISQ items, and once reduced, to provide options for more flexibility in the ISQ administration. It might be possible, given the online version of the ISQ to provide different questions based on the type of course, the goals of the academic unit within which the course is located, etc.

Summary:

The ISQ Task Force concluded that moving to mandatory online deployment of ISQs resulted in an initial decline in response rates. Reduced response rates, however, had a negligible effect on average ISQ ratings (approximately reducing ratings .06 points on average). The Task Force noted that response rates to the online version increased over semesters, and that providing more time for students to respond to the ISQ likely resulted in greater response rates. The Task Force recommended that more resources be provided to faculty and administrators in interpreting ISQ results and in discovering other options for teaching evaluations. The Task Force recommended that the number of items on the ISQ be reduced, and more flexible options be provided for collecting meaningful information for faculty and academic programs.