University of South Carolina

Columbia, South Carolina

The University of South Carolina supports more than 46,000 students on eight campuses across the state. Their 2,100 instructors teach classes that lead to more than 324 degree programs. Various university departments have relied on the feedback captured by Class Climate since 2006 and the Blackboard Building Block since 2009 to improve instructor performance and student success.

Challenge

For years, the University of South Carolina relied on printed Scantron forms to collect course evaluations. Many departments designed their own forms, then the forms were printed, scanned, and results collected into ASCII data files. The data files were uploaded to a mainframe for reporting and analysis.

Making changes was a labor-intensive process. Each time a department changed or added a form, University Technology Services needed to revise the capture application and adjust the data transfer programming.

"There was a great deal of programming involved," says Karla Pool, Applications Analyst, University Technology Services.

When several departments approached Technology Services to add online evaluations, USC knew they needed a unified solution that could collect both paper and online responses seamlessly and present the results in reports that department could easily access themselves.

Further, the university wanted evaluation invitations to be readily available in their Learning Management System, Blackboard.

Enter Class Climate and its Blackboard Building Block.

Solution Snapshot

Selected departments conduct custom evaluations

Support paper and online evaluation forms

Two ways to distribute survey links: email and Blackboard

Department administrators can run their own reports

Fully automated, time-saving process

Solution

Class Climate provides effective methods for creating evaluation surveys via online and desktop tools. The system enables each department to define a core set of questions, to which instructors can add class-related questions if they choose.

Once surveys are created, Class Climate easily distributes them to students via any of a variety of output formats, including traditional paper forms, online options, formats enabled for mobile devices, and a Blackboard Building Block where evaluation invitations appear right on the student's home page.

"Having two means of communication for our students (Blackboard and email) provides more opportunities for students to participate and provide valuable feedback for the instructors," states Pool.

Scantron offers this configurable widget to provide student users with a direct link to each pending course evaluation.

Departments solicit evaluations in various ways:

- Printing paper forms, which are available to students in the classroom.
- Sending initial email invitations when the department's evaluation opens.
- Sending reminder invitations to students who have not yet responded.
- Providing a permanent link to the evaluations in Blackboard via the Building Block.

The Blackboard Building Block provides students with direct links to completed and outstanding course evaluation requests in Class Climate, increasing response rates.

Results

Departments are enjoying an average response rate of approximately 65%. Some departments have much higher response rates, due to student incentives for completing evaluations.

"If [students] participate in just one evaluation, the Blackboard technology available with Class Climate 5.1 allows them to see all evaluations they have completed and have yet to complete, allowing for increased response rates," says Pool.

"[Distributing via] Blackboard and email provides more opportunities for students to participate and provide valuable feedback for the instructors."

Karla Pool, Applications Analyst, University Technology Services
University of South Carolina

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