

Indiana University Bloomington Replaces Multiple Course Evaluation Systems with Blue[®]



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Krisy Lynn Mahome,
Assistant Director for IU Bloomington
Evaluation Services and Testing

INSTITUTION:

Indiana University Bloomington

LOCATION:

Bloomington, Indiana, US

NO. STUDENTS:

~46,000

CHALLENGE:

The university needed to find a course evaluation system that could replace their multiple methods of collecting student feedback institution-wide.

SOLUTION:

Blue course evaluation software

BENEFITS

- Centralize course evaluations across multiple campuses
- Accommodate paper and online course evaluation forms
- Support course evaluations with hundreds of questions easily in one cascaded project
- Utilize advanced response rate optimization features to increase participation

Top ranked for academic excellence, Indiana University Bloomington (IU Bloomington) has been offering its students a quality educational experience that spans two centuries.

Course evaluations at IU Bloomington serve multiple purposes including providing feedback to faculty members to help them improve their teaching skills, gathering information for tenure and promotion decisions, and identifying gaps existing in teaching across the school.

As the flagship campus and largest university of the Indiana University System, IU Bloomington has a decentralized structure that translated to their course evaluation process. The challenge for the university was that there were over 46,000 students in more than 550 academic programs and multiple methods of collecting student feedback. This made it difficult to use responses to assess the quality of teaching across all campuses.

“We were using Scantron paper and then there were some departments and schools that were using different online solutions,” comments Krisy Mahome, Assistant Director for IU Bloomington Evaluation Services and Testing. “There was no one standard and no way to collect institution-wide data in an organized manner.”

Needing to find an effective way to manage course evaluations, the university formed a course evaluation task force in February 2011. The 24 member team was co-chaired by the university's Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and included faculty representatives and specialists in survey design and analysis, higher-education engagement, and information technology.

The task force performed extensive research on online course evaluations including gathering information about the experience of similar institutions nation-wide.

“They looked at tools that would meet the needs of a very decentralized schooling system,” Krisy continues. “From that they determined that Blue had the greatest capabilities.”

BLUE IS A FLEXIBLE TOOL THAT FITS THEIR NEEDS

For an institution as structurally complex as IU Bloomington, the successful implementation and sustainability of course evaluations greatly depended on the robustness of the system they chose.

“We wanted to be able to pull each academic unit into the new system without losing a lot of the flexibility we had access to before,” Krisy says. “Blue was the closest in doing that.”

“They were also willing to listen to our suggestions and provided improvements to accommodate our diverse and wide-ranging needs across colleges, schools, and academic units.”

NO CHALLENGE TOO GREAT FOR THE BLUE SUPPORT STAFF

The Blue course evaluation system was fully implemented at Indiana University Bloomington in 2015. Given the scale of the university along with the multiple tools they had been using, transitioning had its challenges.

“The big concern for us was how do we maintain the same level and standard of course evaluations that we had in the past and at the same time put them all into one system?” Krisy says. “At the time Blue had a cap on questions and we were exceeding it. We knew that exceeding the question cap might be a possibility and as a result the eXplorance development team had already started to design and test a new feature called Question Bank.”

Utilizing the cascading model, Question Bank solved the question cap issue. It enabled the university to create course evaluation projects with a large number of questions that were intended only for certain subjects. This is all based on known demographic data from a variety of data sources at the institution including their SIS, LMS, etc.

“One of the really positive benefits that come with working with eXplorance and Blue is that their team has been willing to listen and give us a solution that we can use,” adds Krisy.

“We were able to use our unique needs to help them build the Question Bank feature into something that’s really useful. It continues to evolve and we continue to give input.”

RESPONSE RATES GO UP

Before Blue, several academic units at Indiana University Bloomington were already administering evaluations online, or had done so in the past, with mixed response rates. Furthermore, faculty members that administered paper evaluations had no control over students turning in blank forms, partially filled forms, or those who just didn't bother to turn them in at all.

"Although there were departments that tracked response data those numbers weren't maintained institution-wide," Krisy adds. "We fully launched Blue online course evaluations in fall of 2015 and we had the highest response rate to date that term."

"Spring 2017 was also a good term and in fact our best spring semester results by a 15% year over year growth."

IU Bloomington plans to launch more initiatives in an effort to keep increasing their response rates.

"We really want to get our response rates up and continue providing this useful tool for IU Bloomington faculty and students. We are making efforts to create a culture of assessment that will allow this process to capture and uncover meaningful and useful feedback."

FINDING NEW USES FOR COURSE EVALUATION DATA

"One thing that is easier to do with the Blue system that wasn't as easy before is that we now have a way to centrally report data for students to use when they are registering," Krisy offers.

By centralizing course evaluations in Blue, students at IU Bloomington have access to past feedback data from their peers that they can use to inform their choice about instructors and courses.

"This is a new incentive that we are able to offer students in addition to the benefits of uniform online evaluations and the other features that comes with Blue."

CONVENIENCE, EFFICIENCY, AND COST-SAVINGS

Ranked among the top five schools in the country in Campus Conservation Nationals 2013, it's no surprise that saving resources and adopting efficient policies would be an important item for IU Bloomington.

"Especially when you look at how much we were spending on paper and maintenance fees during course evaluations," says Krisy.

A fully online and automated system, Blue greatly reduced the need for paper products while significantly saving the university time by optimizing processes.

"There were departments that had staff who were solely responsible for course evaluations. Now with the implementation of the Blue system they can assist in other ways to meet the institution's mission and strategic goals."

BEING PART OF THE BLUE COMMUNITY

An active member of Bluenotes Group – a global community of Blue users, Krisy will attend the Bluenotes Americas 2017 user conference.

"I look forward to connecting with professionals from other institutions that are currently using Blue with high response rates. I presented in the previous conference and I'm currently working on a presentation for this year."

Commenting on IU Bloomington's ongoing relationship with eXplorance, Krisy expresses that "My vision is for us to cultivate a partnership that allows for meaningful and useful two way feedback about the tools that we use, how we use them, and future development."

"Specifically with regards to Bluepulse my goal is to work to show the value of formative feedback in the learning environment and programmatically. I hope to achieve this by showing the value of formative feedback in IU Bloomington's culture of meaningful assessment and improvement."

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