Notes on the Fall 2015 LIFT Pilot:

In fall 2015, 20 GVSU academic units used the LIFT system to administer student evaluations of teaching. Enrollment in the 1,238 participating course sections totaled 34,055, and we received 24,172 valid responses, for an overall response rate of 71%. The distribution of course response rates is bimodal:

![Section Response Rates](image)

The USETI Task Force has recommended that all instructors dedicate a small amount of class time for students to complete the questionnaires. I hypothesize that the bimodal distribution of response rates is explained at least in part by differences between sections where in-class time was or was not provided. Among 178 courses where we know whether or not the instructor allowed time in class, the response rate distribution for those that did so is centered higher than that for instructors who did not. This is certainly not conclusive proof, but it is at least supportive evidence for the value of setting aside time in class.

![Response rates (respondants to post-pilot survey only)](image)
My office received about 35-40 reports of problems during the survey administration period, roughly 0.1% of invitees. Some of the reports came directly from students, while others came from faculty members who had been approached by students. Among the reports, the most common issues were:

Instructor provided incorrect link via email or Blackboard -- Each student should receive the correct survey links via email, so it’s not strictly necessary for faculty members to provide the links. Nonetheless, some instructors told us that their students claimed not to have received the email invitations, so providing the link may be beneficial, but only if the correct link is used.

Student (who is also faculty/staff member) couldn’t log in to the system -- In several cases, students who had both student and employee email accounts were unable to log in because they used their employee ID and password instead of their student credentials.

Student is told they already completed the form when they don’t remember having done so -- This is the most worrisome category – reported by five students. In two cases, they were pretty sure they had accidentally completed the form for one section with responses intended for a different section (e.g. they filled in their Biology form with answers pertaining to their English class, and only discovered the mistake when they went to do the Biology form). The versions of the questionnaires that appear on larger-screen devices do a good job of minimizing this risk (each screen shows course and instructor in the header, and there’s a final verification step that says something like “This is the evaluation for BBS 101 with Dr. Jane Doe. Do you want to submit?”). Unfortunately, the rendering for smart phones doesn’t have either of those safeguards. I have asked the vendor to add them.

We received 105 responses to a brief survey of faculty participants (105 out of 455 invitees = 23% response rate). Seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that they did not experience any problems using the system, or receive reports of problems from students. Among the 27% who did report problems, here are the responses that occurred more than once:

- Couldn’t access report (8 occurrences) -- Unfortunately, the system had recurring and sustained outages between Dec 21 and Jan 1. Nevertheless, the system still distributed messages to GVSU faculty on Dec 24 stating that reports were available, with the result that our faculty were sent links that wouldn’t function. The vendor has apologized for the outages and says that the root of the problem has been corrected. No data was lost, but many faculty members were inconvenienced, including some who needed the data fairly promptly for their portfolios.
- Students were confused by the login process (3 occurrences) -- In one case, this was specifically related to the student-employee issue noted above; in the other cases, details weren’t provided
- Students continued to receive email reminders after they completed questionnaire (3 occurrences) -- This should not happen, and I have notified the vendor.
- Students couldn’t find the link to the survey (3 occurrences) -- Presumably this will become less common as students and faculty get used to the email delivery system. Faculty in the pilot were generally under-informed about what to expect, so they were unable to prepare students.
- Students were confused by different delivery systems (2 occurrences) -- Students seemed confused that some online questionnaires were delivered through Blackboard while others weren’t. Again, this presumably will pass with broader use and better communication with faculty.
- Faculty members got reports before submitting grades (2 occurrences) -- One department had their reporting date set for the day before grades were due. This will be automatically prevented in future terms.
- Students complained about too many emails (2 occurrences)
• **Process for adding additional questions was tedious** (2 occurrences) – This is undeniable. On the upside, each faculty member should only have to actually type in custom questions once. Any questions they have previously used will be available in future terms via a checkbox-type form. In addition, questions added by colleges/departments/schools will no longer need to be added by individual instructors beginning in Winter 2016.

We also collected more general feedback about how faculty members felt about the pilot. Those responses were rich and highly varied. Many respondents thought the system had worked smoothly, but many others had issues with the LIFT questionnaires in particular or with student evaluations of teaching in general. Several raised issues that should be resolved by better communication with faculty about the LIFT processes. The LIFT oversight committee will review the full text of the responses and review options for addressing the concerns raised.

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1 Based on survey responses from 67 faculty members. Survey response rate was 15% and is not presumed to be representative. Faculty indicated whether they allowed in-class time for LIFT in any F15 class, not necessarily in all of their classes, so some courses may be misclassified. Faculty were also asked about 4 other behaviors that might promote higher response rates: emailing the link to students; posting the link on Blackboard; offering collective incentives; or offering individual incentives. None of those other behaviors had as clear an association with response rates in a bivariate sense. In a multivariate linear model, time in class, group incentives, and individual incentives were all associated with significantly higher response rates.