

**ECS Task Force on Implementation of Universal Student Evaluations of Teaching (USETI)
Report #3 to ECS, August 20, 2015**

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This is the third report from USETI to ECS, regarding the implementation of a universal student evaluation of teaching instrument. This report includes a review of the timeline, an update on the work of the task force since the last report, and a second round of recommendations for consideration by ECS and UAS.

Timeline: Past, Present, Future

Before 2014: For several years, various faculty groups discussed the use and implementation of student evaluations of teaching (SETs) at GVSU.

January 2014: The following motion was passed by UAS:

The university should adopt a standardized measure of student evaluations of faculty teaching that meets contemporary standards for reliability and validity in psychometric measurement. The measure should yield both quantitative and qualitative results. The university should also adopt a standardized platform for administration of the measure (e.g., online software). The measure and platform should be used in all units and colleges. Units and colleges may employ additional instruments separately from the university standard.

March 2014: USETI was created and began to meet regularly to address the charges from ECS (see Appendix).

October 2014: Report #1 from USETI to ECS, dealing primarily with choosing a “standardized measure”.

November 2014: The following motion was passed by UAS:

UAS directs USETI to develop implementation plans for the IASystem, using as many of the forms in that system as make sense and seeking input from stakeholders on campus.

February 2015: Report #2 from USETI to ECS, with a round of recommendations as it pertains to the delivery of the survey. (See Appendix.) Recommendations were approved by ECS and UAS.

March-May 2015: IASystem piloted with the Department of Statistics. USETI sought “input from stakeholders on campus”. Management group established. USETI Chair attended a webinar on the successful transition at the University of Louisville to a centralized, online system. Second set of recommendations developed. (Details on most of these items are in this document.)

Anticipated Timeline Going Forward

August-September 2015: Communication at college start-up meetings.

Fall 2015: Second pilot with more units, and more types of courses (e.g. online). Third and final set of recommendations developed and sent to ECS. Continued communications with the campus community.

Through March 2016: Continued communications with the campus community. Short videos completed by Spring Break 2016. Turning over of any further work to the management group and back to ECS.

April 2016: All colleges complete student evaluations of teaching using IASystem for Winter 2016 courses, using approved procedures.

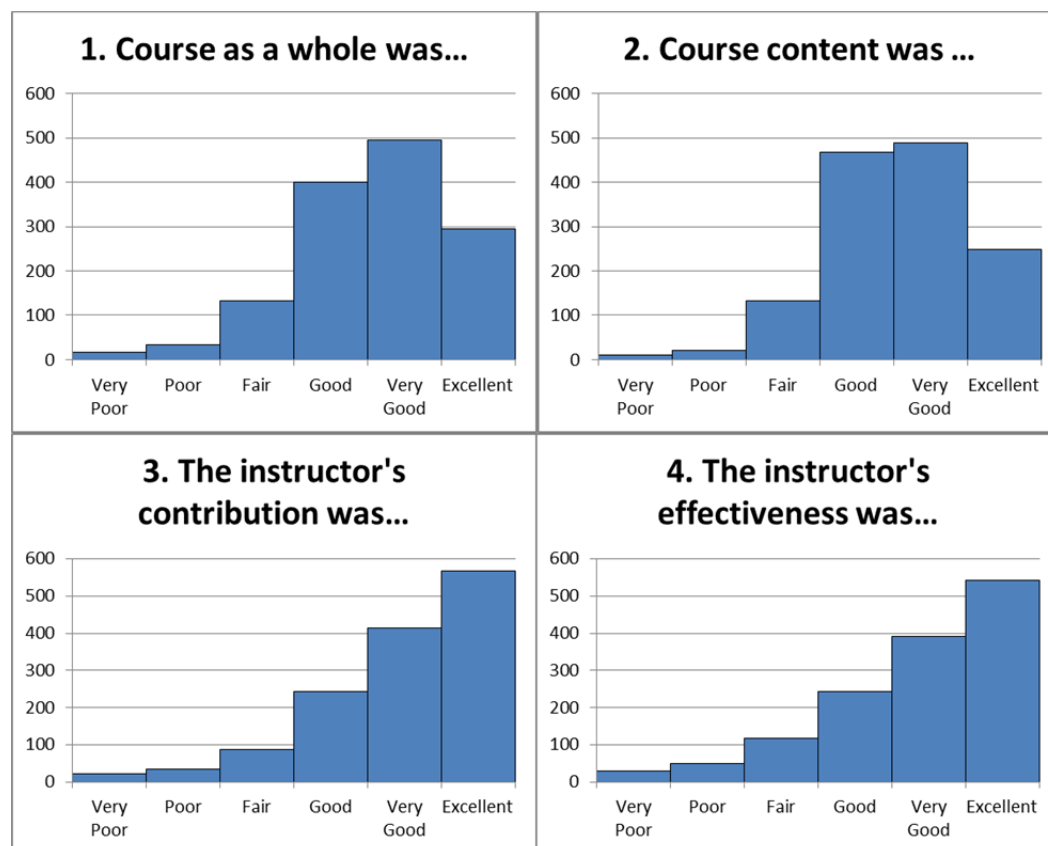
April 2014 Pilot with the Department of Statistics

For Winter 2014 courses, the Department of Statistics volunteered to participate in a pilot of the system, in order for us to see if there were any technical issues in delivering the survey to students, and to observe such things as response rates and average ratings.

In terms of technical issues, there were very few, and the system ran smoothly. According to students, surveys took a median time of five minutes to complete, and reports were available to faculty after grades were submitted.

All faculty members in the Department of Statistics participated in the winter 2016 semester pilot (including affiliate and adjunct faculty); the only exceptions were any visiting faculty members and any tenure track/tenured professor who were within one year of a possible personnel action. Total enrollment in the participating courses was 1620, and there were 1367 student responses, for an overall response rate of 84%. At least 70% of students responded in 52 of the 62 sections (84%), and 46 sections had response rates of 80% or more, so overall response rates were generally very good. It remains to be seen whether similar results can be achieved in a more diverse selection of courses.

The following charts show the distribution of student responses to the four universal questions that are included in all IASystem questionnaires and have the strongest evidence of validity among the survey items:



These four items are combined into a scale intended for use in summative evaluations when a single measure is desired. The scale has a possible distribution from 0 to 5. In the Statistics pilot, we observed the following distribution of scale scores:

Percentile	
10 th	3.02
25 th	3.55
50 th	3.88
75 th	4.26
90 th	4.54

After the student evaluation survey closed, we invited 500 randomly-selected students who participated in using IASystem to complete an online, post-evaluation survey. Sixty-one responded (12%). Some results of this survey were:

- 27.8% used a phone to access IASystem, 1.9% used a tablet, 38.9% used a laptop, and 31.5% used a computer.
- Of 53 responses, only one student indicated difficulty either accessing or completing the evaluation form.
- 76% of students reported not being provided time in class to complete the survey (although this was not required in the pilot). Many who completed the survey in class did so in a computer lab.

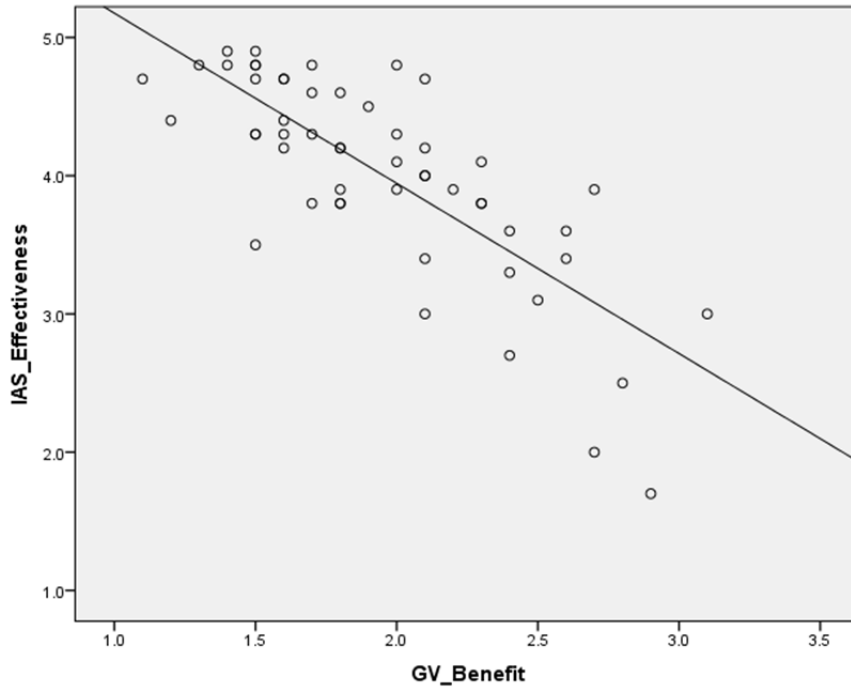
No problems or concerns were reported on a short survey of Statistics faculty who participated in the pilot.

After the Winter 2015 pilot was complete, we looked at past results for participating faculty on two questions in comparison with results for one of the IASystem questions used in the pilot. Specifically, we compared these two questions on Statistics' current form:

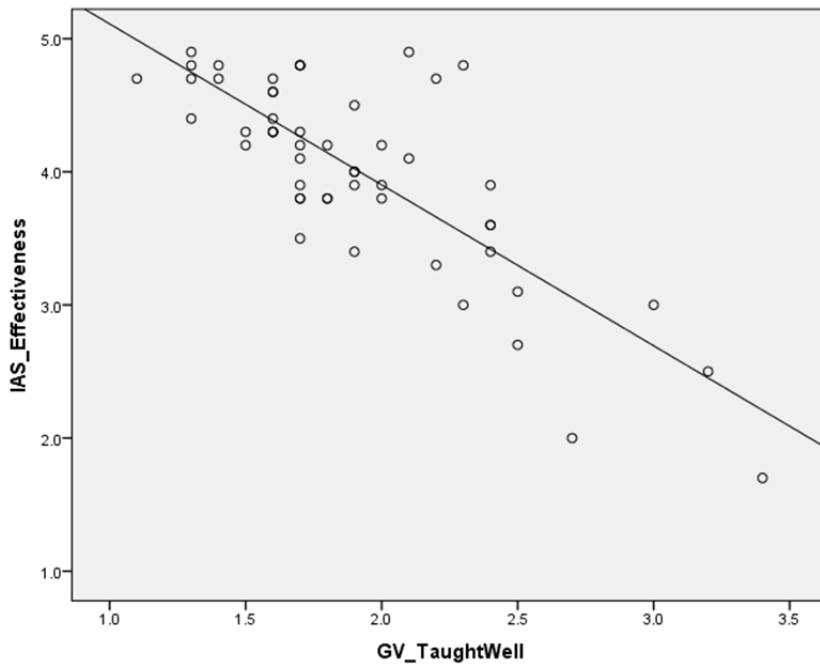
- I have benefited by having this instructor ["Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly Disagree" (5)]
- The course was taught well ["Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly Disagree" (5)]

with this IASystem question: The instructor's effectiveness in teaching the subject matter was... ["Excellent" (5) to "Very Poor" (0)]

For the "benefited" question, we saw a clear correlation, with $r = -.778$ ($n = 53$). (Note that r is negative because of the reversal of the scale between the two forms.)



For the other question, there was also a clear correlation, with $r = -.795$ ($n = 53$):



Finally, in implementing the pilot, some minor issues that came up:

- Because they were not familiar with IASystem, a few students may have thought the e-mails they received from the system were a phishing attempt.

- We need to include in the system an e-mail to faculty when the summary reports are available to them. (The task force does not think it is necessary for Unit Heads to download and send the reports to faculty.)
- Faculty who are leaving the university at the end of the semester (e.g. adjuncts, visitors, retiring faculty, etc.), should download their summary reports in a timely manner as they will lose network access 30 days after their final contract date.

Input from Stakeholders

During Winter 2015, USETI sought input from Unit Heads and from college personnel committees about their practices for weighing results of student evaluation of teaching. For the former group, an online survey was created and sent to fifty-three current Unit Heads. For the latter, an e-mail with questions was sent to chairs of nine college personnel committees. Responses were discussed by USETI during April and May 2015.

Some highlights of the feedback:

- When Unit Heads were asked to provide the percentage weights that student evaluations should carry when assessing a candidate's teaching effectiveness, there were a wide variety of responses, with a median of 25%. At the same time, some Unit Heads expressed concerns with defining a weight so precisely, or with defining a common weight to apply to all faculty on campus. For the former concern, several Unit Heads described a more holistic approach to the evaluation of teaching that cannot be disaggregated into numbers. For the latter concern, many noted that weights may vary depending on the overall information that is available. CPC chairs had similar concerns.
- Most (about $\frac{3}{4}$) unit heads who responded indicated that the weights they reported are not based on a written policy for their units. This was for both personnel actions and annual merit reviews.
- Most (about $\frac{3}{4}$) unit heads who responded also indicated their use of in-depth peer review of course materials as part of their personnel decisions, as well as having some sort of formal guide (form, survey, checklist, etc.) for classroom visits by peers.
- Unit Heads who responded were evenly split on this question: "Once a faculty member has achieved tenure, and given there are no 'issues' related to that individual's teaching, do you support student evaluation for all classes, or student evaluation just one semester per year?" CPC chairs who responded strongly favored evaluating all classes each semester.
- On the question of availability of unit-, college-, or university-wide data (averages or medians) for comparison purposes, CPC chairs were uniformly nervous about this idea, and did not see how this information could be used equitably.

These highlights, and other results from these surveys, have been very helpful in informing our discussions on USETI.

Other Progress

In May 2015, the University Student Evaluation Advisory Committee was appointed. The members at this time are:

Philip Batty (Institutional Analysis)
Katie Clark (Information Technology)
Jon Jellema (Provost's Office)
Paul Leidig (Unit Head)
Barb Ellis (PSS)
Ed Aboufadel (ECS rep)

Philip Batty is the committee chair. All members were appointed by the Provost, with the exception of Ed Aboufadel (appointed by the ECS Chair).

During Winter 2014, there were negotiations between GVSU's Information Technology unit and representatives of IASystem with regards to data security. An agreement was reached in May, approved by GVSU University Counsel.

Philip Batty led a group to train department coordinators (for all departments, not just pilot participants) in July.

Upon further reflection, the task force decided that the information videos for students and faculty should be no longer than one minute in length. These videos would be played in class before students complete the survey, would be available on the GVSU web site, and would be promoted through social media. USETI is starting to focus on how these videos will be created.

Recommendations on Implementation

1. **Naming of the System:** We recommend that we refer to the evaluation system as LIFT: Laker Impressions of Faculty Teaching. Communications with the campus would include encouraging students to complete surveys on the LIFT system, in order to “lift the conversation on campus about teaching”. A URL shortcut www.gvsu.edu/lift could be set up in order to quickly access the login screen.
2. **Who Will Be Evaluated:** We recommend that evaluations are mandatory for all course sections, all faculty: including tenured, tenure-track, affiliate, visiting, part-time, with the following exceptions:
 - a. For courses with ten or fewer students enrolled, evaluations will be optional¹, with the decision made by the Unit Head.
 - b. For team-taught courses, units may create localized plans to evaluate only some of the faculty involved.
3. **Weighting of Student Evaluations:** Guided by language in the Faculty Handbook, the contents of multiple research articles, and input from campus stakeholders, we recommend that information from LIFT system reports contribute towards no more than a third of the overall rating of teaching. In light of this, we strongly encourage the development of standardized procedures that would result in evidence-based peer reviews also being available for use in any tenure/promotion decision.
4. **Which Forms To Use:** IASystem includes forms for several types of classes, and we recommend that units determine which form to utilize for each of their classes, from the following list:
 - A – Small Lecture / Discussion (Designed for lecture courses with the opportunity for discussion.)
 - B – Large Lecture (Designed for traditional lecture courses.)
 - C – Seminar / Discussion (Designed for classes that include a minimal amount of formal lecturing by the instructor.)
 - D – Problem Solving (Designed for classes teaching problem-solving or heuristic methods.)
 - E – Skill Acquisition (Designed for classes in which students get "hands on" experiences, such as courses in clinical nursing, foreign languages, and social-work field experience.)
 - F – Quiz Section (Designed for discussion sections that are usually taught by graduate teaching assistants, in conjunction with a lecture class taught by a regular faculty member.)
 - G – Lectures / Assignments (Designed for use in large lecture classes which rely heavily on homework problems and a textbook.)

¹ This recommendation is informed by this discussion on the IASystem web page: <http://iasystem.org/features-benefits/decision-making/>, along with recognition that student evaluations from one- or two-student independent studies are usually non-informative.

- H – Lab (Designed to evaluate lab classes generally taught in conjunction with classes in the sciences.)
- I – Distance Learning (Designed for use in online courses.)
- J – Clinical / Studio (Designed to evaluate instruction provided through clinical or hands-on experience rather than traditional academic coursework.)
- K – Project / Studio (Designed for courses in which students work autonomously or in small groups to produce artistic, graphic, or other products.)
- L – English as a Second Language (Designed for use with English language learners.)
- M – Study Abroad (Designed for use in courses taught abroad.)
- X – Educational Outcomes (Designed to be used across all course types.)

More details about these forms can be found at: <http://iasystem.org/features-benefits/forms/>

We anticipate that all sections of a course that are taught in the same format (e.g. face-to-face, hybrid, online) would use the same form.

5. **Adding Additional Questions:** We recommend that up to eight additional questions (combined total from colleges, department, and/or individual faculty members) can be added to the forms that are selected by departments². The management group would be available for consultations on the appropriateness of questions and the implementation on IASystem.
6. **Additional Reporting Data:** We recommend that requests for additional reporting data will be coordinated by Institutional Analysis. The PSS will not be responsible for handling requests for longitudinal data. When a faculty member decides to assign extra credit to individuals for completing the survey, the PSS will be responsible for providing this real-time completion data, when requested.

Other Questions Still Under Consideration

USETI has had extensive discussions about the following questions, but are not ready at this time to make recommendations to ECS. We anticipate recommendations on these questions in Fall 2015.

2015-2016 Rollout to the Campus: We will run a more complete pilot test of LIFT in the Fall 2015. As a result, we anticipate that technical issues for the Winter 2016 implementation will be few, but we also realize that effective communication about LIFT to students, faculty, and staff is critical. USETI will continue to work to develop and implement communication plans, including the importance of building “buy-in” by all users.

Minimum response rates for use in merit and personnel decisions: A key concern for USETI has been to promote high response rates, and a key factor to meet this goal is the approved

² As indicated below, further discussion is needed by USETI to determine a recommendation as to what extent written comments from these and the standard open response questions are made available beyond the faculty member and the Unit Head.

recommendation (see Appendix) that faculty will set aside class time for students to complete the evaluations. USETI may want to review the response rates in the Fall 2015 pilot before recommending a benchmark response rate for the campus. We also may decide to comment on the use of incentives by faculty to encourage high response rates.

Formative/Summative/Access to Data: There is agreement on USETI that individual faculty members will have complete access to the reports that will be generated from their courses, and that Unit Heads will also have access. Our deliberations as to which parts of those reports would be available in merit and personnel processes are incomplete. There are four parts of the report that we are discussing (the first four summative questions, the rest of the question that are more formative, the written comments, and the possible additional questions), as well as unit-wide summary statistics.

Transition Issues for Mid-Review Faculty: For faculty who are on the tenure-track but not yet tenured, the question is how best to transition from one evaluation system to LIFT. USETI is not ready yet to make recommendations, but results from our first pilot suggests that this should not be a complicated matter.

Statistical Issues and Universal Measures: Members of USETI are studying the calculation of medians and means that are standard in IASystem. We are also discussing if there is any value in defining universal measures of teaching quality based on the numbers reported by the system. We may decide to comment on these issues in a future report.

Exploration of Integration with Digital Measures: This issue has been raised on the task force as something for consideration after April 2016.

Training on the Use of Results: We have started to discuss that faculty, Unit Heads, and upper Administration will need some form of training on how to interpret the multitude of reports that can be easily generated with the IASystem.

Appendix: February 2015 Recommendations From USETI, Approved By ECS and UAS

1. **Management of the system.** We recommend that the Director of Institutional Analysis (currently Philip Batty) will lead a management group for the system, with technical support from Information Technology. We envision the management group to be small, but should include a representative from the Provost's office, a representative from UAS, a Unit Head, and a member of the Professional Support Staff. As the last two will be focused on implementation of the system in individual units, it will be important to have their perspective. The management group would respond to policy and procedures questions from members of campus.
2. **Procedures.** We recommend that a complete "Procedures" document be developed that would be updated and maintained by the management group. This document would include this set of recommendations.
3. **Availability of evaluation forms.** We recommend that the evaluation forms will only be available through an online system, and students will complete the forms on a tablet, smartphone, laptop or desktop computer. IASystem includes a mobile interface that will work on most mobile devices.
4. **Procedure to administer forms to ensure robust response rates.** In order to ensure robust response rates, we recommend that faculty will set aside 15 minutes of class time for students to complete the evaluations. Faculty should schedule a specific time in each course and remind students to bring a device that day to complete the survey. (Campus wireless should be available in all classrooms.) Faculty should not be in the room while the students are completing the evaluations.
5. **Student access to forms.** We recommend that students will also be able to access the forms outside of class time, so students who are absent on the day evaluations are given, or do not have a portable device, would still have the opportunity to complete the forms.
6. **Length of time forms can be accessed.** We recommend that forms will be available to students through the online system when there are ten regular class days (two weeks) left in the semester, and will close the Sunday night before Monday of Finals Week. (As indicated on the IASystem web site, evaluations open at 7AM on the start date selected and close at 11:59PM on the end date selected, and we can identify the time zone.) During Fall semester, given the Thanksgiving break, forms would open on a Wednesday in the morning. (Unless there is a semester when there are two weeks after Thanksgiving.) During Winter semester, on a Monday in the morning. Communications to remind faculty and students, with specific dates, will be written by the management group.
7. **Informing students about evaluations.** We recommend that a set of short videos (two to five minutes long) will be created to inform students about student evaluations of faculty – what kind of feedback is constructive, what is appropriate or not in written comments, and how the results are used by the University. These videos could be shown

in class before instructing students to complete the evaluation, either the day of the evaluation or one or two class periods beforehand. Louie the Laker and Pres. Haas could be featured in these videos. A separate video will be created just for faculty. (Two possible options for creating these videos: University Communications, or Justin Melick of I.T. who has been hired to develop internal communications of this type.)

8. **Confidentiality of student responses.** Responses are confidential in the sense that GVSU faculty, staff, and administrators will not see names attached to responses. However, student access to the evaluation system requires authentication into our campus systems via password. Instructors and department staff will not be able to identify student responses; only the chief campus system administrator has the ability to access back-end data. The instructor or Unit Head can see the list of students who have completed the survey once five or more students have participated. We recommend that a graphic similar to the one below from the University of California at Irvine will be created for the GVSU community. (An article on improving response rates indicates that knowing that evaluations are anonymous can help with response rates.)



Appendix: Charges from March 2014

In March 2014, when USETI was created, we were charged with the following. The items marked in yellow will be discussed in this report. Items marked in green have been addressed previously. Unmarked items will be addressed in a future report.

- A. Make recommendations for policies regarding SETs, with due consideration of the following factors:
 - 1. Administration policies
 - a. What should the standard time window be for which the evaluations will be conducted?
 - b. Should every faculty member at every rank in every class be evaluated? If not, who should be evaluated when?
 - 2. Usage in the personnel process
 - a. Which portions of the evaluation should be formative? Which portions should be summative?
 - b. How should SETs be weighted in assessing teaching quality?
 - c. What minimum response rates are necessary in order to use the SETs for personnel decisions?
 - d. What confidence intervals are necessary in order to use the numbers gleaned from the quantitative portion of the SETs for personnel decisions?
 - e. How should the data be normed?
 - 3. Policies for data security
 - a. Who should store the data?
 - b. Who should be able to access the data?
- B. Make recommendations for a standardized measure, with due consideration of the following factors:
 - 1. Reliability and validity
 - 2. Applicability to all levels, disciplines, pedagogies
 - 3. Necessary support structures
 - a. Online vs. in-class
 - b. Data storage
 - c. Report generation
- C. Make recommendations for an implementation plan, with due consideration of the following factors:
 - 1. A policy for mid-review faculty
 - 2. A campaign to obtain meaningful response rates

In addition, meetings with faculty during August 2014, as well as our own deliberations, raised other questions for USETI to consider. A list was provided in our October 2014 report. As an example: The idea of “confidential but not anonymous” evaluations could be explored, where students’ names would be attached to their evaluations, in case a Unit Head or administrator needs to follow up on concerns, but the names would not be shared with the faculty being evaluated. Having students attach their names to evaluations may also encourage students to respond carefully.