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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Assessment News

Student Opinion of Teaching (SOOT) Perceptions: A Study of the Purpose and Usefulness of the SOOT Process

by

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Editor's Note: This is the second of two issues devoted to research on the Student Opinion of Teaching (SOOT) and the process by which we currently evaluate teaching effectiveness. This month's issue is devoted to a study by Dr. Matthew Stollak comparing faculty and student perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of SOOT items and processes.

Stollak's complete study includes 15 detailed tables, excerpts from which are included in this issue. The complete set of tables can be viewed on the OIE web site under "Reports & Presentations" <https://www.snc.edu/oie>.

OVERVIEW

To coincide with the historical analysis of SOOT data, a parallel study of student and faculty perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of the SOOT process was conducted in the Spring of 2006. The results indicate differences in the perceived value of SOOTs, not only between faculty and students, but within each of those groups.

Population and Sample. Electronic surveys were sent to all students and faculty.

Student Demographics. 523 students (out of 2,050) returned the survey for a response rate of 25.5%. Of those who responded, 123 had never completed a SOOT form. Of the 400 usable surveys, women constituted a majority of the sample (75.3%). In terms of class standing, 65 freshman, 115 sophomores, 116 juniors, and 102 seniors fully completed the survey, with 2 students not declaring a year in school. In terms of GPA, 10 students had a GPA below 2.5, 70 had a GPA between 2.5 and 3.0, 142 had a GPA between 3.0 and 3.5, and 177 had a GPA above 3.5. In terms of division, 123 surveys were completed by Humanities and Fine Arts students, 62 were in the Natural Sciences, 152 were in Social Sciences, 4 were undecided, and 58 listed "Other".

Faculty Demographics. 84 faculty (out of 177 full and part-time) completed the survey for a response rate of 47.5%. 60 of the respondents were tenured, 23 were untenured, and 1 faculty member left the tenure question blank. Of those who responded, 53 were male, 30 were female, with 1 leaving the gender question blank. In terms of division, 37 surveys were completed by faculty in the Humanities and Fine Arts division, 16 in the Natural Sciences, and 30 in the Social Sciences, with 1 leaving the division question blank. Finally, in terms of years taught, 21 respondents have taught at St. Norbert College for less than 5 years, 18 have taught between 5 and 10 years, 13 have taught between 11 and 15 years, and 31 have taught for more than 15 years. One faculty member left the question blank.

RESULTS

Faculty versus Student Perceptions

Item means were calculated for students and faculty and compared. Independent t-tests were run to compare the mean difference among these two groups. Table 1 (see page 2 of newsletter) shows how students and faculty differ in their perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of specific SOOT items.

In general, students felt more strongly than faculty that SOOTs fulfilled their understanding of the SOOT's purpose and were useful for evaluating teachers/professors and courses, with statistically significant mean differences ($p < .005$) ranging from .46 to .67.

Except for one item, students agreed more strongly regarding the purpose and usefulness of SOOTs than faculty, with differences ranging from .23 to .91. All these items were statistically significant at $p < .05$. Students and faculty disagreed most when asked whether "the workload in a course is too heavy or too light" is an appropriate question for evaluation, with faculty providing a mean of 2.67 to 1.76 for students ($t = -7.63$, $p < .005$). The next largest difference appeared when asked whether the statement "student learning is assessed by appropriate methods of evaluation" is appropriate for evaluation. (Continued on page 3)

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Assessment Conference Possibilities

Assn. Of American Colleges & Universities 93rd Annual Meeting, January 17-20, 2007, New Orleans, Louisiana.

7th Annual Assessment Conference at Texas A&M University, February 22-23, 2007.

AAC&U's General Education and Assessment: Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Learning, March 1-3, 2007, Miami, Florida.

Higher Learning Commission, Leading for the Common Good, April 20-24, 2007, Hyatt Regency Chicago, IL.

AIR 47th Annual Conference, Choice/Chance: Driving Change in Higher Education, June 2-6, 2007, Kansas City, Missouri.

Table 1
Faculty Versus Student Perceptions

<u>Question</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig</u>
SOOTs fulfill your understanding of their purpose	2.42	1.96	0.46	-4.63	0.00
SOOTs are useful for evaluating teaching/professors	2.55	1.88	0.67	-6.02	0.00
SOOTs are useful for evaluating courses	2.48	2	0.48	-4.74	0.00
SOOTs, as an evaluative tool, are beneficial to the College	2.43	1.82	0.61	-5.74	0.00
SOOTs, as an evaluative tool, are beneficial to Faculty Members	2.3	1.81	0.49	-4.78	0.00
SOOTs, as an evaluative tool, are beneficial to Students	2.61	2.15	0.46	-4.57	0.00
"The instructor clearly defines the objectives of this course" is appropriate for evaluation	1.85	1.85	0	0	1.00
"The instructor shows enthusiasm for the subject" is appropriate for evaluation	1.96	1.56	0.4	-4	0.00
"The instructor is well-prepared for class" is appropriate for evaluation	1.9	1.59	0.31	-2.87	0.01
"The instructor explains course material clearly and understandably" is appropriate for evaluation	1.85	1.43	0.42	-3.97	0.00
"The instructor answers questions clearly" is appropriate for evaluation	1.96	1.48	0.48	-4.65	0.00
"The instructor does his/her part to create a (free) climate..." is appropriate for evaluation	1.96	1.54	0.42	-4.37	0.00
"The instructor treats students with respect" is appropriate for evaluation	2.08	1.46	0.62	-5.84	0.00
"The instructor evaluates students in a fair and consistent manner" is appropriate for evaluation	2.17	1.49	0.68	-6.45	0.00
"The instructor does his/her part to challenge students..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.14	1.67	0.47	-4.64	0.00
"If I choose to meet with the instructor outside of class, I am able..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.06	1.56	0.5	-5	0.00
"Taking into consideration...the overall rating I give the instructor is..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.42	1.72	0.7	-6.25	0.00
"As a result of taking this course, I have deepened my interest..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.27	1.92	0.35	-3.16	0.00
"Student learning is assessed by appropriate methods of evaluation" is appropriate for evaluation	2.46	1.71	0.75	-6.97	0.00
"As a result of taking this course, I have increased my knowledge..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.12	1.72	0.4	-3.98	0.00
Given the nature of this course, the workload is..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.67	1.76	0.91	-7.63	0.00
"Taking into consideration...the overall rating I give the course is..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.36	1.72	0.64	-5.77	0.00
"What were the best features of this course..." is appropriate for evaluation	1.9	1.67	0.23	-2.32	0.02
"Are there specific ways this course could be improved" is appropriate for evaluation	1.93	1.52	0.41	-3.9	0.00
The current format of SOOTs allows students to effectively express their views	2.43	1.86	0.57	-4.92	0.00
SOOTs would be taken more seriously if they were administered online	3.02	2.77	0.25	-2.23	0.03

'1' indicates "strongly agree," '2' indicates "agree," '3' indicates "disagree," and '4' indicates "strongly disagree."

n = 400 students, 84 faculty

**Student Opinion of Teaching (SOOT) Perceptions:
A Study of the Purpose and Usefulness of the
SOOT Process** (Continued from Page 1)

ation, with faculty providing a mean of 2.46 to 1.71 for students ($t=6.97$, $p<.005$).

Students and faculty also differed on which questions they felt were most important on the current SOOTs form. For faculty, the top five questions were:

- “The instructor explains course material clearly and understandably. (M=1.85)”
- “The instructor clearly defines the objectives of this course. (M=1.85)”
- “The instructor is well-prepared for class. (M=1.90)”
- “What were the best features of this course... (M=1.90)”
- “Are there specific ways this course could be improved (M=1.93)”

For students, the top five questions were:

- “The instructor explains course material clearly and understandably. (M=1.43)”
- “The instructor treats students with respect. (M=1.46)”
- “The instructor answers questions clearly. (M=1.48)”
- “The instructor evaluates students in a fair and consistent manner. (M=1.49)”
- “Are there specific ways this course could be improved... (M= 1.52)”

Finally, both students and faculty, on average, felt that SOOTS would not be taken more seriously if they were administered online.

Mean Faculty Perceptions of the Purpose and Usefulness of SOOT Items by Gender

Item means were also calculated for male and female faculty. Independent t-tests were run to compare the mean difference among these two groups. In all but 3 cases (see Table 2, page 2 of newsletter), there were no significant differences between male and female faculty. Of the differences, female faculty (M = 1.733) felt more strongly than males (M = 2.132) that the statement “The instructor does his/her part to create a climate in which students are free to ask questions, disagree...” is appropriate for evaluation ($t=2.17$, $p = .033$). Further, women placed more emphasis on the open-ended questions than men. Specifically, female faculty (M = 1.667) felt more strongly than males (M = 2.075) that the question “What were the best features of this course?” is appropriate for evaluation ($t=2.18$, $p = .033$). Female faculty (M = 1.667) also felt more strongly than male faculty that the question, “Are there specific ways this course could be improved?” is appropriate for evaluation ($t=2.32$, $p=.024$).

Mean Faculty Perceptions of the Purpose and Usefulness of SOOTs by Division, Years Taught, and Tenure

Faculty item means were calculated and compared by division, years taught, and tenure status. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to compare the mean difference among these groups.

Complete data appears in Tables 3, 4, 5 on the OIE web site.

No statistically significant differences were found at the $p<.05$ level for faculty division, years taught, or tenure status.

(Continued on page 4)

Table 2. SOOT Items Differing by Faculty and Student Gender

<u>Question</u>	<u>Male Faculty (n=53)</u>	<u>Female Faculty (n=30)</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig</u>
"The instructor does his/her part to create a (free) climate..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.13	1.73	0.4	2.17	0.03
"What were the best features of this course..." is appropriate for evaluation	2.08	1.67	0.41	2.18	0.03
"Are there specific ways this course could be improved" is appropriate for evaluation	2.11	1.67	0.45	2.32	0.02
	Male Students (n=99)	Female Students (n=301)			
"The instructor evaluates students in a fair and consistent manner" is appropriate for evaluation	1.62	1.44	0.17	2.42	0.02
1' indicates "strongly agree," '2' indicates "agree," '3" indicates "disagree," and '4' indicates "strongly disagree."					

Student Opinion of Teaching (SOOT) Perceptions: A Study of the Purpose and Usefulness the SOOT

Process (Continued from Page 3)

Mean Student Perceptions of the Purpose and Usefulness of SOOT items by Gender

Item means were calculated to determine the degree to which male and female students agreed or disagreed with various statements. Independent t-tests were run to compare the mean difference among these two groups. Further, students were asked “would knowing professors view handwritten comments affect SOOT responses” and “should professors be able to see the handwritten SOOTs form”. There was only one statistically significant difference between male and female students using t-tests. Female students ($M = 1.44$) felt more strongly than males ($M = 1.62$) that the statement “The instructor evaluates students in a fair and consistent manner” is appropriate for evaluation ($t=2.418, p = .017$).

Chi-square analyses indicated that women were much more concerned about handwritten SOOT forms. Specifically, female students (55.81%) felt that knowing professors view handwritten comments would affect their responses compared to only 43.43% of males ($\chi^2 = 4.581, p=.032$). This indicates that females are more concerned that professors will know who filled out the SOOTs form. Further, female students (72.67%) also felt more strongly than male students (51.02%) that professors should not be able to see the handwritten comments ($\chi^2 = 15.737, p=.000$).

Mean Student Perceptions of the Purpose and Usefulness of SOOT items by Year in School

The degree to which students agreed or disagreed with various statements based on their year in school was also examined. Students were divided into four groups: 1) Freshmen, 2) Sophomores, 3) Juniors, and 4) Seniors. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to compare the mean difference among these four groups. A number of survey questions showed statistically significant results at the $p<.05$ level (see Table 9 on the OIE web site). In most of these cases, the data indicates that as students continue their academic careers at St. Norbert College, they feel less strongly about the purpose and usefulness of SOOTs. For example, with regard to the statement “SOOTs, as an evaluative tool, are beneficial to students,” the average for freshman was 1.89, for sophomores 2.03, for juniors 2.22, and for seniors, the average was 2.36 ($F=6.92, p=.000$). Similarly, for the statement “The current format of SOOTs allows students to effectively express their views,” the average for freshman was 1.66, for sophomores, 1.72, for juniors 1.95, and for seniors, the average was 2.05 ($F=5.66, p=.001$).

Chi-square analyses indicated no statistically significant differences on whether knowing professors viewed handwritten comments on SOOTs forms would affect response, and whether professors should be able to see the handwritten SOOT forms, based on class standing. Tables 10 and 11(see OIE web site) show the results of the Chi-square analyses.

Mean Student Perceptions of the Purpose and Usefulness of SOOT items by GPA and Major Division

Means were calculated to determine the degree to which students differed on the usefulness of various SOOT items based on their

GPA. Students were divided into four groups: 1) less than 2.5 GPA 2) 2.51 to 3.0 GPA, 3) 3.01 to 3.5 GPA, and 4) above 3.5 GPA. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to compare the mean difference among these four groups. Further, students were asked “would knowing professors view handwritten comments affect SOOT responses” and “should professors be able to see the handwritten SOOTs form”. Table 12 (on the OIE web site) shows the mean difference in perceptions of the purpose and usefulness of SOOTs between students based on their GPA.

Statistically significant differences were found for several SOOT items as well as with the questions regarding hand-written SOOT forms. In most of these statements, agreement with the appropriateness for evaluation increased as GPA increased. For example, for the statement “‘The instructor explains course material clearly and understandably’ is appropriate for evaluation,” students with a GPA below a 2.5 had a mean response of 1.8, students with a GPA between 2.51 and 3.0 had a mean response of 1.47, and students with a GPA above 3.5 had a mean response of 1.32 ($F=6.88, p=.000$).

Chi-square analyses also showed that students with higher GPAs felt more strongly about whether professors should see the handwritten SOOTs form. 55.56% of students with a GPA below 2.5 think professors should see handwritten SOOT forms, compared to 35.71% of those with a GPA between 2.51 and 3.0, 40.85% of those with a GPA between 3.01 and 3.5, and only 23.86% of those students with a GPA above 3.5 ($\chi^2 = 12.941, p=.002$), indicating that above-average students do not want professors to see the handwritten comments (see Tables 13 and 14 on the OIE web site).

No statistically significant differences were found at the $p<.05$ level when student responses were compared by division.

We invite your comments on the two SOOTs studies and with your permission we will publish them in a subsequent issue of Assessment News



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