

# **Student Course Evaluations: A Model of Using Data to Support Student Success in Online Programs**

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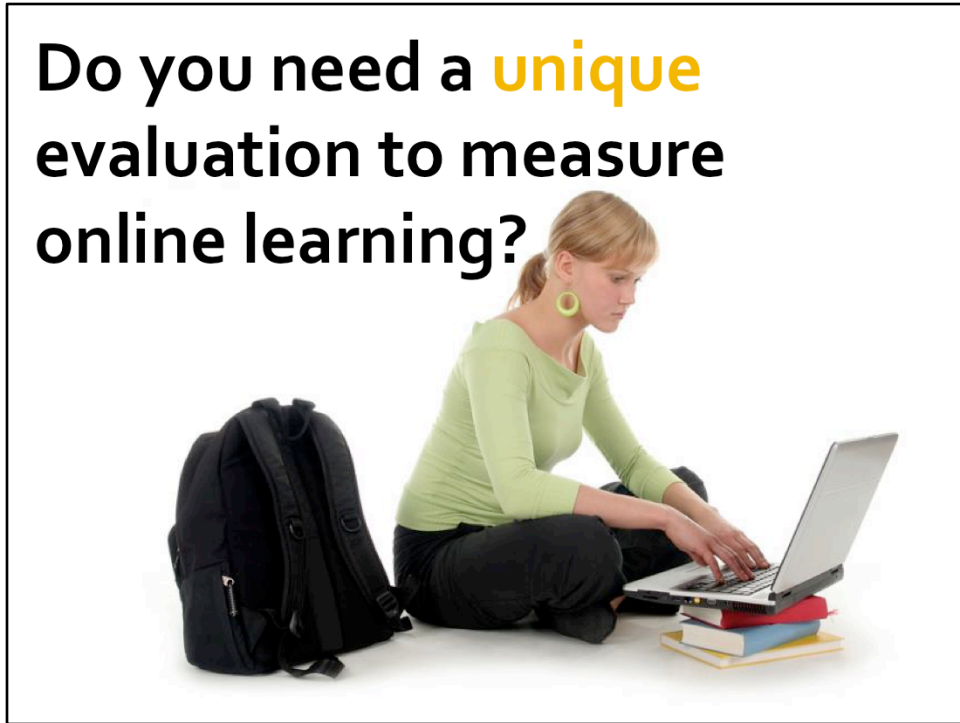


**Focus** today

## **Process and implications NOT the data**

Now we do have a lot of data, but I'm not going to be talking about that today. Instead I'm going to tell you more about the process of developing student evaluations for our online students and what we are doing with the data we are getting from these evaluations.

# Do you need a **unique** evaluation to measure online learning?



It was important for us that we develop a unique evaluation. The university's standard evaluation wasn't going to work for us....I'll tell you more about "why" we needed a unique evaluation in a bit. But this presentation is about the PROCESS of developing a new evaluation and I want you to ask yourself if your institution might benefit from developing your own evaluation for online students.



## **We did...**

**To improve:**

- 1. online course design**
- 2. faculty teaching online**
- 3. student retention**

Again – we decided we did need a unique evaluation and with the data we wanted to improve 1) online course design, 2) faculty teaching online and student retention. Well, the 3<sup>rd</sup> one should be “ultimately”. We assumed that by having data to drive decisions around improving courses and supporting faculty we would **ULTIMATELY** improve retention. That isn’t a given...but it sure would be great to begin collecting online student perception data so we could begin to examine this relationship. So, I’m going to take you to the beginning.

# Background

# ASU Online is growing



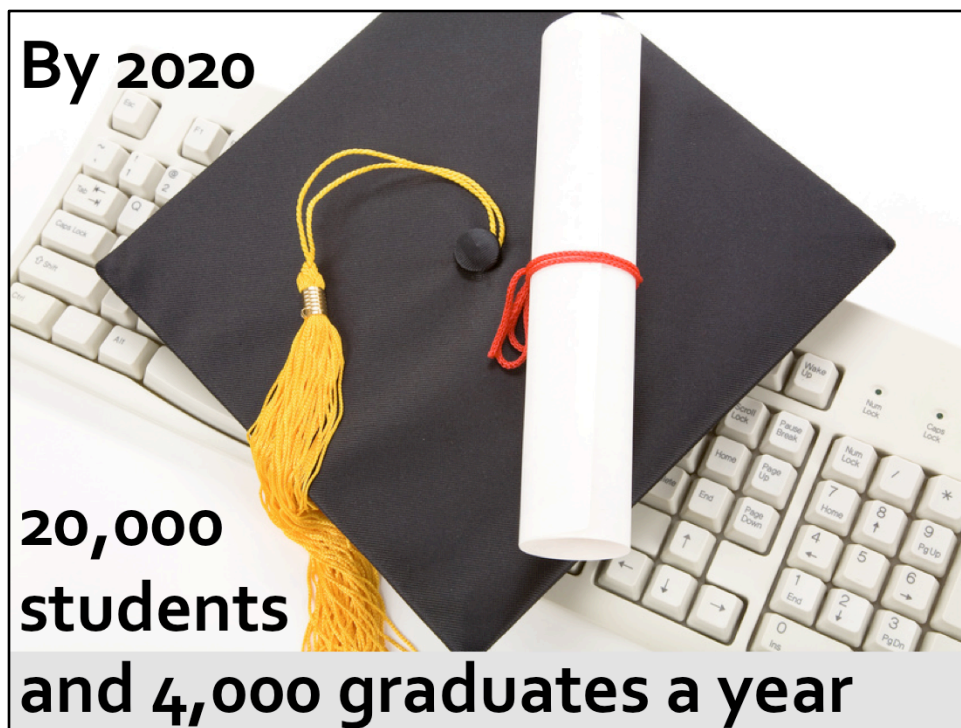
Growing online courses, and in particular online programs, at ASU is now a very strategic effort backed by institutional leadership.

**ASU  
President  
Crow**



**...has set lofty goals**

ASU President Crow has set lofty goals and he's supporting institutional changes to allow these goals to be realized.

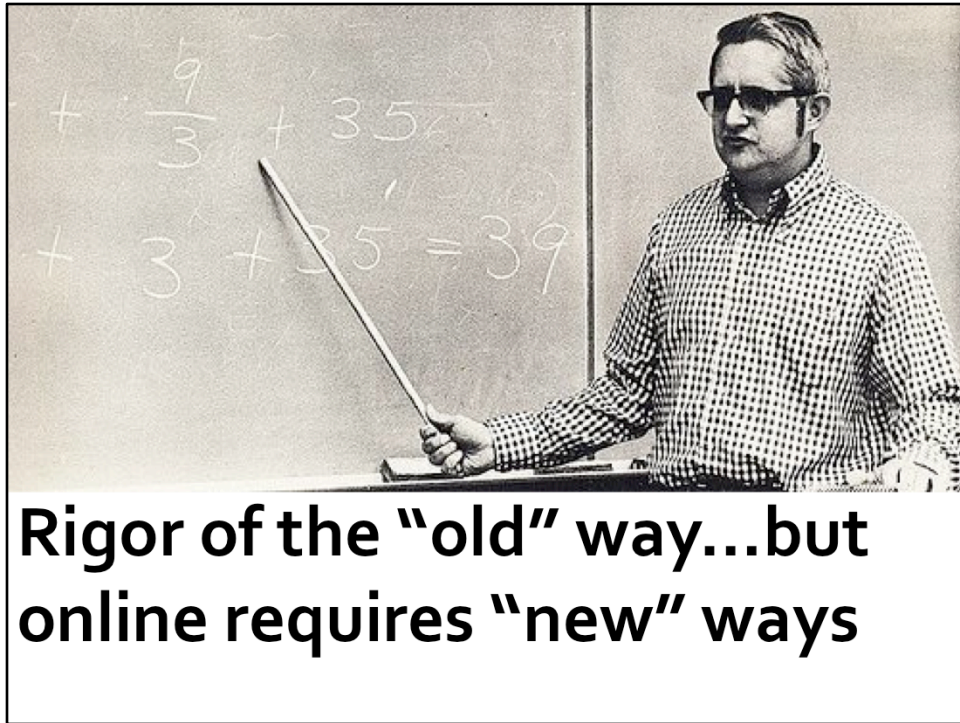


We've got a way to go. However given we were only at approximately 1000 students two years ago...now closer to six thousand. We are making progress but success will depend on effective course design and faculty to support student success.

# Institutional change



Institutional change can feel like an earthquake to some...but these changes and rebuilding are really necessary for the type of growth we are aiming to achieve.



The online programs must have the rigor of traditional programs – the same requirements – but they require innovative delivery methods. To move faculty towards this new way, faculty training and support is required. This support is systematic and may feel compulsory, which not all faculty appreciate....in fact not all comply. Is there a relationship between faculty support and training and their students’ perceptions?

## Managed Programs

### Specific expectations:

**Six 7 ½ week sessions**

**Ability to scale**

**Explicit design**



Many changes to institutional processes to facilitate success and growth...but to “play” the online program game at ASU these days you must follow some pretty explicit guidelines. Expectations for departments offering programs as well as for faculty teaching courses. The “master course model” is a new concept for most faculty...and some traditional faculty have difficulties seeing the value to teaching/learning. Building courses is a collaborative process using ASU Online instructional designers together with faculty and using the QM rubric. The participating faculty are asked to complete training for using Learning Studio and familiarize themselves with Quality Matters. Additional workshops are taught to educate on online pedagogy.





## **Faculty collaborate with ASU Online instructional designers**

This support is systematic and follows the Quality Matters standards (research-backed)....but not all faculty comply or utilize.

# Process

## 4 Reasons



Back to process – what did we do...let's start with WHY...why develop a unique instrument? 4 reasons.

## 1. No access



We don't have access to the existing student evaluation data – that is property of the departments, it is used for promotion and tenure...and it is really hard to get your hands on.



Even if we did have access – the instruments vary considerably across departments – can't aggregate the data and that make it hard to look across programs and courses.

### 3. Anonymous



Traditional course evaluations are anonymous...piggy-backing on the existing institutional tool wasn't going to work for this reason.





Most importantly the instrument items don't reflect the online student experience – they don't measure what we want to know, which is centered on what will help us improve the course design, support our faculty, and ultimately improve retention.

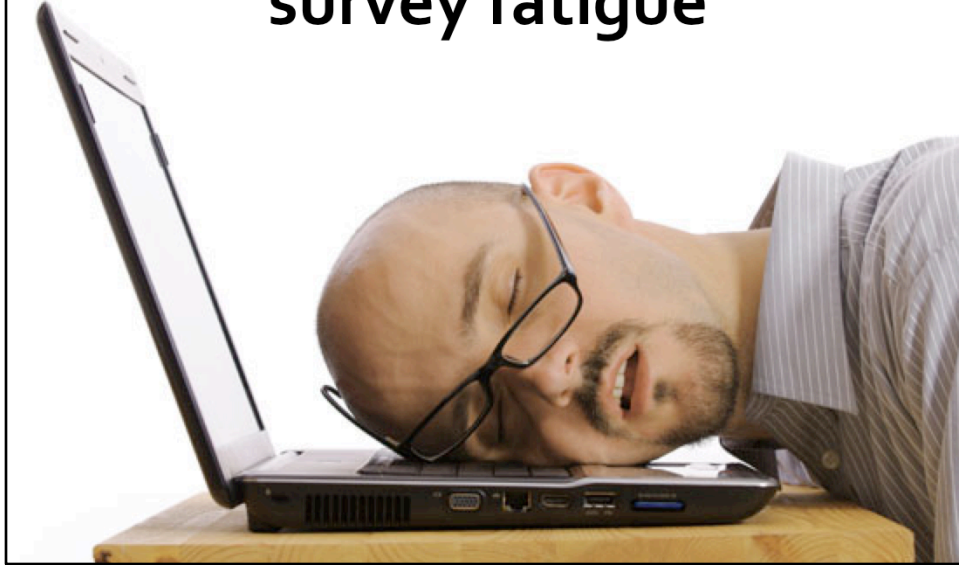
## **New instrument**

**In addition to  
department evaluations**

So we built a new evaluation instrument – specific to measuring the experiences of online learners. Researched existing items and grouped them....we had a few challenges related to the fact that our students would be getting two evaluation requests at the end of each course.



## Concerned about survey fatigue



We wanted to do our best to avoid survey fatigue....and not negatively impact response on our evaluation or on the standard department evaluations.

## **The 2-minute survey**

**20 questions**

**Summary  
Self  
Instructor  
Course**

Used response matrices to facilitate response and get the response time down to 2 minutes.



## Mostly Closed-ended

Questions were almost all closed-ended except when students rated one of the three summary items around 1) self, 2) instructor, or 3) course as a 1 or 2...in that case the student would get the prompt to provide open-ended feedback to discuss how things could be improved. Again – our focus is on improvement.

### SUMMARY

Before the course began, my level of interest in this course/topic was:

Overall, I would rate the quality of my work in/for this course.

Overall, I would rate the effectiveness of the instructor.

Overall, I would rate the quality of this course.

Overall, I would rate the amount I learned in this course.

Recommend this course to another student?

Take another course taught by this instructor?

Recommend ASU to a friend or family member?

### SELF

I asked the instructor for help and feedback when I

needed it.

I invested enough time and energy to meet/exceed the course expectations.

I collaborated with other students to contribute to my learning.

### INSTRUCTOR

The instructor responded in a timely manner to my questions.

The instructor provided clear and helpful feedback on my work.

The instructor encouraged my interaction with other students.

### COURSE

The course requirements and objectives were clearly communicated.

The course material was presented clearly and effectively.

The course utilized appropriate technologies to allow me to interact with the course material, my instructor, and my fellow students.

The course increased my desire to continue learning about this material.



Prompted/displayed ONLY if answered negative on the summary questions:

Overall, I would rate the quality of my work in/for this course.

Overall, I would rate the effectiveness of the instructor.

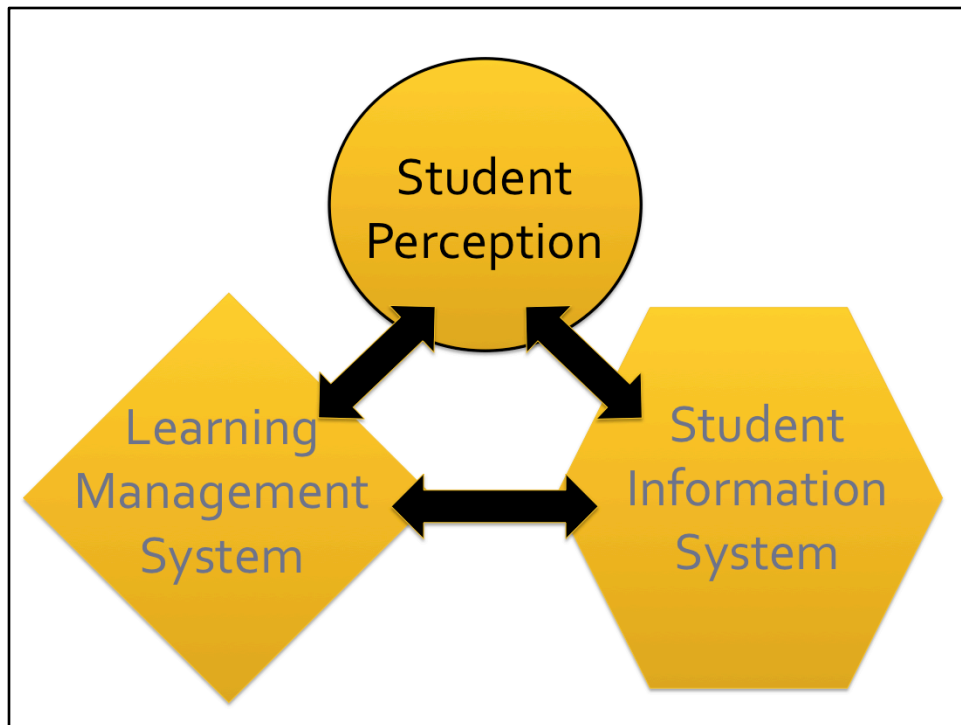
Overall, I would rate the quality of this course.

These questions enabled us to get the qualitative feedback that supports the “what is going on” question that arises when a course is getting low feedback.

Two open-ended questions asked of everyone

OE -- Overall, what elements of this course most contributed to your excitement and engagement as a learner?

OE -- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience in this course?

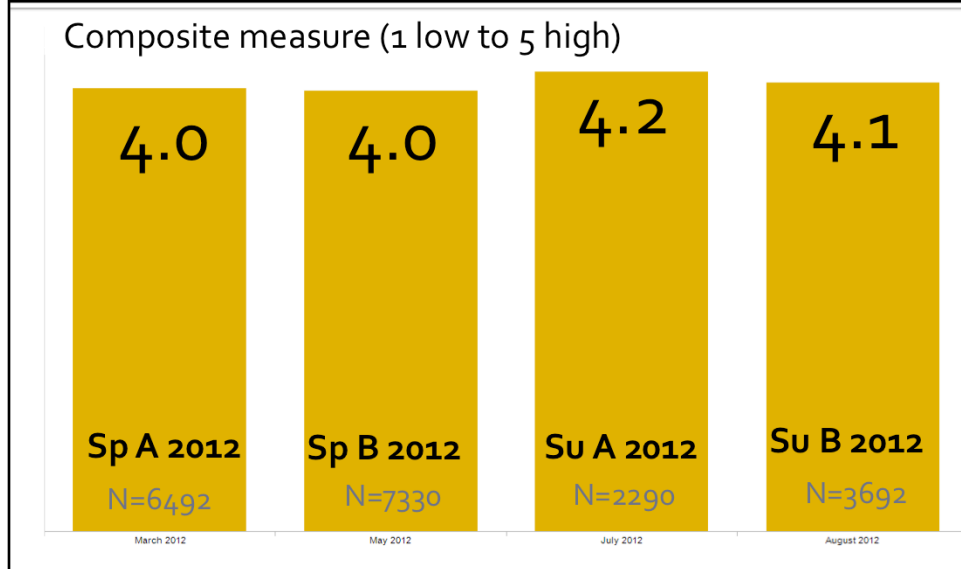


As a research study we aimed to connect – triangulate the data. The perception data is telling us what students think, feel or remember about the course. The IRB and data management plans allow us to link this data with data from the LMS, which tells us what students are actually doing within the courses and to background & demographic data from the SIS as well as enrollment and grade data.

**Findings....**

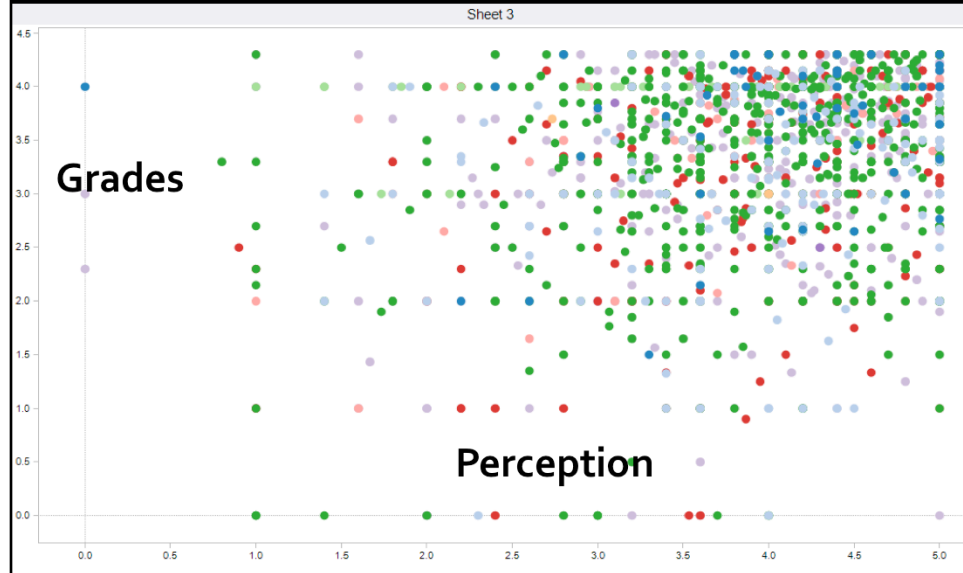
**aimed at improvement**

## Students- Not a lot variation



Response rates have hovered around 38%...but since it is a research study and students must opt-in we can't all use all the data for analysis and public reporting. That said those opting in do not necessarily seem that different from those opting out but still completing the evaluation. Average perception about online learning experience has been high overtime.

## Ratings and grades are correlated



Here the color varies based on the program the student's course is. Although the two variables are correlated, we do have response from students who did poorly and rated the course highly and students who did well but rated the course poorly.

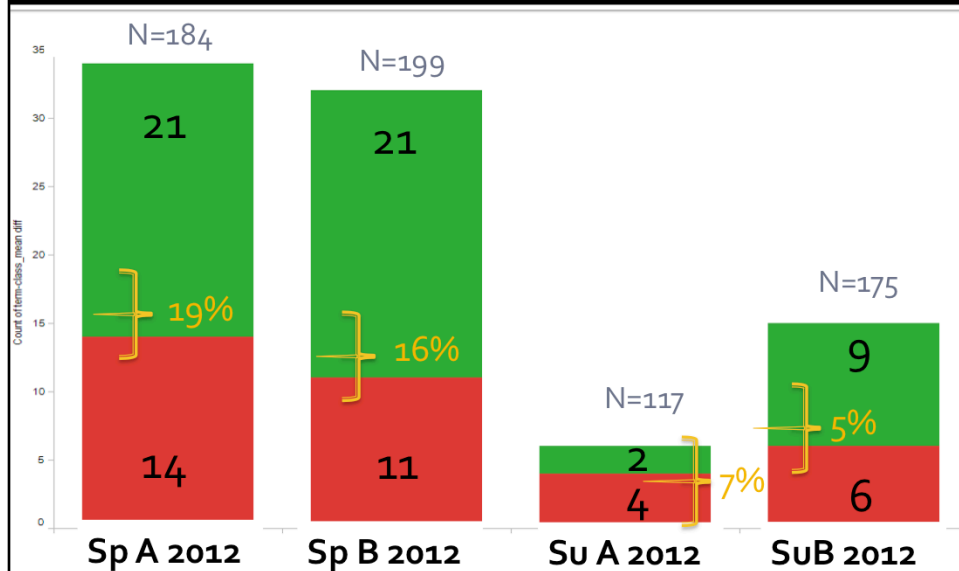


**t-tests used  
to examine  
courses  
significantly  
different  
from session  
average**



We wanted to identify courses that needed attention (i.e. improvement) so we examined whether a course's average perception score (on the composite measure) was significantly different than the overall perception average for that session.

## Course variation is decreasing



This chart is illustrating only those courses where the student mean on the composite measure is significantly different than the mean of all courses in that session. You see that the total % of courses per session that are significantly different from the mean is decreasing. This tells us that our student ratings are clustered closer to the mean across courses over time. This is a good thing and tells us that more of courses are performing well. Now, there might be an anomaly in the summer terms, but we won't know that until we get the fall data analyzed.



How will we implement improvement measures? The ASU Online Dean had ideas about top down approaches...."give me the list of courses/faculty and I'll work through their deans and department chairs to make sure they are recognized, trained, or replaced". In contrast, the instructional design managers had ideas about bottom-up approaches..."give me the qualitative feedback, all of it, for the courses not performing so I can give it to the instructional designer working with the faculty and they'll aim to collaboratively address course design issues, recommend training classes, etc..." Working both ways will probably bring about the greatest amount of improvement.



## Recognize Successful Faculty

But the important part is to recognize successful faculty...reward those that are doing a great job supporting our students' success.

## Support unsuccessful



And provide support, training, gentle guidance to the faculty who are doing a poor job...

BUT if that doesn't work (not everyone buys-in)....then find the "right" person for the job.

## Take Away

Can you use your online student perception data to help make decisions to improve your online courses and programs?

Ask yourself...do you need a unique student evaluation for your online courses? What do you need the data for? In our case, because we specifically wanted data we could connect to other data to help us make decisions to support online learning and ultimately retain students, our answer was a resounding “yes”. We developed a unique measurement tool and designed a research study to address our questions and get us the data we needed.

## Contact

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I am no longer with ASU Online, but I'd still be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. Or, if you have questions about the longitudinal study, please feel free to contact my colleague at ASU Online, Kim Beckert, who will be overseeing the ongoing project.