



The Wisdom of Generating Student Feedback throughout the Term

Nearly all colleges and universities have adopted a formal system of student evaluation of courses and instructors. For an adjunct professor, whose continued employment relies a great deal on the outcome of this less-than-perfect activity, the outcomes of this process can be quite daunting. Those who fear the comments of a few disgruntled students on the formal student evaluation could sabotage their continued teaching need not lower standards or coddle undeserving students to overcome this obstacle. We should however manage the process wisely and proactively. Gambling that students will forget, overlook, or not comment on a poorly-written exam question, or unpleasant classroom moment, is very risky.

How do we reduce the risk? We strongly recommend that you make it a practice to solicit student feedback informally at key points during the term. Such a practice will not only provide some legitimate, useful information upon which you might consider making appropriate changes right away, but will also serve as a venting opportunity for students, thus reducing their need to "unload" on the end-of-the-term formal evaluation.

This point in the term is a key one at which some students are questioning whether they should stay for the remainder of the term or drop out, given their required workload, outside time demands, or anticipated grade. Therefore, use this milestone as a data-gathering opportunity -- it requires little class time, and can pay huge dividends. With 10 minutes or so left in your next class meeting, simply wind up your lesson, and then distribute blank 3 X 5" index cards to each student in the class. Ask them to leave their name off of the card. Then print three or four open-ended questions on the board, to which you ask students to respond anonymously. Those might include:

- What have you enjoyed most about the course up until now?
- What person have you enjoyed most getting to know?
- What issues about the course are you still somewhat unclear about?
- If it were in your power, what changes would you make in the course?

Place a cowboy hat or other unusual receptacle near the door for collection of the cards. When all students have completed the cards, gather them up and take them home for review. During that process, note issues that appear on more than one card. Minimize the temptation to try to discern the identity of a student who might have been especially harsh. At your next class meeting, constructively address what seem to be significant issues in a professional manner. While students are likely to remain quiet, most will note the extra effort that you are making. A few weeks prior to the administration of the final exam, conduct the procedure again with three new open-ended questions.

Generating feedback from students systematically helps reduce the adversarial paradigm that might have developed with some students. Gathering feedback also demonstrate that you value students' input into the course, increasing their sense of ownership in its outcomes. Lastly they provide you the best source of feedback upon which to base mid-course corrections that reduce the anxiety so often associated with the formal evaluation process. RL

Schedule of Upcoming Webinars: Following please find the webinars that are available now for your registration [see directions in the welcome e-mail that you received from Ray Carpenter, or a FAQs on the AdjunctSuccess.net website]. Note: all times listed are Eastern. A recording of each webinar is e-mailed automatically to those who 1. Register for it in advance, and 2. Log-in during the session. Webinars will not be offered during the holiday period.

Sat., Feb. 14, 9:00 am	Achieving Exemplary Student Retention
Sat., Feb. 14, 10:30 am	Employing Authentic Assessment in Your Teaching
Mon., Feb. 16, 8:30 pm	Achieving Exemplary Student Retention
Tue., Feb. 17, 8:30 pm	Implementing Active Learning Strategies in Your Teaching
Wed., Feb. 18, 8:30 pm	Infusing Technology into Your Teaching
Mon., Feb. 23, 8:30 pm	Assessing the Effectiveness of Your Teaching
Tue., Feb. 24, 8:30 pm	Managing Your Teaching Life More Effectively
Wed., Feb. 25, 8:30 pm	Implementing Active Learning Strategies in Your Teaching
Thu., Feb. 26, 8:30 pm	Achieving Exemplary Student Retention
Sat., Feb. 28, 9:00 am	Managing Your Teaching Life More Effectively
Sat., Feb. 28, 10:30 am	Achieving Exemplary Student Retention
Mon., Mar. 2, 8:30 pm	Infusing Technology into Your Teaching
Tue., Mar. 3, 8:30 pm	Assessing the Effectiveness of Your Teaching
Wed., Mar. 4, 8:30 pm	Achieving Exemplary Student Retention
Thu., Mar. 5, 8:30 pm	Managing Your Teaching Life More Effectively
Sat., Mar. 7, 9:00 am	Infusing Technology into Your Teaching
Sat., Mar. 7, 10:30 am	Managing Examinations Effectively

Additional Resources for AdjunctSuccess members: As mentioned above, a rich set of printable resources is posted at www.AdjunctSuccess.net to help you in critical aspects of your teaching. Also in this **Members Area** is an alphabetized [by topic] compilation of websites, each focused on a teaching or classroom management topic. Explore these resources now, and begin saving preparation time and enjoying your teaching much sooner.

New Feature: For your added convenience, we are now posting a copy of the current issue of this eNewsletter on the home page at <http://www.adjunctsuccess.net>.

Troubleshooting Technical Problems: As with any technology dependent resource, AdjunctSuccess members occasionally experience technical glitches. In most cases, your first step in troubleshooting problems with webinar registration or participation is the help desk of Elluminate, the webinar software that we use. Call 866.388.8674, then select option #2.

Also: Inside the "Members Login" area of AdjunctSuccess.net appears a link to a set of frequently-asked questions [FAQs] to facilitate your use of our resources. Also at the home page, you will see a link to testimonials submitted by our members that might help you better understand the mission, features, and usability of our resources. Please submit your suggestions for either feature to lyons@adjunctsuccess.net.