

Best Practices for Achieving Higher Response Rates



In Fall 2016, the Office of Institutional Research surveyed faculty who had received a 75% or higher response rate for two or more courses between Spring 2014 and Spring 2016. One hundred eighty-five faculty responded which represented a response rate of 53%. Each college and a majority of departments are represented in the responses.

The top recommendations for achieving higher response rates were the following:

1. Talk about SPOT in class

78% gave verbal reminders in class

73% told students how they used past SPOT feedback to improve their course

55% reminded students that SPOTs are anonymous

45% gave response rate updates in class

43% told students that SPOT reports are released to faculty after final grades are posted

35% provided open ended responses including:

*Tell students their feedback is important and you take it seriously

*Tell students their feedback impacts change and improves courses

*Do not present SPOTs as “optional” but as expected

*Before the SPOT survey begins, debrief activities and assignments from the semester with students and ask them which ones they enjoyed and learned from the most.

2. Give time in class to complete SPOT

Of those surveyed, 38% gave time in class to complete their SPOTs. Giving time in class seemed to be as effective as using some form of an incentive. The difference in overall average response rates between the two was only 1.92%. One instructor said, “I have done both time in class and extra credit. They seem to end up with very similar response rates.”

3. Email students to remind them to complete SPOT

Of those surveyed, 68% said they emailed their students to remind them to complete SPOT. Of those who sent emails, a majority emailed directly from their TCU account rather than through SmartEvals!.

The vast majority of faculty respondents (79%) emailed students 1-2 times, 18% emailed 3-4 times and 3% emailed 5 or more times.

4. Offer some form of incentive

43% of respondents reported offering some type of incentive to encourage students to complete the SPOT survey. In the majority of cases, the incentive was connected to the class as a whole achieving a specified response rate such as 90%. Several faculty also mentioned that the amount of extra credit or bonus points was minimal enough to have little effect on the overall grade but enough to provide incentive. The difference in overall average response rates for those giving incentives and those not giving incentives was minimal, 92.7% and 89.1% respectively.

Below are examples of the incentives reported by survey respondents:

61% used extra credit

8% offered participation points

7% brought food to class

6% dropped the lowest grade on a quiz or homework

1% offered an extra study session

35% offered various suggestions through open-ended responses including offering bonus points on final exam or project, convert final exam from in class to take home, etc.