

Mid-Semester Evaluation: The Power of Immediate Student Feedback

Katrina A. Swinehart Held

Central State University

1400 Brush Row Road

Wilberforce, OH 45384

kswinehart@centralstate.edu

(937) 376-6036

Introduction & Need for Strategy

Many students enrolled in undergraduate programs are eager to build relationships and identify mentors (Pittenger & Heinmann, 2000). Furthermore, Pittenger & Heinmann (2000) state that “regardless of the chosen words to describe this process, it is a significant role in career outcomes” (p. 1). Rapport has been identified as one of the significant needs in a mentorship relationship. “Rapport is important because of its potential to increase student motivation for learning and satisfaction with the course materials” (Otieno, Ngwudike, Vanerson, Ngwudike, p. 19, 2013). Rapport should be built through intentional actions regarding your course materials, class structure, and course assignments. This ability is evaluated at the end of the semester by students using a tool to evaluate instructors and faculty.

Connection to Literature

In an academic course, rapport can be built by having one-on-one conversations with students and utilizing course materials that connect directly to their needs (McKeachie, 2010). Feedback is something that instructors can use to improve their courses in the future; it can also guide areas of improvement. Irvine & Fenwick (2011) examined the ways that HBCU faculty can use course evaluation to fuel their future courses within their courses. Twenty percent of students found the faculty members leading their classes to be “unfavorable and indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that students experienced instructors who were friendly, whose office hours were kept, and who were accessible to students” (Irvine & Fenwick, p. 35, 2011). Could this opinion that the students hold about faculty be changed if this feedback were shared earlier in the semester? Why should faculty have to wait until the end of the semester to learn about how they can better serve the students in their courses?

How It Work & Implementation of LCT Strategy

As a new faculty member, I was adamant in my desire for student feedback to assist in improving my teaching throughout the semester. After teaching my first semester, I received my course evaluation feedback from students just in time to prepare for the next semester. I received feedback that I wish I had sooner so that I could address the needs of my students. This desire prompted my idea of midterm course evaluation. I devised an anonymous survey to provide students an opportunity to provide feedback in the middle of the semester so that I have time to adjust to serve the students enrolled in my course better.

More specifically, I created a brief Google Form that students can complete if they have an interest. I send the form out to students in a message through Schoology. Two reminders are provided through Schoology: one when students have ten days left to complete the form and one when students have three days left to complete the form. A QR code is also provided on the whiteboard in class so students can efficiently complete the form after class on their smartphone. The questions students respond to in this form are as follows and allow respondents to provide a true or false response and can provide a rationale for their selection.

- The information that is listed in the syllabus is all that I hoped to learn this semester about the topic.
- The assignments given in class/lab have been feasible for the number of credit hours of the class.
- Professor Swinehart Held responds to emails/texts/messages/voicemails quickly.
- Professor Swinehart Held grades my assignments quickly and gives valuable, easy to understand feedback.

- You feel like you have a better understanding of the course topic than at the beginning of the semester.
- Professor Swinehart Held is approachable to talk about issues with grades, the class, or outside topics that I need someone to talk to about.
- •Would you be more likely to use Professor Swinehart Held’s office hours if they were held somewhere else? If true, please tell me where on campus would be more convenient.
- Do you have any other feedback?

Results to Date & Implications / Impact

I just completed my fifth semester of teaching at Central State University which is an HBCU in Ohio. I have implemented this midterm evaluation tool in four of the five semesters. Students have provided positive feedback with the opportunity to provide feedback mid-semester. Feedback provided on the evaluation tool has included:

- “I would really appreciate office hours in the library. I do most of my studying there and would love it if you were close by to provide help.”
- “The assignments are very fitting and match the curriculum.”
- “Could I turn in handwritten reflections? I struggle with my home internet.”

This feedback has been influential for me to adjust to better serve students enrolled in my classes. Students are comfortable providing the input as no names or contact information are required, but they can share them if they wish. Since the implementation of this form, I have been able to address concerns of students mid-semester, which has allowed their experience to be improved, if needed. Additionally, students provide helpful feedback at the end of the semester regarding what worked well in the course. The implication from this opportunity is that by merely asking students how the course is going for them, you can understand their needs more precisely and build a stronger rapport with them. This stronger rapport makes a more connected classroom, which can empower more robust discussions and activities in your class.

Future Plans / Advice to Others

I plan to keep using this tool in my classes to gain feedback from students to meet their needs throughout the semester. This academic year, I plan to ask students if the questions are serving their needs adequately. The items in the survey have served my purposes well over the past five semesters, but I want to make sure that students can provide meaningful feedback to me in this process. If other individuals are interested in implementing this with your course load, I would suggest that you ask questions that provide feedback you are interested in; additionally, you must allow them a textbox to provide further specific, narrative feedback. Many students want to provide clarity so that they can better identify and fulfill their needs. The most significant consideration to keep in mind is that students wish to anonymously provide feedback to you unless they have a specific concern that needs to be addressed. Students also want a brief, efficient survey as they do not want to spend much time providing feedback. My questionnaire is designed for them to complete the questions within 10 minutes; my suggestion would be to have one that is approximately that length. Finally, be sure that you ask follow-up or clarifying questions of your classes, if necessary, for you to address their concerns adequately. Overall, finding a way to gain meaningful feedback from students midsemester in a way that fits your institution will assist you in addressing student needs.

References

Irvine, J. J., Fenwick, J. T. (2011). Teachers and teaching for the new millennium: The role of HBCUs. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 80(3),197-208.

McKeachie, W. J., Svinicki, M. (2010). *Teaching tips: Strategies, Research and Theories for University Teachers* (2nd ed.). Wadsworth.

Otieno, T., Ngwudike, R., Vanerson, A., Ngwudike, C.. (2013). Students' evaluation of faculty-student rapport at an urban HBCU. *The Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 26(2), 19-39.

Pittenger, K. S., Heimann, B. A. (2000). Building effective mentorship relationships. *Review of Business*, 21(1), 38.