Best Practices for Increasing Student Response Rates and Meaningful Course Feedback

End-of-semester course evaluations offer students the opportunity to provide valuable quantitative and qualitative insights into the instructor's teaching effectiveness and the course's overall quality. The following best practices, drawn from various sources, are recommended for faculty and directors to help boost both student response rates and the quality of the feedback received.

1. Communicate the Value of Evaluations Early

Before the evaluation period begins, faculty should explain the importance of course evaluations to their students. This discussion can highlight how serious and thoughtful feedback directly contributes to improving teaching practices and enhancing the course.

2. Share How Past Feedback Has Made a Difference

Faculty should share specific examples of how they have used feedback from previous courses to make improvements. This not only demonstrates that feedback is valued but also encourages students to provide more meaningful input.

3. Request Anonymous Feedback During the Semester

Faculty are encouraged to ask for anonymous feedback at key points during the semester. This formative feedback allows instructors to make small adjustments as needed and shows students that their opinions are heard and considered. It also fosters a sense of trust between students and the faculty. ACUE has an excellent piece titled Securing Student Feedback that is available through the Center for Faculty Development.

4. Leadership Support in Promoting Evaluations

School directors should emphasize the importance of course evaluations in faculty meetings before the evaluation period begins. Directors can remind faculty to discuss the significance of evaluations with their students to further encourage participation. Directors can emphasize the multi-pronged approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness, including incorporation of HIPS, requesting peer observations, and investing in teaching development.

5. Facilitate Evaluation Completion in Class

Faculty should allocate time during a class session for students to complete their evaluations. Asking students to bring their devices and setting aside about 15 minutes at the beginning or end of the class is usually sufficient. Faculty leave the room during this time to ensure anonymity.

6. Express Appreciation for Student Participation

After the evaluations are completed, faculty should take a moment to thank students for their time and effort in providing feedback. This gesture reinforces the value placed on their input.

For additional information, including asynchronous courses, please consult the Center for Faculty Development.