

Assessment of Electronic Course Evaluation Technology and its Applicability to the University of Alaska Fairbanks

Stage 2: AY14

Re-examination of top systems from Stage 1, AY13
and
Final Report and Recommendations

Part One: for Faculty Senate, 3/3/14
Part Two: forthcoming

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Joint Report from the Faculty Development, Improvement, and Assessment
Committee and the Electronic Course Evaluation Workgroup

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March 4, 2014

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2.2 Electronic-Course Evaluation System Features Important for UAF

The workgroup went into the first-round demonstrations with certain ideas about important system considerations. Not surprisingly, some of those were reinforced during the demonstrations while others were discarded or refined. Over eighteen months, the workgroup paid particular attention to considerations such as the following.

- a) Amenability to electronic/paper hybrid system: e.g. who would maintain the paper version; who would integrate the data and what would the integration process look like.
- b) User-friendliness for all user-groups: students, faculty, staff, administrators
- c) Student access modes and access points (computer, tablets, smartphones, QR codes; web-based, LMS integration, special requirements for paper versions...)
- d) Provision for student free-responses
- e) Degree of openness or restrictions on question sets, including UAF's level of control and process for refining questions over time
- f) Provision for instructor, department, school/college, University-generated questions
- g) Accommodation of diverse course formats (non-semester based, co-taught, cross-listed, stacked)
- h) Accommodation of legacy data
- i) Company comments on student response rates
- j) Usefulness of reports for different course evaluation purposes (improving instruction, curriculum analysis and planning, faculty evaluation, University data needs...)
- k) Technical considerations (hosting, securing, survey deployment/retrieval processes, integration with University data systems, system complexity, training and ongoing support...)
- l) Pricing options
- m) Unique features and/or concerns

3. Recommendations

3.1 Recommendation 1: The electronic-Course Eval Workgroup recommends eXplorance/Blue Course Evaluations.

The workgroup determined that eXplorance/Blue met all of the electronic course evaluation features important to UAF and addressed more of those considerations or addressed them more adequately than the other systems considered.

Comments on eXplorance/Blue in relation to considerations important to UAF.

- a) Amenability to electronic/paper hybrid system

- x Single-sign on access, e.g. through Blackboard and/or Banner
- x

- x System can interact with multiple UAF databases.
- x Blue can manually pull from Banner and other databases, or UAF can set Banner to push to Blue.
- x Week of training in first-year package. Typically "train the trainers."
- x Multiple technical services and training options.
- x Standard support hours (Eastern time zone) with optional emergency path and evenings/weekends on request
- x Only BlackBoard Premier partner (as of 2/14). [Chris Beks, OIT, advises that this means "deep integration" between the systems.]

l) Pricing options

- x Company will sell software (perpetual model) or lease (fee per lease period).
- x Under either option, Blue can run on eXplorance server or UAF server

m) Unique features/concerns

- x No major concerns
- x New feature 2/14; no cost: Blue "Pulse"
 - o

Particularly, eXplorance/Blue efficiently includes a paper option. The workgroup considers the paper option important for students who do not have, or do not yet have, ready access to devices necessary to respond electronically; for field-based or other courses where an electronic system would be problematic; and to facilitate a smooth transition.

In view of that conclusion, the workgroup recommends that UAF should move to an electronic course evaluation system. Our report now turns attention to transition considerations and steps.

Appendix A: Institutions that have adopted eXplorance/Blue Course Evaluations.

1. [eXplorance website: News and Events](#). Lists educational institutions by year they adopted eXplorance: Blue Course Evaluations.
2. Other educational institutions that have allowed eXplorance to display their logos on the Blue Course Evaluations website or to use their names:
 - a. University of Louisville
 - b. Université Laval
 - c. Boston College
 - d. University of Toronto
 - e. University of Pennsylvania
 - f. University of Alabama
3. A simple internet search for "eXplorance Blue" reveals many universities that have reviewed and/or adopted Blue Course Evaluations. UAF Faculty Senators may have colleagues at some of these institutions.