



Requirements Analysis and Implementation: Converting a Student Survey of Faculty Teaching System from Paper-Based to Web-Based

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case deals with issues related to conversion of a mostly manual information system to an electronic information system where the new system significantly changes the way users interact with the system. The case focuses on the elements of analysis and design, followed by implementation and results. This case provides scenarios and settings that may be used for role plays and group discussions to highlight the importance and the need for following the accepted systems analysis and design steps in the analysis, design, and implementation of IT systems. [Article copies are available for purchase from InfoSci-on-Demand.com]

Keywords: Academic Administration Information Systems; Communication Gap; Information in Organization; Information Requirements Analysis; System Acceptance; Systems Implementation; User Participation; User Satisfaction

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Major University is a mid-size university that offers undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs. Major has four units: Academic Services, Student Services, Research, and Financial Services. Each unit is managed by one vice president. The vice presidents report directly to the president. The academic services unit has about 550 full-time faculty members in five colleges and enrolls about 17,000 students at its main campus and two satellite campuses in the same metropolitan area. Like many other universities, Major offers distance education courses and

programs to different geographical areas of the United States and abroad. Teaching is a very important part of the mission of this university and faculty and administrators place significant emphasis on this aspect of the job.

Each college has a dean who is responsible for the academic curricula, budgets, and personnel in the college. The deans report to the vice president for academic services. Each college is composed of several departments. Each department, in turn, is composed of faculty who are usually in one major or field, like biology. Each department is managed by a department head who is a member of the faculty in that department. Department heads in a college report to the dean of the college.

The University Computing Office (UCO) is housed in the Financial Services office. The director of UCO reports to the vice president for Financial Services. UCO performs all of the computer and networking activities of the university.

SETTING THE STAGE

In general, the main responsibilities of faculty in higher education are teaching, research, and service. Individual faculty are evaluated at least once a year in each of these areas and their reappointment/nonreappointment, salary increases, rewards, promotion, and tenure are usually determined based on these evaluations. Prestigious awards sponsored by departments, colleges, universities, states, and national and international organizations in teaching, research, and service are also based on faculty performance in these areas and are usually awarded to faculty annually. Annual faculty evaluation is the process of measuring faculty performance in each area of faculty duties and communicating their performance to them. Reappointment and nonreappointment decisions are highly dependent on the results of annual evaluations.

Evaluation of faculty teaching is usually based on performance during the preceding year and is assessed through the review of several documents including the results of student surveys of teaching, peer review of course portfolios, course grade distributions, classroom visits by peers, teaching awards received, teaching workshops attended, and any other related information available to the administrators. Most often the student survey of faculty teaching performance receives the highest emphasis in this process.

During the last several weeks of each semester, students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the courses they had in that semester. Each student can provide feedback for each course one time only. Student responses are confidential and the identity of students is hidden from the faculty and administrators. Students may offer suggestions on how to improve the course content and delivery as they feel necessary. Individual faculty often uses these comments to continuously improve the quality of their courses to improve student learning.

The student surveys are very important input for several processes. Faculty members use the surveys to improve their courses. The feedback provides important information to administrators for evaluation of faculty teaching performance and, consequently, rewards and awards of tenure and promotion. In addition, student surveys are used in selecting the recipients of very prestigious awards that are sponsored by colleges, universities, states, and professional organizations. It is very important to have as high a response rate as possible from students in each class to have a more accurate picture of students' satisfaction and learning experiences in the class. In reality not all students may complete the survey. The response rate can be significantly different from one student survey system to another. Conceptually, student surveys in higher education are similar to customer satisfaction surveys in other industries.

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