

Use of Strategies / Incentives to Increase Survey Response Rates (November, 2010)

The following is a review of incentives utilized to increase online response rates for course / instructor evaluations.

Data were obtained from published journals ($n = 9$) and personal communication from universities that were currently using an online evaluation system ($n = 53$). Of the personal contacts, 34 universities were utilizing some type of incentive, while the remaining 19 indicated that they were not currently endorsing incentives or strategies.

This document is separated into 3 sections:

- 1) One-year data on response rates
- 2) Long-term data on response rates
- 3) Data on instructor ratings (most sources did not provide this information)

1) RESPONSE RATES

Category	Strategy / incentive	Source	Sample	Average Response Rates		
				Before	After	Difference
Mandatory	Incomplete in course	Kentucky U ^a	University		100%	
	Incomplete in course	U Washington ^a	Dentistry	55%	100%	45%
	Incomplete in course	Loma Linda U ^a	Medicine		100%	
	Incomplete in course	Indiana U ^a	Dentistry		100%	
	Withhold grades until survey finished	U California San Diego ^a	Medicine		90%	
	Withhold grades until survey finished	Loma Linda U ^a	Pharmacy		100%	
	Cannot register next semester	Louisiana State U ^a	Nursing	30%	100%	70%
	Cannot register next semester	U Colorado ^a	Pharmacy		100%	
	Grade is decreased by 1 letter if survey not completed (i.e. from A to B-)	U Dayton ^a	Doctor Physical Therapy	87%	100%	13%
	AVERAGE				99%	
Grades	Grade increase	U Buffalo, SUNY ^a	University		70%	
	Grade increase (some instructors make surveys mandatory)	Tulane U ^a	University	50%	95%	45%
	Grade increase (0.25%)	California State U ^b	Business	29%	87%	58%
	Grade increase (small)	East Tennessee State U ^a	Pharmacy	50%	70%	20%
	Grade increase (1%)	McMaster U ^a	Humanities		90%	
	Assigned students to complete survey, gave points	Brigham Young U ^c	University	62%	87%	25%
	View final grades early	U Miami ^a	University	55%	79%	24%
	View final grades early	U Pennsylvania ^a	University		88%	
	Early feedback of grades if 2/3 class completed survey	California State U ^b	Business	29%	51%	22%
	Withhold grades until after finals	Boston College ^a	College	37%	88%	51%
AVERAGE				81%		
Importance	Instructor can encourage students to complete survey	U Arizona ^a	University	65%	90%	25%
	Encouraged students to complete survey	Brigham Young U ^c	Business	62%	32%	-30%
	Emphasize importance of surveys	Indiana U ^a	Dentistry		93%	
	AVERAGE				72%	

Category	Strategy / incentive	Source	Sample	Average Response Rates		
				Before	After	Difference
Assignment / in-class	Assigned students to complete survey, no points	Brigham Young U ^c	University	62%	77%	15%
	Surveys completed in class	Ohio Northern U ^a	Law	52%	76%	24%
	In-class demo of how to complete online survey	California State U ^b	Business	29%	53%	24%
	AVERAGE			69%		
Access to results	View results from courses with >65% resp rate	U Virginia ^a	University		53%	
	Student completes all surveys, able to view results from courses with >70% resp rate	U Maryland ^a	University		63%	
	Student completes all surveys, able to view results	Northwestern U ^a	University	50%	73%	23%
	AVERAGE			63%		
Reminders	Reminder emails	Georgia Institute Tech ^a	University	50%	65%	15%
	Reminder emails	Virginia Tech ^a	University		72%	
	Reminder emails (every week)	Augsburg College ^a	College		50%	
	Reminder emails	U Colorado Boulder ^a	University		57%	
	Reminder emails	Monash U ^d	University		31%	
	Reminder emails (every 3 days)	Thomas Edison State College ^a	Nursing (online)		70%	
	Non-respondents were contacted by phone	Monash U ^e	Recent graduates	32%	55%	23%
	AVERAGE			57%		
Lottery	Draw for various prizes	Queen's College, CUNY ^a	College		30%	
	Draw for many small prizes	McMaster U ^a	Humanities		80%	
	Draw for Ipod (only 1)	McMaster U ^a	Science		20%	
	Draw for Ipod	King's Univ College ^a	College	50%	58%	8%
	AVERAGE			47%		

Category	Strategy / incentive	Source	Sample	Average Response Rates		
				Before	After	Difference
Combined methods	Posted link; statement of importance; reminders	Northern Arizona U ^f	University	42%	74%	32%
	Importance of feedback; instructor promotes survey; draw for cash prize	Murdoch U ^g	Engineering	30%	50%	20%
	Draw for prizes or tuition, promotion in student union	U Calgary ^a	University	33%	43%	10%
	Email reminders; draw for prize	Canterbury U ^h	University		30%	
	Email reminders; encourage to complete	Oregon Health & Sciences U ^a	Dentistry		30%	
	Email reminders; draw for prize	Murdoch U ⁱ	University		47%	
	Email reminders; announced in class; draw for money or phones	U Auckland ^j	University		31%	
	Email reminders; paper / radio announcements	North Carolina A&T State ^a	University		55%	
	AVERAGE				45%	

Notes:

^a Data obtained through personal communication.

^b Dommeyer et al. (2004)

^c Johnson (2003)

^d Nair et al. (2005) in Nulty et al. (2008)

^e Nair et al. (2008)

^f Norris & Conn (2005)

^g Cummings & Ballantyne (1999) in Ballantyne (2003)

^h Ogier (2005) in Nulty et al. (2008)

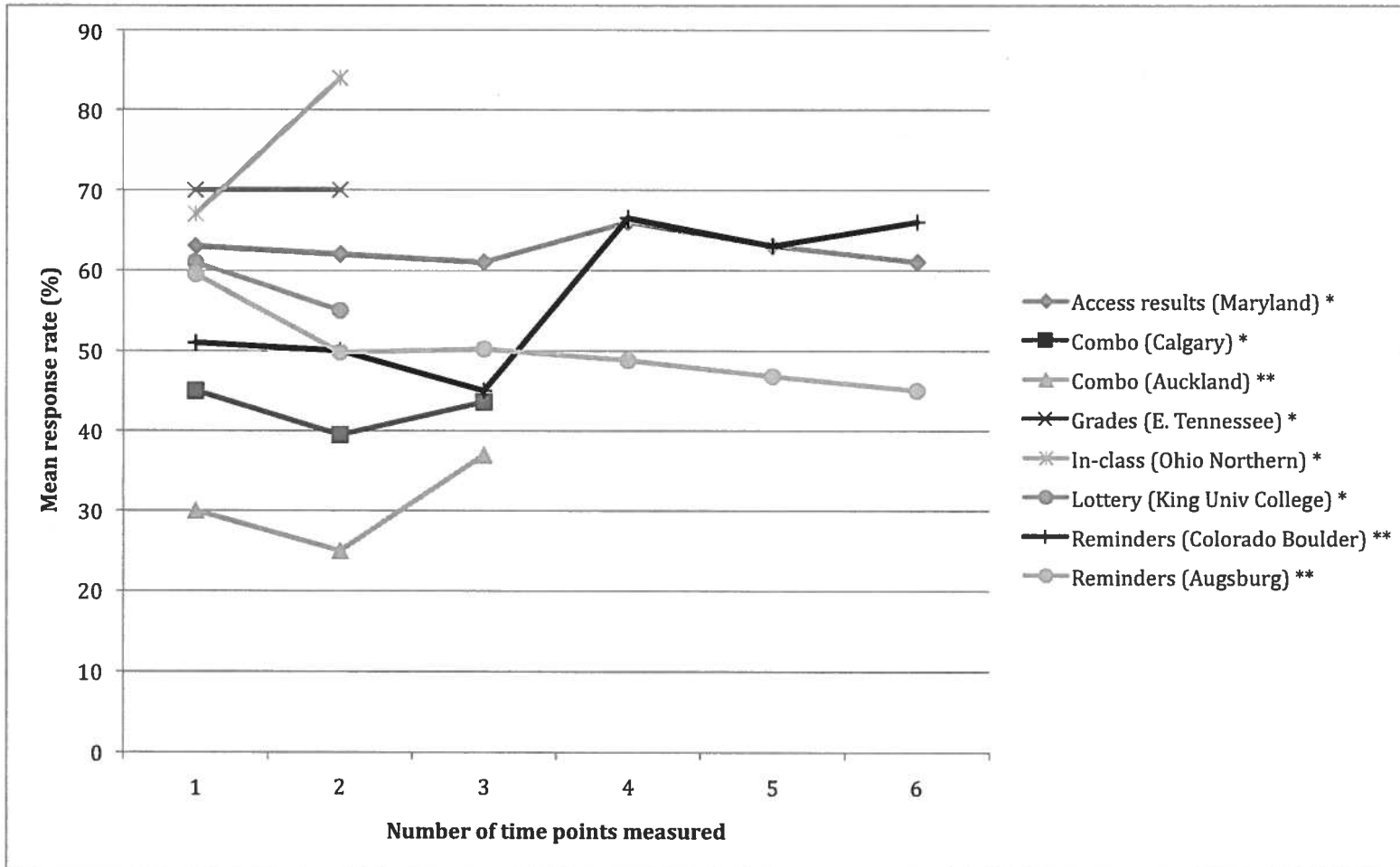
ⁱ Ballantyne (2005) in Nulty et al. (2008)

^j Sheridan & Kan (2007)

If data were available from multiple terms or years, these values were averaged.

Overall averages were calculated for post-incentive only; some sources did not indicate their pre-incentive response rates.

2) RESPONSE RATES (LONG-TERM)



* Evaluated across terms

** Evaluated across years

3) INSTRUCTOR RATINGS

Only two sources indicated whether there was a change in instructor ratings, with the implementation of incentives:

- Ratings have remained stable over 5 years (combined methods; North Carolina A&T State ^{a)})
- No differences in ratings before, during or after final exams (incentive of viewing grades during exam period; Boston College ^{a)})