

*Pitt faculty members share their strategies
for achieving higher than average response rates*

We asked several Pitt faculty members whose response rates were higher than the university average last term to share their strategies for increasing response rates. *Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys* have been administered fully online since Fall 2013. OMET's tips and suggestions to increase response rates have been based on research at other institutions. Now that we are beginning to gather data here at the University of Pittsburgh, it's beneficial to highlight some effective measures from our own Pitt faculty. We thank them for providing this information.

"I did two things. 1. Send an email a.) reminding them about the survey deadline, b.) emphasizing the importance of their comments and how I can use their comments to be a better teacher in the future. 2. On the last day of the class, I stepped out of the class for 15 minutes (at the beginning of the class) and asked them to do the survey if they have not done so by that time. "

Professor Pandu Takikamalla
Katz Graduate School of Business
95% Response Rate

"I take my OMETs seriously and use them to fine tune my teaching every semester – especially the written comments. I decided to treat OMETs exactly as I had in the past: I set aside a time at the beginning of a class that I know most students will attend (exam review or final presentations). I leave the room and give the students 15 minutes to work on their OMETs on their laptops or phones, and if they don't have those, I send them to a computer lab."

Professor Ryan McDermott
English Department, Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences
80% Response Rate

"The steps that I took throughout the semester in hopes of ensuring a high response rate can be broken down into two main steps:

- *Letting students know their feedback is valuable*
 - *On the first day of class, I assured my students that I appreciate their feedback and want to learn from them as well.*
 - *On syllabus day, I point out some of the changes that had been made to my syllabus as a direct result of previous feedback on course evaluations.*

- *Half way through the semester, I had students fill out a very brief and anonymous mid-course evaluation that simply asked them what aspects of my teaching worked well and what aspects of my teaching could be improved.*
- *Repeated encouragement to take the OMET survey.*
 - *Throughout the semester I reminded students of the OMET survey.*
 - *When the survey was officially opened, I emailed students and encouraged them to now take the survey.*
 - *I then provided time (about 10-15 minutes) at the beginning of class for students to fill out the survey (I encouraged them to bring a laptop or electronic device in advance so they could do it).*
 - *I continued to encourage any students who had yet to take the survey to take it before the survey closed and reminded them of the deadline.*

Professor Brock Bahler
 Department of Religious Studies
 Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences
 83% Response Rate

“For my large class probably the biggest way to ensure that they complete the evaluations was the two-part process of instructing them to bring a computer to class on the day of evaluations (although I didn’t say in advance what the purpose of bringing it was) and allowing class time for the evaluations to be completed.

For my small group I reserved a computer lab.

Before both classes completed the evaluations, I reminded them that this process was helpful for me as a professor and that the following semester I would read the anonymous evaluations carefully and adapt my teaching style, course readings, assignments, etc. based on constructive feedback that they provided.

I send 1-2 follow-up emails through CourseWeb reminding those who had been absent on the day of evaluations that they still had time to do them at their convenience and that they would be read carefully next semester

Overall, I would say the combination of explaining to students why evaluations are important, making sure they have the means to do the evaluations (in a computer lab, or by bringing their own computers or simply using their cell phones), and allowing class time for their completion helped my students to participate.”

Professor Matt Kanwit
 Department of Linguistics
 Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences
 90% Response Rate

“The day that the evaluations are released, I inform students that they are available for them to complete. I indicate that I take the evaluations seriously, that I have adjusted the course on the basis of suggestions I received in the evaluations, offering specific examples, and that I will offer donuts on the last day of class to whoever fills out an evaluation. I then show them specifically where to find them on CourseWeb using the classroom’s computer and internet connections. This takes about 3-4 minutes of class time. I repeat that reminder twice over the course of the final weeks of the semester, each time taking no more than 90 seconds. On the final day of class, I bring in donuts and offer them to anyone who has filled out a course evaluation. Anyone who has not may fill out the evaluation then and there, and I give them ten minutes to do so, after which they can have a donut. Obviously it is an honor system. The methods seem to have worked reasonably well in ensuring broad class participation.”

Professor Haider Hamoudi
Law School
88% Response Rate

“I do not give them time during class to fill it out or anything like that. My main method is that I make sure to remind them at least 3 times to perform the evaluation, at least 2 times in class and at least 1 time through email. Then, I spend a very short time in class emphasizing the importance of the OMET. I tell them that it does, in fact, factor into our evaluations as professors (promotion and things like that), and I tell them what would be the most valuable input to me. In particular, I tell them that I would really like feedback on the parts of the course that they felt they learned well, rather than telling me what parts of the course they think are useful or not.”

Professor John Brigham
Civil Engineering
Swanson School of Engineering
83% Response Rate