

# University of Louisville

## KEEPING IT ALL IN ONE PLACE: INTEGRATED COURSE EVALUATIONS AND SURVEYS AT UoFL

The University of Louisville (UofL) serves over 22,000 students from its campus in the Louisville metropolitan area. As a public university, being a good steward of financial resources is a primary concern. In 2008, UofL acquired eXplorance's Blue Survey module to administer online surveys. Blue Survey is used to assess student satisfaction, gather feedback for academic unit-specific accreditation, and administer faculty and staff exit surveys. Previously, assessment surveys were issued by a third party vendor using a costly and unsustainable approach. Additionally, UofL staff did not have any control over the administration of the surveys. Results were provided in a standard report format which was not customizable. These limitations did not support UofL's ongoing culture of assessment or its commitment to continuous quality improvement.

In 2010, UofL transitioned to a university-wide online course evaluation administration using eXplorance's Blue Evaluation. The results of course evaluations are used as an assessment of institutional effectiveness; in addition, results are included as a part of faculty personnel appraisals.

Prior to fall 2010, course evaluations were not administered using a standardized process. Some academic units used a paper/pencil administration while other academic units used electronic methods. "In some cases, evaluations were available only to students who attended the class period in which they were administered." said Becky Patterson, Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. "It became apparent that our existing solutions for course evaluations were cost prohibitive for the university, and labor intensive for the staff and students."



*As a user of Blackboard for approximately 13 years, integrating the administration of online course evaluations through Blue Evaluation with Blackboard increased the accessibility of course evaluations for students. The combined solution makes completing online course evaluations easier than ever for students.*

The acquisition of Blue Evaluation provided a cost effective and reliable solution to the administration of course evaluations. UofL was able to leverage their investment in Blue Survey by acquiring Blue Evaluation. Additionally, both processes are now centrally administered by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. The central administration possible through Blue helps reduce survey redundancy while also giving survey and course evaluation recipients an easier way to provide information.

The integration of Blue with PeopleSoft (UofL's student information management system) allows demographic data to be extracted directly from the system. This eliminates the need to ask these questions on both course evaluations and assessment surveys. Response rates increase when the evaluation form is shortened.

In 2011, Blue became available as a customizable Building Block for the Blackboard Learn™ platform. "As a current user of Blackboard, it made sense to combine Blue into the Blackboard Learn platform," said Robert Goldstein, Associate University Provost for Academic Accountability, Institutional Research and Effectiveness. "The Blue Portal Integrator (BPI) allows for the integration between Blue and Blackboard. Blue Building Blocks are the only ones which are highly customizable and require only one upload into Blackboard. Once the blocks are uploaded into Blue, Blue administrators within the Office of Institutional Research and Planning can add filters or make edits to the blocks and the changes automatically appear on Blackboard after synchronization. The Blackboard administrator does not need to re-import the blocks for any changes to be applied. "The BPI also enables Blue to match any existing format of course names within PeopleSoft. This saves resources since we do not need to revise the format of the course name within PeopleSoft for the integration to be possible," said Goldstein.

The integration with Blackboard Learn allows the students an additional way to access their course evaluations. Students receive an electronic invitation sent to their official university email address. By clicking the link in the email, students are able to access and complete their evaluations. Students can also access the evaluations through scanning a QR code with their mobile device, going directly to the URL for the course evaluation portal, or by logging into Blackboard Learn and clicking the links in the Blue Building Block.

For course evaluations, the university sends out nearly 80,000 emails each fall and spring semester to inform students course evaluations are available for completion,



*The Blue Portal Integrator (BPI) allows for the integration between Blue and Blackboard. Blue Building Blocks are the only ones which are highly customizable and require only one upload into Blackboard.*

Robert Goldstein  
Associate University Provost  
for Academic Accountability, Institutional  
Research and Effectiveness  
University of Louisville



but now students also have the option to complete them within their Blackboard Learn account. "We have received messages from students saying they accidentally deleted the email that contained the link to the evaluations," said Patterson. "Instead of resending the email, we now tell them to log into their Blackboard Learn account."

When course evaluations are available for completion, a link appears in the Blue module located on the Blackboard Learn landing page. Links are activated to each evaluation a student needs to complete. By clicking on the link, a separate internet browser window opens with the evaluation. "Students appreciate the separate window because they do not lose their place in Blackboard," said Patterson.

UofL can also customize the look and feel of the Blue Building Block to optimize the student experience. The BPI allows course evaluation administrators the option of varying the messaging relating to the status of each course evaluation that appears in Blackboard Learn. Evaluations can have a status of 'not ready', 'incomplete', 'in progress', or 'completed'. With Blue, students are given 14 to 17 days to complete the evaluations. Staff in the Office of Institutional Research and Planning create and publish the reports after course grades have been submitted.

In the near future, UofL plans to implement new features of Blue to help further increase responses, including Google Analytics. "We want to add this feature to help us further our marketing efforts to students," said Patterson.

