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FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF
MID-COURSE EVALUATIONS ON LEARNING AND TEACHING

by

Whitney Ransom McGowan

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Instructional Psychology & Technology

Brigham Young University

August 2009

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the dissertation of Whitney Ransom McGowan in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF MID-COURSE EVALUATIONS ON LEARNING AND TEACHING

Whitney Ransom McGowan

Department of Instructional Psychology & Technology

Doctor of Philosophy

The focus of this study is to describe the effects of mid-course evaluations on teaching and student learning. A mixed methods approach was used, combining faculty and student surveys, faculty interviews, debriefing sessions, and a comparison of mid-course evaluations scores with end-of-semester scores. Out of 510 section mean scores (128 sections) from faculty members who participated in the study, 352 section mean scores (88 sections, 69%) showed students' perceptions of their own learning improved between the time they completed the mid-course evaluation and the time they completed the end-of-course student rating survey. Results showed when faculty administered a mid-course evaluation, students' perceptions of their own learning improved.

Faculty members saw more improvement if they conducted a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback, and discussed this input with their students. Faculty members saw the most improvement in their ratings when they also made changes based upon student feedback. The results of this study should be encouraging to all faculty members and administrators who may feel they want to improve their teaching and increase student learning but have limited time to devote to course revisions.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Statement of Problem

Many university faculty members struggle with their teaching performance. Some of these faculty members give up on themselves, concluding they are not effective teachers. Some faculty members want to improve, but are unsure what to change to make their teaching better. Some faculty members want to change but live busy lives and do not feel they have the time to make the necessary changes. What if teaching performance could be improved by using a simple mid-course evaluation tool? What if even greater improvement could be made by faculty members using the tool and listening to the students' feedback and taking action? The purpose of this study is to better understand and explore the effects of mid-course evaluations on teaching performance and student learning from a faculty and student perspective.

Several studies have been done on the value of online mid-course evaluations. Some of the benefits mentioned in the literature include (a) increased accessibility (Bullock, 2003), (b) better versatility in being able to easily modify the web-based form, (Henderson, 2002), (c) reduced processing costs (Bothell, 2003, Johnson, 2003), (d) data collection and reports that are more accurate, and (e) even more thoughtful responses from students (Johnson, 2003) because students can type their comments, rather than writing by hand. This online environment allows the students to write more freely because they have more time to write and can also easily edit their responses (Ballantyne, 2000), (f) and identification of handwriting (Sheehan, 2001).

Although I listed six primary benefits of mid-course evaluations, there are several areas of research pertaining to mid-course evaluations where research is lacking. In

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particular, I found only one primary empirical study, conducted nearly 30 years ago, that demonstrates improved ratings and increased student learning through the use of mid-course evaluations and consultation. This study provides a basis for the need to investigate further the impact that conducting mid-course evaluations has on improving online student ratings, as well as student learning, since only minimal evidence currently exists. A great deal of research has been conducted on teaching effectiveness, but little research on whether students are learning, what they are learning, and how instructors try to improve student learning. Further, minimal research has been conducted on how faculty members perceive and use these ratings (Schmelkin-Pedhazur, Spencer, & Gellman, 1997).

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the effects of mid-course evaluations on student learning, as well as on the improvement of teaching, particularly improvement measured by online student ratings. One measure I will address is whether online students ratings improve when faculty conduct a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback, discuss it with their students, and make changes. Other areas of research will deal specifically with faculty perceptions of mid-course evaluations and the impact on student learning and teaching. Research in these areas is limited. With this study, I feel there is great potential to contribute to the field of improving teaching and student learning that will benefit faculty, students, and administrators in higher education.

Research Questions

In this paper, I will address the following questions:

1. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching?

2. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve student learning?
3. Do students perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their learning?
4. How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?

Definitions of Key Words

The Center for Teaching & Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), formerly the Center for Instructional Design (CID) is a department at Brigham Young University (BYU) that partners with faculty members on a variety of levels to help improve teaching and learning. The CTL currently supports a broad range of large and small-scale faculty projects to maintain and improve on-campus instruction. There are 27 full-time employees and approximately 115 student employees at the CTL.

Evaluation

To evaluate is to make a judgment based on a set of criteria. One of the ways evaluations can be classified is as formative and summative.

Improve

To *improve* will be defined as a comparison between mid-and end-of-semester student ratings of the course and also student perceptions of whether they felt their instructors or the courses had improved.

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Mid-Course Evaluations

Mid-course evaluations include responses to questions posed by the faculty member regarding both the course and the faculty member's teaching of the course. Faculty often administer a paper-based or electronic formative evaluation during the middle of the course to get a feel for how the class is going and what can be improved. Some faculty use mid-course evaluations specifically to improve teaching and student learning.

Online Student Ratings

At the end of each term or semester, BYU students are encouraged to provide feedback on their learning experiences with each of their professors. Once grades are complete, reports of the ratings are made available to BYU faculty members and administrators. Students are given the opportunity to rate their professors for the following four learning items: overall ratings of the course and the instructor, and focused ratings of the learning, intellectual development, course organization, grading procedures, and contribution to the Mission and Aims of a BYU Education (Spiritually Strengthening, Intellectually Enlarging, Character Building, and Lifelong Learning and Service). These ratings are often used in personnel and tenure decisions. Student learning is often assessed based on the scores from the online student ratings.

Student Feedback

Student feedback includes comments from students on their mid-course evaluations, as well as comments from their surveys and debriefing sessions.

Student Learning

Although learning encompasses a variety of areas, learning in this dissertation will be focused on the four learning items from the mid-course and end-of semester evaluations (amount learned, effectiveness of course materials and learning activities, development of intellectual skills, and faculty interest in student learning). Comments from students and faculty pertaining to specific examples of learning will also be considered.

Teaching Performance

In this dissertation, teaching performance will be based on online mid-course and online student ratings, as well as feedback from students. The knowledge and skill of the faculty members to help students learn will also be considered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this section, I will discuss the importance of improving teaching, as several of the research questions pertain to using mid-course evaluations to improve teaching. Next, I will describe the importance and characteristics of improvement in terms of using mid-course evaluations to help students learn more, as well as using them to improve online student ratings. Then I will discuss the role of timing in feedback, as mid-course evaluations help faculty make changes during the semester the evaluation is administered, as well as in subsequent semesters. Finally, I will provide a summary of case studies involving mid-course evaluations that have been conducted pertaining to teaching effectiveness, and will conclude with the need for future research.

The research provided in this literature review is based on mid-course evaluations conducted in higher education. Research on online, as well as paper-based mid-course evaluations, is included. In 1996, researchers at the University of Michigan estimated that over the past 50 years, more than two thousands articles had been written about student ratings (McKeachie and Kaplan, 1996). Although there are many areas of mid-course evaluations, and many types of evaluations, I will include literature pertaining to the research questions.

Expectations for Teachers

No instructor grows up thinking, “I really want to be a bad teacher!” Some teachers may take great joy in being considered “hard or demanding, but never bad” (Phillips, 2001, p. iv). Rather, individuals who become teachers generally want to be the very best they can “become in their field and seek to have elevated purposes in their

teaching pursuits” (Fink, 2003, p. 244). They want their students to have “significant learning experiences, grow, and progress” (p. 6).

The best thing we can do to help every student succeed is to provide good teachers, well versed in subject matter content and in how to teach it. Teachers need and want help to do their jobs well. Good training in college is important but it is not enough....Teachers want the kind of professional development that will give them the knowledge and skills to help their students meet these new academic standards. They want good diagnostic information that allows them to be better at adjusting their teaching for individual students. (Landgraf, 2003, para. 5)

However, despite these high aspirations to become the greatest teachers, faculty members may watch a respected colleague teach and then conclude they can never be as good of a teacher as that professor. They may also get discouraged if they spend time on teaching activities and research that does not improve their ratings (Hattie & Marsh, 1996). Even new teachers may feel frustrated if they do not feel they have reached excellent teacher status at the beginning of their careers.

Most new teachers enter the profession with a powerful desire to do good work. They want to teach. But they are expected to just jump in and be successful. If they don't feel effective, they can get discouraged—especially the most conscientious ones. (Boss, 2005, p. 5)

Students also have expectations for their teachers, just as teachers have expectations for their students (Hunsberger & Cavanagh, 1988). In essence, university students want and expect to be taught by excellent teachers. They pay tuition to gain an education that will enable them to gain the knowledge and learn the skills to succeed in life. Teachers are at the crux of this endeavor.

It is my experience and belief that nearly all faculty members have deep inner dreams of what they would like their teaching to be like—and those dreams are significantly different from their ordinary, everyday experiences in the classroom. In some way

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could be found to encourage faculty members to dream their dreams and to have a realistic hope of making these dreams a reality, they would have the basis they need for saying, “Yes, it is worthwhile for me to invest in learning how to be a better teacher.” (Fink, 2003, p. 8)

Although there has been a debate regarding whether teachers are born or bred, Timpson and Bendel-Simso (1996) state that this debate is “far too simplistic to entertain and clearly begs the responsibility we all share to grow, learn and improve as professionals. Teachers can be made and any teacher can improve through openness to change, study, practice and feedback” (p. x).

Chickering and Gamson (1991) have done significant research on effective teaching and have stated the following seven principles should be used as guidelines for faculty members: (a) encourages contact between students and faculty members, (b) develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, (c) encourages active learning, (d) gives prompt feedback, (e) emphasizes time on task, (f) communicates high expectations, and (g) respects diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson). Although a great deal has been learned and gained from research on teaching in higher education, “much still remains unknown, and most remains unused by practitioners themselves” (Menges, 2000, p. 5).

Instructional Models of Improvement

Although a variety of resources exist to help faculty members improve, ultimately it is the faculty members who must determine they want to change or that change is needed before lasting change can occur, and usually that change takes time (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995). Many instructional models of improvement have been developed to help faculty become better teachers. A few of these models are outlined below.

The first example of an instructional model of improvement is a feedback loop explained by Robert Menges (1991). In this model, the faculty member receives some form of feedback regarding his or her teaching performance. Next, the faculty member takes this information and compares it with his or her internal standards. Finally, the faculty member makes a change in “output [teacher behavior], feedback input, or internal performance standards” (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995, p. 9). Professors “solicit information as feedback; they reflect on their expectations, beliefs, and values; and they experiment with different ways of teaching” (Menges, 1991, p. 27).

Another instructional model of improvement by John Centra (1993) is based upon the assumption that formative evaluation can lead to optimum performance and improvement when the following four steps are followed:

1. New knowledge. The professor must receive new knowledge pertaining to his or her teaching performance.
2. Value. The professor must find value in the new knowledge, meaning the individual or group who solicited the information must be seen as credible or respectful.
3. Understand change. The professor must understand what needs to be done for positive change to occur.
4. Motivation. The professor must have a desire to change.

Centra (1993) clarifies that change can still occur if two of the three conditions are met, however, the changes may not be as lasting or may not have the same type of impact if all four of the steps are followed.

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Another instructional model, outlined by MaryEllen Weimer (1990) includes a detailed, five-step approach for improving performance in teaching. Weimer states the following steps must be followed:

1. Understanding. Faculty members gain an understanding of the techniques they incorporate into their teaching, as well as the assumptions they have for teaching and learning
2. Information. Faculty members obtain information from their students and peers to help them gain a greater understanding of their own understanding of their teaching; the input from them also provides feedback as to the “impact of the policy, practice, behavior, or activity on the person offering the input” (p. 34). Finally, this input provides alternate methods for faculty members to consider so they can accomplish their learning and teaching objectives.
3. Change. The faculty members can then identify the changes that need to be made and possible alternatives.
4. Incorporation. The faculty members can incorporate the changes into their teaching.
5. Evaluation. The faculty members evaluate the impact of the changes they made (Weimer, 1990).

Conditions for Faculty Change

When faculty members possess certain characteristics for change, they are better able to make and sustain positive changes to their teaching. Faculty members must feel some sense of safety correlated with any attempt to change their teaching. In essence, they must be able to see that the changes that are made will still allow them to change

their positive self-image without feeling a loss or a decrease in their integrity or identity (Schein, 1992). One important element of this feeling of safety is we “finally see a way to work on the problem or see a direction or learning that we had not seen before” (p. 301).

Once the faculty member decides to make the change to improve his or her teaching, what elements need to be in place for that change to be sustained? Suppose a faculty member receives higher student ratings after making some changes to improve in his or her teaching performance. If this particular faculty member feels the teaching was meaningful, rewarding, and/or significant, then the changes are more likely to be sustained (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995). This element is important as many faculty members are motivated by intrinsic rewards (Austin & Gamsen, 1983; Olsen, 1993). In fact, it is the “need for self-determined competence that underlies intrinsic motivation” (Deci & Ryan 1985, p. 32). This central need guides individuals to “situations and activities that interest them that provide optimal challenges that allow them to learn and achieve” (p. 28).

However, improvement in the faculty members’ student ratings for the following terms or semesters may also be necessary to maintain that change and to assure the faculty members that the way in which they teach and the scores they received were not just by chance (Paulsen & Feldman, 1995).

Student Feedback

Importance of Student Feedback

Student ratings are one of the most widely used measures of teaching quality in education today (Franklin, 2001) as they provide a perception of student learning and faculty teaching. In fact, student ratings are in use in more than 90 percent of all colleges

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and universities throughout the US (Seldin, 1984). For those who are faculty members, evaluations can affect their academic livelihood and reputation. Many administrations use these ratings to make personnel decisions, and also for promotions and tenure (Franklin, 2001). Faculty members administer mid-course evaluations primarily to improve their teaching (Overall & Marsh, 1979).

Feedback can be defined as “information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies” (Winne & Butler, p. 5740).

Feedback is often considered an essential source of information for faculty (Moore & Kuol, 2005). Student feedback is often considered a low-cost alternative to other more costly forms of evaluations (Greenwald & Gilmore, 1997).

Although there has been some debate surrounding feedback from students, the “developing focus on quality, accountability and the importance of ‘reflective practice’ in university teaching have driven the increased use of student surveys to evaluate or provide feedback on teacher performance” (Moore & Kuol, p. 58). Marsh (1987) concluded that “student ratings are clearly multidimensional, quite reliable, reasonably valid, relatively uncontaminated by many variables often seen as sources of potential bias, and are seen to be useful by students, faculty, and administrators” (p. 369).

It is often difficult to receive high-quality feedback that informs faculty members of the student perceptions of their teaching. Without feedback, faculty members may not improve their teaching, as they are relying on their own perception of their teaching

successes and difficulties. Regular evaluation on the course from students is seen as an essential process of quality improvement (Brown, Race, and Smith, 1997).

Teaching improvement is a focus at many universities and colleges throughout the world, as it is often connected with increases in salary, faculty appointments, and career advancement.

Faculty members who do not strive to improve in their teaching are at risk of stagnation. Faculty members who do not strive to grow in their teaching performance become comfortable with a low-level performance, and also become inflexible in their teaching methods and procedures (Russell, 1993).

Teaching improvement is essential for a variety of reasons. First, faculty members who experience improvement in their teaching tend to increase in their level of teaching satisfaction as well as their happiness. Second, faculty members who do not strive to improve in their teaching are less likely to succeed in motivating their students to achieve additional improvement (Russell, 1993).

Faculty Perceptions of Student Ratings

Although faculty members may possess the necessary attributes to make changes, some faculty may not view student ratings as an important resource to determine the changes that need to be made. Several studies from the literature also indicate that faculty members do not always make use of the evaluations they receive from students. In fact, some faculty members believe student ratings are not valid (Spooren & Mortelmans, 2006) and are used as “meaningless quantification” and lead to “personality contests” (Kulik, 2001) instead of being models that can be used to effectively evaluate teachers. For example, a study conducted in 1970–1980 at Rhode Island College showed no

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evidence that the use of student evaluations produced improved ratings over the ten-year period (Salzberg & Schiller, 1982).

In addition, a study was conducted at a major university in Canada to discover the utility of student ratings. Of the 357 faculty members who were surveyed, 84 percent gave positive responses to the usefulness of the student ratings, although they did not usually use them to improve their teaching (Beran, Violato, Kline, & Frideres, 2005).

Furthermore, a study conducted on the effects of a formal evaluation process showed that 77 percent of the 250 tenured faculty members who were surveyed reported that student evaluations were not taken into consideration when faculty members made changes to their teaching. Results from the study also showed that faculty members would use student feedback when they wanted to make changes in their handouts, the number of assignments given, and also the lecture pace (Spencer & Flyr, 1992).

Some faculty members feel like student feedback can cause grade inflation or a lowering of standards or course rigor (Moore & Kuol, 2005). Some faculty feel student feedback becomes more of a personality contest rather than a measure of the effectiveness of a teacher (Tomasco, 1980). Further, some faculty feel that allowing students to provide feedback switches the balance of power from faculty to students (Moore & Kuol, 2005).

Although some faculty members do not endorse the use of student ratings, the use of student ratings are one of the most common methods of rating the effectiveness of faculty members (Heckert, Latier, Ringwald, & Silvey, 2006). While some faculty members may be skeptical of the accuracy of student ratings, a great deal of research has been performed to validate the usefulness of these ratings (Aleamoni, 1999; Feldman,

1993; Marsh & Dunkin, 1997; Wachtel, 1998). However, a minimal amount of research has been conducted on how faculty members perceive and use these ratings (Schmelkin-Pedhazur, Spencer, & Gellman, 1997).

Considering the research that has been done on faculty member ratings, many faculty members view student evaluations as useful for summative and formative research. They also believe student ratings provide them with valid, reliable, and useful data (Penny, 2003) regarding their effectiveness as teachers.

The ease of scoring, the clarity of the behaviours being evaluated, and the large body of research on the validity and reliability of the forms, has led to their widespread use and over time they are viewed as the “de facto ‘gold standard’ of Retention, Tenure, Promotion decisions” (Gerstman, 1995, p. 122), giving them a taken-for-granted, common-sense, institutional legitimacy. (Kolitch & Dean, p. 1)

Paper-Based Versus Web-Based Evaluations

Traditionally mid-course evaluations have been conducted in a classroom using paper and pen. In general, a portion of the class is devoted to allowing the students to respond to the questions. Typically, the response rate is high as most, if not all of the students fill out the evaluations during class. The questions on the paper-based evaluations are either open or close-ended questions. Analysis of the data, particularly the open-ended questions, is often time consuming, expensive and sometimes inaccurate. The following quote describes the difficulty in accurately interpreting this type of data.

Summarizing raw written comments necessarily requires interpretation, paraphrasing, and reduction. Different interpreters often understand single written comments and patterns of comments differently. Without a strategy for interpreting written comments, subjectivity can easily distort interpretations, especially when the evaluators know the person being evaluated. Evaluators may be unduly influenced by a single highly articulate opinion,

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positive or negative. The use of multiple readers and systematic content analysis methods can address the reliability problem; however their implementation requires skill and resources. (Franklin and Berman, 1997)

The amount of feedback provided by students can be limited, as students write instead of type their responses. Students may also be afraid to express their true feelings about the course or instructor if they feel the instructor will recognize their handwriting (Ardalan, Ardalan, Coppage & Crouch, 2007).

In 2000, Hmieleski and Champagen (2000) estimated that only 2 percent of the surveyed US institutions were using a campus-wide system to administer online student ratings. Kevin M. Hoffman (2003) also conducted a study in which he surveyed hundreds of campuses to discover the pervasiveness of online ratings through 2002. He claimed that 17 percent of the institutions were using the Internet in some way to collect student evaluation data. Approximately 50 percent of administrators from these institutions reported that they had initiated some degree of online ratings collection or had intentions to do so (Hoffman, 2003). One of the reasons faculty and administrators are switching to online ratings is because they feel it provides students with greater opportunities to provide feedback.

Feedback from classroom assessment techniques can provide informative and useful information about teaching and student learning. Adapting these techniques for technology provides even more opportunity for students to provide input. (Lieberman, Bowers, & Moore, 2001, p. 45)

Web-based evaluations are typically cheaper to conduct, increase operational efficiency, accessibility and convenience, and allow for quick calculation of the closed-ended results and anonymity. Depending on the platform that is used, faculty can sometimes send reminders in the form of emails, class announcements, or Blackboard

emails, to the students to fill out the evaluation. Despite the simplicity of the evaluation, response rates are typically lower than paper-based evaluations (Ardalan et al., 2007).

Another advantage of the web-based evaluation is that faculty can easily change or revise the questions (Ardalan et al., 2007). Web-based evaluations are also less expensive. One study (see Hmielecki & Champagne, 2000) suggests that conducting an online student rating, rather than a paper-based rating can lead to a savings of 97 percent.

One possible disadvantage of online student ratings is lower response rates. Some of the reasons fewer students responded to the evaluations can be attributed to the following factors: anonymity, student apathy, inconvenience, technical problems, and amount of time required to fill out the evaluation (Ballantyne, 2000). Research shows when students believe their responses will be used for important decisions about the course of their instructor, they are more likely to respond to a mid-course evaluation (Ballantyne, 1999).

Timing of Feedback

Although some faculty members do not value mid-course evaluations and will not administer them to their students, many faculty members find them to be useful in helping them improve their teaching and student learning. In many colleges and universities, students often have the opportunity at the end of the semester or term to rate the faculty member's teaching, the course, and provide feedback on the overall experience. However, for many students and faculty members, this feedback arrives too late. The feedback, if used, cannot directly benefit the current students; rather, it can only be used to benefit the next class of students (Keutzer, 1993). Hofman and Kremer (1983) suggested that evaluation reports of faculty members should be obtained sooner in the

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course to allow for changes to be made before the end of the course. Further, Angelo and Cross (1994) discovered that mid-course evaluations have the greatest benefit when the faculty members review the results and interpret them in a timely manner (Bullock, 2003).

Faculty members who administer mid-course evaluations to their students can benefit in the following ways: (a) The feedback can immediately be used to make changes to the course, (b) students feel additional freedom and empowerment in designing their educational process, (c) faculty members can receive specific feedback, rather than feedback on the overall quality of the course at the end of the course, (d) faculty members can ask for feedback on specific questions that directly relate directly to their courses, without fearing adverse consequences from academic administration, (e) the attitude of the students can be altered more positively toward the faculty members because they can see their viewpoints and opinions matter, and (f) the results of the feedback go directly to the instructor, rather than administration (Keutzer, 1993).

Case Studies of the Effect of Mid-Course Evaluations on Teaching

In this section, I will describe several research studies that have been conducted on mid-course evaluations and teaching effectiveness.

Cohen (1991) reviewed 17 studies comparing the impact of providing mid-course feedback with no feedback on teaching effectiveness (perceived quality of teacher instruction). He discovered there was a relatively small impact on teaching effectiveness (effect size = .20). Cohen (1980) conducted another study and found that feedback from ratings was even more effective when it was coupled with individual consultation (effect size = .64). Overall, he found that faculty who did the midcourse were at the 58th

percentile at the end of the semester. Faculty members who conducted the mid-course evaluation and were aided by a consultant were at the 74th percentile at the end of the semester. He concluded that faculty members who desire to reach their greatest potential need more than just the results of the ratings; they also need support from a consultant (as cited in Penny & Coe, 2004).

Furthermore, Menges and Brinko (1986) updated Cohen's study six years later and reported a larger effect size when student ratings were combined with consultation (effect size=1.10). To put these numbers into perspective, faculty members who do not receive feedback from a consultant would perform at the 50th percentile, whereas typical faculty members who received their ratings feedback with consultation would perform at the 86th percentile (as cited in Penny & Coe, 2004).

Stevens & Aleamoni (1985) examined feedback from student ratings over a ten-year period. The researchers analyzed ratings based on when they first received feedback, then after .5 years, 4–5 years, and 7.5–10 years. They found some differences between the faculty who received feedback and faculty who received feedback with the additional interpretation of results from a consultant. However, there was no significant effect of time based on these ratings.

Although some researchers suggest that faculty must receive consultation with their student feedback to help them interpret the ratings, (Franklin & Theall, 2002; Brinko, 1993; Cohen, 1980), it is argued that regardless of whether faculty have a consultant work with them, this student feedback is still an important tool to improve teaching in higher education (Lang & Kersting, 2007).

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Do faculty have to work with a consultant for mid-course evaluations to be valuable? No. Although several studies have been conducted that show faculty can improve their teaching to a greater extent when they are assisted by a consultant; faculty alone can still find value in mid-course evaluations. Meta analyses that have been conducted on ratings show that feedback received early in the semester, such as mid-course evaluation feedback can yield a ten percent increase in end-of-semester evaluation scores. When this feedback is combined with consultation from an instructional developer, end-of-semester evaluation scores can rise up to 45 percent (Cashin, 1995).

Although the need for measurement has been emphasized, L'Hommedieu, Menges, and Brinko (1990) argued that scores from mid-course evaluations may not be generalizable to evaluations administered at the end of the course. These individuals stated that the purposes for mid term and end of term evaluations are different. Mid-course evaluations provide faculty members with formative evaluation, whereas end of course evaluations provide summative information.

The second concern with mid-course evaluations is that intervention effects may be minimized as many faculty members do not have a great deal of time to make changes from the middle of the course to the end of the course (Marsh & Dunkin, 1992). Related to this notion is that small changes faculty members make may not be visible to students who will then score the faculty member the same at the end of the course (Penny & Coe, 2004). In essence, after a mid-course evaluation is conducted, some students expect to see immediate changes, and if they do not see these changes, they penalize the faculty member by providing lower ratings at the end of the course (L'Hommedieu et al., 1990).

Conversely, Prince and Goldman (1981) conducted a study and discovered mid-course evaluations did lead to higher ratings at the end of the course. Another study was conducted by Brown (2008) to determine how students perceived mid-course evaluations and how students perceived the course and the instructor when they took these evaluations. Results showed most of the participants (89%) felt faculty members should conduct mid-course evaluations because they believed these evaluations would improve instructor, as well as student performance. These students also felt that faculty members who conducted mid-course evaluations were devoted to their jobs, took responsibility for their teaching, and had a strong desire for their students to succeed.

As there is still debate on the value of mid-course, as well as end-of-course ratings, Penny and Coe (2004) claim that additional research is still needed.

Need for Future Research

As mentioned previously, I found only one research study with an emphasis on course feedback and student learning. This particular research study was conducted by Overall and Marsh (1979) to determine the relationship between mid-course feedback to instructional improvement and students' cognitive and affective outcomes. Results from the study showed that student ratings and final examination scores were higher, and affective outcomes were more positive. Some faculty members who participated in the study received feedback on their teaching, and others did not. The faculty members who received feedback and met with a consultant to discuss changes received higher ratings.

As I reviewed the literature, I found a myriad of articles about mid-course evaluations, but very few studies on the effects mid-course evaluations have on improving teaching and student learning. One explanation for this might be that mid-

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course evaluations could be designed to focus on the instruction, rather than on student learning. Further, many of the studies that do exist are at least 30 years old. I have not found any recent studies (within the last five years) on these particular topics pertaining to mid-course evaluations.

Chapter 3: Design of the Research Study Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods study to determine the effects mid-course evaluations have on improving teaching and student learning at Brigham Young University (BYU), which is a private church-sponsored university. The University's primary focus is on undergraduate education although 68 master's and 25 doctoral degree programs are offered. Approximately 34,000 students attend BYU, and there are approximately 1,600 faculty members. Faculty members advance in rank and status based on the scores from their online student ratings, their research, and their service. For this study, I identified faculty members who used the mid-course evaluation tool and outlined the effects of its use.

The results of my master's thesis, *Contributing Factors to Improved Teaching at BYU*, heavily informed the design and approach of the study. Both my dissertation and thesis focused on improving teaching. For example, I interviewed 30 faculty members for my dissertation. I also interviewed 66 faculty members for a study prior to that. Through these interviews, I tested and reworked the interview protocol to help the faculty members feel comfortable and also willing to share their thoughts and feelings on the topic. The sampling technique in this dissertation was similar to the sampling technique in my thesis. I also worked with my thesis chair on the presentation of several vignettes. A vignette of a similar nature is also included in this dissertation. Many of the results from my thesis also tie in to the results from the dissertation.

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As mentioned earlier, I found one research study that Cohen conducted 30 years ago that is similar to the research I conducted. Although there were similarities, my study was different in the following ways:

1. Results were compared from the mid-course evaluation to the end-of-semester for each faculty member. Using these results allowed me to see improvement in the four learning items and in faculty teaching (as it pertains to online student ratings).
2. Faculty members were from a variety of disciplines, rather than just a computer class.
3. I attended debriefing sessions to listen to the faculty members and students interact, to hear the comments from students.
4. Rather than meeting with a consultant, faculty members were encouraged to reflect on the feedback from their students, discuss that feedback, and make changes.
5. The research focused on the four learning items pertaining to student learning instead of 30. Questions from the mid-course evaluation, pertaining to the four learning items were the same questions the students answered at the end of the semester.
6. The research was conducted at BYU using an online tool created by the CTL, rather than pen and paper.

Faculty Participants

Faculty Characteristics

Faculty members from all twelve colleges and 52 departments were represented in the study. Twenty-percent of the 105 faculty participants were from the McKay School of Education (21 faculty members), followed by the Marriott School of Management (17 faculty members, 16%); the College of Family, Home & Social Sciences (12 faculty members, 11%); the College of Humanities (10 faculty members, 10%); the College of Fine Arts and Communication (9 faculty members, 9%); the College of Life Sciences (8 faculty members, 8%); and the College of Physical & Mathematical Sciences (8 faculty members, 8%). A complete list of all of the colleges and their percentage of participation is shown below in Figure 1.

Faculty participants consisted of 74 males (70%) and 31 females (30%) and included different professorial ranks and statuses. These faculty members also showed evidence of their desire to improve their teaching by volunteering to participate in the study.

Identification of Faculty Sample

All BYU faculty members (full and part-time) received an email from the Director at the CTL on September 18, 2008. The email introduced them to the mid-course evaluation tool and provided a link for them to administer the evaluation (see Appendix 1). As part of this email, faculty members were also encouraged to participate in a study on mid-course evaluations.

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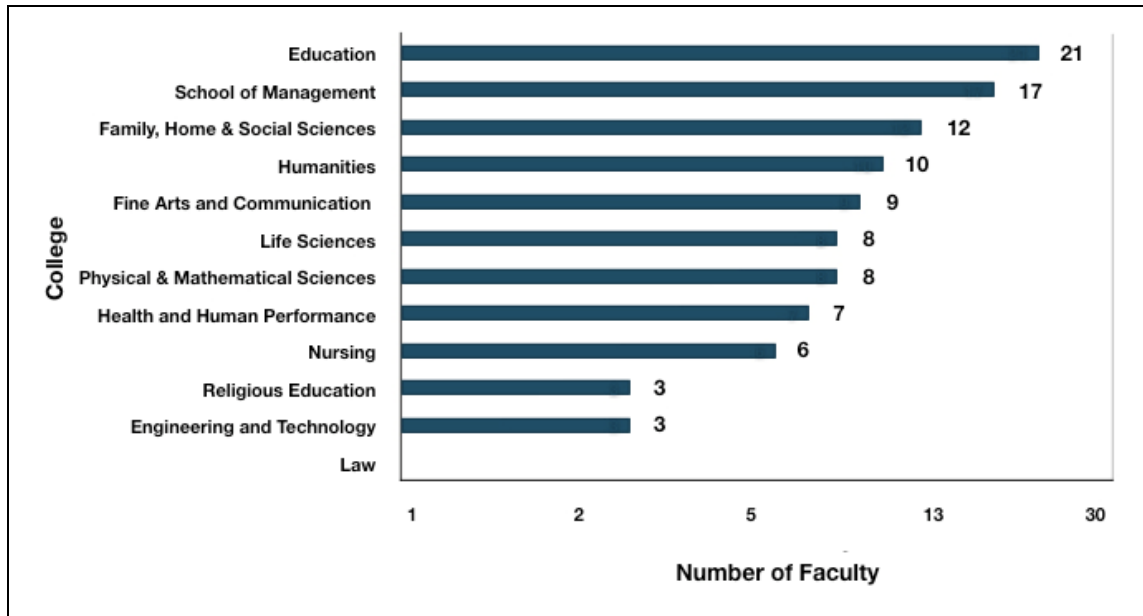


Figure 1. College representation of faculty participants (n=105).

To participate, faculty members needed to click on a link that directed them to a Qualtrics survey (see Appendix 2). In this survey, they entered their names, departments, email addresses, and said whether they were willing to participate in a study on mid-course evaluations. Of the 109 participants who responded to the initial email, 56 faculty members (51%) said they were willing to participate in the mid-course evaluation study. The data from these individuals is currently compiled in a Qualtrics database. Faculty members were informed that participation with the mid-course evaluation tool and also the study were confidential and voluntary. This participation varies from the online student ratings that are mandatory for all faculty members to administer at the end of every semester or term. The information from these end-of-semester student ratings is shared with administrators. Students can also view results to a few of the questions in the online student ratings.

To help improve participation, faculty chairs from each department received an email from the Director of the CTL. In the email, he asked them to invite faculty

members in their departments, who may have received lower student ratings, to participate in this study. Additionally, there was a link on the CTL website (<http://ctl.byu.edu/ctls-mid-course-evaluation-tool/>) where faculty members could learn about the mid-course evaluation tool and opt in to participate in the study. To increase awareness and participation, a link was also added to the mid-course evaluation tool, allowing faculty members another opportunity to participate in the study once they sent out their mid-course evaluations. This link accounted for 49 additional faculty members participating in the study (with 56 faculty members who signed up in the initial email), for a total of 105.

All faculty members participating in the study were invited to use the four-question mid-course evaluation, rather than the two-question mid-course evaluation. Neither mid-course evaluation scores, nor end-of-semester evaluation scores could be obtained from the faculty members who sent out the two-question mid-course evaluation, as both of the questions were open-ended questions.

Informed Consent

I received BYU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for conducting the mid-course evaluation study. The IRB required three different consent forms for the study in the following areas:

1. Faculty members who completed the follow-up survey completed an online consent form (see Appendix 5).
2. Faculty members who participated in the interviews and debriefing sessions completed a paper-based online consent form (see Appendix 6).

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3. Students who took part in the debriefing sessions were asked to sign an informed consent before they filled out the student survey (see Appendix 7).

Faculty members who participated in the online survey, as well as the interviews and debriefing sessions, were required to complete both consent forms. Faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluation study were informed that their participation would mean they would need to fill out a mid-course evaluation survey once they had used the mid-course evaluation tool. They were also informed of the possibility of their names being randomly drawn to participate in an interview to discuss the effectiveness of a mid-course evaluation tool and a debriefing session (see Appendix 8).

By completing the follow-up survey, faculty members were informed they were giving me consent to look at the results from their mid-course evaluation, and also their online student ratings results at the end fall semester 2008.

Mid-Course Evaluation Tool

During fall semester 2008, employees at the CTL created an online mid-course evaluation tool to help faculty members conduct mid-course evaluations so that students could provide course evaluation feedback. To access this tool, faculty members needed to click on the mid-course evaluation tool link (<https://studentratings.byu.edu/survey/midcourse>) and login to their account. Once they accessed their account, a screen appeared showing all of the courses they were teaching during the fall semester. Then the faculty member selected the course or courses they wanted the students to evaluate. They had the option of using a two or four-question survey. Faculty members could also add a question of their own.

The two-question survey included the following open-ended questions:

1. What is going well in class? What contributes most to your learning?
2. What could be improved? How could this course be more effective in helping you learn?

The four-question survey included the following rating scale items with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. I am learning a great deal.
2. Course materials and learning activities are effective in helping me learn.
3. This course is helping me develop intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and integration of knowledge).
4. The instructor shows genuine interest in students and their learning.

Once the faculty members selected the questions, a survey was mailed to all of the students in that particular course. After the survey closed (based on whether the faculty member selected the survey to be open for three school days or five), the faculty member received an email containing an Excel spreadsheet with the students' feedback. The mid-course evaluation tool was available to faculty members the first week of Winter Semester 2009 until the online student rating forms became available on March 27, 2009.

Data Collection and Analysis

To answer the research questions, I used a variety of methods to support the data including faculty members' scores from the mid-course evaluation and end-of semester online ratings, faculty members' surveys, faculty members' interviews, student interviews, and debriefing sessions.

I conducted 30 interviews to better understand the experience faculty members had participating in the mid-course evaluations with their students, along with their

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reasons for conducting a mid-course evaluation, their overall experience, how it affected student learning, and so forth. I felt that 30 interviews gave me a variety of perspectives and personalities, and allowed me to interview faculty from different colleges with different levels of teaching experience. As I interviewed faculty, I noticed many of their responses were similar and concluded that 30 interviews provided a representative sample of the opinions of those who participated in the study.

To determine who should be interviewed, I collected the names and mid-course and online end-of semester scores of the 105 faculty members who participated in the study. I then separated the faculty members into two groups based on their scores (four from the mid-course evaluation and four from the end-of-semester online ratings for each section the faculty member taught). These four scores all pertained to student learning and were previously listed under the questions asked in the four-question survey. Group 1 contained faculty members who had scores ranging from 6.0 to 8.0. Group 2 consisted of faculty members who had scores of 5.9 or less. The scores are based on an 8-point scale. If any of the eight scores for each section were 5.9 or less for each section, the faculty member who taught that section was placed in Group 2.

There were 63 of the 105 faculty members (60%) in Group 1 with scores from 6.0 to 8.0. There were 42 faculty members (40%) in the 5.9 and lower group. Fifteen faculty members were randomly sampled for each group to be interviewed individually. Individual interviews took 20–30 minutes. The questions that were asked during the semi-structured interview are outlined in Appendix 3. The faculty members were interviewed in their offices. Each faculty member signed a consent form before the interview started. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and converted to an

mp3 file (an audio file, with mp3 as the extension). Then the interviews were uploaded to a secure server at the CTL, transcribed, and imported into nVivo (a qualitative data analysis and research software program) for analysis.

When I scheduled the 30 faculty member interviews, I asked each one of them if I could attend their debriefing sessions. Some of the faculty members had already conducted their debriefing sessions. Other faculty members were uncertain when they would have a debriefing session. I attended eight debriefing sessions. These eight sessions consisted of four faculty members, one of whom, I attended four different debriefing sessions (one for each section), and one debriefing session which was a combined session with several members who taught a student development course. Three of these faculty members were in the 6.0–8.0 group, and the fourth faculty member (the faculty member who allowed me to attend four of her debriefing sessions) was in the 5.9 and lower group.

The purpose of attending these sessions was to hear the conversation and reactions of the students to the debriefing, to listen to how the faculty member approached the debriefing session, to hear the feedback, and to learn if the faculty member was going to implement changes as a result of the student feedback.

As part of attending the debriefing session, I also had the opportunity to talk with the students about the mid-course evaluation. I explained to them the purpose of the mid-course evaluations and invited them to take the survey to share their thoughts on mid-course experience. Each student received a piece of paper with a few questions on it (see Appendix 4). The students had approximately five minutes to complete the survey. The student survey results are shown in Chapter 4.

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All faculty members who consented to participate in the study received an e-mail asking them to use the mid-course evaluation tool and also to provide a specific date when they intended to use the tool. Of the 105 faculty participants, only 28 (27%) provided a specific date. Although it would have been more helpful if everyone had given me a date when they planned to have a debriefing session so I could have attended more sessions, the faculty members who did provide a date helped me plan times for the interviews and debriefing sessions. Every faculty member received a follow-up survey once they completed their mid-course evaluation (see Appendix 9). The survey contained questions about the faculty member's experiences using the tool. Next, the names of these faculty members were placed in a database. A programmer at CTL obtained the four scores pertaining to student learning for each course the faculty member taught for Fall Semester 2008. If a faculty member taught several sections of a course, the average score was given.

The purpose of the data analysis for the interviews was to gather information based upon hermeneutic (involving attention to themes that emerged in the interviews) and ethnographic (providing thick and rich descriptions from the faculty members) traditions of inquiry. Once the transcribed files were imported in nVivo, I looked for themes from the comments that faculty members gave.

The procedure was as follows: I read the first transcript, looking for possible themes. I then read the second transcript to see if some of the same themes were present. Once I read all of the transcripts, I outlined the overarching themes. I also categorized the transcripts according to the specific questions that were asked. I used Lincoln and Guba's guidelines (1985) for keeping categories, which include paying attention to the frequency

(or the number of times a respondent mentions a particular theme), the importance that faculty members give their mid-course evaluation experience and the impact of this experience, the uniqueness of some of the comments that were mentioned, and even some new areas of research that may not have been thought about during the initial interviews, but lent importance to the study.

Before I explain the next process in the data analysis, I will provide definitions for some of the terms that are commonly used in this dissertation. An individual item rating will refer to one response (a number from 1 to 8) to one of the four questions pertaining to student learning. For example, if the student responded to the 8-point Likert scale question, “I have learned a great deal in this course,” when he responds with strongly agree, that number was converted to an 8. Essentially each student has four individual item ratings (one for each of the four items pertaining to faculty interest in student learning, effectiveness in materials and activities, the amount learned, and development of intellectual skill).

A section mean score refers to the average of all individual item ratings for each of the four learning items. A section mean score of 100 would mean 100 section mean scores for the mid course and 100 section mean scores for the end-of-semester. An item mean score refers to an average of the section mean scores. For example, if one faculty member taught a course with 30 students, I took the 30 individual ratings from those students for each of the four learning items (120 individual ratings). I then averaged the ratings for each of the four items to obtain four mean mid-course scores (one mean score for each of the four items pertaining to perceptions of student learning).

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A composite mean score refers to the average of the means for each of the four separate items—“grand mean.” The composite mean score for the mid-course evaluation will be compared to the composite mean score for the end-of-semester ratings to determine the effects of the intervention on students’ perceptions of their learning.

Now, I will explain the process I used to obtain and analyze the composite mid-course and end-of-semester mean scores. I first obtained the four mid-course evaluation mean scores with the end-of-semester means for each of the four items pertaining to student learning for Fall 2008. I then compared the four mean mid-course scores with the four mean end-of-semester scores (a total of 510 section mean scores). Then, I took the four mean scores for each of the four items and obtained an average of these means, which resulted in a composite mean score.

These four items are also the items BYU uses to measure student learning on the online student ratings. I combined the four mean scores for each faculty member for each of the four learning items. I did this by combining all of the individual rating mid-course scores and obtaining a mean score for each of the four learning items. I then added all of the end-of semester scores together for each learning item to obtain a mean score. I then compared the mid-course mean scores with the end-of-semester mean scores. I wanted to cite the correlations to show that they could be combined. The correlation of amount learned with intellectual skills development was a strong, positive relationship of .81. The correlation of amount learned with interest in student learning was .67. The correlation of amount learned with materials and activities were effective had the strongest positive relationship of .90.

I assessed the amount of improvement that was made, based on statistical comparisons of these four scores. These statistical comparisons were possible because the first four learning items on the mid-course evaluation tool are identical to the items the students respond to on the online student ratings at the end of the semester or term. I then tabulated the results from student surveys and the open-ended questions from the faculty surveys. With the open-ended questions, I read all of the questions and placed them into categories. These categories were then placed into larger overarching categories. I read the transcripts from the debriefing sessions and used this data to support the primary findings in the study. Results from this data are shown in Chapter 4.

I also conducted a factor analysis to further demonstrate the section mean scores from these four learning items pertaining to perceptions of student learning could be combined. The factor analysis used the extraction method of maximum likelihood and varimax rotation. There were 3,550 students who answered the four items pertaining to student learning. Cronbach's Alpha for the four items (which reports the internal consistency) was .92. The total variance that can be explained (based on the cumulative percent from the extraction sums of squared loadings) by these four factors was 81 percent.

Table 1 shows the factor loadings. These results show that all four of these learning items work well together and are good indications of students' perceptions of their own learning.

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Table 1

Factor Loading for Four Learning Items

Items Pertaining to Perceptions of Student Learning	Component 1
I am learning a great deal in this course.	.920
Course materials and learning activities are effective in helping me learn.	.921
This course is helping me develop intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and integration of knowledge).	.911
The instructor shows genuine interest in students and their learning.	.840

Methods of Answering Research Questions

The research questions were answered by using data from the survey questions and also from analyzing data from the interview questions. Table 2 identifies each research question, and shows the method used to answer it.

A great deal of this research is based on faculty and student perceptions of student learning and teaching. I believe members' perception of whether mid-course evaluations improved their teaching should not be brushed off as unimportant. For example, suppose I took a biology class and the teacher said I learned nothing, but I felt I learned a lot. Regardless of what the teacher said I learned; I feel I have a good indication of my own person learning and my perception counts a lot. I hope readers of this dissertation will also see the usefulness in the faculty and student perceptions of improving teaching and student learning.

Table 2

Identification of Each Research Question and the Methods Used to Answer It

Research Question	Corresponding Data
1. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching?	Interviews with faculty members Statistical comparison of online student ratings (for mid-course and end-of-semester) Faculty member survey Debriefing of mid-course evaluation sessions
2. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve student learning?	Interviews with faculty members Statistical comparison of online student ratings (for mid-course and end-of-semester) Faculty member survey Debriefing of mid-course evaluation sessions
3. Do students perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their learning?	Student survey Debriefing of mid-course evaluation sessions
4. How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?	Interviews with faculty members Debriefing of mid-course evaluation sessions Statistical comparison of online student ratings (for mid-course and end-of-semester) Faculty member survey

Features of Disciplined Inquiry

The standards used for this study were taken from Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four ways of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I employed as many trustworthiness

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strategies that were feasible for this study. Steps taken in each of the four areas are included below.

Credibility

To establish credibility, I used the following techniques: (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, (c) peer debriefing, and (d) audit trail.

Triangulation. Triangulation was included in this study as I used a variety of data-gathering methods such as using the results from the mid-course and online student ratings database, surveys from faculty and students, personal interviews with faculty members, and debriefing sessions. I also used literature pertaining to mid-course evaluations to frame the study.

Member checking. I provided a transcript of the results to the faculty members who participated in the debriefing session, as well as the group mid-course evaluation. I asked them to verify the documents and send any changes that they had. This method provided them with an opportunity to voice their opinions and confirm the activities during the debriefing sessions. My committee members also checked it for accuracy, and provided feedback.

Peer debriefing. Dr. Russell Osguthorpe provided peer debriefing. He met with me in all of the stages of this study. He also served as a committee member for my thesis and was heavily involved in the research process. I also talked with other members of my committee regarding the research process.

Audit trail. I have kept an audit trail containing the mid-course and end-of-semester scores, the interviews, the faculty and student surveys, the debriefing sessions, and also emails and meeting notes pertaining to the dissertation.

Transferability

Transferability, an important standard addressed as part of this study, pertains to the process of applying the results of this research to other similar situations. With transferability, a researcher does not necessarily make the statement that the results apply to other situations. Instead, a researcher reports the results and allows readers to judge whether the results fit with their situation and are relevant. Generalizability and transferability can overlap. For example, a generalizable study can be transferable, but a transferable study is not necessarily generalizable. One person could transfer the results of this study to another context, but that one person is not necessarily representative of a larger population to make the results generalizable. To make transferability possible, I provided a description of the setting of the study, the faculty members and their circumstances, as well as rich details from the interviews, debriefing sessions, and comments from the student feedback. Direct quotes from the interviews and comments from the students were also used.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that dependability can be established through an inquiry audit. To allow for this process to happen, I discussed my dissertation findings and insights with Dr. Osguthorpe on a regular basis.

Confirmability

To establish confirmability, copies of the recorded interviews and transcripts, as well as notes from me are available upon request. The CTL has copies of the interviews and transcripts. My committee members also have copies of the dissertation. One

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debriefing session was video recorded and is displayed on the CTL website to allow faculty members to see one of their colleagues talking about his experiences using the mid-course evaluation tool.

As I have actively participated in these four trustworthiness activities, I feel there is ample evidence that the dissertation has been conducted in a rigorous and thorough manner.

Chapter 4: Results

Do faculty members who participate in mid-course evaluations perceive that they will improve their teaching and student learning? The short answer is yes. Overall, 305 BYU faculty members conducted mid-course evaluations. These faculty members sent out 646 evaluations (meaning that one faculty member could have sent out one survey to each course or section they were teaching). Of these 646 evaluations, 249 used the four-question survey. The remaining 397 of the 646 evaluations used the two-question mid-course evaluation. Overall, 124 faculty members sent out the 249 mid-course evaluations who used the four-question evaluation. Of these 124 faculty members, 65 said they were willing to participate in the study.

The tool is confidential and the only person who saw or knew the faculty member took the time to participate in the mid-course evaluation was the faculty member himself. No one forced faculty members to participate, which is different from the mandatory participation at the end of the semester. There were 7,787 students who participated in the mid-course evaluations. The item rating scores from these students are combined into the mean scores, and the composite mean mid-course and composite end-of-semester mean scores.

Mid-Course and End-of Semester Quantitative Comparison

Overall, the composite mean mid-course score was 6.37 and the end-of-semester composite mean score was 6.71 for the combination of all of the mean scores from each of the four item rating scores measuring perceptions of student learning (n=510 section mean scores). The section mean scores for each of the four learning items showed

Mid-Course Evaluations

improvement from the mid-course evaluation to the end-of-semester evaluation.

Improvement consisted of an increase in the faculty member's mean score in at least one of the four learning items.

Further, I conducted a two-tailed, paired t-test comparing the mid-course with the end-of-semester composite mean scores, as well as for the mean scores for each of the four items. All of the results for each of the four items, as well as the composite mean score comparisons (based on the 510 scores) were statistically significant at least at the .01 level, showing that on average students end-of-semester ratings on the four learning items were significantly higher than their ratings on those same items on the mid-course evaluation. Table 3 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, t-test results, and confidence intervals for each of the four learning items, as well as a comparison of the composite mean scores.

To further validate the results of this study, Cohen's d will be used. Cohen's d can be defined as an effect size measure representing the standardized difference between two means. The formula is $M1 - M2$, divided by the standard deviation, s , of either group ($d = (M1 - M2) / s$).

In this dissertation, the effect size measure will represent the standardized difference between the composite mean of the mid-course evaluation, and the composite mean of the end-of-semester evaluation. Cohen (1988) hesitantly defined effect sizes as "small, $d = .2$," "medium, $d = .5$," and "large, $d = .8$ ". Anything less than $.2$ will be considered no effect. The effect size represents the change (measured in standard deviations) in an average faculty member's outcome (end-of-semester online student rating scores) that can be expected if the faculty member administers a mid-course evaluation.

Table 3

Summary Data for Four Learning Items

	Mid-Course Mean	End-of-Semester Mean	Difference Between Mean Scores	Standard Deviation Mid Course	Standard Deviation End-of-Semester	Paired-T-Test (P-Value)	Confidence Interval (95%)
Interest in Student Learning (n=128 section mean scores)	6.84	7.08	.24	.69	.81	.011	(-0.43–0.06)
Materials and Activities (n=127 section mean scores)	6.12	6.44	.32	.73	.73	.001	(-0.50–0.14)
Amount Learned (n=130 section mean scores)	6.33	6.61	.28	.73	.75	.002	(-0.47–0.10)
Intellectual Skills Developed (n=126 section mean scores)	6.16	6.64	.48	.70	.66	.001	(-0.65–0.31)
Composite Means (n=510 section mean scores)	6.37	6.71	.34	.77	.72	.001	(-0.43–0.25)

Out of the 510 section mean scores, with composite mean mid-course of 6.37 and composite end-of semester mean of 6.71, Cohen's d was .46. This .46 represents a medium effect. Essentially out of the faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluation, there was an overall medium, positive effect. Of these 510 (section mean

Mid-Course Evaluations

scores for each of the four learning items for the mid-course and end-of-semester) mean scores, 352 section mean scores (69%) showed an increase from mid-course to end-of-semester, and 158 section mean scores (31%) decreased from mid-course to end-of-semester.

Of the 352 section mean scores that increased, the average mid-course score was 6.20. The average end-of-semester score was 6.86. Of these 352 section mean scores, 157 (45%) had a large effect. Only 55 of these 352 section mean scores (16%) would be considered no effect. Further, only 65 of the 352 section mean scores (18%) would be considered a small effect.

Of the 158 section mean scores that decreased, the average mid-course score was 6.74. The average end-of-semester score was 6.37. Of the 158 section mean scores that decreased, 62 percent (98 section mean scores) can be considered no effect or a small effect. There were 37 section mean scores (23%) that had a large effect. Table 4 shows a comparison between the 510 section mean scores that showed improvement (n=352) and the section mean scores that declined (n=158).

Faculty Implementation Levels to Improve Teaching

Most faculty participants saw improvement from their mid-course scores to their end-of-semester scores just by conducting a mid-course evaluation. Faculty members saw more improvement if they conducted a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback and discussed this input with their students. Faculty members saw the most improvement in their ratings when they conducted a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback and discussed it with their students, and then made changes, based upon student feedback.

Table 4

Comparison of Effect Size

Effect Size	No Effect (.19 and lower)	Small Effect (.20 to .49)	Medium Effect (.50 to .79)	Large Effect (.80 and higher)
Improved (n=352)	55	65	75	157
Percent Improvement	16	18	21	45
Declined (n=158)	46	52	23	37
Percent Decline	29	33	15	23

The following data from faculty participants demonstrates their perceptions of the concepts listed above. Of the faculty members who read the feedback from the mid-course evaluations and discussed it with their students (60 sections, 239 section mean scores), the mean mid-course score out of all the mean scores was 6.43. The end-of-semester mean score was 6.95, an improvement of .53. The standard deviation for the mid-course score was .72 and .66 for the end-of-semester score.

Of the faculty members who read the feedback from the mid-course evaluations and did not discuss it with their students (17 sections, 68 section mean scores), the mean mid-course score was 6.52, and the end-of-semester mean was 6.67. This improvement was .15. The standard deviation was .77 for the mid-course scores, and .60 for the end-of-semester scores.

Mid-Course Evaluations

Of the 103 faculty members who responded to the question whether they read feedback from their students, four faculty members said they did not read the feedback (4%). All four of these faculty members said they had not received their mid-course evaluation feedback from their students at the time they took the survey. They all said they planned on reading the feedback once they received it.

For example, one faculty member said, “I haven't seen the responses to my mid-course evaluation yet, but plan on reading through the responses and incorporating the feedback in a discussion with the students during class.” Means for mid-course and end-of-semester scores could not be calculated for these four faculty members, as they all sent their students the two-question open-ended survey. Figure 2 provides a graphical summary of the means of the mid-course and end-of semester scores for each of the four groups.

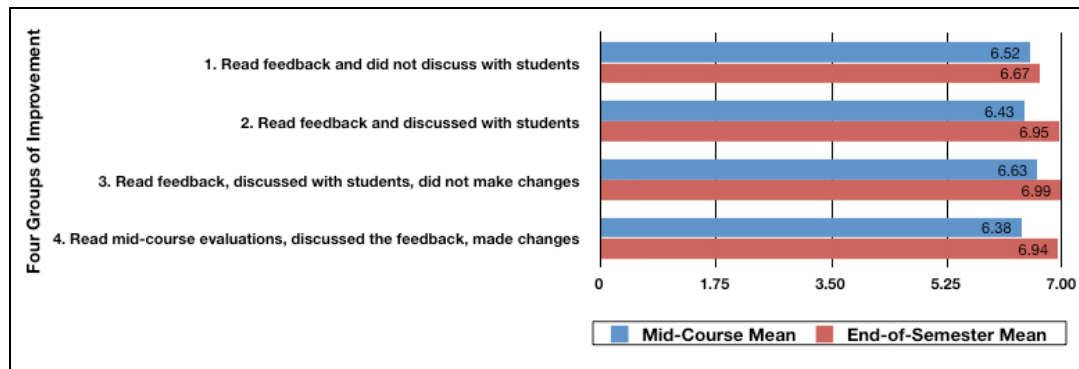


Figure 2. Mid-course and end-of-semester means for four groups of improvement

Faculty members' ratings improved most when they read the mid-course evaluations, discussed this feedback with their students, and made changes. Of the faculty members who followed this pattern (54 sections, 215 section mean scores), the mean mid-course score was 6.38. The end-of-semester mean score was 6.94, an improvement

of .56. The standard deviation for the mid-course score was .73 and .68 for the end-of-semester score.

There were only three faculty members who read the mid-course evaluations, discussed it with their students, and did not make changes (3 sections, 12 section mean scores). The mean mid-course score for faculty members who followed this pattern was 6.63. The end-of-semester section mean score was 6.99, an improvement of .35 on the online student ratings. The standard deviation of the mid-course score was .61 and .41 for the end-of-semester score. With only three sections where faculty followed this pattern, there is not enough information to make a substantial claim.

In summary, the percent improvement for faculty members was based on the amount of effort they put into their mid-course evaluations, in terms of whether they read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes. As they participated in each of these steps, their percent improvement was the greatest (see Figure 3).

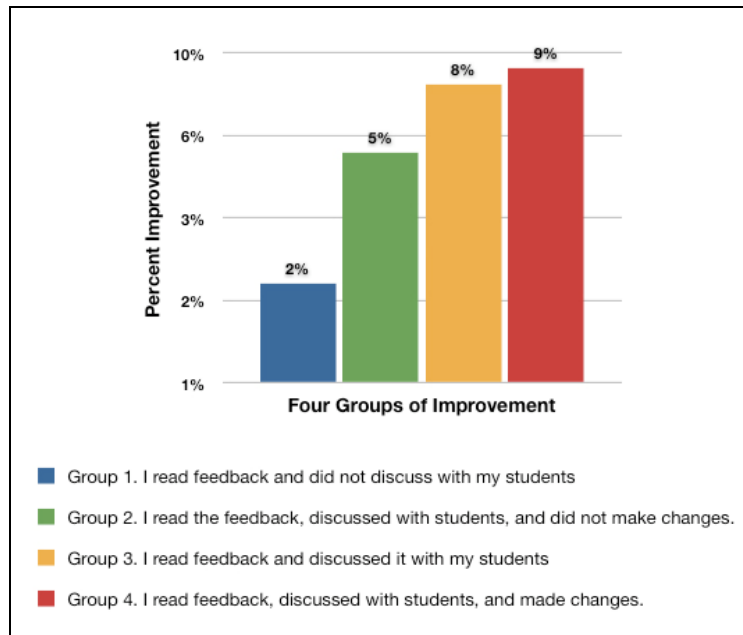


Figure 3. Percent improvement in each of the four groups

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The percent improvement for faculty members who read the feedback and did not discuss it with their students was approximately 2 percent. The percent improvement for faculty members who read the feedback, discussed it with their students and did not make changes was approximately 5 percent. The percent improvement for faculty members who read feedback and discussed it with their students was approximately 8 percent. The percent improvement of faculty members who read the mid-course evaluations, discussed it with their students, and made changes was approximately 9 percent.

There is a noticeable difference between faculty who only read the feedback and did not discuss it with their students and faculty who read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes. There really is not much of a difference between faculty who read feedback and discussed it with students, and faculty who read feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes (groups 3 and 4).

Table 5 highlights the four different groups of improvement including the sample size, average number of students who responded in each faculty members section, number of students who filled out the mid-course evaluation, average amount of improvement, and percent faculty members improvement.

Student Survey Results

Reasons Students Filled out Mid-Course Evaluation

Some students whose faculty members participated also had the opportunity to provide their feedback on mid-course evaluations. I attended 8 debriefing sessions. At the beginning of each debriefing session, I explained the purpose of the study to the students, and also passed out a consent form. All students who filled out the consent form were eligible to take the survey.

Table 5

Comparison of Student Response Based on Faculty Implementation Level

Groups	Sample Size (sections)	Average number of students who responded per section	Number of students who filled out midcourse evaluation	Average amount of improvement from survey participants	Percent of faculty members' improvement in online ratings
Group 1. I read feedback and did not discuss with my students	68	22	445	.15 points	2%
Group 2. I read the feedback, discussed with students, and did not make changes.	12	11	32	.36 points	5%
Group 3. I read feedback and discussed it with my students	239	17	1,234	.53 points	8%
Group 4. I read feedback, discussed with students, and made changes.	215	18	1,190	.56 points	9%

Mid-Course Evaluations

One-hundred and twenty-six students from six sections filled out the survey. The students took approximately 7.5 minutes to complete the survey. To view a copy of the student survey (see Appendix 4).

Out of the 126 students, 78 (62%) had completed a mid-course evaluation before using the online mid-course evaluation tool, 48 (38%) had not. One hundred and twenty-six students answered the question, “Did you fill out the mid-course evaluation, If yes, why? If no, why not?” Out of these 125 students, 94 said “yes” (75%), 31 said “no” (25%).

The most common reason students (37 students, 30%) mentioned they filled out the mid-course evaluation was to provide feedback to the instructor. These students often commented that the mid-course was easy to fill out, didn’t take a lot of time. They also felt that since they appreciated feedback on their work, their professors would also appreciate feedback from them on the course. For example one student said, “I know it can be beneficial to an instructor as I have sought similar feedback when I have taught.”

The second and third reasons students filled out the mid-course evaluations were because they received extra credit points (25 students, 20%) and because it was required for an assignment or grade (20 students, 16%). One student changed his motive for filling out the mid-course evaluation from getting a grade to helping to make the course better. He said, “Yes, originally it was for the grade, but eventually as I was doing it, I did it to see some positive changes in the course.” Figure 4 provides a complete list of reasons students filled out the mid-course evaluation.

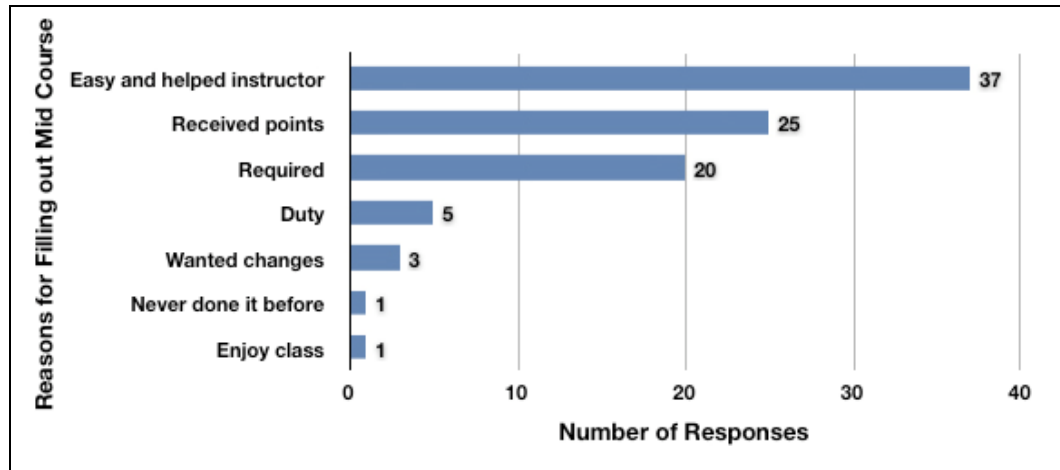


Figure 4. Reasons students filled out mid-course evaluation (n=124 responses).

Reasons Students did not fill out Mid-Course Evaluation

The most common reason students did not fill out the mid-course evaluation was because they forgot about it (14 students, 11%). For example, one student commented, “No, I completely forgot about it. I was focused on other midterms and the quizzes for this class.” Another student said, “No, I forgot which is sad, because I really wanted to.” Some students also said they didn’t receive the email to fill out the mid-course evaluation (9 students, 7%). One student felt remiss about not having the opportunity to fill out the midcourse, “I did not fill out the mid-course evaluation because I did not get the email link. I intended to and even thought about what I would say, but did not get the email.” Figure 5 shows the complete list of reasons why students did not fill out the mid-course evaluation.

Mid-Course Evaluations

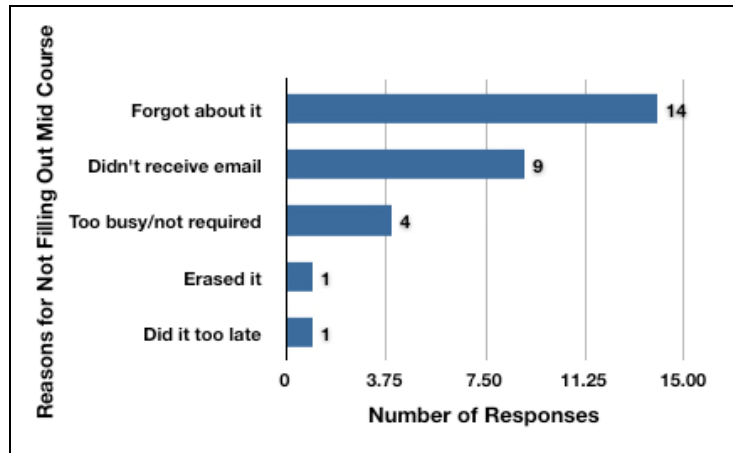


Figure 5. Reasons students do not fill out evaluations (n=29 responses).

Value Students Received from Filling out Mid-Course Evaluation

Students were also asked to state the value they felt in filling out the mid-course evaluation, on a scale ranging from not valuable, somewhat valuable and valuable. Fifty-seven students (45%) said doing a mid-course was valuable, followed by 29 students (23%) who said it was somewhat valuable, 23 students (18%) reported it was not valuable, and 17 (13%) did not provide a response.

Overall, the students valued the mid-course evaluations as nearly 70 percent of the students (86 students) said mid-course evaluations were somewhat valuable or valuable. One of the reasons students felt the mid-course evaluation was valuable was because it provided them with an opportunity to express their viewpoints on the course and provide feedback. Two students commented on the value of mid-course evaluations because faculty members could make changes in the middle of the semester, rather than waiting until the end. One student said, “They are like half time in football. You see what is working and what isn't. I think they are great!” Another student commented,

I think it is important to do and evaluate halfway through so the teacher can change things for the rest of the term. When we do the

end-course evaluation, we don't get to see or reap the benefits of the change.

Twenty-two percent (27 students) felt mid-course evaluations were not important. These students had a variety of reasons for their responses ranging from they didn't feel the class was important, to the things they wanted changed were out of the professor's control, to feeling that the professor wouldn't make the suggested changes. For example, one student said, "Mid-course evaluations are only important if the instructor will actually change something from feedback received. Even then, changes are hard to adjust to, so maybe mid-term evaluation isn't so important." Another student said, "I don't know that it was that valuable for me because I won't be taking any classes at BYU because it's my last semester."

For 85 percent of the students (106 students), they felt their voices were heard concerning their thoughts on the class. Less than ten percent (9%, 11 students) did not feel like their voice was heard and their concerns were met. Seven students did not answer the question (6 percent).

Faculty Member Ratings at End-of-Semester

Of the 124 students who responded to the question, "Will you rate your professor higher at the end of the semester on the online student ratings because he/she conducted a mid-course evaluation?" Fifty-six students (45%) said "yes." There were 42 students (34%) who would not rate their professors differently. Twenty-six students (21%) were uncertain whether they would rate their professors differently.

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Perception of Learning Based on Mid-Course Evaluation

The students were also asked whether they felt their learning would increase because their professors conducted a mid-course evaluation and had a debriefing session. Nearly half of the students (47%, 58 students) felt their learning would increase. Thirty-six students (29%) felt their learning would not increase because their professors conducted a mid-course evaluation and had a debriefing session. There were 30 students (24%) who were uncertain or said that their learning might increase.

Common Themes Regarding What Faculty Could Improve

At the end of the four-question survey, students were invited to answer the question, “What could be improved? How could this course be more effective in helping you learn?” Instead of using results from all 105 faculty participants, I decided to read the responses from students whose faculty members had at least a one-point increase from their mid-course evaluations to the end-of-semester scores.

I felt this approach would be more valuable than gathering the responses from all faculty members (as some did not improve, and some improved an insignificant amount). I also felt a one-point change is a practical difference in the online student ratings, one that is most likely due to changes faculty made in the mid-course rather than confounding variables. These faculty members also believed the changes they made would improve their teaching and student learning. I will now outline the seven overarching themes regarding changes students suggested that faculty could make to improve their teaching.

Unclear expectations. This area was the most common response for improvement, mentioned by 60 students (36 percent). Students mentioned they were not sure what was expected of them in the course. They also felt they did not have clear explanations on

quizzes, assignments and grading. For example, one student commented, “The syllabus is not clear, defined, and it is not followed.” Other examples from students include the following:

This class is so vague. It seems like it is being made up on the fly. For example, when a quiz is given, the teacher doesn't even know what she is looking for in an answer, and the rubric under which each answer is graded. The questions themselves are even vague at times. Then, we are assigned points without knowing why or what we missed. It is very frustrating.

Fewer changes in the course would be GREAT (i.e. keep the syllabus constant, don't make last-minute changes to due dates or requirements for projects, hold more regular class hours and office hours, make sure students know exactly what is expected of them, make sure the TAs know how to help the students).

I'd like to know specific ways I can make my papers improve.

I feel like there is little correspondence between what we read for homework, and what we learn in class. It would be, in my opinion, more effective to talk about what we are actually reading.

She can better prepare us for quizzes. For many of the quizzes we have no idea what to prepare for because all we know is that we need to know the slides. Many of these PowerPoints have 50+ slides that were full of info that was not emphasized in class. It would be beneficial if she could tell us what to focus on for the quizzes.

The quizzes could be a little longer. Today we took one where students around me got two out of four and hadn't even read the material; whereas I had studied it pretty hard and got a three out of four. Kind of frustrating and this isn't the first time. Longer quizzes would weed some of that out.

Explanations in class should be clearer. Most of the class is confused when things are explained, if they are explained. Projects are not understandable until we are halfway through them. The teacher understands the projects, but we don't.

Mid-Course Evaluations

Active learning. More active learning opportunities were mentioned by 43 students (25 percent). Students felt they would learn more in the class if they were given real-world examples and opportunities to more fully engage themselves in the learning process. They wanted to have time to practice the concepts and material the faculty members presented.

My professor seems like he is more interested in what he is saying than what the students have to say. He asks for comments, but I think it is mostly because he wants a catalyst for his own commentary. He also asks questions, to which there is no answer but his own. Class discussions in this section are no good.

More class discussion. Ask questions. Get us talking. Don't be too generic. Pick on us a little. Also, allow us to share what we have found in the scriptures, what we wrote in our journals.

Possibly have more group work, to have more personal experience with the material. I know that lecturing is not the best way I learn. Perhaps assign topics for group presentations.

Okay, so we're taught what something is. Lets learn to apply it. If we're taught something that will require pluggin' in numbers, as a class we should go through how to do it.

Make more personal connections and draw on the board, rather than just flipping through and explaining the slides, especially when students ask questions. The teacher needs to not be afraid to deviate from the slides and make up an example to help out the students.

Working out problems has been the most effective way for me to learn in this class so far. So, working more concept problems would be very beneficial.

I feel I am learning a lot but it is too much for me to retain forever, I would like a little more emphasis on what is most important and what in five years you would want me to know. I don't know if we just haven't got there yet, but I would like a little less theory and a little more of how campaigns and elections work.

Learning a new thing class after class is such a pain because I don't know how to apply what I just learned into a new concept that we're learning.

Too much busy work/covering. The third area for improvement 28 students (17 percent) mentioned dealt with faculty who focused their efforts on the wrong kinds of homework and assignments. Students often felt much of their work was busy work or that the faculty member covered the material too quickly. For example one student said, "Sometimes there are assignments or course work that we just don't need to do." Another student commented on the amount of reading. He said, "The reading is pretty heavy, and can get repetitive, especially if there are multiple pieces by one author. Maybe cut it back just a little." Other student said, "Assignments are unrealistic" or "Slow down a bit." Here are some additional comments from students discussing why they feel their faculty members were giving too much busy work, or trying to cover too much material in one class period.

I feel that the course provides a great deal of "busy work" that does not enhance my understanding of second language learners. I really do appreciate the instructor though, as she works hard to try to make this course more applicable to us un-certified teachers, as well as in giving actual experiences that DO help us apply some of these concepts. The overall course, though, is not planned out well. Many other students feel the same way. I wish I could do away with so much of the busy work and simple activities that do not help, and really get to go into the classrooms more to see and help these Early Language Learner (ELL) students.

Because the slides are so full of info, she does not explain about 9 out of 10 of them very well. At the end of every class period (or slide) I don't really understand what I was supposed to have learned because it was so confusing or poorly explained. It feels like the majority of the information on the slides is extra info that just confuses me. In a nutshell I think that it would be very beneficial to have less slides with the most important info on them (that will be explained well),

Mid-Course Evaluations

rather than a whole lot of slides with tons of info that we have to learn and interpret ourselves. I also think that it would be very beneficial to have the slides only contain a few key points that she will teach and expound on, rather than big sentences with too much information.

The teacher talks quickly. Often I'm in the middle of writing down something important, but before I complete that he's moved on and I can no longer remember what was said.

Sometimes I feel like the end of the lecture is either rushed or not reviewed because we spend too much time on other parts of the lecture or just other questions that the students have that are not relative to the lecture. Like that one day that we spent a half hour on acid-base imbalances when we had gone over those in lab prep. That day we didn't even finish the lecture, and we need to know about those lab values. Other times we just doddle and then rush.

No changes. The fourth most common theme students mentioned was that the faculty members should not make any changes. Twenty-two students (13 percent) told their faculty members that they did not have any suggestions for improvement. For example, one student said, "I really enjoy this class. I really wish that I could come up with a suggestion for you to improve but I really can't. Sorry." Another student made a positive comment about his professor, he said, "I love the course the way it is. I feel like my teacher is well prepared." Here is another example from a student discussing why she felt her professor did not need to make any changes.

Although every course could be improved, I can't really think of anything specific that he could change. All of his lectures are interesting, and he always gets the class to think and be involved.

Faculty preparation. Nine students (5 percent) made comments regarding better preparation in class from teaching assistants. Specific elements about how a faculty member taught, the media they used, and their personalities were mentioned. For example, one student said, "Her voice is very monotone, and it makes it very hard to stay

focused. She needs to show some excitement about the subject.” One student made a comment about the teaching assistant. He said, “I feel like the labs are helpful, but sometimes the TAs lack the training to really help the students out.” The comment below from a student discusses a change needed in media presentation.

I think that the teachers should be able to put together their PowerPoint presentations that could then be approved by the statistics administration. It seems that my teacher doesn't like the way she has to present the information, and there isn't really an incentive for me to go to class because my teacher goes over the PowerPoint presentations word-for-word, just like the presentations online would do.

More student effort. Five students felt they needed to give more effort in the course. Specifically, a few students commented that the course material was difficult. Two students felt intimidated to respond in class, and one student felt that he just needed to put more effort into the course.

Sometimes the atmosphere in the classroom is intimidating. I want to participate, but I get worried about saying something wrong. I feel like a lot of what I want to say isn't complex/deep enough to share with the class.

I think that I could be getting a lot more out of this class by personally putting more time into it.

The professor makes things clear and easy to understand. The material is just difficult to comprehend sometimes.

Outside influences. This theme was only mentioned by two students (1 percent). These individuals mentioned factors that were outside of the control of the faculty member, such as the length of the course, and the room temperature. For example, one student said, “If the room was not so warm, I would be able to stay awake in class easier. The room really needs to be cooled down.” Another student commented, “The labs are a little long.”

Mid-Course Evaluations

Complete details regarding the themes and sub themes are shown in Table 6. These responses are from 169 students whose instructors improved at least one point based on their mid-course evaluation and end-of-semester scores. The questions posed to students were, “What could be improved? How could this course be more effective in helping you learn?” Some students provided more than one response.

As mentioned above, the top items students, whose faculty members improved at least one point in their online student ratings, wanted their faculty members to improve or change, included (a) making expectations clearer (60 responses, 36%), (b) involving students in more active learning experiences (43 responses, 25%), (c) decreasing workload /and trying to cover too much material (28 responses, 17%), (d) making no changes (22 responses, 13%), (e) being more prepared as faculty members, (9 responses, 5%), (f) having students provide more effort (5 responses, 3%), and (g) changing outside influences (2 responses, 1%).

Faculty Survey Results

Faculty participants were asked if they read the responses of their students from their mid-course evaluation. One hundred and three faculty members responded to this question. Ninety-nine faculty members said “yes” (96 percent), and four said “no” (4 percent).

Faculty members were asked if they discussed the feedback from their mid-course evaluations with their students. One hundred and five faculty members responded to this survey question. Seventy-eight faculty members said “yes” (74%). Twenty-seven faculty members said “no” (26%).

Table 6

Responses from 169 Students: What Could be Improved?

Themes	Number of Responses and Percent	Sub Themes
1. Unclear Expectations	60 responses, 36%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not sure what is expected (16) b. Not clear on tests/quizzes/assignments/grading (12) c. Not clear on readings/what's important (11) d. Better prepare for tests (8) e. More organization (8) f. Quick/better feedback (5)
2. Active Learning	43 responses, 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Real-life application (18) b. More practice/examples (11) c. Interactive learning (7) d. More discussion (6) e. Prayer (1)
3. Too Much Busy Work/Covering	28 responses, 17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Too much busy work (10) b. Instructor talks too fast/Covers too much (9) c. Too many/little tests/quizzes (4) d. Stay on schedule (3) e. Assignments are unrealistic (1) f. More credit for work (1)
4. No Changes	22 responses, 13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I wouldn't change anything (22)

Mid-Course Evaluations

Themes Continued	Number of Responses and Percent	Sub Themes Continued
5. Faculty Members' Preparation	9 responses, 5%	a. TA's (3) b. More /better media (3) c. Faculty members personality (1) d. Faculty members Favorites! (1) e. Lack of experience (1)
6. More Student Effort	5 responses, 3%	a. Difficult material (2) b. Less intimidating learning environment (2) c. More effort from students (1)
7. Outside Influences	2 responses, 1%	a. Labs are too long (1) b. Room temperature (1)

Shortly after the faculty survey about mid-course evaluations had been sent out, a faculty member who had completed the survey sent an email to me with the suggestion of adding a question about whether faculty members had conducted mid-course evaluations before. The following question was added to the survey: "This is the first time I have conducted a mid-course evaluation." The response rate for this question was 63 faculty members, as some had already completed the survey before the question was added. Of these 63 faculty members who responded to this question, 32 faculty members (51%) said

this was their first time performing a mid-course evaluation. Thirty-one faculty members (49%) said they had administered a mid-course evaluation before.

Faculty Perceptions of Using Evaluations to Improve Student Learning

As part of the survey, faculty members were asked whether they believed doing the mid-course evaluation improved student learning. Of the 105 faculty members who responded to this question, 62 faculty members (59%) felt mid-course evaluations improved student learning. Thirty-one faculty members (30%) said they were not sure yet. Many of them wanted to wait until the end of the semester to see if they felt learning had improved. Twelve faculty members (11%) said they did not feel mid-course evaluations improved student learning.

Some of the changes these 62 faculty members made to improve student learning included more review of material, more practice problems, making changes to syllabi, adding more active learning activities, and clarifying grading procedures.

One faculty member said, “I responded to the students' input. Therefore, I believe that I am finding common ground with them and that will enable me to better help them link their learning with their current perspectives, skills, and knowledge.”

Another faculty member who felt student learning improved from conducting a mid-course evaluation said,

I think that by taking the observations of the students I was able to focus better on what their expectations were for the class and their learning. I have made some adjustments that I think have worked (e.g., more student speaking and interaction among themselves).

Mid-Course Evaluations

Other faculty members felt that conducting a mid-course evaluation may not have improved student learning, but it did improve their relationship with the students. The two comments below from faculty members demonstrate this principle.

Research shows that student learning increases dramatically when they know that faculty members care about them and their learning. This is a way for me to show students that I care about what they learn. When students voice concerns about how something is done (an assignment, tests, skills lab), and I have the opportunity to explain why it is done the way it is, and the history of how it has been done and previous student feedback, they will often find that we really are doing things in the best way possible given the conditions we have to work with.

Yes, I sensed the students appreciated having a voice, first of all, and that we used the comments as discussion in class to find ways of improving the rest of the semester. They were fairly open in their comments, and we had a healthy discussion on the classroom process.

Faculty members who stated they were unsure whether mid-course evaluations improved student learning provided a variety of answers why they felt this way. Some faculty members had just received the student feedback and had not had time to assess whether student learning had occurred. For example one faculty member said, “I won't know if it improved student learning until I get data from the end of the semester surveys and calculate grades.” Other faculty members who said they were unsure whether student learning had improved felt they didn't have a high enough response rate from students, while some felt they did not know how to measure student learning. For example, one faculty member said,

I cannot tell yet if the evaluation has influenced student learning. They certainly know I looked at it and have made some minor adjustments as a result. It may be helping students who made specific comments.

The faculty members who said they felt student learning did not improve because they conducted a mid-course evaluation also provided reasons for their belief. Several faculty members commented on the low response rate they received. For example, one faculty member said,

This has the exact same limitations as the online end of the semester ratings do. You only hear from a select group of students. I've done mid-semester ratings on my own using paper and pencil that I handed out in class to ALL students. I found these much more helpful because it was actually representative of the class. The online mid-semester ratings were of little help to me—given I got so few responses. It was hard to know if there were actual patterns or interpersonal quirks of the rater.

Other faculty members stated they did not have enough evidence that student learning had improved because of the mid-course evaluations. Another faculty member commented,

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in student learning using a mid-course evaluation compared to student learning with no mid-course evaluation. The data from one semester is not sufficient to reject the null hypothesis.

Faculty Motives for Conducting a Mid-Course Evaluation

As part of the survey, faculty members were asked, “Why did you do a mid-course evaluation?” One-hundred and four faculty members responded to the question, providing 118 different reasons. The most common reason faculty members conducted a mid-course was because they wanted to hear the students’ opinions (20 responses, 17%). One faculty member commented how she specifically wanted to validate comments the students made with the rest of the class.

I always have done mid-course evaluations since I started teaching. One reason I love doing the mid-course evaluation is that I can

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clarify and validate comments that the students give. If I get a negative comment about an assignment or a teaching method I will pose the question to the class, “Should we continue to do this or not?” I use an electronic audience participation system where students can anonymously input answers and a graph flashes up on the screen with the report. What I find is that in the first semesters of teaching my course I really did have changes that the whole class agreed needed to be made. Now, when I get a negative comment and I pose it to the class I usually find that the student is very much in the minority. If all I had to go by was the end of the semester feedback, then I wouldn't have any more contact with these students and I wouldn't be able to clarify or validate comments. This is also helpful for the students to see that their peers all have different learning styles. I think that when they come to understand that as faculty members we are trying to give a well-rounded experience that appeals to a broad range of learning styles they are a little more tolerant of an activity that doesn't quite suit them....At this point, even though I pretty much know what the comments are going to be and what my responses will be it is still a valuable tool. The act of going through a mid-course evaluation and receiving feedback on it is helpful for the students.

The second most common response faculty members gave for conducting a mid-course evaluation was because they felt feedback is helpful (17 responses, 14%). For example one faculty member said, “I am a big fan! Feedback to the instructor is just as important as feedback to students.” Another faculty member gave several reasons why feedback is important.

I want to improve my teaching. I wanted my students to consider the benefits of soliciting student feedback in their own teaching. I wanted to create an environment where student feedback was welcome and discussed. And I wanted to give myself time to respond to that feedback for the benefit of the students who gave it, as well as for subsequent students.

The third most common reason faculty members said they conducted a mid-course evaluation was because they were new faculty members or they were teaching a

course for the first time (15 faculty members 13%). One new faculty member felt doing a mid-course evaluation would help her become a more effective teacher.

I am a new faculty member at BYU, so I want to do my best to become an effective teacher. One of the best ways to find this out is through student feedback. I also thought this would allow me a chance to make improvements within the semester and demonstrate that I do care about students' learning and want to do all I can to foster learning in the classroom setting.

Another faculty member was teaching a course for the first time and had a recommendation from colleagues to do a mid-course evaluation.

This is the first time I have taught this course and I was anxious to make corrections along the way. I have also heard several of my colleagues say how helpful it was to get feedback early and respond to it.

To improve teaching received the same number of responses (15 faculty members, 13%) as those who conducted a mid-course evaluation because they were new faculty members or were teaching a new course. For example, one faculty member said, "Seemed like the best way to improve my teaching was to get data directly from those whom it most affected." Another faculty members commented, "I'm serious about becoming a better teacher and I think that student evaluations can help."

To improve student learning followed closely behind to improve teaching in the reasons why faculty members conducted a mid-course evaluation. One faculty member commented on this reason.

I really want to make sure that students are learning! I realize that I have blind spots in my teaching, i.e., things that I think are going well, may not be "going well" for students.

Another faculty member also felt a strong desire to improve student learning using the mid-course evaluations as a tool.

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My classes are fairly transparent. I spend a good amount of time reviewing teaching outcomes and letting the students know the goals of the class. I ask for their input and they fill out a pre-evaluation of their own skills at the beginning. It seemed like a logical midpoint to make sure we were all on track together.

The sixth most common reason faculty members cited for conducting a mid-course evaluation was because they were encouraged by their department chair or by another instructor. For example one faculty member said, “The Dean's office strongly recommended that we use it as a means of collecting outcomes information. I am glad that I listened.” Another faculty member said, “It was recommended to me by my department chair, and I believe they are helpful in making course corrections while there is still time [before the end of the semester].”

Seven faculty members (6%) said they conducted a mid-course evaluation out of habit, meaning they had conducted them for years and have found them to be helpful. For example one faculty member discussed how he conducts mid-course evaluations every semester and makes small course corrections based on student feedback.

I do it every semester. It allows the students to feel like I will listen to them and change the course to meet their needs. The changes are usually small, and based on my records; they do not lead to improved learning outcomes (as measured by test scores). The biggest benefit is that students have a better attitude about the class, and you are rewarded on your course evaluation for being *cool* and *caring*. My impression is that if you do a mid-course gut check and then make a few simple changes, the students perceive you as caring a lot more about their learning experience than other professors who are *less flexible* or don't respond to student complaints/suggestions. Just like any parent, there is only so far that I'll go in terms of implementing their suggestions. As long as you implement a few obvious ones, you don't have to give in to those suggestions that actually deter from student learning (and there are plenty of those, trust me).

A complete list of the reasons faculty members conducted a mid-course evaluation with the number of responses and percentage is shown in Table 7. Some faculty members listed more than one reason for conducting a mid-course evaluation, which is why there are 118 responses listed and 105 faculty members.

Table 7

Faculty Reasons for Conducting Mid-Course Evaluations

Reason for conducting mid-course evaluation	Number of responses	Percentage
Want student opinion	20	17%
Feedback is helpful	17	14%
New faculty members or new course	15	13%
Improve teaching	15	13%
Improve student learning	11	9%
Encouraged by department chair or other faculty members	8	7%
Habit	7	6%
Easy to use	6	5%
To show students they cared	6	5%
End of course too late	3	3%
To make changes	3	3%
To improve ratings	2	2%

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It was available	1	1%
Try something new	1	1%
Compare mid-course and final	1	1%
Anonymity	1	1%
Enjoy doing it	1	1%
Total	118	100%

Faculty Changes to Improve Teaching Based on Student Feedback

What did faculty members actually improve? Did they make the same changes students requested? To answer these questions, I reviewed 105 responses from the faculty members who participated in the study. A list of the top five changes is shown in Table 8.

Here are the results of what faculty members changed to improve their teaching from the most common change faculty members made to the least common change: (a) provided clearer expectations (30 responses, 29%), (b) provided more active learning experiences (25 responses, 24%), (c) more review of course material, homework problems, and reviews for tests and quizzes (12 responses, 11%); (d) less busy work/covering (6 responses, 6%), (e) slowed down (5 responses, 5%), (f) better organization (3 responses, 3%), (g) better technology (2 responses, 2%), (h) caring more for the students (2 responses, 2%), and (i) providing a new textbook (1 response, 1%).

Table 8

Top Student Changes Compared to Faculty Changes

Changes to Improve Teaching	Student Percentage (n=153 responses)	Faculty Percentage (n=76 responses)
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Clearer Expectations	60 responses, 39%	30 responses, 39%
Active Learning	43 responses, 28%	25 responses, 33%
Too Much Busy Work	28 responses, 18%	6 responses, 8%
More Review	0 responses, 0%	12 responses, 16%
No Changes	22 responses, 14%	3 responses, 4%

Figure 6 shows a comparison between what students wanted faculty members to change and what faculty members actually changed to improve their teaching and student learning. Three of the four changes are the same for both faculty members and student. The first two changes (clearer expectations, and active learning) were the top two changes for both faculty members and students.

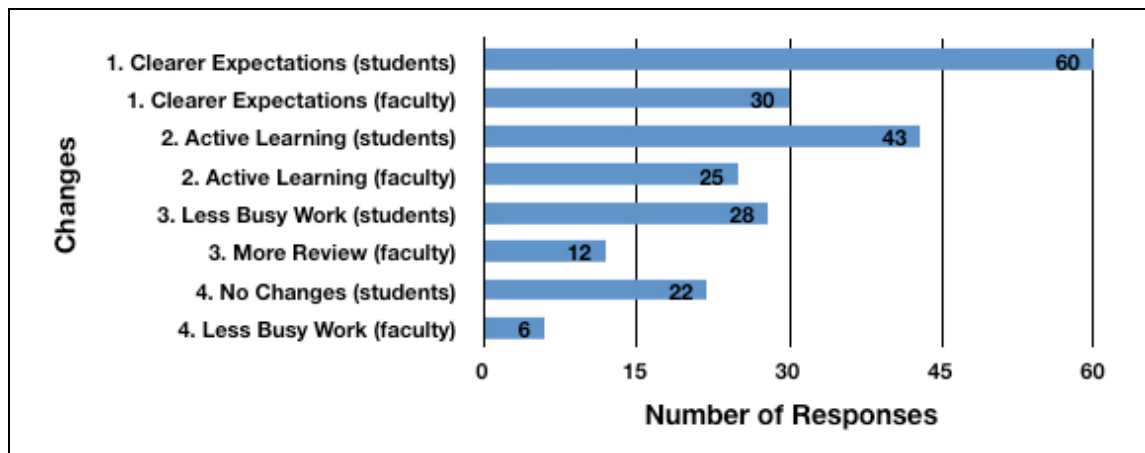


Figure 6. Changes from students and actual changes from faculty members.

The number one change faculty members made was the number one factor students wanted faculty members to change, which was to make expectations clearer. How did faculty members make their expectations clearer? Some of the responses included the following: “I am trying to help them see how the test questions are congruent and aligned with their learning activities and the outcomes of the course.”

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Another faculty member said, “I now state at the beginning of the class what the objectives of our classroom lecture/discussion will be. I have posted answer keys to all of the thought questions in the course packet.” Another faculty member expressed the importance of presenting the main point in each lesson.

I am presenting the ‘big picture’ for each lesson, providing a map for discussing concepts and details, and returning to the big picture at the end. I am explicitly discussing the rationale for assignments and for class activities.

To improve his teaching, one faculty member stopped using PowerPoint to better emphasize the most important parts of the class discussion.

Although nobody mentioned this specifically, I have decided to quit using PowerPoint. A couple students mentioned having trouble picking out main points and themes from lectures. When something is on the screen, I (subconsciously perhaps) feel like I don't need to spend as long elaborating. By eliminating PowerPoint, I think I'll find myself working harder to emphasize major points.

One faculty member explained how making expectations clearer does not have to mean lowering expectations.

In fact, I found my level of expectation for my students was very high prior to the mid-course evaluation. Though I didn't lower my expectation, I did take some time to further explain assignments and projects so that the students could reach my expectations with ease.

The second most common change faculty members made, which was also the number two factor students requested faculty members to change included providing more active learning experiences. These active learning experiences included group work, paired-conversation activities, application examples, more practice work for outside of class, more discussion of problem solving, more iClicker questions, more student presentations, and so forth.

One faculty member discussed how he made his course more effective by providing more hands-on activities.

On one activity, I divided the students into pairs, and then had them use those conversations to participate in a larger class conversation. The other change was to spend a day reciting poetry to each other, rather than just discussing it, and then using the experience as the basis of a discussion on that experience. This change, along with things we were already doing, made this unit more effective, as I saw on the course mid-term.

The number three factor faculty members said they changed to improve their teaching was to provide more review of course material, homework problems, and reviews for tests and quizzes (12 responses, 11%). Two comments from faculty members on using this factor to improve their teaching included the following:

We now have a review every class period of what we learned in the class period before. We also have a review every few weeks. I have incorporated suggestions about the lab (such as having a sample microscope set-up) as well.

Students expressed concern that they did not know how to study for the midterm (i.e. they did not understand what kind of information would be included), and so I have introduced study sessions, and we have talked about this in class.

The rest of the results included reducing the amount of busy work (6 responses, 6%), slowing down (5 responses, 5%), better organization (3 responses, 3%), better technology (2 responses, 2%), caring more for the students (2 responses, 2%), and providing a new textbook (1 response, 1%).

The fourth most common change faculty members made was to reduce the amount of busy work. For example, one faculty member said,

Based on concerns about the workload of the class, we established that each class day I would provide a detailed description of the time ceiling that I expect for the next class preparation. The

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students agreed to partner with me in an effort to commit ourselves to a more rational class preparation model.

Another faculty member commented on how reducing reading did not detract from the students learning the most relevant course material.

I stopped requiring reading (many students felt that the textbook was not useful, and we had covered the most relevant material already), and I gave more time in class for working on projects (this is a studio art class).

Slowing down in class was the fifth most common factor faculty members changed after listening to feedback from the mid-course evaluations. In this area, faculty members made comments such as, “I am focusing more on making sure the student gets it than getting through material.” One faculty member even discussed how she was going to try to slow down her rate of speech to her students.

I have made a conscious effort to reinforce to the students that if I am going too fast, to let me know. Since that time, students have been more likely to mention if they need more time to write down the notes on the lecture slides.

The final three changes faculty members made to improve their teaching, based on mid-course evaluation feedback, included better organization, better use of technology, caring more for students, and providing a new textbook. A few examples of how faculty members made changes in their teaching in these areas included comments such as “I tried to be more personable to my students, since a couple of them gave me low marks on the question that asked how much I cared about their learning,” and “I received feedback about how to use BlackBoard to enhance lectures, and I implemented this change.

Faculty Interview Results

As mentioned previously, I interviewed 30 faculty members (15 faculty members who received scores ranging from 5.9 and lower on their online student ratings, and 15 faculty members who received scores ranging from 6.0 to 8.0 on the online student ratings). I had hoped to do some statistical comparisons on the two groups to see the amount of improvement in each area. Unfortunately, of the 30 faculty members, 19 faculty members administered the 4-question survey to their students (63%) and 11 faculty members administered the 2-question survey to their students (37%). Specifically, in the 5.9 and lower group, six faculty members (40%) used the two-question survey, and nine (60%) used the four-question survey. In the 6.0 to 8.0 group, five faculty members (33%) used the two-question survey, and ten faculty members (67%) used the four-question survey.

Student Learning and Mid-Course Evaluations

In terms of the actual interview questions, the responses were similar for both groups (5.9 and lower, and 6.0 to 8.0). In general, during the interviews faculty members felt that doing mid-course evaluations improved student learning. Their responses for how student learning improved were similar to the responses faculty members gave in the follow-up survey. Most of the faculty members who were interviewed had conducted a mid-course evaluation previously. Many faculty members could not provide solid evidence or quantitative data to show student learning had improved. These faculty members often “had a feeling” or felt that class was better because they had conducted a mid-course evaluation. One faculty member in the 6.0 to 8.0 group made a comment about using mid-course evaluations to improve the learning process.

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I think if they feel that they're responsible in some way for the class, they have some ownership there, their learning always improves. They feel more motivated, connected to the learning topic, and plugged in if they've said, "We don't get why we're doing this." Then I come back from the evaluation and say, "A bunch of people complained they don't understand why we're doing this." Then I explain it, I think they feel more, "Oh I can see that has a real learning need and so I'm going to care more about that assignment." I think their learning improves because they care more about the work and they spend more time on it, hopefully, not necessarily time, but more effort or paying attention as they see it as learning (not just checking boxes on assignments). So, I think it, even if it doesn't necessarily give me a new skill set or a new thing I have to try for the class that semester, it kind of sets a tone of you're learning matters to me, but you're responsible for your own learning.

Another faculty member who scored in the 5.9 and lower range discussed how measuring student learning by grades was not a good outcome, as the average GPA of the students in the nursing program is 3.8. She said if her learning outcome was comparing grades, she wasn't able to see a big difference when comparing the students. She discussed how she uses connectedness to older people as her outcome to measure student learning.

The bottom line to me is so that they're going to be your nurse. They're going to be my nurse and I want them to be the best that they can be. They're taking care of older people, which is basically the core of nursing and medicine now as people age. I find that students who are in their twenties and early thirties are afraid of those people. They feel that they don't have anything in common. They're strange. They're just not connected. But, by the end of the class, and this is one outcome that I gauge, their whole attitude is changed toward this population of people. As a matter of fact, I tell them the first day, "I don't care if you get nothing out of the class. I want you to see these people as human beings, see them as the Lord sees them." That is hard to measure, but generally, students anecdotally tell me that they love these patients and they love the experience. And to me, that's an outcome. That's the outcome I'm looking for. To me, that's huge.

Another faculty member who scored in the 5.9 and lower group felt student learning pertained to attitudes toward knowledge, an area he said he had no numbers to prove the data, just a change in the students over time.

The learning outcomes that were specified for the school's requirements are by in large performance or meta cognition kinds of objectives. They really don't have anything to do with dispositions to study more or to become a lifelong learner. It doesn't give an indication of whether they become a better critical thinker or not. Those kinds of things are almost an intuitive measurement you make. I think by following the feedback that I've gotten in the midcourse evaluations, I have improved student learning in a couple of different ways. One, I think I've been able to increase the amount of coverage. Two, I think I've been able to increase the attitudes toward the knowledge. I've been able to improve the students' interest in the subject matter, continuing interest in the subject matter, and their ability to think critically, and their confidence that they can attack a problem and reason through it and come up with a reasonable answer. I feel, I have no evidence, no numbers that indicate that these things have improved over time, but I feel that they have.

Overall Experience Conducting Mid-Course Evaluation

In general, when faculty members commented during the interviews about their overall experience using the mid-course evaluation, their experiences were positive. Faculty members commented on how using the mid-course evaluation tool was simple and easy to use, took relatively short amount of time to administer, allowed for anonymity, and was a way to show their students they cared about their progress in the course and they were willing to listen to their feedback. Faculty members also appreciated receiving feedback in a timely manner and having time in the middle of the semester to make course changes. During one of the interviews, a new faculty member expressed her excitement for doing the mid-course evaluations because she was able to

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get the pulse of her class, which she could show to her academic superiors when it was time for her continuing status review.

Well the results from the mid-course evaluations just give me more confidence so that when I talk to my academic superiors I can say, "Look! I know the students love my classes and I know they like the way I'm doing it."....I feel like I've got secret little weapons in my confidence backpack. I've got great quotes too that I can actually use. I know when I was hired, one of the things that they were worried about was my lack of teaching experience and my pedagogy. So I've tried to focus on those things a lot so that when I reapply for one-year tenure, I can say, "I realize these are weaknesses of mine and I've actively tried to address them. I think I'm succeeding because look at some of these verbatim quotes from my students." I sort of have proof, written proof. There's a lot at stake and it's hard to prove things, especially within the theater department because it's all touchy, feely, theoretical items, based on students' performance. To have things in the students' own words that they feel is effective or not effective is really helpful.

During another interview, the faculty member expressed her appreciation for the mid-course tool as it saved her time and decreased some stress.

It was positive to do it on the computer and I appreciated having it there. It decreased my stress. I don't have a TA this semester and I've always had a TA that collated them for me and so I would have needed to do that by myself. So it was very nice to just have it sent and have it all done and be able to just pull up the results.

Another faculty member commented on the simplicity of the mid-course evaluation tool and how it gave her a better idea of the kind of responses to expect on the online student evaluation at the end of the semester.

The main reason that I did the mid-course evaluation is because I'm a first year and I have absolutely no idea what responses are like at the end of the semester. I kind of wanted to get an idea...I think it was good since it was so easy. It was already set up for you, and I do feel like I learned and it helped me understand what the students were thinking.

Effort Involved in Implementing Changes to Improve Teaching

As stated earlier, many faculty members made changes in their courses based on the feedback they received from the mid-course evaluation. How much effort did these changes take to make? According to the faculty member interviews, the faculty members did not have to spend a great deal of effort to make improvements, either in their teaching or in the area of student learning. Here are three comments from faculty members discussing the effort involved in making changes in their courses.

It doesn't involve much effort at all. These were really easy things to fix. I mean to put stuff on Blackboard was, you know, just convert the PowerPoints into pdfs and post it on there to make it easier for them. And we have discussions anyway about various things, so now probably twice as much as I did before, I'll take an aspect of that discussion, have them discuss together, and then we'll talk....So, they were really, really easy fixes.

At this point, no, there is not a lot of effort. Like I said, I've been changing the course semester by semester. Especially if it's the same course I teach multiple times, I can get it to better as we go down the line.

Well, the mid-course is a small course correction, you know? You have to be careful about that too because if I lay out things in a course syllabus, and then I make a dramatic change mid-course, a lot of students will complain about that too. Then say, "You said you were gonna' do this, and now you're not doing it. You're adding more on."

Continuation of Mid-Course Evaluations Post Study

As part of the interviews, I asked the faculty members if they were going to conduct another mid-course evaluation next semester. All of the faculty members who responded to this question said they would conduct another mid-course evaluation. The faculty members provided different responses for their reasons for conducting another mid-course evaluation in the future. One faculty member expressed how every semester

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he receives a different group of students and wants to check their progress each time he teaches.

I think I have a pretty good understanding of what's going on in the course, but every semester is different and the group of students is different. Students come in and I change, and every semester I do a couple little things differently based on the field. So yeah, I will do a mid-course evaluation. I think it's helpful.

Another faculty member from the department of business management commented during his interview that he passes around a suggestion box every day in class. The students can put their names on the comments or remain anonymous. This professor said he receives informative feedback. Despite having the suggestion box, he decided to use the mid-course evaluation as well. He told his students if they felt like they had something to contribute, they should fill out the online evaluation. He said he received similar feedback on the mid-course evaluation as he does with the suggestion box. When asked if he would conduct a mid-course evaluation next semester, in addition to his suggestion box, he made the following comment:

Well, think of the cost. It took me thirty seconds to click two buttons to fire that off. So effectively, there was zero marginal cost. So as long as the marginal benefit is not zero, then it's worth doing. So I'll do it every time. I mean if you guys send me an email to remind me, and if I only have to click two buttons, I'll do it. And then all of a sudden, BAM, a spreadsheet shows up. I can read through it, as it doesn't take long to read sixty lines on a spreadsheet, and pick out the thing or two that's new. But, yeah, I'll clearly do it as long as you offer to do it...So, you know, I would be an advocate, since it's already built. The frame is already built. The software's already there. The face is already built. It seems like it wouldn't be that costly to make this happen again.

Another faculty member commented during her interview that although the feedback from students is sometimes critical and can seem harsh, she will still do another mid-course evaluation next semester. She appreciated that she had some time over the

weekend to compose her thoughts before talking to her students about their mid-course evaluation feedback.

I know among other faculty members that I work with, it's kind of the dreaded student feedback. It's nice when it comes at the end of the semester because you're already getting ready for another semester and you're not letting it affect your teaching. When I read the mid-course evaluations it happened to be over a weekend. I thought I could compose myself before my next class, because I could address some of their concerns in an open format and not be defensive...It is hard for the teacher to take that feedback and professionally put it in the vault and just use that as a way to improve teaching without taking it as a personal attack against you individually or your teaching. I think it's useful. I will do it again.

Another faculty member commented during his interview that he would do the mid-course evaluation again because he liked open-ended questions he was able to ask the students.

I'll use it. Absolutely, I'll absolutely use it. I like the idea. I like the concept. I like the open ended. I didn't use the other one where they asked multiple-choice questions. I like the open endedness of it because I think I can get more information than I can from multiple test types of questions.

Ideas for Conducting Mid-Course Evaluations

One of the interesting findings that came out of the interviews is the way faculty members conducted mid-course evaluations prior to receiving the mid-course evaluation tool from the CTL. Many of the faculty members made these responses when they were responding to the question, "Why did you decide to conduct a mid-course evaluation?" Faculty members can continue to use the mid-course evaluation tool, or they can adopt one of the following ideas from faculty members on ways to evaluate the course. Several faculty members mentioned this first example during their interviews. This approach involves asking students the following three questions:

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1. What should I keep doing?
2. What should I start doing?
3. What should I stop doing?

Here is how the faculty member explained it:

I have a form that I've used before where I basically ask them three questions. I ask them *keep*, what things in the course do they really like that you recommend they keep? *Stop*, is there anything in the class that you don't like, that you wish I would do away with? I can't remember the label for the other one. It's kind of an *add*, where I ask, "Are there things that I'm not doing that you wish I were doing?" And I get them to respond like that. That's kind of helpful to see if there's any particular things that irritate them or bother them, or too much work, or that they wish I wasn't doing. You always get a few that say, "This is a waste of time. Why are you doing this?" But you identify things that you think you're doing well that sometimes you wonder. If a lot of the students say, "Oh this is a great idea. I'm glad we did this. I really learned a lot from this," then you keep doing that. I've done that at the end of semester, but I also would do that mid-course evaluation just to get a mid-semester read on how they're doing.

Another faculty member follows a similar pattern to evaluate her students that involves a plus, minus, wish scenario that each student fills out every three class periods.

I've always been interested in student feedback. Every single class period, I do a little thing called a plus, minus wish, where I have students list something that they really liked about today's class, something they felt was maybe a waste of time, and something they wish we would have done that we didn't get to. I divide the class into three so that they only do it every third time. So, like I have folders, green folders, yellow and violet, and when it's their day, they do that plus, minus wish. So, I get feedback every single time. And our class ratings have gone up and up every semester.

In addition to conducting a mid-course evaluation, one faculty member asks his students to fill out a daily feedback form. He uses it to check his attendance and also to receive immediate feedback each day. One faculty member gathers feedback by having

his students work in teams, while another faculty member has a course council. Here are the comments from these two faculty members.

I normally do midterm feedback in my classes. I have one person from each team come up here and they gather feedback from their team. Then we sit down, and they tell me the good and the bad, and then we talk about it.

I've also done what we'd call a course council. We meet monthly with representatives from each clinical section to get their feedback on how to improve the course (what's going well, what's not going well). So we've made some major changes based on student feedback.

Other faculty members ask their students questions during class, such as, "What is going well, and what could be improved?" One faculty member passes out a feedback form after each test to see how the students felt the course work prepared them for the exam. One theatre faculty member discussed how in his discipline there is constant feedback throughout the entire semester or term.

I sit down with my directing students and say, "OK, how's it going? What is working and what isn't working? What do you need that you're not getting from me?" And they all just say, "I need this," and so we'll alter things. We make changes right then. Then, I have a TA, and we'll sit down every Friday and we assess how the class is going. We do the grading for the week, and then we ask questions about whether or not they're getting what they need and what we need to do to improve. So, those kinds of continuous evaluations or assessments are the only way to really keep the course fresh. That's what I do.

Faculty Perceptions of Using Mid-Course Evaluations to Improve Teaching

As stated earlier, the faculty members felt the mid-course evaluation was simple, easy to use, and did not require a great deal of their time. One of the research questions is to determine whether faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching. I asked all 30 faculty members who were interviewed whether

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they felt conducting a mid-course evaluation improved their teaching. Of these 30 faculty members, 28 faculty members (93%) felt mid-course evaluations improved their teaching. Two faculty members had different opinions (7%). For example, one faculty member felt mid-course evaluations just improve the relationship between teacher and student.

I'm not sure whether mid-course evaluations improve teaching. I think it does improve relationships with the students. I think it makes them open to the idea that we're listening to their comments and what they have to say...At the end of course evaluation last year, I kind of wandered the room as I was giving lectures. I got comments from three or four students that said, "I really didn't like that. It felt weird having you stand at the back of the room." Of course, I wasn't standing back there the whole three hours. Our lectures are three hours so it was kind of challenging. So, I guess I've changed my presentation. I'm not sure that I've actually changed what I teach or how I teach it other than presentation.

The other faculty member who did not feel mid-course evaluations improved his teaching received a low response rate from his students. He said with only a few responses from students, he was uncertain whether his teaching had improved because he conducted a mid-course evaluation. He also felt an incentive should be offered to students to fill out the evaluation.

Well, no I wouldn't say that it improves my teaching at this point, with just 25 responses out of 70 students. It's a little hard to know exactly what students are thinking. Unfortunately, you find out a little bit more at the end of the semester when you do the online student ratings because I do give incentives. I say, "You do get five points if you fill out the student evaluation at the end." And so, really, I think you have to do something similar on the midcourse to give them an incentive to answer the questions.

The 28 faculty members who felt their teaching had improved because they conducted a mid-course evaluation provided various reasons for their feelings. One

faculty member felt he received good feedback on providing more examples in class, which helped him improve his teaching.

Oh, clearly the mid-course evaluation does improve my teaching. Clearly it does. Like here's an example. Teaching to minors, I assumed if I gave them ten homework problems and the solutions that they would know how to work these problems. I also give them quizzes on Blackboard that I spend a lot of time to write, as well as the crazy drawn out solutions. This is not the case. Now what I've learned is not all students prepare. I mean, I already know that. I've done this for fifteen years. I already knew that. But, working problems in class is highly effective. I'm working so many now, every other day I work problems in class. It's just, lets work this... BOOM I put them up there, and here's the problem, there's multiple choice, and I make it just like a test scenario. I use the same test bank I do for the test and I walk through, "How should you be thinking about this?" ...And I probably wouldn't do that if I hadn't received feedback. I know I wouldn't do that because I had prepped the course not to do that.

Another faculty member commented during his interview how he felt his teaching had improved over time as a result of mid-course evaluations. He also discussed how the amount of diverse feedback he received decreased.

I've been doing midterm student feedback, goodness, since I was at the institution where I got my PhD. So I've been doing it for years. And at first, I'd get a lot of comments in student feedback, and they were very diverse. Over the years, I get fewer negative comments and there's less variety in them. So maybe that means I'm becoming a better teacher, you know, maybe I'm getting these. I hope that means I'm becoming a better teacher. I am, I hope, more organized. For example, I color code the assignments now. My students early on, three years ago, said, "It's so confusing. I can't tell what I'm supposed to do. There's just this pile of stuff he gives us." So now I color code everything. In class I can say, "Take out the blue sheet and look on that or page three on the purple sheets." That's partially because of student feedback. Although in that case I think it was end of semester feedback that only helps me for the next semester, which I know is that purpose of the mid-term student feedback, so we can fix it for this semester. Maybe it's because I'm teaching the same classes over and over again. As I've been doing this, I'm getting fewer and fewer things that I can fix during the semester.

Another faculty member who felt using mid-course evaluations improves her teaching said in her interview that she discusses changes with all her students before she implements a change in the course based on one student comment.

I think mid-course evaluations improve my teaching. One thing I've learned to do is take a little bit with a grain of salt because one person's comment doesn't represent the whole class. I have in the past, on several occasions, used the iClickers or Turning Point, whatever we have at the time. So, if a student has voiced a concern, I'll put like something there and I'll ask the students, "How many of you agree with this comment?" I've found out that student is in the vast minority. One student will say, "We have way too many papers. I don't get anything out of writing this certain paper. I don't learn anything by doing it." And so I'll put the statement up there, "I have learned from writing this paper. How strongly do you agree from a range from of strongly agree to strongly disagree?" What you find sometimes is that the ones who are complaining about something aren't in the majority. If we respond to every concern and complaint by changing our course, you can change it in a wrong direction. I usually validate things like that before I change them, either through class discussion or through anonymous clicker response. Another thing that's helpful when I do the anonymous clicker response is I'll explain to the students that people learn in different ways and that as teachers, we have to have a variety of teaching methods. You may hate the role play because it is just not in you to do a role play, but for some other student, it may cement the concept that they're struggling with. And so as they see these clickers pop up with their classmate responses, I think it's, it's kind of a humbling experience, because they go, "Oh yeah, class isn't just about me, is it? It's about all of us, and maybe I have to kind of suffer through an assignment that's not my style, but I can see that 23% of the class really liked that assignment."

Faculty Perceptions of Using Mid-Course Evaluations to Improve Learning

The second research question pertains to faculty perceptions of whether mid-course evaluations improve student learning. In addition to using mid-course evaluations to improve teaching, the faculty members who were interviewed also felt mid-course evaluations could be used to improve student learning. Specifically, 27 faculty members

(90%) felt mid-course evaluations improve student learning and two faculty members (7%) felt it had more to do with the relationship, and one faculty member (3%) felt it just improved student satisfaction, rather than student learning.

Does it improve student learning? I have no idea. How do I evaluate that? I mean, yeah, you know. I'm interested in it from a standpoint of seeing if there's anything significant enough that I need to address to make changes that I'm not aware of. The mid-course evaluation ends up helping the students, but how do you measure that? I have no way of measuring the increase of learning. And I don't make the assumption that because we say, "Well this is going to increase student learning," if I don't have a measure for it, then I'm not willing to accept that it increases student learning. Student satisfaction has a lot to do with student learning, but student satisfaction in and of itself is not a measure of student learning, in my opinion.

Of the two faculty members who felt mid-course evaluations improve the student relationship, one faculty member expressed, "I think the mid-course evaluation is more of a caring thing than it is helping them to learn anything, as far as the way this evaluation was set up."

The 27 faculty members who felt mid-course evaluations improved student learning listed a variety of reasons why it improved learning, such as helping students become passionate about the subject matter, helping students take ownership of their learning, clarifying learning objectives, and giving students an opportunity for evaluation and assessment of their learning. Here are a few quotes from faculty members discussing the reasons mid-course evaluations improve student learning.

I think any time you tell a student what they're supposed to get out of an assignment; they're more likely to learn from it. I think if you explain to them, "Here's what we're hoping you're going to attain by doing this," then they get their mind in the right set. So I do a lot of talking in general in my class about why we're doing this, why we're doing that, what they're supposed to gain, and in that

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sense, if they come out with things like, “You know what, this was a dumb assignment” or whatever, if you can explain it, that helps.

I think it gives them an opportunity for evaluation and assessment and that's an important aspect of the college career that they can learn and that they can have some opportunity for feedback. If they take that opportunity, I think it is part of the learning process and I also believe that it's an opportunity for them to express their views, which is learning. They can do it one of two ways. They can take it seriously and give some honest, open feedback that's not pointed or abrasive, or they can quickly rush through it and just think, I like this class, but I don't like that teacher, and just kind of go through it and not really take those steps for it to be a learning process.

I think the mid-course evaluation does improve student learning in the sense that it empowers them. It gives them a voice to express disapproval or discontent. I think sometimes students act out and do less than their best work because they feel like they don't have a say. Whenever you can give them a better say and give them power and that I'm accountable to them. I'm not just teaching whatever I want to teach. I'm saying, “I want to help you learn. What do you need to learn more effectively or learn deeper or go further? You tell me what you want and I'll figure out a way to teach it to you.” Instead of, “I don't care. This is how this class is organized. You just take it and get out of my hair.”

One faculty member who was interviewed felt mid-course evaluations help students know what they should focus on in class.

The mid-course evaluation helps students know what they need to start focusing on. So it helps them think about their learning. I think a mid-course evaluation shouldn't just be, “What can be done to better improve teaching?” It's also a good assessment point for the students. What can I do to better learn? What can I do to better focus?

Usefulness of Student Feedback

During the interviews, the faculty members were asked about the usefulness of the student feedback. Some of the faculty members felt the feedback was not surprising because they had received the same feedback before.

I've asked all of those questions of them out loud in the class already, and so it was more or less, yeah, OK. It was reinforcement. It was a written reinforcement of what we had been doing.

A lot of them said things that I kind of already knew. If there were any criticism or something that they hoped for to make the course better, they were things that I already knew should be implemented or changed.

Not a whole lot of surprises. The feedback is nice when it's positive and the complaints that I heard, again, there wasn't a whole lot I could do to change it this time around just because of the nature of my course experience this time. But, um, you know, it's helpful to see what people are thinking.

Other faculty members felt the feedback was meaningful because it gave them specific information to change to improve their courses. For example, one faculty member made several changes based on the feedback from the mid-course evaluations.

I have one class where I have one student that keeps like one voice of dissent. I thought I was the only one annoyed by her, but that the class wasn't suffering. I had three or four other students say that what they hate about the class was this student and the amount of time that she absorbs and then I was like, "Oh, I should pay attention to my instincts better and I need to nip that in the bud and it's not right that the whole class is suffering because she has some issues." So I took her in and gave her a one-on-one interview that lasted quite a long time, but she's been better since then. And I probably wouldn't have done that directly if I hadn't known it was irritating the other students as much as it was irritating me. And then other students that want more of the academic things were like, "You need to update the syllabi. It's not just enough that you do it verbally. We need hard copies handed out to us, and we need updated grade sheets so we're aware of what everything counts." So all of those things I've tried to take into consideration and do. In one of my classes, I teach an auditions class where they're like, "We love what you're doing as a teacher, but we feel like we're not learning to do it ourselves," and they had other issues with use of time and things like that, so basically I just said, "OK, there's nine of you in the class and this class can be whatever we want, and people have voiced these concerns. So how can we take this in?" We decided to restructure the class so that now they teach each other for the first twenty minutes. They coach each other on scenes

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and things like that before I go to them with notes. I feel like I've benefited from that because I have to spend less time with each student and they come to me better prepared because they've already gotten confidence and feedback from their peers before I work with them. So that was a great thing that I wouldn't have ever thought of if I hadn't done the midterm evaluations.

There were a few faculty members who felt they received mixed feedback from students. For example, one faculty member stated that it is difficult to please all of the students.

There were some comments that I knew and expected to see. There were some that were new and I actually kind of set a little mental goal for myself to improve in a certain way. Sometime people feel that I digress too much, or it seems that I'm not prepared for whatever's going to happen that day. And so I've tried to improve on that area. One of the interesting things about evaluations is that you never please everybody, and in the same class, you'll have people saying, "He's too abstract," and "He's too specific," or "He's moving too fast," or "He's moving too slow."

One faculty member who received some negative feedback felt students should be educated on how to give constructive feedback.

I think one thing that needs to be taught to students is how to give feedback. You know? Just making a negative comment is not feedback. I mean it's feedback, but it's not anything that the instructor can do anything with. You know what I mean? That just makes you mad, but it doesn't provide anything reasonable.

Frustrations Using Mid-Course Evaluation Tool

Although many faculty members felt the mid-course evaluation tool was useful in improving teaching and student learning, the faculty members sometimes expressed their frustration for certain aspects of their experience.

Output of mid-course evaluation data. During the interviews, the most common complaint spoken about the mid-course evaluation tool was the output of the data.

Faculty members received an email with an Excel file containing the results.

Unfortunately, many faculty members found the Excel file difficult to use for the following reasons:

1. The open-ended questions. The open-ended questions stretched out in the cell. This meant the faculty members had to continue to scroll to the right to see each student response.
2. The Excel spreadsheet contained no graphs depicting the results.
3. The Excel spreadsheet listed the answers in words such as strongly disagree to strongly agree. Faculty members then had to convert the words to numbers to calculate means, standard deviations, and so forth.

Here are comments from four faculty members who liked the simplicity and ease of use of the mid-course evaluation tool, but expressed their frustration with the output of the mid-course evaluations.

First of all, the evaluation form is very hard to interpret and very hard to read. You could make it graphic and it would communicate much faster and much better. It's very hard to interpret what proportions are answering, which way. A simple bar graph, a histogram would tell the tale so much better and so much faster.

One thing I would like to comment on is on the way I got the information back. It's really hard to read because it's in an Excel spreadsheet, so I had to expand the columns because it's illegible, or you have to do it column by column and you can't just glance down... you either have to mess with the file or you have to keep scrolling through. So I wonder if a Word table would be something, or maybe I'm supposed to import it into a Word table or something. I have a small class so it wasn't a big deal because it was easy to do, but if I had to read through 75 of these.

I kinda read as much as I could, without reformatting everything, then I just stopped. I said, "This isn't worth my time." I didn't take the time to look at all the feedback because of the format that it was in. You know, I'm a professor, and my other faculty members are professors. So when something comes to us as a tool, we don't expect to have to then massage that tool. Otherwise, it's

inconvenient for us. We're not clerical staff, and I don't expect myself or other faculty members to do clerical types of activities. This ended up being a clerical type of activity for no reason. I mean, there's no reason for it that I know of. So I just said, "OK, that's it. I'm not going to bother with it at this point." Maybe I'll get a student assistant to go through it and format it when there's time, but as far as, you know, I probably won't look at it now until maybe next term, or whenever one of my assistants doesn't have much to do. Then I'll forward the spreadsheet and say, "Why don't you put this in a readable format?" So, I know that's negative, but it's not negative about the activity. It's about the end user being able to use the tool. If the end user can't use the tool conveniently, at least from my perspective, I'm not interested in the tool.

When I went into the evaluation, it was really poorly presented to me in trying to gather the information. I basically had to go through and type up all the information. I thought, "Gee, for all that energy and effort that we're putting into this and then we're making it difficult to retrieve information. Gosh, that seems kind of crazy." Okay, here's an example. So, my students in the main course, there are 64 students, and I think I had 33 respond to the survey. So now I have 33 people that I have comments like this (pointing to spreadsheet) and how do I put it together without spending a lot of time and energy? Which I did because I had to make some sense out of it...I extracted it all, but that was all time and energy that I had to put into it. I think it was great to be able to throw that survey out there in two seconds, add an extra question to it and throw it out there, it was really simple. But then the output for it was really time consuming for me. I probably spent three or four hours doing that, and I can't even imagine if you had a course of three hundred students. And if I were a faculty member with three hundred students, I wouldn't use it.

Response rate. Another complaint about the mid-course evaluation tool was that faculty members wanted a higher response rate from students. Table 9 shows the percentage of students who responded to the mid-course survey (based on responses from the faculty members survey). For example, as one of the survey questions, faculty members were asked, "What percentage of your students responded to the mid-course evaluation survey?" They could select responses in 20 percent increments (such as 10 to

20 percent, and 21 to 40 percent, up to 81 to 100 percent). One hundred and two faculty members responded to this survey question.

Some faculty members commented how when they conducted a mid-course evaluation in class, using pen and paper, they received responses from all of the students. Although the online mid-course evaluation had many benefits, some faculty members felt frustrated that only a few students gave them course feedback.

Table 9

Faculty Estimates of the Percentage of Students Who Responded to the Survey

Number of Faculty Responses per Estimate Range	Percentage of Students Who Responded to Mid-Course Evaluation (Faculty Estimate)
21	10–20
25	21–40
35	41–60
12	61–80
9	81–100
102	Total

The process was okay. I didn't have as good of a response. When I gave it in class, I've been doing mid-course evaluations for about five years, and of course then everyone does it because I do it in class. So I get all 60–64 students to return some sort of a response. But this time, I think out of 62 students, I only had 26 respond. So, almost half, but not quite.

I have what's called a bridging group, so I have ten people in this bridging group that I have evaluate me. Unfortunately, I only had two out of ten respond to it. Whereas the other way, the paper and pencil method, I pretty much got all ten out of ten back.

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One faculty member said he was going to conduct a mid-course evaluation next semester. However, the decision to use the mid-course evaluation tool and to conduct a mid-course evaluation using pen and paper in class was contingent upon improvement in the output of the mid-course evaluation data.

Oh, I'm still going to use midcourse evaluations. In this department, our department chair, in particular, is very keen on everybody doing that. I would like to do it this way, because I can just make an announcement in class, such as, "Hey this is really important. Please fill this out. I will follow up on it." But I'll have to see what the tool looks like. If it's not quite a bit better, then I'll probably just do it the way that I've been doing it. This is the first kind of launch of it I'm sure, so I will keep my eye on it.

Case Vignette

I conducted 30 interviews to gain a better understanding of the faculty member's experiences in conducting mid-course evaluations. The information gleaned from these interviews has been used to support the survey results from faculty members and students, the quantitative data from the mid-course evaluation and end-of semester student ratings. I also used data from the interviews to form a vignette. This vignette was written to provide faculty members with a real-life example of how one of their colleagues used mid-course evaluations to improve her teaching, as well as student learning.

Vignette Criterion Selection

The following section highlights a faculty member who improved her teaching and learning. She also participated in the survey and was interviewed. This faculty member was chosen based upon Pattons' purposive sampling ideas (Patton, 1990). The interview was selected because it met the criterion of what Patton (1990) describes as

intensity, meaning “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely, such as good students/poor students, above average/below average or deviant case” (Patton, *Purposive Sampling*, 1990, para. 2).

The following vignette shows one faculty member’s experience conducting a mid-course evaluation. This faculty member is currently part of the College of Health & Human Performance and has taught for eight years. The semester this study was conducted was the first time she had ever conducted a mid-course evaluation. This vignette is written in first-person format using the instructor’s own words from the interview. A pseudonym is used to preserve anonymity. In addition to being an information-rich case, I also chose to highlight this faculty member’s experience because I felt the interview was interesting, and the comments were comparative to comments from other faculty members in their interviews. This faculty member also participated in a debriefing session, which I attended. Comments from her debriefing session will follow after her vignette.

Vignette Example

Reason for conducting mid-course evaluation. The reason I did a mid-course evaluation—probably the first and foremost reason—was because in a discussion with another faculty member, he suggested I do the midcourse evaluation as a means to not only improve my course halfway through, but as the biggest investment to my students' careers academically to show them I am willing and able to adjust and accommodate their needs and concerns midway, not just at the end of the semester. The mid-course was just a way to improve my teaching. I'm always looking for ways to increase my teaching

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skills and show I'm committed to my students. I appreciate and will take their criticisms and comments.

In deciding a date to send the mid-course, I thought the best time would be the third week of October. I happened to be in San Diego at a conference at that time, so I had scheduled to do it right before Halloween. That just happened to be a very busy week with midterm exams so I actually did it the following week. I felt awful about scheduling it so late in the semester. I felt like, you know, the students are going to be giving me feedback on the course and the instructor in a couple of weeks anyway, but they did complete it and I think the only inconvenience was a couple students accidentally deleted the email that the CTL sent, so they contacted me, "Can you send me the link again? I wanna do it."

Reaction to feedback. I received the feedback and went through it. You know for an instructor, you have to kind of step back and realize their comments are at times not meant to be hurtful. They're just open and their taking this opportunity to express their concerns. I felt like some of the comments that were made were more a result of their frustration, possibly with midterms, than a true reflection of their thoughts about the class. You know, a couple of them took the opportunity to just hit on a few nit-picky issues, which, again it's great for me to understand and know because those are things that I can remedy now and/or next semester. I felt a few of the comments were probably more a result of their frustration with one or two assignments than them getting the overall picture of the course. What I had hoped is that they would give some constructive feedback on ways to improve the course rather than just one or two, few items, but again,

I mean, hopefully with my years of experience I'm able to separate out the comments that were just made out of frustration or anger.

I've taught many different courses, and this is by far my favorite. I feel like this is the class that I've really put my heart and soul into and kind of, probably so, as my husband would report, I get more involved than I probably should with this class because it is a passion of mine and an area where I focus much of my research on. This is the women's health class. This is just my heart's content to do good work in the community. So I feel like I'm really putting myself out there and putting all this time into my research and into my presentations, and I do a lot of external reading in preparation for this class. In my heart of hearts, I really feel like this course benefits the students more than just a grade in a course at BYU. For many students it can really launch their passions in this area, and I've heard from students who've come back and said, "This class was the one that really set my career up and I really tried to focus on."

I try not to take the comments personally, like we talked about, but I'll be honest, I opened these on Saturday, last weekend, and it kinda put me in a bad mood. I was thinking about it over the weekend and just thinking, like, what I hope they get out of it is not what they seem to be getting out of it at this point. Maybe by the end of the semester when we kind of wrap things up, they'll see the theme or the goals that I had. Right now, they're kind of hung up on the grades and the exams or the papers, where I want them to see the bigger picture. Not that I'm the perfect instructor or by any means that my class is perfect, but I really want them to get more out of it. And that's just a handful of students I think that made me feel that way.

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Changes made based on feedback. I did make some changes based on their feedback. One of the big themes I learned involved a community senior project where the students often have an opportunity to spend ten to fifteen hours in the community doing a specific project that we had outlined in class. My hopes with this project would be that they would take it and just kind of run with it. I've learned they want specific direction, which for me, at a college level, senior, 400, major class, I felt like they could use some of their own creativity. I didn't imagine I would have to hand hold so much which I have had to do, which is disappointing for me because there are the group of students who just take it, they're motivated. They make it fabulous. Then there are the ones that wait for me to give them direction.

One thing I think I will do next semester is possibly have clearer directive in the beginning. I will tell them that they should consider this to be an assignment from their boss. You wouldn't continue to ask your boss, "How do I do this? How do I do this? What do you want me to do?" In a work setting, you would make it work and if you needed direction, you could go back and say, "I did this. How does this look? Will you review this with me?" Rather than say, "I'm waiting for you to tell me what to do, and I need ten hours and I can't figure out what to do with my time."

Student learning and teaching improvement. In terms of student learning and teacher improvement, I feel like mid-course evaluations accomplish both. I think the students appreciate an opportunity for their voices to be heard. I prefer face-to-face interaction with my students. If they have a concern, I would much prefer that they come to my office and say, "I don't really understand this, and I'm really struggling." I think in settings when you get negative feedback, it instantly puts the instructor kind of in defense

mode, like, “Well it was in the syllabus, and if you didn't read it, you're not doing what you should be doing.” And so I don't appreciate that feeling of needing to be defensive with my students because it's not a defensive situation, it's just a communication issue if anything.

The mid-course evaluation gives students an opportunity for evaluation and assessment and that's an important aspect of the college career. If they take that opportunity to give feedback, I think it is part of the learning process and I also believe that it's an opportunity for them to express their views, which is learning. They can do it one of two ways. They can take it seriously and give some honest, open feedback that's not pointed or abrasive, or they can quickly rush through it and just think, “I like this class, but I don't like that teacher,” and just kind of go through it and not really take those steps for it to be a learning process.

I think the mid-course evaluation does improve my teaching because I'm able to see from their perspective, you know, what their frustrations are or what things they would improve. Again I don't know if I'm being overly analytical, but I really wanted them to say, “I think the lectures are well researched,” or “There's too many slides,” or “We need outlines to support the lecture.” I really wanted them to give specifics about the course structure, ways I can improve. With the comments I got, some of them, I really do truly want to improve, but I don't know what to do because they didn't really provide that hard evidence of ways that I could improve.

Will I do a mid-course evaluation again? I think I will. I appreciate knowing. I know among other faculty members I work with, it's kind of the dreaded student feedback. It is hard for the teacher to take that feedback and professionally put it in the

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vault and just use that as a way to improve teaching without taking it as a personal attack against you individually or your teaching. I think it's useful. I will do it again.

Debriefing Session Results

Structure of Debriefing Sessions

Parker Palmer (1993) phrased the term “Good Talk About Good Teaching” essentially to mean that good teaching can occur when we openly and honestly talk about concerns, struggles, and ideas with others. Good teaching can come in the form of a conversation with those who make up our community (Palmer, 1993). In terms of mid-course evaluations, good talk about good teaching can occur during a debriefing session. Faculty members have the opportunity to open up to their students, discuss the feedback they provided and make suggestions. In these settings they can talk about their passions and also challenges for the course.

Our task is to create enough safe spaces and trusting relationships within the academic workplace hedged about by appropriate structural protections that more of us will be able to tell the truth about our own struggles and joys as teachers in ways that befriend the soul and give it room to grow. Not all spaces can be safe, not all relationships trustworthy, but we can surely develop more of them than we now have so that an increase of honesty and healing can happen within us and among us for our own sake, the sake of our teaching, and the sake of our students. (Palmer & Scribner, 2007, p. 120)

Students also have an opportunity to participate in the conversation by sharing their thoughts and feelings on the feedback, providing suggestions, and also by gaining an understanding of the faculty member’s teaching style.

As mentioned earlier, I attended 8 debriefing sessions. These debriefing sessions were administered in different ways. Some lasted just a few minutes, and some lasted up to 40 minutes. A few faculty members prepared PowerPoint presentations for their

debriefing sessions. These presentations included statistics on participation and responses, as well as suggested changes. Some faculty members discussed changes they could make that students suggested. They also suggested reasons why they could not make some of the changes students suggested.

During some of the debriefing sessions, the faculty member would ask a question and allow the class to participate. Other faculty members were more reserved and had made decisions prior to coming to class regarding changes that would be made. Some of the faculty members expressed their motives for conducting a mid-course evaluation. Some faculty members stated how they wished the response rate had been higher. There was no right or wrong way to conduct a debriefing session. Faculty members were not instructed as part of the study on how they should conduct a debriefing session.

The following link contains a short video clip of a debriefing session performed by a BYU faculty member (<http://ctl.byu.edu/ctls-mid-course-evaluation-tool/>). I also attended this debriefing session.

Debriefing Session Example

Immediately following this interview, I attended the faculty member's course, outlined in the vignette, for a debriefing session. The class consisted of nearly 50 female students. In the following example, I outlined the debriefing experience (what happened, questions that were raised, how questions were resolved, the faculty member's feelings about the course and the mid-course evaluation, and so forth).

Once class began, the faculty member introduced me and explained why I was attending the class. She thanked the students for their honesty and openness on the midcourse evaluations. She also said that she felt that the mid-course evaluations would

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be beneficial for students to know she is invested in their academic careers and she hoped that the feedback she received would be helpful to improve the way she teaches the course. As it is a 400-level class, she has high expectations. She feels what they do and say needs to be a reflection of their level of education.

Next, the faculty member discussed how a few of the students had expressed concern (both face-to-face and in the survey), and she again expressed gratitude for that feedback. She told the class that most of the concerns dealt with the projects. She then discussed how when individuals work in groups there are always challenges because of different personalities and preferences. She then reminded the students that they have both individual papers and group work as part of their grades. Next she specifically talked about the community project. She shared how she hoped the students would be creative and not look to her for every individual question. She told the students she could have outlined every detail; however that would have defeated much of the purpose of the project.

The faculty member talked about how the format of her class is fairly open, and as a result, she sometimes goes off on a tangent. She told the class she would try to stick to what was outlined in the material for the day. She explained that Blackboard is a way for her to make sure that all the material is covered even if they don't have time to get to it all in class. She feels posting the PowerPoint presentations is very helpful for the students.

Following those remarks, she became sentimental and even began to cry. She told her students that she's very passionate about this class and that if she were to self-critique, she would say that she puts maybe too much energy into this class than any other class. It is more than just a course to her; it is more like her life's work. It is more than a job to

her. She would probably teach the class for free, or even pay to teach it. It seemed that the students really felt her love and concern. They were all watching her closely and paying attention to her words.

At the end of the debriefing session, she asked whether anyone had any other concerns or questions. There weren't any responses, and she then went to the course material for the day.

Group Mid-Course Evaluations

One of the positive effects of the mid-course evaluation tool was that most or all of the faculty members in several departments decided to participate. As stated earlier, one of the motivating factors faculty members cited for administering a mid-course evaluation was because they were encouraged by a department chair or other faculty members (7%). It should be stated that the Director for the CTL initiated this invitation to faculty chairs, who then passed on the invitation to the faculty members in their departments. The impact of these invitations in several departments, including the Department of Organizational Leadership & Strategy, the Counseling and Career Center, the Department of Mathematics (in this situation some faculty members participated in the mid-course evaluation sent by the CTL and the faculty members were invited to participate in a mid-course evaluation created by their department), and the College of Nursing was impressive—meaning most faculty members in the department or college participated.

As mentioned above, several departments participated in the mid-course evaluation. For example, all the faculty members who taught *Advanced Reading Strategies for College Success*, a student development course within the Counseling and

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Career Center participated in the mid-course evaluation. A student development course is a one or two credit course designed to help students with relevant college-related concerns, such as life planning and decision-making, career exploration, individual development, and managing life and career transitions.

Together, these three faculty members teach five sections of the *Advanced Reading Strategies for College Success* course. Once their students completed the mid-course evaluation and they received the results, a student assistant gathered information from the five sections and compiled the feedback. The faculty members appreciated the feedback because they did not know whether the student comments were from their section or from another section of the same course. This helped the faculty members not take offense by negative feedback. For example, one faculty member who was teaching a student development course said,

We took all the feedback, and it wasn't specific to any one class. They were across the board. That was easier because then I could think, "All these negative ones are from some other class and some other teacher." Nevertheless, we discussed the comments and made decisions about the implications for improving our course. Some we implemented as is, some we adapted, and some we justifiably ignored.

One of the common themes that emerged from the mid-course evaluations in the student development course was that students felt there was too much busy work in the course, particularly in the strategy area. In this course the students would have to try each learning strategy three times. Based on the mid-course evaluation feedback, the faculty members who teach this course decided the students would only have to try each strategy twice, instead of three times.

Another important change faculty members who taught this course made was a restructuring of the course. In the past, the framework for the course was that the students should do something before they read to prepare themselves (before strategies). Then they do something while they are reading to be sure they understand the material (during strategies). Then they do something after they have read to solidify the material and internalize it (after strategies). Up until the mid-course, all the professors had always taught the “before strategies”, followed by the “during strategies”, and then the “after strategies.” The students made comments that they wished they had known about the after strategies sooner. As a result of the feedback, the professor made the following changes, “But now we teach the strategies ‘before,’ ‘during,’ ‘after,’ ‘before,’ ‘during,’ ‘after,’ ‘before,’ ‘during,’ ‘after,’ all the way along. So that was a major change that came about because of student request.”

This same faculty member who participated with her department in the student development area talked about her debriefing session and student learning. She said that she had anticipated spending ten minutes on the debriefing session; however, she ended up spending 30–40 minutes debriefing in each of her three sections. The changes she made as a result of the mid-course evaluation and debriefing session have helped improved student learning.

We did a mid-course evaluation progress. Our students this semester are further at midterm in speeding up their reading than all of our classes were at the end of the semester last time. And why? Because last semester we had them turn in a log of their practice just three times during the semester. And now we have them turn it in every week. Well that yes, increases paperwork, but it's just plotting their progress. It takes five minutes or less, three minutes, thirty seconds. Students are doing more in one week than they used to do in that third of a semester. So, I'm saying, a small price for them to pay for the great progress they're making. They

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are further ahead now than our students were last semester at the end of the semester.

Improvements Made to Mid-Course Evaluation Tool

The CTL created the mid-course evaluation tool and sent it out to faculty members for the first time during fall semester 2008. Since receiving feedback about the mid-course evaluation, the CTL has made many changes to make the product better. The mid-course evaluation tool was sent to faculty members to use again during winter semester 2008.

At the time it went out, the following improvements had been made to the mid-course evaluation tool:

1. Faculty members can create as many open-ended questions as they desire.
2. Faculty surveys are saved in a way that allows faculty members to send out the same survey to their students the following semester or term.
3. Faculty members receive the results in a pdf format, rather than an Excel file.
4. The results show the instructor name, course name, and response rate.
5. For each question, faculty members can see the average rating, and the percentage of students who selected each option.
6. Open-ended questions are in a readable format. (Faculty members do not have to scroll across the page to read a response.) Appendix 10 provides a sample ratings result form.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Comparison of Findings to Literature

In this discussion section I will relate my findings from this mid-course evaluation study and compare them with findings from the literature. Then I will provide a list of recommendations, ideas for future research, and some practical applications. I will conclude by summarizing the main findings from this dissertation.

Principles for Effective Teaching

Earlier in the literature I mentioned Chickering and Gamson's seven principles for effective teaching. Several of their principles were also mentioned by students and faculty who participated in my mid-course evaluation study. For example, communicating expectations more clearly was the number one change students requested and faculty made from the mid-course evaluations. The number two request from students for faculty to improve, as well as the number two change faculty made was to add more active learning experiences. Active learning is Chickering and Gamson's third principle for effective teaching. Both of these principles of active learning and expectations were also mentioned as factors contributing to improved teaching from my thesis. "Communicates high expectations" is Chickering and Gamson's sixth principle for effective teaching.

Instructional Models for Improvement

Earlier I discussed several instructional models for improvements. I also provided in the practical application section, a five-step process faculty members can take to get

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the most out of their mid-course evaluations. These steps included the following: (a) conduct a mid-course evaluation, (b) read feedback from students, (c) discuss feedback from students, (d) implement change, and (e) evaluate progress. This five-step process is similar to MaryEllen Weimer's five-step instructional model, which includes the following steps:

1. Understanding. Faculty members understand the technique they can incorporate into their teaching. One of these techniques could be using a mid-course evaluation.
2. Information. Faculty members obtain feedback from their students and peers. Faculty members receive information from their peers when they request this information in a mid-course evaluation and read it.
3. Change. Faculty members identify what needs to be changed. Faculty members who conduct a mid-course can also understand what they need to change in their teaching based on student feedback.
4. Incorporation. The faculty members can incorporate the changes into their teaching. This step is similar to the fourth step in my five-step process, which is implement change. Faculty can discuss and implement these changes with their students or implement them on their own.
5. Evaluation. Both Weimer and my five-step process end with evaluation; although evaluation can be a process that faculty members practice all throughout the five-steps.

Motivation to Change

Earlier I cited how Paulsen & Feldman (1995) stated that if faculty members feel as though the changes they made to improve their teaching were meaningful, rewarding, and/or significant, then these changes are more likely to be sustained. I saw this characteristic in many of the faculty members who participated in my mid-course evaluation study. In fact, all 30 of the faculty members whom I interviewed said they would conduct a mid-course evaluation again. Some of their motives for conducting another mid-course were because they saw or predicted changes in their teaching that were meaningful, rewarding, and/or significant.

Perception of Usefulness of Mid-Course Evaluations

Research from Spooren & Mortelmans (2006) states some faculty do not make use of the evaluations they receive from students because they do not believe they are valid. Four faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluation study did not read the feedback they received from their students, although they did not read the feedback because they had not received it at the time they took the survey. This is a very small percentage of the faculty who participated in the study. The majority of the faculty who participated in the study found the mid-course evaluations to be valid and useful. This result corresponds to Spencer & Fly's research (1992) where 77 percent of the 250 tenured faculty members who were surveyed reported that student evaluations were not taken into consideration when faculty members made changes to their teaching.

In the literature review I mentioned that a minimal amount of research had been conducted on how faculty members perceive and use mid-course evaluations (Schmelkin-Pedhazur, Spencer, & Gellman, 1997). I feel my study provides a thorough analysis on

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how faculty members perceive mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching and student learning.

Paper Versus Web-Based Evaluations

Research (Ardalan et al., 2007) suggests mid-course evaluations administered online typically have a lower response rate than paper-based evaluations. Results from this study reflect similar results. However, some faculty members actually received moderately high response rates. For example, 34 percent of the faculty who participated in the study had response rates between 41–60 percent. Nine percent even had 81–100 percent of their students respond. Research shows some of the reasons students do not respond to these evaluations is because of anonymity, student apathy, inconvenience, technical problems, and amount of time required to fill out the evaluation (Ballantyne, 2000). Students who did not fill out the mid-course evaluation from my study said it was because they forgot (14 responses) or because they did not receive the email (9 responses).

Mid-Course Evaluation Results Compared With Literature from Meta Analyses

Meta analyses that have been conducted on ratings show that feedback that is received early in the semester can yield a ten percent increase in end-of-semester evaluation scores (Cashin, 1995). This result is similar to faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluation who read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes. These faculty members received a nine percent increase in their end-of-semester ratings.

As stated in the literature review, Cohen compared the impact of providing mid-course evaluation with teaching effectiveness. He found that faculty members who did

the mid course were at the 58th percentile at the end of the semester. Similarly, in my study, faculty members who performed the mid-course evaluation and discussed it with their students were at the 64th percentile and the end of the semester. Faculty members who did read the feedback and did not discuss it with their students were in the 54th percentile at the end of the semester. Faculty members who conducted the mid-course evaluation, discussed it with their students and did not make changes were at the 63rd percentile at the end of the semester. Faculty members who read the feedback, discussed it with their students and made changes were in the 65th percentile at the end of the semester. This number is comparative to Cohen's study where faculty members who conducted a mid-course evaluation and were aided by a consultant were at the 74th percentile at the end of the semester.

Recommendations

As demonstrated in this dissertation, faculty members who conduct mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching. The amount of improvement increases as faculty members read the results, discuss the feedback with their students, and make changes.

Based on this research, I suggest the following recommendations:

1. Faculty member emails regarding mid-course evaluation. The CTL should continue to send an email to all faculty members at BYU each semester with information about the mid-course evaluation and a link to send out this evaluation to their students. Based on the research from this study, faculty members appreciated the email notification about the mid-course evaluation and the simplicity in administering it to their students.

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2. **Invitations.** The sixth most common reason faculty members cited for administering a mid-course evaluation was because they were encouraged by a department chair or other faculty members (7%). This number could improve and the number of faculty members who administer mid-course evaluations would increase if every chair on campus invited their faculty members for whom they have a stewardship to send out a mid-course evaluation. Faculty chairs could also give a special invitation to faculty members who are particularly struggling with their teaching or who continually have low online student ratings.
3. **Tech Tip.** The CTL currently sends out a tech tip each month to all BYU faculty members. One of the tech tips could include research on the benefits of sending out a mid-course evaluation and also provide examples of how faculty members improved from conducting these mid-course evaluations.
4. **Student education.** One of the complaints faculty members made about receiving feedback from students was that some students did not provide constructive feedback. Students should be educated on how to provide useful feedback to faculty members. Faculty members could discuss what useful feedback means in class, or a section in the faculty member's syllabus could include a portion about the impact of mid-course and end-of-semester ratings and how to provide useful feedback to faculty members. Useful feedback provides the instructor with information on how to improve the course, rather than a student just saying that he doesn't like the course or that the class is boring without any explanation.
5. **Consultation.** The CTL currently offers a service in which faculty members can have a faculty consultant review their student feedback and help the faculty

- members to make changes based on their input. I recommend this service continue to be offered, possibly with greater visibility to faculty members. Many faculty members receive the feedback and want to make changes; however, they are unsure what changes to make and how to make them. Faculty consultants could serve as a resource to these faculty members and help them make the most improvement of their mid-course evaluations.
6. Habit. Faculty members should learn to make a habit out of conducting mid-course evaluations. They can conduct a mid-course evaluation for the courses where they would like to receive feedback. Even if a faculty member feels like he or she knows how the class is going and what the students need, he or she could still benefit from a single comment from a student. Faculty members who continually send out mid-course evaluations will have data to compare their progress each semester. They will be able to know how they are doing during the middle of the course, at the end of the course, and also their progress on the course throughout the years. Mid-course evaluations are just one way of measuring student learning. Faculty members who choose not to administer a mid-course evaluation could consider other measures for student learning such as exam scores, peer observations, and additional ways of gathering feedback.

Practical Application

To have the greatest impact on teaching and student learning, faculty members should take all of the steps in conducting a successful mid-course evaluation and encourage their peers to do the same. Namely, they should send out a mid-course evaluation each semester. They should read the feedback, discuss it with their students,

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and make changes. Finally, they should evaluate their progress after each semester. Based upon the research from this dissertation and research conducted in the literature reviews, mid-course evaluations can be a valuable tool for improving teaching and student learning. Faculty can get the most out of their mid-course evaluations, in terms of improving learning and student teaching, when they follow each of the five steps with all the courses they teach (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Five-step process to getting the most out of a mid-course evaluation.

Limitations in this study stem primarily from the quantitative area of measuring perceptions of student learning and faculty teaching primarily from the scores from the mid-course evaluation. I have mentioned when faculty members conduct a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback, discuss it with their students, and make changes, their scores are likely to improve. However, I also recognize that confounding variables exist. For example, a faculty member may teach theory during the first half of the class and then application the second half. Students may like the second half better and may rate their faculty members higher based on the course content, rather than the mid-course

evaluation. Faculty members may also initiative other changes, apart from the mid-course evaluation to help improve their teaching and student learning. These changes may have caused the faculty to receive higher student ratings at the end of the semester, rather than the mid-course evaluations.

Other confounding variables include the subject matter. Some students may give higher ratings based on whether they like the course content, rather than whether the faculty member conducted a mid-course evaluation. Students may also be at different levels of understanding of the course content at the beginning of the course. Several students could have received A's in the course. One of these students may have learned a great deal, and another student may have only learned a small amount because he or she already knew the content before he or she entered the course. This level of understanding from the students could have also affected the ratings at the end of the semester.

Another limitation is the number of students who responded to the mid-course evaluations. Some faculty members may have only had five students who responded to the mid-course evaluation, while other faculty members may have had 100 students respond. One high score from a response rate of five students can cause a much larger impact in the end-of semester scores, than one student from a section of 100 students who filled out the mid-course evaluation.

Further, I only measured faculty members who used the mid-course evaluation. Essentially, I did not have a treatment and control group. Some faculty members, who did not use the mid-course evaluation tool, could have seen improvement from their mid-course to the end-of-semester as a result of making other changes, or even from not making any changes.

Future Research

I have just listed recommendations for the mid-course evaluation. Future research could focus on the following areas:

1. Additional areas from online student ratings. Although the research primarily viewed the areas that pertained to student learning from the online student ratings, future research could be conducted on other areas included in the online student ratings in which faculty members could improve such as student involvement, how effectively concepts were explained, the amount of time that was valuable in class, and so forth. To be able to make a comparison, the same questions asked in the online student ratings at the end of the semester could also be asked as part of the mid-course evaluation.
2. Comparison of scores from past semester. In this study I compared scores from the mid-course evaluation and the online student ratings from the end of the semester or term. Future research could be conducted where scores are compared from past semesters as well. For example, if a faculty member taught Biology 200 section 3 for two consecutive years, those scores could be compared with the current mid-course and end-of-semester scores. In addition, an analysis on the student comments over a period of time could also be reviewed to see if comments from students change from semester to semester, based on suggestions from students.
3. Student Interviews. In this study, I interviewed faculty members about their experiences using mid-course evaluations. Another area of research would be to conduct student interviews on their experiences taking the mid-course evaluation

and compare them to the faculty member's responses. Talking with students about other measures of student learning could also be considered for future research.

4. Nearly one third of the section mean scores decreased (31%). Future research could include an investigation of why these scores decreased, and whether there was any relationship between the amount of effort faculty put into their mid-course evaluations (whether they read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have provided information to answer the four research questions.

1. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching?
2. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve student learning?
3. Do students perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their learning?
4. How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?

As research results were provided in separate sections from faculty interviews, students' and faculty surveys, and mid-course and end-of-semester scores, I will now recap the responses.

Faculty Perception of Mid-Course Evaluations and Teaching Improvement

First, do faculty members who participate in mid-course evaluations perceive that they improve their teaching and student learning? Yes, faculty members who take a few minutes to send out a mid-course evaluation each semester or term perceive they will see improvement. Out of 510 scores (128 sections) from faculty members who participated in the study, 342 scores (86 sections) showed improvement from mid-course to end-of-semester (67 percent). In terms of faculty members' perception on whether mid-course

evaluations can be used to improve teaching, 28 of the 30 faculty members (93%) who were interviewed felt mid-course evaluations improved their teaching. Faculty member' perception of the amount of improvement when they would receive is actually higher than the actual improvement they received (based on the end-of-semester scores); however, improvement in teaching still occurred.

When examining the faculty member survey, the fourth most common reason faculty members cited for conducting a mid-course evaluation was to improve their teaching. The most common reason students (37 students, 30%) mentioned they filled out the mid-course evaluation was to provide feedback to their instructors. These students wanted to help their instructors improve their teaching and the course. Further, 45 percent of the students surveyed (56 students) said they would rate their professor higher at the end of the semester on the online student ratings because he or she conducted a mid-course evaluation. Based on the quantitative data, as well as the qualitative data, conducting a mid-course evaluation improves teaching.

Faculty Perception of Mid-Course Evaluations and Student Learning

The second research question was, "Does student learning improve when faculty members administer a mid-course evaluation and act on feedback from students?" As mentioned earlier, the four specific items where student learning was measured dealt with interest in student learning, effectiveness in materials and activities, the amount learned, and development of intellectual skills. On average, the faculty participants, as well as those who did not participate in the study, showed improvement on their online student ratings at the end of the semester for each of the four learning items.

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In terms of faculty members' perception, 27 of the 30 faculty members (90%) who were interviewed felt mid-course evaluations improve student learning. From the faculty member survey, 62 of the 105 faculty members (59%) felt mid-course evaluations improved student learning. Only 11 percent (12 faculty members) did not feel mid-course evaluations improved student learning. The rest of the faculty members were uncertain and wanted to see their end-of-semester scores. A variety of reasons were listed why faculty members stated in their survey responses that conducting a mid-course evaluation would improve student learning. From the survey data, the fifth most common reason faculty members stated why they conducted a mid-course evaluation was to improve student learning.

Student Perceptions of Mid-Course Evaluations and Learning

The third research question pertained to whether students perceived mid-course evaluations improved their teaching. From the student surveys, nearly half of the students (47%, 58 students) felt their learning would increase because their professors conducted a mid-course evaluation. There were 30 students (24%) who were uncertain or said that their learning might increase. Combining the two groups, 71 percent (88 students) felt when their learning might or would increase because their faculty members conducted a mid-course evaluation.

Use of Mid-Course Evaluations to Improve Learning and Teaching

The final research question was, "How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?" The results from the research show that faculty members improve their learning and teaching incrementally based on the

amount the faculty member does with the mid-course evaluation. For example, faculty members who read the student feedback and did not discuss it with their students saw a 2 percent improvement in their teaching (based on online student rating scores). Faculty members who read the feedback, discussed it with students, and did not make changes saw a 5 percent improvement. Faculty members who read the feedback and discussed it with their students saw an 8 percent improvement. Finally, faculty members who did the most with their mid-course evaluations saw the greatest amount of improvement. Specifically, the faculty members who conducted the mid-course, read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes saw a 9 percent improvement. Essentially, just by taking those four simple steps, faculty members could see nearly a 10 percent improvement in their online student ratings. Other variables that were not directly measured may have also played a role in the faculty members' improvement.

Mid-Course Evaluations as a Precision Feedback Tool

In addition to improving online student ratings, there are a variety of other benefits from gathering student feedback. Some of these include improving the relationship with the students, showing students that the professor cares about their learning, gaining a better understanding how the class is functioning, and so forth. Gathering student feedback from students does not take a great deal of time or effort, but still pays big dividends for faculty members in terms of improving teaching and student learning.

A metaphor for mid-course evaluations could be an individual who receives laser surgery to improve eyesight. Laser surgery is relatively painless, has short recovery time, is a simple procedure by the standards of many other complicated surgeries, and usually

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leads to improved vision. For example, most patients following surgery see at 20/20 or 20/40. The surgeon performing the surgery uses a laser to zoom precisely to the tissue that needs to be sculpted (with little or no effect on the surrounding tissue) and changes the shape of the cornea.

Likewise, when faculty members conduct a mid-course evaluation, they receive feedback and results designed specifically for that course and their teaching. The feedback is based upon students who take part in the class. Like laser surgery, conducting a mid-course evaluation is relatively painless, takes a short amount of time (compared to other teaching techniques), and can yield significant improvements, particularly when faculty members read the feedback, discuss it with their students, and make changes. A mid-course evaluation can be a precision feedback tool for faculty members, allowing them to make changes in the specific course they are teaching.

Research That Validates Mid-Course Evaluation Results

To show further validation on the results from this dissertation, my master's thesis focused on contributing factors to improved teaching at BYU, a study which will be published in *Innovative Higher Education* (McGowan, W.R & Graham, 2009). In my thesis I outlined what more than 200 faculty members at BYU did over a three year period to make significant and sustained improvements in their teaching.

Through the office of the Academic Vice President, I sent 307 faculty members an email survey and asked them to answer four questions about what they did to improve their teaching. These 307 faculty members had improved at least 1.5 points in a specific course over a three-year period for three consecutive semesters. I received 203 responses, which was a 66% response rate. The first of the four questions was open-ended: "Your

student ratings have increased for at least three consecutive semesters during the last three years in your ____class. What factors led to this change in your teaching performance?”

I read the survey responses from all of the respondents, categorized them into 45 detailed categories, coded this information, and then placed each response in a column in Excel. All of the responses that stated the same factor were combined. I took these 45 categories and then combined them into 13 overall factors that contributed to improved teaching in the opinions of survey respondents. The following top five categories comprised more than two-thirds of the responses explaining what changes faculty members had introduced: (a) active/practical learning, (b) teacher/student interactions, (c) clear expectations/learning outcomes, (d) faculty member’s preparation, and (e) evaluation.

From the mid-course study, the number one change students requested that faculty make, the number one change faculty members made, and also the number three change faculty members made to improve their teaching was clearer expectations. The number two factor students requested and faculty members changed from the mid-course study, and also the number one change faculty members made in the improving teaching study was more active learning experiences. Further reduction of busy work was the number three requested change for students and the number four change for faculty members in the mid-course evaluation study. Faculty preparation was the number five change faculty members requested from the mid-course study, and the fourth most common change faculty members made in the improving teaching study. Table 10 shows the similarities between what students requested and faculty members changed in the mid-course study

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and the changes faculty members made in the improving teaching study. Similarities exist in four of the five areas listed.

Table 10

Similarities (in Decreasing Order) Between Mid-Course and Improving Teaching Studies

Mid-Course Study		Improving Teaching Study
Students' Desired Changes (n=169 responses)	Faculty Changes (n=105 responses)	Faculty Changes (n=203 responses)
1. Clearer Expectations (60 responses, 36%)	1. Clearer Expectations (30 responses, 29%)	1. Active Learning (96 responses, 20%)
2. Active Learning (43 responses, 25%)	2. Active Learning (25 responses, 24%)	2. Teacher/Student Interactions (75 responses, 15%)
3. Reduction of Busy Work (28 responses, 17%)	3. More review (12 responses, 11%)	3. Clearer Expectations (63 responses, 13%)
4. No Changes (22 responses, 13%),	4. Reduction of Busy Work (6 responses, 6%),	4. Faculty Preparation (57 responses, 12%)
5. Faculty Preparation (9 responses, 5 percent)	5. Slowed down (5 responses, 5%)	5. Evaluation (46 responses, 9%)

Another area of similarity between the mid-course study and the improving teaching study involved the amount of effort required to improve teaching and student learning. In this mid-course study, in the interviews faculty members commented on how sending out the mid-course evaluation involved little effort. Discussing the feedback with their students only took a few minutes of time, and the effort involved to make changes was minimal. Similarly, as part of the improving teaching study, I interviewed 30 faculty members. Approximately 78 percent of the faculty members commented that the effort it took to make these changes was minimal.

In essence, they were fine-tuning their teaching. For example, one faculty member said, “Most of the changes I have made are simple, but they make a big difference to the students.” Another said, “It took a little bit of time. Overall the changes reduced a lot of the grading work I had to do. It reduced some of the load off of me.” Another interviewee said he did not put forth any additional effort. He simply changed his focus. Although the effort to change did not require a great deal of each faculty member’s time, the results were quite apparent, important, and improved online student ratings.

From the results from the dissertation, as well as the results from my master’s thesis on improving teaching, faculty members can learn that improving teaching and student learning can happen by making small course corrections, with minimal amounts of effort. As faculty members lead busy lives and many do not have a lot of time to make large course corrections or take a series of courses on improving teaching, they can find comfort in knowing that doing simple and small things such as sending out a mid-course evaluation or making a course correction can improve online student ratings, as well as making an improvement in the area of student learning.

Mid-Course Evaluation Comparison for Fall 2008 and Fall 2009

Although many faculty members had a positive experience conducting a mid-course evaluation, some faculty members mentioned a few drawbacks. As mentioned previously, one of the major frustrations faculty members experienced with the mid-course evaluation was the output of the results they received. I outlined the changes, and improvements were made for the following semester. Since Fall 2008 (the first semester of inviting faculty members to participate in a mid-course evaluation), many more faculty members participated in the mid-course evaluation the following semester (Winter 2009).

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In comparing Fall 2008 Semester with Winter 2009 Semester, there were 75 additional faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluations during the Winter 2009 Semester. Plus, there were 286 additional course sections where mid-course evaluations were used during Winter 2009. There were 7,813 more students who responded to the mid-course evaluation for Winter 2009. There were 13,856 more students who received the mid-course invitation in Winter 2009. Table 11 shows a comparison of the use of the mid-course evaluation tool from Fall 2008 to Winter 2009.

Table 11

Mid-Course Evaluation Comparison for Fall 2008 and Fall 2009

Growth of Mid-Course Evaluation Tool	Fall 2008	Winter 2009	Increase
Number of faculty members using mid-course evaluations	305	380	75
Number of course sections using mid-course evaluations	646	932	286
Number of students who responded to mid-course evaluations	7,787	15,600	7,813
Number of students who received a mid-course evaluation	16,860	30,716	13,856

These numbers should be encouraging to faculty members and chairs, as well as personnel at the CTL. Essentially, these numbers show that more faculty members have become interested in the mid-course evaluation tool. It also means that faculty members are using the mid-course evaluation in more of their sections. Further, it means that the importance of participating in a mid-course evaluation has increased and more faculty

members have been motivated to take action in conducting an online mid-course evaluation.

Of course these numbers do not show the number of faculty members who participated in mid-course evaluations on their own (in-class evaluations, or evaluations such as suggestion boxes). In addition, these numbers do not tell us if the faculty members who used the mid-course evaluation in the fall also used the mid-course evaluation in the winter. The 380 faculty members who participated could have been faculty members who participated in fall and also could be new faculty members who decided to try out the mid-course evaluation tool.

Hope for Faculty who Conduct Mid-Course Evaluations

Overall, the results from this mid-course study show faculty members can improve their teaching, as well as student learning by conducting a mid-course evaluation. Out of 510 scores, (approximately 128 sections), improvement was made in 352 scores (69 percent). Although faculty members improved their online student ratings at the end of the semester simply by sending their students a mid-course evaluation, faculty members saw the most improvement in their ratings when they sent out the mid-course evaluation, read the feedback, discussed the feedback with their students, and made changes.

The results of this study should be encouraging to faculty members who may feel they want to improve their teaching and increase student learning but do not have a great deal of time to spend on making changes. Faculty developers, teaching improvement specialists, and faculty members in leadership positions who are looking for ways to help

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their colleagues improve teaching performance can also suggest mid-course evaluations as a simple, yet effective way to improve teaching and student learning.

Chapter 7: Summary Article

Abstract

This paper adds value in the area of educational and faculty development. The focus of this paper is to highlight the effect mid-course evaluations have on teaching and student learning. I used a mixed methods approach, combining faculty and student surveys, faculty interviews, debriefing sessions, and a comparison of mid-course evaluations scores with end-of-semester scores. Out of 510 section mean scores (128 sections) from faculty members who participated in the study, 342 section mean scores (86 sections) showed improvement from mid-course to end-of-semester (67 percent). Overall participants saw improvement from their mid-course scores to their end-of-semester scores just by conducting a mid-course evaluation. Faculty members saw the most improvement in their ratings when they conducted a mid-course evaluation, read the feedback and discussed it with their students, and then made changes, based upon student feedback. The results of this study should be encouraging to all faculty members and administrators who may feel they want to improve their teaching and increase student learning but do not have a great deal of time to spend on making changes.

*Introduction**Statement of Problem*

Many university faculty members struggle with their teaching performance. Some of these faculty members give up on themselves, concluding they are not effective teachers. What if teaching performance could be improved by using a simple mid-course evaluation tool? What if even greater improvement could be made by faculty members

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using the tool and listening to the students' feedback and taking action? The purpose of this study is to determine the faculty and student perceptions that mid-course evaluations have on teaching performance and student learning.

Several studies have been done on the value of mid-course evaluations. Some of these of the benefits mentioned in the literature include (a) increased accessibility (Bullock, 2003), (b) better versatility in being able to easily modify the web-based form, (Henderson, 2002), (c) reduced processing costs (Bothell, 2003, Johnson, 2003), (d) data collection and reports that are more accurate, and (e) even more thoughtful responses from students (Johnson, 2003), and (f) anonymity in writing (Sheehan, 2001).

Although I have listed six primary benefits of mid-course evaluations, several areas of research pertaining to mid-course evaluations is lacking. In particular, I found only one empirical study, conducted nearly 30 years ago, that demonstrates improved ratings and increased student learning through the use of mid-course evaluations. This study provides a basis for the need to investigate further the impact that conducting mid-course evaluations has on improving online student ratings, as well as student learning, since only minimal evidence currently exists. Further, a minimal amount of research has been conducted on how faculty members perceive and use these ratings (Schmelkin-Pedhazur, Spencer, & Gellman, 1997).

The primary purpose of this study then is to understand the effect or potential impact mid-course evaluations can have on student learning, as well as on improving teaching.

Research Questions

In this paper, I will address the following questions:

1. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their teaching?
2. Do faculty members perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve student learning?
3. Do students perceive that using mid-course evaluations can improve their learning?
4. How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?

Review of the Literature

In this section, I will provide an overview on the scholarship of teaching, the importance and characteristics of improvement, timing of feedback, case studies of mid-course evaluations and teaching effectiveness, and the need for future research.

Expectations for Teachers

No instructor grows up thinking, “I really want to be a bad teacher!” Some teachers may take great joy in being considered “hard or demanding, but never bad” (Phillips, 2001, p. iv). Rather, individuals who become teachers generally want to be the very best they can “become in their field and seek to have elevated purposes in their teaching pursuits” (Fink, 2003, p. 244). They want their students to have “significant learning experiences, grow, and progress” (p. 6).

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It is my experience and belief that nearly all faculty members have deep inner dreams of what they would like their teaching to be like—and those dreams are significantly different from their ordinary, everyday experiences in the classroom. If some way could be found to encourage faculty members to dream their dreams and to have a realistic hope of making these dreams a reality, they would have the basis they need for saying, “Yes, it is worthwhile for me to invest in learning how to be a better teacher.” (Fink, 2003, p. 8)

However, despite these high aspirations to become the greatest teachers, oftentimes faculty members consider the literature on that which makes an excellent teacher, or watch a faculty member whom they feel is an outstanding teacher and immediately shut down or give up thinking that they can’t improve because they believe they can never be as good of a teacher as that professor for various reasons. They may also get discouraged if they spend time on teaching activities and research that does not improve their ratings (Hattie & Marsh, 1996).

Chickering and Gamson (1991) have done significant research on effective teaching and have stated that the following seven principles should be used as guidelines for faculty members: (a) encourage contact between students and faculty members, (b) develop reciprocity and cooperation among students, (c) encourage active learning, (d) give prompt feedback, (e) emphasize time on task, (f) communicate high expectations, and (g) respect diverse talents and ways of learning. Although a great deal has been learned and gained from research on teaching in higher education, “much still remains unknown, and most remains unused by practitioners themselves” (Menges, 2000, p. 5).

Importance and Characteristics of Improvement

Feedback of high quality that helps inform the faculty member of the student perceptions of his or her teaching is often difficult to receive. Without feedback, faculty

members may not improve their teaching as they are relying on their own perception of their teaching successes and difficulties. Regular evaluation on the course from students is seen as an essential process of quality improvement (Brown, Race, and Smith, 1997). Teaching improvement is a focus at many universities and colleges throughout the world, as it is often connected with increases in salary, faculty appointments, and career advancement.

To measure growth, one must understand how growth works and its importance. A program that looks toward the “cultivation of faculty members growth is a necessity in every institution” (Russell, 1993, p. 1020). Faculty members who do not strive to grow in their teaching performance become comfortable with a low-level performance, and also become inflexible in their teaching methods and procedures (Russell, 1993).

Faculty member improvement is essential for a variety of reasons. First, faculty members who experience improvement in their teaching tend to increase in their level of teaching satisfaction as well as their happiness. Second, faculty members who do not strive to improve in their teaching are less likely to succeed in motivating their students to achieve additional improvement (Russell, 1993).

Although a variety of resources exist to help faculty members improve, ultimately, it is the faculty members who must determine they want to change or that change is needed before lasting change can occur, and usually that change takes time. Many instructional models of improvement have been developed. For example, John Centra’s (1993) model, is based upon the assumption that formative evaluation can lead to optimum performance and improvement when the faculty gains new knowledge, values this knowledge, understand what needs to be changed, and is motivated to change.

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Although some faculty members do not endorse the use of student ratings, they are one of the most common methods of rating the effectiveness of faculty members (Heckert, Latier, Ringwald, & Silvey, 2006). While some faculty members may be skeptical of the accuracy of student ratings, a great deal of research has been performed to validate the usefulness of these ratings (Aleamoni, 1999; Feldman, 1993; Marsh & Dunkin, 1997; Wachtel, 1998). However, a minimal amount of research has been conducted on how faculty members perceive and use these ratings (Schmelkin-Pedhazur, Spencer, & Gellman, 1997).

Timing of Feedback

In many colleges and universities, students often have the opportunity at the end of the course to rate the faculty member's teaching, and provide feedback on the overall experience. For many students and faculty members, this feedback arrives too late. The feedback, if used, cannot directly benefit the current students. It can only be used to benefit the next class of students (Keutzer, 1993). Hofman and Kremer (1983) suggested that evaluation reports of faculty members should be obtained sooner in the course to allow for changes to be made before the end of the course. Angelo and Cross (1994) also discovered that mid-course evaluations have the greatest benefit when the faculty members review the results and interpret them in a timely manner (Bullock, 2003).

Faculty members who conduct mid-course evaluations can benefit in the following ways:

1. The feedback can immediately be used to make changes to the course.
2. Students feel additional freedom in designing their educational process.

3. Faculty members can receive specific feedback
4. Faculty members can ask for specific feedback.
5. The attitude of the students can be altered more positively toward the faculty members because they can see that their viewpoints and opinions matter.
6. The feedback goes directly to the instructor, rather than administration (Keutzer, 1993).

Mid-Course Evaluation Case Studies and Their Effect on Teaching Improvement

In this section, I will describe several research studies that have been conducted on mid-course evaluations and teaching effectiveness. Cohen (1991) reviewed 17 studies comparing the impact of providing mid-course feedback with no feedback on teaching effectiveness (perceived quality of teacher instruction). He discovered there was a relatively small impact on teaching effectiveness (effect size = .20). Cohen (1980) conducted another study and found that feedback from ratings was even more effective when it was coupled with individual consultation (effect size = .64). He concluded that faculty members who desire to improve to their greatest potential need the results from the ratings and support from a consultant (as cited in Penny & Coe, 2004).

Furthermore, Menges and Brinko (1986) updated Cohen's study six years later and reported a larger effect size when student ratings were combined with consultation (effect size = 1.10). To put these numbers into perspective, faculty members who do not receive feedback from a consultant would perform at the 50th percentile, whereas typical faculty members who received their ratings feedback with consultation would perform at the 86th percentile (as cited in Penny & Coe, 2004).

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Prince and Goldman (1981) conducted a study and discovered mid-course evaluations did lead to higher ratings at the end of the course. Another study was conducted by Brown (2008) to determine how students perceived mid-course evaluations and how students perceived the course and the instructor when they took these evaluations. Results showed that most of the participants (89%) felt faculty members should conduct mid-course evaluations because they believed these evaluations would improve instructor, as well as student performance. Although some research has been performed on mid-course evaluations, additional research is still needed in the areas of student learning and faculty teaching.

Design of the Research Study

The Study

This study used a mixed-methods study to determine the effects mid-course evaluations have on improving teaching and student learning at Brigham Young University (BYU), which is a private church-sponsored university. The University's primary focus is on undergraduate education although 68 master's and 25 doctoral degree programs are offered. Approximately 34,000 students attend BYU, and there are approximately 1,600 faculty members. Mid-course evaluations are important in teaching as they can help faculty make course changes in the middle of the semester, build greater rapport with students, and improve online student ratings at the end of the semester. Faculty members advance in rank and status based on the scores from their online student ratings, their research, and their service. For this study, I identified faculty who used the mid-course evaluation tool and outlined the effects of their use. Faculty who filled out the

mid-course evaluation survey and participated in an interview or debriefing session are defined as participants in this paper.

Mid-Course Evaluation Tool

During fall semester 2008, employees at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) created an online mid-course evaluation tool to help faculty members conduct evaluations. The mid-course evaluation contained two survey options. The two-question survey included the following questions.

1. What is going well in class? What contributes most to your learning?
2. What could be improved?

The four-question survey included the following rating scale items with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. I am learning a great deal in this course.
2. Course materials and learning activities are effective in helping me learn.
3. This course is helping me develop intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and integration of knowledge).
4. The instructor shows genuine interest in students and their learning.

Once the faculty members selected the questions, a survey was mailed to all of the students in that particular course. After the survey closed (three–five days), the faculty member received an email containing an Excel spreadsheet with the students' feedback. The mid-course evaluation tool was available to faculty members the first week of Winter Semester 2009 until the online student rating forms became available on March 27, 2009.

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Identification of Faculty Sample

All BYU faculty members received an email from the Director of the CTL on September 18, 2008. The email introduced them to the mid-course evaluation tool and provided a link for them to administer the evaluation. As part of this email, faculty members were also encouraged to participate in a study on mid-course evaluations and use the four-question evaluation. Neither mid-course evaluation scores, nor end of course evaluation scores could be obtained from the faculty members who sent out the 2-question mid-course evaluation, as both of the questions were open-ended.

Data Collection Procedures

To answer the research questions, I used a variety of methods to support the data including faculty members scores from the mid-course evaluation and end-of semester online ratings, faculty members surveys, faculty members interviews, student interviews, and debriefing sessions.

I conducted 30 interviews from the 105 participants to better understand the experience faculty members had participating in the mid-course evaluations with their students, along with their reasons for conducting a mid-course evaluation, their overall experience, how it affected student learning, and so forth. I separated the faculty into two groups. Group 1 contained faculty members who had scores from 6.0 to 8.0. Group 2 consisted of faculty members who had scores of 5.9 or less (on an 8-point scale. There were 63 of the 105 faculty members (60%) in Group 1 with scores from 6.0 to 8.0. There were 42 faculty members (40%) in the 5.9 and lower group. I performed a random sample in each of the two groups to interview. Fifteen faculty members from each group were interviewed individually for 20–30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and

coded in nVivo. Once the files were imported in nVivo, I looked for themes and categorized the responses from the faculty members.

I also attended eight debriefing sessions of the 30 faculty members whom I interviewed. The purpose of attending these sessions was to hear the conversation and reactions of the students to the debriefing, to listen to how the faculty member approached the debriefing session, to hear the feedback, and to learn if the faculty member was going to implement changes as a result of the student feedback. In addition, while at the debriefing session, I administered a survey to students about their experience with the mid-course evaluation. I received IRB approval for conducting the mid-course evaluation study.

Faculty Characteristics

Faculty members from all 12 colleges and 52 departments were represented in the study. A complete list of the colleges and their percentage of participation is shown in Figure 8). Faculty participants were male and female and included different professorial ranks and statuses. These faculty members also showed evidence of their desire to improve their teaching by volunteering to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Every faculty member who signed up to participate in the study received a follow-up survey containing questions about their experiences using the tool. CTL personnel also queried a database to obtain the four scores pertaining to student learning for each course the faculty member taught for Fall Semester 2008. If a faculty member taught several sections of a course, the average score was given.

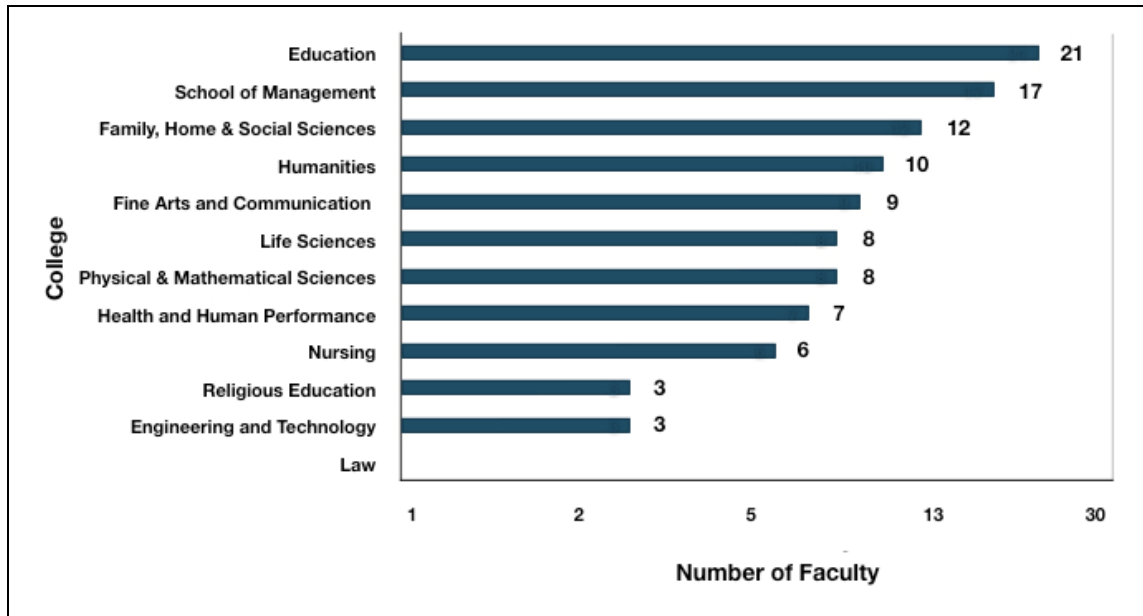


Figure 8. College representation of faculty members (n=105).

I compared the four mid-course section mean scores with the final four section mean scores pertaining to student learning for Fall 2008. I felt these four items formed a good construct of student perceptions of learning. These four items are also the items BYU uses to measure student learning on the online student ratings. As I combined the four section mean scores for each faculty member in these areas, I wanted to cite the correlations to show they could be combined. The correlation of amount learned with intellectual skills development was a strong, positive relationship of .81. The correlation of amount learned with interest in student learning was .67. The correlation of amount learned with materials and activities were effective had the strongest positive relationship of .90. I assessed the amount of improvement that was made from these four scores, based on statistical comparisons. These statistical comparisons were possible because the first four questions of the mid-course evaluation tool are identical to the questions the students respond to on the online student ratings at the end of the semester or term. I then

tabulated the results from student surveys, and the open-ended questions from the faculty surveys.

Establishing Trustworthiness

The standards used to establish trustworthiness for this qualitative study were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as described in Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility. To establish credibility, I used the following:

1. Prolonged engagement. I compared the mid-course as well as the end-of-semester scores.
2. Triangulation. I used a variety of data-gathering methods such as a comparison between the mid-course and end-of-semester scores, faculty and student surveys, faculty interviews, and debriefing sessions.
3. Member checking. I provided a transcript of the results to the faculty members who participated in the debriefing session, as well as the group mid-course evaluation. My committee members also checked it for accuracy, and provided feedback.

Transferability. To enable transferability, I provided the CTL with a description of the context of the study, the faculty members and their circumstances, as well as rich details from the interviews, including direct quotes. Using this information, researchers have the ability to transfer the conclusions to other similar situations. They could also use this information to replicate, as closely as possible, the procedures that were followed in conducting this research.

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Dependability. To establish dependability, I kept notes on the discussion and the things I learned and sent the faculty members copies of their interview transcripts. I also discussed reflections from the interviews, coding structures, insights that arose while coding the data, and the decisions that were made as part of the study with the Director of the CTL, several faculty members in the Instructional Psychology & Technology Department, and several administrators.

Confirmability. To establish confirmability, copies of the recorded interviews and transcripts as well as my notes were available upon request.

Results

Mid-Course Evaluations and Teaching Improvement

Do faculty members who participate in mid-course evaluations improve their teaching? Yes, faculty members who take a few minutes to send out a mid-course evaluation each semester or term perceive that they will see improvement. Overall, 305 BYU faculty members conducted mid-course evaluations. These faculty members sent out 646 evaluations (meaning one faculty member could have sent out one survey to each course or section they were teaching). Of these 646 evaluations, 249 used the four-question or section they were teaching). Of these 646 evaluations, 249 used the four-question survey. Unfortunately, 397 of the 646 evaluations used the two-question mid-course evaluation. Overall, 124 faculty members sent out the 249 mid-course evaluations that used the four-question evaluation. Of these 124 faculty members, 59 said they were not willing to participate in the study, and 65 said they were willing. Although 105 faculty members filled out the mid-course evaluation survey after using the mid-course evaluation tool, many of them used the two-question evaluation, rather than the four-

question evaluation. There were 7,787 students who participated in the mid-course evaluations.

Mid-course and end-of-semester quantitative comparison. Overall, the composite mean mid-course score was 6.37 and the end-of-semester composite mean score was 6.71 for the combination of all of the mean scores from each of the four item rating scores measuring perceptions of student learning (n=510 scores). The section mean scores for each of the four learning items showed improvement from the mid-course evaluation to the end-of-semester evaluation. Improvement consisted of an increase in the faculty member's mean score in at least one of the four learning items.

Further, I conducted a two-tailed, paired t-test comparing the mid-course with the end-of-semester composite mean scores, as well as for the mean scores for each of the four items. All of the results for each of the four items, as well as the composite mean score comparisons (based on the 510 scores) were statistically significant at least at the .01 level, showing that on average students end-of-semester ratings on the four learning items were significantly higher than their ratings on those same items on the mid-course evaluation. Table 12 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, t-test results, and confidence intervals for each of the four learning items, as well as a comparison of the composite mean scores.

To further validate the results of this study, Cohen's d will be used. Cohen's d can be defined as an effect size measure representing the standardized difference between two means. The formula is $M1 - M2$, divided by the standard deviation, s , of either group ($d = M1 - M2 / s$).

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Table 12

Summary Data for Four Learning Items

	Composite Mid- Course Mean	Composite End-of- Semester Mean	Difference Between Mean Scores	Standard Deviation Mid Course	Standard Deviation End-of- Semester	Paired T- Test (P-Value)	Confidence Interval (95%)
Four Areas of Learning Combined (n=510 section mean scores)	6.37	6.71	.24	.77	.72	.001	(-0.43– 0.25)
Interest in Student Learning (n=128 section mean scores)	6.84	7.08	.32	.69	.81	.011	(-0.43– 0.06)
Materials and Activities (n=127 section mean scores)	6.12	6.44	.28	.73	.73	.001	(-0.50– 0.14)
Amount Learned (n=130 section mean scores)	6.33	6.61	.48	.73	.75	.002	(-0.47– 0.10)
Intellectual Skills (n=126 section mean scores)	6.16	6.64	.34	.70	.66	.001	(-0.65– 0.31)

In this dissertation, the effect size measure will represent the standardized difference between the composite mean of the mid-course evaluation, and the composite mean of the end-of-semester evaluation. Cohen (1988) hesitantly defined effect sizes as "small, $d = .2$," "medium, $d = .5$," and "large, $d = .8$ ". Anything less than $.2$ will be considered no effect. The effect size represents the change (measured in standard deviations) in an average faculty member's outcome (end-of-semester online student rating scores) that can be expected if the faculty member administers a mid-course evaluation.

Out of the 510 section mean scores, with composite mean mid-course of 6.37 and composite end-of semester mean of 6.71, Cohen's d was $.46$. This $.46$ represents a medium effect. Essentially out of the faculty members who participated in the mid-course evaluation, there was an overall medium, positive effect. Of these 510 (section mean scores for each of the four learning items for the mid-course and end-of the semester) mean scores, 352 section mean scores (69%) showed an increase from mid-course to end-of-semester, and 158 section mean scores (31%) decreased from mid-course to end-of-semester.

Of the 352 section mean scores that increased, the average mid-course score was 6.20. The average end-of-semester score was 6.86. Of these 352 section mean scores, 157 (45%) had a large effect. Only 55 of these 352 section mean scores (16%) would be considered no effect. Further, only 65 of the 352 section mean scores (18%) would be considered a small effect.

Of the 158 section mean scores that decreased, the average mid-course score was 6.74. The average end-of-semester score was 6.37. Of the 158 section mean scores that

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decreased, 62 percent (98 section mean scores) can be considered no effect or a small effect. There were 37 section mean scores (23%) that had a large effect. Table 13 shows a comparison between the 510 section mean scores that showed improvement (n=352) and the section mean scores that declined (n=158).

Table 13

Comparison of Effect Size

Effect Size	No Effect (.19 and lower)	Small Effect (.20 to .49)	Medium Effect (.50 to .79)	Large Effect (.80 and higher)
Improved (n=352)	55	65	75	157
Percent Improvement	16	18	21	45
Declined (n=158)	46	52	23	37
Percent Decline	29	33	15	23

Improvement on eight-point scale. Another measure of improvement can be based on the scores faculty members receive (on an 8-point scale) for their mid-course and end-of-semester ratings, rather than just looking at the amount of improvement. Typically, when faculty members receive online student ratings scores at 4 or lower, the majority of the comments are negative. Faculty members who receive an overall score of 5 usually receive both positive and negative comments from students. The majority of the comments that come to faculty members with scores between 6 and 8 are generally positive.

When looking at the overall mid-course scores for the participants, there were 36 scores in the four-point range. This number can be compared with only five scores between 4.0 and 4.9 at the end-of semester. Furthermore, there were 10 scores that received a perfect 8 for the mid-course evaluations and 20 scores that received a score of 8 at the end-of semester. These numbers suggest that not only are faculty members improving in terms of amount of improvement, but also in terms of where faculty members start and end on the 8-point scale.

Faculty perception of using mid-course evaluations to improve teaching. In terms of faculty members' perception on whether mid-course evaluations can be used to improve teaching, 28 of the 30 faculty members (93 percent) who were interviewed felt that mid-course evaluations improved their teaching. The perception of improvement is actually greater than the actual improvement from the end-of-semester scores; however, improvement in teaching still occurred.

From the faculty member survey, the fourth most common reason faculty members cited for conducting a mid-course evaluation was to improve their teaching. The most common reason students (37 students, 30%) mentioned they filled out the mid-course evaluation was to provide feedback to their instructors. These students wanted to help their instructors improve their teaching and the course. Further, 45 percent of the students surveyed (56 students) said they would rate their professor higher at the end of the semester on the online student ratings because their faculty member conducted a mid-course evaluation. Based on the quantitative data, as well as the qualitative data, conducting a mid-course evaluation improves teaching.

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Mid-course evaluations and student learning. The second and third research questions dealt with faculty and student perceptions of whether using mid-course evaluations can improve student learning. Both of these questions will be summarized in this section. As mentioned earlier, the four specific areas where student learning was measured dealt with interest in student learning, effectiveness in materials and activities, the amount learned, and development of intellectual skills. On average, the faculty participants, as well as those who did not participate in the study, showed improvement on their online student ratings at the end of the semester in each of these four areas.

In terms of faculty member perception, 27 of the 30 faculty members (90%) who were interviewed felt mid-course evaluations improve student learning. From the faculty member survey, 62 of the 105 faculty members (59%) felt mid-course evaluations improved student learning. Only 11 percent (12 faculty members) did not feel mid-course evaluations improved student learning. The rest of the faculty members were uncertain and wanted to see their end-of-semester scores. A variety of reasons were listed why faculty members stated in their survey responses that conducting a mid-course evaluation would improve student learning. From the survey data, the fifth most common reason faculty members stated why they conducted a mid-course evaluation was to improve student learning. From the student surveys, 71 percent (88 students) felt their learning might or would increase because their faculty members conducted an evaluation.

Relationship between student feedback and teaching. The final research question was, “How do faculty members use mid-course evaluation data to improve learning and teaching?” The results from the research show that faculty members improve their

learning and teaching incrementally based on the amount the faculty member does with the mid-course evaluation.

For example, faculty members who read the student feedback and did not discuss it with their students saw a 2 percent improvement in their teaching (based on online student rating scores). Faculty members who read the feedback, discussed it with students, and did not make changes saw a 5 percent improvement. Faculty members who read the feedback and discussed it with my students saw an 8 percent improvement. Finally, faculty members who did the most with their mid-course evaluations saw the greatest amount of improvement. Specifically, the faculty members who conducted the mid-course, read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes saw a 9 percent improvement. Essentially, just by taking those four simple steps, faculty members could see nearly a 10 percent improvement in their online student ratings.

There is a noticeable difference between faculty who only read the feedback and did not discuss it with their students and faculty who read the feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes. There really is not much of a difference between faculty who read feedback and discussed it with students, and faculty who read feedback, discussed it with their students, and made changes (groups 3 and 4). Essentially, there is no statistical significance between groups 3 and 4, although there is statistical significance between groups 1 and 4.

Table 14 highlights the four different groups of improvement including the sample size, average number of students who responded in each faculty members section, number of students who filled out the mid-course evaluation, average amount of improvement, and percent faculty members improved.

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Table 14

Comparison of Four Levels of Improvement

Groups	Sample Size (sections)	Average number of students who responded in each faculty members section	Number of students who filled out midcourse evaluation	Average amount of improvement from survey participants (Mean mid-course score minus mean fall 08 score)	Percent faculty members improvement in online ratings
Group 1. I read feedback and did not discuss with my students	68	22	445	.15 points	2 percent
Group 2. I read the feedback, discussed with students, and did not make changes.	12	11	32	.36 points	5 percent
Group 3. I read feedback and discussed it with my students	239	17	1,234	.53 points	8 percent
Group 4. I read feedback, discussed with students, and made changes.	215	18	1,190	.56 points	9 percent

Faculty Survey Data

Faculty participants were asked if they read the responses of their students from their mid-course evaluation. One hundred and three faculty members responded to this question. Ninety-nine faculty members said “yes” (96 percent), and four said “no” (4 percent).

Faculty members were asked if they discussed the feedback from their mid-course evaluations with their students. One hundred and five faculty members responded to this survey question. Seventy-eight faculty members said “yes” (74%). Twenty-seven faculty members said “no” (26%). Thirty-two faculty members (51%) said this was their first time performing a mid-course evaluation. Thirty-one faculty members (49%) said they had completed a mid-course evaluation before.

As part of the survey, faculty members were asked, “Why did you do a mid-course evaluation?” One-hundred and four faculty members responded to the question, providing 118 different reasons. The most common reason faculty members conducted a mid-course was because they wanted to hear the students’ opinions (20 responses, 17%), followed by they felt feedback is helpful (17 responses, 14%).

The third most common reason faculty members said they conducted a mid-course evaluation was because they were new faculty members or they were teaching a course for the first time (15 faculty members 13%). One new faculty member felt doing a mid-course evaluation would help her become a more effective teacher.

I am a new faculty member at BYU, so I want to do my best to become an effective teacher. One of the best ways to find this out is through student feedback. I also thought this would allow me a

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chance to make improvements within the semester and demonstrate that I do care about students' learning and want to do all I can to foster learning in the classroom setting.

Other reasons included to improve teaching and student learning (15 faculty members, 13%), encouraged by department chair or other faculty members (8 faculty members, 7%), habit (7 faculty members, 6%), easy to use and to show students they cared (6 faculty members, 5%), end-of-semester is too late and to make changes (3 faculty members, 3%), to improve online ratings (2 faculty members, 2%), and it was available, and to try something new, to compare mid-course with final, to allow anonymity, to enjoy doing it (each area 1 faculty member, 1%).

Student Requests to Improve Student Learning

At the end of the four-question survey, students were invited to answer the question, “*What could be improved? How could this course be more effective in helping you learn?*” Instead of using results from all 105 faculty participants, I decided to read the responses from students whose faculty members improved had at least a one-point increase from their mid-course evaluations to the end-of-semester scores. Approximately 22 faculty members met this criterion. I grouped all of the responses (169) into 29 sub themes, and then seven overarching themes.

The top items students, whose faculty members improved at least one point in their online student ratings, wanted their faculty members to improve or change, included (a) making expectations clearer (60 responses, 36%), (b) involving students in more active learning experiences (43 responses, 25%), (c) decreasing amount of busy work /and trying to cover too much material (28 responses, 17%), (d) making no changes (22 responses, 13%), (e) being more prepared as faculty members, (9 responses, 5%), (f)

having students provide more effort (5 responses, 3%), and (g) changing outside influences (2 responses, 1%).

Faculty Changes to Improve Teaching

I just outlined what students wanted faculty to improve. Here are the results of what faculty members changed to improve their teaching from the most common change faculty members made to the least common change (based on 105 faculty responses):

(a) Provided clearer expectations (30 responses, 29%), (b) provided more active learning experiences (25 responses, 24%), (c) more review of course material, homework problems, and reviews for tests and quizzes (12 responses, 11%), (d) reduction of work load (6 responses, 6%), (e) slowed down (5 responses, 5%), (f) better organization (3 responses, 3%), (g) better technology (2 responses, 2%), (h) caring more for the students (2 responses, 2%), and (i) providing a new textbook (1 response, 1%). Overall, three of the four changes are the same for both faculty members and student. The first two changes (clearer expectations, and active learning) were the top two changes for both faculty members and students.

Student Surveys

One-hundred and twenty-six students from six sections filled out the survey. Out of the 126 students, 78 (62%) had completed a mid-course evaluation before using the online mid-course evaluation tool, 48 (38%) had not. One hundred and twenty-students answered the question, “Did you fill out the mid-course evaluation, If yes, why? If no, why not?” Out of these 125 students, 94 said “yes” (75%), 31 said “no” (25%).

Mid-Course Evaluations

The most common reason students (37 students, 30%) mentioned they filled out the mid-course evaluation was to provide feedback to the instructor. These students often commented that the mid-course was easy to fill out, didn't take a lot of time. The second and third reasons students filled out the mid-course evaluations were because they received extra credit points (25 students, 20%) and because it was required for an assignment or grade (20 students, 16%). Other responses included doing the mid-course evaluation out of duty, to make changes, to fill it out because it was new, and one student filled it out because he liked evaluations.

The most common reason students did not fill out the mid-course evaluation was because they forgot about it (14 students, 11%), followed by not receiving an email (9 students), too busy (4 students), and erased it or did it late (1 person in each category). I also wanted to understand the student perception on the value of mid-course evaluations. Seventy-eight percent (97 students) of the students felt mid-course evaluations were somewhat important or important.

Faculty Interviews

Concerning the 30 interviews, I had hoped to do some statistical comparisons on the two groups to see the amount of improvement in each area. Unfortunately, of the 30 faculty members, 19 faculty members administered the 4-question survey to their students (63%) and 11 faculty members administered the 2-question survey to their students (37%). In terms of the actual interview questions, the responses were similar for both groups (5.9 and lower, and 6.0 to 8.0). In general, during the interviews faculty members felt doing mid-course evaluations improved student learning. Their responses

for how student learning improved were similar to the responses faculty members gave in the follow-up survey.

As part of the interviews, I asked the faculty members if they were going to conduct another mid-course evaluation next semester. All the faculty members who responded to this question said they would conduct another mid-course evaluation. As stated earlier, many faculty members made changes in their courses based on the feedback they received from the mid-course evaluation. According to the faculty member interviews, the faculty members did not have to spend a great deal of effort to make improvements, either in their teaching or in the area of student learning.

Group Mid-Course Evaluations

One of the positive effects of the mid-course evaluation tool was that most or all of the faculty members in several departments decided to participate. One of the motivating factors faculty members cited for administering a mid-course evaluation was because they were encouraged by a department chair or other faculty members (7%). The Director for the CTL initiated this invitation to faculty chairs, who passed the invitation to the faculty members in their departments. The impact of these invitations in several departments, including the Department of Organizational Leadership & Strategy, the Counseling and Career Center (particularly faculty members who taught student development courses), the Math department, and the College of Nursing was impressive—meaning most faculty members participated.

Discussion and Conclusion

From the dissertation results, as well as the results from my master's thesis on improving teaching, faculty members learn that improving teaching and student learning can happen by making small course corrections, with minimal amounts of effort. As faculty members lead busy lives and many do not have a lot of time to make large course corrections or take a series of courses on improving teaching, they can find comfort in knowing that doing simple and small things such as sending out a mid-course evaluation or making a course correction can improve online student ratings, as well as making an improvement in the area of student learning.

Recommendations

As demonstrated in this article, faculty members who conduct a mid-course evaluation can improve their teaching. The amount of improvement increases as faculty members read the results, discuss the feedback with their students, and make changes. Based on this research, I suggest the following recommendations: (a) Continue to remind faculty about mid-course evaluation tool and help them make it a habit, (b) have department chairs or other faculty members invite their colleagues to participate in a mid-course evaluation, (c) send email to faculty member with a technology tip that is on the benefits of mid-course evaluations, (d) train students how to better provide constructive feedback, and (e) have the CTL offer consultations to faculty who need assistance interpreting their results.

To have the greatest impact, faculty members should encourage their peers to take all of the steps in conducting a successful mid-course evaluation. Namely, they should

send one out each semester. They should read the feedback, discuss it with their students, and make changes. Finally, they should evaluate their progress after each semester.

Future Research

Future research could focus on the following areas: (a) Measure different areas from the online student ratings, rather than just the questions that pertain to student learning, (b) compare past scores in addition to mid-course scores and end-of-semester scores, and (c) interview students to get their perspective on mid-course evaluations.

Overall, the results from this mid-course study show faculty members can improve their teaching as well as student learning, by conducting a mid-course evaluation. In addition to improving online student ratings, there are a variety of other benefits from gathering student feedback. Some of these include improving the relationship with the students, showing students that the professor cares about their learning, gaining a better understanding how the class is functioning, and so forth. Gathering student feedback from students does not take a great deal of time or effort, but still pays big dividends for faculty members in terms of improving teaching and student learning.

The results of this study should be encouraging to faculty members who may feel they want to improve their teaching and increase student learning but do not have a great deal of time to spend on making changes. Faculty developers, teaching improvement specialists, and faculty members in leadership positions who are looking for ways to help their colleagues improve teaching performance can also suggest mid-course evaluations as a simple, yet effective way to improve teaching and student learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Initial Email to Faculty

From: University Communications univ-comm@byu.edu
Date: Fri, 19 Sep 2008 12:09:30 -0600
To: faculty members@listserv.byu.edu
Subject: [*] Tip of the Month

Dear Faculty,

I am excited to announce that CTL has released a new tool to help you in your teaching: "The Mid-course Evaluation Tool." With just a few clicks, this tool permits you to select or customize the questions you want to ask about your course and then e-mails those questions to each of your students. After they respond, you will automatically be sent a list of their answers categorized under each question.

We know from previous research that when faculty members act on the feedback students provide on mid-course evaluations, students and faculty members feel better about the course. We would like to learn more about the effects of mid-course evaluations on student learning at BYU. So if you think you might be interested in participating in a study on the effects of our new mid-course evaluation tool, please click on the following link: http://new.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9p0MqTR3sa209Fi&SVID=Prod

If you would like to learn more about the new tool, click on the following link: <http://ctl.byu.edu/ctls-mid-course-evaluation-tool/>

Thanks,
Russ

Russell T. Osguthorpe, Director
Center for Teaching and Learning
3810 HBLL
Phone: 801-368-6908

This message was sent to all faculty members from University Communications by Brent Harker (brent_harker@byu.edu, A-274 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 84602), who has authorized it. No patron will send bulk, unsolicited electronic messages unless expressly authorized. If you wish to be removed from the University Communications mailing list, please write to univ-comm@byu.edu.

Appendix 2: Email to Faculty Members who Used Mid-Course Evaluation Tool

Dear \${m://FirstName},

Thank you for using the mid-course evaluation tool and for your willingness to participate in this study. We would like your feedback on your experience. By filling out the survey, you consent to being a research participant. Click here to view Informed Consent Document.

Please follow this link to the Mid-Course Evaluation Survey: \${l://SurveyLink}

or copy this URL into your browser:

https://byu.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_afrOc0C9dbpMG1K&SVID=Prod

The survey should take just a few minutes to complete.

Thank you!

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience using the mid-course evaluation tool? (i.e. – Was it easy to use? How long did it take to administer the mid-course evaluation).
 2. How did your students respond to the mid-course evaluation(s)?
 3. Did you talk with your students about their feedback from the mid-course evaluation?
 4. Did you make any changes in your teaching as a result of feedback from students from the mid-course evaluation?
 - a. If so, what changes did you make? How much effort did it take to make those changes?
 - b. If not, why didn't you make the changes?
-
1. Were there any suggestions from students that you did not make? If so, why not?
 2. How did you decide which changes to make in your teaching?
 3. Did you use the mid-course evaluation tool twice this semester?
 4. Will you conduct a mid-course evaluation next semester?
 - a. If so, will you use the mid-course evaluation tool from the CTL?
 - b. If not, why not?

Regardless of your student evaluations, do you feel like your teaching improved because you conducted a mid-course evaluation? What evidence do you have to support this assumption?

Appendix 4: Student Survey

1. Have you ever filled out a mid-course evaluation?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Did you fill out the mid-course evaluation? If yes, why? If no, why not?

3. How valuable was your experience in filling out the form and attending the debriefing session?

4. Will you rate your professor higher at the end of the semester on the online student ratings because he/she conducted a mid-course evaluation?

5. Do you feel like your learning will increase because your professor conducted a mid-course evaluation and had a debriefing session?

6. How important are mid-course evaluations to you?

7. If you filled out the mid-course evaluation, how long did it take you?

8. Do you feel like your voice was heard by filling out the mid-course evaluation or participating in the debriefing session?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Appendix 5: Online Faculty Informed Consent for Survey

Using Mid-Course Evaluations To Improve Teaching at BYU

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Brigham Young University to learn more about whether participation of mid-course evaluation can improve faculty teaching, as well as their online student ratings.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in a short survey on changes you have made to improve in your teaching. By filling out the survey, you also give I consent to look at your last semester overall course score, the results from your mid-course evaluation, and also your online student ratings results at the end of this semester.

Risks/Discomforts

The risks for participation in this study are minimal. You will be asked to take some time to use the mid-course evaluation tool and fill out the follow-up survey. There is a possibility that you may feel some discomfort in sharing responses from your students about your teaching.

Benefits

No direct benefits to faculty members. Your answers will help administrators at BYU identify the impact mid-course evaluations can have on faculty teaching and improvement. This information will serve as a resource to faculty members, and various learning institutions and centers on campus.

Confidentiality

All information gleaned from the survey will be stored on a file on the Center for Teaching and Learning's server. The information will be used to improve teaching and learning at BYU. Pseudonyms will be used in place of faculty names.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation for doing an interview.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate in the survey without jeopardy to your faculty status, or standing with BYU. Your comments as well as your name will be kept confidential and will not affect your rank or faculty status. You may also be asked to participate in an interview and debriefing session if additional information is needed.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Whitney McGowan at (801) 735-2192 or whitney_ransom@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, Christopher_Dromey@byu.edu.

Appendix 6: Consent Form for Faculty Interviews

Using Mid-Course Evaluations To Improve Teaching at BYU

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Whitney McGowan, doctoral candidate in the IP&T Department, under the direction of Russ Osuguthorpe, the Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning at Brigham Young University to learn more about whether participation of mid-course evaluation can improve faculty teaching, as well as their online student ratings. We want you to participate because we are interested in learning about your experiences with mid-course evaluations.

Procedures

You will be asked to use the mid-course evaluation tool created by the Center for Teaching and Learning this semester in one of your classes. You have been invited to participate in an interview to discuss your experience using this tool and the impact (if any) it has had on your teaching. If your name is randomly selected, the researcher will ask you if she can attend your debriefing session and talk with some of your students about the mid-course evaluation tool. The students will receive a piece of paper with a few questions on it. This will be administered in class and will take approximately five minutes. The interviews will take place at your office and will last approximately 20-30 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts

The risks for participation in this study are minimal. You will be asked to take some time to use the mid-course evaluation tool and will also be interviewed. There is a possibility that you may feel some discomfort in sharing responses from your students about your teaching. To minimize risk and discomfort, I will clearly explain the procedure, remind you that your responses are confidential, and will personalize the interview to you and your experiences.

Benefits

Your answers will help administrators at BYU identify the impact mid-course evaluations can have on faculty teaching and improvement. This information will serve as a resource to faculty members, and various learning institutions and centers on campus.

Confidentiality

All information gleaned from the interviews will be stored on a file on the Center for Teaching and Learning's server. The information will be used to improve teaching and learning at BYU. Pseudonyms will be used in place of faculty names. I hope to publish the results of this study in a scholarly journal. The information will also be available to academic administration in aggregate. Your name will not be mentioned, just your experiences.

Compensation

There will be no compensation.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate in the survey without jeopardy to your faculty status, or standing with BYU. Your comments as well as your name will be kept confidential and will not affect your rank or faculty status. You may also be asked to participate in an interview if additional information is needed.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Whitney McGowan at (801) 735-2192 or whitney_ransom@byu.edu. You may also contact Russ Osguthorpe at (801)422-1804 or russ_osguthorpe@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, Christopher_Dromey@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 7: Student Informed Consent

Using Mid-Course Evaluations To Improve Teaching at BYU

Student Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Whitney McGowan, doctoral candidate in the IP&T Department, under the direction of Russ Osuguthorpe, the Director of the Center for Teaching & Learning at Brigham Young University to learn more about whether participation of mid-course evaluation can improve faculty teaching, as well as their online student ratings. This is not a classroom assignment, and your participation is voluntary. We want you to participate because we are interested in learning about your experiences with mid-course evaluations.

Procedures

You will be asked to answer a few questions on your experience with the mid-course evaluation. I will also attend your class when the debriefing session is held and listen to the comments from students. The debriefing session will be recorded. If you make a comment in class, it will be recorded, but your name will not be identified.

Risks/Discomforts

The risks for participation in this study are minimal. You will be asked to fill out a few questions about your experience. I will minimize risks and discomforts by talking about the study for a moment in class and giving you the opportunity to ask any questions before the questionnaire is administered.

Benefits

Your answers will help administrators at BYU identify the impact mid-course evaluations can have on faculty teaching and improvement. This information will serve as a resource to faculty members, and various learning institutions and centers on campus.

Confidentiality

All information gleaned from the debriefing sessions will be stored on a file on the Center for Teaching and Learning's server. The information will be used to improve teaching and learning at BYU. The researcher hopes to publish the results of this study in a scholarly journal. The information will also be available to academic administration in aggregate. Your name will not be mentioned, just your experiences.

Compensation

There will be no compensation.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate in the survey without jeopardy to your standing as a student at BYU. Your comments as well as your name will be kept confidential.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Whitney McGowan at (801) 735-2192 or whitney_ransom@byu.edu. You may also contact Russ Osguthorpe at (801)422-1804 or russ_osguthorpe@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, Christopher_Dromey@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 8: Email to Faculty Members Regarding Participation in Study

Subject Line: Your Participation in the Mid-Course Evaluation Study

Dear Faculty member,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the mid-course evaluation study.

Here is what your participation will involve:

1. Use the mid-course evaluation tool. Please use the 5-question option instead of the 2-question option.
2. Participate in a follow up-survey after you have administered your mid-course evaluation.

I will also conduct 20-minute interviews, a few debriefing sessions with faculty members, and interview some students from a few courses where the mid-course evaluation tool has been utilized. A random sample will be conducted to determine the faculty members. If your name is drawn, you will be contacted.

Confidentiality will be maintained, and no names will be used in the report of this study. If you have any questions, please contact Whitney Ransom McGowan at (801)735-2192.

Please click on the link below to select a date when you will administer your mid-course evaluation. (This date is necessary to know when to contact you for a follow up interview or debriefing session:

http://new.qualtrics.com//WRQualtricsSurveyEngine?SSID=SS_dj4t912braKgCTW&SVID=Prod

Appendix 9: Follow-up Faculty Survey

1. What is your name?
2. What is your department?
3. Did you read the responses of your students from your mid-course evaluation?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Did you discuss the feedback you received from the mid-course evaluation with your students?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. How valuable was your experience using the mid-course evaluation tool?
6. Do you think conducting this mid-course evaluation will have an impact on student learning in your course?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I'm not sure.
7. Did you make any changes in your teaching because of student feedback from the mid-course evaluation, and if so, what?
8. Would you be willing to participate in a 20-minute interview about your experience using the mid-course evaluation tool?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Mid-Course Evaluations

Appendix 10: Sample Results Form

Instructor Name: John Smith

Response Rate: 4/6 67%

Course materials and learning activities are effective in helping me learn.

Average Rating 5.75/8.0

Response Count Rate (%)

Very Strongly Agree: 0 0%

Strongly Agree: 2 50%

Agree: 1 25%

Somewhat Agree: 0 0%

Somewhat Disagree: 0 0%

Disagree: 1 25%

Strongly Disagree: 0 0%

Very Strongly Disagree: 0 0%

Instructor showed genuine interest in students and their learning.

Average Rating 6.0/8.0

Response Count Rate (%)

Very Strongly Agree: 0 0%

Strongly Agree: 1 25%

Agree: 2 50%

Somewhat Agree: 1 25%

Somewhat Disagree: 0 0%

Disagree: 0 0%

Strongly Disagree: 0 0%

Very Strongly Disagree: 0 0%

What is going well in class? What contributes most to your learning?

I thought the class was very interesting and I appreciated that the teacher asked us questions instead of just lecturing. That helped me learn better.

The teacher is awesome! He is very knowledgeable about the material and has been to many of those places. His personal stories made the material more real to me.

The teacher is pretty interesting and keeps the material exciting by his enthusiasm. I like the organization of the class; it helps me stay on track.

I like the material of the class, but I find comments from other students distracting. Straight lecture is the best for me to learn.

Do you feel like you receive adequate feedback on your work?

We get our work back in a week's time, which is very surprising. My work has not received much feedback, but I think that is good thing.

The feedback was excellent; I could apply it to future papers to make them better.

On some papers I felt like I did not get enough feedback, but what I did receive was quite beneficial.

I had plenty of feedback on my work; it felt like too much sometimes.