



## **Executive Summary; Mid-Semester Feedback Pilot**

Lyman Briggs College, Spring Semester 2016

Lorenzo Santavicca, President, ASMSU

Since the 51<sup>st</sup> session, the Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU) has advocated for all colleges at MSU to mandate a mid-semester feedback process. As the idea was introduced, a mandatory mid-semester feedback process would allow for students to evaluate course content and the instructor's pedagogical methods prior to semester end SIRS forms. This would potentially increase student and instructor understanding of roles and course satisfaction, as well as increased participation as a result of positive affirmations or changes suggested. An ideal process would be accessible and anonymous to all students, but also kept confidential from the Dean's units or other tenure and promotion faculty.

In the Spring Semester of 2016, Lyman Briggs College (a residential learning community devoted to studying the natural sciences and their impact on society) piloted a mid-semester feedback program. The Dean's Advisory Committee asked faculty to participate in a mid-semester feedback pilot per the request of the Provost and the Dean. The committee convened and discussed standardized questions to be used on the feedback form for the pilot initiative. The suggested feedback questions were compiled by members of the Dean's Advisory Committee, and were submitted to all faculty at the college. The pilot process was conducted prior to Spring Break. Instructors were given the freedom to conduct the survey before, during, or after class.

After Spring Break and near the end of the semester, ASMSU conducted feedback surveys following the piloted initiative to both Lyman Briggs faculty and students. The surveys were sent via email to all students in the college, as well as faculty members, and advertised to be completed by individuals who participated in, or administrated an LBC mid-semester feedback survey within the Spring semester. The surveys were designed to gauge the process and overall reactions from the college that participated in the pilot initiative. A total of **15 faculty members participated** (1 full professor in the tenure system, 3 associate professors in the tenure system, 5 assistant professors in the tenure system, 2 academic specialists, and 1 fixed term instructor). A total of **42 students participated** (22 freshmen, 6 sophomores, 8 juniors, and 5 seniors).

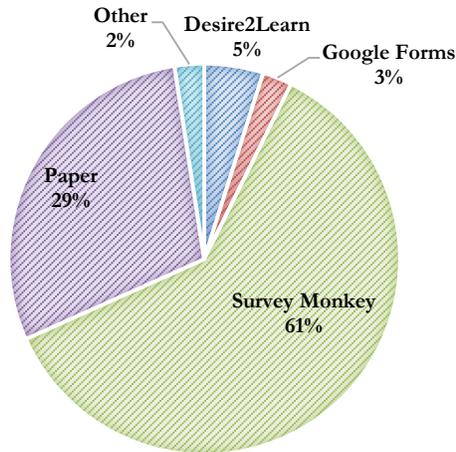
From the responses and feedback on the LBC piloted initiative, ASMSU can conclude that students have indicated a strong desire to see through to the efforts across the university in mandating a mid-semester feedback process. Students believe that their comments related to the pedagogical structure of the class is valued at a higher level, the instructor demonstrates a concerted interest in student feedback, and a collaborative learning structure based on student input is fostered. Similarly, faculty believe this is an opportunity to affirm the current teaching style or structure of their class, and understand differences in learning strategies envisioned by the instructor versus the current strategies pursued by the students. ASMSU recommends a continued implementation with the remaining residential colleges, and then expansion into the larger core and professional colleges.



# STUDENT RESPONSES

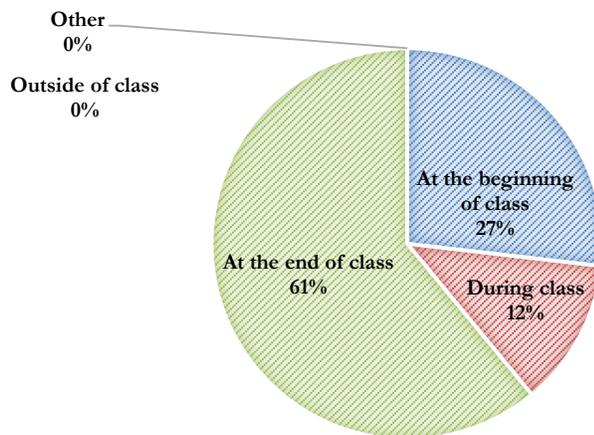


### How did your instructor administer the mid-semester feedback survey?



**Student Response**

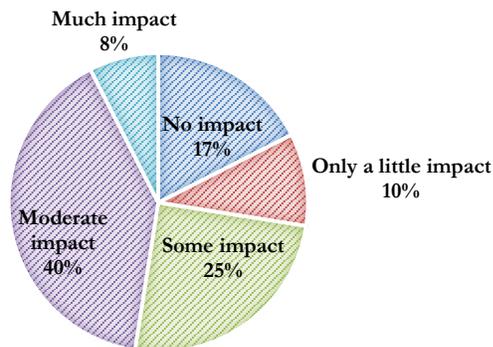
### When did your instructor conduct the mid-semester feedback survey?



**Student Response**

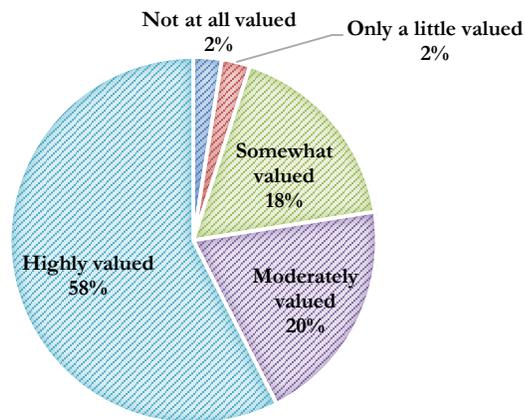


How much impact did your and your classmates' responses on the mid-semester feedback survey have on maintaining or improving your course in the second half of the semester?



**Student Response**

To what extent do you think your instructor valued your and your classmates' responses on the mid-semester feedback survey?



**Student Response**



**STUDENT RESPONSE: What sort of changes, if any, did you see in the second half of your course as a result of the mid-semester feedback survey process?**

None/satisfied with course prior to survey so no recognizable changes made (6 responses)
Change of pace/teaching style; better presentation of the material (4 responses)
Putting PowerPoints up earlier; more visual aids (4 responses)
Asking people to engage in class discussions that haven't previously to speak up
More practice problems; problems at the end of PowerPoints to prepare for exams (3 responses)
More extra credit offered
Due dates of homework were made clearer

**STUDENT RESPONSE: How, if at all, did the mid-semester feedback survey help you better understand your role as a student?**

Helped me realize I had a voice in future improvement of the class (9 responses)
Professor cares about student input (4 responses)
I can help the Professor improve the course, as much as the Professor can help me learn the material
Helped me realize what I can be doing better, rather than placing blame only on the instructor
It didn't (5 responses)
N/A (2 responses)

**STUDENT RESPONSE: How could LBC improve the content and/or administration process of the mid-semester feedback survey?**

Actually implement what students suggest
Possibly do it earlier in the semester.
It was great.
Do it for labs
Emphasize the importance of student debrief
Have a before and after survey
Send out reminders until the professor has had the class do the survey.
Having a follow up to the form explaining what will change.
I think asking more detailed, specific questions would help. Also, telling students weeks or more in advance that they'll eventually be filling out the mid semester feedback survey would help - this would give them time to reflect on what changes they would like to see as class is happening; it was hard for me to think up answers to questions because I wasn't really attending to class in that way in the first half of the semester, if that makes sense.
Allow room for additional comments.
Ask questions that are better catered to the class



Maybe send it earlier or closer to when the survey was done

**STUDENT RESPONSE: How would you suggest the larger MSU community implement a mid-semester feedback survey process?**

Require them online like with SIRS; most efficient this way (9 responses)

Every class should do this (4 responses)

Have all classes do this

Stressing it is not an evaluation of the professor, but suggestions for how to improve the course for the current students.

Promote it as a way to help professors understand their student's needs.

Through surveys online, I suppose. It would be hard to encourage people to participate in them, but I am not sure how else MSU could implement mid semester feedback.

Have them complete it in class or give a deadline

The same way that we did here. Just take the survey and review it so you can make the second half of the semester better

Remind the students it's coming in advance, so they have more time to reflect on the semester so far before they have to write something. I know I blank a lot when it's sprung on me, so I feel others might too.

**STUDENT RESPONSE: Do you have any other comments at this time about the mid-semester feedback survey process?**

I found them useless because no one will change their class halfway through.

One thing that is done in labs is a mid-semester CATME and I think that is very beneficial especially for group work.

It could potentially be a very helpful tool if used correctly

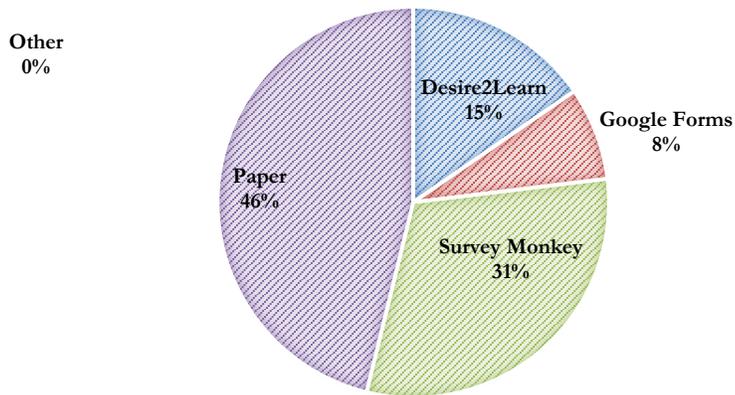
It was very worthwhile.



# FACULTY RESPONSES

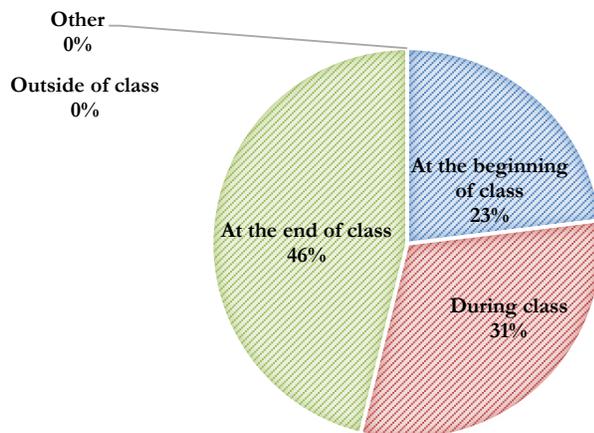


### How did you administer the mid-semester feedback survey?



**Faculty Response**

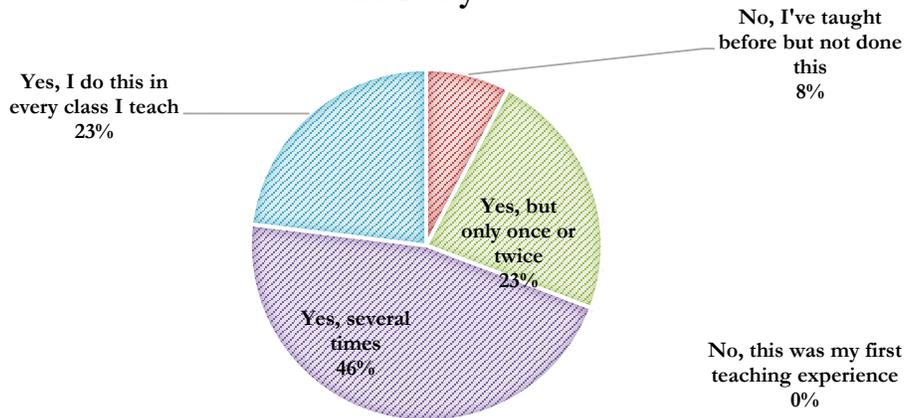
### When did you administer the mid-semester feedback survey?



**Faculty Response**

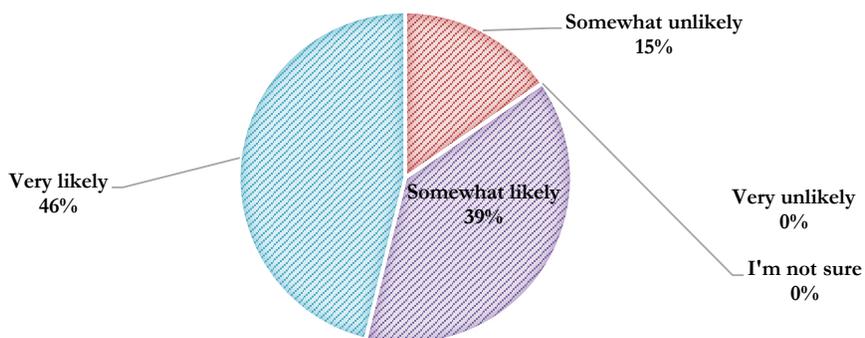


**In past semesters, have you administered some sort of mid-semester feedback survey?**



**Faculty Response**

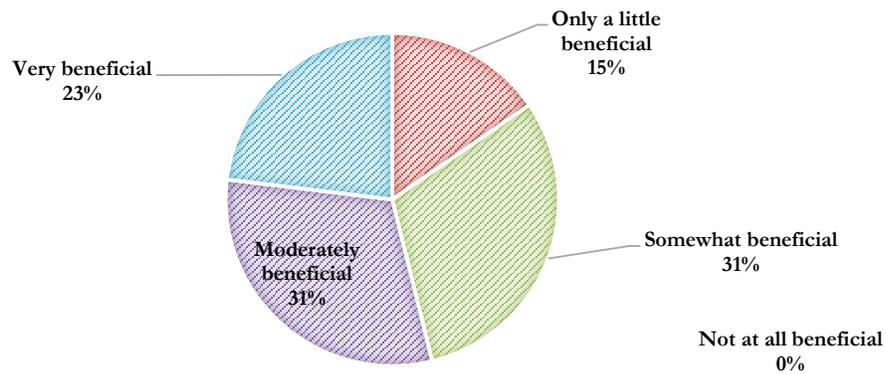
**How unlikely or likely are you to administer this type of standardized mid-semester feedback survey in your LBC classes in upcoming semesters?**



**Faculty Response**

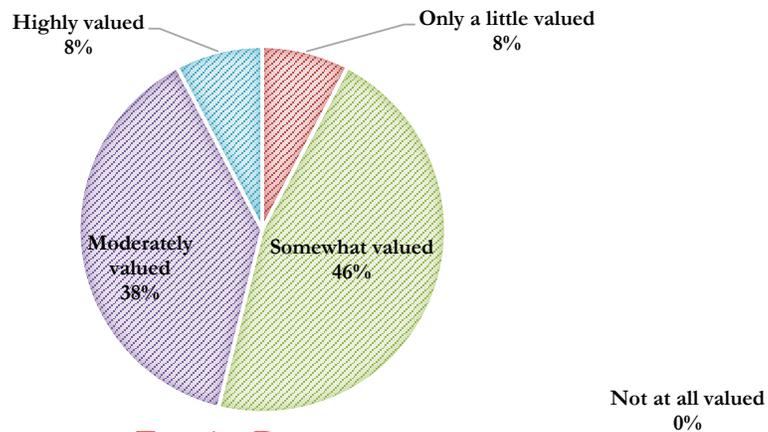


**How beneficial were the students' responses on the mid-semester feedback survey for maintaining or improving your course in the second half of the semester?**



**Faculty Response**

**To what extent do you think your students valued the opportunity to complete the mid-semester feedback survey?**



**Faculty Response**



**FACULTY RESPONSE: How, if at all, did the mid-semester feedback survey help you better understand the needs of your students? What sort of changes did you implement in your class as a result of the students' responses on the mid-semester feedback survey?**

I retained some experimental methods and class structures, which I had previously been skeptical about, because of strong positive feedback. After the feedback, we had a nice class conversation about participation and there was a more balanced distribution of participation as a result.

It is principally useful as a retrospective tool, indicating which resources did or didn't work effectively. In one class, it served to identify problematic group dynamics that I was able to ameliorate through the way I designed course activities in the second half.

I altered the discussion format for the class a bit, and I also made a point of making more connections between the course material and current events and news items.

I took the feedback to be very affirming of what I was doing. There were no real surprises, and I did not make any changes. The REAL value, for me, was A) getting the students to do metacognition on their own learning habits and B) having a forum to show them that I care about their feedback

Their feedback was extremely valuable. In particular, I discovered that many of them felt they couldn't keep up with the discussion and didn't have enough opportunities to participate. I doubled my efforts to curb the overachievers and ensure full participation.

They provided a few examples of things that I could easily address. It also gave me the opportunity to explain why some things were not able to be changed.

It didn't. The students were extremely pleased with the course structure (they helped design it), so there were no substantive suggestions as we had been adjusting throughout the course.

I started using only black markers on the white board. This was the only real constructive feedback

The students' feedback was very positive in this spring 2016 class. It is the second time that I taught the course, and I made several changes based in large part on student feedback (mid-semester and end-of-semester) from the first time I taught the course. From the mid-semester feedback I received this time through the pilot LBC/ASMSU survey, it appears those changes had a positive effect on students' learning and satisfaction.

It helped me to understand that the students didn't necessarily have the same strategies for studying for the course that I thought they did. Therefore, I added in information about how students in the course studied for the exam 2 and what it meant for their exam 2 grade.

It was also useful to know what this particular group liked vs didn't like. I wasn't able to make too many changes here because it was a hectic semester, but I did try to give students more choice throughout. For example, polling them to ask if the course should be moving faster or slower for specific topics, etc. They seemed to appreciate that.

I typically use mid-semester feedback to gauge the balance between effort and learning gains for the readings, activities, and assignments completed to date. I found the standardized forms did not support this kind of assessment well because it did not prompt students to evaluate each activity separately but instead required students to recall the elements of the class they wanted to evaluate.

It was too general to be of much help. Mine are much more specific.



**FACULTY RESPONSE: How could LBC improve the content and/or administration process of the mid-semester feedback survey?**

I have no complaints/it was done very well (2 responses)

This survey was somewhat less useful than the survey I normally give around mid-term. The vague, generic questions that initiated the survey meant that by the time my students got to my customized questions, which could have actually helped me address the specific needs of the specific class, they had run out of steam and had little to say. LBC students are over-surveyed, and so these tools need to be short, to the point, and precisely targeted. This survey cut down on the flexibility I previously enjoyed to use a survey that was targeted to the particular content of the course and the particular students in it.

I didn't find the questions about the students' study skills to be particularly enlightening. Most of them said "do the readings before class" and "take notes during class." I think we should either remove these questions OR prime them in some way a few weeks beforehand.

I understand the desire to have this not be used in annual evaluations, however, it would be good if there were some way to identify if a course is completely going off the rails (there was an example of this in Fall 2015, which would have been good to be able to catch earlier). If there is no oversight mechanism, this approach will provide small benefit to most classes (which is highly valuable) but would still miss catastrophes if the instructor just doesn't care.

standardized using Survey Monkey

I'm not sure. It seems like a good process thus far.

I wasn't sure how to best present the mid-semester feedback back to the class. Most students had the same answers, but I never found the time to put all their responses into bar chart format. Instead I polled them again periodically with the clickers to ask what they wanted me to fix in class. Lack of structure is great in an eval so it fits both big lectures and small discussion classes, but I need to learn how to condense this information to be able to a) use it effectively and b) report this information more effectively to students.

I appreciate the guidance LBC gives in presenting the evaluations to students, but I think that guidance on creating my own custom survey would be more useful than the standardized form.

I think the questions are too vague, but each faculty member really needs to write their own questions, tailored to their own courses. Perhaps help or suggestions for this would be better.

**FACULTY RESPONSE: How would you suggest the larger MSU community implement a mid-semester feedback survey process?**

Absolutely/Yes (3 responses)

However they want to; flexibility is good (2 responses)

The notion that a one-size-fits-all tool would be appropriate for all of MSU is deeply problematic. The most effective way to implement midterm feedback surveys would be to make procedures and samples available to instructors and to ENCOURAGE instructors to modify them to fit the needs of their individual classes. At core, this is an issue of academic freedom.

I'm thinking it might be useful to provide a website with a sample of the sort of mid-semester survey that faculty could do and some sample instructions for doing it. And perhaps the Provost's office could send out an email to all the faculty a little bit before the mid-point of the semester to let faculty know about the website with ideas for doing a mid-semester survey. That way faculty wouldn't feel that they had to do the survey, but it would be relatively easy to figure out how to do a survey if they wanted to.

anonymous surveys through D2L seem to work well.

It might be better to have suggested mid semester feedback forms that faculty can choose from, but also



allow instructors to create their own surveys as desired. For example, a small discussion class might use the form from this year, but a large lecture class could choose a form that has structured responses (i.e., what are some strategies or techniques you used to help you learn. select as many as apply: a) hw, b) lecture notes, c) exams, d) book, e) tweak these for your course as you see fit, f) other \_\_\_\_\_). This way, in a large lecture class I can share the results with my students more easily without wasting time tallying results, but can still leave room for creativity in the "other" categories and open ended responses. It would be ideal to leave the process as flexible as possible.

I would suggest that it remain optional and that the standardized survey be considered a "template" or "example" rather than an unchangeable standard.

**FACULTY RESPONSE: Do you have any other comments at this time about the mid-semester feedback survey process?**

Find a way to make sure that everybody does every semester. It's important.

Every effort must be made to ensure that the data generated from these surveys are never collected, and are never seen by anyone other than the instructors administering them. If the data exist, someone WILL find a way to use them as a benchmark or evaluation tool, and at that point their utility to instructors will be lost. To be honest, I find this whole exercise troubling. I had a well thought-out system in place that allowed me to tailor short, effective surveys to the needs of particular courses--courses with very different content, assignments, readings, and, most importantly, classes composed of very different INDIVIDUALS. This standardization effort has watered that system down. Forcing a generic, tepid tool on the MSU community will mean that instructors will treat this only as another box they have to check to make nice with the bureaucracy, and mid-term evaluations should be an instructor resource, not a box-checking exercise. The recommended procedures and best practices are good, and should be distributed widely, but I'd hope ASMSU would do everything in its power to ensure instructors maintain MAXIMUM flexibility in the type of surveys they administer.

I think it was great. For whatever reason, though, I analyzed the results a lot later than I usually do. I'd like to administer it sooner (middle of February) and have fewer obligatory questions. (There's a lot that I'd like to know from them, as well, but the form can quickly be overwhelming.

Personally, I'd like to see a question on the final course evaluation that addresses the question of if the instructor addressed mid-semester student concerns. Note, that this would not inherently require changes by the faculty member per say, but could simply be that they pointed out why certain issue (pace of course for example) could not be changed during the semester. In some cases changes, may well happen in response to the student comments.

## **Instructions for Administering the Mid-Semester Feedback Survey**

Please administer the Mid-Semester Feedback Survey in each of your SOC courses by **March 3rd**.

After you have added any additional open-ended or closed-ended questions of your own at the end of the survey, you can choose to administer it in one of the following ways:

### **A. via a hard-copy handout in class**

1. get a large manila envelope to transport the surveys and instructions
2. print out and photocopy your finalized survey and the instructions for students
3. read through the instructions with the students (while having them read along with their own copy of the instructions and/or with the instructions projected on the screen)
4. tell all students to place their completed surveys in the manila envelope
5. if administering this survey at the beginning or in the middle of class, you can simply collect the envelope yourself
6. if administering this survey at the end of class, then arrange to have one of the students deliver the manila envelope to you (in your office, mailbox, etc.)
7. give your students approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey; add more time if you include more questions
8. be sure to leave the room before students begin completing the survey

### **B. via D2L**

1. go to your course's D2L page
2. in the "Assessments" tab, clicking on "Surveys" in the dropdown menu
3. select "New Survey"
4. under "Properties"
  - a. name the survey "Mid-Semester Feedback Survey"
  - b. select "make results anonymous"
  - c. click on "Add/Edit Questions"
    1. click on "New" and then select "Long Answer Question"
    2. type/paste in the Question 1 text into the "Question Text" box
    3. select "Save and New" at the bottom
    4. repeat steps 1-3 for all remaining open-ended questions
    5. select "Save" at the bottom
  - d. click on "Done Editing Questions"
5. under "Restrictions"
  - a. change Status to "Active"
  - b. arrange any start and end dates as you wish
  - c. change Attempts Allowed to "Single attempt that is editable"
  - d. select "Save and Close" at the bottom
6. under "Properties"
  - a. click on "Invite Participants"
  - b. craft your message and subject line and then click "Submit"
7. decide whether you want to have your students complete this survey in class or outside of class
8. if you have them complete it in class, then just be sure to leave the room after reviewing the instructions with them

**C. via Google Forms**

1. use the Word files titled “SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Instructions for Students” and “SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Survey”
2. log in to Google and go to <<https://docs.google.com/forms/>>
3. click on blank form; in untitled form, type “Mid-Semester Feedback Survey”
4. paste the text of the “SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Instructions for Students” file into the description
5. for the first question, change the “multiple choice” selection to “paragraph” and paste in the first question from the “SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Survey” file
6. click the + sign in toolbox to the right of the form to add additional questions, select the “paragraph” option, and paste in the remaining questions from the “SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Survey” file
7. click on settings and unselect “automatically collect respondent’s Michigan State University username” and also unselect “show link to submit another response”
8. when you hit the send button, you can embed the link to send it out to your students; again, make sure you’ve unselected the “automatically collect respondent’s Michigan State University username” button
9. decide whether you want to have your students complete this survey in class or outside of class
10. if you have them complete it in class, then just be sure to leave the room after reviewing the instructions with them

**D. Also, you may administer the SOC Mid-Semester Feedback Survey via Qualtrics or SurveyMonkey if you have an account with either.**

### Suggested Steps after Receiving Mid-Semester Feedback

When you go through your students' feedback, identify those clear and robust patterns in their responses. If you would like some guidance about this feedback, feel free to ask a colleague to chat about this in confidence.

Present a brief summary of the feedback results to the class, organized as outlined below. **Do not report any feedback in a way that would allow the class to identify which specific student provided which feedback.** Devote roughly 15 minutes of class time to discussing the results of the feedback, if possible. For courses where the instructor and students are unable to discuss the results in person soon after feedback is gathered, provide the information below in email form.

1. At the beginning of the discussion (or report, if done via email), emphasize that the process is primarily meant to identify ways that the course can be improved by the learning community—which includes instructors and students together—during the second half of the semester.
2. After reading the qualitative data, identify roughly three of the most common responses for each item below (three for instructor behavior and three for student behavior). Some of you may wish to include closed-ended (e.g., multiple choice) questions on your survey. If so, please think about presenting this quantitative data as a distribution graphing all of the responses (which is more informative than just giving an average).
3. As outlined below, it is also nice to report feedback that is will be helpful for future semesters (e.g., critiques of assignments from the first half of the class) and feedback that is outside the control of the instructor or students (e.g., classroom size).
4. Based on the feedback and the discussion (or student comments provided by email), work together with the students to make a list of concrete plans for how the instructor and the students can each change their behavior to improve the second half of the semester.
5. Have the class revisit the feedback after roughly two weeks to check-in on how the plans are being carried out.

## **Template for Summarizing and Conveying Feedback to Students**

### What the students can do to improve the course for the rest of this semester

Qualitative trends/patterns in the feedback:

- A. [e.g., “a recurring comment in the feedback was that some group projects have been done mostly by one member of the group...”]
- B.
- C.

Quantitative trends/patterns in the feedback:

- A. [e.g., “here is a distribution of how the class responded to...”]
- B.
- C.

### What the instructor can do to improve the course for the rest of this semester

Qualitative trends/patterns in the feedback:

- A. [e.g., “a recurring comment in the feedback was that the exam questions are hard to interpret...”]
- B.
- C.

Quantitative trends/patterns in the feedback:

- A. [e.g., “here is a distribution of how the class responded to...”]
- B.
- C.

### Other feedback that can be used to improve the course for in future semesters:

- A. [e.g., “about half of the class said that the first quiz happened too early this semester...”]
- B.
- C.

### Other feedback that is informative but is outside the control of the instructor and the students:

- A. [e.g., “one of the most frequent comments was that the classroom is too cramped...”]
- B.
- C.

**The following page is a handout that McCright created to debrief students in his spring 2016 LB 335 course.**

## Mid-Semester Feedback Survey for McCright's Spring 2016 LB 335

Remember that this process is primarily meant to identify ways that WE can improve OUR course during the second half of the semester.

Here are the most consistent themes in your answers to the open-ended questions from our Mid-Semester Feedback Survey. The entries in each section are ordered from the most to least frequent responses.

### What the students can do to improve the course for the rest of this semester

- A. read the assigned text (and the notes/slides on D2L):
  - 1. earlier (not just the night before);
  - 2. slower (not in a rush);
  - 3. more deeply (underlining, highlighting, and/or taking notes); and
  - 4. perhaps more than once
- B. use the e-mailed questions as a study guide when reading the text and preparing for class
- C. take more careful notes during class
- D. come prepared with questions and ask more questions before, during, and after class

### What the instructor can do to improve the course for the rest of this semester

- A. end each class with a brief recap/summary of the main points/takeaways of the reading/discussion
- B. shorten the length of the mini-lectures at the beginning of class to allow for more discussion/activities
- C. re-visit the quizzes (28 points remaining)

we should choose ONE of the following options:

- 1. **continue the quizzes as is:** 4-point, 4-question quizzes each of the next 7 Thursdays
- 2. **continue the quizzes with modifications:** 4-point quizzes each of the next 7 Thursday; varying the quiz format and question type (e.g., write a paragraph summarizing a reading's main argument; allow peer collaboration; etc.)
- 3. **create an alternative to the quizzes:** find other small-stakes opportunities for students to demonstrate their comprehension of the assigned readings (e.g., short response papers, worksheets)
- 4. **shift points to Take-Home Essay Exam Three:** drop all the remaining quizzes and make the final essay exam worth 125 points (instead of 100 points); then give everyone the remaining 3 quiz points for free)

*Here's one thing you may want to consider. You can earn up to 106 participation points (even though your grade is calculated out of 100). You may miss a class and/or not do so well on a quiz or two and still earn about 100 participation points.*

## Mid-Semester Feedback Survey

*Dear Student: Please complete this survey to provide constructive, **anonymous** feedback to me about how our class is going. Please be as specific and complete as possible in your comments so I can identify those steps we can take to improve our course. At the end of the semester, you will complete a different survey that allows you to evaluate our course for administrative purposes.*

- 1. As a student, what are some strategies or techniques you have used that have helped you learn in this course?**
- 2. As a student, what could you do in the second half of the semester to help you learn more effectively?**
- 3. As an instructor, what methods and activities have I used that have helped you learn in this course?**
- 4. As an instructor, what could I do in the second half of the semester to help you learn more effectively?**
- 5. Do you think that the classroom environment is an inclusive space where everyone feels comfortable participating? Why or why not?**

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

To: Students in spring 2017 SOC courses

From: Department of Sociology Chair

Re: Mid-Semester Feedback

Date: February 20, 2017

This mid-semester survey is an opportunity for you to **anonymously** share with your instructor some constructive feedback about how your course is going so far. This feedback may help you and your instructor make changes that improve the course in the second half of the semester. Yet, please keep in mind that it may not be feasible to incorporate some suggested changes in the weeks remaining.

Your constructive feedback will be useful for you, your classmates, and your instructor. It is important that your feedback remain anonymous, so please **don't put your name** on this survey.



**DEPARTMENT  
OF  
SOCIOLOGY**

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48824-1111

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sociology.msu.edu

Some examples of helpful comments include:

- “I appreciate your in-class reminders about deadlines.”
- “Is there a way for you to slow down the lecture or review the main points?”
- “I’m having trouble hearing you in the last row.”
- “The \_\_\_\_\_ assignment helped me prepare for the first exam/essay.”
- “The discussions are helping me understand the reading material.”

Some examples of unhelpful or inappropriate comments include:

- “I really like/dislike your clothes.”
- “You’re a nice/mean person.”

After you complete this survey, your instructor will review the results and discuss them with you in class or via e-mail. Again, the main goal is to improve, where possible, your course in the second half of the semester. *At the end of the semester, you will complete a different survey that will allow you to formally evaluate the course and your instructor for administrative purposes.*