

University Committee on Undergraduate Education
Report from the SIRS Subcommittee
November 12, 2020

In May 2020, following an abrupt transition from in-person to remote learning resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, students were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the transition to remote teaching through a supplementary survey that accompanied the SIRS process. The results were intended to provide both the institution and individual faculty members with information for formative purposes only. They were not intended to be used as part of annual review, reappointment, promotion, or tenure decisions.

Approximately 3,886 responses covering 329 courses were received (8% response rate)¹ and aggregated results were shared with each college, but this did not allow for a breakdown by department or instructor. Automated reporting at these levels was not built into the system, and thus, the SIRS Online Administrator has been going through the process of manually creating reports for instructors. As of October 15, 2020, reports had been prepared for faculty who received more than 11 responses in the survey.

On September 3, 2020 Jeff Grabill, the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, asked UCUE to incorporate modified versions of the questions used in the supplemental survey in the course evaluation process for Fall Semester 2020. In subsequent communication with him, the UCUE SIRS Subcommittee has clarified the request.

1. Implement a modified version of this supplemental survey for Fall Semester 2020. (The proposed survey accompanies this recommendation.)
2. The survey would be administered by the SIRS Online Administrator, but it would be a Qualtrics instrument and remain independent of the SIRS system.
3. Students would be given a link to the supplemental survey at the same time as they receive the message indicating that the SIRS system is available to them.
4. The responses gathered through the supplemental survey are intended to assist instructors in improving their remote teaching practices and for formative use by the university to inform the development of additional support for instructors. They would be kept separate from the SIRS data and not used for annual review, reappointment, promotion, or tenure decisions.

Recommendation:

UCUE endorses the use of the supplementary survey proposed by the Associate Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Technology, for Fall semester 2020.

¹ See email from 10/27/20 email from Michelle Carlson. The typical response rate for SIRS is about 72%.

Rationale:

1. Collecting information related to online instruction for the Fall Semester 2020 makes sense given that most of our courses are being taught remotely. While we expect a return to in-person instruction, it is likely that more MSU courses will be taught online in the future. Collecting information about the effectiveness of online instruction is essential to evaluating and improving it.
2. While many faculty received support to improve online instruction throughout Summer 2020, remote instruction is still a new form of teaching for most faculty. In addition, the decision to move almost all Fall Semester 2020 courses to a remote format was made only 3 weeks prior to the start of the semester, giving faculty who had planned to teach courses in-person little time to prepare. It is important to gather information to improve remote instruction, but given the circumstances of the Coronavirus Pandemic, it would not be fair to use this information in evaluative processes.
3. An administrative decision was made in October 2020 to purchase a new software system (Explorance Blue), to replace the current SIRS system. Implementing this system will involve a review of the information gathered as part of the course evaluation process. Additional questions about remote instruction should be considered at that time.