![explorance — Improvement at heart.]

Mohawk College Spends Less Time to Get Higher Response Rates with Blue®

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> Senior Research and Planning Analyst for
> Institutional Research at Mohawk College

CLIENT:
Mohawk College

CHALLENGE:
The college's large and diverse student population required greater flexibility for course evaluations and surveys than they previously had.

SOLUTION:
Blue, a flexible, user friendly system that integrates with in house systems

BENEFITS

- Doubled response rates from previous online course evaluations

- Reduced time spent creating surveys by 50%

- Produced reports for faculty/staff in days instead of weeks

- Integrated with Banner system

Mohawk College is an educational institution of the 21st century. Urban, with a highly diverse and multicultural student body, the college serves almost 12,000 full-time students and a whopping 46,000 continuing education students with its various programs.

Such a large and varied population puts high demands on the college's office of Institutional Research, especially as they continue their path toward a culture of accountability and metric-driven decision-making.

360 REVIEWS CRITICAL TO PROGRAM

To manage surveys and course evaluations, Mohawk College used to rely on two different outsourced research providers. The last provider ran the required surveys online and posted the reports for faculty and their supervisors online. But outsourcing was proving expensive and too inflexible to meet their strategic mandate.

"Every time we wanted to make a change, survey a different group of students and/or courses, or add another survey period it would cost us," says Helen Sheridan, Senior Research and Planning Analyst for Institutional Research at Mohawk College.

"It limited the number of variations we could put on a survey, since each one drove up the cost."

Their situation is typical of many educational institutions that outsource their research. Without on-site technology to manage their own projects, data gathering becomes a sunk cost rather than an investment that research teams can build on.

INTEGRATING WITH BANNER

The Institutional Research team assessed many options, including building their own homegrown system, before selecting Blue from eXplorance.

A key deciding factor was Blue's proven integration with their Banner system, which houses the college's key data.

"I used to spend a lot of time cleaning up the data I pulled from our Banner system, before sending it on for the survey," says Helen. "It was really tedious, time- consuming work. The fact that Blue could easily integrate with Banner, and the potential to integrate with our Desire2Learn eLearning platform, definitely influenced our decision."

A TRULY FLEXIBLE SYSTEM

Once Blue was implemented, Institutional Research found that managing course evaluations took less time than when an outsourced provider did it — more than half the time.

"We used to have to extract data from Banner using queries, and then clean up all the data," she says. "Now that the surveys are integrated with Banner, it's so much easier to pull the data we need. It takes us about half the time it used to."

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DOUBLED RESPONSE RATES

Not only has Institutional Research at Mohawk saved time, they've also increased response rates.

"We basically doubled our response rates on course evaluations from last year once we went online with Blue," she says. "We were ecstatic!"

Some of the features they felt contributed to the increase include a link in the email that takes students directly to the online evaluation form. They also provided links from their school portal to make the forms easy to access.

"We're expecting response rates to increase further now that we have our single sign-on working within our college portal with Blue, so students only need to login once to access their course evaluations."

PROVIDING GREATER MOBILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Another important feature of Blue forms is their availability on mobile applications. Since most students now carry their own smartphones or other mobile devices, they can easily complete a form almost anywhere.

"Many of our faculty wants students to complete evaluation forms in class. Some classes do not have computer labs, so having Blue forms available on mobile technology makes a huge difference," she says.

Institutional Research appreciates some other features that allow the college to meet the diverse needs of their faculty and students.

"We like being able to customize surveys for different types of college students. And we had no problem with our courses that have different start and end dates."

GETTING AN "A" FROM FACULTY AND STAFF

Real-time data gathering is allowing everyone, including researchers as well as the faculty and staff looking at the data, to respond faster to results.

"Some of our executive have told me they are very pleased about the faster turnaround times," she says.

"We're putting reports in their hands much sooner than we used to. We're even evaluating survey results while they're still open, so we can make adjustments almost immediately."

For further analysis, Institutional Research often extracts data from Blue and exports it to SPSS, where they can conduct more statistical analysis.

The new tools allow Institutional Research to spend more time on strategy and less on manual and tedious work for their research, providing the agility and responsiveness that Institutional Research needs to make a true impact.

She sums it up nicely: "eXplorance has a solid piece of software that does more than one thing. Any company can create software to do a survey, but that's not where the true value is."

She continues, "The true value is in a complete integration: with in-house data, with the student information system, and then being able to produce good reports from all that data together."