

# How to Enhance Your Student Feedback with Pre-course Surveys

University of Pittsburgh

University Center for Teaching and Learning

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# Services

- Faculty & Department Consultations & Workshops
- Pitt Online
- Testing Center
- Canvas Support
- Open Lab Markerspace
- Classroom technology loans
- Learning space development

# Partner & Support

- New Faculty Orientation
- Annual Assessment & Teaching Conference
- Graduate Student Teaching Initiative
- Diversity Institute
- Generative AI Idea Lab - Revolutionizing Teaching & Learning

# Teaching survey

# Course evaluation process

# Process

- With **Explorance/Blue** since 2015
- Central survey administration FOR 23/24 schools
- Decentralized processes for surveys opt in/out decisions, questionnaires, and report access
- Administer 15,000 end-of-term teaching surveys annually



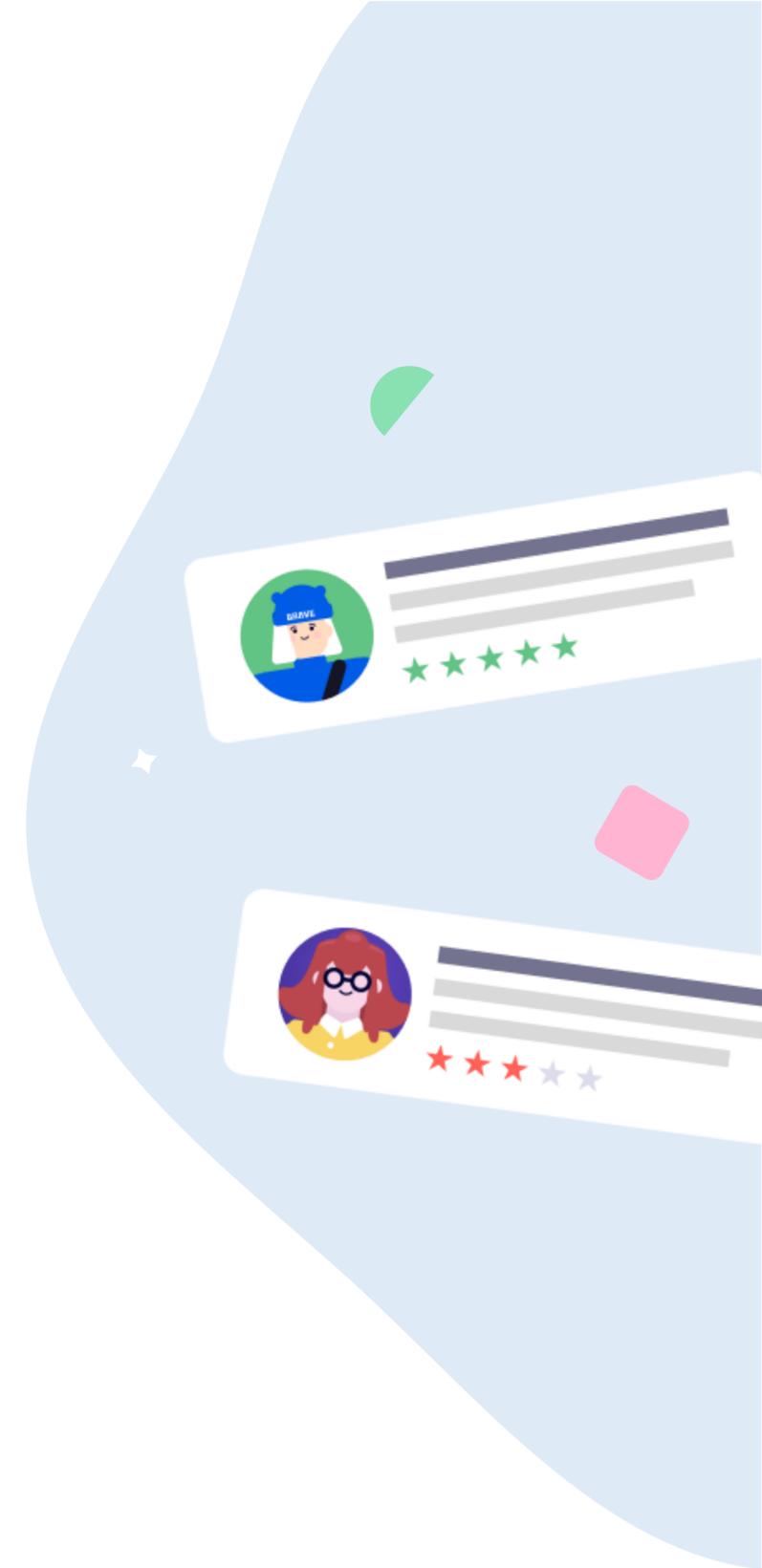
# How Results are Used

- **Prior to 2020/2021** - sole method for measuring teaching effectiveness for P/T and annual reviews.
- **Spring 2021** - Based on a recommendation from the Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence, the Provost asked each school to develop an Assessment of Teaching Plan that included measures beyond student opinion and Teaching Surveys.



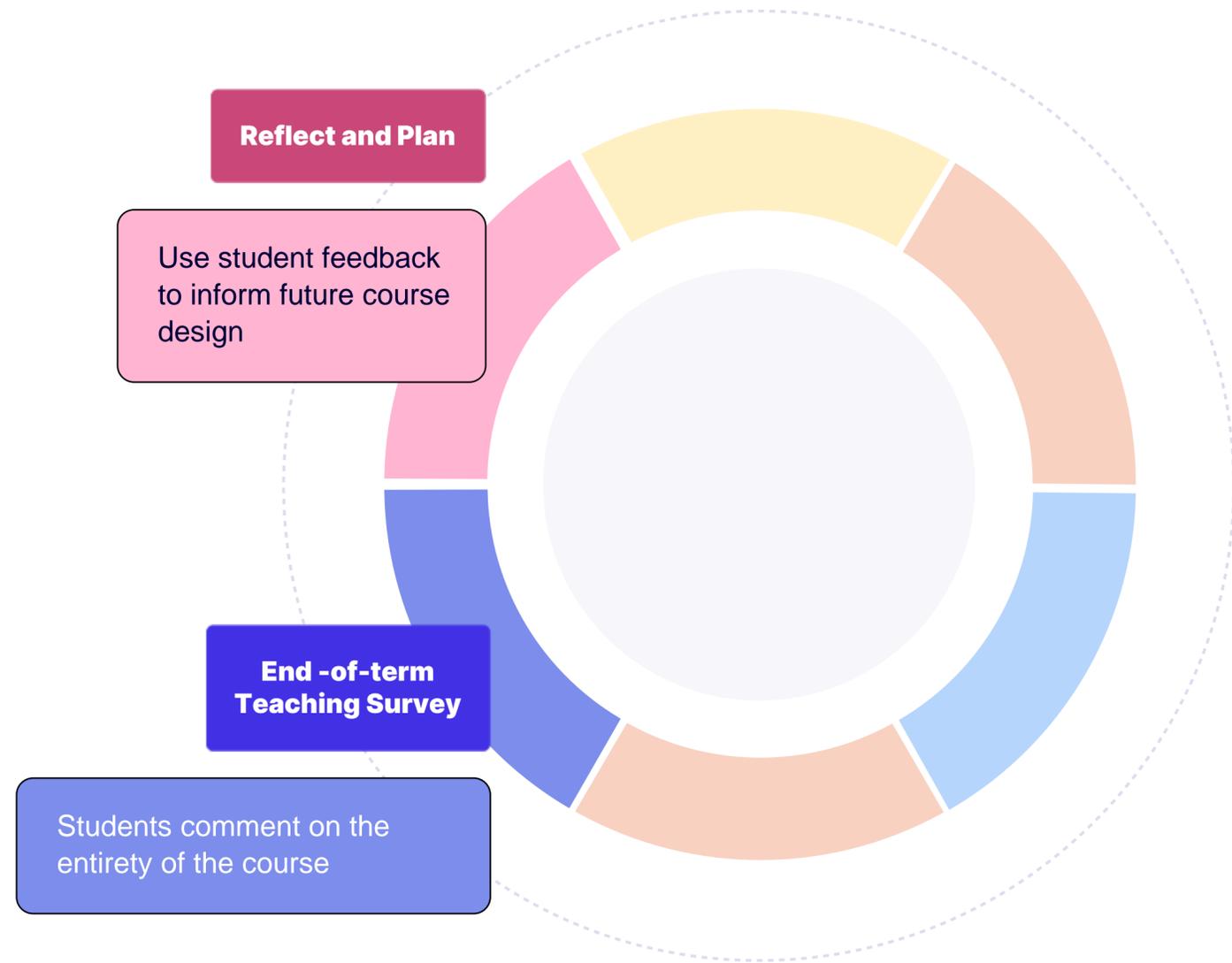
# How Results are Used

- **When viewing results:**
  - Avoid comparison
  - Look common themes, don't focus outliers
  - Look for improvement focuses opportunities
- **Collect additional feedback** and make timely changes before the end of the term



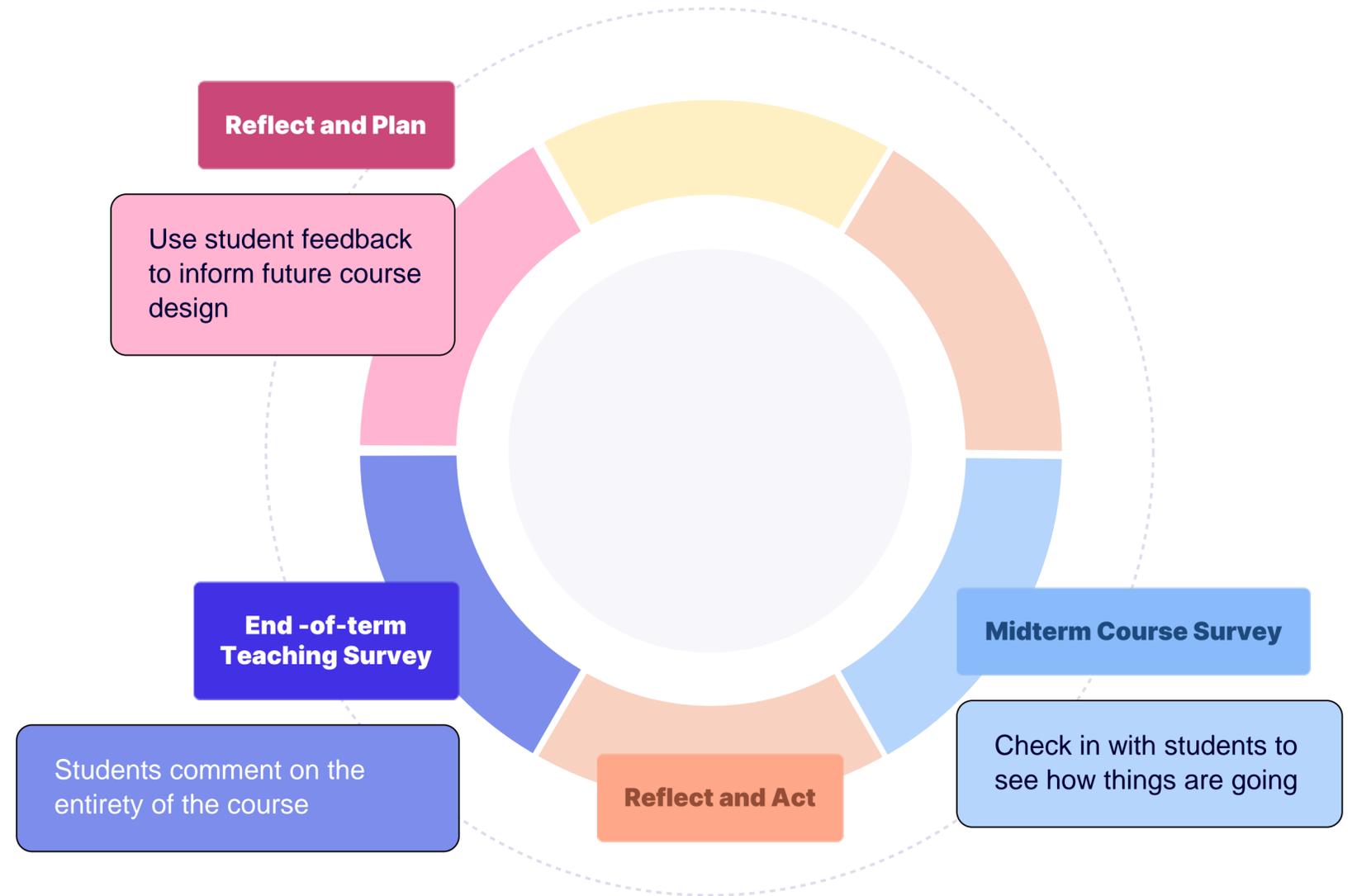
# Toward a continuous cycle of feedback

Before Fall 2019



# Toward a continuous cycle of feedback

Midterm survey option added spring 2020



## ❖ Each New Cohort Of Students Is Unique

- Remote and hybrid learning opportunities
- Adapting to evolving technological tools and platforms
- Generative AI
- Personalized learning experiences
- Career readiness
- Real word application and experience



## ❖ Each New Cohort Of Students Is Unique

- Increasing non-traditional student populations
- Work and family responsibilities
- Cost
- Mental health awareness
- Accessibility need
- Accommodations testing



# Good Teaching Practice

- “ Pre-course surveys capture learners’ prior knowledge, readiness, and interests, and serve as an example of responsive teaching.

# Good Teaching Practice

- “ The importance of inviting student voice to help inform course design is a necessary step to creating relationships between instructors, learners and content and initiating a sense of community.

# Good Teaching Practice

- “ Allows the instructor to create a more inclusive, comfortable, and welcoming space for everyone from the very start.

# ❖ Positive Effect On End Of Term Evaluations

## Research

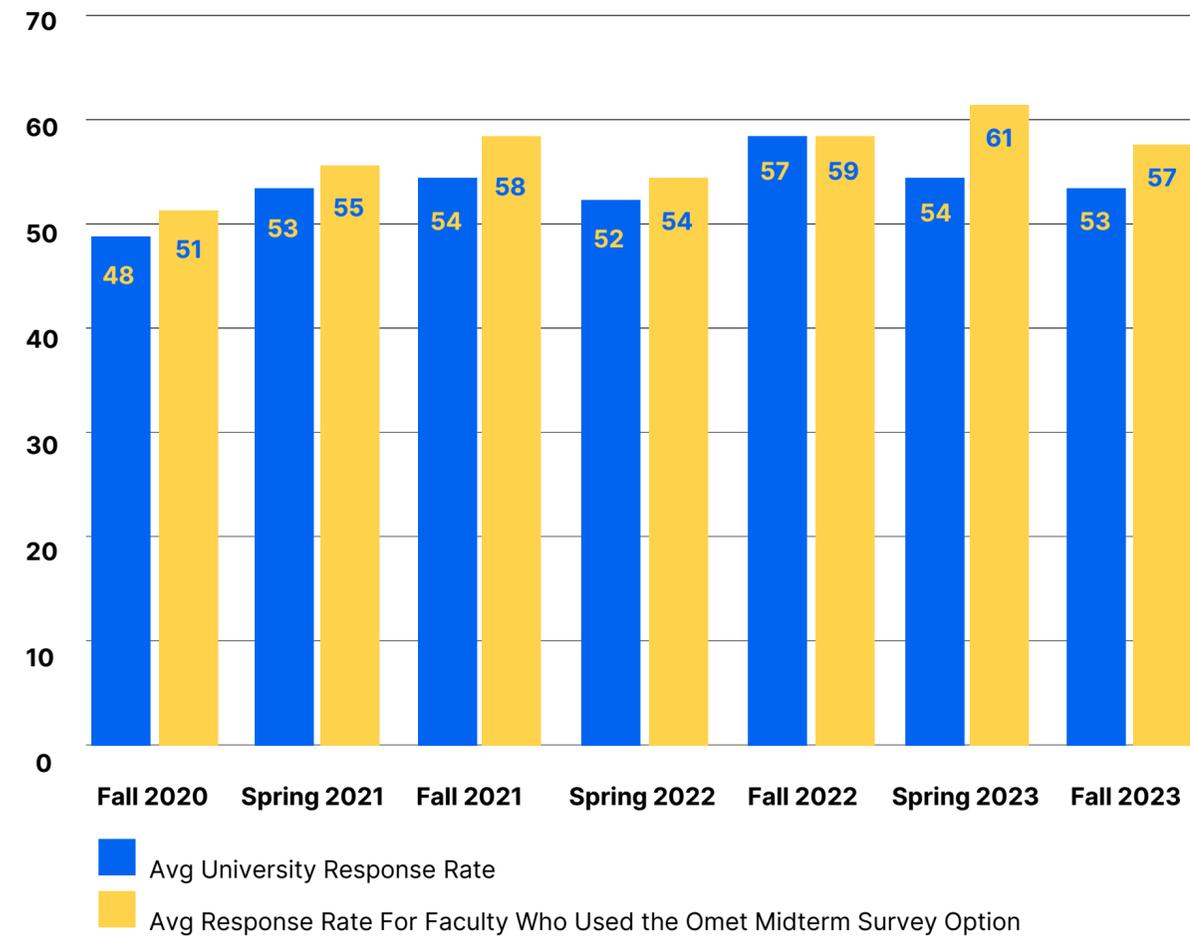
Collecting early feedback improves student perception of the value of the process.

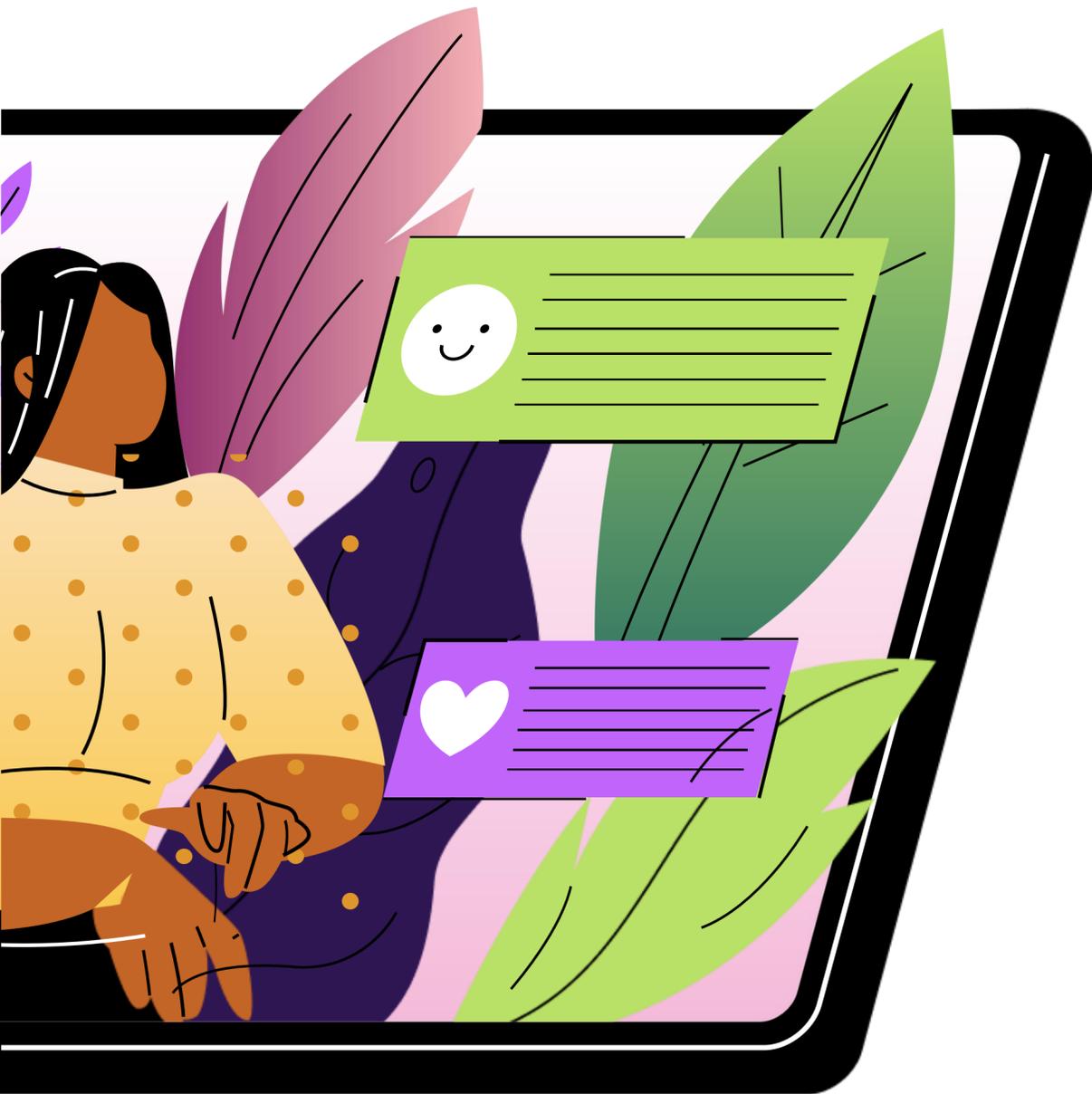
Svinicki, M. D. (2001). Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2001(87), 17-24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.24>

## Evidence

Pitt faculty who used Blue midterm course surveys have consistently received higher than average response rates on end-of-term teaching surveys since the midterm survey option was offered.

Comparison of end-of-term Teaching Survey response rates  
Faculty who used the midterm survey option

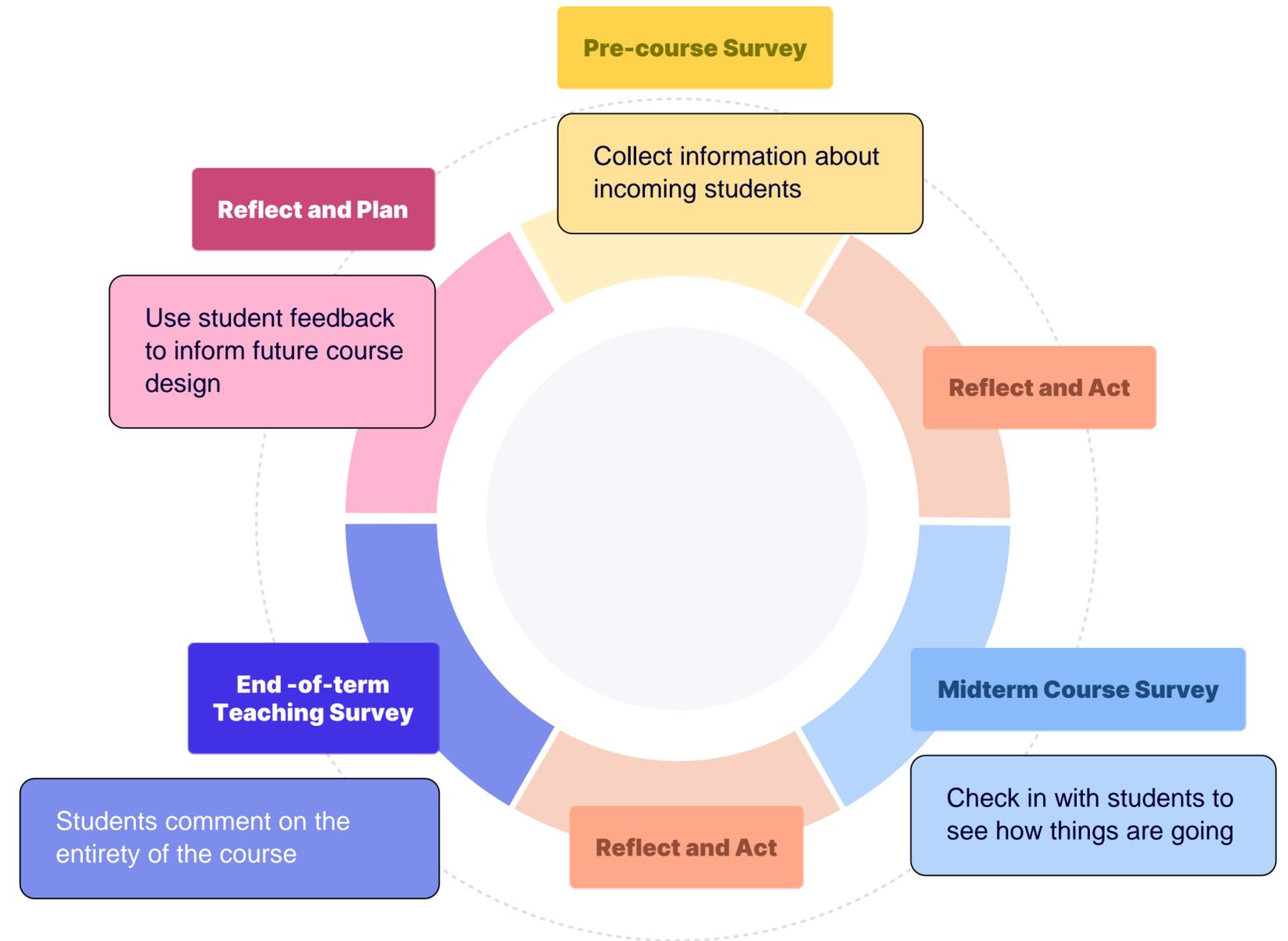




- Everyone needs feedback to improve.
- Musicians and athletes receive “continual feedback across the countless hours spent in practice for the occasional performance
- Teachers deliver multiple “performances” a year with almost no feedback
- Ongoing feedback is necessary to innovate teaching

# Closing the Gap

Standard Pre-course Survey Questions:



# Closing the Gap

## Standard Pre-course Survey Questions:

Briefly explain why you decided to take this course.

What are you most excited to learn about in this course?

Do you anticipate potential barriers that will hinder your learning in this class (If yes, what are those barriers)?

Please describe any teaching strategies you find particularly useful.

What could your instructor(s) or TA(s) do to improve or better support your learning experience in this course?



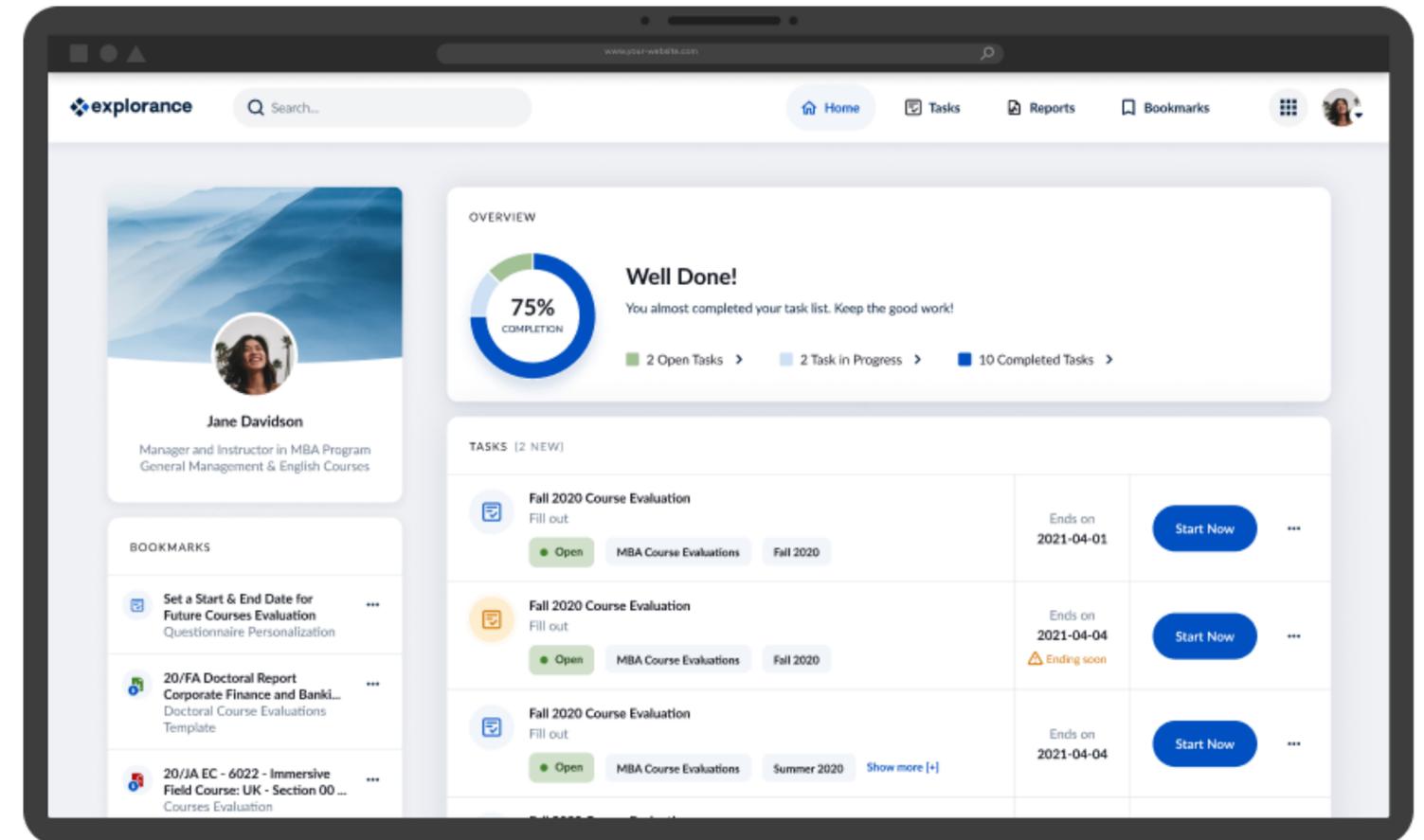
# ❖ Why Use Blue

Faculty and students are familiar with the dashboard.

All course evaluation data is stored in one place.

DIG makes it easy for faculty to request a survey and choose question sets.

Added value to Blue - no additional expense to run multiple projects.



# ❖ Blue Set-up And Reporting

## 1 Separate Blue Project

## 2 Faculty uses DIG to request and select a question set

- Choose the standard set of questions and add custom questions.
- Write your own set of questions. (question trigger set up in project)

## 3 Standard survey dates are applied

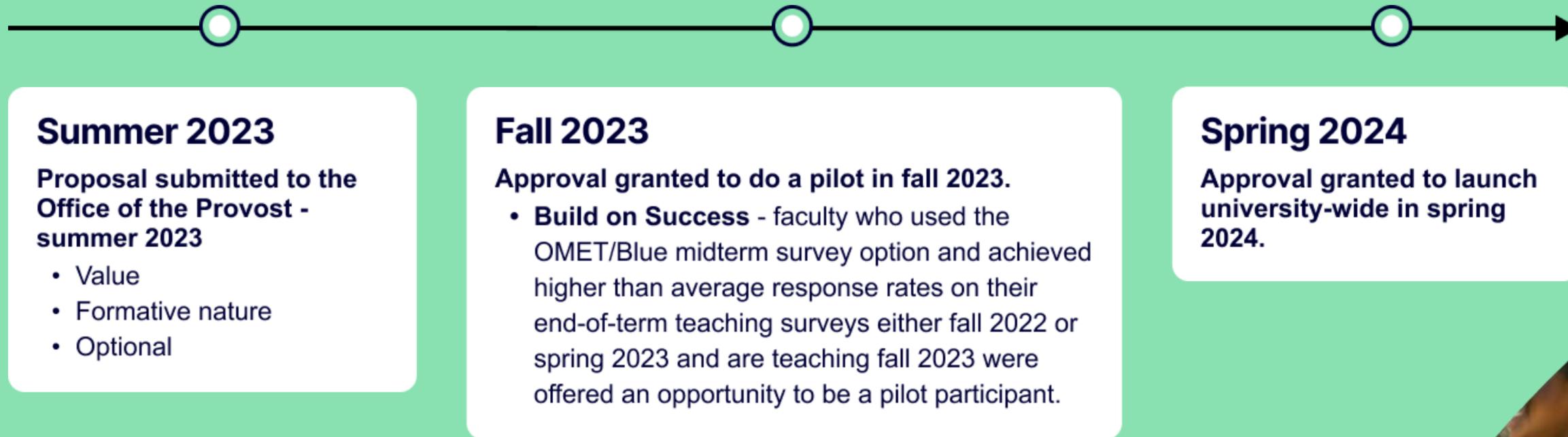
- Open one week before classes and closes after first two weeks of classes

## 4 Reports are released after at least one student responds.

- Faculty can use results to spark discussion on day one of class and encourage more students to respond.

## 5 Results are only released to the faculty member.

# ❖ Administrative Support



## ❖ Faculty Buy-in

# Improvement focused

Results to pre and  
midterm surveys  
questions are only  
released to faculty

✓ **Connect with students**

✓ **Make improvements throughout the term**

✓ **Reflect and track outcomes:**

**Change**

**Innovative teaching strategies**

✓ **Ask custom questions to get targeted feedback**

✓ **Identify growth and development opportunities**

## ❖ Faculty Testimonials

“ **Pre-course surveys are a great tool** to make sure you have a good connection with your class and can hit the ground running with your materials, while making sure you aren't leaving anyone behind. ”

“ The pre-course survey allowed me to hear from students about their interest before the first day of class. I was able to use this information to emphasize course elements and focus my class more on students interests. **I hope this will translate into an overall better experience for my students.** ”

## ❖ Faculty Testimonials

“ **It is a great idea.** It is especially helpful to hear what students expect to get out of the course. ”

“ I appreciate the opportunity to have this pre-course survey. I appreciate having this format to ask questions to guide me as I interact with students and teach this semester. **I created custom questions and they were very useful for me to get to know the students a bit and learn about their interests.** ”

# ❖ Using Results To Inform Teaching

## Categorize results:



### Why are most students taking the course?

Can be used as a springboard for discussion

### What are students most excited to learn about

Do these topics aligns with your learning objectives for the class?

### What other information have students provided

Have students expressed concerns over things that cannot be changed

### What are students concerned about?

Can you provide additional resources?  
Are courses materials equally accessible to all students?  
Have they mentioned anything specific? (i.e., concerns about assignments, due dates, having trouble navigating Canvas)  
Are there resources on campus that you can direct students to?

### How do students like to learn?

Do they strategies align with what you have planned?  
Are there ways to add or modify activities?



# ✦ Using Results To Inform Teaching

## Understanding, responding to, and recording Student Feedback



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Can be used as a springboard for discussion

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# ✦ Using Results To Inform Teaching

Teaching Center resources that may be helpful



## Schedule Time

To review your results with a Teaching Consultant

Faculty Workshops

Teaching support

Review your Canvas Course Shell



# ❖ Reflection On Student Feedback Faculty Worksheet

Set up as a project in Blue and can be found on the Teaching Survey/Blue Dashboard.

Includes links to helpful resources, guided reflection prompts, and space to record summaries, actions, and outcomes.

Open all term until two weeks after end-of-term teaching survey results are released.

## Summarize numerical data:

There are several [resources available](#) when looking at numerical ratings from the end-of-term student surveys. This may identify strengths and areas for improvement. This may also note individual data and note whether scores are consistent or if there are noticeable changes.

Enter text here

(Character limit: Max 1000)

## Reflect and comment on results:

[Get an overview of student comments](#). Look for patterns and don't just respond to positive or one or two negative comments.

Things to consider:

- Do you make changes or introduce something new this term based on student feedback from previous terms?
- If you conducted multiple teaching surveys this term, reflect on how and why student feedback changed. What has this taught you about your teaching?
- Include any additional factors to take into consideration (i.e., class enrollment, course delivery mode (in-person, online), first-time teaching or teaching this course, tried a new teaching strategy, etc).

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## Future actions:

What do you plan on continuing to do? What are some professional development opportunities to take advantage of? What changes will you make? (Take into consideration what support will you need to make these changes? What are potential barriers or challenges to making these changes?)

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# ❖ Reflection On Student Feedback Faculty Worksheet

A final copy of the worksheet is released to the faculty member and may be shared or used at their discretion.

## SAMPLE - Faculty Worksheet – Reflection on Student Feedback Final Version

Term name and number

Faculty member name

Course name

### Pre-course Survey Student Feedback

#### Summary of pre-course survey student feedback:

##### Comments

- Students report that they find small group discussion, examples, and short online videos helpful for their learning.
- They are concerned about managing their time effectively.
- Some students lack confidence in their academic writing abilities.

#### Action:

##### Comments

- Added a bank on online videos on building academic writing skills to Canvas.
- Highlighted the Writing Center information on my syllabus on the first day of class.
- Demonstrated where to go to download the Canvas student app and how Canvas calendar functions. Suggested creating reminders to start assignments early.
- Will discuss partial assignment examples during the term.

#### Outcome:

##### Comments

- Students report that they use the Canvas app. Time management seems to be going okay – slightly less late work than usual.
- Only two students are using the videos.

## ❖ Promotional Efforts

Devoted web resources

University wide mailings

Workshop

Blue emails

Student newspaper

Staff and student  
short (60 sec video)

Social media outlets

Teaching Center Newsletter  
• Special edition



The image shows a screenshot of a university newsletter. The top header is blue with the University of Pittsburgh logo and the text "University Center for Teaching and Learning Weekly Newsletter". A navigation menu on the right includes "Home", "Announcements", "Resources", and "Workshops". Below the header is a white box with a yellow border containing the text "Pre-course Surveys" next to a graduation cap icon. Below this box is a blue link "Pre-Course Surveys Available for Spring Term" followed by a paragraph of text: "Pre-course surveys collect important information from your students to inform course design and help align expectations. Request a pre-course survey for your course(s) by Jan. 15."