

CASE STUDY



University of Pittsburgh Implements Pre-Course Surveys to Innovate Teaching Effectiveness with Explorance Blue

About the University of Pittsburgh

Founded in 1787, the University of Pittsburgh is a state-related research university with over 32,000 full-time students, nearly 6,000 faculty, and about 9,000 staff. As a member of the Association of American Universities, Pitt is recognized for its research excellence and its commitment to innovative teaching and continuous improvement.

Explorance Partner Since 2015



CHALLENGE

Growing Demand for Real-Time Insights

The University of Pittsburgh, like many higher education institutions, primarily relied on end-of-term student evaluations as one of the data points to assess teaching effectiveness. However, these evaluations often provided feedback too late to influence the current student cohort, leaving faculty with minimal opportunity to adjust their teaching methods in real-time.

Shifts in student needs and expectations such as technology adoption, accessibility needs, mental health concerns, and students balancing work and family responsibilities have increasingly emphasized the importance of immediate feedback to better support students' learning experiences as early as possible.

SOLUTION

A Cycle of Continuous Feedback

Even after implementing midterm surveys in Spring 2020, the university still recognized there was a need for earlier student feedback to support innovative teaching.

In 2024, the University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Teaching and Learning implemented pre-course surveys through Explorance Blue, expanding its feedback collection system to include surveys at the start of each term. These surveys were designed to collect information about students' prior knowledge, learning preferences, and expectations before the course began – giving instructors an opportunity to make immediate adjustments that better supported student learning from day one.

The integration of Explorance Blue allowed for seamless setup and execution of these surveys. Using Blue's Data Integrity Gateway (DIG), faculty could opt in, choosing from pre-designed survey templates or customizing their own questions.

One of the major benefits of using Blue was its ability to centralize all student feedback from pre-course, midterm, and end-of-term surveys, in one system.

OUTCOME

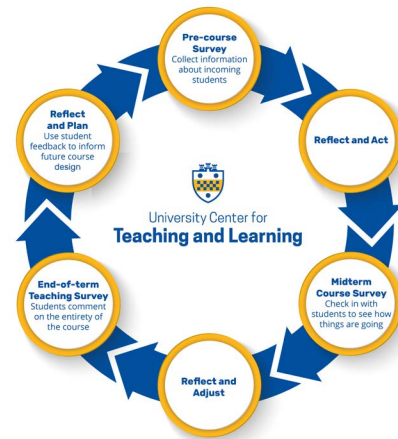
Holistic View of Student Feedback

The introduction of pre-course surveys at the University of Pittsburgh significantly enhanced faculty to student engagement. This higher engagement was attributed to faculty's active involvement in gathering feedback throughout the course, signaling to students that their opinions were valued and acted upon.

The feedback from pre-course surveys allowed faculty to adjust their teaching strategies, such as modifying the course format, adding additional resources, or addressing specific student needs.

Additionally, Explorance Blue's ability to house all feedback data in one system provided faculty with a

Faculty could easily track feedback patterns over time using the dashboard, allowing for continuous improvements throughout the term.



"We decided that adding a pre-course survey made sense. It gave faculty more opportunity to connect with students as the term begins and to even make slight adjustments at the very beginning of the term. Why not use Blue? All the data is in one place and it's easy for faculty to request and access reports—this just made sense." – **Lisa Votodian, Survey Assessment Manager, University Center for Teaching and Learning**

holistic view of student experiences across the term. This comprehensive feedback loop enabled instructors to reflect on their teaching practices continuously, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes that directly impacted student success.

Learn More About:

- [University of Pittsburgh's University Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Pre-course Surveys](#)