

# Profile in Green

## Office of Educational Assessment *IASystem Development & Management Team*

### **Stimulus for Conversion**

The Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) has provided course evaluation services to the University of Washington for several decades. Introduced in 1974, the UW course evaluation system (*Instructional Assessment System; IAS*) capitalized on the then-emerging computing and optical mark (scanning) technologies, and OEA subsequently introduced a complementary online system in the mid-90's. The high quality of the UW paper-based system attracted the notice of other postsecondary institutions and the majority of course evaluations at UW Seattle have been funded for decades by revenues from a word-of-mouth client base.

With the increasing sophistication of online technology, colleges and universities have introduced a variety of web-based capabilities in their face-to-face courses and expanded the number and scope of their online course offerings. This is particularly true of the UW, and OEA has recognized the need for a more sophisticated and flexible course evaluation system to optimize the fit of the evaluative process with courses of all types. As added incentive, online evaluations provide the potential both for cost savings related to reduced use of paper and stabilized financial support for UW course evaluations through attraction of additional external clients. For the past 2.5 years OEA has been working to create a new course evaluation system (*IASystem™*) for use both at UW and at other post-secondary institutions across the country.



### **Our Approach**

The OEA course evaluation system is distinguished from other nationally available systems by the number of evaluation forms developed by faculty to match specific course types, and a particular strength of the system is the combination of faculty collaboration with rigorous psychometric analyses. In creating *IASystem™*, we have focused on retaining and building on existing strengths, while adding capabilities uniquely available in an online environment. Our goal is to provide faculty the opportunity to choose the evaluation modality (online or paper-based) that best fits a particular course offering, while providing encouragement and support to transition as many courses to online evaluations as is consistent with superior pedagogical and assessment practice.

Redeveloping our existing course evaluation system to support both online and paper-based evaluations has required transitioning from a desk-top database (MS Access/Visual Basic) to an online environment (MySQL/Perl). We began defining our new database structure in 2011-12, pilot tested online survey delivery with courses in the iSchool and at UW Tacoma in 2012-2013, and evaluated

all courses online in the Law School in 2012-13 while continuing the iSchool and UWT pilots and testing the online administrative interface. We released Version 1.0 of the new integrated system (*IASystem™*) in Autumn 2013 and have begun training departmental coordinators at UW Seattle in the use of the online administrative interface. We have also begun working with faculty and departments to identify effective administrative practices to ensure high student response rates when evaluations are given online in face-to-face courses.

### **Next Steps**

We are proceeding slowly and deliberately in making changes to an evaluative system that has been in place for more than 40 years, particularly as evaluation results are used to support high-stakes decisions relating to faculty promotion and tenure – the existing system has long been woven into departmental expectations and practices. Our focus this year is to familiarize faculty and departments with new procedures in managing the course evaluation process (both online and paper-based) and to encourage faculty teaching online courses to use online evaluations. We are identifying specific interested departments able to administer online evaluations in face-to-face courses and participate in crafting a set of institution-wide best practices. During 2014-15 we will begin encouraging wider use of online evaluations in face-to-face courses with a goal of reaching steady-state adoption (~85%) within two years. We anticipate that this level of usage will result in a savings of approximately \$66,000 annually.

For more information, go to:  
[green.washington.edu/paper-reduction](http://green.washington.edu/paper-reduction)

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