

## **Memo**

To: Provost Capuano, FDU Faculty  
From: Scott Behson, Faculty Chair of IDEA Implementation Team and Catherine Kelley, Co-Chair of IDEA Implementation Team  
Date: February 27, 2014

**Subject: Report on the Fall 2013 IDEA Pilot Test**

### **Summary**

This report summarizes the activities involved in pilot testing the IDEA course evaluation system during the Fall 2013 semester as well as the data generated and feedback received from faculty who participated in the pilot program. The pilot test was extremely successful, as reflected in the resultant data and faculty feedback. We are further conducting a small Spring 2014 pilot test for specific types of classes not included in this past pilot test (more on this later). We recommend full university-wide implementation of IDEA for Fall 2014.

We are extremely grateful for the support given by the Provost, Deans and Directors/Chairs, and especially by the Pilot Test Faculty during the past two semesters.

## A Timeline of Activity

- Over the past two years, a task force consisting of 2 faculty from each college conducted extensive research on possible alternatives to the Endeavor course evaluation system, gathering input from many sources including the full FDU faculty. We strongly recommended IDEA as the best system on the market. The Provost approved our recommendation for pilot testing the system, with an eye for possible future adoption. Reports from each semester, including our first pilot test in Spring 2013, were shared with the entire FDU faculty. This report focuses on the Fall 2013 semester, in which we ran our second pilot test of the system.
- For this pilot test, we recruited 5 Pilot Test departments- Criminal Justice, Nursing and Psychology from University College, Psychology from Becton College, and Management from Silberman College. We also allowed individual faculty members to volunteer to participate. **In all, 194 classes were included in the pilot test, with responses from approximately 3,200 students.**
- We ran an orientation session for each pilot test department. Drs. Scott Behson, Diane Wentworth and Jamie Zibulsky conducted these orientations. A copy of all training materials is available upon request.
  - The training seminars were very well received, as indicated in the pilot test survey results (included as an addendum to this report)
  - Faculty were given hard and soft copies of materials for the pilot test, and faculty who could not attend were given soft copies of materials, as well as step by step instructions.
- Combined with our Spring 2013 pilot test, IDEA has now been successfully run on a trial basis in **274 classes**, in all 4 colleges, and on both NJ campuses, with approximately **4,800 student responses**.
  - Our Spring 2014 pilot test includes classes in Vancouver and at off-site locations, and also include classes outside of the traditional 15 week semester format
- On December 1<sup>st</sup>, the IDEA system was officially launched for students to fill out. Students had until December 10<sup>th</sup> (the day before final exams) to complete their surveys.
- We submitted our processing request to IDEA on January 7<sup>th</sup>, after campuses re-opened post-holidays. There was a short delay in getting our results back due in part to the weather and in part to a miscommunication by IDEA. This latter issue is resolved.

- FDU received the IDEA feedback reports, as well as an Institutional Summary Report (available upon request), group summary reports for each pilot test department, in both soft and hard copy on February 6. Faculty began receiving copies of their feedback on February 7. All faculty had received their feedback by February 10, and chairs also received their Group Summary Reports via email on February 10<sup>th</sup>
- Pilot test faculty were sent a surveymonkey.com survey on February 12<sup>th</sup>, and sent a reminder on February 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. In all, 45 of the pilot test faculty responded to the survey. The survey results are available upon request.

## Overall Results

The Institutional Summary Report (ISR) compiles the data from all pilot test class evaluations, comparing them to classes at the other 400+ US colleges and universities using IDEA course evaluations.

Highlights from the report include:

- Overall, FDU's teaching evaluations are considerably higher than the IDEA database averages. Specifically:
  - **80%** of FDU classes were above the IDEA database average for the overall course rating, including 82% above average for “progress on relevant objectives”, 74% on “excellent teacher” and 77% on “excellent course”. This is highly encouraging, as it demonstrates that we have a lot to be proud of as an educational institution. Further, this should reassure faculty that they should not fear that the IDEA system will result in lower evaluations.
  - 67% of FDU classes earned a t-score of 55 or above (50 being the average, meaning that **over half of FDU classes were rated at least a one-half standard deviation above average- above the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile**) in the IDEA database. This is especially impressive as IDEA colleges may tend to be more committed to teaching and continuous improvement than schools using other systems.
- The overall response rate was 51%, which is lower than we had hoped and lower than is typical with Endeavor and with other universities who use IDEA (IDEA reports an average response rate of 74%). We will discuss this in more detail in the Lessons Learned section.

Overall, the results show that FDU faculty members who volunteered for this pilot do excellent teaching compared to a broad cross-section of US universities.

It is possible that the departments that volunteered for the pilot test contain faculty are among our better teachers and chairs/directors who are more committed to teaching. It is possible that there is a novelty factor and that students may have been positively biased. It is possible that the lower response rate means that more motivated and satisfied students were more likely to respond to the survey. Despite these factors, the group summary report is overwhelmingly positive news.

## Faculty Survey Summary

The responses to the faculty survey are also encouraging.

Highlights include:

- Most faculty who attended the orientation sessions found them useful
- Most faculty found the orientation materials helpful
- Many faculty chose 3-5 learning objectives, which was what is recommended by IDEA and was emphasized in training. Some chose many more, which is against the recommendations made at orientations and in materials provided to faculty. This indicates that we can improve communication/education with the faculty.
- Most faculty stated they received teaching scores that were commensurate with what they typically receive with endeavor
- 88% found their evaluations to be valid
- 3/4 of respondents received scores above the IDEA average, only one faculty member was well below average
- Most faculty understood their feedback and found it somewhat or very useful
- Only 2 of the 45 respondents did not recommend switching from Endeavor to IDEA, and most want to implement immediately (combined with the Spring 2013 survey results, this means that **only 6 of the 86** faculty who participated in the pilot test recommend against implementing IDEA)
- The few negative comments represented content that was addressed and discussed at faculty orientation, indicating that those who made the comments could have their concerns addressed well before IDEA launches.

On the downside:

- Only 60% of faculty reported they attended an orientation session. This is unfortunately because, of those who attended, all but one found it to be very or somewhat useful.
  - As these orientations were voluntary and mostly conducted outside of regular department meetings, this is an area that can be improved
- Similarly, 20% of faculty reported that they did not refer to the IDEA orientation materials they were given. This is unfortunately because, of those who used these materials, all but one found them very or somewhat useful.
  - The apathy of a minority of faculty is also an issue we need to work on
- Almost 30% of faculty selected more than 3-5 learning objectives, which was strongly recommended in the orientations and the training materials. In fact, this was the central topic of the orientations, as IDEA ratings are not as useful when too many objectives are selected.

- This again indicates the importance of having faculty well-oriented to IDEA and making orientations part of regular department meetings.
- 18% of faculty did not introduce IDEA to their students, and another 14% did so only minimally. Further, only 6 set aside class time for these evaluations. These are likely key drivers of lower response rates. Over half of faculty reported lower response rates than they typically received with endeavor
  - Again, renewed emphasis on faculty education on IDEA, as well as communication material for students will likely correct this issue.

Finally, I conducted one-on-one debriefs with the department chairs of 4 of the 5 pilot test departments. We walked through the Group Summary Reports they received for their departments, and discussed their impressions of IDEA. They were unanimous in supporting IDEA and found the Group Summary Reports for their departments very useful and informative. They stated that they could use these reports for curricular improvements, faculty development and staffing decisions. All recommended transitioning to IDEA as soon as feasible.

## Lessons Learned

- Training and orientation is important- faculty who attended orientations came away impressed with IDEA and reported that they understood the system and what they needed to do
  - We need to figure out ways to encourage better participation in faculty orientation sessions.
  - For the fall 2014 semester, we should have representatives from the IDEA Task Force attend college and department faculty meetings to run orientation sessions. We also need to get more visible buy-in from deans and chair/directors (most of whom are very supportive, we just need more vocal support).
- Further, most of the faculty in the Fall 2013 Pilot Test were volunteered by their chair/director, as opposed to individually volunteering. Both full-time and adjunct faculty were included, and few adjuncts attended orientations. We need a mechanism for adjunct orientation in the future.
- Most of the feedback and questions at orientation sessions involved: “how do we implement?” or “how do we deal with this unusual circumstance?” as opposed to anything that questioned whether IDEA was a quality system or something we should use.
- The low response rate is a concern, but one that can be addressed.
  - IDEA’s internal research found that the #1 predictor of whether students fill out their online surveys (they report an overall response rate of 74%, with gains every year) is whether the professor discusses IDEA with the students and tells them that the course evaluation information is important and used for future class revisions, curricular development and faculty evaluations. This will be a point of emphasis in faculty outreach and orientation going forward.
  - More information and orientation is needed for students. We will create a short youtube video for faculty to show students in class and provide students a paper example of the survey they will fill out online later in the semester.
  - Further, once IDEA becomes the official instrument and student no longer need to fill out Endeavor and also complete IDEA as an extra voluntary matter, response rates should improve.
- Based on conversations with a wide range of faculty, staff, chairs and directors we realized just how few individuals were satisfied with endeavor.
- We learned how to administratively implement IDEA on a wide cross-section of classes, and what resources are needed for continuous implementation. We have commitments from administration on allocating the financial and support staff resources required for IDEA (both of which are less than what is currently required for Endeavor)
- Finally, we learned just how much work it takes to administer endeavor. Currently, several staff members spend countless hours of thankless work and frustration to run

endeavor, which can only be run on technology significantly older than our latest graduating class. As the technology gets less and less stable, it may no longer be feasible to run endeavor much longer, even if we all wanted to keep using it.

## **Recommendations for 2014 Activity**

### **Spring 2014**

#### **A Third Pilot Test-**

- We are currently conducting a third pilot test of IDEA, just for a sample of classes that have yet to use IDEA. This pilot test is primarily focused on ensuring that we can successfully administer IDEA across locations and alternate class timeframes.
- In particular, we are including classes in Vancouver and at off-site locations, as well as classes outside of the traditional 15 week semester format. Most pilot test classes are being drawn from Petrocelli's School of Administrative Science, which teaches classes at various NJ locations, in Vancouver, and online, as well as the Saturday MBA courses in Silberman, which are 8-week classes that are a blend of in-class and online teaching.

#### **Faculty and Administrative Approval-**

- During the Spring 2013 semester, we are seeking approval from the Senate Academic Policy and Research Committee (APRC) and the full Faculty Senate to implement IDEA university-wide beginning Fall 2014.

### **Fall 2014 and Beyond**

#### **Full Implementation-**

- We believe that, after a full year of research and three semesters of pilot-testing that FDU is ready to implement IDEA as the course evaluation system for FDU.
- We wish to form a faculty task force that will report to the APRC and be charged with developing recommended guidelines for how IDEA reports should be used for faculty development and evaluation, and with the responsibility for educating the full FDU community about IDEA.
  - This task force will conduct faculty training, student orientations, and serve as "go-to" faculty peers to help faculty with the system. Further, this task force will report to the APRC with recommendations on how IDEA can be best used for faculty development and evaluation
- We believe that Endeavor should be continued only for non-tenured tenure-track faculty through their tenure decisions. Endeavor may be run separately just for these classes, or the Endeavor questions can be included as "extra questions" at the end of the

IDEA survey. (*Note that continuing to run Endeavor via the paper instrument for these individuals will be a more costly option.*)

### **In Conclusion**

By the end of this semester, we will have conducted three successful pilot tests of IDEA with a broad cross-section of faculty from all four FDU colleges. While some decisions still need to be made, we believe that the time is right, and the foundation has been laid for a successful implementation of IDEA as FDU's course evaluation system.

With the support of leadership and faculty, a task force should be formed to ensure a smooth transition to an evaluation tool that is far superior to our current outdated system.