Research Brief #128
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Syllabus Student Survey: Fall 2016
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At the request of the Academic Senate Standards and Practices Committee, the Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Office conducted a survey of students in order to determine the most essential elements of an effective syllabus. The survey also addresses the Actionable Improvement Plan in the 2014 Accreditation Self-Study. This plan seeks to ensure that every student receives clear and accurate information with specific learning outcomes by implementing a system for reviewing and storing accurate syllabi for every class.

Surveys were distributed to faculty mailboxes the week of September 5, 2016. Of the 3,590 students who were invited to participate in the survey, completed surveys were received from 1,829 students, resulting in a response rate of **51 percent**.

Introduction

As indicated in Table 1, more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the following should be "required" or "highly recommended" in the introduction of the syllabus: official course title, instructor(s) name, schedule of class days and location of class meetings, instructor contact information, instructor office hours and location, course prefix and course number, course description, add/drop deadlines, section number(s), units for course, term course is offered, and prerequisites.

Table 1. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Introduction

	Required	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Optional	Unnecessary
Official Course Title (n=1821)	79%	11%	9%	1%	<1%
Instructor(s) Name (n=1817)	78%	13%	6%	2%	1%
Schedule of class days and location of class meetings (n=1821)	74%	15%	8%	2%	1%
Instructor Contact Information (n=1825)	74%	16%	8%	2%	<1%
Instructor Office Hours and Location (n=1828)	73%	17%	7%	2%	1%
Course Prefix and Course Number (n=1816)	67%	16%	12%	5%	1%
Course Description (n=1822)	65%	21%	11%	3%	1%
Add/Drop Deadlines (n=1826)	62%	22%	10%	4%	1%
Section Number(s) (n=1815)	56%	20%	16%	7%	2%
Units for Course (n=1816)	52%	20%	16%	10%	2%
College Name (n=1816)	51%	10%	17%	14%	9%
Term course is offered (n=1812)	48%	22%	17%	10%	2%
Prerequisites (n=1808)	46%	22%	17%	11%	5%

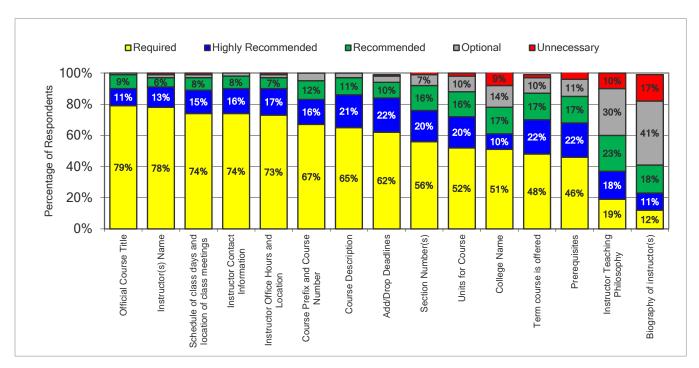|	Required	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Optional	Unnecessary
Instructor Teaching Philosophy (n=1809)	19%	18%	23%	30%	10%
Biography of instructor(s) (n=1817)	12%	11%	18%	41%	17%

Figure 1. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Introduction

Student Learning Information

As indicated in Table 2, more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the following should be "required" or "highly recommended" in the Student Learning Information section of the syllabus: course calendar, required materials, content, and course objectives. Less than five percent of the respondents indicated that the aspects surveyed for Student Learning Outcomes were "unnecessary" in the syllabus.

Table 2. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Student Learning Outcomes

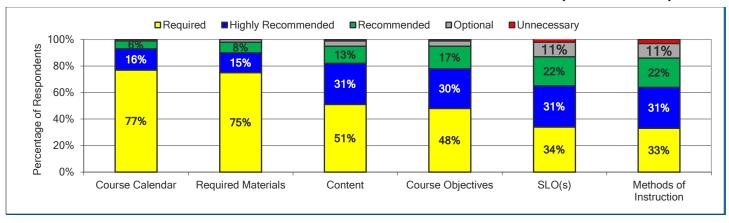|	Required	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Optional	Unnecessary
Course Calendar (n=1825)	77%	16%	6%	1%	<1%
Required Materials (n=1821)	75%	15%	8%	2%	<1%
Content (n=1811)	51%	31%	13%	4%	1%
Course Objectives (n=1824)	48%	30%	17%	4%	1%
SLO(s) (n=1820)	34%	31%	22%	11%	3%
Methods of Instruction (n=1825)	33%	31%	22%	11%	3%

Figure 2. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Student Learning Outcomes

Assignments, Assessments, and Evaluations

As indicated in Table 3, more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the following should be "required" or "highly recommended" in the Assignments, Assessments, and Evaluations section of the syllabus: key graded assignments, projects and exams with weighted total toward final grade, exams, grade scale used to determine the student's final grade, submission information, late policy, departmental grading policy, and revision policy. Very few respondents indicated that any of the areas surveyed for assignments, assessments, and evaluations are "unnecessary".

Table 3. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Assignments, Assessments and Evaluations

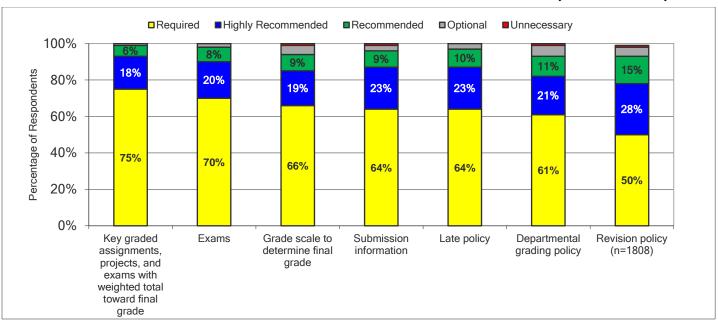|	Required	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Optional	Unnecessary
Key graded assignments, projects, and exams with weighted total toward final grade (n=1809)	75%	18%	6%	1%	<1%
Exams (n=1808)	70%	20%	8%	2%	1%
Grade scale to determine final grade (n=1813)	66%	19%	9%	5%	1%
Submission information (n=1798)	64%	23%	9%	3%	1%
Late policy (n=1811)	64%	23%	10%	3%	1%
Departmental grading policy (n=1806)	61%	21%	11%	6%	1%
Revision policy (n=1808)	50%	28%	15%	5%	1%

Figure 3. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Assignments, Assessments and Evaluations

Course Policies

As indicated in Table 4, more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the following should be "required" or "highly recommended" in the Course Policies section of the syllabus: absence/tardy policy, notice that the course schedule and/or assignments may be changed at the instructor's discretion, and emergency procedures.

Table 4. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Course Policies

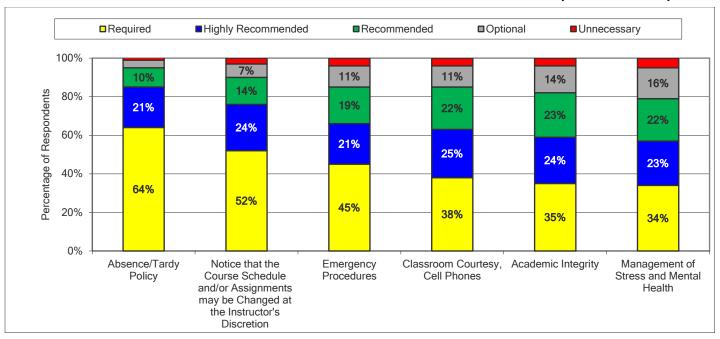|	Required	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Optional	Unnecessary
Absence/tardy policy (n=1809)	64%	21%	10%	4%	2%
Notice that the course schedule and/or assignments may be changed at the instructor's discretion (n=1806)	52%	24%	14%	7%	3%
Emergency procedures (n=1804)	45%	21%	19%	11%	4%
Classroom courtesy, cell phones (n=1801)	38%	25%	22%	11%	4%
Academic integrity (n=1803)	35%	24%	23%	14%	4%
Management of stress and mental health (n=1801)	34%	23%	22%	16%	5%

Figure 4. Level of Requirement for the Course Syllabus: Course Policies

Addendum of Services

Respondents were asked to indicate what they think the level of requirement should be for the Addendum of Services section of the syllabus, which includes a list of student services such as The Learning Center, Library, Student Health Center, Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSP&S), and Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS). Forty percent indicated that the Addendum of Services should be "required", while 27 percent indicated it should be "highly recommended", 17 percent indicated it should be "recommended", 13 percent indicated it should be "optional", and 3 percent indicated the Addendum of Services is "unnecessary".

Recommendations

Upon review of the results, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Encourage faculty to include areas identified by students as "required" or "highly recommended" in syllabi, including:
  - o **Introduction**
    - ▪ Official course title
    - ▪ Instructor(s) name(s)
    - ▪ Schedule of class days and location of class meetings
    - ▪ Instructor contact information
    - ▪ Instructor office hours and location
    - ▪ Course prefix and course number
    - ▪ Course description
    - ▪ Add/drop deadlines
    - ▪ Section number(s),
    - ▪ Units for course,
    - ▪ Term course is offered, and
    - ▪ Prerequisites.
  - o **Student Learning Information**
    - ▪ Course calendar,
    - ▪ Required materials,
    - ▪ Content, and
    - ▪ Course objectives.
  - o **Assignments, Assessments, and Evaluations**

- Key graded assignments, projects, and exams with weighted total toward final grade,
        - Exams
        - Grade scale to determine final grade,
        - Submission information,
        - Late policy,
        - Departmental grading policy, and
        - Revision policy.
    o **Course Policies**
        - Absence/tardy policy,
        - Notice that the course schedule and/or assignments may be changed at the instructor's discretion, and
        - Emergency procedures.

For more detailed information on this research brief, stop by the Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Office located in BONH-222, or call Alicia LeValley, Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.3140.

Action Implications

Upon review of the 2016 Syllabus Student Survey results, the following actions have been taken:

- A resolution was passed in Academic Senate on March 23, 2017 providing specific direction regarding elements of syllabi that are required, strongly recommended, recommended, and optional; specifically:

Table 5. Resolution of Required, Strongly Recommended, Recommended, and Optional Elements of Syllabi

Required:	Strongly Recommended	Recommended	Optional
College Name	Instructor(s) Name	Course Description	Academic Integrity
Official Course Title	Office Hours and Location	Missed Exam Policy	Course Objectives
Course Prefix and Number	Instructor(s)' Contact Information	Grade Scale to Determine Final Grade	Department Grading Policies
Term	Schedule and Location(s) of Class Meeting(s)	List of Graded Assignments and Value in Relation to Final Grade	Units
Section Number(s)		Late Policy for Assignments	Outline of all Content covered in course
SLO(s)		Absence/Tardy Policy	Prerequisites
		List of Class Meetings & Relevant Assignments	Submission Policy
		Schedule Change Policy	Revision of Assignments Policy
			Classroom Courtesy
			Add/Drop Deadlines

- Academic Senate is working with Academic Affairs and Student Services to compile the Addendum of Services and determine the best way to maintain the Addendum of Services.