



studentvoice

Wright State University | Case Study

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Daniel Abrahamowicz
Vice President for Student Affairs

Much like the namesake of the institution, aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright, Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio is an innovative and dynamic institution eager to connect technology and learning.

With a growing community of nearly 16,000 students, 700 faculty and 1,300 staff participating in programs leading to more than 100 undergraduate and nearly 50 graduate and professional degrees, it had become critical for student affairs administrators to quickly monitor and measure student satisfaction, especially when looking to make large investments in new buildings, programs and activities.

“We had always been interested in finding a way to poll student opinion and get instant feedback,” noted Daniel Abrahamowicz, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services at Wright State. “In the past, we had tried paper-and-pencil, email and web projects all with mixed results. StudentVoice offered a new concept and we were intrigued with the possibility to see immediate results and finally have the ability to put a finger on the pulse of the student body.”

Wright State became a StudentVoice partner in September of 2002 via an activity-based license, allowing the institution to commission projects at any time, without restriction or expiration.

Wright State’s initial assessment study dealt with a new Recreation, Wellness & Health Center proposed for construction. Facilities combining fitness amenities, health counselors and intramural sports activities had been built at similarly situated institutions and Wright State was contemplating adding this type of building to the campus skyline.

At almost every school in America, large campus expenditures, especially new buildings, are often discussed, and more often debated. Preliminary plans and



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dialogue regarding the recreation project had been going on for several years and the Wright State Student Affairs department chose to use the StudentVoice platform to assess student interest in the proposed facility.

The project was based primarily at food venues and other high-traffic student gathering spots on the WSU campus over a six-day period, using Palm PDAs for data collection and the StudentVoice reporting module for real-time reporting. Kathy Morris, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Services, coordinated the introduction of StudentVoice to the campus and specifically for the initial project. “The ability to quickly create and execute a survey was wonderful,” Morris reported. “Even those technically challenged had no trouble getting started.”

The surveys were administered by students recruited and selected by the school, providing a comfortable, peer-to-peer interaction for the project. “We posted the [student] positions in the student newspaper and with student organizations across campus,” said Morris of the volunteers that wore shirts provided by the Student Affairs office to add credibility to the process in the eyes of the student body. “The interest level and turnout was fantastic. I was able to select an enthusiastic, diverse group of men and women from both undergraduate and graduate programs.” The peer-to-peer interaction built goodwill among students and staff, illustrating that campus issues could be discussed and decisions can be made with teamwork and cooperation.

In the end, the project tripled the number of responses that had been collected with a less proactive web survey, administered one year earlier. “We had conducted an email survey to every student on the same subject last year,” said Morris. “StudentVoice provided an opportunity to re-test and instantly re-affirm those results and provided a more balanced response between residential and commuter students.”



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At the project’s conclusion, data, analysis and recommendations were made to the Board of Trustees, presenting student opinions on the proposed facility and illustrating the potential effects on health services, retention and student satisfaction.

Encouraged by the success of this initial venture, Wright State has continued use of the StudentVoice system, including a groundbreaking project that examined student credit card use and debt management issues on campus. Commissioned in conjunction with the College of Business, the project will investigate the applicability of a finance and debt counseling center to the student body, speaking to almost 1,000 students in a 6-day period.

“Our students really respond well to the mobile data collection concept,” Morris notes. “They are impressed with the technology, and the immediacy of the results certainly helps my department make quick, effective decisions without spending significant amounts of time and money. I was impressed with the level of acceptance and cooperation from our students and was also pleasantly surprised that many suggested other topics for future surveys.”

As a result of student feedback, future assessment studies include projects relating to campus parking and transportation, food service and student fees.