



How Madison Area Technical College Evolved to Support Instructors and Students in the COVID-19 Era Using SurveyMonkey



Navigating a changed world for education

When COVID-19 forced a move to fully-remote instruction at Madison Area Technical College, a survey design team was formed in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning; the Center knew the school's 1,275 instructors would be faced with changes no one anticipated. As the crisis continued, it became clear that online courses would be a requirement into fall and not just a quick-fix solution. In order to best serve faculty and students, the team rapidly moved forward with designing targeted surveys for each group using SurveyMonkey to create a response strategy.

Uncovering individual challenges and patterns

The design team developed surveys focused on their emergency remote learning/instruction plans in order to get an understanding of how students were adapting, what resources were lacking, and how both groups felt about permanent online courses. Some questions overlapped on the surveys designed for students and instructors, and many questions had "other" or "none of the above" options with space for respondents to provide context if needed. The goal was to add the survey results to other data sources, so effective (and quick) decisions could be made while not losing sight of individual experiences.



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Questions that asked things like “What are your top three concerns right now?” that then listed a handful of options saw high rates of extended explanation in the “other” option. Text analysis tools within SurveyMonkey became vital in understanding the patterns in the open-ended responses from all respondents. Some responses indicated that students were adapting really well, but the comments presented a deeper story.

The survey was deployed in April 2020, during a critical time in the COVID-19 crisis. Results showed 28% of instructors and 30% of students said they’d be likely to choose remote learning, given the choice. Instructors pointed out how an emergency remote learning model differs from traditional online learning, and students frequently said it wasn’t comparable to in-person classes. Instructors ranked “diminished student learning” as their top concern, and students chose grades as their main worry. The survey comments painted a picture of teachers and students that had the right technology in place, but needed more support in bringing emotional connection and resonance to online learning.

Adapting and bettering education for students

A common theme in the comments from instructors was feeling unprepared to effectively teach online. Recognizing that the choice may be out of everyone’s hands this fall, the college launched 18 sections of its flagship training, Preparing to Teach Online course in summer, with 150 instructors taking part. The college plans for 70% of the school’s courses online in the fall.

Students pointed to time management, motivation, and missing their cohort as the biggest challenges. This helped spotlight areas in which the college could better support students. The survey responses also revealed a few areas where communications from the college may have been missed or misunderstood.

“After careful survey analysis, we had clear recommendations to present to leadership,” says Dr. Robin Nickel, Director of Assessment. “We knew exactly how to modify professional development, so students would have high quality instruction, communication, and assessments. We developed online training pathways for instructors. And finally, we knew we needed a reliable exam proctoring solution.” The recommendations were a direct result of using SurveyMonkey and conducting a thorough analysis of the results, says Robin.

As Madison Area Technical College heads into this new era of education, SurveyMonkey is an important tool in the school’s arsenal. Getting a look into how students and instructors are managing through the next year will be key to the school’s long-term plan.

Organization:

Madison Area Technical College

Strategic goal:

- Formulate Covid-19 response plan
- Assess student and instructor health status

Solution:

Enterprise

Success factors:

- Seamless process that caters to multiple groups
- Centralized platform that enables a swift response to issues

Learn how your organization can use surveys and feedback to grow, evolve and adapt post COVID-19 with [SurveyMonkey](#).