ALL-SIS STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: A BRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT SURVEYS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SPRING 2011

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In Spring 2011, the Student Surveys Subcommittee of the ALL-SIS Student Services Committee sent an email to the ALL-SIS listserv with a link to a brief, twelve-question SurveyMonkey survey designed to learn how academic law librarians have obtained feedback from their students.

Overview

Representatives from a total of sixteen institutions completed the survey. Of these, fourteen libraries had conducted surveys of their students. The two institutions that had not conducted surveys indicated that they were planning to do so in the future. Most of the libraries had begun using surveys in the past 5-8 years, but a few had been using surveys for 20 years or more. Ten of the fourteen institutions conducted their surveys annually, while three did them only every three years. One institution reported that they conducted their survey every other year. Most of the respondents distributed their survey during the spring semester.

Most respondents conducted general student satisfaction surveys, but three institutions reported using surveys to learn about their students' legal research experience in their summer jobs. The three surveys concerning legal research were distributed to returning students at the beginning of the academic year in either August or September.

Distributing and Marketing Surveys

All of the respondents indicated that their surveys were distributed via email, and the information was gathered using an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey or LimeSurvey. The responding libraries promoted their surveys in a variety of ways, including: email, the

library website, the library blog, the library Twitter account, the library newsletter, or posters or table tents in the library. Some respondents said that they asked the student bar association or the faculty to promote the survey among the student body.

Of the fourteen libraries that conducted student surveys, eight reported using incentives, with the most popular being gift certificates. Other incentives mentioned included an iPod Touch and an iPhone. One library waived the overdue fines of anyone who completed a survey.

Response Rate

The response rates ranged from 15% to 41% with most in the 20-30% range.

Perceived Efficacy of Student Surveys

All of the institutions who conducted surveys reported that they felt the surveys were successful. Several libraries indicated that they received suggestions from students that led directly to changes to existing services or new programs.

Other Feedback Avenues

All of the institutions reported that they offered other feedback avenues besides surveys, with the most popular being a physical or online comment box. Most of the libraries who used comment boxes said that they were not often used by students. Five libraries reported using student focus groups or committees to get feedback from students, while another reported using "town hall meetings with students." The respondents who used these sorts of groups found them very helpful. Other libraries mentioned getting feedback from informal conversations between librarians and students, and some had designated individual librarians (usually either the library director or the student services librarian) whom students could email with feedback about the library.