



# Blue/Surveys sets the standard at the University of Louisville

**Client:** The University of Louisville

**Challenge:** A new online survey system had to meet the varied needs of the entire academic community in order to assure user uptake

**Product:** Blue/Surveys, a flexible, user-friendly system that is designed for easy integration with current systems for quick access to key data

**Benefits:**

- Cost savings of \$133,000/year (after initial startup costs)
- Went from five survey administrators to over 50 in just two years
- Helped increase response rates as part of new best practices
- Saved time for faculty and staff creating surveys

“In this current economic climate, we have to be even more vigilant about costs. Blue has helped us bring the costs of surveys down while continuing to support a strong culture of assessment here at the university.”  
- Robert Goldstein, Associate University Provost, Office of Academic Planning & Accountability

by Anne Sueko Coyle, eExplore

The Office of Institutional Research at the University of Louisville knew when they introduced a new online survey system that academic units would be moving away from paper surveys.

What they didn't expect was how quickly it would happen.



“Two years ago, we started out with five users who had project management and administrative rights. We've now grown to just over 50 users across campus,” says Becky Patterson, Director, Office of Institutional Research at the University of Louisville.

## ***Blue/Surveys the perfect teacher's pet***

With a new web-based survey system called Blue/Surveys, the University of Louisville has virtually eliminated paper-based surveys, saved time for faculty and staff, increased response rates, and established a standard system for online surveys that people throughout the academic community can use and benefit from.

They are currently relying on a site-wide license for even greater cost efficiency in their operations.



The university is especially pleased with the cost savings they are now seeing. “After two years with the new system, Blue/Surveys is now saving us over \$133,000 a year, every year, in survey costs. This cost savings is the result of Blue/Surveys allowing us to end an existing contract with a third-party vendor” says Becky.

But these cost savings aren't coming at the expense of response rates. Several features of Blue/Surveys helped earn the confidence of users, while solid processes around the new technology ensured high response rates and an overall successful project.

“With faculty and staff giving positive feedback on Blue to their peers, the new system was basically selling itself,” says Becky.

## ***Easy-to-use software encourages user uptake***

Blue/Surveys was designed to be easy to use, while providing enough features and functions for a powerful survey system.

“We find Blue incredibly intuitive to use. It has a lot of features, and the reports are easy to create and format,” says Becky.

“I highly recommend the training offered—in a very short amount of time you can become functional experts in Blue/Surveys. It's money well invested.”

Blue's integration with their PeopleSoft system is also important—users have quick access to key population data for survey and report creation.



“Faculty and staff who are using it do not have to run queries against the university's information management system to get the email addresses and other information they want—it's all quickly available in Blue,” says Becky.

“This time savings is important for everyone but is especially important for faculty, who would rather invest their time in research and analysis,” says Robert Goldstein, Associate University Provost, Office of Academic Planning & Accountability.

## ***Flexible enough to meet individual needs***

Blue/Surveys allows the Office of Institutional Research to centralize their

survey operations while providing administrative and academic units enough autonomy to ensure optimal surveying throughout the university.

“A lot of the surveying used to be done de-centrally. Once we showed what they could do with Blue/Surveys, especially through the reporting functionality, people started to see the possibilities,” Robert explains.

“Faculty members use it for their own research, administrative offices survey populations such as deans and chairs on specific issues, and academic units survey students about current issues like H1N1 or the use of tablet PCs in the classroom,” he says.



The flexibility of the Blue platform also allowed the university to implement an online survey software system that matched the university’s organizational structure.

“We are a large university and are very decentralized. How you implement really has to honour who you are and how your organization is structured, and respect the various processes of the whole community,” says Robert. “Blue/Surveys lets us meet these individual needs.”

### **Higher response rates**

The Office of Institutional Research is pleased to see a jump in response rates with Blue, which can be attributed to both

the new technology and their excellent processes around it.

“We have clearly seen an improvement in response rates with the new system,” says Robert.

“The graduating Senior Survey is now getting a 43% response rate—this is a distinct improvement over the previous response rates, which could be as low as 14%,” says Robert.

The Office of Institutional Research implements important key processes to get these kinds of results.

First, they ensure populations are not oversurveyed, which can lead all too quickly to survey fatigue.

“An assessment calendar on our webpage shows academic units and others what population is being surveyed and when, so they can schedule accordingly. The calendar helps them increase their response rates and everyone else’s by scheduling at a less busy time,” says Robert.

### **Ensuring clear communications**

Second, the Office of Institutional Research implements marketing campaigns for the highest priority surveys, letting populations know that their feedback is vital to the university.



“We are very clear about what surveys we will promote to the community,” says Robert. “We put a lot of effort into explaining why we are assessing and why we value that the assessment is online.”

Finally, but just as important, various departments and units follow-up on survey results. When populations see concrete outcomes from the surveys, they are more likely to continue responding to them.

“We have become increasingly aware of the need to post results of surveys, so students know their voices are being heard. They can see the results and how they’re effecting change around the university. We are improving at ‘closing the loop’ of assessment” says Becky.

“Last year, we conducted our work climate survey on Blue for the first time. With the new platform, we were able to survey and analyze the data much, much more quickly. We could then share important information to key groups across the university. This provides support for data informed decisions in real time—that kind of agility contributes to an atmosphere of responsiveness,” Robert says.

In just about every respect, the university has implemented an ideal survey solution, with the right processes in place and an easy-to-use system that people could take to. And that kind of momentum is just what a university needs to set a standard.

