

December 12, 2013

SUBJECT: Retirement of Skylight Survey System

Dear WSU Community:

Course evaluations are a critical part of assessment of educational quality at WSU, and contribute to annual review and decisions about faculty promotion and tenure.

In the coming year, WSU will be retiring and replacing the Skylight Survey System, an in-house software that is reaching the end of its lifespan and is no longer maintainable. The system is operated and supported by the Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning, which over the next 12-18 months will decommission Skylight and transition to a commercial course evaluation system.

Skylight is also used as a survey instrument for a wide range of other purposes, including assessment of student learning and program assessment (e.g., exit surveys and other student surveys), faculty research, surveys about events or services, as well as for evaluations, awards, registrations and applications. As an interim step to continue to provide a survey tool for WSU units, faculty, and staff, WSU is investigating commercial products such as Qualtrics for a university-wide site license for 12-18 months.

A new course evaluation system and a new survey tool are both intended to help the WSU community reach our goals related to teaching, research and outreach. Specifically, we expect the new systems to enhance the ability of faculty, staff, and administration to gather evidence they need to guide decisions about instruction, curriculum, programs, and services, and to support survey needs connected to research and evaluation.

ATL has been working with academic leadership and college representatives to identify key features for online course evaluations and reports of results. Among other features, the new system will support the use of mobile devices and offer increased flexibility in how results are reported. Most colleges and departments will continue using Skylight for Spring and Summer 2014; pending a successful pilot in Spring 2014, colleges will transition to the new system Fall 2014.

For Skylight surveys that are not course evaluations, technical support may be limited in Spring 2014. From July 1, 2014, no new surveys may be offered in Skylight. Skylight users will have access to download their data through December 2014.

Next steps:

- In January, we will be holding an information session on this project.
- Additional information, including timeline updates, will be available at atl.wsu.edu
- ATL Director Kimberly Green (for course evaluations) or Vice Provost Erica Austin (for survey tool) are also available for your questions or input.

This important transition will impact and involve faculty and staff across the university, on all campuses. We anticipate calling on many of you as we prepare to pilot and navigate the new systems in the coming year and we appreciate your support at each step of this effort.

Thank you,

Mary Wack, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Erica Austin, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs