

## **Informal Assessment Practices Garner High Impact Results**

At the University of Northern Colorado University Libraries, the Assessment Committee has discovered that informal assessment practices, such as using whiteboards, flipchart pads, and equivalent online tools, provide excellent opportunities for student input on a variety of topics.

### **Methodology**

In a recent building-wide assessment project to learn more about student needs, flip-charts pads located throughout the building allowed the committee to gather over 270 comments about choice of space within the library as well as information about temperature, noise, and privacy. The use of whiteboards in the same project generated 488 responses to questions ranging from what furniture the students preferred to what equipment they checked out.

The committee used whiteboards and Padlet, a tool for online feedback, during spring 2020 to gather input about general questions related to the role of the University Libraries in student success.

Whiteboards have also been used to gather information concerning other library initiatives such as the cost of textbooks and possible furniture purchases.

### **Practical implications and value**

These informal practices allow students to interact quickly with questions in an anonymous way. Library users who comment on whiteboards or Padlet surveys may also agree with, add to, and create conversations with the comments left by other users. Library personnel may even add questions to these conversations if more context or detail is needed to understand specific comments. For example, a student commented there needed to be more supplies for students to use, so we were able to ask for what type of supplies they needed.

While the information gathered could be considered anecdotal and self-selecting, similar patterns have appeared when using more formal data gathering instruments, such as LibQUAL. Though student involvement is brief, results have allowed the University Libraries to inexpensively gather many comments in a short period of time, which have been used to shape decisions such as purchasing new furniture and equipment, improving Wi-Fi access, offering late night study hours, and addressing building maintenance issues.

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