10th Annual Uniformed Service IR Forum

28 – 29 April 2011

Maxwell AFB, AL

Consequence of low on-line survey response rates-traditional and creative methods to improve them

Presenters: Dr. Watson-Stone and Mr. Houston Markham of AU's Holm Center for Officer Accessions, Dr. Kenneth Scott of Amridge University and Dr. Mack Adkins of Troy University

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Survey Activity

Please take a minute and complete a quick survey.

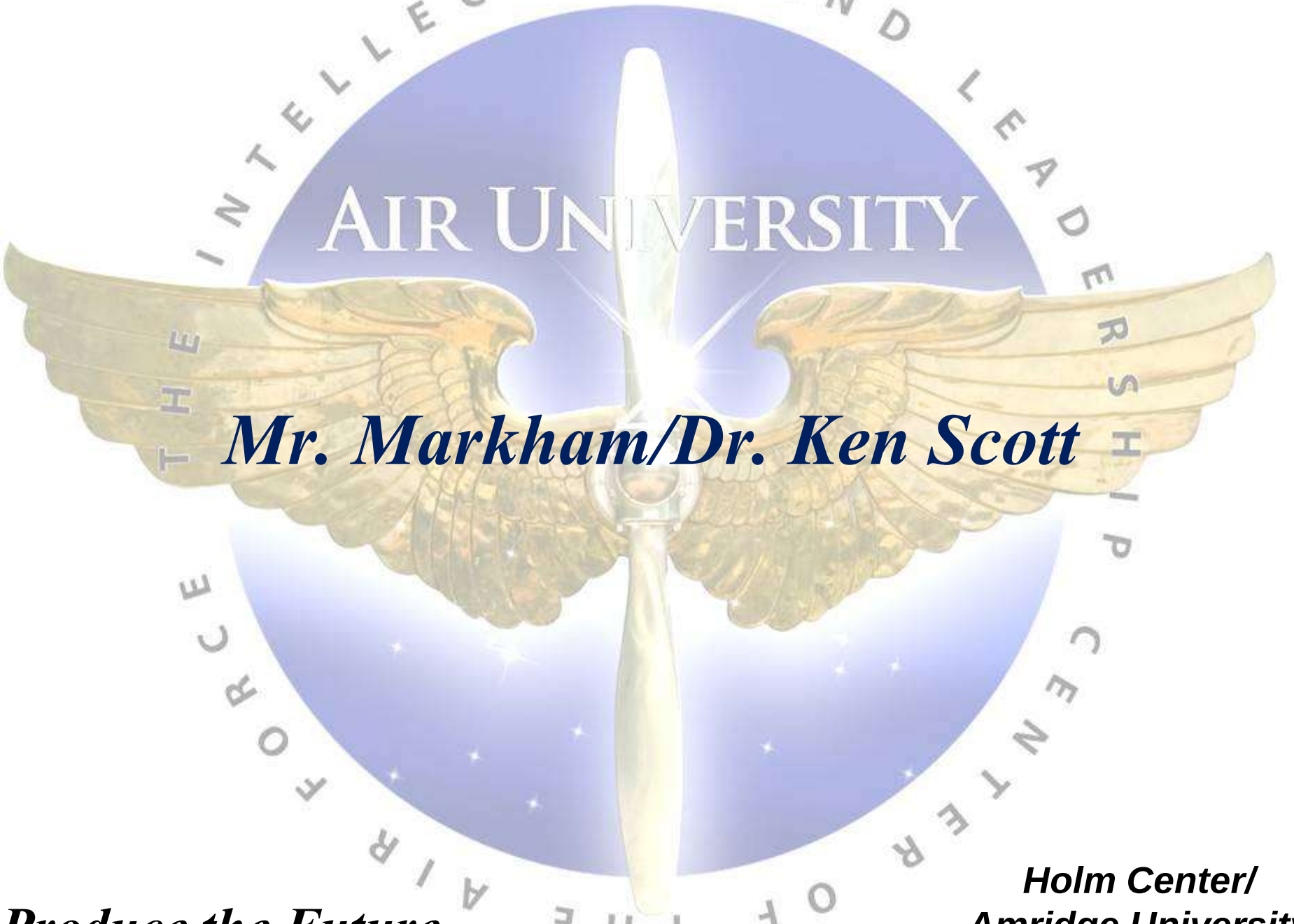
Write three points that frustrate you when you take a survey.

Survey Activity

Check with your neighbor to see if he/she has similar points!

Reasons for Low On-line Survey Response Rates

- "I am not interested in thinking hard so *__you__* get something out of it."
- "I get asked to answer a lot of online surveys, and usually ignore them."
- "Questions are hard to understand and scales do not make sense."



Mr. Markham/Dr. Ken Scott

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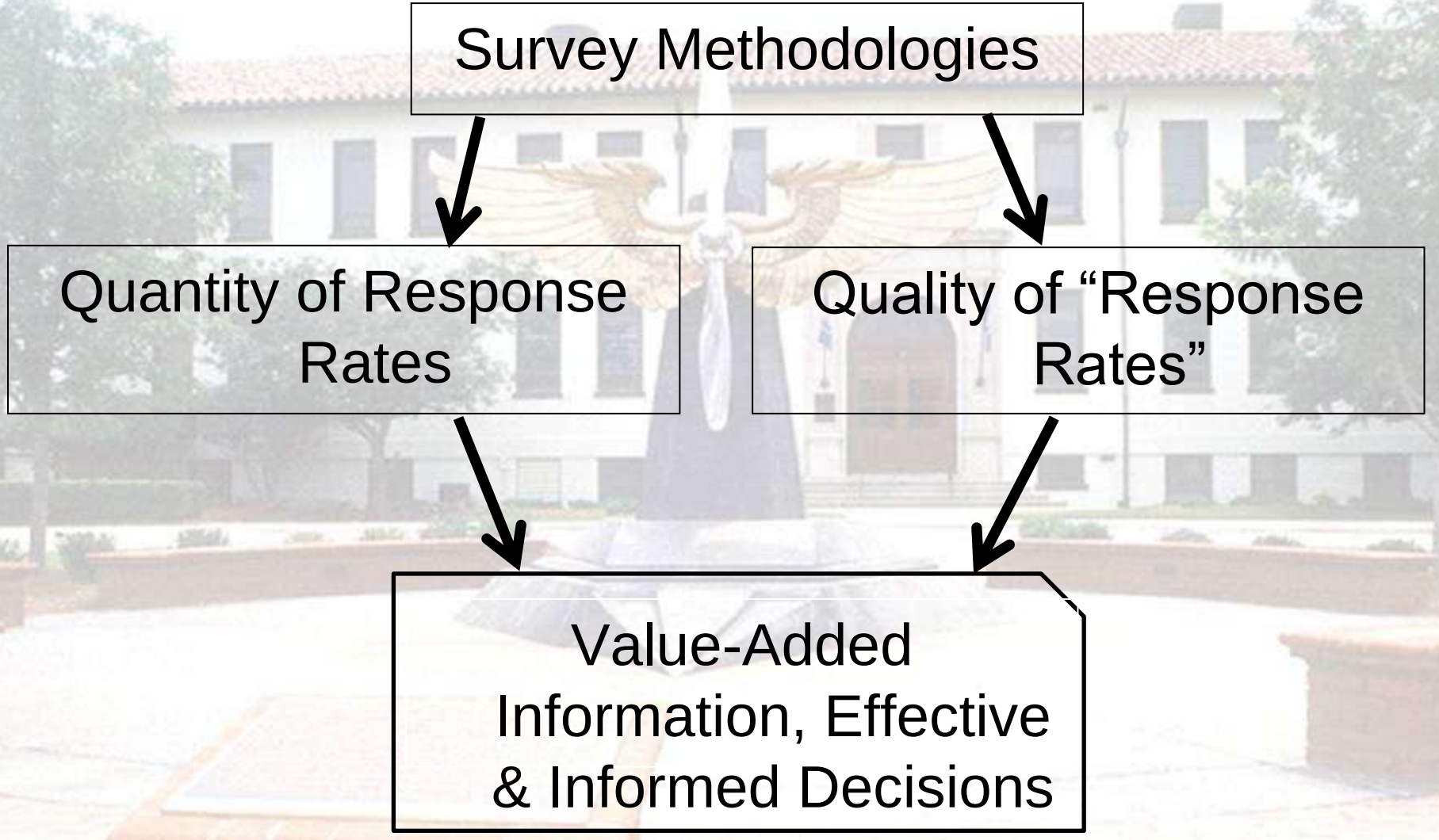
Holm Center/
Amridge University

Consequences of Low On-line Survey Response Rates



Consequences of Low On-line Survey Response Rates

- Decision-making has potential to be skewed toward a misinformed decision.
- Catch-22: low return rates may promote delayed decisions; invited respondents perceive lack of leadership/decision-making or institutional effectiveness.
- Status-quo becomes the “new normal.”

"It says they want our feedback."

Consequences of Low On-line Survey Response Rates

"Though it may not grab headlines like Twitter or Face book, the use of surveys is one of the fastest-growing and most pervasive trends on campuses, and it's no wonder. With rising demands for systematic evidence and rapidly shrinking costs to gather such data, [military] colleges and universities are increasingly surveying students, employees, and alumni to measure all kinds of things—from engagement to satisfaction to the carbon footprint made in commuting to campus."

[Forgive the violation of "the slide rule" about quoting or busy slides; this is too good to omit…]

Do you see the **CONSEQUENCES** of low on-line survey response rates?

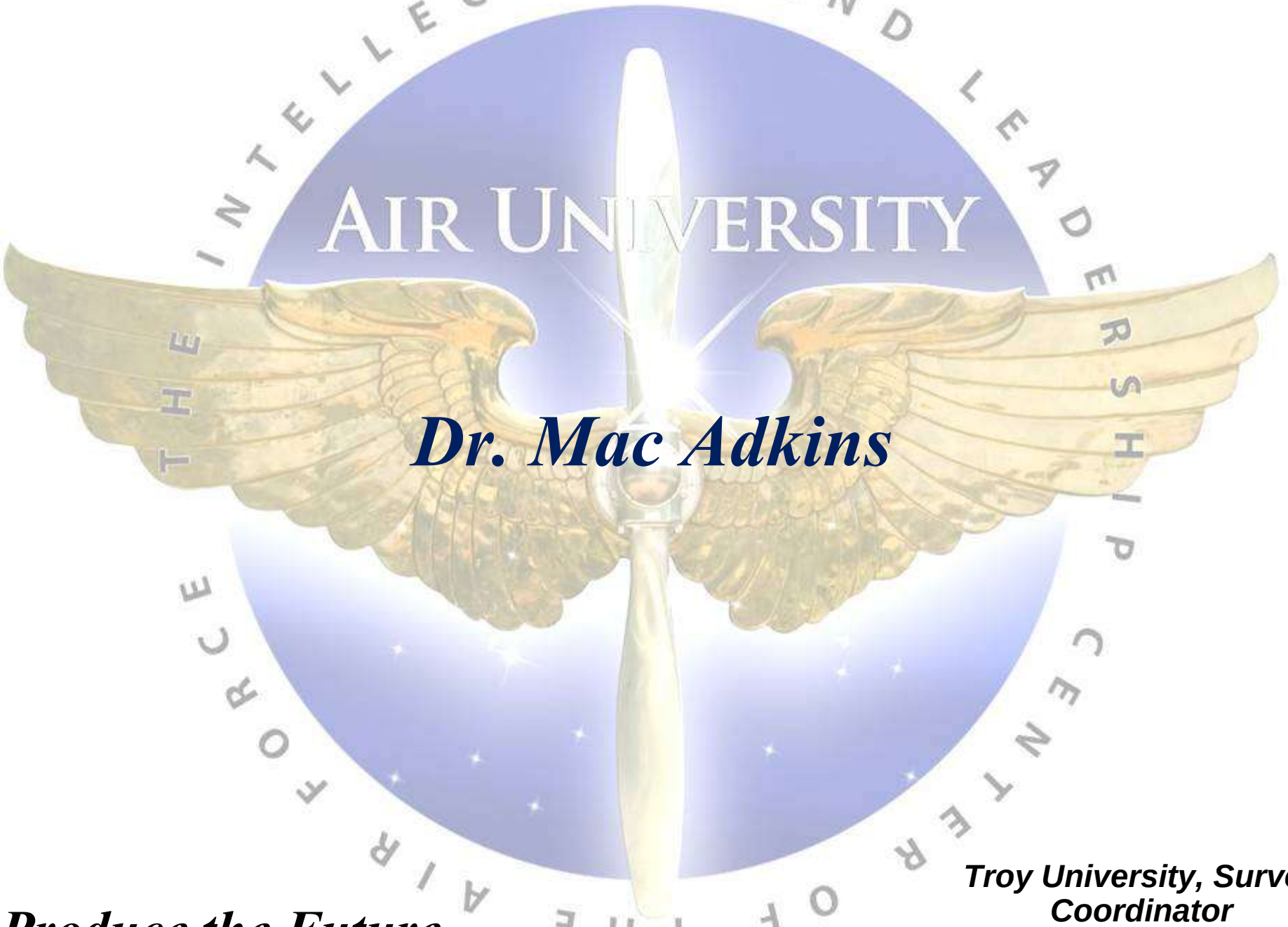
Radwin, D. (2009, October 5). High response rates don't ensure survey accuracy. *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review.*

Consequences of Low On-line Survey Response Rates

- *Reliability* – can we trust the data to invest the funds, build the Technology Center, hire consultants, etc.?

- *Validity* – if we repeat this process in two years (variables relatively constant), will we have to buy an entire new platform for IT?

- *Contextual Quality* of the dataset indicates that the serious nature of the responses are lackadaisical; consequently, institutional support may be misaligned.



Dr. Mac Adkins

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Troy University, Survey Coordinator

SmarterServices, President

Boosting Response Rates

- Promote the end-of-course surveys prior to the end of the term.
  - Posters, announcements in LMS, bulletin board, text messages, postal mail
- Reward the faculty
  - Offer a professional development stipend to faculty whose courses receive a certain participation rate.
- Give students a long window of opportunity to submit the surveys.
  - Students are very busy at the end of the term.

Boosting Response Rates

- Regularly remind students about the survey.
  - Send regular reminders to non-respondents.
- Incentive student participation
  - Free/discounted tuition, book store certificate, etc.
- Assure students that their input is anonymous
  - Really mean it. Don't do individual analysis.
- Inform students of improvements made based on their input
  - Communicate that their ideas make a difference

Boosting Response Rates

- Require/Reward Participation
  - Withhold final grades or give bonus points
- Determine if a low response rate is still yielding a representative sample.
  - Compare demographics of total campus population to that of survey participants.

Controlling for Response Bias

- Why are some faculty suspicious of end-of-course evaluation data?
  - Response bias
- University of North Texas
  - Psychometrically valid faculty teaching evaluation instrument for inter-departmental usage.
  - Analyzed three year's worth of data.
  - Developed a pool of 28 valid items from an initial pool of over 3000 items from over 100 universities

Controlling for Response Bias

- Four Factors
  - Organization and Explanation
  - Learning Environment
  - Self-Regulated Learning
  - Overall Effectiveness
- Scale Score
  - 0 – 1000 scale
  - Used to longitudinally track instructor effectiveness per course over time

Controlling for Response Bias

24 External Control Variables

- 1. Student ID
- 2. Faculty ID
- 3. Unique Course ID
- 4. Course College
- 5. Course Size
- 6. Course Time
- 7. Course Internet Other
- 8. Course Department
- 9. Room
- 10. Faculty Gender
- 11. Faculty Age

12. Faculty Rank
13. UNT Years
14. Instruction Type
15. Instruction Department
16. Student Credits Earned
17. Student Course Load
18. Student Pre Requirements
19. Student Major
20. Student Gender
21. Student Academic Level
22. Student GPA Mean
23. Student Anticipated Grade
24. Course Grade Assigned to Student

Controlling for Response Bias

- Statistical Processing
  - Multi-Level Anova
  - Inverse probability weighting
  - Ant Colony Optimization
- Available through SmarterSurveys.com

Questions?

"Before you're released, would you mind taking our exit survey?"

The Intellectual and Leadership Center of the Air Force

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One Student at a Time

One Faculty Member at a Time

One Idea at a Time