



Questionmark Case Study

Training Physician's Assistants at Trevecca Nazarene University

Background

Trevecca Nazarene University is a small Christian university of 2,100 students in Nashville, Tenn. In its graduate physician's assistant (PA) program, students learn how to practice medicine under an M.D., and between 70 and 100 students are in the program at any given time.

Academic Testing

PA students take 116 hours of instruction as part of the program. Courses cover subjects like anatomy and physiology, lab medicine, and surgery, and students take several assessments throughout the semester in each course. Assessments consist of multiple-choice, multiple-response, matching, true/false and essay questions.

Dr. Michael Moredock, director of the program, says that he uses the explanation feature in Perception to give any additional instructions the questions require.

"For example, if we give a case study and then ask several questions about it, the explanation feature lets us give further directions."

Using Online Reports

Faculty members use the coaching report to give students immediate feedback on each assessment. They also use the item analysis report to keep track of how difficult questions are and whether students are missing the same questions repeatedly, which in turn helps faculty to adjust questions and the curriculum if need be.

"We can grade assessments much faster than we could before, and it's made it possible to include graphics and other add-ons," says Moredock.

"Not all of our faculty are using it yet, but they're moving that way, because it's easy to learn Perception to stretch to those new areas."

Surveys Yield Improvements

The PA program uses Perception almost more for surveys than for assessments. After potential students come in for their interview, a Perception survey asks them about their experience, such as

whether current students were helpful, what they thought of the interview process, and their first impressions of the program. Survey data is used to improve the school's process and ensure that its description matches up with what actually happens. End-of-semester evaluations cover teaching methods, professors' availability, the textbook and other aspects of each course. Each survey includes a comment box, so that students can give more specific feedback.

Tracking Graduates' Progress

After students graduate and move on, the program surveys them again to ask about their overall experience in the program. "We ask where they are, what they're making, and how applicable they're finding their training," says Moredock. "We participate in a national association of PA programs, and the data from the surveys show where we stand compared to other PA programs. We have to have that alumni data in order to participate, and it helps us to show the administration when we need more money or more support."

Easier Data Collection

Perception improves response rates on different types of audiences, according to Garnett Bogle, database manager for the program. "Current students are easy to survey, but our alumni are all over the place, and if we mailed the surveys our return wouldn't be as good," says Bogle.

Moredock appreciates both the ease with which surveys can be created and e-mailed and the anonymity that electronic surveys offer to students, who are likely to be more honest when they know they can't be identified.

More information

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