Conversations on Technology
What did your students think?

prepared for

The Institute on Learning Technology

part of the

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This conversation also is available from the Learning Through Technology web site, http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/nise/cl1/ilt/
Conversations on Technology:

**Question #6:**
"For that matter, how are my students going to view this? Have your student evaluations gone up or down?"

**My student evaluations have gone up in my introductory courses.** Students seem to appreciate the use of technology and they often expect it.

**The students have to be trained themselves,** in order to understand the value of what you are doing. So, there has to be added value, which students find in real world problems. If it looks like more busywork, they will not like it at all.

**Well, in the case of calculus,** science majors appreciated the real world applications that the computer allowed us to do but non-science majors just found it an added burden. Folks that really hated the computer signed up for a different offering of the course. I don't know what you mean by "evaluations" because we evaluate many different things. It's not just a single number.

**If you match challenge with support** your students will manage and will not complain too much. Evaluations may go down for one semester in the course because students have not heard about the new requirements you are imposing in the course. Once the word gets out then they just accept it as part of the program and evaluate on normal issues as one would expect. However, today's students are changing. They expect technology so it is entirely possible that you will get the same or higher scores on evaluations. Again it depends on how you match the challenge with the support that students need to succeed. It helps to praise them regularly. You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, but then you know that.

**My student evaluations took a hit when I became chair here last year.** I had such a learning curve for this job and on a new campus to boot that I was always too tired to give students the attention they needed. I am doing better this year and I expect continued improvement after this year is over. My research took a hit too but the supportive group I am working with filled in as I got settled here.
The student evaluations are no different than they have been.

Using new methodologies that you are unfamiliar with will almost certainly drive down your evaluations with students. They know how to approach courses in the old, traditional ways. They will see you new methods as ineffective and time-consuming (at least in the beginning). Change is difficult. But if you do not at first succeed, try, try again.

Students uniformly comment about how much they love having their assignments and grades available to them on the web. They also like having note outlines. They say repeatedly that the convenience of accessing this information over the web and not having to write so much in class is worth every dime. In case you think my students are rich this is not the case. I teach in a college that is 72% first generation college students. Most pay their own way through school. They are poor, but they recognize a learning aid when they see it. Yes, I believe it has helped my evaluations. I know it has not hurt them.

I started last September so I don't yet have student evaluations to analyze.