Merrimack College
Faculty Senate
Nominations and Elections Committee

Online Voting Using SurveyMonkey.com:
Lessons Learned

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Introduction

During the academic year, 2003 – 2004, the Merrimack College Faculty Senate Nominations and Elections Committee switched from paper to online (web) voting and the tool used was “surveymonkey.com”. This paper briefly describes how to setup and use it and some of the lessons learned. While the voting setup is fairly straight forward, some of the options that are needed are not as obvious.

Setup

First, access http://www.surveymonkey.com.

Enter the login and password (obtain from Web Support at x5357).

<There is sensitive information on this site and the login/password are closely guarded and MUST NEVER BE SHARED WITH ANYONE! Because of this, there are currently only five (5) individuals at Merrimack College who have access to this site. Please guard the information and the login/password as very private>
Next, click on “New Survey” then create a survey from “scratch” or copy one that already exists.

Name the Survey by clicking on “Edit Title”.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/home.asp

http://www.surveymonkey.com/
This example is named “test survey”

Next add a question (or vote) by clicking on “Add Question”
When you need to vote for ONLY ONE PERSON

Select the type of question as “Choice – One Answer (Vertical)”. Selecting this only allows the user to vote for one person.
When you need to vote for 
MORE THAN ONE PERSON

Select the type of question as “Choice – Multiple Answers (Vertical)”. Unfortunately, if the voter selects more than the number of candidates than they should have, you will have to review each vote.
The (example) completed survey is then shown below. This is what the AUTHOR sees not the voters.

The recessed square bullets shown above indicate that the each voter can select more than one answer while the round bullets indicate only one answer is allowed.

**How to use the survey**

1. From the logged in page, open the Survey by clicking on the box at the far left, and
2. Click on “Collect” to get the URL for your email announcement, etc.
VERIFY that each person
ONLY VOTED ONCE

To do that,
1. From the logged in menu, click on analyze for that election.
2. Click on Last Name or First Name (be sure to prompt for this in all elections: “Open ended – one line w prompt”),
3. Click on “view”,
4. Select “Show 250 per page”,
5. Copy the left most two columns (# and name) into Microsoft Excel,
6. Sort on Name in Excel.

Excel will then show who has voted more than once. Experience from the 2003 – 2004 elections has shown that a few will (accidentally) vote more than once. The worst case was 4 times. There are three possible scenarios which are:

1. The voter was checking out the election and did not vote. When this happens, either leave it or delete the empty ballot (that is why the vote # is needed),
2. The voter voted more than once but for different parts of the election each time and when the 2+ ballots are added together, it ends up as only one ballot. For example, they voted for items 1 - 3 the first time and then items 4 – 10 the second time. For this, do nothing.
3. The voter voted more than once for the same election which is a violation. The procedure is to notify the voter and delete all of their votes except the last one. This did occur during the 2003 – 2004 election. An example email is:

   Hi:

   It has been detected that you have voted more than once for the:
   Faculty Nominations and Elections 2004. The times recorded were:

   4/28/2004 10:42:09 PM and

   Since you can only vote once, the older vote has been deleted.
   If you suspect a problem, please email me back directly to resolve this.

   Vance Poteat
   Nominations and Elections.

   If they would like to delete all of them and vote again, that is also an option but this was not requested during the 2003 – 2004 elections.
Recommendations:
Overall the online voting worked very well. In summary, the major tasks include:

1. Learning the tool,
2. Set up the voting (0.5 – 2.0 hours depending on the size of the election),
3. Screening the voting for: voting too many times, and voting for more than they should have (voting too many times ~ 10 minutes for 100+ faculty, voting for more than they should have ~ hours).
4. Use the randomize feature for voting as it will reorder the candidates each time someone votes (fairer to all candidates),
5. DON NOT USE the MUST ANSWER feature except for entering the voter’s name. Many faculty do not vote for every item and they will not be allowed to proceed if this is enabled! If they do not feel qualified to vote, DO NOT FORCE THEM TO!
6. ONLY select “Multiple Responses per Respondent (Shared Computer)” which is located under Options (shown in the following figure). If a more restrictive option is selected, THERE WILL BE VOTING PROBLEMS!
7. Since there are over 100 faculty, only a surveymonkey.com paid account, like Merrimack.edu, can be used. Don’t even think of using the free account version.
8. Finally, once the survey is running IT CAN NOT BE EDITED without losing all votes. Make sure that the election is set up right the first time! Have others on the committee test it **before** it is used.
The best feature is the results. From the logged in menu, just click on “Analyze”.

Please don’t hesitate to contact Vance Poteat if you have any questions.

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This document is also available on the web at:
http://www.merrimack.edu/~vpoteat/NEsurveymonkey.pdf