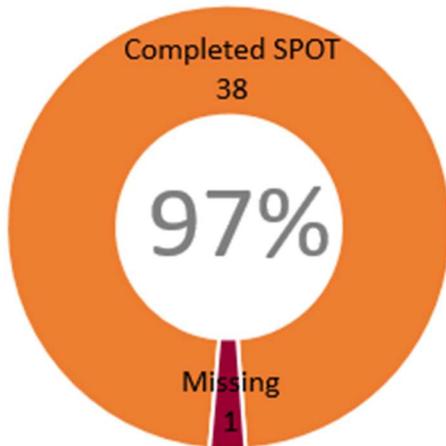


Insights from Instructors

How do you encourage student participation in the SPOT process?

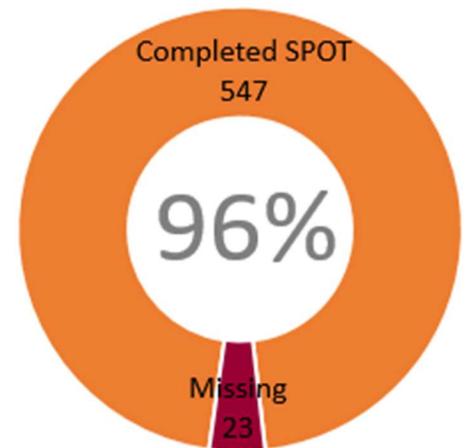
Lisa Summer
English



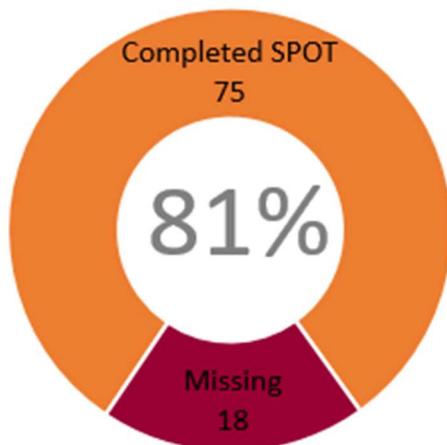
I explain the importance of SPOT evals and then provide time in class (near the end of the term) where **I leave the room** and students complete them.

Upon discussing this with my class of 570, I provided 2 times in class to complete and asked them to provide a **screen shot of the last page**, (which indicates completion) and submit in their drop box **for a class participation point**. This resulted in a 96% completion and the students felt this was part of class participation and were very agreeable.

Donna Wertalik
College of Business



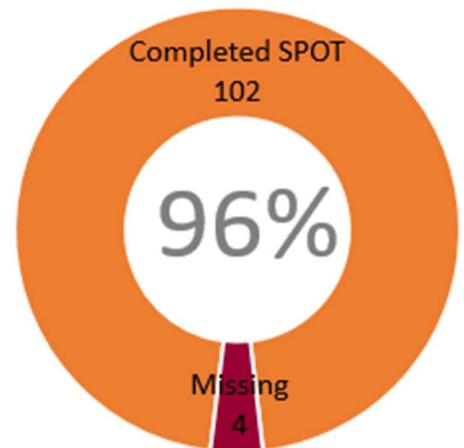
David L. Brunisma
Sociology



After some years of just asking students to fill out their SPOT forms, then pleading, I finally instituted a day towards the end of the semester where I **ask them to bring their laptops, iPads, phones, etc.**, and we do it then and there.

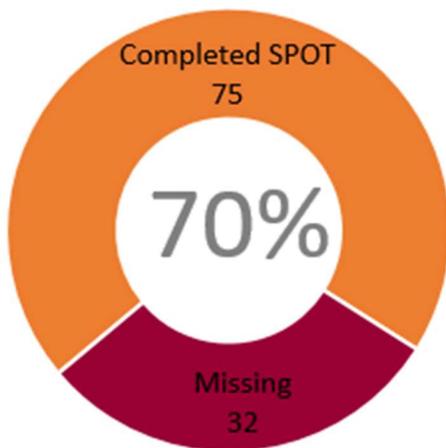
We allow time in class (around 15 min) for them to complete the survey. This could be handled by building it into the syllabus, or before the end of the semester, allowing for around 15 minutes of time when it can fit in to a class. **Repetition is key.** I will repeat or announce multiple times during the end of the semester to complete the survey. We use scholar announcements to remind them additionally. **We are genuinely interested in how our teaching style is perceived and what we can do to improve for future classes.** When we make these announcements in class to complete the survey, we talk for a minute or so and coach them as to why they are taking the survey. This is their chance to be completely honest about what we did right as professors and what could be improved. I think if you are sincere when you make the announcement that you really desire this feedback, more students will respond to that, especially if you scan the class and talk to them like you are talking to them individually.

LT T. J. Franklin & LT Tony Deprisco
Naval Science



Kristie Cooper

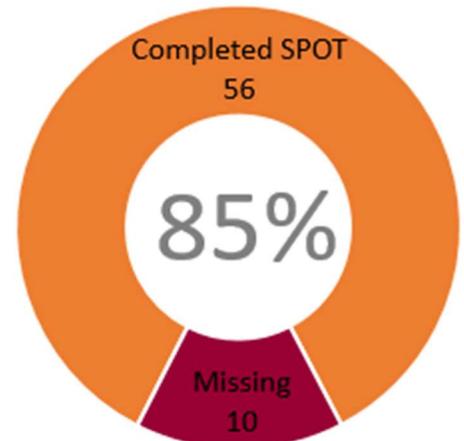
Electrical & Computer Engineering



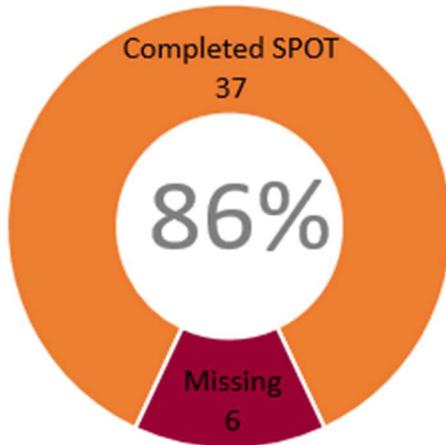
- A quick verbal reminder at the beginning of each class, with **emphasis on the fact that I read the SPOT results.** (I also point out that the reminder emails won't stop until they do the survey.)
- A reminder on the class slides.
- A slide showing examples of past constructive comments that resulted in changes to the course compared to non-helpful (ranting) comments.
- I ended class ~5 minutes early on one day and left the classroom to give them time to complete the survey.

I tell them to bring their laptops to class toward the very end of the semester. I then give them ten minutes in class and ask them to fill out the SPOT. I say, **"I've been giving you feedback all semester, and now it's your turn."** That's it.

Scott Sanders
English



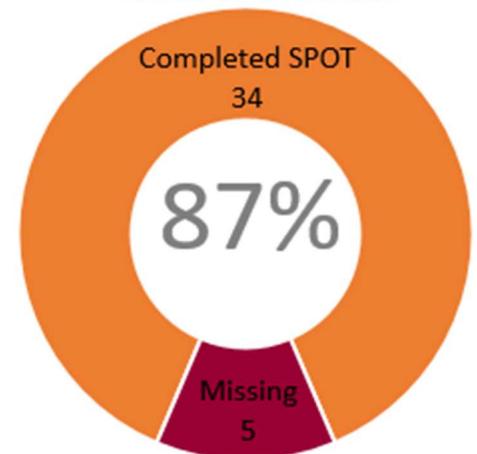
Paulo Polanah
Sociology



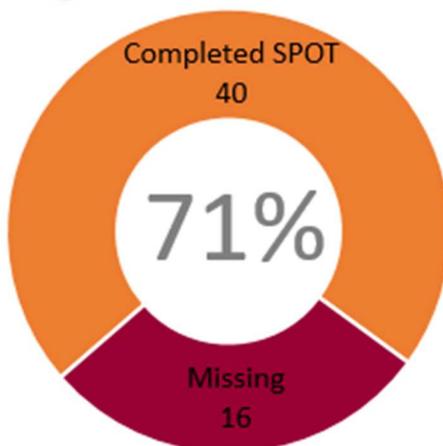
I think it involves delivering an honorable amount of diatribe to the students, pressing the point that they themselves have access to rights and privileges they have the luxury of ignoring and trivializing, — rights and privileges largely absent in universities elsewhere on the planet. Essentially, **I urge them to address the evaluations as a political duty of sorts**, along the lines of any political responsibility a bona fide member of a republic (such as ours) ought to diligently observe. Somehow, it seems to work. Did I mention the diatribe? It gets really colorful...

I normally have a no-electronics policy in my class but I made an exception for one day of class and had my students fill out the SPOT survey then. I came to class 10 minutes late to **give them time before class started** for the day. This was based on a students' suggestion to have time at the beginning of class instead of the end when students may rush through the survey in order to leave early. The TA was there in case they had any questions. I also emphasized the importance of SPOT and providing feedback.

Sarah Misyak
Human Nutrition
Foods and Exercise



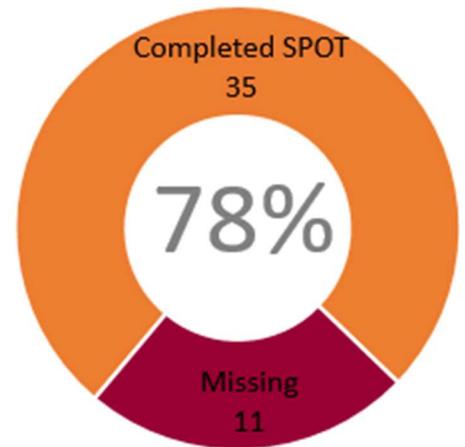
Elizabeth Gilbert
Agriculture and Life Sciences



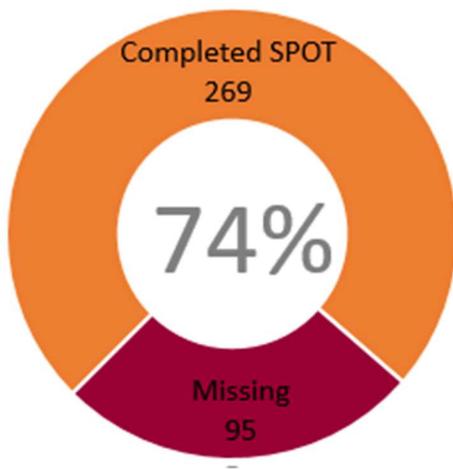
I announced on Scholar (two days in advance) that 15 minutes of class would be dedicated to SPOT surveys and that students were encouraged to bring their laptops/tablets to class for completing the survey. There were no other discussions of the survey, as I did not want to bias the responses.

I devote time in class for my students to complete the evaluations. I also create one for myself that elicits feedback on aspects of the class and my teaching that the SPOT survey does not address. My thought there is that if it's important enough to me and the university, then I should set aside valuable class time for it. Before students start completing their evaluations, I explain to them the importance of it not only to the university but, more importantly, for me as their instructor. Overall, I develop great relationships with my students, and by **explaining to them how the evaluations affect me**, I draw from those personal connections. It becomes less of a thing they have to do and becomes something meaningful in terms of our student-teacher relationship.

Jason Crafton Music



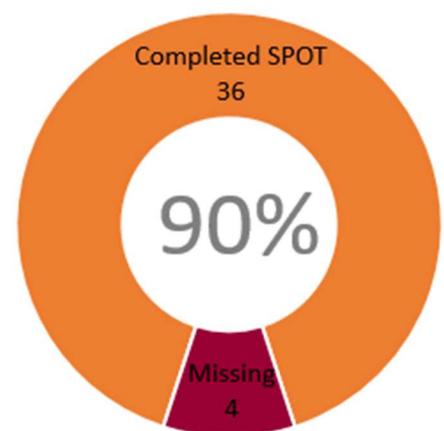
Anonymous



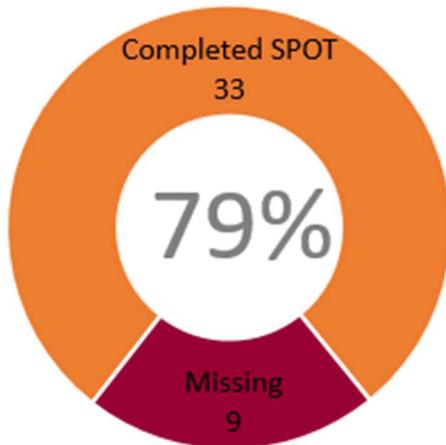
First, I always rate extremely high on "concern and respect" and I believe that **when students KNOW that you are truly concerned about them, they respond!** In all kinds of ways. It is the case now, though it is only recently so, that I offer points for completion of a SPOT. Mind you, the points are pretty much statistically insignificant...but students will do just about anything if they think points are to be awarded. Finally, **I absolutely tell them that I read EVERY comment** (and I precede this with a semester-long marathon of reading ALL of their many essays) so they know I am serious and that I "evolve" or "tweak" and take their comments seriously as I plan future iterations of the course. I have supplemented the old SPOT for years now with an associated essay allowing a more detailed commentary of my course/my teaching. I still include this as one of the many writing assignments even though the SPOT forms address some of those issues.

I take 10 minutes of the last class and set it aside for course evals. **I tell the students in advance to bring their laptops/devices** and I leave the room, as I would have if we were still using paper and pencil. Simple but effective.

Josh Thompson English



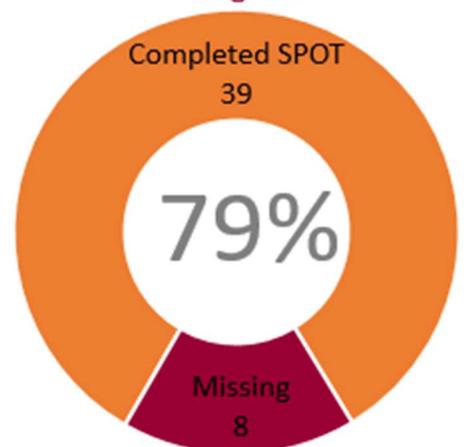
Petra Rivera-Rideau
Sociology



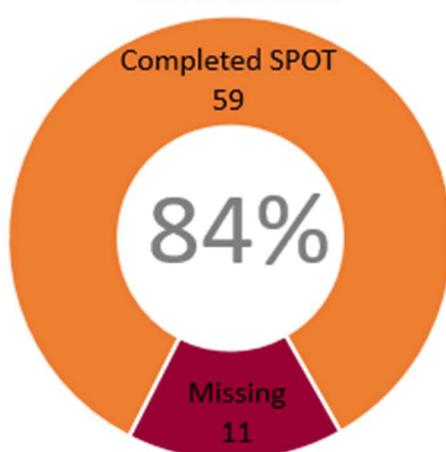
I talk to my students about how the class that they are taking has been modified based on prior students' feedback. For new courses, **I tell them I am interested to know the good and the bad so I can improve the class in the future.** I also tell students that these evaluations are an important way that I am evaluated by higher ups in the department. The number one thing I do is have them complete SPOT in class. I leave the room while they complete the evaluations. **I do not wait until the last day of class since many students will skip that day.** Of course, I take attendance (which is required in my classes), so I have a high response rate. But, I treat this as I would the paper evaluations.

I pull the SPOT survey up on the projector and show them how to get to it and I ask them if they would do it. I tell them that it's mostly for my benefit because I use it for class planning so I really want their candid feedback about the class. I tell them they don't have to do it, I won't know if they are just playing on Facebook during the 15 minutes or so, but I'd appreciate if they did it. **I remind them that it's anonymous and I won't see the results until after their grades are final.** That's it!

Brittany Hoskins
English



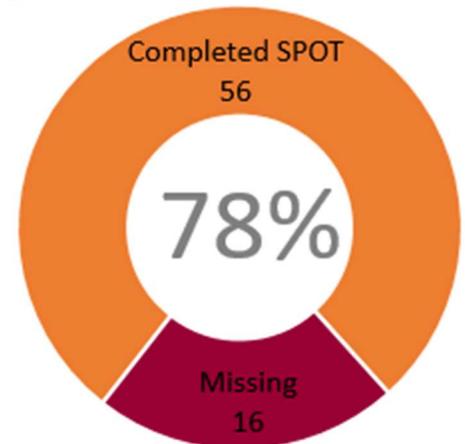
Jay "Berni" Burkette
Naval Science



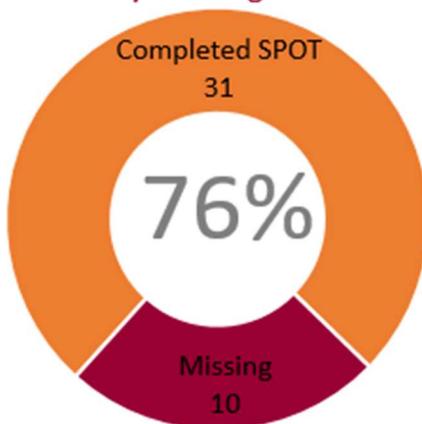
We dedicate time in the syllabus (during the response window) to allow in-class completion. For my class, I scheduled it for a class in which I was doing group presentation debriefs. The class was instructed to bring a laptop or tablet to class that day, and **while I was talking to the various groups separately, the other students were asked to complete the survey.** We try hard to present it to them as a way to substantively improve the quality of the course and the overall effectiveness of the Naval Science curriculum (and, in the process, our instructors as well). I'd like to think that "selling" the survey (personally - as in taking the time to talk through these points in class) in that way has helped our response rates.

- From Day 1, I explain that as a professor I am committed to continually learning, and that this path is a two-way street, without their feedback I remain stagnant and do not grow professionally.
- **I bring up the SPOT several times during the semester, usually when we have been engaged in an activity or lecture that resulted in positive feedback or conversely, resulted in discontent or confusion.**
- As an economist, we talk often about opportunity costs, or “giving up what you have to get what you want most.” For this reason, I offer students points for completing the SPOT in recognition of the “time” it costs them to complete it thoroughly and, the “value” I place on it as a partner in their learning experience. These points are based solely on the honor system, and represent the equivalent of a homework grade.
- **I appeal to their sense of UT Prosim and Hokie pledge to integrity.**
- I bring up the importance of SPOT to their future Hokie colleagues.
- I tell them that it truly matters to my professional advancement, as their information is reported on my promotion and tenure submission, on applications for teaching awards, and to VT Provost.

Kim Morgan
Agricultural and Applied Economics



Vicky Tu
Division of Neuroscience
Academy of Integrated Science



I think the key is to let the students believe that their feedback is useful, and you will really spend the time reading and making the course better to help them succeed. I use the MUSIC model (<http://www.ep.soe.vt.edu/ms>) to motivate my students in the course, and I think it applies well to motivate them to complete the SPOT evaluation too. **To build the students' trust in me, I usually do a mid-semester evaluation with paper and pen.** There are 15 questions where the students have to rate on a 5-point scale, and the rest of it is free-format writing. I keep my word and get back to the students a week later. I show them what I will change to tailor the course to their needs. I also explain why I am not willing to change some course policies (if any). In addition, I specifically save

about 15-20 minutes in the last class for my students to work on their SPOT evaluation while I wait outside. I encourage them to discuss their thoughts on the course and my teaching. Because many undergraduate students have told me it is “a lot of work” for them to log in the system and find the course before they can take the survey, I think having them do it in class as a group project will engage them more and increase the response rate.

Across the semester, I comment about approaches that my previous students taught me. **I let the current students know that I value feedback and incorporate student suggestions into the class.** When the evals are set to open, I ask students to wait on the evals until the last day of class. I explain that I'll give them time in class to complete the evals and that I have some questions I want them to answer. Basically, I want them to have finished the class before they comment because they can finally see how everything fit together.

I use a "stars and wishes" technique to get student feedback at midterm —

Stars = What's working well for you in the class?

Wishes = What do you wish we would do that would enhance your learning?

This strategy focuses on constructive feedback, not just complaining. ("I wish our book had more examples," not "I hate the book.") I remind students that I need to know what I should continue doing as well as what suggestions they might have. For SPOT, I ask them to make comments about their stars and wishes for the course.

Because I teach freshmen, I also explain how the SPOT forms are used — that they're not just for complaints — that **I expect the same thoughtful feedback I give to them on their work** — and that the tone of their comments may mean whether or not a faculty member takes the comments seriously. I encourage them to fill out SPOT for every course they're taking.

Marlene Preston Communication

