

Piazza @ IU

Evaluation Report of the Pilot Implemented in 2014

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Introduction

Piazza is a free online problem-solving and Q&A platform where students collaborate in a wiki-like interface to come up with answers to questions that may be posed by students or instructors. Piazza also offers a more traditional discussion format and supports the editing of computer code and equations. At Indiana University, Piazza was integrated within IU's Learning Management Systems (LMS), Oncourse and Canvas. Piazza was added to the list of Next.IU tools that were piloted at Indiana University during spring and fall of 2014. During its pilot phase, Piazza was used in residential and blended courses.

In April and November 2014, faculty members and their students, who used Piazza in their courses during spring or fall 2014 at Indiana University, were sent online surveys to evaluate Piazza's quality and utility and to share their experiences. This report summarizes the findings from the faculty and student surveys.

Key Faculty Findings

- Six faculty members from six courses responded to the survey. All but one faculty were teaching undergraduate courses. Five faculty members felt extremely or very comfortable with technology. Four of these courses were delivered online while the other two were blended in delivery format.
- Based on the fall 2014 data, three faculty respondents used Piazza moderately in their courses. Spring 2014 survey did not ask the frequency of Piazza use. Faculty used Piazza to post questions to discuss with their class. One respondent noted that Piazza reduced the number of emails about assignments in a large class.
- When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Piazza on a 4-point scale (*1 – Strongly Disagree, 4 – Strongly Agree*), four out of six respondents:
 - Found it easy to use.
 - Found it useful for their teaching.

On the other hand, one respondent disagreed with the statements above. Two of the fall 2014 respondents also stated that they would use and recommend other faculty to use Piazza in future courses.

- In terms of Piazza's impact on teaching and learning, five out of six respondents agreed that Piazza was easy to use for students. However, respondents were split in terms of how they feel about the following statements:
 - Piazza increased their efficiency as an instructor.
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 - Piazza increased student engagement, communication, and collaboration in their course.
 - Piazza increased the sense of community and social presence in their course.
 - Piazza allowed them to teach in a new way.

- Only fall 2014 respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of Piazza's features. All three respondents found *posting questions, answers, and polls* and *immediate notification of a question* moderately or very useful. Only one respondent used LaTeX editor but found it very useful. This respondent also ranked *forming teams and study groups* and *endorsing good questions* not useful at all.
- Faculty respondents liked Piazza's ease-of-use, simplicity of the editor for posting assignments, and Piazza's ability to format programming code on multiple devices and the ease of keeping videos in one place.
- When asked what they liked least about Piazza, two faculty respondents noted IU's LMS have similar capabilities. One faculty commented that Piazza forces posts into categories such as note versus question. Another respondent claimed that students might be confused with the lack of threaded discussion as they are used to it in Oncourse forums.

Key Student Findings

- Sixteen students responded to the survey. Twelve students responded to the demographic questions. Ten respondents were undergraduate students while two were graduate students. Six students were male while five were female. All of the twelve respondents were at least somewhat comfortable with technology.
- Five respondents from fall 2014 reported using Piazza incidentally while another five used it moderately. Four respondents reported not using Piazza. Among these non-users, one student did not find it useful; another student claimed that it was inconvenient to use when he was already using Canvas and e-mail for communication.
- Among twelve respondents, 10 found Piazza easy to use, six found it useful for their learning, and six would recommend using it in other classes.
- When asked to rate the statements on a 4-point scale (*1 – Strongly Disagree, 4- Strongly Agree*), some respondents out of 12 agreed that Piazza:
 - Enhanced their understandings of the course material ($n = 5$)
 - Helped to study for exams and quizzes ($n = 2$)
 - Helped to complete course assignments ($n = 6$)
 - Made efficient use of their time in the course ($n = 4$)
 - Helped to communicate with their professors ($n = 6$) and their classmates ($n = 6$)
 - Helped to collaborate with their professors ($n = 5$)
 - Allowed them to express themselves and their ideas in new and creative ways ($n = 4$)
- Only fall 2014 respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of Piazza's features. Some respondents out of 10 found the following functions to be at least slightly useful:
 - Posting questions, answers, and polls ($n = 8$)
 - LaTeX editor and ability to include unformatted code ($n = 4$)
 - Working in teams and study groups ($n = 7$)
 - Immediate notification of a question ($n = 9$)
 - Ability to comment anonymously ($n = 5$)

- Thanks! Button for helpful answers ($n = 7$)
- When asked what they liked most about Piazza, they liked the fact that they could ask questions to the instructor publicly and anonymously and that they get a response quickly from the instructor or other students.
- When asked what they liked least about Piazza, one student complained that one needs to leave the LMS site to use Piazza. Another student commented it took too many steps to communicate with the instructor and other students.