
STUDENT SATISFACTION GUARANTEES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF STUDENT AND FACULTY ATTITUDES¹

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This study reports on an exercise in guaranteeing the satisfaction of undergraduate students with the instructor's performance. The guarantee was a modified version of that employed by McCollough and Gremler (1999) with the revisions intended to address some of the negative student perceptions they report. In addition to discussing revisions made to the guarantee, this study describes quantitative measures of the attitudes of both students and faculty about the student satisfaction guarantee. The results verify many of the findings of McCollough and Gremler's qualitative study and suggest the revised guarantee is generally well received and adequately addresses concerns with McCollough and Gremler's original guarantee.

Increasingly, universities are treating students as customers (Hoffman and Kelley 1991; Stafford 1994). Consistent with such a viewpoint, McCollough and Gremler (1999) guaranteed the satisfaction of undergraduate students with the instructor's performance. Following the guidelines of McCollough and Gremler, this study presents a modified, simplified student satisfaction guarantee. This study begins with a brief review of the findings of McCollough and Gremler (1999) which guided the development of the revised guarantee presented here. Quantitative measures of student and faculty attitudes toward student satisfaction guarantees are presented and discussed.

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We would like to thank Dean Byron Dangerfield, College of Business and Economics, and Chair C. Randall Byers, Department of Business, for their support in allowing us to introduce a satisfaction guarantee in our classes.

Perceptions of McCollough and Gremler's Student Guarantee

To gain a better understanding of students' perceptions of their student satisfaction guarantee, McCollough and Gremler (1999)² collected and content analyzed qualitative data from students regarding their opinions of the guarantee. Table 1 presents a summary of the major themes and subcategories that emerged from MG's content analysis which the quantitative data analysis reported in the present study was designed to validate. In addition, the revised guarantee addresses some of the negative issues identified by MG in their qualitative data analysis. To aid the reader in understanding the subsequent quantitative data collected in this study, a brief review and recap of the major themes is presented next.³

Three main categories emerged from MG's qualitative data analysis. Within these main categories, or salient themes, MG reported positive and negative issues. Within each main category a number of sub-themes also emerged. The main themes were student attitudes toward (1) the guarantee concept, (2) guarantee specifics, and (3) issues related to service delivery.

Positive comments relating to the guarantee concept focused around general approval of the student satisfaction guarantee. The major sub-themes involved perceptions that the guarantee was a "good idea," "increased student confidence and trust in the instructor," served to set "expectations that both student and instructor would work hard," "wowed the students when introduced," and served to "differentiate" the instructor. While the guarantee concept was generally viewed positively by students, some comments were not so positive. Negative themes focused on opposition to the idea of a student

Table 1
Student Perceptions of the Teaching Performance Guarantee

	<i>Positive Themes</i>	<i>Negative Themes</i>
<i>Guarantee Concept</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good idea • WOW!! Factor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unheard of - surprise - shocking • assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased confidence - nothing to lose/risk reduction - increased trust • expectation setter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both instructor and students will work hard - challenges the student - makes student want to go to class • differentiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - university shouldn't have it - waste of time/useless - guarantee offers only what is expected - not invoked with good instructors • guarantee never invoked <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instructor is judge <i>and</i> jury - possible retaliation (by professor) in future classes
<i>Guarantee Specifics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fair conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple process - conditions are clear/easy to understand - guarantee is unconditional • good "presentation" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guarantee looked the part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everything's covered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professors are completely protected by the conditions • grade satisfaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grade issue not included as part of guarantee • terms & conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - too many conditions - vague/subjective terms - compensation (in-state vs. out-of-state tuition, required receipts) • misunderstanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of "30 day" clause
<i>Service Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guarantee defines professor's role - leads to improved instruction - displays professor's care/concern • co-production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guarantee defines customer's role - shifts focus away from "getting a grade" - increases student accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defines customer's role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - too much - insulting - doesn't address what the professor will do - students do not want to co-produce/be responsible for their own learning • third-party influences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doesn't address influence of other students

Source: McCollough and Gremler (1999)

guarantee, with some students feeling that the "university should not have it," that it was a "waste of time and useless," and that it served to guarantee only what is "normally expected of an instructor." Others felt the guarantee could never be invoked because the instructor was perceived as "judge and jury." Students also expressed concerns of possible "retaliation" by the professor in future classes.

Positive and negative comments relating to specifics of the guarantee also emerged from MG's study. Some students found the terms and conditions "fair," the guarantee "clear and easy to understand," thought the process to invoke the guarantee "simple," and viewed the guarantee as essentially "unconditional." Others, however, felt the guarantee so completely "covered everything" that it could never be invoked. Often, these students felt the guarantee had "too many conditions" and/or "vague and subjective terms." Some felt the compensation offered, which was based on in-state tuition and fees, was "inadequate" for out-of-state students. Finally, several students believed the guarantee should cover grade satisfaction.

A major and unexpected theme that emerged from MG's experience was the issue of service delivery. Students felt the guarantee led to "improved instruction" and displayed the instructor's "care and concern." Because education is a service high in co-production, MG's guarantee had to define the student's role in order to clarify what was and was not covered in the guarantee. Many students found this definition very helpful in delineating the relative educational "co-production" roles of both the instructor and the student. Not only did these respondents feel the guarantee increased instructor accountability, they felt it increased student accountability. Students also felt the guarantee shifted the focus toward learning and away from a "getting the grade" mentality.

Negative comments revolved around the guarantee actually serving to define the student's role "too much," with the definition of the student's role being "insulting." Conversely, some felt that the guarantee did not adequately define what the "professor would do." MG indicate that some students did not want to be responsible for their co-production role in the learning process and resented the guarantee. Finally, some believed third party influences should be covered, especially the actions of other classmates and (group project) teammates.

A Revised Student Satisfaction Guarantee

The guarantee we present here is similar to MG's guarantee, a "specific results" guarantee (Hart, Schlesinger, and Maner 1992). That is, the guarantee focuses on the student's satisfaction with the performance of the instructor and is not an unconditional satisfaction guarantee which would cover every ele-

ment of the student's classroom experience. Like MG's original guarantee, this guarantee is also subjective, meaning it is up to the student to decide if the performance of the instructor is unsatisfactory. However, the guarantee differs in that it is much simpler. The original guarantee of MG and the revised guarantee are presented in Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2, respectively.⁴

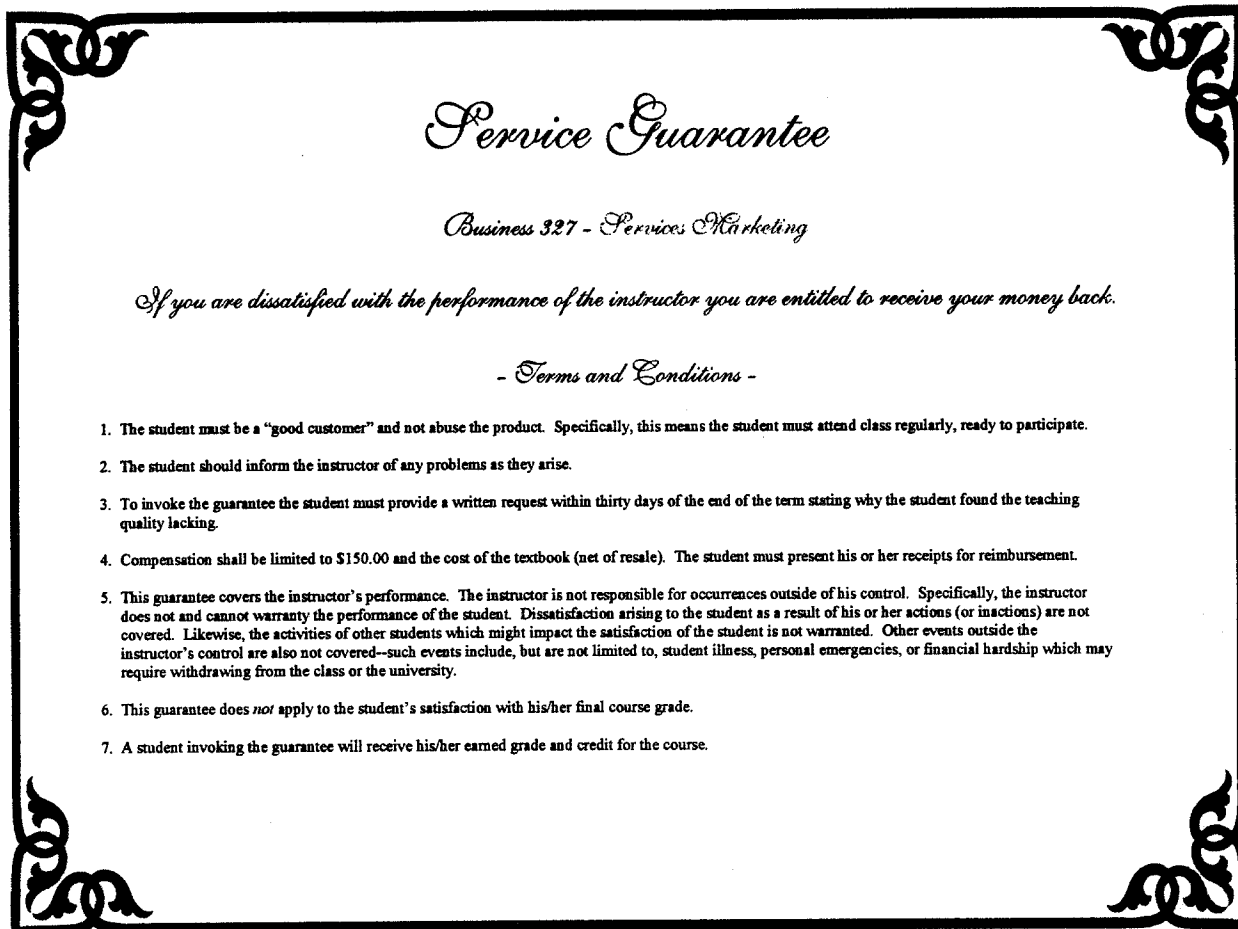
The revised guarantee, like that offered by MG, was guided by two main objectives. The first objective was to make clear the guarantee covered the student's satisfaction with the instructor's performance and not overall unconditional satisfaction or grade satisfaction. The guarantee also disclaimed responsibility for dissatisfaction arising from the student's actions, the actions of other students, or events beyond the instructor's control. The second objective was to avoid "gaming" or cheating behavior by the students.

In general, the revised guarantee was designed to address the student concerns reported by MG that some students perceived their guarantee as including "too much fine print," with "too many conditions" which made it difficult, if not impossible, to invoke. Therefore, several of MG's original guarantee conditions were revised or eliminated. A review of the major revisions follows.

Condition 1 of both guarantees states the student must be a "good customer" and not abuse the guarantee. MG intended this condition to prevent student abuse of the guarantee by specifying the student attend class regularly, ready to participate. However, the revised guarantee dropped the specific definition of a "good student" from Condition 1. Instead, the instructor and the students jointly develop a consensus definition of what constitutes a "good student" and a "good instructor" when the guarantee is initially distributed and reviewed.

MG's Condition 2 states "students should inform the instructor of any problems as they arise." This condition was dropped from the revised guarantee, in the belief that most problems would come to the instructor's attention prior to resulting in a claim against the guarantee. MG's Condition 3 requires students to invoke the guarantee "within thirty days of the end of the term." MG report that the intent of this condition was for students to have thirty days *after* the end of the term to invoke the guarantee. However, MG report this condition generated confusion, with some students interpreting "within thirty days of the end of the term" as meaning the guarantee had to be invoked thirty days *before* the end of the term. As a result, an expiration date was added to the bottom of the revised guarantee (dated about one month after the end of the term). Other aspects of MG's Condition 3, such as how to request a refund and concerns about retaliation, resulted in Condition 5 of the revised guarantee which specifies how to invoke the guarantee and allows the student to invoke the guarantee anonymously.

Exhibit 1
Original Guarantee of McCollough and Gremler (1999)



MG's Condition 4 stipulates that a student invoking the guarantee would receive \$150 plus the cost of the textbook and the reading materials. MG based this compensation on average in-state tuition for resident students. However, MG report that out-of-state students perceived this as unfair. Therefore, the revised guarantee does not stipulate a specific dollar amount, and the amount of compensation is defined in class when the guarantee is distributed. In determining the amount of compensation, students receiving the revised guarantee generally agree that anyone invoking the guarantee should receive whatever they paid, be it in-state or out-of-state tuition.

MG's Condition 5, which states that the guarantee covers the instructor's performance and exempts conditions outside the instructor's control, inspired the simplified Condition 2 of the revised guarantee. MG's Condition 6 asserts that the guarantee does not apply to the student's satisfaction with his/her final course grade. This condition was also included and appears as Con-

dition 3 of the revised guarantee. Condition 7 of MG's guarantee declares that a student invoking the guarantee would receive his/her earned grade and credit for the course. This condition was adopted unchanged from MG and appears as Condition 4 of the revised guarantee.

In total, the revised guarantee is simpler and more straightforward than MG's original guarantee. The number of conditions has been reduced from seven to five, and the five conditions greatly simplified. A larger font is used in the revised guarantee, literally allowing the fine print of MG's guarantee to be eliminated. Overall, we believe these revisions address the majority of the negative issues which MG report.

Implementation of the Revised Guarantee

The revised guarantee was offered at a medium-sized, public university in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. over three semesters during 1997-98. In total, the re-

Exhibit 2
Revised Guarantee

Service Guarantee

*Business 327 – Services Marketing
Spring Semester 1998*

If you are dissatisfied with the performance of the instructor you are entitled to receive your money back.

-- Terms --

- 1. The student must be a "good customer" and not abuse the product.*
- 2. This guarantee covers the instructor's performance. The instructor is not responsible for occurrences outside his control. Such events include, but are not limited to, student illness, personal emergencies, or financial hardship that may require the student to withdraw from the class or the university. Likewise, the activities of other students are not guaranteed.*
- 3. This guarantee does not apply to the student's satisfaction with his/her final course grade.*
- 4. A student invoking the guarantee will receive his/her earned grade and credit for the course.*
- 5. The guarantee may be invoked by submitting, in person, a written request to the instructor or to C. Randall Byers (Chair, Department of Business). Students who wish to remain anonymous to the instructor may do so.*

Offer void after July 1, 1998

vised guarantee was offered in five sections of two marketing classes to a total of 85 students. MG report that no students invoked their original guarantee. To date, no students have invoked the revised guarantee and requested a refund. This is significant given that the revised guarantee is considerably more liberal than MG's original one. The introduction of the guarantee followed that detailed by MG with the exception that the instructor and the class jointly developed a consensus definition of "good student," "good instructor," and what constitutes fair compensation.

Methodology

Research in the services marketing arena has demonstrated the importance of quantitatively validating the findings of qualitative work. For instance, Arnould and Price (1993) followed up their qualitative study with a

quantitative validation (Price, Arnould, and Tierney 1995). Likewise, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) verified their qualitative examination of service quality with a quantitative study (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). Therefore, a major objective of this research is to quantitatively validate the qualitative findings of MG.

To assess the success of the new guarantee in addressing the concerns of students identified by MG, and to quantitatively evaluate the strength and relative importance of the major themes that emerged from their qualitative data analysis, students receiving the revised satisfaction guarantee were surveyed at the end of each term. Simultaneous with filling out the satisfaction guarantee survey, students also completed a required university evaluation of the instructor's performance and a supplementary course evaluation. In total, 73 students completed the survey (out of the total class enrollments of 85) for an overall response rate of 86 per-

cent. However, the number of responses varies by specific item, as not all students answered every question.

As we prepared to offer a guarantee at our university, collecting data from a second group of people—fellow faculty—seemed appropriate. Indeed, previous research in both management (e.g., Schneider and Bowen 1985; Schneider, Parkington, and Buxton 1980) and other areas of marketing (e.g., Brown and Swartz 1989; Bitner, Booms, and Mohr 1994) has benefitted from exploring issues from both customer (i.e., student) and provider (i.e., faculty) viewpoints. MG also report that faculty perceptions of student satisfaction guarantees are of conceptual interest. Therefore, all of the tenure-track faculty who teach business classes at the university were also surveyed. The questions were either identical, or virtually identical, to the student survey measures. However, some questions asked of students were inappropriate for the faculty survey and vice versa. In total, 20 out of the 40 surveys distributed to the faculty were returned for a 50 percent response rate. All questions used a seven-point Likert format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results

Table 2 presents the mean response and standard deviation for selected items related to the guarantee concept, specifics of the guarantee, and service delivery themes for both the students and faculty. In addition, perceptions regarding the guarantee which are indirectly related to MG's major themes are also reported. Simple *t* tests (also reported in Table 2) were also conducted to determine significant differences between the perceptions and attitudes of the students and faculty. As noted earlier, the faculty and student sample sizes are unequal; however, this does not create a problem regarding the *t*-tests per se, but unequal sample sizes erode the power of the *t* tests. Therefore, the significant mean differences for each pair of means reported here are actually conservative. The equality of the variances of the two samples were also evaluated and, for all of the variances, the hypotheses of equal variances for each pair of means could not be rejected ($p=.05$).

Guarantee Concept

In general, students feel the guarantee is a "good idea" ($\bar{x}_s=5.59$).⁵ Faculty are less positive than the students, with the mean response slightly below the mid-point of the scale ($\bar{x}_f=3.94$). The *t* test comparison of the mean difference is significant ($p\text{-value}=.0003$)⁶ Interestingly, given the difference in perceptions that the guarantee is a good idea, both students and faculty feel the

guarantee should be continued in these classes ($\bar{x}_s=5.71$, $\bar{x}_f=5.25$, $p\text{-value}=.3572$). In general, both students and faculty report the guarantee communicates to the student the instructor's commitment to quality ($\bar{x}_s=5.95$, $\bar{x}_f=5.40$, $p\text{-value}=.0723$). Students and faculty also perceive the guarantee to increase student confidence and trust in the instructor as well as to reduce student perceived risk (see Table 2). However, the mean responses for these measures are lower and closer to the scale mid-point than the perception that the guarantee communicates the instructor's commitment to quality.

Neither students nor faculty feel strongly that the guarantee leads students to work harder ($\bar{x}_s=3.37$, $\bar{x}_f=3.12$, $p\text{-value}=.5953$). Students do not think the guarantee is as easy to invoke as the faculty do ($\bar{x}_s=3.58$, $\bar{x}_f=4.61$, $p\text{-value}=.0268$). Students mildly agree that the university should guarantee all classes while faculty strongly disagree ($\bar{x}_s=4.69$, $\bar{x}_f=2.05$, $p\text{-value}=.0001$). Students also feel the guarantee leads to high expectations of the instructor ($\bar{x}_s=5.08$), are generally surprised (or "wowed") by the guarantee ($\bar{x}_s=5.52$), and think the guarantee differentiates these instructors from others who do not offer such a guarantee ($\bar{x}_s=5.47$).

Students strongly disagree that a student satisfaction guarantee is inappropriate for a university, while the mean response of the faculty is closer to the mid-point of the scale ($\bar{x}_s=2.39$, $\bar{x}_f=3.32$, $p\text{-value}=.0365$). Students also think the guarantee does not present a major risk of fraud by students, while the faculty are again closer to the mid-point of the scale on this issue ($\bar{x}_s=2.58$, $\bar{x}_f=3.67$, $p\text{-value}=.0043$). Interestingly, faculty are much more likely to believe students would fear retaliation if they invoked a guarantee than are the students ($\bar{x}_s=3.73$, $\bar{x}_f=4.78$, $p\text{-value}=.0316$). Both groups have mean values near the scale mid-point on the question of whether the guarantee is worth the effort to invoke ($\bar{x}_s=3.82$, $\bar{x}_f=4.35$, $p\text{-value}=.2996$). Both groups also indicate the guarantee only covers what is normally expected of the instructor ($\bar{x}_s=5.04$, $\bar{x}_f=5.22$, $p\text{-value}=.6531$). Students and faculty both mildly disagree that a guarantee is meaningless because students are primarily responsible for their education ($\bar{x}_s=2.84$, $\bar{x}_f=3.26$, $p\text{-value}=.3341$). Finally, students also express mild disagreement that such a guarantee could never be invoked because the instructor is both judge and jury ($\bar{x}_s=3.15$).

Guarantee Specifics

Both students and faculty feel the revised guarantee is clear and easy to understand ($\bar{x}_s=5.38$, $\bar{x}_f=5.20$, $p\text{-value}=.6424$) with fair terms and conditions ($\bar{x}_s=5.93$, $\bar{x}_f=6.00$, $p\text{-value}=.7920$). Students also feel the compensation offered in the revised guarantee is fair ($\bar{x}_s=5.73$).

Table 2
Student and Faculty Perceptions of Teaching Performance Guarantee

		<i>Student Mean^a (S.D.)</i>	<i>Faculty Mean^a (S.D.)</i>	<i>p-value^b</i>
	<i>Guarantee Concept</i>			
<i>Positive Themes</i>	Guarantee is a good idea	5.59 (1.43)	3.94 (1.47)	.0001
	Continue to offer guarantee	5.71 (1.60)	5.25 (1.29)	.3572
	Communicates instructor's commitment to quality	5.95 (1.09)	5.40 (1.50)	.0723
	Increased confidence in instructor	5.02 (1.84)	4.35 (1.60)	.1480
	Increased trust in instructor	4.89 (1.72)	4.50 (1.50)	.3906
	Reduce student's risk	4.26 (1.80)	3.94 (2.25)	.5525
	Guarantee leads students to work harder	3.37 (1.83)	3.12 (1.36)	.5953
	Guarantee leads to high expectations of instructor	5.08 (1.77)	N/A	_____
	Guarantee served to differentiate instructor	5.47 (1.43)	N/A	_____
	Guarantee provides a surprise	5.52 (1.77)	N/A	_____
	Guarantee is easy to invoke	3.58 (1.55)	4.61 (2.09)	.0268
	University should guarantee all classes	4.69 (2.04)	2.05 (1.65)	.0001
<i>Negative Themes</i>	Inappropriate for a university	2.39 (1.68)	3.32 (1.60)	.0365
	Never invoke because instructor is judge and jury	3.15 (1.50)	N/A	_____
	Too much risk of fraud	2.58 (1.24)	3.67 (1.75)	.0043
	Guarantees only what is expected of instructor	5.04 (1.40)	5.22 (1.70)	.6531
	Not worth bother and effort to invoke	3.82 (1.93)	4.35 (1.54)	.2996
	Students would fear retaliation if invoked guarantee	3.73 (1.86)	4.78 (1.52)	.0316
	Students responsible for education, so guarantee is meaningless	2.84 (1.62)	3.26 (1.79)	.3341
	<i>Guarantee Specifics</i>			
<i>Positive Themes</i>	Clear and easy to understand	5.38 (1.40)	5.20 (1.67)	.6424
	Terms and conditions fair	5.93 (.95)	6.00 (.84)	.7920
	Compensation offered is fair	5.73 (1.11)	N/A	_____
<i>Negative Themes</i>	Too much fine print	3.03 (1.82)	2.47 (1.26)	.2171
	Guarantee is a gimmick	3.37 (1.87)	4.50 (1.86)	.0282
	Should cover grade satisfaction	3.51 (1.90)	1.44 (.70)	.0001
	Should not take grade in class if guarantee invoked	3.09 (1.79)	2.53 (1.65)	.2310
	<i>Service Delivery</i>			
<i>Positive Themes</i>	Guarantee increases instructor's accountability	5.58 (1.50)	5.33 (1.41)	.5260
	Guarantee increases student accountability	5.21 (1.44)	4.94 (1.16)	.4809
	Guarantee displays instructor's caring	5.31 (1.61)	N/A	_____
	Students get out of class what they put in	6.08 (1.16)	5.90 (1.45)	.5739
	Students get out of class what the instructor puts in	4.52 (1.47)	2.75 (1.65)	.0001
	Guarantee shifts focus from "getting the grade"	4.34 (1.83)	3.35 (1.54)	.0456
	Guarantee and class discussion define instructor's role	5.50 (1.29)	N/A	_____
	Guarantee and class discussion define student's role	5.34 (1.49)	N/A	_____
	Guarantee empowers student	4.94 (1.56)	4.56 (1.50)	.3860
<i>Negative Themes</i>	Guarantee should cover the actions of other classmates	4.03 (2.30)	N/A	_____
	Class definition of "good customer" insulting	2.02 (1.19)	N/A	_____

Table 2 (continued)
Student and Faculty Perceptions of Teaching Performance Guarantee

	<i>Student Mean^a (S.D.)</i>	<i>Faculty Mean^a (S.D.)</i>	<i>p-value^b</i>
<i>Other Issues</i>			
Grade influences student evaluations of instructor	5.20 (1.58)	5.10 (1.60)	.8082
Should unconditionally guarantee student satisfaction, not just satisfaction with instructor performance	<i>3.00 (1.78)</i>	<i>2.00 (1.53)</i>	<i>.0349</i>
Students are fair and objective judges of teaching quality	5.09 (1.55)	3.75 (1.65)	.0013
If university guaranteed all classes teaching quality would increase	<i>5.17 (1.71)</i>	<i>3.89 (1.67)</i>	<i>.0060</i>
If all classes were guaranteed, more students would attend this university	<i>4.33 (1.93)</i>	<i>3.35 (1.66)</i>	<i>.0642</i>
Through the guarantee I learned an important lesson about service quality/customer satisfaction	5.24 (1.48)	N/A	_____
Would choose guaranteed section of a class over non-guaranteed section	5.47 (1.75)	N/A	_____
Have had courses where I would have invoked guarantee if offered	5.35 (2.22)	N/A	_____
Are courses where students would be justified in invoking guarantee	N/A	6.27 (1.03)	_____
Appropriate to consider students as customers	N/A	4.50 (2.29)	_____
My teaching quality would increase if I offered a guarantee	N/A	2.78 (1.52)	_____
I offer high teaching quality	N/A	6.00 (.69)	_____
I would be interested in offering a teaching guarantee	N/A	2.14 (1.35)	_____

Notes:

- ^a All questions were evaluated using a seven-point Likert-format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Standard deviations are presented in parentheses after the means.
- ^b The reported *p*-value is the level of significance of the *t* test for the difference between the student and faculty means. Pairs of means with a *p*-value of .05 or less are in italics.

Regarding the negative themes related to specifics of the guarantee, neither group feels the revised guarantee has too much fine print ($\bar{x}_S=3.03$, $\bar{x}_F=2.47$, *p*-value=.2171). Responses regarding the view that the guarantee is merely a "gimmick" are close to the midpoint for both groups, with faculty more pronounced in this viewpoint ($\bar{x}_S=3.37$, $\bar{x}_F=4.50$, *p*-value=.0282). While students seem almost undecided on whether the guarantee should cover grade satisfaction, faculty are very strongly opposed to this concept ($\bar{x}_S=3.51$, $\bar{x}_F=1.44$, *p*-value=.0001). Indeed, this is the lowest mean response reported by the faculty for any question. On the question of whether a student should have to take a grade in a class if he/she invokes the guarantee, the mean responses of both groups indicates this is not a major issue ($\bar{x}_S=3.09$, $\bar{x}_F=2.53$, *p*-value=.2310). That is, neither group thinks a student should have his/her grade and credit hours expunged if he/she invokes the guarantee.

In summary, both students and faculty find the revised guarantee clear and easy to understand, has fair

conditions, offers fair compensation, and generally lacks in fine print.

Service Delivery

Students and faculty feel the guarantee increases both the student's and the instructor's accountability. The means for faculty accountability are high ($\bar{x}_S=5.58$, $\bar{x}_F=5.33$, *p*-value=.5260), as are the means for student accountability ($\bar{x}_S=5.21$, $\bar{x}_F=4.94$, *p*-value=.4809). Related to the issue of accountability is the issue of the relative importance of student and faculty efforts in the co-production of knowledge. First, there was very strong agreement with the statement, "I believe what students get out of a class is primarily the result of what they put into it," by both students and faculty ($\bar{x}_S=6.08$, $\bar{x}_F=5.90$, *p*-value=.5739). Interestingly, this is the highest absolute mean response reported for any of the student measures. Perhaps even more striking are the responses to the question, "I believe what students get out of a

class is primarily the result of what the instructor puts into the class" ($\bar{x}_S=4.52$, $\bar{x}_F=2.75$, p -value=.0001). While students and faculty alike believe the student's efforts are more important than the instructor's efforts in the joint-production of knowledge, students apparently value instructors' efforts significantly more than do the faculty themselves. Students also feel the guarantee helps define both the student's role ($\bar{x}_S=5.50$) and the instructor's role ($\bar{x}_S=5.34$) in the education process.

Faculty and students believe the guarantee empowers students ($\bar{x}_S=4.94$, $\bar{x}_F=4.56$, p -value=.3860). Students are significantly more likely to believe the guarantee shifts the focus of the class away from "getting the grade" and toward learning ($\bar{x}_S=4.34$, $\bar{x}_F=3.35$, p -value=.0456). Students also feel the guarantee displays the instructor's caring ($\bar{x}=5.31$) and are neutral on whether the guarantee should cover the efforts of classmates ($\bar{x}_S=4.34$). Students also do not find the definition of a "good customer," discussed the first day of class, to be insulting ($\bar{x}_S=2.02$).

Overall, it would appear the service delivery elements associated with offering a guarantee are viewed positively by students. The quantitative measures seem to confirm MC's (1999) qualitative data analysis that a student satisfaction guarantee aids in the service delivery process by increasing student and instructor accountability. Students also feel a guarantee helps define the role of both students and faculty, empowers the student, and displays the instructor's caring.

Other Issues

Measures of issues indirectly related to the guarantee were also collected. Both students and faculty feel a student's evaluation of an instructor is influenced by the student's anticipated grade in the class ($\bar{x}_S=5.20$, $\bar{x}_F=5.10$, p -value=.8082). Nevertheless, students are much more likely to believe they are fair and objective judges of teaching quality than are faculty ($\bar{x}_S=5.09$, $\bar{x}_F=3.75$, p -value=.0013).

Students indicate they would have invoked a guarantee, had it been an option, in other classes they had previously taken ($\bar{x}_S=5.35$). It is interesting to note the high standard deviation on this question (2.22). Reviewing the distribution of responses for this question shows that fully 54 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the question; the second most common response was the lowest response (strongly disagree), chosen by 12.7 percent of the respondents. A similar question asked faculty if they believed there were courses where the students would be justified in invoking the guarantee. Faculty overwhelmingly agreed with this statement

($\bar{x}_F=6.27$); this response had the highest mean of any of the questions.⁷

Neither students nor faculty feel student satisfaction should be unconditionally guaranteed, as opposed to limiting the guarantee to the student's satisfaction with the instructor ($\bar{x}_S=3.00$, $\bar{x}_F=2.00$, p -value=.0349). As the faculty mean indicates, faculty are very strongly opposed to this idea.

A number of questions evaluated the perceived competitive advantage a guarantee might give an instructor or institution that guaranteed student satisfaction. Students are much more likely than faculty to believe teaching quality would increase if an institution guaranteed all classes ($\bar{x}_S=5.17$, $\bar{x}_F=3.89$, p -value=.0060). However, neither group thinks more students would attend the university if all classes were guaranteed ($\bar{x}_S=4.33$, $\bar{x}_F=3.35$, p -value=.0642). Students did indicate that if they were to choose between two sections of a class, one of which was guaranteed, they would be more likely to choose the guaranteed class ($\bar{x}_S=5.47$).

One question asked students to assume that some classes offered a guarantee (while others did not), and to rank (with 1 being the most important and 5 the least important) the criteria they would use in choosing a class. Students report the following, in order from most important to least important: (1) instructor reputation as a good instructor ($\bar{x}_S=1.69$); (2) recommendation of other students ($\bar{x}_S=1.98$); (3) time of day offered ($\bar{x}_S=3.24$); (4) instructor reputation as an "easy" grader ($\bar{x}_S=4.03$); and (5) presence of a guarantee ($\bar{x}_S=4.08$).

MG suggest that one important reason to offer a guarantee in the classroom is so that students can learn, first hand, about service quality (McCullough and Gremler 1999). Students think this objective is being met, agreeing with the statement that they learned an important lesson about service quality and customer satisfaction through the guarantee ($\bar{x}_S=5.24$).

A number of questions were included only in the faculty survey. Faculty responses were quite varied to the question, "I believe it is appropriate to consider students as customers." Although the mean response was near the scale's midpoint ($\bar{x}_S=4.50$), the standard deviation of 2.29 suggests faculty were not neutral about this statement. The high variance reflects a close to bipolar distribution on this question. In total, 28 percent chose either "1" or "2" for this question (indicating strong disagreement) while 50 percent chose either "6" or "7" (indicating strong agreement). Faculty also report no interest in offering a teaching guarantee of their own ($\bar{x}_F=2.14$) with no response above "5" on this question. Faculty also do not feel that offering a teaching guarantee would improve their own teaching quality ($\bar{x}_F=2.78$). This may reflect the

generally high teaching quality the faculty believe they are already delivering ($\bar{x}_F=6.00$).

Discussion

The quantitative results reported here verify many of the qualitatively developed themes reported by MG. For instance, students generally feel the guarantee is a good idea and aids in the setting of expectations of both instructor and student performance. Based on the results reported here, it would also appear many of the student concerns reported by MG about the guarantee have been addressed in the revised guarantee. For instance, students generally do not find the revised guarantee to have too much fine print and believe the compensation offered is fair. However, no baseline quantitative measures are available for these perceptions regarding MG's satisfaction guarantee. It is possible these feelings were not very pronounced concerning MG's guarantee, and the negative themes reported were a by-product of the qualitative methodology which elicited negative thoughts and comments. For instance, some students might have felt obligated to produce negative comments when prompted. Nevertheless, it appears the revised, simplified guarantee presented here is perceived by students as fair, clear, and meaningful.

Both students and faculty believe the guarantee can be used as an aid in increasing the accountability of not just faculty, but also students. This finding quantitatively validates the interesting qualitative finding of MG that a student satisfaction guarantee can be used as a pedagogical device to set not just performance standards for instructors, but also performance standards for students.

It is interesting to note that, while students generally feel the guarantee is a good idea, they also feel it only covers what is normally expected of the instructor. Combined with the finding that both students and faculty feel there are classes where the student would be justified in invoking a guarantee, it would seem that in some instances instructors are not perceived as meeting the basics of what is normally expected of an instructor. Therefore, a satisfaction guarantee would still seem to be of value to students, even if it only covers what is normally expected of instructors.

The faculty who responded to the survey generally do not see a student satisfaction guarantee of instructor performance as a good idea. However, they do believe there are instances in which students would be justified in invoking a guarantee if one were offered. These results could indicate that, while faculty may believe there are instances of poor teaching quality, a guarantee is not seen as an appropriate, or perhaps effective, solution to these situations.

In discussions with peers at other institutions, the question of faculty resentment of instructors who offer guarantees often comes up; that is, by offering a teaching guarantee an instructor risks alienating his/her peers. Based on the results reported here this does not seem to be a problem in this case. While other faculty do not seem interested in offering a teaching guarantee of their own, they do feel that the guarantee offered in these classes should be continued. This may reflect the high collegiality of our college and its commitment to innovative teaching, as well as the long-standing tradition in academia that every instructor is master of his/her classroom.

In the rank ordering of important factors considered when taking a class, students ranked the presence of a satisfaction guarantee last in importance, suggesting that a guarantee would not give an instructor a "competitive advantage" against competing courses. However, signaling theory argues that guarantees are effective because they signal to customers the quality of a product which cannot be judged prior to purchase (Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Kelley 1988; Priest 1981; Shimp and Bearden 1982; Wiener 1985). Given the importance of the instructor's reputation as a good instructor, the apparent reliance on the recommendation of other students, and the finding that students would choose a guaranteed section over a non-guaranteed section, it could be that in the absence of other clues about instructor quality (such as the recommendation of other students) a guarantee might have greater weight than the numbers reported here indicate.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study relied on the responses of students and faculty within one college at one institution. It is very possible the reaction of student and faculty at other institutions (or in other colleges, departments, or even classes) would differ markedly. Thus, generalizations about student and faculty attitudes toward a student satisfaction guarantee cannot be made in this study. Future research should seek to replicate the results reported here at different universities. In addition, the attitudes of others, including non-business faculty and students, administration, and other university constituents, are of potential interest.

It is also important to note that, in our case, the understanding and knowledge of our students regarding student satisfaction guarantees is actually greater than the faculty. Through the offering and discussion of our guarantee (both when it is introduced and throughout the semester when the lessons of service quality and service

guarantees are discussed) our students gain an appreciation of the theory and practice of guarantees that our fellow faculty may not have. Therefore, in some respects, the mean comparison of student and faculty responses may be "unequal." If so, it might be interesting to apply the guarantee to courses where it is not directly related to the curriculum (i.e., non-services and retailing classes).

Both this study and McCollough and Gremler (1999) report results indicating that the teaching guarantee may be effective, in part, because it helps to set clear expectations for both parties of the education co-production process, potentially increasing role clarity and the accountability of both faculty and students. This tentative finding has implications that extend beyond the specific context of teaching guarantees and might be of significant interest to the service guarantee literature as a whole. Path analysis might also be employed to evaluate how student attitudes about the guarantee influence role clarity, expectations, and student attitudes about the quality of their own efforts and the effort of the instructor.

Conclusion

This study built upon the guarantee proposed by McCollough and Gremler (1999) and presented a revised and simplified student satisfaction guarantee. Analysis of the survey data suggests the revised, simplified guarantee presented here is perceived by students as fair, clear, and meaningful, and the results provide empirical support that confirms many of MG's qualitative findings. A comparison of the student and faculty data suggests the attitudes of both groups concerning the student satisfaction guarantee are generally similar; however, some differences do seem to emerge, with students generally more positive about the concept than are faculty. Even though faculty are supportive of someone else offering a service guarantee in the classroom, they are not interested in using such a guarantee in their own classes.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are seeking ways to tangibilize the quality of their intangible teaching quality. The guarantee presented here is one potential tool to accomplish this task. In addition, as opposed to pandering to students as customers, a teaching guarantee might be an effective way to actually increase, and not lessen, student responsibility for their education.

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Endnotes

¹An earlier version of this paper received the Best Paper award for the "Marketing Academy, Marketing Education, and Teaching Innovations" track of the American Marketing Association 1999 Summer Educators' Conference.

²For notational expediency McCollough and Gremler (1999) will hereafter be abbreviated as MG.

³The summarization of the major themes is necessarily brief here. Readers interested in more detail are directed to McCollough and Gremler (1999) for a detailed elaboration, including reporting of extensive student comments.

⁴It is beyond the scope of this article to review the literature on goods, service, and teaching guarantees. Likewise, the rationale for guaranteeing student satisfaction is not reported here. For a detailed discussion of these conceptual issues the

reader is directed to Hart (1993); Priest (1981); and McCollough and Gremler (1999).

⁵Means for students' responses will be designated \bar{x}_s throughout the manuscript, while faculty mean responses will be designated \bar{x}_f .

⁶The p -value reported throughout the manuscript is the level of significance of the t -test for the difference between the student and faculty means.

⁷We feel we should comment on the generally high quality of teaching instruction at our institution. Indeed, our institution's commitment to teaching quality is evidenced by the administration's approval of our offering a student satisfaction guarantee. We believe our institution is not the only one at which both faculty and students would feel that a student would be justified in invoking a satisfaction guarantee if one were offered.