

Students again suffer faculty partisanship

The University Assembly's rejection Wednesday of student access to statistical course evaluation information shows that body's willingness to put self interests above those of students and the University.

Their action is a typical example of no-win games students play negotiating their way through the University.

But eternal compromise to a group of professors who can have a 10 percent showing and still out-vote students three to one is no longer the only game in town.

Already, the ASUO Executive, the Incidental Fee Committee and SUAB are committed to using a full-time legis-

lative lobbyist to push this issue in Salem. With cooperation from the Oregon Student Lobby and several legislators who showed their warm colors last session, debate will be pre-

ours

empted from campus cloisters and considered as possible legislation.

If properly organized, the effort of those groups will produce a fair chance of legislating release of the evaluative data to students and the public by next school year.

But this task will take months of work

and several thousand dollars. It's a burdensome, irritable expense students shouldn't have to bear.

No matter what History Prof. Paul Holbo says about the intent of his substitute motion was in dealing with course evaluations, his effect was to cancel faculty sentiment drifting toward allowing students the benefit of knowing how their peers felt about classes.

Typically, it's Holbo and a crew of professors from the same mold who in blustery insensitivity keep the University Assembly from doing anything constructive.

An Ad Hoc Committee on Course

Evaluations spent nearly a year working on a proposal that would standardize course evaluation data and provide a mechanism for use of that data by students.

After two sessions of debate, the University Senate endorsed the committee's work and recommended it along with two SUAB proposals to the University Assembly.

And their work died University Pres. William Boyd has the authority to mandate release of evaluations to students. Boyd says he believes the information should be available to students but has refused to follow his words with action, saying the final decision should be made by the faculty.

While such a decision may perpetuate his love affair with the faculty, it speaks poorly of his new-found commitment to improve the plight of students. His slowness to act in support of his slowing rhetoric lets works fall like lead to the floor.

But when the faculty and Boyd have been rebuked, we reserve some dismay over the SUAB's naivete in handling the issue.

Being on the right side isn't good enough.

Eighteen students had the chance of lobbying with favorable faculty to bring them to the vote.

ASUO surveys reveal that a majority of University faculty may support student access to course evaluation material and having those votes at the meeting could have made the difference.

Having failed there, the SUAB has wisely decided to support ASUO Executive and OSL intentions to go to the Legislature with the unreasonable, un-retractable decision they desire.



'HOO'S ON FIRST? I-DONG-NO? NO, HEE'S ON THIRD ... THEN, WAT'S ON SECOND...'

Yours

Intent altered

On the issue of course evaluations, it is important to realize that the new form now being debated radically alters the intent of the evaluation process. Presently we have a form with a large number of specific questions designed to aid the instructor improve teaching. Every computer print-out of the results carries the message that the form was "developed solely for the instructor's information." In fact, the results seem to be monitored by the administration for use in promotion, salary, and tenure decisions, which may represent an abuse of the material. The new form proposed by committee and now being debated reduces the number of questions so that the instructor merely learns if the course was popular and if the students feel they learned. It is no aid to instruction. The sole intent of such a form (apart from individual written comments, which are always possible) is to aid in promotion, salary, and tenure decisions.

Possibly the results of any type of form would be useful to students, but it is also true that skill is required in interpreting the results. It is doubtful that very many faculty or administrators are competent in interpreting the present forms.

Name withheld on request

A blind attitude

On Wednesday, December 6, the University Assembly voted once again to deny students access to faculty evaluations. This action is in no uncertain terms irresponsible and without merit. When one considers that the majority of faculty are in favor of open evaluations one can only wonder at who among our faculty are so afraid of having their performance made public that they must pack the Assembly to vote no on this issue.

Without a doubt this casts doubt on the integrity of some of our faculty and in doing so casts a shadow all over. We call on those clear thinking faculty members to confront

their colleagues and associates and let them know this blind attitude cannot continue. We call on students to clearly indicate their preference for open access on any further evaluation.

As for the ASU of O, we cannot and will not allow a minority faculty opinion to hold us back. We have waited a long time. We are prepared to pursue this issue with the Oregon Legislature. We are pledged to combat this abridgement of students' rights. We are determined to succeed. We will not be silenced. We will not step down.

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End 'Dark Ages'

It's good to note that tradition, disrespect for students, and fear have been once again joined to defeat a method of allowing students to know of teacher evaluations. This re-affirms the following pattern:

1. That teaching remains the secondary purpose of the University. (Right in there behind research and publication.)

2. That knowledge about teachers and courses remains a secret subject, discussed (in hushed tones of course) by upper level students within their respective departments. (God help the new students or those attempting a variety of courses. The quality of their education is left to the roulette method of course selection.)

3. That faculty and the administration treat students as subordinates: obviously we are not mature enough, intelligent enough, or responsible enough to make evaluations that can be made public.

4. That poor teachers (yes, believe it or not, there are some of those), can remain in the University with little incentive to improve their teaching. (Or little incentive to teach only those courses in which they excel, or concentrate on research if they can't teach, etc.)

Despite the benefits of the above system, it might be important to speculate on what would happen if public student evaluations were made available.

1. Teacher evaluations would get better. (As evaluations became more important to teachers and students, efforts would be intensive to make them honest, comprehensive, and useful.)

2. Teaching quality would become more important to the University.

(Faced with students picking classes based on knowledge, the administration would be forced to help teachers improve their classes.) Teaching would improve.

3. Teachers would put a greater value on teaching quality. Most would work to get better. (And would be openly supported in that endeavor by the University and students alike.) Others would teach only what they could teach best. And some who are only good at research and wish to remain so would only do research. Teaching would improve.

4. Students would pick classes best suited to their educational needs.

5. More good students would go to a University that placed such a high value on teaching. (In times of declining enrollments this becomes increasingly important.) Good teachers would also go to a school which openly places a value on teaching. Students and teachers would work together towards the same goal: better education.

It seems extremely ironic (if not incomprehensible) that a University (which would seem to choose knowledge over ignorance) in the free-market economy of America (where the consumer, supposedly, knows best) would insist on a system of hiding teacher evaluations from those who made those evaluations.

If the Administration continues with this absurdity I can only suggest that students start making and publishing separate evaluations. Like scientific research 978 years ago, it is time that teacher evaluations came out of the Dark Ages.

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