

EVALUATIONS

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an instructor at Academic Learning Services.

"There are lots of professors who have no evaluations on file," Powell said. "Students who need good teachers have no way to find them at a great many classes at the University, especially first-year languages and required math classes."

At the end of each term, students all over campus rate the teachers and the courses that have occupied their time for the past dozen or so weeks.

For many, it's an opportunity to praise the inspiring leader of a great class. For others, it's a chance to clobber the pedant who tormented them with a course that shouldn't have been inflicted on unrepentant felons, let alone bright college students.

When all of the evaluations for a class are gathered at the department office, they are summarized by hand or are sent to the campus Computing Center to be summarized by machine.

The originals are given to the instructors after all grades have been submitted, and a summary goes in the teacher's file at the department office.

Most people probably know that the summaries are used to help determine whether a particular instructor is doing a good job. That's true, but it's not the whole story.

"Student evaluations are just one piece of the instructor's evaluation," said Lorraine Davis, vice provost for academic personnel. "They're not the only evaluation of teaching by any means."

Decisions regarding faculty retention, promotion and tenure also are based on interviews with department heads, assessments by other faculty members who sit in on classes, participation in research and other criteria, Davis said.

If a student includes signed comments with the evaluation, those, too, go into the instructor's file. Unsigned forms can be discarded after the instructor reads them.

Departments are required to send two copies of each evaluation summary to the provost's office, according to University Assembly legislation adopted by faculty in May 1985. When all the summaries are received, a member of the Student Senate is supposed to pick them up and leave one complete copy at the Knight Library and another copy in the Office of Academic Advising in Oregon Hall.

These rules were adopted in part because students seeking election to ASUO offices in 1985 made reform of teacher evaluations a hot campaign issue, said Nancie Fadeley, assistant to the provost.

Previously, evaluations were available for students to read inside each department office, but student politicians argued that such an environment was too intimidating.

However, Fadeley said she has a complete copy of last spring's evaluations in her office that nobody bothered to pick up. The Office of Academic Advising doesn't have copies of evaluations and hasn't had any in quite some time, a secretary said.

In the main library's reserve/periodicals room, where students are supposed to be able to look up past course evaluations for almost any class offered on campus, many summaries are at best incomprehensible and at worst, non-existent.

One of the best examples of hard-to-use evaluation summaries is in the binder for linguistics classes.

The binder contains a 3-inch-thick stack of computer paper, still bearing the tractor printer holes at each end. And the paper has been bound into the notebook by weaving a cord in and out of the tractor holes.

Also, the sheets haven't been separated at the tops and bottoms, so the pages can't even be opened.

On the positive side, students who want to read summaries of business or dance classes, or classes in the chemistry, psychology or Russian departments will find clear, complete, easy-to-use information.

But students seeking lower level classes in math or languages are often out of luck.

These courses are many times listed in the Time Schedule of Classes with no instructor named. Powell said students who sign up for these classes are often on shaky academic ground to begin with and need good teachers most of all.

Davis said departments don't list the instructors for some classes because they are taught by GTFs whose schedules are not known until after registration. She also said that faculty members are evaluated in nearly every class.

Powell said that in the past he has sent students to look for evaluation summaries, but they've been unable to find them. They've come back with excuses like, "ASUO hasn't delivered them."

"Somebody ought to be paid to look after course evaluations and make regular reports about instructional quality on campus," Powell said.

Davis said the Student Senate has wrestled with this issue for years, and it is likely there will be changes in the system again.

However, it may not matter whether evaluation summaries are clear because most students may not care.

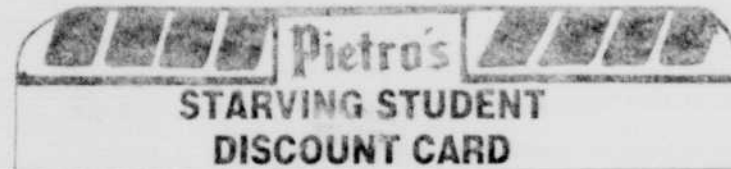
Mary Klein, a student worker at the service desk next to the shelf where the evaluations are kept, said an *Emerald* reporter is the only person she has seen looking at the documents in the year she has worked there.



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