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Faculty evaluation: useless or advantageous

Questionnaire is one of 'best'

by Gary Seacrest
Nebraska Staff Writer

Many of the criticisms of the faculty evaluation are not convincing and are based on misinformation, according to the two students who headed the ASUN Faculty Evaluation Committee.

Ken Wald and Scott Swanson said Tuesday that the computerized form to be used for the faculty evaluation is excellent. However, they both said that the questionnaire and the whole evaluation system can be improved.

"I've looked at about every faculty evaluation questionnaire from every University and I believe ours is the best possible computerized questionnaire," Wald said.

One of the best criticisms, according to Wald, is that the questionnaire has no space for people to write in their personal evaluations. Write-in space was not provided because the evaluation committee concluded that many faculty members would not participate in the evaluation project with such space.

Not libelous

Wald said the faculty evaluation is not libelous since faculty participation in handing out the questionnaire is voluntary and the student is not writing in any personal comments.

"If faculty evaluation can be construed as libelous then a teacher could be sued for giving a student an F in a course," Wald said.

"However, I don't see any damage coming to teachers from the evaluation, but if it does come it is probably justified."

Another criticism of the questionnaire is that it does not have space for the student to write in the grade he is receiving in the course. However, Wald said, "empirical evidence done by the Carnegie Institute shows there is no correlation between what a student gets in the course and how he evaluates the course."

Wald agrees with some critics that faculty evaluation is not a proper function of ASUN.

"I would like to see another organization like the Teaching Council undertake the evaluation project," he said.

Wald's partner in the faculty evaluation, Scott Swanson, said of the project:

"We're hoping to get the system set up this year and improvements can be made in the questionnaire and in the system in the future."

Swanson said that he could understand the faculty criticism of the computerized form, but that it is almost impossible to do the evaluation any other way because of the numerous forms that must be evaluated.

"The evaluation is to help people and it will not be used as a club against the faculty," Swanson said.

The evaluation book will provide only statistics and will not make any judgments about teachers. The advantage of this, according to Swanson, is that each student can make up his own opinion from the raw data.

One of the faculty proponents of the

Moratorium begins with Peace Rally

The December Vietnam Moratorium will begin at 1:30 p.m. Friday with a Peace Rally in the Union ballroom.

The Pelican Peace Band, an underground rock group, will entertain until 2 p.m., when a program of speakers will discuss the history and future of the Vietnam war, and suggestions and possibilities of peace.

Dr. Ivan Volgyes, professor of political science, will speak first, setting the historical framework of the Vietnam War and stressing the importance of "Peace on Earth," according to Dennis Berkheim, chairman of the Moratorium Speakers Committee.

Dr. Wallace Peterson, chairman of the Economics Department, will speak second.

The third speaker will be Dr. Jack Siegman, of the sociology department.

Dr. Phillip Scribner from Centennial College will explain that "Nixon does not intend to end the war before 1972 and that politically, he can't afford to end the war yet."

Next, Dr. Edward Becker of the philosophy department will present moral and tactical objections to Nixon's plan of withdrawal.

Following Becker, John Liljenstolpe will talk on the problems of militarism. Concluding the program Rev. Carl A. Burkhardt, Jr. of Bethany Christian Church will testify to the significance of Christmas to the Peace movement of today.

From 3:30 to 4:00 the people from the rally and members of the community will go to the north steps of the Capitol to start a vigil which will last 26 hours.

At 6 p.m. there will be a candlelight walk around the capitol.

evaluation is Dr. Dudley Bailey, chairman of the English Department. He said that "even if the present form is bad, it is still healthy to get student opinion about certain aspects of the teachers and the courses."

"The English Department never has been reluctant to have itself evaluated. We don't feel threatened by such things. The value of the evaluation is to get the students' perception of our teaching," he added.

Bailey contends that student evaluation is only one facet of the total evaluation of a teacher.

"It may be doubtful that students can judge how good a teacher is, but they are the only people competent to judge their opinions of a teacher's effectiveness," he added.

The English professor said he hopes that the faculty members are as wise and cautious in their interpretation of the faculty evaluation as they are on any other piece of information.

Gregory F. Hayden, assistant professor of Economics, pointed out that faculty evaluation is a student right as expressed in the "Student in the Academic Community" document.

Don't understand

"Many people who are critical of the evaluation do not understand that it is a student project financed by student funds," according to Hayden.

Although all proponents of the faculty evaluation that were interviewed said some of the criticisms of the project are unfounded, all agreed that the evaluation can be improved.

Toward that end, next year Wald plans to solicit written opinions from faculty about this year's faculty evaluation.

P-F privileges limited at NU

by John Dvorak
Nebraska Staff Writer

(Editors Note: This story is the first of a two-part series examining the University's pass-fail program and programs of other universities. Also appearing will be proposals and suggestions by professors, administrators and students to improve pass-fail.)

Approximately 200 students take advantage of pass-fail courses at the University of Nebraska, judging from the average increase per year since 1966. Many other schools including those in the Big Eight similarly limit the pass-fail privilege, but some institutions are doing away with the A, B, C, D and F idea entirely.

The basis conditions for p-f at NU were approved in May, 1966, and have remained essentially unchanged. The conditions limit the number of students eligible for the classes.

Only juniors and seniors can take p-f courses. A student may not take the courses in his major department, and pass-fail courses may not be used to fulfill minor or group requirements.

In addition to those restrictions, departments may identify courses which may not be taken on a pass-fail basis. In some cases, such as in art, business finance and microbiology, the entire department forbids pass-fail in all courses.

No statistics

There are no statistics on the number of students taking pass-fail courses at NU this semester. The last survey of the system was taken by Beverly A. Cunningham, registration advisor, in November 1968. At the time, 161 students took advantage of the privilege.

She found that most students in p-f courses were in the College of Arts and Sciences or Teachers Colleges. Psychology classes had 28 students on the p-f basis, followed by 19 students in English classes. Economics, philosophy and sociology courses were also popular.

The situation at other colleges and universities varies. Some schools, such as Yale, are more liberal with pass-fail courses. Many other institutions do not permit it at all.

"There is no general drift with other colleges," said Don Stenberg, who is chairman of the ASUN Education Committee this year. His group is making a study of pass-fail, both at Nebraska and at other schools.

Most Big Eight conference schools have a pass-fail privilege, although it is limited in every school. At the University of Missouri, medical students are graded S for satisfactory and U for unsatisfactory. All other students are on the A-F system.

Oklahoma State probably has the toughest grading system of the eight schools. An "A" is defined as 83 per cent or higher. A "B" is 85 to 92, "C" is 77 to 84 and "D" is 70 to 76. The limited pass-fail courses are included in computing the overall grade point average.

At the University of Colorado, pass-fail is more widely used than at any other Big Eight school. P-F hours count toward degree requirements, but are not



Dr. Dudley Bailey



Scott Swanson

Some express disapproval

by Ron Whitten
Nebraska Staff Writer

Neither the upcoming ASUN faculty evaluation program nor the questionnaire being used in the process has pleased some faculty members.

Tuesday the University Faculty Senate defeated a resolution expressing full approval of the evaluation. An alternate resolution pledging cooperation with ASUN and endorsing the principle of evaluation was passed instead.

At that meeting Dr. Henry E. Baumgarten and Professor Peter J. Worth expressed their displeasure with the evaluation form, and Worth added that he considered the evaluation program "useless."

Thursday other faculty members from different departments expressed their disapproval.



Dr. Russel Smith



Ken Wald

Larger base and more work cited as needs for Moratorium

by Bill Smitherman
Nebraska Staff Writer

A larger base of support and more individual work to get people thinking about the war is the current need of the Vietnam Moratorium, according to some of the anti-war movement's former leaders.

One of the leaders of the October demonstration, who did not wish his name to be used, said the October activities were effective in drawing a large number of people together.

"People throughout the Lincoln community became interested in the Moratorium," he said. "However, nothing has been done to follow this up."

He added that the moratorium is becoming a strictly student activity. However, even students are losing interest, he said.

"It is a well-known fact throughout the country that students are uptight

Plus grading system helps

The 4.5 grading system has significantly helped the average student's grades.

When the new system was adopted in May of 1968, nearly 25 per cent of University students were on scholastic probation, according to statistics collected by the Faculty Senate Grading Committee. In May of 1969, only 12.25 per cent were on scholastic probation.

"There were two things that helped pull up students grades," Professor Emil Heermann, chairman of the Faculty Grading Committee, noted. "One was the new system itself. Plus grades and the option of dropping D and F grades and re-taking those courses."

The other important factor in the success of the plus grading system is faculty cooperation, Heermann said.

"The faculty became aware of the large number of students on probation in the spring of 1968," he said. "With the plus grading system, the faculty had an opportunity to remedy the situation and they helped the students out

Dr. Russell Smith, an associate professor of geology, said that he "was not happy at all with the questionnaire."

Smith said he opposed the use of a computerized form for evaluation. He suggested that a form could be used with space provided for students to add written comments.

"I realize this would take many man-hours to check over," Smith commented, "but faculty evaluation should be more than just another computer-graded exam."

Smith said that he opposed the use of machine-graded exams for the same reason, that "they don't really give the student a chance to express himself."

The geology instructor added that he was not initially in favor of the ASUN program but he has agreed to participate in the process next week.

Honest evaluations

Smith said he believed that "a vast majority of students will give honest evaluations of their instructors, that is, within the limits that this questionnaire allows."

He noted that the Geology Department has its own standard evaluation form (a write-in answer sheet) which most geology teachers use each semester and that he intends to use the department form next week along with the ASUN form.

"I plan to compare results of the two," Smith said.

Dr. Jack M. Sosin, history professor, said he has reservations about both the questionnaire and the program itself.

"If any evaluation is to be carried out, it should be done by the faculty," said Sosin. He added that the fact that any person teaches at this university indicates that he has been adequately evaluated and accepted.

Sosin said he doubted whether the questionnaire will actually provide an objective analysis of faculty members. He noted that several questions on the form were less than objective.

"One question is concerned with whether the instructor covered his material at an appropriate intellectual level," Sosin noted. "Appropriate for whom? Unless students are already well-versed in the subject matter, how can they possibly tell whether it has been presented at an appropriate intellectual level?"

Sosin said that he recently conducted an evaluation in certain classes concerning the course discussion sections. He said that all European and American history classes which have discussion sections do the same.

About 80 per cent of his students answered on the form that they believed

the discussion sections were "sometimes" integrated with the lecture material, Sosin said.

But, he added, "it is a matter of fact that all my lectures are integrated with the discussion sections. If only 20 per cent of the students can recognize this, how valid can their evaluations be?"

Sosin said he will cooperate with the evaluation procedures next week.

An assistant professor of political science, George K. Perry, commented that he has no objections to the evaluation form, but he is still unsure about the principle of the program.

"I have nothing against the faculty evaluation form," Perry said, "but I haven't seen much cohesion within the teaching profession by which you can determine what constitutes a good or bad instructor."

Perry said that he thought there is a "good chance" that some students may be less than objective in their evaluations.

"Voter research has proven that people allow personal attitudes to color objectivity," Perry said. "Of course, some instructors can tell good jokes, some of them are good entertainers, especially to undergraduates. But should that be considered when evaluating his ability to educate?"

Perry said that ASUN should in the future attempt to utilize other devices to strive towards objectivity. "I do hope that the present program will serve a positive purpose," he added.

Nebraskan applications being taken

Applications are now being taken for second semester staff positions on the Daily Nebraskan.

Application forms may be picked up in Room 34, Nebraska Union.

Those wishing to apply for editor, managing editor, news editor or business manager must turn in applications to the Nebraskan office by 5 p.m. Tuesday. Interviews by the University Publications Board for these four positions will be Wednesday afternoon.

Applications for other staff positions, including reporters, copy editors, business assistants can be turned in any time before mid January.

The last edition of the Nebraskan for first semester will be next Wednesday.

about the war," he commented. "President Nixon and the rest of the country seem to have simply written students off as a perturbed minority. For this reason, we need a broader base of support."

He added that the Moratorium needs "people power" to change the President's Vietnam policy.

Needs change

Alan Siporin, another organizer of the October demonstration, also believes that the Moratorium needs a change of direction.

He said that the idea of the Moratorium was not only to bring the war to a quick end, but also to get people thinking about problems of the world around them. The October activities were effective to this end, he said.

Siporin added that he left a leadership role in the Moratorium because he began to doubt his ability at involving large numbers of people. "It is also a good idea to get as many people as possible involved in the leadership of an organization like this," he said.

"I don't believe that large demonstrations will really accomplish much," Siporin continued. "We turned a lot of people on to thinking in October, but it would be difficult to do this again on a large scale."

He said that what is needed in the Moratorium is more individual contact and education. As it is now, the Moratorium is not really stimulating enough thought on diverse issues, he added.

Mike Shonsey, former chairman of the Moratorium Steering Committee, also emphasized that people need to be organized individually against the war. "There is a great need to involve those who participated in October in an effort to strengthen the organization," he said.

He added that he does not favor further activities on a large scale. "However, what is being done in December is good," he said.

Activities important

Shonsey commented that Moratorium activities this month are important because they serve to show that the

anti-war movement is still active. The activities are symbolic and will give those already involved in the movement something to center around, he said.

"Canvassing may be effective in reaching the community at large," he added, "though it is hard to say."

He said that the new Moratorium leadership has filled a vacuum he was not able to. The actions planned for December are very important and meaningful, he said.

The anonymous source said that there are other ways besides canvassing that might be effective in reaching larger portions of the community.

Town meetings held

Many Moratorium committees on the east coast are becoming active in the community by holding town meetings to consider military spending, federal taxes and local spending, he continued.

He said that these groups are also planning to become more involved in congressional campaigns, supporting candidates who favor a shift in government spending from military programs to domestic needs.

"In spite of the problems involved though, the Moratorium is still an important activity," he said. "Even if you feel frustrated now, it's better to do something other than just sit on your hands."

NU classes next Friday

University of Nebraska classes will be held as usual on Dec. 19, the day before the Cornhuskers play in the Sun Bowl.

Dr. C. Peter Magrath, dean of faculties, notes that the University's operating assumption is that students and faculty meet their academic obligations. Thus, it is expected that those students and faculty who have class or laboratory obligations on Dec. 19 will make appropriate arrangements to fulfill them.

The Christmas vacation for University students begins Dec. 20. Classes will resume Jan. 5.