USG plans to publish evaluations

By Johnny Wilson
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The results are in from a new course evaluation survey at Ohio State, and the Undergraduate Student Government plans to make this information available to the student body.

This is the first step in an effort by USG to eventually publish a list of evaluation results after each quarter for all undergraduate courses at Ohio State.

USG developed and distributed the new course evaluation form during last Autumn Quarter.

The course evaluation consists of 10 statements, to which students respond in a range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

The evaluation includes statements such as: "The instructor shows willingness to help students outside of class," and "I would recommend this instructor to another student."

It also includes statements not found on other course evaluations, such as: "I am pleased with the teacher for this class."

The USG course evaluation form was distributed in General Education Curriculum classes including Arts College 160, Astronomy 162, Biology 101, Communications 209 and Sociology 101.

The evaluations were also distributed in every undergraduate class in the Department of Political Science.

During last quarter's trial run, almost all the evaluated instructors scored well. Political Science 517 received the lowest mark, and students were undecided as to whether they would recommend the course.

One reason the instructors scored well is USG solicited departments receptive to the idea, USG President Rob Edmund said.

The true test for the new evaluation will be the Department of Mathematics, Edmund said.

Edmund delivered and discussed the evaluation forms with Department of Mathematics administrators last week.

"If there's any department on this campus that would resist (the new evaluation form), it's the math department," Edmund said.

John P. Hunke, assistant chairperson of the department, said he will leave it to individual instructors to decide whether or not to use the new evaluation forms. If used, the forms will be paired with the white-colored Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) forms near the end of the quarter.

USG will also be targeting the history, sociology and engineering departments in future quarters.

In creating the course evaluation, USG members first studied similar efforts by other colleges and selected what they believed were the best statements to which students could respond.

The new evaluation form is an addition to two forms being used university-wide, the SEI and the green-colored Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET).

Edmund said SET results are not centrally located and difficult to obtain.

The SEI is still in the experimental stage and has yet to be approved as a teacher evaluation tool by the university, Edmund said.

Edmund said these teacher evaluations are used to determine an instructor's eligibility for tenure, but the USG evaluation determines the appeal of the class from a student's perspective.

"The goal is, as this grows, we'll look into putting out an independent publication," Edmund said. "We'd like to provide a tool that students can use in addition to the lackluster advising they receive."

OSU faculty expressed their concerns and acknowledged the benefits of publishing course evaluations.

John T. Schieck, an associate professor in mathematics, said he thinks course evaluations can easily turn into popularity contests and may not reflect the quality of teaching.

Michael E. Mangino, who taught Biology 101 last quarter, said, "I see no reason why students shouldn't be able to compare courses and instructors and choose accordingly."

Other Big Ten schools, including Northwestern, Michigan State, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois, publish and distribute results of course evaluations.