

DEPAUW STUDENT GOVERNMENT

White Paper No. 8

A White Paper concerning Student Opinion Surveys

Introduction

DePauw Student Government believes that DePauw faculty are active and engaged individuals who are highly qualified and capable educators, scholars, and advisers. The University is a learning institution where intellectual exchange is highly valued and communication essential. Student Opinion Surveys are one of the many ways faculty receive student feedback to improve their courses and teaching. Therefore, we feel that the university needs to communicate more effectively to students the value that is placed on their fair and thorough evaluations. We have included several observations and recommendations below that would help improve the quality of feedback received from students therefore assisting faculty and also assure students of their important role in faculty evaluations.

Observations

The following is a set of issues that were brought up by multiple students during focus-group sessions.

First is a lack of understanding in regards to how much weight Student Opinion Surveys are given. It is clear after discussing the issue with members of the Academic Affairs department that these surveys are given great weight throughout a faculty member's time at DePauw. Educating the students as to the weight the surveys are given is the challenge.

Students also seem to be unaware of why some surveys are proctored in class and others out of class. There seem to be a number of student theories as to why the two types of surveys exist but no clear basis for these theories. An administrative explanation would help greatly.

One of the largest issues that arose during these conversations is what makes a good evaluation. We found that many students determine the amount of time they should spend on an evaluation on the rank of the professor being evaluated. Many students also report only ranking the faculty member by number and not giving additional comments citing doubt that the comments are ever read.

Finally, many students who have dropped or withdrawn from a class do not know their options in terms of feedback. From discussing this matter further we have learned that students many contact the Kelley Hall, Associate Dean of Academic Life or Pedar Foss, Dean of Academic Life . However, if a student does not understand they have this recourse nothing is added to the faculty members file showing an issue; therefore, missing crucial student feedback.

Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations generated by students in addressing concerns around evaluations:

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42 1) The preface at the beginning of surveys should include both those University staff/faculty
43 (i.e. Department Chair, Vice President of Academic Life, etc.) who will be required to review the
44 applications and those who will have access to the surveys.
45 2) Include in the preface to the survey the importance of well thought out comments (not just
46 numbers) or consider removing the numbers since some students do not realize that numbers
47 without written comments are not considered.
48 3) A part of the preface given before an in-class evaluation should include instructions on who
49 the student should seek out if there is an issue (both good and bad) that the students feels
50 warrants more attention than the evaluation. This could include a check box at the bottom of the
51 survey that a student may check in order to be contacted personally regarding additional
52 questions or concerns the students may have.
53 4) Students who drop or withdraw from a class should be given an exit survey.
54 5) Provide an explanation to students regarding the difference between in class and out of class
55 surveys and why the requirement is different for different professors (this could be sent out as a
56 part of the email notifying students they have an out of class survey to complete)
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58

59 Conclusion

60 In conclusion, DePauw Student Government acknowledges and appreciates the hard
61 work and dedication of DePauw faculty and staff. We feel that the implementation of the
62 aforementioned recommendations would help to make DePauw an even more outstanding
63 University as well as helping students further realize their agency is shaping their academic
64 experience.
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66
67 Aye __38__

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69 Nay __0__

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71 Absent __3__
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74 This **24th** day of **April, 2011**.
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78 SIGNED COPY IN DSG OFFICE

79 Christine Walker, President
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Attest:

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Tyler Hess, Secretary

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