

AEJMC 2009 Boston, MA
“The Doctors Are In”
Elected Standing Committee on Teaching

Evaluations topic: **Teaching Evaluations in the 21st Century**

Compiled by: Kristin N. P. Marie Evans, PhD Student, Communication
D. Milton Stokes, PhD Student, Communication
Department of Communication Sciences
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
kristin.evans@uconn.edu
milton.stokes@uconn.edu

Introduction:

Teaching has changed and thus teacher evaluation has changed. This information sheet addresses one of those changes, the professor rating web page. These web pages provide students with a forum to discuss their likes and more often their dislikes about their college and university professors. This information sheet will discuss how to handle these websites and how they can be used to benefit college-level educators.

Websites

There are several websites that students use to discuss their professors and seek information about other professors from their peers. Some of these websites include RateMyProfessor.com, MyProfessorSucks.com, PickaProf.com and others. Many say the best way to deal with these sites is just not to look. While ignorance may be bliss the truth is in the world of bloggers, reality television, and YouTube, this type of expression is quickly becoming the norm. Here are a few tips to help teachers today deal with the increasing popular teacher rating websites.

Facts:

1. **These sites started out of frustration** – Understand that each site was created to give students a platform to express their opinions. What is written is often brash and uncomfortable to read, however students feel that these sites are their only access to honest information because it represents unedited reports from their peers.
2. **Comments on these sites can be helpful** - Most students who post negative comments are extremely frustrated or angry. Oftentimes these students have attempted to address their concerns with the professor before resorting to posting on a website. What the student really wanted was a resolution and he or she settled for retribution. Listening to and actively addressing students concerns can limit negative posts on these sites.
3. **Students still have some respect for teacher authority** – Rarely will students send these types of comments via email or write them on their instructor evaluation sheets. There is still an intimidation factor, while it often seems to be shrinking, sites like this point to the gap between students and teachers. Students

AEJMC 2009 Boston, MA
“The Doctors Are In”
Elected Standing Committee on Teaching

do not always feel comfortable with expressing themselves on evaluation forms. If you sense that your evaluations may not be accurate or honest, you can use these websites as a checking system.

Tips:

1. **Use online evaluations** – Speak the language of your students. Most of today’s college students have used a computer since they were young children. Not only are today’s students more comfortable with online evaluations but the internet also provides them with an added sense of anonymity which will allow for more honest evaluations. Providing a forum for suggestions and complaints on teaching evaluations drains the ammunition and anger from disgruntled students.
2. **Make changes to the course when necessary** – Keeping your course applicable to the generation you are teaching will help your students to stay engaged. Use examples to which your students connect. Understand the learning style of the generation. Engaged students allows for more learning and thus better evaluations.
3. **Make changes to your teaching method** – Stay current. Integrate new technology and creative learning techniques. It does not matter if you have been teaching the same course for 10 years, teaching students who were born in the 80s will be different from teaching students born in the 90s and so forth. It is important to recognize that they have been socialized to receive information differently.
4. **Pay attention to previous evaluations** – Students will tell you how to change your course and make it more effective in your evaluations. It is your responsibility to listen and make the appropriate adjustments. If you continue to get the same type of comment from students over several semesters and refuse to make adjustments when appropriate, do not be alarmed when your name appears on MyProfessorSucks.Com
5. **Get over it!** – There is only so much that you can do as an instructor. If you can be confident that you have done your job of giving your students the best instruction that they could receive, then rest in that fact. Do not let the reports on these websites discourage you. Make changes when you can and remember that these comments are typically flippant, resulting from frustration.

Citations:

- Goodfriend, S., (2002) *Students Evaluate Instructor Performance On Myprofessorsucks.com*.
<http://media.www.collegian.com/media/storage/paper864/news/2002/09/18/News-campus/Students.Evaluate.Instructor.Performance.On.Myprofessorsucks.com-1700167.shtml>
- My Professor Sucks
www.professorperformace.com
- Philips, E. (2008). *Better than “Rate My Professor,” Pickaprof.com proves more detailed than other sites*.
<http://media.www.theeastcarolinian.com/media/storage/paper915/news/2008/01/31/Features/Better.Than.rate.My.Professor-3178862.shtml>