

Instructor evaluation form: how does it rate?

By Neil Myers

Those instructor evaluation forms--as much as you might hate them, they play a major role in granting or denying tenure and promotions. Here at Capitol Campus, the form is something that nobody loves and many people misunderstand.

According to Dr. John Joseph, assistant provost, promotions and tenure are granted on the basis of teaching ability, research, scholarship and community service, but, "By far the single most used method of evaluation is the student evaluation." Even so, that doesn't mean the evaluations are popular.

"They're often very inaccurate," says Dr. Irwin Richman, professor of American Studies and History.

One of the questions on the form asks if the instructor encouraged discussion.

"I don't necessarily want to stimulate discussion," Richman says, adding some courses should be taught by lecture and others by participation.

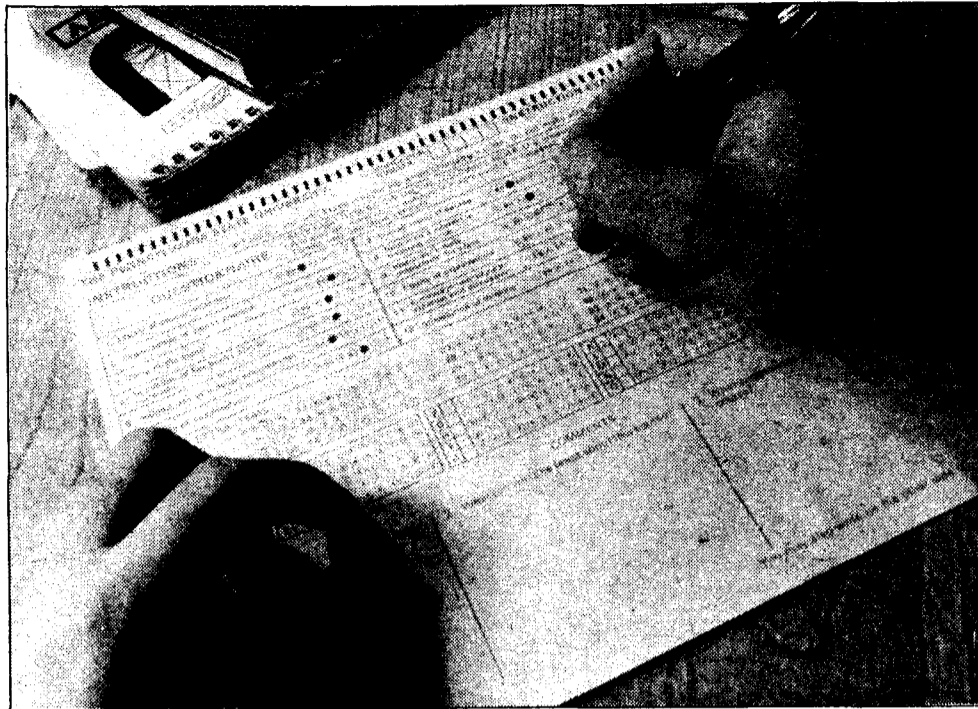


Photo by Jeffrey G. Shatzer

Richman thinks some students answer negatively based on subjective attitudes toward the instructor and not the instructor's ability.

Richman does not use the forms in his classes.

S.H. Dahir, professor of Engineering, agrees.

"I think the students need to

evaluate more objectively," he says. He suggests a campaign every semester to encourage students to answer fairly.

Other faculty members we asked were ambivalent.

Dr. Carol Nechemias, assistant professor of Public Policy, feels the forms are useful but not enough students fill out the com-

ment section.

But Clem Gilpin, instructor of Afro-American Studies, says just the opposite, citing "inconsistencies" in the comments that make them difficult to interpret.

Dr. Amir Jassim, assistant professor of Risk Management and Finance, says the forms are "not the best, but at least they give you an idea (of teaching effectiveness)."

Assistant Provost Joseph says that efforts have been made to improve the form. Faculty at Capitol may now omit certain questions regarding textbooks, class pace, examinations, assignments and grading, according to a memo issued this November by Acting Provost/Dean Stanley N. Miller.

In addition, instructors may ask supplemental questions. Either of these moves, however, bars that class' data from inclusion in norms for each division, campus and the entire university, Joseph reports. None of the instructors we talked with, either here or at another campus, feel either alternative is entirely successful.

"The form is a compromise," says Johnson. It represents an attempt to measure achievement of individual goals while comparing the individual to other instructors for promotion and tenure.

"It's questionable whether you can combine the two purposes," he added.

How the forms are administered is also not so clear.

Please see "EVALUATION," pg. 4

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Provost/dean search narrows to five

By Tony Perry

The Provost/Dean Search Committee recently chose five finalists to be considered for the provost/dean position at Capitol Campus and began on-campus meetings to introduce the candidates to various campus constituencies, according to the committee's chairperson Dr. Robert Graham.

Dr. Stanley Miller was named acting provost/dean, effective last July, and will serve in that capacity until a new provost/dean is chosen.

The finalists are: Dr. Frank Butler, Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Physics at Indiana University East in Richmond, Indiana; Dr. Norman Cantor, Director of the Institute for Cultural Analysis at New York University; Dr. Samuel Goldman, Dean of the College of Human Resources at Southern Illinois

University; Dr. Ruth Leventhal, Dean of the School of Health Sciences at Hunter College in New York; and Dr. Robert Smith, Dean of the College of Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Each of the finalists will be interviewed on campus by Student Government Association representatives and members of the staff, faculty, administration, and Board of Advisors. Candidates will move on to University Park the following day.

Finalists were chosen from an "excellent and varied" pool of 150 applicants that were "extremely experienced at the dean level and above," Graham said.

"Over 50 percent (of the applicants) were experienced deans, provosts, vice presidents, chancellors or small college



Photo by Jeffrey G. Shatzer

Dr. Edward Beck (left) greets the first Provost/Dean candidate to visit Capitol Campus, Dr. Frank A. Butler (right), Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Physics at Indiana University East, Richmond, Indiana. Butler is one of the five finalists that were chosen from over 150 applicants who applied for the position of Provost/Dean here at Penn State/Capitol Campus.

Please see "PROVOST," pg. 3