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Faculty and Students Agree that Student Rated Teacher Evaluations Need to be Reevaluated

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The purpose of Student Rated Teacher Evaluations (SRTE) is "to provide feedback on teaching and learning so that the instructors can make necessary adjustments if the feedback indicates a need for adjustment" according to Francis Achampong, Director of Academic Affairs. However, 50% of faculty respondents to a survey conducted by The Fourth Wall claim that they do not benefit at all from SRTEs.

SRTEs are a controversial issue on campus among students, faculty, and administration. Discussions frequently spring up at Faculty Senate meetings regarding the frequency of the use of SRTEs, and recommendations that

SRTEs should be conducted by all faculty members, even those not on tenure track. University administrators have proposed that SRTEs be conducted online rather than in the classroom. Such discussions have stirred the emotions of many faculty members and prompted heated debates.

When a faculty member is being evaluated for a raise in salary or a promotion, three things are taken into consideration: teaching, service, and research. The amount of research and service are solely the responsibility of the instructor. However, faculty feel that teaching effectiveness is judged solely on two numbers from the SRTEs: Overall quality

of the course and overall quality of the instructor. If these numbers are not satisfactory, the instructor's salary increase may be smaller. The administrators hold that a range of factors and checks are taken into account.

One instructor who has been published in prestigious journals and is involved in the campus community was given a lower salary increase than he felt he deserved and believes that it is because two students gave him ones and twos on the SRTEs, bringing down his overall average.

How far will instructors go to prevent this from happening? Some instructors are lenient with students. If students are unhappy, they will give low

SRTE scores. Some instructors feel pressure to give higher grades to undeserving students just to make sure their SRTE average stays high. This results in "grade inflation." Many students will go on in their careers believing that they are as smart as their GPA reflects. Another instructor claims that a recent study conducted by the University Senate shows only "a slight correlation between course GPAs and SRTEs." Several instructors admitted to giving higher grades than are deserved, and one felt that many instructors inflate grades but don't want to admit it – even to themselves. However, several claimed that they feel pressure

to pass students and will offer ways to help boost grades.

Achampong says that peer reviews are administered as a means of corroborating SRTE scores. There is a worksheet outlining each step the reviewer must take. First, the reviewer meets with the instructor to determine a date for the review. They then discuss the lecture to be given and the reviewer gives advice on how to improve the lecture. Finally, the reviewer submits the review in written format, which is nothing more than a fill-in-the-blank form given to all reviewers. Of the respondents that have had peer

see *SRTEs* page 8

Student Government Hopes to Implement More Efficient SRTEs

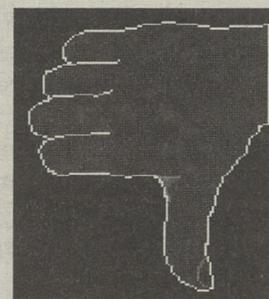
The Council of Commonwealth Student Government (CCSG) is proposing a supplemental survey to the current Student Rated Teacher Evaluations (SRTE) that will benefit students. The survey, named "Teacher Facts" by Mont Alto Student Government President Matt Hass, is to be completed online and mandatory for all students to fill out.

The SRTEs that students fill out at the end of each semester are confidential and the results cannot be viewed by students. CCSG wants to create a survey and make the results available online for all Penn State

students. The survey will be created by the students, therefore, they will be more specific to the class and the instructor. The questions will address such issues as the instructor's teaching style (auditory versus visual) to allow students the opportunity to choose instructors most compatible with their learning style.

Hass says, "All students should know what they're getting into when they take a class." His concern is for the students and their experience at Penn State.

If you have any recommendations or concerns regarding this project, email Matt Hass at mch214@psu.edu.



Parking Ticket Money Goes Back to Students

Andy Hess
SGA Treasurer

You arrive at your vehicle and find a parking ticket lying under your windshield wipers. Most people think that it's just another way for Penn State to get your money. I am one of the many people who are quite disturbed by having to pay a parking ticket.

Where does the money go? The university gets it, right? Actually, no. The money goes to the Student Government Association, which then allocates it to clubs and organizations on campus. SGA also uses the money to sponsor events such as Fall Fest, .

To know that Penn State is not profiting from the money is a

comforting thought. I'm much more content knowing that the money comes back to the students. Most students that I have talked to had no idea who gets the money from parking tickets. When I tell them that the money ultimately comes back to them, they react differently than when they thought the university was pocketing their money for their own disposal.

This may or may not ease the tension when paying a ticket, but at least you know that you get your money back through programming on campus.