

the daily opinions

editorial opinion

Tenure trauma

One way not to measure teaching ability

If a professor wants to get tenure at Penn State, he or she must teach adequately. No one here says otherwise.

But how should a professor's teaching ability be measured?

It's a good question, ranking right up there with measuring the sound a tree makes when it falls in the woods or the sound of one hand clapping or counting the sips of brew in Beaver Stadium on a Saturday afternoon.

The University Faculty Senate is stuck with the responsibility of setting a policy for measuring teaching quality as part of the University's tenure and promotion policy, PS-23.

What's PS-23? If you ask, you're not a faculty member here. PS-23 provides that candidates for tenure are rated according to their records in four areas: research and publication, service to the University and community (such as membership on the Faculty Senate), advising and teaching.

Candidates for tenure are reviewed by three, sometimes four, committees: commonwealth campus, department, college and university.

The way teaching evaluations are done now, each department has its own way of evaluating teachers. Some use peer evaluations, some rely primarily on student evaluations. Some use detailed questionnaires, some use interviews. Some rate teachers on a scale of 1 to 10, some use a scale of "poor" to "very good."

Many faculty senators say this disjointed, decentralized way of evaluating teachers is unfair. When the University-level tenure committee has to make a tenure decision, the candidate's teaching ability is impossible to measure on a University-wide scale.

So, in effect, the University-level committee has to depend largely on the recommendations of the lower-level committees, who know better what evaluations mean and know the faculty member, but also might be more prone to political ploys than the University committee.

So the senate Faculty Affairs Committee has recommended that a few standardized comprehensive questions on the overall quality of instruction be included on teaching evaluation forms throughout the University. The recommendations will

come up for a vote at the senate meeting next month.

The effect of the standardized questions on the tenure review process is not exactly clear. It would probably give more of the responsibility for teaching evaluation to the University-wide committee, whose members cannot possibly know particular faculty members as well as department heads.

But that point aside, this proposal is not the way to measure teaching more accurately.

Standardized questions cannot possibly be the way to better evaluate teachers.

Students' attitudes toward their instructors vary widely between large classes and small, required courses and electives, introductory courses and honors courses.

As one professor pointed out, someone teaching Math 161, which is required of engineering majors, might want to be tough with students to get them to learn, but someone teaching an introductory literacy course wants students not only to learn, but to like the subject enough to come back for more.

And space does not allow listing the myriad of ways teachers can "rig" student evaluations, even if a neutral proctor administers them.

Standardized questions would only give University-level committees the illusion of objectivity.

Real information on the quality of a teacher can come only from those who know the teacher firsthand — students and other teachers. And that information cannot be gathered with standardized forms.

Perhaps the Faculty Senate could consider different kinds of University-wide standards, such as interviewing students and sending transcripts of interviews to the tenure review committees. Or, better yet, tenure committees could interview a teacher's former students — whose opinions are less likely to be colored by a teacher's personality.

Sure, these methods are a whole lot more cumbersome than standardized questions on evaluation forms, but no one ever said measuring teaching quality would be easy.

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor-in-chief holding final responsibility.



Neglected advisees can find help

By KIM NURICK
7th-general arts and sciences

TWO years ago on a hot August afternoon, I pulled out my trusty map that every freshman would be lost without and double-checked the location of my adviser's office building.

Can't be late, I thought, because, after all, the advisers of the University are there to help us (Naive Freshman Mistake 1).

When I arrived at the math professor's office I was handed my pink slip with a smile and, with a slight shrug, my adviser said, "Well, that's it." No signed number 2 card, no explanations about the courses I didn't get — nothing.

"Don't worry," my Resident Assistant said. "There are advisers on the registration floor to help you."

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Great, I thought. They'll surely know what a first-term pre-med student should take (Mistake 2).

After about an hour on the floor trying to arrange a schedule, I went to the advisers at the College of Science to make sure it was O.K.

"It's up to you," the man told me with a blank stare. I decided then to make an appointment with my assigned adviser to set up a tentative schedule for the year. I'd just find out when his office hours were (Mistake 3). Not only was he not present during office hours, but I soon found that all of his students' affairs were handled by his secretary.

I began to learn from my mistakes and for three terms I arranged my own schedules on pre-registered forms obtained from the faithful secretary.

But I began to grow very tired of taking one science course after another, with nothing in between. This may be all right for some, but not for me, I thought, and I knew something had to be done. I camped out in front of the

secretary's desk one morning at 7:30 I could nab my adviser when he came in.

As he poured his coffee, he told me that he had a lot of papers to grade, but if I asked questions, he could either answer them with a yes or no. It wasn't what I had in mind, but he mumbled "yes" when I wanted to add Spanish and drop chemistry.

The secretary had already signed my drop-add slip without glancing at it, so I was set.

Set, that is, until the following term and the one following that. I was becoming increasingly unhappy in my major, but there was no one to guide me or help me to go about changing it.

Situations such as this are extremely common among students of all majors and term standings throughout the University. Unfortunately, however, many cases are met with much more apathy.

Some are not even met at all — as in the case of my friend Jane. Her adviser had office hours (or, rather, hour) one period a week. Because Jane had a class during that period, she tried to set up an appointment at a different time. No dice. He was much too busy, he said, and besides, if he made special hours for Jane, he'd have to do it for all his advisees.

The situation appears hopeless. Yet, hard to believe as it may be, there are a few knowledgeable, concerned, available people left in the University. These select few have been known to give tremendous help in guiding students toward their future. But they don't seek out students.

If you are one of the many students assigned to an adviser you don't even know — or wish you had never met — it's up to you to remedy the situation. And how to do it?

Talk with other students. Talk with your professors, or a department head, or the dean of your college. Go to the Career Development and Placement Center and talk with the counselors. They'll give you names of people to talk with.

You have a right to be advised. Get to know the people who know how to do their job, to provide guidance. Get to know them and let them get to know you. And your future will look wonderful brighter.

Hi, I'm 7th-entomology. And you?

A scene in a State College bar: A man takes a seat next to the woman he has been scoping all evening. "First, engineering," he whispers breathlessly into her ear. "Tenth, liberal arts." She smiles and quickly moves to the other side of the room. After all, the best engineering major she went out with wasn't worth the trouble, and anyway, first term men just aren't her style anymore.

Maybe this has never happened to you, but it could become a reality for any Penn State student. We have been trained to identify ourselves by term and major so often that it's usually the first thing one student says to another at an initial meeting. The results could be devastating. Imagine the student who is majoring in entomology and must explain to everybody that entomology is not some obscure Far Eastern language. Or worse yet, a student with a double major in developmental and remedial reading and reading communication and language education won't even be able to spit out one of his majors before losing everybody's attention.

First term students are naturally labeled as naive freshmen, even if they are 25 years old. Twelfth term students are admired because they've almost made it.

As for me, I think I'm in a rut. I'm eighth term — sort of stuck in the middle — and tired of saying "journalism and Spanish" to identify myself. I've always wanted to try a different major to see how it sounded. Something like dairy science always sounded interesting to me. New acquaintances picture a woman who knows how to milk a cow and isn't afraid of a little hard work.

Or how about music? I've always wanted to be a singer anyway and even if I'm not good enough I can pretend I'm living out a fantasy.



Iris Near is an 8th-term Journalism and Spanish major and a copy editor for the Daily Collegian.

You have what in your dorm room?

- Last week, as I dragged my carpet up four flights of stairs for the fourth year, it suddenly occurred to me that I was violating yet another University policy. I'd also be committing a violation later when I played Frisbee in the quad or made a cup of coffee after work.
- To those freshmen or naive upperclassmen who are totally confused by my illegal actions, allow me to clarify: if you have carefully read the "Terms, Conditions and Regulations" concerning dorm living, you will be surprised to learn that just about every student residing on campus is a "violinist" in one way or another.
- I have found that reading that small white booklet is an unapologetically hilarious experience. And so, with due respect to Housing and the Administration, I wish to "dedicate" the following rules to certain people (some names have been shortened to protect the guilty):
- Students are permitted to use... small non-washable rugs. Additional furniture is restricted: In honor of my room-size rug and my roommate's hope chest, rocking chair, wooden table, floor lamp and ironing board.
- Students may have overnight guests of the same sex in their rooms. In honor of Jeff and other guests who have "camped out" with us throughout the year.
- Arrangements (for guests) should be made through the area coordinator's office, and charges should be paid in advance at the area post office: You mean we had to pay for guests?
- Do not use the lavatories and seated areas adjacent to the residence halls. In honor of the hundreds of students who play Frisbee, baseball and other sports in the quads.
- Pet animals are not permitted in residence halls: In honor of the German shepherd who lived down the hall, the kitten who lives upstairs, the tarantula and snake who live across the street and the bird who attended our parties.
- Mattresses are not to be used on bed frames provided and are not on the floor;
- Acts of "horseplay" are not permitted because of the possible injury to others in the dining rooms. In honor of the four food fights in Simmons dining hall last year.
- To protect draperies, sills, and flooring from rain, snow or dampness and to help conserve heating fuel, windows should be closed when you are not in your rooms. In honor of my old room, which registered approximately 99 degrees even in the middle of winter and which forced us to keep the window open all year.
- Pictures, additional bulletin boards, and decorations or to be hung from picture molding with picture hooks. . . . The use of tape, adhesives, putty, glue, paste, nails, tacks, staples, and screws on walls, furniture, doors, or other woodwork or glass is not permitted. In honor of all the adhesives and nails used to hang up my framed pictures.
- Dart boards are not permitted: In honor of S. and K.'s dart board.
- No papering of rooms is permitted: In honor of S. and K.'s papered room.
- The conducting of any business enterprise for personal profit is prohibited in or around University-operated units: In honor of my Avon lady.
- Your meal ticket may not be used by another person: In honor of all my guests, male and female, who have posed as Joyce Venezia to get a meal.
- Candles or other flame-emitting articles may not be burned in residence halls: In honor of the various candle-lit sessions held in my room.
- The University reserves the right to cancel or deny a contract to student... if that student... violates University rules and policies, and/or the terms and conditions of this contract. In honor of my fourth year in the dorms. Long live the University's dorm contract! All hail as it flies into my garbage can!
- Ironing must be used only in designated ironing rooms: In honor of Laura, who would rather iron in the room on a towel than go down the hall with her Noxema on.
- A single serving of fresh fruit... may be taken (from the dining hall); in many of the many dinners we have had upstairs in our room.
- Napkins, chinaware, silverware, trays, paper cups, and other supplies may not be taken: In honor of my 92-piece Food Service china set and my neat sled for the winter.



Because of fire or sanitation hazards, no electrical appliances may be used in student rooms, including such items as hot plates, hot pots, ovens, toasters... multiple outlets... strings of lights, etc.: In honor of Laura's hot pot, Deb's toaster oven, Kathy's multiple outlets and my Christmas lights.



Illustration by Lydia Cloud

A rebel's rebel

Fighting tirelessly for Angolan independence

Jonas Savimbi is one of those independent-minded Third World leaders against whom the odds are so great that the mere fact he is alive must be seen as a major victory.

Savimbi, a 46-year-old Angolan, has been living in the brush and fighting an anti-colonial war for 15 years. His opponents have not always had the same faces. He began fighting the Portuguese, who ruled Angola for 400 years, but he is now fighting the Russians, Cubans and Germans, who have ruled Angola for the past five years.



and they receive the same pay as the black Angolans: nothing.

The Swiss-educated Savimbi founded the National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola. Along with two other groups, the pro-Western FNLA and the pro-Marxist MPLA, Savimbi spent nine years from 1965 until 1974 fighting the Portuguese colonial army. South West Africa People's Organization guerrillas, Katangan police, South African long-range penetration units and the Rhodesian Air Force.

After a group of left-wing officers seized control of the Portuguese government, Savimbi approached the leaders of the two other guerrilla groups, Holden Roberto of the FNLA and Agostinho Neto of the MPLA, and the three agreed to form a united front in order to negotiate for independence.

In January 1975, the three leaders signed an agreement that was later endorsed by the Portuguese. The three rebel groups were to divide the cabinet portfolios among them until elections were held immediately after independence.

But the Marxist-dominated MPLA faction had no intention of allowing these elections, and in August 1975 they attacked the compound which housed the FNLA and UNITA ministers. Fighting spread to the rest of the country, and FNLA and UNITA pulled out of the coalition government. The Portuguese were demoralized and had no desire to continue the war, which was devouring half of Portugal's budget. As fast as the Portuguese were pulling out of the country, Russian, Cuban and East German advisers and troops were pouring in. When independence day came to Angola, the Russians were in control of Luanda, the capital, and the rest of the country was at war.

Relying on a large base of popular support, Savimbi seized most of the southern portion of the country and came within 150 miles of Luanda, while at the same time Roberto, backed by a \$28 million gift from the CIA, seized areas of the north and came within 20 miles of the capital.

While the U.S. Congress was busy ratifying the Church Amendment — which prohibits the U.S. government

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If you are interested in finding out more about the Program attend one of the following orientation meetings:

Tuesday, September 15 Room 9 Sparks 11:00 a.m.
Thursday, September 17 Room 9 Sparks 1:15 p.m.

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