

Evaluations evaluated in third part of series

by christine siddons

guest writer

UNLV students and teachers agree that student evaluations are worthwhile and help teachers in structuring their classes.

"The evaluations are a good idea because they are a way of letting the students speak freely," said 23-year old Elizabeth Hernandez, sophomore in Spanish. "I take the evaluations seriously."

Conn Peterson, also a sophomore, agreed that evaluations should be taken seriously because they help teachers improve their teaching.

And Cathy Watlet, a junior in Accounting and member of the Lady Rebels basketball team, said, "If students don't take the time each semester to voice their opinions, they have nothing to complain about in the end."

Student's responsibility

for the evaluations was also stressed by Kathleen Wilson, a mature freshman in Geology. The evaluations are "only as good as the student makes them," Wilson said.

However, Tanya Rubin, a senior in Hotel Administration, argued for joint responsibility for the success of the evaluations. She said students, teachers and administrators must cooperate and be willing to change.

Failure to change was cited by some students as evidence that the evaluations are useless. Some teachers never change their bad habits, suggested Wendy Zak, an Engineering junior.

Another junior, Michelle Wing, Elementary Education, said that the longer a person teaches, the harder it is to change.

Assistant professor Cathy Hurst-Hoffman, Theatre Arts, agreed that

time can be the enemy of good teaching. People fall into habits and patterns which put blinders on them, she said, and eventually some teachers become scared to try to do something different.

However, several experiences teachers said they have indeed made changes as a result of the evaluations.

Claudia Collins, a part-time instructor in Sociology and documentary producer on KLVX-TV 10, said she tries to correct problems pointed out in evaluations. "One student said I went too fast, so I tried to slow down the next semester," she said.

Myrlene LaMancusa, associate professor of Nursing, said she has changed textbooks as a result of student reaction of evaluations. Like most faculty, LaMancusa said she doesn't alter her methods unless it is clear that changes must be

made. "I'm looking to see if I am teaching at a level that is compatible with my classes" when reading evaluations, she said.

Professors said they especially appreciate the written comments and expressed concern that the specific questions included on most college evaluations forms do not really measure good teaching. Several also objected to using the same questionnaire in all kinds of classes.

Music professor Douglas Peterson said he appreciated thoughtful comments, and noted that they were more likely to come from mature students. Younger students seem to be in a hurry to fill out the forms and leave class.

In the same vein, Senior Brian Correa, Hotel Administration/Finance, suggested that evaluations

are a waste of time given on the last day of class when everyone is in a hurry to leave and that perhaps they could be done at different times in the semester.

Some students clearly worry about repercussions from giving a teacher a bad evaluation.

"When you are in a small class, a teacher really knows you and how you think," Patrick Lawrence, a Criminal Justice major, said. "You can't tell me at the end of the semester a teacher doesn't know your handwriting."

Rick Rosenthal, a junior in Secondary Education, urged an evaluation administered by students, with the results compiled in a guide and distributed at the same time as course catalogs.

Rosenthal said he takes the evaluations seriously, but has mixed feelings about them.

"Good instructors receive good evaluations and take them seriously," he said, "where as the poor instructors receive poor evaluations and disregard the comments made by students."

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