

The power of a teacher evaluation Students should realize importance of evaluations; not underestimate participation



CAYLA CARR

from the evaluation form and illustrates the statistical summaries.

The information is available at the Measurement and Research Services Website (www.tamu.edu/marshome/ratings/results/index.htm), but results are limited because many professors do not request that the information be made available to students.

But, according to Martin, grades and ratings are released to the "Pick a Prof" Website, which is not affiliated with the University, but made available to A&M students.

This Website allows students to view evaluated grade distribution, student reviews and teacher ratings to help them

choose effective professors.

Students can base choices of courses, majors and professors on ratings made by other students.

Sadly, a small percentage of teachers agreed to have their evaluation results available to students.

This should not discourage students from adequately completing the forms, because the professor views results after the semester has ended.

Students should realize that their professors read their critiques and take into consideration the complaints, compliments and

suggestions made by their students.

Many times, teachers do not realize their weaknesses and strengths until they are pointed out. Professors are given the opportunity to improve their teaching skills and improve their course standards by reading and acknowledging students' opinions of the course and the professor's teaching ability.

The results are first sent to the department heads and then eventually professors have the option of viewing them.

Professors, toward the end of the semester, alter the syllabus to aid the overall class grade-point ratio.

Many times, participation and attendance will be worth a higher percentage of the grade.

Other times, low test or quiz scores are dropped or detailed exam reviews are given. These are all underlying effects of teacher evaluations and grade-point ratio standards.

Most professors' primary concern is students and their overall understanding of the lectured material.

Professors have different ways of achieving these goals.

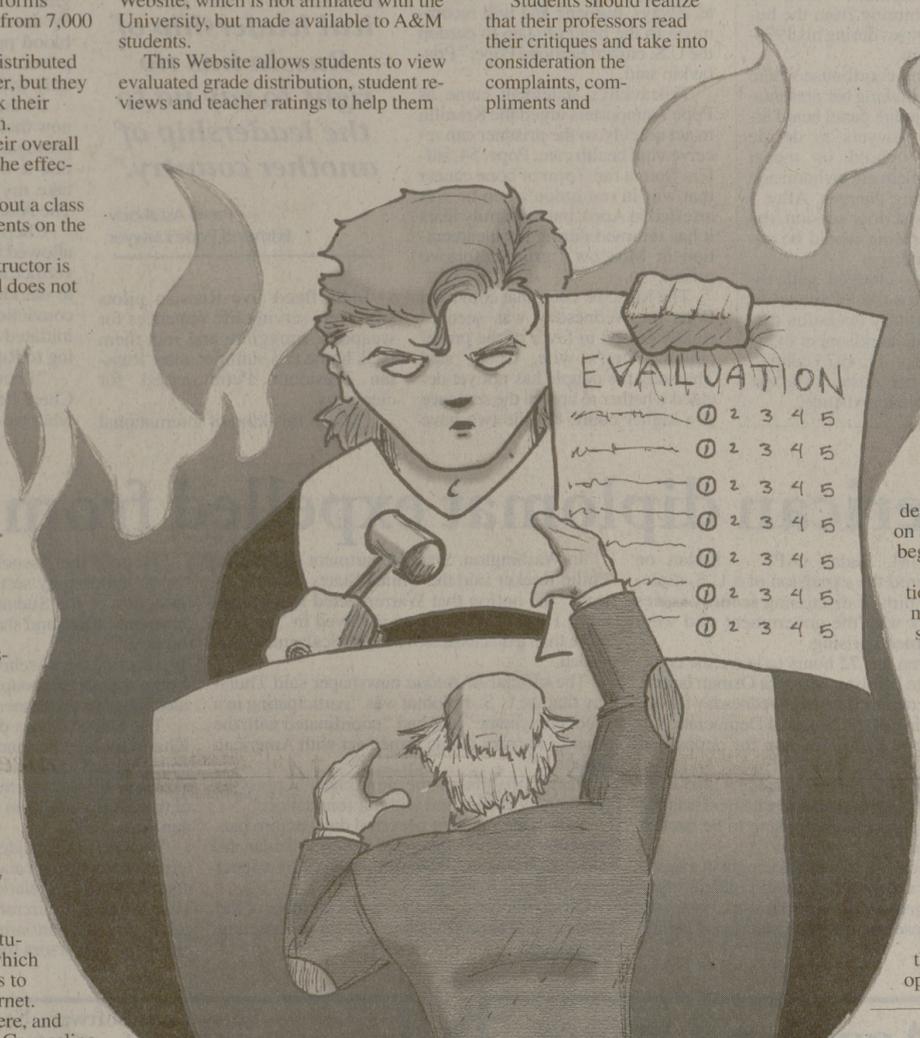
Whether professors seek student approval, they usually ease up on syllabus standards made at the beginning of the semester.

The power of the teacher evaluation is somewhat misleading. Its main objective is to give professors an idea of where they stand with the students.

But it also gives other students an idea about the course and grade distribution and simplifies syllabi standards.

The evaluation should not be taken for granted because it gives students a chance to express their feelings and concerns directly to the instructor. It is up to the instructor to take these ideas to heart.

This is the beauty of a democracy: Students and teachers are given an opportunity to voice their opinions and determine which opinions they choose to believe.



JOE PEDEN/THE BATTALION

Cayla Carr is a junior journalism major.

Just keep on driving Supreme Court correctly halts checkpoint searches



BRIANNE PORTER

In a landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on Nov. 29 that roadway checkpoints for drug searches are unconstitutional.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which brought the case before the Supreme Court, argued that Indianapolis citizens' Fourth Amendment rights were violated by the searches. The Fourth Amendment protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizures.

The arguments of the ACLU are valid and the Supreme Court made the correct ruling.

Out of 1,100 cars checked, more than 100 arrests were made.

Of those 100, only a little more than half were for drug-related offenses.

The roadblocks extended police searches to everyone, not just people under suspicion.

The lawyers for the city said the roadblocks were justified because they were set up in high-crime areas, but the Supreme Court did not agree.

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said, "The gravity of threat alone cannot determine whether the program was constitutional."

These roadblocks were not protecting the public from eminent danger such as drunk drivers.

They were specifically hunting for criminals, which is illegal.

The police assumed the motorists were guilty until proven innocent.

That assumption goes against everything the founding fathers designed the legal system to be.

By following that assumption, the police harassed innocent drivers.

The dissenting justices said these checkpoints are a valuable public safety device.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which brought the case before the Supreme Court, argued that Indianapolis citizens Fourth Amendment rights were violated by the searches ... the arguments of the ACLU are valid and the Supreme Court made the correct ruling.

Yet, they failed to see that the roadblocks were indistinguishable from normal crime control. That is what made the roadblocks unconstitutional.

By using the roadblocks as a crime-fighting tool, the police could construct these blocks to "prevent" any kind of crime.

Every semblance of privacy while driving would be nonexistent.

According to The Record, a Bergen County newspaper, these checkpoints make motorists "open to a criminal investigation that presumably would not have happened otherwise."

Totalitarian police tactics have no place in the American criminal justice system.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist supported the checkpoints because they also check for drunken driving and license violations.

But this line of thinking is wrong because every motorist is hassled, no matter who is under suspicion.

These checkpoints assume that motorists may be guilty simply because they are driving in a high-crime area.

But this logic is faulty. People cannot be assumed to have drugs in their vehicles simply because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Kenneth Falk, legal director of the ACLU affiliate that brought the case against Indianapolis, said, "The police cannot conduct a criminal investigation without cause."

These roadblocks constitute an investigation without cause.

"We are particularly reluctant to recognize exceptions to the general rule of individualized suspicion where governmental authorities primarily pursue their general crime control ends," said Justice O'Connor.

The Supreme Court's decision protected the constitutional rights of Americans. The roadblocks presumed that motorists were guilty until proven innocent.

While the checkpoints did serve some public good, they allowed police to invade the privacy of the public.

Brianne Porter is a sophomore chemical engineering major.

Battalion editor in chief reflects on semester, career at Texas A&M



BETH MILLER

As a graduating senior and outgoing editor in chief, I have ample opportunities to review my career at Texas A&M to reflect on the lessons I have learned.

Being editor in chief is the biggest paradox I have ever (and probably will ever) experienced. It is black and white, right and wrong, good and bad, but it is not nearly that clear cut.

Running a newspaper is a combination of business and journalism. Every day, it is managing a staff, thinking efficiently, choosing between censorship of offensive material and the First Amendment and making difficult ethical decisions. It is constant awareness of advertising accounts, administrators, student leaders, readers and the staff.

Working until 6 a.m. on a football special and again for the Bonfire Memorial Special, standing in the rain in Austin to cover an inconclusive election, and returning to campus twice in one night somehow pays off, though, when the paper hits the stands the next morning.

It was at one time said that The Battalion was good only for polishing the brass on Corps of Cadets uniforms and lining bird cages.

A&M students of the past have called Battalion staffers a heartless breed of non-human invaders who descended on campus to aggravate readers and destroy the structure of the University. This accusation could have been disproved easily: We invaders never would have chosen to run an anti-A&M campaign out of the basement of the Reed McDonald Building.

On a more serious note, I have received countless compliments this semester. Rumors are circulating, saying that professors actually are beginning to accept The Battalion as a credible source for presentations and reports. Apparently, The Battalion also is surfacing in staff meetings as more than just a coaster.

Mail Call

Leaving graduation ceremony early is disrespectful

One of the traditions Aggies hold especially dear is our graduation ceremony.

On these occasions, we celebrate as each graduate walks across the stage and is handed their actual diploma.

Unfortunately, this tradition is at risk.

In recent years there has been a disappointing exodus on the part of graduates and guests when they receive their diplomas.

These early departures are disrespectful to the other graduates, and they are embarrassing to those who remain for the entire ceremony.

I urge all of you who are receiving degrees this semester to plan to stay through the entire commencement ceremony.

We realize that the commencement events are long.

To make things easier this semester, we have added an additional ceremony.

This addition should reduce the time of each commencement considerably.

I hope this change will encourage you and your guests to stay through to the end.

At the end, when you all stand for the last time to sing, "The Spirit of Aggieland" as students, you will have been true to each other as Aggies can be.

Let us make our motto at commencement Aggies do not walk out on Aggies.

Dr. Ray M. Bowen
President, Texas A&M University
Class of '58

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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ART BY MIKE LUCKOVICH