Campus Wide Feedback System

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DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE

When the Student Course Evaluation Improvement Project passed through the University Senate in October 2019, the course evaluation questions were replaced in order to make the results of course evaluations more accurately represent the quality of the professor and the course as a whole. However, because course evaluations usually only occur once at the end of the semester, professors only get feedback about their teaching then, at the end of the semester. Students don't benefit from their feedback, and professors are given fewer opportunities for growth than they otherwise would if they had received student feedback earlier in the semester. Students could email feedback throughout the semester, but doing so a) is not anonymous, b) takes a lot of courage, c) is unusual/not normalized and d) there's a moderate likelihood the professor will ignore the student.

DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE

I'd like to see a new, campus wide feedback system for every class that would allow students to give anonymous feedback about each of their classes throughout the semester, so that professors can improve the course throughout the semester instead of waiting until the end of the semester. Providing such a feedback system would not only allow professors to get real time feedback on their course changes, but also it would lower the barrier between students and professors and normalize the feedback process.

The feedback would be anonymous the same way that course evaluations are anonymous; that is, anonymous unless someone delivers hate speech to the professor, at which point they would be reported to the appropriate authorities.

SUGGESTION FOR HOW YOUR PROPOSAL WOULD BE PUT INTO PRACTICE

The feedback system would ideally be a branch off of the course evaluation page. It would be linked on the side bar on ELMS as the course eval system is, for easy access. Students could submit personalized feedback about issues they see, and this would be delivered anonymously to professors.

It might be more productive for this to be on a more public forum setting. It's sometimes difficult for students to produce constructive feedback on their own, but seeing other feedback often helps students to understand and voice their own concerns. There could also be a thumbs-up button or something similar to indicate agreement of a particular point among students, so professors understand what students agree that needs work on and what might just be a one-off grievance. The professors should also have an opportunity to respond and engage with students about why they do things the way they do, and work to find teaching methods that works for both sides.

The professors and TA's would be responsible for monitoring the forum for their own classes, both so that they're seeing the feedback they're getting and so that hate speech or other inappropriate things

are either not posted or taken down quickly after they are posted. There should also be a report button that notifies TAs or professors so that they don't have to be on it 24/7 and can instead just log on when a post is reported. Students would log in through CAS or something else connected to their UMD account to get to this system though, so while feedback would be anonymous as long as they stayed respectful, students would be reported if need be.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students and professors would both be positively affected by this change. However, it would require extra work on the part of professors and TAs, and there would be financial implications in the form of creating the feedback system.

At least one professor, Justin Wyss-Gallifent, has taken to Reddit to get feedback about how to improve a course he's never taught in order to make it better for next semester when he will teach it. He has received a substantial number of responses from students about how the course could be improved and engaged in discussion about why things work the way they do and how he could work to change/fix some things. He has made two posts, which are linked here:

https://www.reddit.com/r/UMD/comments/k3xyr1/soabout_cmsc351what_can_i_do/
https://www.reddit.com/r/UMD/comments/khk039/cmsc351_looking_for_more_input/

If this kind of system was implemented on a university wide level, there would be a huge amount of communication between students and professors and I believe a lot of courses and professors would improve. I also believe students through this communication would gain a greater understanding of why certain things work the way they do and there would be fewer petty student grievances about professors.

I'm proposing this to the Senate because the Senate worked on the Student Course Evaluation Improvement Project; if it doesn't belong here, let me know and I'll can also try proposing this to the University IT Council.