

## Centralized Course Evaluation System

### **Background:**

Unlike other universities, Columbia University does not have a centralized course evaluation system across departments. On the other hand, Princeton uses a single standardized form<sup>1</sup>. This questionnaire was carefully crafted by the administration to ensure question clarity using student focus groups and surveys. Even SEAS, has a set of 6-8 questions across its departments which are uniform. Through meetings with members of the administration, it seems that the impetus is growing for Columbia to reconsider its current course evaluation model. As such, CCSC ought to assist in this process and ensure that student voices are heard.

### **Argument:**

Advising takes many forms. It ranges from the advice one receives from formal advisors to the information one has access to. This proposal deals with the latter by improving the quality of information gathered using course evaluations. A lack of uniformity in course evaluations makes it difficult to assess the strengths and weaknesses of students' educational experience because:

- A) There are no benchmark questions to compare and contrast all courses.
- B) Not all departments compile the data in a ready to use format.
- C) The quality and clarity of survey questions varies across departments.

The academic experience of our peers and constituents depends upon having an effective model to assess the Columbian academic experience. By working with the administration in this process, we will be moving towards higher quality instruction in our classrooms. Ultimately, once we have helped create a centralized course evaluation system, the door will be open to consider publishing some of that data from departments. As it stands, we cannot even have data published unless we are sure about the quality, clarity, and consistency of the data.

### **Proposal:**

In conjunction with the Office of the Vice President of the Arts & Sciences, CCSC will help create a better course evaluation system. Such help will include but is not limited to assisting with:

- A) The administration of surveys across the student body to find what sort of questions should be included in the final centralized course evaluation system.
- B) The creation of student focus groups to test the questions.

Any further measures that CCSC can take to ensure this process develops smoothly will be brought up and discussed with the council as the need arises.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Princeton's form, see the attached copy of their course evaluation.