

Ethical Dilemma: Power of the Professor?

Susan Jaymes is a professor at a mid-sized regional university. Dr. Jaymes has always been popular with the students, who frequently cite her enthusiastic style, hands-on approach, and excellent knowledge base as reasons for taking her class. Her popularity is

even further boosted by teaching evaluation scores, which are gathered by the student council and published at the start of each semester. These same scores are also factored into all professors' yearly performance appraisals, and as appropriate, merit increases.

Lately, merit increases have become smaller, and the bar that seems to matter most in determining raises has become higher. In response to this, Dr. Jaymes has taken steps to *ensure* that her teaching evaluations are as high as possible. First, knowing that only the most serious students will attend, she hands out the evaluation during an optional exam review session. Second, she brings snacks and drinks to the session (something she never does during normally scheduled class sessions). Finally, after handing out the forms and before leaving the classroom, she reminds the students "how much your input counts on my remaining employed with the university and how important getting a raise—albeit tiny—is for me to be able to pay my huge monthly student loan payments, considering how little faculty here are paid."

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how Dr. Jaymes is using persuasion to facilitate her goal. What methods or theories are being used?
2. Do you think these methods will be effective? Why or why not?
3. Do you think Dr. Jaymes' approach is ethical? Explain.
4. If you were her boss, in other words, the department chair, and you found out what she was doing, what, if anything would you do and why?
5. If you were a student thinking of taking Dr. Jaymes' class and a former student of hers told you about her practices, in what way would this information affect your decision?