Summary of “Evaluation of a Web Site: RateMyProfessors.com”

Kevin Murphy argues that RateMyProfessor.com does not provide students with sufficient reliable information to help them choose professors wisely. One problem has to do with the writing of the reviews: Because reviews are posted anonymously, the user cannot know whether a particular review represents the typical student’s experience, or even whether it was really written by a student in that course. Quality control is another issue: The site provides guidelines but does not enforce them. As a commercial site, it is focused on attracting viewers for advertisers and could select or alter material for that purpose. Finally, Murphy points out that professors are rated on qualities that are not relevant to how much or how well students learn in the course. He acknowledges that a student who sifts through the comments carefully could gain some useful information, but counters that its weaknesses make its value very limited. He concludes by suggesting that a student would do better to just talk with other students on their campus.