UGA Teacher Scouting Tool –

Application to help UGA Students choose courses

Intro:

When UGA students build their schedules each new semester, it is often a process of extensively switching between official University pages between like UGA bulletin, Athena, and Degree Works, and teacher ratings websites like Koofers.com and RateMyProfessor.com. Though the process of registration will likely always include a lot of switching between webpages and doing research to find what works best for the student, we aim to provide an application that streamlines some of the registration process. Teacher quality and course difficulty will always be a concern among students, particularly students looking to fill an elective slot with an easy class or students trying to avoid or seek out particular instructors. The final version of our Teacher Scouting Application would make deciding on electives and other courses easy. Just choosing the desired courses will allow you to view all associated teachers for each course in one convenient location without having to cross-reference teacher ratings websites.

Original Contributions:

As mentioned in the intro, this application highlights a need among current and future UGA students. Younger students may be undecided in their major or considering switching majors, and when the time comes to register for classes, they must conduct a lot of research in order to make informed decisions on which classes to take. The UGA Teacher Scouting Tool would not eliminate the need to research which classes to take, but would be able to stop students short of signing up for a teacher with high difficultly and low ratings. Or on the other hand, it may provide them with the incentive to sign up for a certain class that they now know will have an attractive or easy teacher. Different students have different preferences for classes, and our tool puts the power of weighing teacher options in the hands of the student all on one page. No longer will UGA students need to deal with the exhaustive process of opening 15 or 20 tabs and flipping back and forth between them to weigh their different class and teacher options.

Broader Impact:

With our application freely available to UGA students and hosted on a public webpage, we could change the way that the average UGA student researches teachers online. The primary appeal of our application is that all of the insight that sites like RateMyProfessor and Koofers give could be consolidated onto one webpage for all courses you’re interested in, where you can compare all reviewed UGA teachers for each course you enter(up to 10?). However, it is worth mentioning that our application will have the same drawbacks as these websites, with information only on teachers who have previously taught each course, which is to be expected. If popularized by UGA students as a more reliable and streamlined tool for exploring potential teachers, the UGA Teacher Scouting Tool could become the new standard in Athens.

System Architecture:

The external data sources used in this application will be the databases from RateMyProfessor.com, Koofers.com, and Bulletin.uga.edu. The front end will be built using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript with 10 inputs for UGA courses in appropriate format. When a recognized course is entered, our application will access the appropriate databases and generate the teacher ratings from RateMyProfessor or Koofers in a uniform format.

Technical Details:

Our application will need to access teacher data for UGA courses through the RateMyProfessor or Koofers API. Our PHP code will work with SQL to make queries from the databases on these websites for the courses requested by the user. For data we may acquire from Athena, Degree Works, or UGA Bulletin, it will be necessary for us to use web-scraping, a fairly easy process. The web-page will be publicly hosted on a TBD website, and the front end will be built using HTML, styled using CSS, with event handling taken care of by the JavaScript component. Not sure if we will need to populate our own database with teacher ratings or if we can sufficiently achieve what we are trying to accomplish by accessing RateMyProfessor or Koofers databases per user request.

Related Work:

The essential components of our project are as follows:

* HTML file structuring text boxes and related fields
* CSS file styling the HTML webpage
* JavaScript file that handles user input and submits
* PHP back-end that accesses teacher data as needed
* Finding a free host webpage

Planned Time-Line:

Time-Line Goals are as follows:

September: Ensure that we can access the relevant databases and acquire the teacher/course content from those databases.

Mid-October: Built the HTML/CSS front end, not necessarily perfect autofill functionality for courses.

October: Have text boxes drop down with UGA courses and autofill correctly. Don’t allow duplicates. Exception handling of input.

Mid-November: Full functionality for extraction of appropriate teacher information for input courses from either Koofers or RateMyProfessor.

November: Works with information from both websites if possible. This would require two ratings for duplicate teachers or some kind of decision-making process for combining or choosing ratings from both websites.

Team Members and Responsibilities (Tentative – Could change to match the needs of the team):

**Cody**: Keep the team working along the planned time-line, scheduling meet ups, and assist other team members when they confront hurdles in the development process. Possibly SQL queries.

**Allison**: HTML/CSS front-end development, find potential free website for public hosting

**Robert**: JavaScript event handling, autofill courses from database

**Matthew**: Look into accessing the RateMyProfessor/Koofers API so that we can pull down teacher data for server-side development in PHP.

Conclusion:

This application should be fairly straightforward to implement, using freely available databases, but consolidating their content in a way that is easier for the average user to take advantage of. New and returning UGA students will all be able to benefit from our application, perhaps giving students information they would have been unlikely to find themselves. At the very least, the process of comparing teachers and classes during registration will be streamlined and require fewer tabs. If students popularize the UGA Teacher Scouting Tool, we may be helping people decide which teacher/course combination works best for them for years to come.