

## Preamble

The Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) is bringing a *Sense of the Faculty* Resolution before the Faculty. Unlike our typical faculty resolutions, a *Sense of the Faculty* Resolution is an informal, non-binding statement that may be articulated when the Faculty wishes to express their sentiment or opinion on an issue. In this case, the vote provides feedback to the Administration early in the decision-making process and summarizes the collective voice of the Faculty around an issue. CEPP presents the following Sense of the Faculty Resolution regarding the transition from paper to online delivery of All-College Student Evaluations:

## RESOLUTION:

Whereas, the Skidmore Faculty affirm our commitment to uniform evaluation<sup>1</sup> of faculty teaching that is fair and honest<sup>2</sup>, and protects confidentiality<sup>3</sup>, thus furthering the mission of the College by promoting the transformative power of liberal learning;

In light of CEPP's duly considered recommendation<sup>4,5</sup> regarding the need to change the delivery mode for All-College Student Evaluations forms (currently the qSETs),

Be it resolved that the Sense of the Faculty is to support the shift from paper to online delivery of the All-College Student Evaluation forms by the Dean of the Faculty and Institutional Research, beginning with the 2026-27 academic year.

## Rationale

During the 2024-25 academic year, CEPP was provided with strong evidence that our current system for gathering All-College Student Evaluations is unsustainable<sup>4,5</sup>. Our longstanding paper-based system for tabulating and evaluating quantitative results is now dependent on a single vendor (Scantron), leaving us vulnerable to any further unilateral changes the vendor decides to make, and to any decision on their part to end the service or raise the price. Many of you may recall that such an event occurred in 2023, when Scantron's move to the cloud resulted in changes to our qSET reports, with some comparisons becoming unavailable. Even more concerning, CEPP has found that Skidmore is the only school still entirely dependent on legacy paper course evaluations out of 72 colleges and universities surveyed<sup>4</sup>. Thus, we are no longer in control of our course evaluation delivery system, with potential ramifications of cost, content, and customization.

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty Handbook (25-26), Part Three III G.1.a

<sup>2</sup> Faculty Handbook (25-26), Part One VIII A.4 & Faculty Handbook (25-26), Part Three III G.1.e

<sup>3</sup> Faculty Handbook (25-26), Part Three III G.1.a, Part Three III G.2

<sup>4</sup> CEPP Report "Transitioning to Online Ratings at Skidmore College", May 21, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> CEPP Annual Report 2024-25 <https://www.skidmore.edu/cepp/documents/annual-reports/CEPP-Annual-Report-24-25.pdf>

### Why now?

In order to adequately prepare the databases required to administer an online Student Evaluation system in time for Fall 2026, Institutional Research will need to work with IT, the Registrar, and the new vendor. Ideally, Institutional Research will run a pilot using the new online system in the coming months. All of these steps and checks take time. By approving this Sense of the Faculty, we will provide DoF/VPAA and IR with the runway they need to prepare to roll out the new system in the Fall.

### What are the expected impacts?

The move to online ratings brings some important benefits and may involve some disadvantages. The reliance on paper qSETs has left us with a cumbersome, time-consuming system. As CEPP noted in last year's annual report, "printing, transporting, hand-checking and distributing each of the thousands of forms is time-consuming and physically demanding." It is prone to scanning errors from improper student completion of forms. An online form would largely eliminate these problems. By eliminating the process of scanning, re-scanning, and checking all of the paper forms, we anticipate another advantage: receiving the results sooner. An online system will improve accessibility for students with disabilities. Students will be reminded to fill out forms by their instructors, and by the College – likely through a portal on theSpring (details will be forthcoming next semester, but courses would not need to use theSpring to access the portal).

Online rating systems often realize lower response rates, and CEPP expects that ours may drop slightly. Our student evaluation response rates are currently about 90%, and our peer institutions in NY6 are lower, about 71%. However, at the few schools where online evaluations are done in-class using a similar mode to Skidmore's paper-based method, the response rates are equivalent to ours, in the low 90s%. This suggests that we too can maintain a high response rate using online student ratings tools. On the other hand, students who are absent on the day when evaluations are done in-class would now be able to participate in the online ratings system. CEPP has considered various carrot and stick methods, and we feel that our culture surrounding student ratings is a major factor in our high participation rate.

In consultation with the DOF, CEPP recognizes that Faculty Handbook language would need corresponding modifications reflecting any change in delivery method. As we move forward, CEPP will draft a motion (in consultation with ATC, PC, NTT Faculty Union Stewards, CAFRA, and other stakeholders) to propose appropriate Faculty Handbook language for consideration prior to implementation of an online rating system.

### What is not changing?

CEPP is not moving to change anything else about the All-College evaluation system at this time – the online evaluations will continue to be administered in-class as we do now, and a preamble script will still be provided. Our current practice will continue, where faculty may not remain in

the room while they are being evaluated. Departments and Programs will still deliver and collect their “longform” questionnaires as before.

There will be no changes to qSET questions or content. CEPP also expects little change to the qSET comparative data that we are familiar with, although we can anticipate some minor changes in the appearance of some report graphics. Once we learn more about what those will look like CEPP in conjunction with DOF will provide information in advance. In terms of overall annual cost, the online system would be similar to the current system and is likely to save a modest amount annually (on the order of a couple thousand dollars).

It is important to note that the move to online administration of All-College Student Evaluations is decoupled from the mode of delivery for departmental “long-forms”. Here, we are considering only the need to shift away from legacy paper qSETs to delivery of the qSETs online. Regarding the “long-forms,” CEPP is planning to host community discussions and involvement in the Spring semester, where faculty will be invited to consider whether some qualitative questions should be included in the online All-College form.