CEPP Call for Faculty Endorsement of Goal to Standardize Qualitative Student Feedback Instrument

6 November 2026

CEPP intends to call for a Sense of the Faculty in the December 11, 2026 faculty meeting, asking the faculty to endorse our goal of completing Skidmore's move to online student course ratings by establishing a standardized, all-College set of qualitative questions to replace our current paper-based departmental longforms. CEPP has already conferred with key stakeholders on this plan, and is grateful that ATC, PC, and NTT union leadership have all endorsed in principle the idea of standardizing qualitative questions to facilitate the move to an all-online ratings instrument.

As a non-binding motion that simply expresses faculty sentiment, this motion will be introduced and voted on in the same December 11 meeting. CEPP would like to reacquaint faculty with the basic issues at stake now, so faculty have the opportunity to read, deliberate, and prepare for a robust discussion of CEPP's upcoming Sense of the Faculty motion.

In AY2026–2027 we have a hybrid system of student ratings. Quantitative all-College ratings will be completed using the new SmartEvals online ratings system. Qualitative departmental longforms will be completed via the traditional paper method. This hybrid system is, to put it mildly, not ideal. CEPP seeks your endorsement to move forward with the goal of completing our transition to all-online student ratings. Since it is not feasible for IR to maintain over forty separate feedback instruments in the new SmartEvals system, CEPP believes the most reasonable

course of action for conducting qualitative feedback is to create a single, standardized set of qualitative questions. This has several potential benefits, including:

1. Reducing the complexity of administrative workflows around departmental longforms.
2. Standardized qualitative ratings questions can be developed using best practices, with low-inference questions that are far less likely to elicit biased responses. This would be a marked improvement over the status quo. Our departmental longforms contain at present far too many high-inference questions that are likely to elicit biased responses.
3. Currently ATC and PC navigate dozens of different departmental longforms in their evaluation of candidates. Moving to a standard set of questions will facilitate more consistent interpretation of files across disciplines.
4. Moving online will also make the work of ATC and PC more efficient, as members will no longer be tasked with the burden of reading hundreds of pages of handwritten (and sometimes barely legible) student comments in order to evaluate a candidate's file. C/PDs will also find this newfound legibility beneficial when it comes time to review the ratings of faculty in their departments and programs.
5. Standardization of feedback and evaluative mechanisms is in keeping with the recent Middle States recommendation that Skidmore should strive to standardize processes for reappointment, tenure, and promotion across the College.

CEPP invites all faculty members, in advance of the December motion, to read the following documents carefully:

1. The CEPP announcement from May 2025, in which CEPP made clear its intent to move the entirety of student ratings online. Note in particular CEPP's stated intention that the move

online would ideally be “all or none,” and note also CEPP’s advance warning that moving online would entail significant rethinking of the current approach to departmental longforms.

2. The 2024 whitepaper from the Working Group on Inclusive and Accessible Teaching and Learning entitled “A Study of Skidmore’s Current Systems, Practices and Instruments for the Evaluation of Teaching.” Please read the Executive Summary, pp. 3–6, and interested faculty are invited to dive deeper into this important report. The Working Group concluded that “Department longforms are not well aligned with the current criteria. Their questions are inconsistent across departments, and only 10% of them use low-inference questions, meaning that the majority are highly likely to introduce bias through medium- and high-inference questions.”

In anticipation of this moment, CEPP joined with the WGIATL to conduct a Committee of the Whole in Spring 2026 to solicit faculty ideas for useful qualitative questions. If the faculty endorse CEPP’s proposed direction to standardize qualitative feedback, we will continue this effort by spending Spring 2027 working with Skidmore faculty to workshop and refine a single, standardized set of low-inference questions that can best facilitate our evaluative moments. The work will, ideally, culminate in a successful faculty vote on the new qualitative instrument, along with relevant Faculty Handbook changes to facilitate implementation.

CEPP thanks you in advance for your time and energy. These are important matters for all faculty, and we hope by investing time to read and reflect now, we can have a productive deliberation in the December meeting, after which CEPP will have clarity on the will of the faculty and confidence to proceed with the work in Spring 2027.