Faculty Senate Routing Form
(action/proposal attached)

I. Item Title: __Adopting Proposed Student Course Survey__

  a) Brief Description: As prior and current Senate and Task Force groups have recommended reviewing and replacing the current "Student Assessment of Instruction" survey, the Faculty Senate is adopting the "Student Course Survey" recommended by the Student Questionnaire Task Force starting Fall semester 2022.

  b) Initiated by: __Faculty Affairs Council__

II. Faculty Senate Action: ☒ approved ☐ not approved ☐ other date: ___03/23/2022___

  Comments: Discussion and debate was followed by a voice vote to approve the resolution.

  Vote: ☐ Voice Vote, Unanimous ☒ Voice Vote, Majority In Favor
         ☐ Electronic Clicker: Ayes   Nays   Abstentions

  FS Secretary signature: _Erin K. McNelis_ date _03/24/2022_

III. Provost: ☐ for information ☒ Recognition of Receipt
               ☒ for action.....................☐ approved   ☐ not approved

  Comments: _____

  Person responsible for Implementation: __Dr. 3 chureds__

  Provost signature: _____ date _24 Mar 30_

IV. Chancellor: ☐ for information ☒ Recognition of Receipt
                 ☐ for action............☐ approved   ☐ not approved

  Comments: _____

  Chancellor signature _Kelli R Brown_   date _3/24/2022_

Once finalized copies will be returned to the Provost Office's representative who will scan and distribute electronically to:
    Chancellor
    Provost
    Chair of Faculty Senate
    Secretary of the Faculty Senate
    Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (for catalog and handbook)
    Associate Dean of Graduate School (for catalog)
    Others (i.e. person responsible for implementation)

Resolution: Adoption of replacement for "SAI" survey

Whereas, prior Senate and Task Force groups have recommended reviewing and replacing the current "Student Assessment of Instruction" survey;

Whereas, the 2021-22 Student Questionnaire Task Force also recommends replacing this survey in their March 2022 report to Senate;

Be it resolved that the Faculty Senate adopt the "Student Course Survey" recommended by the Student Questionnaire Task Force starting Fall semester 2022.

PROPOSED WCU STUDENT COURSE SURVEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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WCU STUDENT COURSE SURVEY (proposed)

To be seen by students:

	Questions	SA	A	D	SD		
1.	In this course, the subject matter was explained clearly.						
2.	The organization of this course (e.g., due dates, required assignments, resources) was communicated clearly.						
3.	Clear guidelines were provided for the work required in this course.						
4.	Grades and/or other feedback enabled me to know how I was doing throughout this course.						
5.	Students were encouraged to use available resources (e.g., textbooks, readings, websites, library materials, tutoring, or office hours) to improve their understanding of course content.						
6.	The instructor was available during office hours or via email.						
7.	The instructor encouraged participation and/or students' questions.						
8.	The instructor treated me with respect.						
9.	The subject matter was presented in an interesting and engaging way.						
10.	Overall, I was satisfied with this course.						
	On the next two items, compare this course with others you have taken at this institution.	Much less than most	Less than most	About average	More than most	Much more than most	N/A or cannot answer
11.	Amount of coursework						
12.	Difficulty of subject matter						
13.	What grade do you expect to receive in this course?						

	Open-ended questions:	
14.	Describe the most important aspects of this course that fostered your learning.	
15.	Describe changes that could be made to this course to foster learning.	

WCU STUDENT COURSE SURVEY (proposed)

With sub-scales and annotation for faculty and administrators:

	Questions	SA	A	D	SD
	Organization and Clarity:				
1.	In this course, the subject matter was explained clearly.				
2.	The organization of this course (e.g., due dates, required assignments, resources) was communicated clearly.				
3.	Clear guidelines were provided for the work required in this course.				
4.	Grades and/or other feedback enabled me to know how I was doing throughout this course.				
5.	Students were encouraged to use available resources (e.g., textbooks, readings, websites, library materials, tutoring, or office hours) to improve their understanding of course content.				
	Course Environment and Rapport				
6.	The instructor was available during office hours or via email.				
7.	The instructor encouraged participation and/or students' questions.				
8.	The instructor treated me with respect.				
9.	The subject matter was presented in an interesting and engaging way.				
	Overall Satisfaction				
10.	Overall, I was satisfied with this course.				
14.	**Open-ended questions:** Describe the most important aspects of this course that fostered your learning.				
15.	Describe changes that could be made to this course to foster learning.				

	Course Workload and Difficulty **(The following questions are for context only, and are not for inclusion in the assessment.)**						
	On the next two items, compare this course with others you have taken at this institution.	Much less than most	Less than most	About average	More than most	Much more than most	N/A or cannot answer
11.	Amount of coursework						
12.	Difficulty of subject matter						
13.	What grade do you expect to receive in this course?						

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED SURVEY

Overall

- Student evaluations for each course and each semester are required by UNC policy (https://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/policy/doc.php?id=182); each campus chooses how and when.
- This task force has endeavored to rely on work by prior groups at WCU conducted in the last few years, published literature, existing student survey instruments, and our own expertise to develop an instrument that is as sensible and short as possible.
- However, in light of the extensive literature highlighting the flaws of student survey instruments (discussed below), we expect the proposed instrument to exhibit some of the same flaws as existing instruments. Further, although we believe the proposed instrument is an improvement over our current instrument, it is possible that the proposed instrument will not be a more valid* assessment of teaching effectiveness as compared to our current instrument, or any other instrument. (*validity: the extent to which an instrument actually measures what it claims to measure and predicts things that it should predict)
- In the meantime, student evaluation data should be reported, interpreted, and used appropriately (more guidance forthcoming). Better strategies for assessing teaching (e.g., independent expert review, e.g., by Coulter Faculty Commons) should be funded, developed, and relied upon more than a single end- semester survey.
- **The immediate need is to finalize a new instrument, recognizing that it will inevitably be imperfect.**

Major points from relevant literature

• Many experts agree that students *cannot* accurately report on teaching quality or how or much they've learned due to lack of experience, expertise, or metacognitive abilities.

- Student evaluations generally assess student satisfaction/enjoyment, not instructor effectiveness (e.g., Freishtat, 2016; Stark, 2016; Stroebe, 2020)

- Using student evaluations for hiring and promotion may encourage poor teaching and grade inflation (Stroebe, 2020).

- Higher student evaluations are unrelated to, inversely related to, or only weakly positively related to, actual student learning (e.g., Uttl et al., 2017)

- Student evaluations are negatively influenced by factors outside of instructor control (race, gender, course type, course difficulty, etc.; Boring and Ottoboni, 2016; Freishtat, 2016; Kreitzer and Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Stark, 2016; Stroebe, 2020)

• Existing instruments that are available for use

- are too long and time consuming

- ask questions about things that students cannot plausibly report on, and/or o lack evidence for being valid measures of teaching effectiveness
  - are too long and time consuming
  - ask questions about things that students cannot plausibly report on, and/or

- lack evidence for being valid measures of teaching effectiveness

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- **What students *can* plausibly report on (list not intended to be comprehensive; drawn from references above)**
  - Satisfaction with course
  - Enjoyment of course
  - Whether the course/assignments/instructor was engaging o Instructor's clarity in communication
  - Whether feedback was timely
  - Whether the organization of the course was clear (e.g., due dates, finding relevant information e.g., readings)
  - Comfort with asking questions or for assistance
  - Whether instructor encourages discussion
  - Whether they would recommend course to others o Increase in interest in topic after taking the course

- **What students are *less (or not at all)* able to report on:**

  - Teaching quality or effectiveness
  - Curriculum design, course organization, appropriateness of assignments or assessments
  - Instructor's knowledge
  - If course content is up to date
  - How much students have learned, what they have learned, or how they learned

Rationale for the Proposed Survey

- **The proposed survey seeks to:**

  - Adhere to UNC policy (see above)
  - Address things that students can plausibly report on (see above)
  - Focus on concrete aspects of course whenever possible
  - Be relevant to all WCU courses, regardless of modality
  - Address issues identified by prior work by Faculty Senate as much as possible
  - Provide useful feedback to instructor
  - Minimize overall length in order to maximize completion rates (current "SAI" instrument has 20 items)
  - Have 2 or more items per subscale (question set) to maximize validity/reliability wherever possible.
  - Have two open-ended questions (same as existing instrument)

- **Any new survey will *not* ...**

  - ... address the possible need for university-wide formative mid-semester feedback, per the 2018-19 SAI Task Force's report, 2019-20 student input, and common best practices in education
  - ... be a solution to the larger problem of WCU's (and some of our departments', and higher education's overall) overreliance on the fundamentally flawed premise that

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students are qualified or have the metacognitive abilities to evaluate teaching or learning without bias,
- ... be free from bias. Despite ample evidence of bias in student evaluations, the task force is not aware of any reasonable evidence in the literature that this can be eliminated or meaningfully reduced.
- ... have stronger validity as a measure of teaching quality than any other student evaluation instrument.

Summary

The Task Force has focused on an end-of-semester survey instrument on student perceptions of teaching effectiveness, not on student perceptions of their learning or learning processes, and importantly, one that can plausibly be used by all courses at WCU. The instrument has been kept short, with 3 subscales. The questions have focused on what students can plausibly report on. The instrument should be named the "Student Course Survey", since that is accurate, while also minimizing the likelihood of misinterpretation (such as, student evaluation or student assessment...). The Task force recommends that mid-semester feedback be gathered to include students' learning processes, by using different methods that the semester-end survey.

References

Boring, A., & Ottoboni, K. (2016). Student evaluations of teaching (mostly) do not measure teaching effectiveness. *ScienceOpen Research*.

Feldman, K. A. (2007). Identifying exemplary teachers and teaching: Evidence from student ratings. In The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: An evidence-based perspective (pp. 93-143). Springer, Dordrecht.

Freishtat, R. L. (2016). *Expert report on student evaluations of teaching (SET); Prepared for Ryerson Faculty Association ("RFA") and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations ("OCUF A").*

Kreitzer, R. J., & Sweet-Cushman, J. (2021). Evaluating student evaluations of teaching: A review of measurement and equity bias in SETs and recommendations for ethical reform. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 1–12.

Stark, P. B. (2016). *Expert Report on Student Evaluations of Teaching (Faculty Course Surveys) Prepared for The Ryerson Faculty Association and.*

Stroebe, W. (2020). Student evaluations of teaching encourages poor teaching and contributes to grade inflation: A theoretical and empirical analysis. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *42*(4), 276– 294.

Uttl, B., White, C. A., & Gonzalez, D. W. (2017). Meta-analysis of faculty's teaching effectiveness: Student evaluation of teaching ratings and student learning are not related. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 54, 22-42.*

TASK FORCE RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK

Title: "Student Satisfaction Survey"

Feedback: The name of the survey needs to be changed.

Task Force Response: We agree! The name has been changed to "Student Course Survey" (SCS).

Organization and Clarity

1. In this course, the subject matter was explained clearly.

Feedback: Some courses, based on content and external required assessment/assignments for certification, have far more complex concepts and criteria that are not within the instructor's control, while other in other classes instructors have total control over the content and related requirements. The courses that contain these external requirements are often very specific and complex, and therefore difficult by nature to make clear, whereas other classes have concepts and content that is very easy to make clear. After years of teaching specific courses within my program, this question is always a lower average for the courses with complex and external requirements. I am wondering if there is a way to word it to where the instructor "worked to explain subject matter clearly"

Task Force Response: Asking students to accurately perceive and report on instructor's motivations or attempts is problematic. Additionally, wherever possible, we have aimed to keep survey items focused on the course, not the instructor.

3. Clear guidelines were provided for the work required in this course.

Feedback: Students all have a different idea of how many guidelines should be provided. For example, one student was very upset at another professor for not providing the required number of sentences necessary in a reflection assignment and another student was trying to help her understand it was not about sentence quantity. This is a common difficulty in expectations for guiding information.

Task Force Response: We agree that student's standards and expectations will vary greatly. We assume this will be an issue for all survey items. However, we also assume that it is an important aspect of course management to clearly state guidelines and expectations.

4. Grades and/or other feedback enabled me to know how I was doing throughout this course.

Feedback:
- Feedback should be the focus rather than the # grade.
- Specify "feedback", i.e., is this getting an auto-graded quiz posted in Canvas? Standing in course?
- Heavily susceptible to what students choose to access or process.
- Grading/feedback on 100 essay drafts or by TAs on labs very different.

Taskforce Response: We agree that students should focus on substantive feedback rather than only grades. However, what type or amount of feedback is reasonable for a course varies across different course types,

formats, sizes, and instructor design. We believe that the current phrasing is inclusive of the greatest number of course types, formats and sizes.

5. Students were encouraged to use available resources (e.g., textbooks, readings, websites, library materials, tutoring, or office hours) to improve their understanding of course content.

Feedback #1: This asks if "student were encouraged to use available resources to improve understanding." Does this mean resources outside of what was assigned for students to use?

Taskforce Response: We believe that students should be encouraged to use any or all resources available to them, which likely includes one or more of the items in the parentheses, such as a textbook or readings or tutoring. We have added "office hours" as a resource as well.

Feedback #2: Alternative to the above was "The way this class was taught was stimulating." This suggests that it is the faculty's job to keep our students awake. How about "I care about the course material more than I did"?

Taskforce Response: We had considered this sort of item, but decided it was problematic because their response would be influenced by their prior interest. Consider that many students take a course because they care about the topic, and their degree of care is maintained throughout the course due to excellent instruction.

Course Environment and Rapport

8. The instructor treated me with respect.

Feedback #1: Consider focusing on a "positive" or "safe" learning environment/classroom environment. From SITL department meeting on Mar. 4 – really want to change #8 *specifying this because of their background and the timing of the input*
- No clear answer to fixing this part, but mainly taking "respect" out
  - "respect" is ill defined culturally; replace with behaviors that indicate what is meant with this question
  - Students may have baggage from high school or earlier with this type of classroom "rule"
  - "Respect/Disrespect" is the kind of child behavior descriptor that leads K-12 teachers to complete office referrals in disproportionate and biased ways. It's ill-defined. Like "insubordination" often is. Tends to be biased because if the course is more challenging and/or the topics are more confronting, the discomfort or pre-conceived ideas being questioned can be processed as not feeling respected
- Certain professors personalities will by default generate higher or lower scores on this type of question; how can departments and peer review committees factor this in that isn't also subjective
- Suggestions
  - maintained mutual respect? but then, how would students interpret their own behavior
  - I felt heard
  - The Instructor created opportunities through class session and/or assignments to get to know me, my experiences, and my interests.
  - The Instructor put practices in place to help create a safe space for learning.
  - The Instructor provided opportunities for me to think critically/analytically, express myself, be heard, and hear others.

<u>Taskforce Response</u>: We agree that "respect" is ill-defined culturally and is likely to be biased (and ample evidence indicates student evals as a whole are likely to be). However, terms like "safe space," "positive," "mutual respect," and "feeling heard" would have the same problems. Moreover, building on the concern about bias against challenging or confronting topics, we are concerned that incorporating "safe space" would exacerbate such bias (though we agree that there may be certain college settings or groups where the "safe space" concept could be valuable). Safe from what? Safe from having one's pre-existing beliefs, assumptions, or ideologies challenged? College students should be prepared to confront challenging and controversial concepts and information, and they need to be prepared for those situations to make them feel uncomfortable. Learning difficult concepts and processing information or ideas that conflict with pre-existing beliefs often entails discomfort, sometimes even anger or offense. There are bodies of research that investigate the roles of discomfort and dissonance in learning and attitude change. At the college level, students need to be prepared for such discomfort. At the least, the notion that college classrooms should be safe spaces is controversial and politically fraught (google "safe spaces college academic freedom" for numerous examples).

      Re: "opportunities or assignments to "get to know me, my experiences, and my interests": while we agree that this could be valuable for certain types of courses, it is not clear to us that this should be relevant to all courses, especially considering variability in class sizes and instructors' learning goals. Additionally, the goal of learning about individual students experiences and interests might cut into instructors' ability to cover course content or have assignments covering course content.

      Re: "provided opportunities for me to think critically/analytically, express myself, be heard, and hear others." As per the summary of research on SAIs that has been prepared by the taskforce, this is asking students to report on course design and what or how they learned. These are things that experts in the student course evaluation field seem to agree that students are not able to accurately report on (e.g., do students, especially freshmen, even know what "thinking critically/analytically" means?). Additionally, this would be a quadruple-barreled question.

<u>Feedback #2</u>: Suggest rephrasing the question such that there is mutuality of respect (i.e., "There was mutual respect between the instructor and me" or "There was mutual respect between the instructor and students."

<u>Taskforce Response</u>: In addition our comments above, asking students to report on "mutuality of respect" is asking students, in part, whether they respect the instructor. This is likely to be biased, for a host of reasons. It is also asking students to report their perceptions of other people's perceptions, which we view as problematic.

Overall Satisfaction

10. Overall, I was satisfied with this course.

<u>Feedback #1</u>: How about "this course was a valuable learning experience"?

<u>Taskforce Response</u>: As discussed in the taskforce report on research on student course evaluations, student evaluation experts agree that most students have limited, or no, capacity to report on what or how they learned. Consider the students who are likely to not realize how much they learned in a course until much time has passed.

Feedback #2:
• Satisfied and satisfaction seem subjective.
• This question could be interpreted by students in multiple ways. One of which would be to equate satisfaction with the grade. If this is the interpretation, then how is it useful for evaluating instruction?

Taskforce Response: As discussed in the taskforce report on research on student course evaluations, student evaluation experts agree that student evaluations are little other than reports of satisfaction. Thus, if someone were to conduct a factor analysis of the proposed survey items, we predict that "I was satisfied with this course" would account for the greatest amount of variance across all items. Thus, it is likely that "I was satisfied with this course" is the item in the entire survey that is most valid—and face valid (face validity: the degree to which a self-report survey [or item] measures what it claims to, "on its face").

Feedback #3: Suggest replacing "was satisfied with" with "enjoyed" or "was challenged in".

Taskforce Response: In addition to our responses above, it is possible that some students might be satisfied with a course (e.g., they learned a lot) but did not find it enjoyable, because it was challenging. Alternatively, they might have learned a lot, but they did not find it challenging because they were well-prepared or highly organized. Additionally, courses might be challenging because of poor instruction or course organization.

Course Workload and Difficulty

11. Amount of coursework
    Much less than most courses
    Less than most courses
    About average
    More than most courses
    Much more than most courses
    Not applicable/ Cannot answer

Feedback #1: Students should be prompted to compare to similar courses and certainly those of similar format. I teach a class that has been taught in hybrid format, asynchronous instruction, for years. I constantly hear feedback from students that this course has so much more work than others but that is due to the hybrid nature—there are more deliverables than there are when students are in class for all their lecture and discussion. The hybrid format classes are perceived as having more workload (homework) but that is the nature of the beast, so to speak. Without proper comparison to classes of same instructional format, students will not accurately assess workload in a course. Online classes would need comparison to online courses too for similar reasons.

Taskforce Response: Questions 11 and 12, are intended to provide context to student evaluations, because difficult courses with high workload may be rated by students differently (and probably more negatively) than easier courses. These two items should NOT be considered in the student ratings of teaching or satisfaction. Because they are for context only, we believe that the reasons why students feel a course has high workload or is difficult is irrelevant. The mere fact that they might feel a course is difficult provides valuable context within which to better understand the survey responses.

Feedback #2: We can ask questions that ask whether their success depended on doing homework, and what kind of homework it was.

Taskforce Response: As discussed in the taskforce report on research on student course evaluations, this would be asking students to report on course design and how much or how they learned, which most students have limited, or no, capacity to accurately report on. In terms of "what kind of homework it was," it is not clear to us as to how to ask this in an efficient and interpretable manner.

Feedback #3: Some students may not be able to compare courses at WCU, especially if they are freshmen or transfer students.

Taskforce Response: We agree and have added a "not applicable" option to the questions.

13. What grade do you expect to receive in this course?

Taskforce Response: Taking feedback into account, we have added this question on expected grades.

14. & 15. Open ended questions

Feedback:
• Open ended #13 - This question needs to be more specifically worded so students understand this is not a place to complain about items that are not related directly to course content.

• About "Describe changes that that could be made to improve the course". That's a little tricky for some courses, especially music education methods and education pedagogy courses, where instructors are trying to meet state and national education accreditation, standards, and the expected curriculum content so students can achieve licensure. Perhaps clarifying the question by adding "to improve content delivery"?

Taskforce Response: We agree with these concerns and have modified the items.