Class Climate Implementation Committee Resolution on Course Evaluation Questionnaire

Whereas, the Faculty bears the responsibility, and right, to "develop and apply instruments for student evaluation of Faculty" (Article VII, Part B, Section 1(d) of the Faculty Bylaws 2016); and

Whereas, while it has not been used for several years, the Faculty Senate has an approved questionnaire for this purpose; and

Whereas, the transition to a new process for collecting data on student perceptions of course instruction includes the implementation of a software program, Class Climate, which elicited minor modifications to this questionnaire for use in the system, including:

a. creating sections to separate question types,
b. rewording Likert scale response anchors to relate to all questions,
c. expanding evaluation items into full sentences to provide clarity,
d. expanding "overall rating as a teacher" into three separate items to preserve the intent of the original item,
e. including prompts to introduce requests for written feedback; and

Whereas, the Faculty, at a meeting of the Full Faculty Senate (September 30, 2016), offered feedback on a proposal for these minor revisions to the Faculty Senate approved document, including:

a. re-constructing the scales in section two to address relative, rather than absolute, criteria,
b. re-orienting the scales in section two for consistency, organizing responses from negative to positive ratings,
c. re-considering the language of the prompt used for written feedback to better encourage an assessment of both strengths and weaknesses; and

Whereas, these modifications have been made by members of the Class Climate Implementation Committee in good faith; and

Whereas, modifications to the questionnaire are requirements of the system, in response to Faculty feedback, and not substantive,

Be it resolved that the Faculty approve this questionnaire for implementation of the new Class Climate program for collecting data on student perception of course instruction.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty have the right, and responsibility, to continue to assess and improve this questionnaire's effectiveness for fostering ongoing teaching development, and may revisit the content of this instrument at a later date.

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Mark as shown: ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Please use a ball-point pen or a thin felt tip. This form will be processed automatically.

Correction: ☐ ■ ☐ ☒ ☐ Please follow the examples shown on the left hand side to help optimize the reading results.

1. Evaluation of Instructor

		Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1.1	The instructor presented the course material clearly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2	The instructor stimulated interest in this subject.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.3	The instructor cleared up points of confusion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.4	Tests and assignments were related to material covered in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.5	The tests and assignments were graded fairly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.6	Course objectives were clear.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Overall Impression of the Course

2.1	How much do you feel you learned in this course? 1=Nothing 5=A lot	1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	5
2.2	Please provide an overall rating of this instructor's teaching. 1=Very Negative 5=Very Positive	1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	5
2.3	Please provide an overall rating of this course. 1=Very Negative 5=Very Positive	1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	5

3. Background Information

3.1	Is this course a requirement for your major?	☐ Yes	☐ No

3.2 What is your class standing?
- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate Student
- ☐ Other

3.3 What is your approximate cumulative GPA?
- ☐ 4.0
- ☐ 3.5
- ☐ 3.0
- ☐ 2.5
- ☐ 2.0
- ☐ 1.5
- ☐ 1.0
- ☐ Less than 1.0
- ☐ Unknown

3.4 What grade do you expect in this class?
- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D
- ☐ F
- ☐ Unsure

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4. Written Feedback

4.1   What were the strengths of this course and/or instructor?

4.2   What were the weaknesses of this course and/or instructor?

4.3   Use this space for any additional comments.

Class Climate Implementation Committee Resolution on Class Climate Fall 2016 Pilot Data

Whereas the Faculty bears the responsibility, and right, to "develop and apply instruments for student evaluation of Faculty" (Article VII, Part B, Section 1(d) of the Faculty Bylaws 2016); and

Whereas, this responsibility is a reflection of our commitment to teaching excellence; and

Whereas, student perceptions of course instruction have a measurable impact on the Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure processes for both tenure-stream and non-tenure-stream faculty; and

Whereas, Faculty have the right to a transparent and consistent process for evaluating their strengths and areas of improvement in the classroom,

Be it resolved that the transition to the new Class Climate system for collecting data on student perceptions of course instruction will begin with a full pilot of the questionnaire, system, and processes in fall 2016 in all face-to-face, blended, hybrid, and online courses.

Be it further resolved that this full pilot will be administered parallel to the existing data collection process of distributing written paper feedback forms to students in classes.

Be it further resolved that only the existing written paper feedback forms will be used for the purposes of evaluating fall 2016 instruction in any future reappointment, promotion, and tenure reviews, including the reappointment of adjunct faculty.

Be it further resolved that the data collected, and any reports distributed, through the Class Climate system during the fall 2016 pilot will be excluded from evaluation of fall 2016 instruction in any future reappointment, promotion, and tenure reviews, including reviews of adjunct faculty.

Class Climate Implementation Committee Resolution on Implementation Guidelines

Whereas the Faculty bears the responsibility, and right, to "develop and apply instruments for student evaluation of Faculty" (Article VII, Part B, Section 1(d) of the Faculty Bylaws 2016); and

Whereas, this responsibility is a reflection of our commitment to teaching excellence; and

Whereas, student perceptions of course instruction have a measurable impact on the Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure processes for both tenure-stream and non-tenure-stream faculty; and

Whereas, Faculty have a vested interest in the effective and consistent implementation of instruments and processes related to the evaluation of instruction; and

Whereas, the transition to an online system of course evaluation highlights concerns about effective ongoing implementation of software and the resulting data quality; and

Whereas, the Class Climate Implementation Committee has reviewed the software, data collection instruments, related research on course evaluations, Faculty Bylaws, and Faculty concerns; and

Whereas, based on this careful consideration, the Class Climate Implementation Committee has proposed the attached guidelines and clarifications of the College's current practice in support of the effective ongoing implementation of the Class Climate system,

Be it resolved that the Faculty supports these guidelines as a reflection of our continued dedication to teaching development and teaching excellence.

Be it further resolved that the Faculty urges the Office of Academic Affairs to take these guidelines under consideration as it pursues a standardized and centralized ongoing implementation of this evaluation process and tool.

Proposed Guidelines for Development, Use, and Ongoing Implementation
October 2016

Effective fall 2016, Old Westbury will implement new software (Class Climate, a Scantron product) for the collection of instructional and course feedback from students. The first stage of this implementation will include a full pilot of all undergraduate courses, including face-to-face, blended, hybrid, and online formats, in the fall 2016 semester. This pilot will be administered for system and process testing purposes only, and will run parallel to the current process of distributing hard-copy evaluation forms, which will continue to be used for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure purposes. Following a successful pilot, the College is expected to make a full transition to this process effective spring 2017.

The Class Climate Implementation Committee is composed of representatives of the following stakeholders: Faculty, including relevant committees of the Faculty Senate, Information Technology, and Academic Affairs. Committee Members include: Jill Crocker (Vice Chair), Youngjoo Kim, Ashlee Lien (Chair), Duncan Quarless, Alex Sartakov, Chandra Shehigian, Kate Velsor.

As part of the implementation process, this committee has determined that the following new guidelines and clarifications of current practice are in order.

A. **Understanding of Faculty Control of Course Evaluation**

Per Article VII, Part B, Section 1(d) of the Faculty Bylaws (2016), Faculty have the responsibility to "develop and apply instruments for student evaluation of faculty" under the charge of the Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion Standing Committee of the Faculty.

That is, Faculty have the right, and responsibility, to oversee the evaluation of Faculty instruction. For the purposes of this implementation, this right is understood to mean that only faculty-approved instruments may be used in the collection of student evaluation data.

This committee hereby reasserts its commitment to this understanding. In the implementation of the Class Climate system we have drawn on the questionnaire developed by faculty and approved by Faculty Senate prior to the current "Written Feedback" system, with limited (not substantive) changes made to the evaluation items/scales. These changes were designed to accommodate the requirements of the Class Climate system, have been proposed to the Faculty Senate for approval, and will be voted on during fall 2016.

Any future modification of this instrument is to be proposed and considered in the Faculty Senate.

B. **Proposed Timeline for Course Evaluations**

Prior to the start of each semester (Week 1), and again by the end of Week 5, the Evaluation Administrator will distribute a notification to faculty that reviews this evaluation process, its purpose, and Old Westbury's commitment to Teaching Excellence. The first notification will allow instructors to incorporate the spirit and logistics of the course evaluation process into their course planning. The

second will allow this communication to reach instructors hired or assigned to courses after the first notification.

After the end of Open Withdrawal (currently the end of Week 7), the Evaluation Administrator will begin the export/import of instructor, course, and student data from Banner/Blackboard into Class Climate.

By the end of Week 11, the Evaluation Administrator will notify *all instructors* of the mechanics (how to access the survey) and timing (distribution date and survey availability window) of course evaluation distribution. Such notification should clearly state to whom questions – from both instructors and students – should be directed.

By the end of Week 11, the Evaluation Administrator will notify *all students* of the approaching course evaluations. Research has suggested that doing so has a significantly positive impact on response rates (e.g. Norris & Conn 2005).

Course Evaluations will be distributed by the Evaluation Administrator not earlier than Week 13 but not later than Week 14 of any given semester to provide flexibility for the College calendar. Evaluations should be distributed to students at the start of the week, and open for a period of 7 days.

Notifications and Reminders:
Because course evaluation surveys will be administered in an electronic format, communication and procedural transparency are key to their successful implementation. Furthermore, feedback on an initial summer pilot suggested that students would have been more likely to respond if they had been reminded to do so more frequently. As such, we recommend the following guidelines:

> Instructors will be notified when the evaluation period has begun, and will be provided with a script to read to students on the topic of course evaluation during class, or in case of online courses, to send via direct communication (email) to students.

> *In addition to the initial notification*, students should be reminded to complete their surveys by the Evaluation Administrator *at least* two times over the 7-day period. When possible and appropriate, these reminders should be timed for distribution one-two hours prior to class meeting times.

> *In addition to the initial notification*, instructors should receive response rate notifications (indicating response rates for each course) within one-two hours of the start of class meeting times. Instructors are advised to use this data to prompt student participation.

C. Proposed Guidelines for Increasing Student Participation/Response Rate

The implementation of an electronic course evaluation system raises concerns about access, response rates, and resulting data quality. One factor shown to mitigate the negative effect of student participation is instructor involvement. Research has demonstrated that when instructors take the time to encourage students to complete the course evaluation (Anderson et al., 2006) and communicate the value of their input (Gaillard et al., 2006), response rates increase.

It is this committee's recommendation that – at the very least – the following steps be taken to increase student participation:

> *Instructors* should continue to allocate class time to survey completion. Instructors should remind students of the importance of course evaluations, inform students where they can access the survey (via their Old Westbury email accounts or, in future semesters, Blackboard links), and instruct students who have not yet done so to complete evaluations during dedicated class time (during which Instructors leave the classroom). Scripts should be provided by the Evaluation Administrator.

> *Departments* should be provided by the Evaluation Administrator with signs to hang in visible locations. Signs should remind students of the importance of completing course evaluations.

> The *Student Government Association* should be encouraged by the Evaluation Administrator to remind students about the course evaluation period – and that their voices matter.

> *Access* to computers should be provided. Workstations in Smart Classrooms should be logged in (by the instructor, using OWPOD login information) for student use during dedicated course evaluation time.

The goal of each of these strategies is to create a culture of student participation. Such participation should be assessed on an ongoing basis by the Evaluation Administrator, and additional improvement strategies developed as needed.

D. Proposed Guidelines for Software Access, Data Maintenance, and Security

For reasons of data security, access to Class Climate software will be strictly limited.

The Evaluation Administrator will have the sole Administrator account, and therefore will have primary control over access to the software.

The data is stored by Scantron, and will be backed up by the Evaluation Administrator to College-owned storage on a basis appropriate to ensure the long-term maintenance of data (likely to occur after each period of data collection and report generation). Data and reports may be retrieved, as needed and appropriate, by administrators, departments, or instructors, by request to the Evaluation Administrator. The software prevents manipulation of raw data, and reports will be generated from raw data.

In addition to standard reports issued by the Evaluation Administrator to individuals, department chairs, school deans, and Academic Affairs (see below), individuals may request access to the raw data for their own courses after all grades have been submitted. Unless for record keeping (department or school), or for matters related to reappointment, tenure, and promotion, appropriate requests for access to raw data or reports other than those related to an individual's own course will be in aggregate or de-identified forms. Such requests shall be for the purpose of assessing or improving teaching effectiveness and will be responded to in a timely fashion.

Procedural accounts may be created on behalf of report generators, but these accounts will not have access beyond the department(s), school(s), or program(s) such personnel represent, nor will these accounts have permissions beyond report generation.

Faculty will not have access to the software, but will be issued reports by the Evaluation Administrator.

E.   Proposal for Part Time Personnel for Ongoing Implementation of Class Climate Software

One advantage to shifting to online course evaluations is that it reduces staff workload. At the same time, even processes facilitated by technology require ongoing maintenance, development, and oversight. In the past, Old Westbury paper evaluations were copied by print services, sorted, distributed, and received by department and school staff, and then completed evaluations were again copied by department staff for distribution to instructors, chairs, and in some cases for storage. This decentralized process met our needs, but was not necessarily done in a consistent way over time or across departments. Prior to the current written feedback form distribution, Scantron forms were distributed and scanned in by staff – albeit inconsistently, as damaged student evaluations were known to be discarded.

This transition to online course evaluations offers an opportunity to improve on the past and current practices by centralizing and standardizing the process of conducting student course evaluations. This standardization provides a better service to our students and instructors, and reduces the legal liability that results from an inconsistent process. In many ways the implementation of the Class Climate system will be more efficient than what we have had in place. That is not to say that it does not require oversight.

The improvement on past practice is dependent on personnel with the capacity to provide this centralized service. Without such personnel we do not have the capacity to use the technology the way it was designed to be used, and therefore forfeit the advantages such standardization provides. Without such personnel we risk inconsistency in the use of available data, which will have negative consequences for instructional development, student learning, student retention, and reappointment processes.

The automation of some steps in the process is a clear advantage. For example, once a template for notification emails is drafted, little editing should be required from semester to semester. Once the questionnaire and reports are approved by Faculty Senate, they will not change with any frequency. Nonetheless, the *ongoing implementation* of the Class Climate software will require personnel support in the following ways:

- Regular export, import, and cleaning of multiple data files for each academic term
- Scheduling multiple batch functions, including notifications and distributions of surveys and reports in a timely fashion
- Ongoing training and development, both to refine usage and to evolve with software
- Training and supervision of personnel who use software for various administrative functions
- Creation of procedural accounts as needed
- Provision of data and reports as requested by instructors and administrators
- Regular and reliable backups of data and reports to ensure data security
- Serve as a point of contact for responding to requests for technological assistance from students, instructors, and staff, which are beyond the scope of the IT Service Desk; and responding to requests to assist with interpretation of data that has been generated; and

collaborate with faculty for matters of ongoing development of the questionnaire and implementation procedures
- Monitor ongoing use of software
- Oversee development and distribution of reports
- Serve as liaison between Class Climate and the College regarding contractual service provision
- Disseminate data in a publicly-accessible location to be agreed upon by the Class Climate Administrator through consultation with faculty
- Create a procedural manual for SUNY Old Westbury specific implementation processes
- Generate data and/or reports for the assessment of Institutional Learning Outcomes as they are defined by the College, as Class Climate provides opportunities to assess ILO's
- Regular technical administration of the system and processes as needed

Particularly with the intended evaluation of Winter and Summer courses, these responsibilities will be year-round. While the workload will naturally peak at particular times each semester, consistent effort will be required over the course of the semester to ensure a smooth and consistent process over time. It is this committee's recommendation that a single position or office be assigned to this collection of responsibilities. Based on experience with other similarly-sized institutions, Scantron's post-implementation specialist has recommended that this position be assigned 0.5 FTE.