

Final Course Feedback Survey report

March 2025

Based on the Fact-Finding Report presented to Senate in February 2024 and further responses thereon, the Ad-Hoc committee on the Course Feedback Survey has now compiled a draft Course Feedback Survey (CFS). Our new instrument follows the best practices of the [ACUE Student Evaluations of Teaching](#). (The next section of this report is organized according to the ACUE recommendations.)

Instruction is a vital part of a course, but it is part of a larger environment that defines whether a student may succeed. Further, this notion should be reflected in the name of the Course Feedback Survey (cf. *Student Evaluation of Instruction*).

In this report, we present 1) a summarized rationale, 2) the proposed sets of questions for in-person and for online classes, 3) some recommendations for dissemination of the CFS in assessment of teaching, including tenure, promotion, and merit applications, and 4) the original Fact-Finding report from February 2024. The questions used in the pilot survey can be found in the meeting materials for the October 9, 2024 Faculty Senate meeting.

1. Rationale

ACUE Recommendation #1: Ensure that instruments are not biased against particular groups of faculty.

- 1) The new Course Feedback Survey (CFS) recognizes that a student survey is a qualitative tool and best used as such. Therefore, the focus is shifted away from quantitative results with dubious meaning toward an invitation to students to express which particular aspects of the class were helpful and which ones were not.
- 2) A pilot survey in the Fall of 2024 confirmed that the ratio of positive and negative comments showed, compared to the SEIQ, a reduced relationship (see section 4) with instructor demographics (including race, gender, and tenure status) and class characteristics (including class size, modality, and level). We believe that the proposed new set up and the new phrasing of the questions mitigates the known biases in CFEs. This will have to be demonstrated before full implementation.
- 3) The pilot study revealed that a preamble statement about possible biases reduced the actual bias in the results, in agreement with the literature.

ACUE Recommendation #2: Items should be written with the student in mind.

- 1) A key barrier to students filling out the current survey is its length. In a small pilot over the summer, the average time to fill out the new CFS was about 2 minutes, compared with 10 minutes for the current survey.
- 2) A student can often give expert feedback on well-defined individual aspects of the course (e.g., was the instructor's feedback timely and helpful), while other broader questions are harder to judge or more open to interpretation (e.g., the instructor's expertise in the field). The recommended questions are more framed as the former.

ACUE Recommendation #3: Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET)s should have a clear purpose and be connected to outcomes of interest.

- 3) The focus of the new CFS is more on feedback for improvement of classes, and not just on the assessment of teaching for the benefit of tenure, promotion, and merit. The instructor must then use the results of the CFS to make their case for tenure, promotion, or merit as with the other components of the assessment of instruction (self-assessment, peer review, peer observation).
- 4) The proposed new CFS acknowledges that the instructor is a crucial part of the student's course experience, but not the only one. Students are invited to mention other factors that contributed to their learning as well, including support services, class schedule, and their own contributions to their learning.
- 5) The new CFS is designed to be adaptable to classes that are not the traditional on-campus lecture. By design, not all options in Questions 1 and 2 need to be applicable to all courses, so it is easy to add some that are more valid for online, lab, or internship courses. This is a work in progress, and not yet fully reflected in the current survey draft. We anticipate that these options in Questions 1 and 2 will evolve over the first few years, based on suggestions by instructors and students. Additional questions for specific sub-groups may also be more easily added.
- 6) To evaluate the instruction and the teaching environment, it is important to take a long term view across multiple courses and multiple semesters. We recommend that at least a condensed overview of responses to Questions 1 and 2 be provided

for the instructor to use as they see fit in their case for promotion, tenure, and other teaching evaluations.

2. The list of questions

Course Feedback Survey for <Course Name>

Cleveland State University recognizes that student evaluations of teaching are often influenced by students' unconscious and unintentional biases about the race and gender of the instructor. Women and instructors of color are systematically rated lower in their teaching evaluations than white men, even when there are no actual differences in the instruction or in what students have learned.

As you fill out the course feedback survey please keep this in mind and make an effort to resist stereotypes about professors. Focus on your opinions about the content of the

course (the assignments, the textbook, the in-class material) and not unrelated matters (e.g., the instructor's appearance).

This survey is anonymous. Only your written comments and aggregate information will be presented to the instructor, and only after the course is completed and grades are made available.

1. For On-Campus Lecture classes:

Q1 What was **particularly helpful** for your learning in <Course Name> ? Check all that apply.

- How I was treated with courtesy and respect by the instructor
 - Clarity on how to do well in the course
 - Availability of the instructor for assistance and consultation
 - The in-class activities
 - Opportunities to collaborate with classmates
 - The homework assignments
 - The required course material (books, courseware, etc).
 - The affordability of the required course material (books, courseware, etc).
 - The use of online tools (e.g., Blackboard, online courseware, homework environment, etc)
 - Quality of feedback on assignments
 - Timeliness of feedback on assignments
 - Preparedness of the instructor
 - The way course material was presented by the instructor
 - Support services such as tutoring, advising, and disability services
 - The relation of course material to my previous knowledge
 - My own time management skills
 - Other:
-

Q2 If applicable, which of the following **could be changed to improve** your learning in ----? Check all that apply.

- ☒ To be treated with more courtesy and respect by the instructor
- Clarity on how to do well in the course.
- Availability of the instructor for assistance and consultation.
- The in-class activities.

- Opportunities to collaborate with classmates
- The homework assignments.
- The required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The affordability of the required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The use of online tools (Blackboard, online courseware, homework environment, etc.)
- Quality of feedback on assignments
- Timeliness of feedback on assignments
- Preparedness of the instructor
- The way course material was presented by the instructor
- Support services such as tutoring, advising, and disability services.
- The relation of course material to my previous knowledge.
- My own time management skills.
- My other responsibilities unrelated to this class
- Other:

Q3 How many of the class sessions did you attend for <Course Name> ?

- All (1)
 - Almost all (90% or more) (2)
 - Most (50%-90%) (3)
 - Some (less than 50%) (4)
 - None (5)
-

Q4 What percentage of the assignments required for the course (e.g., exams, problem sets, other assignments) did you complete and submit?

- All (1)
 - Almost all (90% or more) (2)
 - Most (50%-90%) (3)
 - Some (less than 50%) (4)
 - None (5)
-

Q5 According to the Ohio Department of Education, you are supposed to spend $\{e://Field/Work\%20time\}$ hours per week on average on a $\{e://Field/Credit\%20Hour\}$ credit hour course like this, including class time and homework. How much time did you spend on <Course Name> in a typical week?

- Much more (over 150% of that time) (1)
 - Somewhat more (110%-150% of that time) (2)
 - About that amount (90%-110% of that time) (3)
 - Somewhat less (50%-90% of that time) (4)
 - Much less (less than 50% of that time) (5)
-

Q6 Do you have specific points of constructive feedback for <Course Name> ?

2. For Asynchronous Online classes:

Q1 What was particularly **helpful** for your learning in <Course Name> ? Check all that apply. Optionally, write specific examples in the text boxes.

- How welcoming the course environment was
- Clarity on how to do well in the course
- The interactive online experience (discussions, online learning community, etc)
- Availability of the instructor for assistance and consultation.
- The quality of the assignments
- The flexibility of an online course
- The required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The affordability of the required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The use of online tools (e.g., Blackboard, online courseware, homework environment)
- Quality of feedback on assignments
- Timeliness of feedback on assignments
- Preparedness of the instructor
- The way course material was presented by the instructor

- Support services such as tutoring, advising, and disability services.
- The relation of course material to my previous knowledge.
- Other:

Q2 If applicable, which of the following **could be changed to improve** your learning in <Course Name> ? Check all that apply. Optionally, write specific examples in the text boxes.

- How welcoming the course environment was
- Clarity on how to do well in the course
- The interactive online experience (discussions, online learning community, etc)
- Availability of the instructor for assistance and consultation.
- The quality of the assignments
- The flexibility of an online course
- The required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The affordability of the required course material (books, courseware, etc).
- The use of online tools (e.g., Blackboard, online courseware, homework environment)
- Quality of feedback on assignments
- Timeliness of feedback on assignments
- Preparedness of the instructor
- The way course material was presented by the instructor
- Support services such as tutoring, advising, and disability services.
- The relation of course material to my previous knowledge.
- My own time management skills.
- My other responsibilities unrelated to this class
- Other:

Q3 What percentage of the assignments required for the course (e.g., exams, problem sets, other assignments) did you complete and submit?

- All (1)
- Almost all (90% or more) (2)
- Most (50%-90%) (3)
- Some (less than 50%) (4)
- None (5)

Q4 According to the Ohio Department of Education, you are supposed to spend $\{e://Field/Work\%20time\}$ hours per week on average on a $\{e://Field/Credit\%20Hour\}$ credit hour course like this, including class time and assignments. How much time did you spend on $\{e://Field/Course\%20Name\}$ in a typical week?

- Much more (over 150% of that time) (1)
- Somewhat more (110%-150% of that time) (2)
- About that amount (90%-110% of that time) (3)
- Somewhat less (50%-90% of that time) (4)
- Much less (less than 50% of that time) (5)

Q5 Do you have specific points of constructive feedback for $\{e://Field/Course\%20Name\}$?

3. Dissemination of the CFS for assessment purposes

The proposed CFS emphasizes the dual intent of the survey for both formative evaluation and for summative evaluation. It purposefully does *not* provide a single quasi-quantitative number, because that leads to ignoring the feedback in the entire document. Nevertheless, it is important that the CFS can be used effectively in summative evaluations as well, including tenure and promotion dossiers.

For any evaluation, we recommend taking a longitudinal view of multiple CFSs, and not focusing on positive or negative results in individual classes.

We recommend reflecting on which options in Questions 1 and 2 were typically emphasized positively or negatively, as well as those for which there was little explicit feedback. This can be done in some graphical way, or in a descriptive manner.

As a potential example, the graphs below show the frequency of occurrence for all the options (rows) in several (fictitious) classes (columns); darker colors are more common comments. This means that darker rows are common answers across the courses; bright columns were outlier classes.

In these figures, the columns represent courses and the rows represent options available for selection in Questions 1 and 2. The numbers in the cells represent proportions of students who selected that response, with darker cells indicating higher percentages. For example, in the first figure the proportions of students who indicated that clarity on how to do well in the course was indicated as helpful by 0.45, 0.62, and 0.45 of students in courses 215, 434, and 55, respectively.



We do not see much value in evaluating the total number of positive and negative comments at the level of individual instructors, other than perhaps ensuring that the negative comments do not outnumber the positive ones. Any comparison of the number of positive and negative comments between instructors is a meaningless distraction from the purpose of the CFS.

To summarize the written comments, we recommend publishing word clouds when the number of comments is too large to be individually presented. We explored the use of an AI sentiment checker, but these seem not to be very reliable yet.

4. SEI report – fact finding report

As presented in Faculty Senate in April 2024

Executive Summary

Based on a review of the literature, consultations with Dr. Regan Gurung (Oregon State University), an analysis of the current CSU SEI data, and surveys of students, faculty, and administrators, the committee comes to the following findings:

1. Our current SEI system suffers from several biases, some of which strongly impact minoritized groups or instructors of large classes. We recommend several actions to mitigate these biases (Sections 4, 5.1.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.5)
2. Almost all questions on the current SEI strongly correlate with each other, suggesting that we obtain little independent information, and could do with a much shorter SEI (Sections 4, 5.1.2)
3. The response rate has gone down to 27% since the move from paper to online forms, which immediately disqualifies the SEI as a valid instrument. Several efforts are recommended to improve the response rate (Sections 5.1.2, 5.2)
4. The current instrument and process results in a mostly summative assessment of teaching with little, if any, attention to formative assessment to improve teaching. We recommend a more holistic approach, which should include (in addition to other possibilities) mid-semester SEIs, and more formalized peer observations and self-reflections. (Sections 5.1.3, 5.1.5, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.4)
5. The SEI is often used as a shorthand for quality of instruction, while numerous studies find that the correlation is weak at best. This needs to be reckoned with and addressed when presenting and using the data for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and merit decisions. (Sections 5.3, 5.4)

As a next step, the committee will work on implementing these findings in an improved instrument, and on evaluating the technical constraints and needs in this instrument.

Committee Charge and background

In the spring of 2023, six faculty and two administrators were appointed to review the Student Evaluation of Instruction instrument and make recommendations to improve the measure. Over the course of the last year this group has reviewed the literature, met with

stakeholders associated with the BLUE data collection platform, consulted with an expert in SEI and invited him to CSU for a faculty-wide presentation, conducted a factor analysis of CSU's current instrument, performed statistical tests to assess for bias in CSU's current instrument and surveyed faculty, students, as well as PRC representatives, chairs, deans' and the Provost's office regarding their views and use of SEI.

Background on CSU's Student Evaluation of Instruction

Student evaluations are referenced in the CBA (12.10 C(6)) as one possible piece of evidence that may demonstrate exceptional achievement as a teacher. Similarly, the Electronic Faculty Annual Activity Report (eFAAR) instructions indicate faculty must record the SEIQ mean scores for the instructor and the course and upload the SEIQ reports for each course taught. Various college and departmental guidelines for promotion mandate the reporting of SEIQ scores. Some units indicate a specific minimum mean score that is required for promotion.

The 'Memorandum on Dossiers and Reappointment, Promotions, and Tenure Reviews' from the Office of the Provost indicates data from student evaluations are "expected." The same memo indicates, faculty "should consider" including, "summaries of student evaluations for all courses taught", further stipulating it is "helpful for college or department means to be included to provide further context for the SEI scores. One would normally expect scores at or above the department mean, and one would also normally expect to see improvement over time." Faculty are recommended to "present summary table presenting the summary statistics for each course you have taught (average ratings, comparison averages, response rates, etc.)". The SEIQ is governed by the Student Evaluation Policy (see Appendix 1), which states the guiding principles, the way the SEI is administered, and how the SEI is reported to faculty, chairs, and directors. According to the 2023 Contract Implementation Committee memo on Merit Awards, the suggested documentation for merit for teaching (which is 1/3 of all merit awards) includes "Student evaluations. Primarily this could be assessed by consistently above average scores on standardized student evaluations."

Literature review and consultation of external expert

Student Evaluations of Instruction are a common topic of discussion in higher education. University administrators want to know about students' classroom experiences and faculty want to know that their materials and methods result in positive learning outcomes. In short, a survey of students alone will not provide the answers we're looking for, but in concert with peer evaluations and self-reflection, it can inform the process.

We also found several institutions currently using best practices to inform a holistic assessment of academic courses. To that end, we contracted Dr. Regan Gurung, a widely regarded expert in the field of SEI to provide individualized guidance to the SEI committee and to present to the wider CSU faculty community about SEI. Some main takeaways from his presentation are summarized here.

Effective teaching cannot be established by only one of indicator, but instead requires multiple measures including peer evaluation (reviewing course materials such as a syllabus, or online materials), peer observation (which should consist of pre-observation meeting, an observation of a teaching session, and a post-observation feedback meeting) instructor self-reflection (read evaluations and demonstrate the instructor has reflected on what might need to change), and student evaluation (these are prone to bias due to gender, race, rank, and discipline), Dr. Gurung urged that universities not rely just on a number from a student evaluation since they are more biased than other forms of evaluation. Peer observers need training to reduce bias in peer observation.

Dr. Gurung suggests instructors may opt to use formative evaluation questions on student surveys such as: What is the teacher doing to help me learn? What am I doing to help me learn? What is the teacher doing that is not helping me learn? What am I doing that will not help me learn?

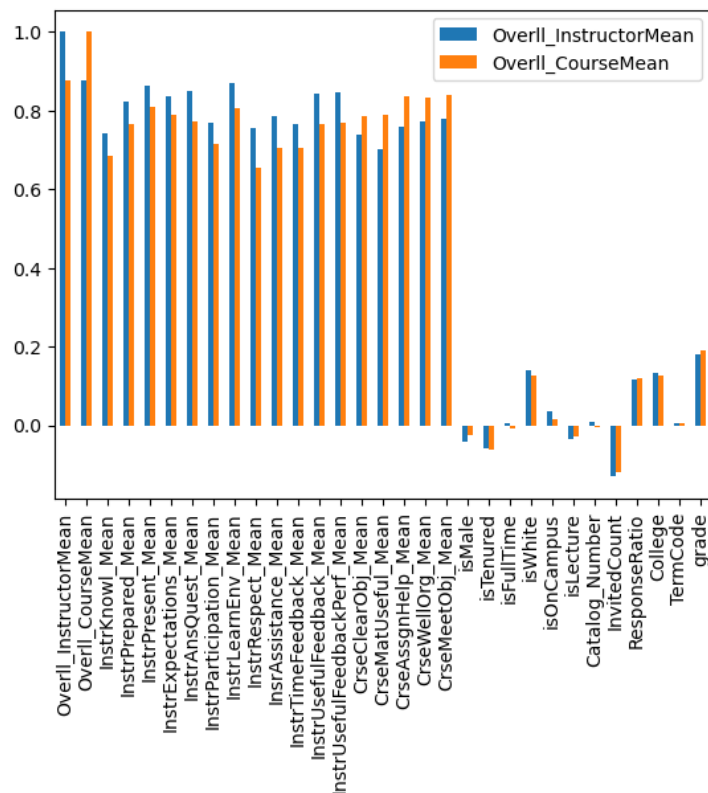
Meeting with our current SEI vendor

To better understand the functionality of BLUE SEIQ survey platform, members of the committee met with the vendor in Fall 2023. The vendor has some potentially valuable tools on offer that we currently do not employ. For instance, they showcased an automated dashboard that allows for slicing through data on a multi-year level, grouped by instructor or unit, and with different options for comparison data. They also showcased an AI summarizer of open comments, permitting quickly focusing on general sentiment and filtering out inappropriate comments, or.

Statistical analysis of CSU SEI data

To empirically evaluate the number of factors present in the current SEIQ questions, and also to investigate possible indicators of bias in the current SEIQ instrument, we performed 1) a correlation, 2) a multi-variable regression analysis, and 3) a factor analysis on the SEIQs and course & instructor properties between Fall 2021 and Spring 2023. While the data below is based on the undergraduate classes only; a qualitatively similar picture arises from the graduate courses; however, graduate data is harder to interpret due to the prevalence of small project-based courses.

Based on the correlation and factor analysis, we observe that there is a strong (>0.7) correlation between all SEIQ questions, and little underlying information. A factor analysis confirmed that 70% of the variance can be explained by a single factor, and 80% by two.



Analysis was also conducted to assess if the following demographic, course-related, or student factors revealed indicators of bias. Characteristics that were non-significant for biases in our current instrument include gender (0.0042 difference in score; $p=0.77$), and whether a class is online or on campus (0.017; $p=0.42$). With an R-squared of 0.09, only a limited part of the overall SEIQ score may be explained solely by instructor and class properties, suggesting that the SEIQ does contain information about other things, such as quality of instruction. Nevertheless, these

impacts are strong enough that they may affect individual tenure, promotion, and merit cases. The table below shows how each factor impacts SEIQ scores.

Factor	Impact
If Is true...	...scores are lowered by ... points
College	0.33 between highest and lowest College
Race=non-white	0.27
Not a Lecture class	0.19
Part time	0.13
Has Tenure	0.08
First year class (vs 4 th year)	0.06

Low grade	0.06 per GPA point
Large class	0.4 per 100 extra students

Surveys of CSU Constituents

In the Fall of 2023, we performed 3 surveys to gather input from students, instructors, and evaluators (PRC members and administrators).

Student Survey

795 students completed a brief survey about their experience with CSU's SEIQ instrument and process. 21% of respondents indicated they never fill out the SEIQ, while most respondents (31%) fill it out sometimes. Most respondents (47%) spend 2-5 minutes filling out the survey, with another 35% spending 5-15 minutes filling out the survey for each course. When asked what CSU could do to make filling out the SEIQ easier, the most frequent response was having clearer questions (31%) followed by better announcements (23%) and fewer questions (22%). When queried on possible strategies to increase the chance they would fill out the SEI, 35% desired grade improvement, 23% desired class time to fill out the survey, and 22% desired an in-class reminder and explanation of the SEI.

Faculty Survey

A survey was distributed to full time and part time instructors in the fall of 2023. Among the 170 instructors who completed the survey, only 37% of faculty agree the current questions on the SEI help to improve their teaching, and only 23% of faculty agree the current SEI questions are a valid evaluation of their teaching.

The following SEIQ questions were considered the most useful to instructors (% of respondents that rated this question very useful)

- o The instructor makes course expectations clear (60%)
- o The instructor presents the course materials clearly (57%)
- o The instructor is well prepared (54%)
- o The instructor treats students with courtesy and respect (53%)
- o The instructor is available for assistance and consultation (50%)

The questions that were considered the least useful by faculty include:

(valid % of respondents who rated this question not useful or harmful)

- o The instructor is knowledgeable in the subject matter (35%)

- o What is your overall evaluation of this instructor (31%)
- o The instructor fosters and effective learning environment (27%)
- o Comments about the instructor (31%)

6.3 Survey of PRC representatives, chairs, deans' and the provost office

Also in the fall of 2023, a survey was sent to chairs/directors, representatives from the Dean/Provost office and faculty from the College and University PRCs. A total of

33 individuals responded to questions about their use and perceptions of the SEIQ.

- The majority (85%) use the SEI scores as one of several factors in their decision-making process for tenure and promotion.
- Most (94%) give SEI scores a little or a moderate amount of weight.
- Most (88%) review the results of SEI scores “always” or “most of the time” when making promotion decisions.
- When asked to consider the average score under which the respondents would find the SEI score a serious concern to promotion or reappointment using the following scale (1=Poor, 2=Below Average, 3=Average, 4=Above Average, 5=Excellent) the answer was 2.5, which indicates a score midway between “below average” and “average.” No respondents thought the cut off score should exceed 3.75 which is just below the qualitative rating of “above average.”
- When asked about which circumstances might incline the respondent to discount the SEI data, a majority of respondents indicated properties of the course (88%), the percent of students who filled out the SEI (85%), faculty race/ethnicity (55%), faculty gender (55%), and whether English is faculty’s native language (52%).
- Only 36% of respondents somewhat agree or strongly agree SEI scores accurately reflect the quality of teaching and instruction.
- The following questions were considered the most relevant in the promotion decision making process (% of respondents that rated this question very important):
 - o The instructor is well prepared. (52%)
 - o The instructor treats students with courtesy and respect. (42%)
 - o The instructor makes course expectations clear. (40%)
 - o The instructor is available for student assistance and consultation. (40%)
 - o The instructor presents the course material clearly. (33%)
- The following questions were considered the least relevant in the promotion decision making process (% of respondents that rated this question of low importance or least important):
 - o The instructor is knowledgeable in the subject matter (21%)
 - o The course meets its state objectives (24%)

- The required course materials are useful (21%)
- The assignments help me to learn the course material (18%)
- The instructor fosters student participation. (15%)
- The instructor provides useful feedback on my performance in the course (15%)

When asked for suggestions to improve SEI, the following qualitative themes emerged most frequently.

1. Reduce the number of questions:
2. Mandate student completion of SEI or take other steps to improve response rates such as offering student incentive, allocating class time. The belief is that this would address the issue of biased results and increase the overall response rates.
3. Change how CSU uses SEI data.
4. Improve the quality of questions to make them more reasonable and meaningful.

General Findings

Taking of this data together, some important points emerge.

First and most importantly, the SEIQs at CSU show biases based on college, race of the instructor, type of class, full time status, and class size. It is imperative to reduce those biases and develop safeguards so that these biases do not propagate into the decision making process on reappointment, promotion, tenure, and merit. While a majority of PRC and administrators indicate they might be inclined to discount the SEI data based on properties of the course, not everyone does, and it is not clear how any adjustments are made in a way that is consistent over time and between different committees and administrators.

For the SEIQ to be a valid instrument, it is imperative to have a much better response rate than the current 27%. With such low response rates, it increases the chances that classes do not meet the required minimum to be reported to the instructor and their chair. It also increases the risk of a bias response, in that only the students with a very strong opinion about the class may fill out the survey, thus missing the insights from the majority of the students. Several measures are described below that may help improve the response rate.

The emphasis on SEI mean scores is further devalued given that only about a third of PRC members and administrators agree SEI scores accurately reflect the quality of teaching and instruction and nearly all give SEI scores little or moderate weight. Indeed, an average SEI

score would need to be below 2.75 before PRC members and administrators would find an SEI score low enough to be a serious concern for promotion or reappointment.

The existing literature and the external expert suggest using SEI as one small imperfect measure of teaching quality. Efforts need to be made to decrease the bias inherent in the SEI and balance the SEI scores with other indicators of teaching quality for promotion, reappointment and merit.

Change to the SEI instrument and process is also desired by students who want clearer questions, more visible (including in class) announcements about SEIQ availability, fewer questions, a grade incentive for filling out the survey, and class time to fill out the survey.

Suggestions to improve the SEI instrument

1. A value statement to help reduce biases

Based on the literature, a clear but short value statement in the header of the survey can help reduce bias. This should be tailored to the situation at CSU. As an example, the following statement has been used at Iowa State University:

*“Student evaluations of teaching play an important role in the review of faculty. Your opinions influence the review of instructors that takes place every year. Iowa State University recognizes that student evaluations of teaching are often influenced by students’ **unconscious** and **unintentional** biases about the race and gender of the instructor. Women and instructors of color are systematically rated lower in their teaching evaluations than white men, even when there are no actual differences in the instruction or in what students have learned.*

As you fill out the course evaluation please keep this in mind and make an effort to resist stereotypes about professors. Focus on your opinions about the content of the course (the assignments, the textbook, the in-class material) and not unrelated matters (the instructor’s appearance).”

(<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0216241>)

2. Limit the number of questions.

A data analysis showed that the number of independent factors in our current SEI is very low, close to just 1. This turns out to be common in many SEIQs. However, we also found a clear desire to ask a wider variety of questions in the SEI. The role that these questions might play is as a statement of what CSU values in good instruction, thus anchoring the summary questions. Many questions in the current SEI are focused on the instructor rather than being student centered. The current instrument has 18 questions, all measuring effectively a single factor, with most questions other than the summary questions about the instructor and the course—and maybe not even the summary question about the course—even looked at by instructors, PRCs, and

administrators. A shorter survey (5-10 questions at the most) may increase the chance that students will fill it out.

In comparing the survey responses of administrators/PRC members and faculty there was exact agreement on the top five most valuable questions (although they were in different ranked order) suggesting the following five questions should be given extra consideration for being retained in the proposed changes to the SEI:

- 1) The instructor makes course expectations clear
- 2) The instructor presents the course materials clearly
- 3) The instructor is well prepared
- 4) The instructor treats students with courtesy and respect
- 5) The instructor is available for assistance and consultation

There was also agreement about two questions that were the least valued between these two groups. These two questions may be considered as the first questions that are subject to elimination in a proposed revision to the SEI instrument.

- 1) The instructor is knowledgeable in the subject matter (21%)
- 2) The instructor provides useful feedback on my performance in the course (15%)

3. Make optional mid semester formative evaluation more readily available.

Currently, the SEI is predominantly used and seen as an evaluation tool, i.e., a summative assessment. Instructors report little use for the SEI to improve their teaching. To foster a culture of ever-improving teaching, a mid-semester formative assessment would be helpful. The results of this survey should not be used to evaluate the instructor ~~for evaluation~~, so should be solely distributed to the instructor..

4. The faculty survey yielded mixed responses to open questions.

On the one hand, open questions allow students to give more fine-grained comments, appropriate to a particular class. On the other hand, this section is hard to summarize in an evaluation report, and particularly open to biased comments. A screening of these comments could be useful here, for instance through an (AI) summarization tool.

5. More flexibility in SEI questions

It is currently rare for units or instructors to add questions to the SEI, perhaps since few people know about the possibility. Altering questions to the SEI comes at the cost of decreased comparability between courses, and adding questions has the cost of longer

time to fill out the survey, resulting in lower response rate. We recommend that for the end-of-semester survey, questions should generally be consistent throughout the courses, with question-sets being developed for subsets of classes (e.g., lectures, projects, internships, online classes). Based on our research, the answers to the questions tend to strongly correlate with each other, so having a fine-tuned list of questions may yield less information than expected. For a mid-semester survey, a default set of questions may be more liberally fine-tuned to the needs of the individual instructor.

1. Consistent scaling of all quantitative questions.

Currently, some questions are scaled between 1 and 5, some questions are scaled between 1 and 4, which is confusing. We recommend to scale all questions between 1 and 5.

5.2 Suggestions to improve the SEI process

Since the switch to an online SEIQ, student response rate has dropped to a median of 27%. To improve this number we have found the following suggestions:

1. Allow students to fill out the SEI in class.

Per the current guidelines, instructors are not allowed to be in the same class room while giving students such time, but leaving the class means that students use the timeslot for other things (chatting, leaving early). We did not find strong evidence in the literature that having the instructor in the classroom creates a bias in the evaluations.

2. Make the SEI more findable.

Many students reported that the survey was hard to find, only in the few emails that came to an (oft-unread) CSU email account. Having the link posted more clearly in Blackboard should help, along with a “reminder message” when logging in to Bb during the course evaluation time period; having reminders by text and the ability to quickly fill out the survey in a mobile interface may also improve response rates.

3. Longer period of response.

Currently, the SEI closes before the last week of classes, which many students and faculty found too early. Extending this window until the last day of classes could be beneficial. The external expert cautions against allowing the SEI period to extend beyond the last day of class and suggests it should not be extended into exam week.

4. Opt-out messages in Blackboard.

Some universities report success with a hold on transcripts until the student opts out from filling out the SEI. Such a method may have some unforeseen side effects,

but having a required assignment in Blackboard to either do the SEI or opt out of it may help, especially in online classes. As per the current policy, this is not allowed.

5. Clarity on allowed boosters.

The most commonly suggested incentive to fill out the SEI was extra credit. The committee is mixed over the appropriateness of such an incentive, but a CSU-wide guideline could be useful here (e.g., *a response-rate based incentive of up to X percent is allowable*).

5.3 Suggestions to improve the presentation of SEI data

1. Acknowledge the inherent uncertainty of the SEI

It can be hard to properly interpret any central moment in surveys, especially when the sample size tends to be small. We recommend that the SEI presentation acknowledges this, by reducing the focus on the mean score, which is not a valid aggregation method for categorical data, and can be particularly sensitive to outliers. For instance, we could consider reporting different central moments (mode, median), or including the standard deviation and sampling error in the report as well.

2. Adjust the comparison data.

The nature of the current reporting system ensures that evaluation focuses on single-term, single-class headline number, without much explicit context regarding the class setting. A better approach would be to look at a multi-semester longitudinal dashboard, grouping classes based on a range of properties. Further, it seems dubious that a direct comparison with any group of peers would reveal much meaningful information, but a comparison with the department and college mean leaves room for a particularly large set of interpretation issues. The current comparison of instructor mean scores to a departmental/college mean gives the suggestion that all instructors are supposed to be above this mean – a mathematical impossibility. Instead, evaluation of a SEIQ score should be oriented to what the scores actually mean (1=Poor, 2=Below Average, 3=Average, 4=Above Average, 5=Excellent). We propose to account for factors known to influence scores such as (College, type of class such as lecture, level of class, class size) by comparing with classes of similar type instead of simply with classes from the same department. Further corrections can be considered, for instance to correct for biases against minoritized subgroups. We also find that the current comparison against the mean drives the suggestion that all instructors should be above average, a clear impossibility.

3. Allow for easy download of the SEI scores for analysis for Reappointment, Tenure, Promotion, and Merit.

Instructors are often asked to do some data analysis on their SEI data in their tenure and promotion packages. Currently, this data has to be manually scraped from the reported PDF files, and comparison data (for instance, disaggregated by class type) is not available. We recommend ensuring that our SEI system is able to do so in an efficient way.

4. Filter harmful content

Open ended questions were a divisive issue according to the Instructor Survey. On the one hand, answers may be more specific and more useful in improving quality of instruction. On the other hand, the answers are the most common places for harmful and inappropriate responses. We recommend exploring a filtering mechanism, for instance through an AI system, or through human intervention by a designated person, such as the department Chair. Such a system would initially hide any harmful content, but can make it available if the instructor chooses to.

5. Better aggregate small, cross-listed, lab, and team-taught classes.

For cross-listed classes, the course related information is aggregated, but the instructor related information is not, which includes the most consequential question on the SEI. This makes it awkward if not impossible to aggregate for P&T purposes, and becomes a more serious problem if certain cross-listed section do not make the required minimum of 5 respondents, resulting in a lack of report. For some practical classes, individual sections never make the required minimum, and as a result instructors never receive any feedback. Sensible aggregation, for instance across multiple sections, courses, or even semesters may be necessary.

6. Release the SEI results quickly after the end of the semester

Currently the SEI results are often disseminated several weeks after the end of the semester, well into the next Spring for the Fall semester. It is well known from the pedagogical literature that quick feedback cycles are better for improvement. It also means that feedback often comes too late to adjust in the consecutive semester. We recommend automating the system as much as possible and striving for release of the data shortly after the end of the semester.

5.4 Suggestions to improve the use of SEI data

Many of the flaws of the SEIQ are inherent, and not easily fixed by an improved tool. However, they can be mitigated by acknowledging that the SEIQ is not directly measuring quality of instruction, but that it is measuring student opinion and satisfaction. As such, we recommend a more thorough review of the use of SEI. This is beyond the immediate scope

of this committee, but based on our efforts we would like to make the following suggestions:

1. Use SEI only in combination with other tools of evaluation of instruction for purposes of reappointment, tenure, promotion, and merit.

Student evaluations of instruction should only be one of several forms of evaluations of instruction. Based on the literature, discussions with Dr. Gurung, and valuations of SEIs in our surveys. A more holistic approach, including formative assessments, peer observations, and peer evaluations of the entire course, and a structured self-reflection is often recommended. To have such an holistic approach work, it is important that evaluations peer review committees formally include and acknowledge all these modes of evaluation.

2. Use multiple modes of evidence to establish teaching competence.

Encourage peer evaluation that provides instructors with a second method to establish excellence based on the indicators that are being measured based on the SEI. For example, during the evaluation process, the instructor can share the course resources to establish if the instructor makes course expectations clear, if the instructor presents the course materials clearly, and if the instructor is well prepared. Peer review instruments should also explicitly focus on whether the instructor treats students with courtesy and respect, and evidence that indicates if the instructor is available for assistance and consultation.

3. Faculty should have a mechanism to demonstrate the SEI are not valid

If it is established through objective data that a course evaluation is not valid, the SEI scores should be erased. If there is a consistent trend of inaccurate student reporting on the SEI this should be noted in the report. In cases where the instructor is a consistent victim of biases in the system, the SEI should be ignored altogether, without the need for the instructor to justify this on a case-by-case basis.

4. The focus of SEI should be on assisting instructors to improve their teaching, not on comparing instructors.

Instructors should be encouraged to examine longitudinal trends and qualitative feedback (that is consistently received) to make changes as needed to their teaching. Qualitative feedback that is not consistent should be given less weight.

5. A short training course on common biases and how to interpret SEIQ data

The survey showed mixed results in how evaluators include biases in their interpretation Most administrators have little formal training in statistical

interpretation of these surveys, let alone the PRC members who rotate on a year-by-year basis. We recommend a quick reminder on what the current biases in the instrument are, and how to mitigate their impacts.

APPENDIX 1

STUDENT EVALUATION POLICY

Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) Principles and Policies (April 1, 2016; revised and reaffirmed Nov. 29, 2017, with addition of final two paragraphs)

Principles

1. The overarching goal of the SEI process is continuous improvement of education at CSU.
2. More specifically, the SEI process is intended to provide faculty feedback from students for evaluating, improving, and refining their methods of instruction.
3. Accordingly, personnel action (promotion, denial of promotion, renewal, non-renewal, merit awards, discipline, or sanction) should not be undertaken solely on the basis of SEI data. The SEI should not be construed as the sole or primary evidence of competence or excellence in teaching. Rather, the SEI is part of a constellation of materials that document teaching performance, including, but not limited to, peer observations, teaching portfolios, and student outcomes.

Administration of the SEI

1. Each semester, the SEI will be opened for students at the beginning of the twelfth week of classes and close at the end of the fourteenth week of classes. Courses whose opening and closing dates do not fit the semester schedule will have the evaluation window scaled appropriately.
2. At the opening of the evaluation window, faculty will supplement the reminders delivered by the on-line software by reading the following statement of purpose and guarantee of anonymity to the students: "You are about to complete an electronic student evaluation of your instructor. The purpose of this evaluation is for the

student to provide constructive feedback to improve the learning experience at Cleveland State University. Please do not identify yourself in your responses. Responses will be kept anonymous. The course instructor will not see the results of this evaluation until after final grades are submitted and posted.”

3. While faculty may remind students to complete evaluations, they should take care not to provide any individualized incentives or disincentives, whether explicit or implied, to affect the students’ responses to the SEI. If the faculty member provides time in class for completion of the SEI, she or he must be absent from the classroom during such time.
4. In order to ensure adequate student participation, faculty may use the following practices to motivate students:
 - Remind students that their evaluation data helps other students choose their instructors, using the “courseeval” site.
 - Set aside class time for students to complete the SEI, as long as the instructor is not present.
 - Offer a reward for the entire class if a certain threshold of participation is reached. (For example, the instructor might offer a modest amount of extra credit if 90% of students fill out the SEI by a certain date.)
 - Send email reminders to the class.
 - Post reminders and a link to the SEI page on the course Blackboard page.

Reporting of SEI Data to Faculty

1. SEI reports to faculty will incorporate the following standard calculations provided by the software for each SEI question: mean, mode, median, along with distribution bar graphs.
2. The comparators in such reports will be the current department and college means for each question.
3. Aggregate reports of SEI data will be sent to chairs and deans. In addition, chairs or their designees will have access to the individual reports of each faculty member, including both the quantitative and qualitative responses.

Campus Access to SEI Data

1. In order to inform students as to their peers’ assessment of courses and instructors, the Faculty Senate is committed to sharing SEI data with students in accordance with the following principles.
 1. All access must pass through appropriate secure authentication.
 2. Resources permitting, Institutional Research will work with appropriate faculty and student governance mechanisms, including UFAC, Faculty Senate, and Student Government Association, to determine the data to be shared and the implementation method for sharing it.

3. These governance and administrative units will monitor the data to ensure its validity and determine when a sufficient data set has been gathered for that data to be statistically reliable.
2. Faculty will have the same access to this data as students.
3. Requests for reports upon or analysis of SEI data should be directed to the Chair of the University Faculty Affairs Committee and Director of Institutional Research; requesters must provide a rationale for the request.

Inclusions and Exclusions for SEI Data Collection

1. Unless an exemption is deemed necessary by a College/School, all academic activities with a course number will be evaluated using the SEI process. Where Blue cannot perform evaluations for a particular academic activity due to current technical limitations, an alternative method will be used in a manner appropriate to that activity as determined by the unit's Dean's office and College/School Faculty Affairs Committee. The goal is for Blue, ultimately, to be able to capture all evaluation data.
1. College/School Faculty Affairs Committees will be responsible for determining the evaluation needs and parameters, if any, for their College or School; this determination is expected to be stable over time. The Committee will determine which courses, if any, are to be excluded from the evaluation process. For example, some Committees may determine not to include thesis or independent study courses in the evaluation process.
2. A representative for the College or School will work with Institutional Research to implement changes consistent with the capabilities of the Blue software.
2. A course enrolling fewer than 5 students will be excluded from reports, to ensure student anonymity, except in the case of combined or cross listed courses. For those courses data will be reported in aggregate.
3. Data for non-grade-earning students, e.g., Project60 students, may be collected but only data for grade-earning students will be reported

Alternative methods of evaluation of teaching effectiveness for low-enrollment classes

Given the important role of student evaluations in an instructor's dossier for reappointment, promotion and tenure, it is important to recognize that some faculty members may primarily teach either low enrollment courses or low enrollment sections of a course. This results in student evaluations not being made available to the instructor for reasons of preserving student anonymity. Academic units should devise alternative methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness in such cases. Alternative methods could include, for example, peer evaluations of those sections.

For SEI Report to Chairs/ Directors

This language will be included at the top of SEI reports from Institutional Research to chairs and School Directors.

Department Chairs/School Directors: Please note that the SEI report you receive includes individual faculty reports of courses with fewer than five respondents. In an effort to protect student anonymity, a faculty senate approved policy states that these reports must not be made available to faculty; therefore, they should not be used to evaluate faculty performance. Please adhere to this policy. Due to limitations with the Blue system, the report to chairs/directors cannot be changed to remedy this issue.