In 2018, then-University Provost Jean Morrison charged a faculty and staff task force to examine how we approach course feedback from students, among other broader teaching evaluation issues. With regard to end-of-instruction student evaluations, there is significant scholarship about tools that minimize or prevent biases and about avoidance of tools for which there is a lack of correlation between course evaluation scores and student learning.

The task force recommended that BU create a University-wide online student feedback survey. Standard University-wide forms are widely used across major institutions and enable comparison across departments, schools, and colleges. The goal is to develop a standard tool across all University academic units that will prevent biases and ensure student evaluation of teaching is not merely a reflection of faculty popularity. We also want a tool that can capture the extent to which courses meet their stated learning objectives.

The complexity of implementing a University-wide instrument during the COVID pandemic slowed our progress on this effort. However, we are now prepared to implement the new system. Russell Stone, assistant provost for academic assessment, has spent the last year working with various BU stakeholder groups. We contracted with a course evaluation vendor and piloted our new tool (called Blue) this summer. Blue is widely used by Association of American Universities members and R1 institutions for managing course evaluations. Boston University’s new evaluation tool, which can be accessed online, was successfully piloted during this past summer in BU courses. We will begin University-wide use of this assessment tool during the fall 2023 semester. Please note that some schools and colleges within BU may still require additional evaluation instruments to meet individual accreditation standards. School and department administrators should contact Russell Stone at courseeval@bu.edu for consultation if you have questions about ensuring those requirements are met.

All students will be sent automated invitations to complete evaluations for their courses near the end of the instructional period. Students will also be able to complete evaluations for their courses via Blackboard. Instructors will be sent automated invitations to monitor response rates for evaluations of their courses and will be able to access evaluation results after the deadline for submitting grades. The Office of the Provost, in partnership with IS&T and Education
Technology, will post online resources for the BU community and will host information and training sessions for faculty and staff users.

I thank all who have been involved in this process for getting us to this point. A well-thought-out student evaluation instrument is a valuable tool for the continual improvement of the education we provide and for thoughtful assessment by leaders.