INTRODUCTION: Student evaluations are among the most common assessments for teaching. Yet, they rarely provide substantive feedback on ways to enhance teaching and learning. This conceptual project addresses the issue by focusing its lens on the student evaluation and reimagining it through a SWOT framework.

GOAL: The goal is to re-envision the student evaluation as more fluid and consistent, mutually beneficial for students and instructors, and seamlessly integrated into the fabric of the course.

SWOT ANALYSIS: The tailored SWOT analysis creates opportunities for students and instructors to identify (a) strengths which aid learning, (b) weaknesses which inhibit learning and inquiry, (c) opportunities for instructional and/or course improvement, and (d) instructional and/or course design threats to learning. It also serves as an instructional assessment and reflective learning tool for students and instructors alike (Figure 1).

DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK: Building on the work of service-learning researchers concerning the democratic classroom, the instructional framework supports the use of democratic assessment and engagement tools through the recognition of students AND instructors as co-educators engaged in mutually beneficial exchanges of teaching and learning. The framework is applicable to any classroom setting (i.e., undergraduate, graduate, traditional, online, or hybrid) (Figures 2 and 3).

DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK continued: There are 3 basic and obvious assumptions of the framework:

Assumption 1: Students possess practical knowledge that can inform and improve teaching and learning processes.

Assumption 2: Instructors and students are equally accountable for the quality of teaching and learning that takes place within any course. One stakeholder can and should inform as well as assist the other in efforts to continually improve teaching and learning within a given course.

Assumption 3: Instructors and students are equal stakeholders regarding teaching and learning processes.

IMPLEMENTATION: The implementation of the framework is critical to the effective utilization of the tailored SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis should be used frequently throughout the course as an active teaching and learning tool for (1) inquiry analysis and skill-building and (2) student engagement and empowerment as co-educators. By asking students and the instructor to complete the analysis multiple times throughout the semester, both stakeholders are forced to (a) think critically about the quality of teaching and learning within a course, (b) identify instructional strengths which aid learning, and (c) identify critical areas for improvement (which if left unaltered will essentially undermine the quality of learning and inquiry within the course).

Figures 2 and 3 identify the most ideal instructional design model and representation of knowledge flow within a democratic classroom. Both are rooted in a fundamental belief that students are co-educators who should engage democratically with the instructor in displays of active teaching and learning.