UNIVERSITY POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Category: Academic Affairs
Title: Student Survey Policy
Applicability: Thomas Jefferson University
Contributors/Contributing Departments: Office of the Provost, Office of Institutional Research

I. Policy Statement

Students are frequent subjects for surveys by the University, outside agencies, and other sources. This policy sets forth guidelines for the centralized coordination and approval of student survey administration for the following reasons:

1. To ensure that students are not being over-surveyed, which would cause “survey fatigue” and a loss in response rate across all surveys;
2. To ensure that surveys are administered on a schedule that best promotes response rates;
3. To ensure that surveys are constructed in ways that protect student confidentiality and prevent coercion;
4. To ensure that students are not being asked for information on topics for which there is already data;
5. To ensure that there is a central repository of student survey data that can be used for institutional purposes, such as accreditation.

All surveys directed toward students (with exceptions below) must be approved in advance by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), and the results of those surveys must be reported to the OIR.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all surveys that are administered to University students, including surveys that are developed internally (i.e. by administrative units, faculty, and students) and externally. This policy does not apply to surveys that are developed for the following purposes:

1. Program-level surveys for internal purposes (e.g., program improvement, course evaluations)
2. Class projects surveying students only within that class (e.g., a Health Literacy Survey in a Health Literacy class)
3. External surveys that are mandated by accrediting agencies (e.g., AAMC student surveys)
4. Programmatic evaluations after an event or workshop on campus

III. Components

1. University departments and individuals who wish to administer an internal or external survey to University students must submit a survey proposal (attached) to the Office of Institutional Research for approval. The proposal must contain:
   a. The purpose of the survey
   b. The target population
   c. The uniqueness of the proposed data set, as compared to information gained from existing student surveys
The survey administration timeline

The survey administration mechanism (ex: paper, online, phone)

Respondent confidentiality safeguards

The assurance to the population that participation is voluntary, and non-participation will have no adverse affects on the student's status in their program

The plan for communicating survey results to stakeholders, including the target population

A signature from the College's respective Dean, or designee

It is recommended, though not required, that surveys are proposed at least 2 months prior to the proposed administration to allow time for it to be coordinated with other surveys, thereby reducing the possibility of overburdening students.

After a proposal is submitted, OIR will evaluate the proposal in a two week period and either make an approval decision, or ask the submitter to provide clarification or additional information. If the survey is not approved, the submitter may appeal the decision to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, who will have final say on the matter.

After review, the Colleges will have an opportunity to review all changes or suggestions made by the OIR.

Persons who are developing surveys for research must consult with OIR before submitting their survey to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine a survey administration timeline.

All requests for purposes of research, presentations, posters, or publications must conform to Human Subjects guidelines, and will require Jefferson IRB approval or exemption (http://www.jefferson.edu/university/human_research/irb.html). Surveys that are approved by the IRB must still be approved by OIR for the administration timeline, so that the survey does not negatively impact other surveys.

All surveys conducted must comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) (http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/)

Survey authors are highly encouraged to meet with OIR to discuss the appropriate sample size needed.

Use of group-email for advance notice letters, survey invitations, and non-respondent follow-ups must be coordinated through the Office of Institutional Research.

Survey results must be provided to the Office of Institutional Research, so that all student-related survey data can be triangulated, and made accessible for institutional purposes such as accreditation.

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Responsibility for maintenance of policy: Associate Provost for Academic Affairs

Approved by:

Mark L. Tykocinski, MD
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date