

Overview of Considerations for Planning and Implementing a Campus Survey

Stakeholders

Who has the power to draw attention to and garner support for the climate survey?
Which stakeholders do we need support from for this to be successful?
Who needs to know that we are working on a campus climate survey so that no one is caught off guard or surprised down the road?
Who should be asked for input on one or more drafts of the survey?
Who should be involved in developing the tool itself? In analyzing the data? In planning and executing a communication/dissemination plan?

Stakeholders vary by campus, but may include: members of the administration, the Chancellor, Dean of Student Life, Residential Life, Academic Advisors, Mental Health/Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Services, medical practitioners on campus, disciplinary or judicial board staff, Institutional Research, Title IX office, News/Communications/Publicity office, sexual assault advocacy center or victim advocates (if there aren't any on your campus, bring in community-based advocates), education and prevention specialists that may want to know certain things specifically for educational programs, students (including specific groups like minority groups, those involved in Greek life, athletic teams, etc.), faculty, staff and other relevant offices or persons. Survivors of sexual assault are one of the most important groups of stakeholders, so be sure to include voices from the group in some capacity, e.g. through advocates, survivor support groups, focus groups, students groups that work on issues of sexual assault, etc.

Management and Logistics

How will the group working on the survey make decisions? What will the decision-making process look like? Is there a leader of the group?
When do we need this data by?
What is our overall timeline? What tasks need to be achieved by certain dates?
What approval do we need (e.g. from the IRB or other departments)?
Do the appropriate people in the group have the necessary training and certification to do this (e.g. human subjects training)?

Communications and Branding

What will the survey title be? How might it be interpreted by various groups on campus?
What will our elevator pitch on the survey consist of? Who needs to hear this and at what point in the process?
How might the survey be viewed by different groups? Is there any potential for negative reactions? If so, what are they and how can we address them?

Goals of the Survey

Why are we doing this survey?
Broadly, what is it that we hope to learn?
What questions are we trying to answer with the resulting data? What do we want to be able to say once we have the data?

**Survey
Participants**

Who are we surveying? Whose opinions do we want? Whose experiences do we want to know about?
Which perspectives would be most helpful in answering our questions?
How are we selecting participants (i.e. randomly choosing individuals, selecting clusters, etc.)? What is the rationale behind our decision?
Do we need to oversample any groups?
Are there different groups that we will survey that require adaptation or tailoring of the instrument?
Do we need to create different versions of the survey for different groups with our population (e.g. students, staff, faculty, undergraduates, graduate students, etc.)?

**Independent
and Dependent
Variables**

What topic areas are we interested in collecting data on? What are we measuring?
For example, do we want to **only** gauge students' perception of the campus culture around sexual violence, or are we interested in faculty opinions as well?
Do we want to be able to demonstrate correlations between certain perceptions and other variables, like academic success?
What questions are we answering with which variables?
Do we have clear definitions of our variables?

Study Design

Who are we comparing our population to? Are we obtaining a baseline to measure against in the future?
Is it important to be able to compare data on a national level? To other schools in particular?
Are we more interested in gathering data on our campus **over time** than comparing ourselves to anyone else?
Do we want to be able to parse out groups **within** our population for comparison?
Do we want quantitative data or qualitative data (or both)? Why?
Do we want to use other sources of information to inform and triangulate responses?
What do we need to ask in order to achieve our dissemination plans?

**Selection of
Survey Tool**

What kind of tool best suits our population, setting, data collection and dissemination goals? What are our priorities in selecting a tool?
How do we choose one if several will work? Does a new tool need to be created using existing items (keeping in mind the comparison repercussions of this)?
How much time should it take to complete the survey?
Will we need to use an incentive? Can we use a larger incentive to compensate for a longer survey?

**Development or
Tailoring of
Survey
Questions**

Does the organization and flow of the survey make sense?
Do the questions ask a single question, or are they double-barreled? Is there room for ambiguity or varying interpretations in the answers?
Do the answer choices account for all possible situations and responders?
Are open-ended questions included? If so, do the prompts make sense?

Based on what we would like to be able to say about our population using the data we collect, are we using correct question and answer formats?

Survey Administration Methods

Is this going to be administered online, given out in hard copy, or through a combination?
How will participants be notified of the survey? Will there be reminders sent to participants? By whom?
How long do they have to complete it? Is it possible to complete part of it and finish it later?
When will the data collection period begin and end? Are these dates going to coincide with any other surveys being run on campus?

Data Collection Methods

Are the survey participants going to remain anonymous (rather than their identities remaining confidential)? If so, how are we going to do this?
Are we using unique identifiers?
Do we need to restrict access to the survey in some way (e.g. only students with a valid certificate or email address can access)? If so, how are we going to do this?
Is the tool set up in such a way that one person is able to fill out multiple surveys? Does that matter?

Data Cleaning and Analysis

Who is going to aggregate and clean the data? How are we going to clean the data? What are we going to do with missing data, answers that don't make sense, etc.? In other words, which statistical method are we going to use to deal with them (or are we going to throw them out)?
Are we going to do any recoding if open-ended responses listed under "other" match pre-existing categories? If so, what method will we use?
What are our thresholds or guidelines around cleaning?
Where is the data going to live?
Who has access to the data? For what period of time?
What are the potential risks associated with these choices around confidentiality?

Dissemination of Results

Are we going to display frequencies for each question anywhere (for public or private/internal use)?
How do we want to convey the survey results? What format would we like them to be in (e.g. formal report, shorter summary of most relevant findings, etc.)?
Who needs to see them? What might various audiences want to know from the survey results? Who is going to manage subsequent requests for information from the data?
Who needs to receive these results for initiative development or other specific uses?
If the purpose of this survey is to provide evidence for a program, initiative, or something else, will the tool and questions we have chosen elicit the data we need in order to do this?