

Survey Advisory Committee Meeting
November 21, 2011
8:00 – 9:30 A.M.
1911 Building rm 129
Meeting Minutes

Members present: Nancy Whelchel, Maxine Atkinson, Mike Carter, Leslie Dare, Ginny Hall, Sarah Lannom, Malina Monaco, Shevaun Neupert, Donna Petherbridge, Kevin Rice, Sheri Schwab, Paul Umbach, Mike Williams, Carrie Zelna

Not attending: Ken Esbenshade, Michelle Johnson, Stan North Martin, Haylee McLean, John O'Daniel, Deb Paxton, Alan Schueler

Call to order: Nancy Whelchel called the meeting to order at 8:05.

Agenda

Welcome and introductions

Approval of September 27, 2011 minutes: Minutes were approved.

Review of institutional oversight

Nancy summarized the information gathered by a subcommittee consisting of herself, Carrie Zelna, and Sarah Lannom that had been tasked with investigating survey oversight activities at other institutions. Through an online search they identified 25 institutions that appeared to have some guidelines and/or policy related to surveys on their campus. Using information available either online or through follow-up phone conversations they completed a rubric about the guidelines/policies at each institution. [It should be noted that they did not identify specific institutions (e.g., peers) to investigate, but rather focused on those that came up on a Google search for such guidelines/regulations.] For the complete report, see Appendix A below.

Group discussion on recommendations

Survey Calendar: There was universal support among attending SAC members for the development of a 'survey calendar.' Such a calendar would allow UPA/SAC to systematically gathering information about surveys being administered on campus (as per our charge), as well as educate those considering a survey about existing and planned survey activities. There was a lot of discussion about whether or not there should be a requirement to submit survey activities to the calendar, and if so, whether all surveys or only those meeting certain criteria be included in the calendar. Overall, most seemed to feel that at least initially it was important that it be required for any/all surveys to be included on the calendar. (Members struggled to come up with definitive exclusion or inclusion criteria to identify what projects should or should not be required.)

Sarah Lannom suggested that information about the requirement be made widely available, and followed by a semester or year long pilot phase to see how it works out. It is likely that a small subcommittee of SAC members (e.g., perhaps a rotating group made up of those with some survey expertise) be responsible for reviewing calendar submissions and following up with PIs to request/provide further information and/or to provide support as necessary.

The group noted that in order for the calendar to be successful it will have to be very easy view current information as well as to submit new information. In addition, those submitting information should get some benefit for doing so, such as consultation on best practices for their survey project and/or material support (e.g., review of questionnaire, sample selection and contact information).

Educational Outreach Activities:

The group discussed various types of education outreach activities. There was widespread support for a website devoted to survey methods best practices, including citations for recommended readings, locally developed 'how-to' documents and topical presentations, examples from survey methods course material, and contact information for support from (willing) NC State experts and resource staff (e.g., IRB, EMAS, UPA). Kevin Rice and Donna Petherbridge suggested that such a web site could be relatively easily developed and maintained on Moodle.

External Surveys:

The group had a specific discussion about surveys administered to NC State faculty/staff/students by outside researchers, and concluded that such projects should be subject to the same rules as local surveys. The question of value to NC State (e.g., what do we actually get out of the survey?) was raised as particularly important. Others agreed that an NC State person needs to be willing to serve as the local 'point person' for the project, including submitting the project to the calendar and providing any requested information to SAC. Sheri pointed out that the CALS Extension office has rules about conducting external surveys, and said it would be helpful for the University to have consistent rules across all colleges/divisions.

Next steps

- Nancy will meet with Leslie Dare to develop a draft of a Survey Project Calendar.
- Nancy will meet with Donna Petherbridge to think about using Moodle for posting educational materials.
- SAC members will think about what materials they have that could be posted on the "education" web site, and be prepared to provide a summary of such materials at the next meeting.
- Nancy will send out a Doodle Poll to schedule the next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:30

NEXT MEETING:

Friday January 20, 2012.

3:00-4:30

1911 Bldg room 129

APPENDIX A: Survey Oversight Review Summary

Nancy Whelchel, Carrie Zelna, and Sarah Lannom did an online search for survey oversight activities, and found and reviewed such activities at about 25 institutions.

Level/Type of Oversight Activity

- Survey Calendars
- Educational outreach
- Procedures/Guidelines/Formal review if require assistance
- Formal policy

Justification/Objectives

- Protect rights/privacy/safety of potential survey respondents
- Minimize over-surveying; prevent survey fatigue
- Maximize response rates for critical university administrative surveys
- Eliminate collection of duplicate information
- Facilitate development and administration of high quality surveys
- Ensure effective dissemination of results
- Promote college online survey tool

Responsible Unit

- IR office
- Univ Committee (n=11)

IRB/committee relationship

- IRB review as appropriate
- IRB rep on committee
- IRB familiar/supportive of policy/guidelines
- IRB approval does not necessarily mean survey is approved by committee

Oversight Activities

- Develop/recommend/review policies/procedures/guidelines
- Schedule/coordinate/track/document survey activity
- Review & approve surveys
- Advise DIR
- Education/Consultation/Support
- Collect/maintain repository of final reports (incl how results were used)
- Annual report to Provost

Survey Calendar (n=7)

- Posted on website
 - Researchers encouraged (not required) to consult prior to application for review
 - Committee takes into consideration when reviewing application
- Information
 - Survey title
 - PI name / unit
 - Field dates
 - Broadly defined population / N
 - Administration mode
- Limiting survey field time (i.e., 2 weeks)

Control of Population/Sample

- *(often not mentioned)*
- Not specified, but must get approval to access pop
- Sampling must be done by designated office
- Excluding sample members from subsequent surveys
- Prohibiting surveys while institutional high-stakes (e.g., longitudinal/accreditation) surveys in field

Educational Activities

- Survey best practices
 - Info on website (local &/or external)
 - Consulting services (as time permits)
 - Local peer support network
 - Presentations/workshops
 - Links to relevant policies (e.g., OIT, IRB)
- Information on policy/guidelines
 - Info on website
 - Links to relevant policies
 - Presentations/workshops
 - Communication from CAO to community
- Other
 - Inventory of survey questions / available data

Formal Policy (*N=12; private/public; large/small; CC/4yr*)

- Carlton Univ
- Marquette
- NYU
- NVIT (BC)
- Piedmont Virginia CC
- Stanford
- Texas State Univ-San Marcos
- Univ at Albany
- Univ Maryland-BC
- Univ Puget Sound
- Univ Regina (SK)
- Western Nevada College

What Types of Surveys Guidelines/Policy Covers

- All (*no explicit mention of applying to only certain subjects*)
- Only if need access to contact info / sample
- Only if want to use online survey tool
- Only if statewide (e.g., for CC system)
- Excludes
 - Faculty doing research
 - Faculty surveys of their students
 - Administrative surveys of faculty, staff, students
 - Within own unit/school
 - Class projects w/ less than 50 students in sample
 - Academic course/program evaluation
 - Point of contact / event surveys
 - Surveys collecting information on operational status and projected needs
 - Surveys with 3 or fewer questions

Procedures

- Submit application to committee
 - Questionnaire
 - Purpose of project (e.g., tie to strategic goals)
 - Mode
 - Field dates
 - Text of all messages
 - Data security measures
 - Incentives
 - Population/sample description and size
 - How results will be used and communicated
- Input/review/approval from unit leader
- External surveys must have local sponsor
- Must attend workshop before getting online account for survey software

Evaluation Criteria *(only from UM-BC and Univ Minnesota)*

- Availability of existing data
- Conflict with other surveys
- Burden on respondents
- Extent to which results will be shared
- Institutional reporting requirements
- Relevance to strategic planning and priorities
- Research design
- Privacy issues

Sanctions *(Only mentioned by one institution)*

- Written notification to PI and unit VP
- Clearance by unit VP to admin survey in future (for indeterminate time)

Workload

- *(unclear but seems like could be a lot)*
- Designated reviewer(s)
- Schedule for review
 - Beginning of semester
 - Quarterly
 - Monthly
 - On-going
- Quick turn-around for review

General comments

- Little explicit info on external surveys (typically fall under overall policy)
- No explicit mention of 'public records' info
- Campus buy-in unclear
- Effectiveness (i.e., reduce over-surveying/improved assessment) unclear

Phone Interviews

- UMBC
 - Problem with fac/staff having more easy access to contact information
 - Importance of key offices informing PIs of policy/guidelines
 - Importance of providing consulting services
 - Has not denied any survey (gets about 1-2 requests a month)
 - Priority on coordinating scheduling
- Puget Sound
 - Private school so can/does say no to requests for contact info from external PIs
 - Works to improve surveys (consult services)
 - Revising calendar for large institutional surveys so done less frequently
 - Working with units to set up rotating survey schedule
 - (has to decide what constitutes an 'emergency' survey...
- Plattsburgh State Univ
- Stanford Univ
- Stonehill College
- Texas State Univ-San Marcos