SMU's Survey Procedure

Introduction
Surveys are a popular and necessary method of gathering information from large groups. Though there are other methods of data collection such as observations, interviews, and focus groups, a wide range of offices and individuals have reason to launch university-wide surveys to inform or improve practices. Consequently, many within our university community, including students, faculty, staff and other constituents experience what is commonly known as "survey fatigue". This phenomenon, along with overlapping survey dates, can cause a variety of problems for those of us who seek to gather information.

Purpose
In order to achieve the best response rate for your surveys, to minimize redundancy and coordinate survey deployment, and to avoid survey fatigue, the Office of the Provost has directed that students, staff, and faculty desiring to survey any part of the university community (i.e. alumni, donors, prospective or current students, and employees) follow the procedures outlined here.

A. Steps to complete before sending out a survey
The following steps must be completed before a survey is conducted:

1. Review SMU's Institutional Research Board (IRB) website for guidance on the types of research that require IRB oversight.[i]

2. Obtain a determination from Research Compliance as to whether the survey requires IRB oversight and if so, the expected level of review.
   a. Initial determination if IRB oversight is needed can take up to 5 business days. If IRB oversight is determined as necessary, further review can take up to 60 days.
   b. Once it has been determined that IRB oversight is NOT required for a particular survey, there is no need to have it re-evaluated each time you conduct the survey.

3. Review the Survey Calendar and coordinate with the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (IPE) to determine an appropriate survey time-frame and audience segment.[ii]
   a. Significant survey overlap and Reading Week must be avoided.

4. If needed, a contact list can be requested by contacting desroor@smu.edu. Include copy of IRB approval or affirmation from Research Compliance that IRB oversight is not needed.

B. Email Policy and Resource:
1. Group broadcast email messages must conform to SMU's policy on Broadcast E-mail Messages on Campus (Policy Number 8.1.16).
2. If you need advice on best survey practices, please contact IPE at assessment@smu.edu.

C. Exclusions

These procedures exclude those brief evaluative surveys sent to individuals after they have attended or participated in a campus event, course, or activity.

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[i] The main role of IRB is to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants are protected.

[ii] To prevent survey fatigue, it is possible to sample audiences to get the information we need. Sampling allows more surveys to take place while each audience member receives fewer solicitations for participation.

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