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**Responsible Executive:** Provost & VP for Academic Affairs

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# Surveys

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## I. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

Surveys are widely recognized as an important means for collecting information that can maintain and assure educational quality, enhance institutional effectiveness, improve student and employee satisfaction, contribute to general knowledge of campus function and culture, and meet external accountability needs. The purpose of this policy is to better manage and coordinate surveys taking place across campus. A coordinated survey strategy will reduce survey fatigue among University of South Dakota (USD) students, employees, faculty, and alumni as well as improve response rates of surveys that are critical for institutional decision-making purposes.

Coordination of surveys through a central office allows for maintenance of a survey calendar for a wholistic understanding of survey activities, broader dissemination of survey results to better inform campus stakeholders, and coordination for optimal timing of additional surveys offered within academic departments, colleges or schools, and/or institutional departments.

## II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and students conducting a campus-wide or administrative survey as well as external requests to assist in the administration of a survey to campus.

The types of surveys that fall under this policy are those that seek to obtain and retain data sets for decision-making. These typically include surveys that address faculty promotion and tenure, graduate outcomes, campus climate, satisfaction, strategic planning initiatives, and accreditation or compliance needs.

The following types of surveys or questionnaires would be exempt from reporting the requirements outlined in this policy.

- Questionnaires or surveys used to assess course or program learning outcomes.
- Surveys conducted by students to meet the requirements for a course or degree program.
- Student Course evaluations.
- Evaluation forms or surveys given to event participants to gather feedback.
- Forms or questionnaires used for administrative purposes (scheduling, voting, solicitation of nominations, elections, etc.).
- Surveys sent by student organizations to their membership to poll members, evaluate events or nominate officers.

### III. DEFINITIONS

**Academic Research Surveys** - Faculty may generate surveys as a part of a research study and protocols. This type of survey, along with surveys generated by students for research related to a course, would be considered Academic Research Surveys. These surveys will likely be subject to the IRB process through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, though they would not be subject to review for approval under this policy. However, notifying IRPA personnel and utilizing the master schedule prior to survey administration aids in the overall goal of reducing survey fatigue.

**Administrative Surveys** – An administrative survey is a survey administered by colleges/schools or their departments, academic support units, student support units, libraries, or administrative units. These surveys impact on the administrative area but do not survey the entire USD population (for example: a dean emailing all faculty to respond to a satisfaction survey or a student services unit providing a survey to all students that participate in university housing or Student Government Association regarding additional support services).

**Assessment Committee** – a standing committee appointed by University Senate. Committee members represent each college and school as well as student services, undergraduate and graduate students and IRPA.

**Assistant Provost and Director of Assessment** – represents IRPA and the Office of Academic Affairs and is the primary personnel for assessment and surveys. They will oversee the entirety of survey administration processes at the University of South Dakota including scheduling, implementing, and analyzing as needed.

**Campus-wide Surveys** – A questionnaire consisting of one or more items for which the target respondents include an entire population of members of the USD community. Campus-wide surveys may include instruments that sample a significant subpopulation of students, faculty, staff, administrators

and/or alumni. Campus-wide surveys are typically sponsored by the IRPA office (for example: a survey that is given to all graduating seniors or all incoming freshmen).

**Coordinator, Student and Institutional Assessment** – responsible for the logistics of survey efforts including survey administration, maintaining contact with vendors, and coordinating campus efforts to engage appropriate audiences.

**IRB** – Institutional Review Board. Housed in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, the IRB reviews and monitors research involving human subjects.

**IRPA** – Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment. Under the Academic Affairs unit, IRPA supports the university community by providing information, services, and data analysis that inform and enhance strategic decision-making.

**Primary Survey Administrator** - The USD staff member that serves as the primary individual administering a survey. This individual or these individuals are the key contact(s) for requested survey administrations and are the primary liaison between IRPA and campus stakeholders with questions. They will coordinate survey administration functions and are responsible for archiving and disseminating survey results.

**Survey Committee** – this committee (personnel from IRPA, marketing and various departments as appropriate) will evaluate surveys that meet the threshold of respondents to ensure that the questions and data derived from external surveys is appropriate and not covered by other survey instruments.

**Survey Timelines** – Surveys have a timeline that describes the duration that the survey is administered. To this policy, the survey timeline also references the official survey schedule held by IRPA which is updated annually as new surveys are reviewed and administered.

**Survey Request Form** – An online submission form used to initiate the process of survey approval and inclusion into the institutional survey calendar for Administrative and Campus-wide Surveys.

**USD** - The University of South Dakota, and constituent of the South Dakota Board of Regents, with its main campus located in Vermillion, South Dakota. This includes officially designated locations, programs, or activities of USD including USD-Sioux Falls and other off-campus locations.

#### IV. PROCEDURES

All campus-wide surveys and administrative surveys administered to 50% or more of the unit's stakeholder group (50% of the unit's faculty, staff, or students) or 100 or more respondents should be submitted for review by the

Survey Committee – unless they fall under the category of Academic Research Surveys or are referenced as exemptions. IRPA will then approve and assist in the coordination before the survey is administered by referencing a survey calendar and timeline. IRPA will maintain the official survey calendar and timeline to serve as a clearinghouse for all administrative and campus-wide surveys.

Faculty, staff, and students who intend to conduct a campus-wide survey or administrative survey for more than 100 individuals must complete an online Survey Request Form (see 6.1) through InfoReady at least two weeks prior to the requested survey launch date. IRPA will begin the review process with the Survey Committee and may suggest the elimination of survey questions, combining surveys and/or suggest changes to survey scheduling to minimize the burden on the USD community. Any recurring survey would only need to be reviewed once. The Primary Survey Administrator would be responsible for the submission of a new Survey Request Form if any parameters of the survey change in future administration.

If the Primary Survey Administrator needs assistance in designing a survey, IRPA will provide support with question design, defining the target population, and identifying a sample of that population when appropriate. If IRPA's assistance is not needed to identify a sample population, the Primary Survey Administrator shall notify IRPA of the survey recruitment method(s) within the Survey Request Form.

IRPA may request a plan from the Primary Survey Administrator for distributing survey results ahead of survey distribution. This will allow the proper use of resources from Marketing, IT and other pertinent departments across campus.

When appropriate, IRPA will work with the Primary Survey Administrator to coordinate with IT to obtain email addresses, ensure emails are whitelisted, and any additional IT or cyber security needs.

Some surveys submitted for review may require IRB approval. IRPA will notify the Primary Survey Administrator ahead of survey distribution in such event. See USD ORSP [Human Subjects Protection](#).

IRPA may develop internal protocols with further guidance consistent with this policy.

IRPA staff will regularly review surveys included on the official timeline and their relative administration dates and data availability. IRPA staff are also responsible for providing high level reports of survey efforts across campus to the Senate Assessment Committee and institutional leadership as appropriate.

When a survey is administered with clear connections to current surveys sponsored by IRPA, IRPA staff may request to review results to triangulate with other institutional data for better data informed decision-making.

IRPA will work with Marketing as appropriate to distribute results of surveys sponsored by IRPA.

## V. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

[InfoReady Form](#)

IRPA Survey Timeline

[Institutional Survey Dashboards](#)

[ORSP Policies](#)