Surveys and other data collection strategies (e.g., focus groups, telephone interviews) are frequently conducted at the university, and the results provide valuable feedback on our performance and guide efforts for improvements. Successful surveying requires special expertise and a detailed understanding of the components of good survey practices. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) has this expertise and is eager to serve as an institutional resource for any members of the university who might want to conduct surveys or other data collection.

The Survey Working Group, composed of representatives from administrative and academic units from the Denver and Anschutz Medical Campuses, is a sounding board and guiding body for OIRE and those who wish to develop/administer surveys or other data collection strategies. The Survey Working Group sets the agenda and guides the timelines for institutionally administered surveys to students, faculty, staff and alumni. One example of an institutionally administered survey is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is administered to our Denver Campus freshmen and seniors to collect information about their experiences here at CU Denver and to provide leadership with data for curriculum enhancements and improvements of campus life.

Because of the accessibility of survey tools, such as Survey Monkey, and because individuals and units are eager to collect information from and about their constituents, there is justified concern that surveys might significantly overlap, thereby causing survey fatigue and the loss of valuable responses from recipients. The Survey Working Group will be happy to assist members of our university community in designing well-crafted surveys, determining the most appropriate timing for administration, improving coordination among survey administrators, avoiding content and timing overlap, and reducing survey fatigue. Survey fatigue is a significant factor in depressing response rates and low response rates can negate even the most brilliantly designed survey.

The consultative process with OIRE and the Survey Working Group includes:

- **Evaluation of Existing Datasets:** Determining if there are data that already exist that may provide you with what you need (no need to reinvent the wheel!)
  - Have similar surveys been administered?

- **Modality Determination:** Establishing the best method of collecting the information (e.g., online survey, paper survey, focus group)

- **Instrument Design:** Developing items and response categories, ordering items, using white space to improve readability, etc.

- **Population Selection:** Determining the most appropriate population(s) to include, sampling, etc.

- **Messaging:** Creating awareness about your survey
  - How do you engage with your population?
  - What information do you share about your results...and with whom?
The **goals of this process** include:

- Excellent survey design and optimal survey strategies
- Reduced survey fatigue and improved response rates
- Development of a community of surveyors who share their expertise, instruments/items, and results

Anyone who desires to engage in this consultative process is welcome to do so. We hope that everyone who is interested in conducting a survey that includes large numbers of students, faculty, staff, or alumni across departments, schools, or colleges, or that samples from entire populations (e.g., all undergraduate students, all tenured faculty, all graduates from a particular year) will utilize our services and resources. However, while we are here to support your efforts, there is no restriction for those who wish only to administer course evaluations, participants’ event evaluations, and point-of-service surveys that are addressed to specific users/clients. If you are not certain if it would be valuable for the Survey Working Group to know about your data collection endeavor please, [contact OIRE](http://oire.ucdenver.edu).

Those who wish to administer a survey can also review the survey calendar posted on the [OIRE website](http://oire.ucdenver.edu). The calendar provides information about the large institution surveys that are ongoing/planned, during which times competing surveys should not be administered.

With regard to **external surveys**, there may be times when university personnel are approached by an external individual, group, or other entity, such as CU Foundation, students from other institutions, or the Downtown Denver Partnership, for the purpose of soliciting participation in a survey that involves University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus’ students, faculty, staff, or alumni across departments, schools, or colleges; or that samples from entire populations (e.g., all undergraduate students, all tenured faculty, all graduates from a particular year). University personnel approached by such groups are strongly encouraged to contact OIRE to ensure the external survey does not overlap or otherwise conflict with a university-wide survey.

As a part of developing a **compendium of institutional instruments/items**, we ask that when you [contact OIRE](http://oire.ucdenver.edu), you provide the following information:

- Instrument name
- Overview and objectives associated with the instrument
- Intended participants (e.g., students, faculty, alumni, recent graduates, etc.)
- Timeframe planned for survey administration
- Administration modality (e.g., online survey, paper and pencil survey, focus group, etc.)
- Contact information for the individual responsible for the survey/focus group/etc.

Some surveys may be subject to review and regulation by the **Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB)**, the university’s institutional review board. COMIRB protects the rights and welfare of human research subjects who participate in research activities such as surveys. Survey developers who are not sure whether their survey activity requires COMIRB oversight should go to the [COMIRB website](http://comirb.ucdenver.edu).
Some surveys may also require approval from the institutional unit (program, department, college, and/or school) enrolling the student population you seek to survey. For example, in the School of Medicine, requests to survey medical students are vetted through a subcommittee of its Curriculum Steering Committee. You may need to check with the appropriate institutional unit to ensure access to your survey population.

As you consider your data collection options, here are some things to think about:

- Do you know that you might not have to ask those demographic questions? Call us to find out how!
- How do you plan to obtain the contact information so that you can engage your population? Maybe we can help!
- Did you know that wording of questions can bias your results? Want to know what a leading question is?
- Have you included the appropriate domains within your instrument? What’s a domain? Ask us!
- Did you know that overlapping response categories produce indecipherable results? Not sure what we’re talking about? Ask!
- A good way to engender buy-in from your audience is to explain how the results from the current survey will be used and, if possible, how you’ve used results from prior surveys to make changes/improvements.
- Did you know that there is anti-spam legislation that dictates what information is included in surveys/emails to external constituents?

Increased sharing of collected survey outcomes across the institution and with your surveyed population is one way to demonstrate the usefulness (and USE) of survey results. Therefore, please consider sharing your results with the Survey Working Group, including:

- Purpose of the survey/hypotheses
- Population surveyed/included
- What types of items were included
- Results, including response rate
- How the data were used (e.g., for improvement, change)

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