WORKING WITH SURVEYS
Student Affairs Professional Development Brown Bag - January 2015

Institutional Research, Effectiveness, & Planning
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Overview

A good survey can be a great way to learn more about what others think about your work and to identify potential improvements. Yet, bad surveys can waste lots of time – yours and the respondents. Planning your survey well helps ensure you get the information you want.

Clarify Purpose → Identify Process → Develop Questions → Organize Survey → Pilot Survey → Collect Data → Analyze & Use Data

Clarify Purpose

- What is the primary purpose in fielding the survey?
- What do you hope to learn?
- Who are the best people to help you learn?

Identify Survey Process

- How do you reach your survey target?
- Should you use an Internet survey, personal interview or focus group?
- How many participants do you need in your survey?
- How long is your survey?

Develop Questions

- Measuring the underlying concepts.
- Will the question's answer help you learn?
- Should you use close-ended or open-ended questions?
- Qualtrics question library.
- Avoid leading questions that may introduce response bias.
- Avoid question complexity: double negatives, technical terms or jargon.

Organize a Survey

- Qualtrics as an Internet survey tool.
- Give clear instructions.
- Think about question order.
    - Could the response to one question influence the next question?
- Do all questions apply to all respondents?
- Leave personal or demographic questions until the end of the survey.
- Avoid long surveys.

Pilot Survey

- Seek feedback with your department to assess if the survey is clear and measures the appropriate concepts.
- Pre-test the survey with several target individuals to determine the survey's clarity.
- Ask your pre-test individuals to note any confusion.
- Make appropriate changes to improve your survey based on feedback.

Collect Data

- How and when should you send out your survey?
- What if you have low response or survey completion rates?
- Are you systematically excluding certain individuals from responding to the survey?

Analyze Data

- What does the data suggest about your primary survey purpose?
- Methods of understanding your data.
  - Using frequency counts and percent distributions.
  - Understanding levels of measurement (nominal, ordinal, or continuous data).
  - Evaluating open-ended responses.
  - Understanding survey internal and external validity.
  - Thinking about "not applicable" responses.
- Substantively what do the results mean to your department?

Avoid Common Survey Mistakes

- Long surveys or creating response frustration can lead respondents to drop out.
- Too many open-ended questions can lead to frustration
- Spend time thinking about and developing your survey questions. Check to see if other departments use the same questions or question wording.
- Break the survey into several separate pages making sure that individuals do not have to scroll down.
- Test to make sure your survey works on computers, tablets and smart-phones.

Survey Resources

- Qualtrics Survey Design and Question Help
  - http://www.qualtrics.com/resource-library/
  - http://www.qualtrics.com/university/researchsuite/misc-pages/misc/learn-qualtrics-in-5-steps
  - http://www.qualtrics.com/university/researchsuite/basic-building/getting-started/introduction/libraries/

- General Survey Design
  - http://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf
  - http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary/uploads/resources/Survey_Guide.pdf
  - http://oea.uchc.edu/tips_creating/
  - http://www.opia.psu.edu/sites/default/files/insights014.pdf