

## Overview

The office of Institutional Research & Analysis (IR&A) is responsible for coordinating and conducting several institutional surveys for a variety of university sponsors. Penn's survey plan is a comprehensive program designed to assist in institutional effectiveness efforts and to support the University's mission and purpose. Data collected in these survey initiatives provide insight into the experiences, opinions, and satisfaction levels of members of our university community.

## Survey Responsibility

IR&A manages survey administration, data collection, storage, analysis, and report preparation. All survey initiatives have project owners. These owners are generally executives from the Offices of the President and Provost. Additionally, each institutional survey has an appropriate sponsor (or sponsors) responsible for advising on all aspects of the survey administration and analysis. Undergraduate surveys are sponsored by the Council of Undergraduate Deans, Graduate Surveys are sponsored by the Council of Graduate Deans, and Faculty Surveys are sponsored by the Office of Faculty Affairs. Sponsors advise on the choice of survey instruments and institutional questions, definition of survey populations and sampling designs, administration schedules and modes, uses of incentives, analytical objectives and distribution plans. Final decisions on all aspects of survey administration and analysis are made by project owners.

## Survey Plan

Penn's current survey plan combines internal and external instruments to collect information from both student and faculty populations. All currently employed external instruments allow Penn to append institutionally relevant questions. In many cases, these institutional questions focus on culture and climate issues at Penn. When possible, we use similar institutional questions across surveys, thus allowing for comparisons between campus populations. In the absence of appropriate external instruments, Penn develops its own internal survey instruments to gather target information. Clearly, generating overlapping questions for the various populations is easily accommodated when internal instruments are used. A detailed [survey schedule](#) that chronicles both past survey participation, as well as tentative plans moving forward, is available via the IR&A website.

The survey schedule maximizes the collection of useful information while minimizing the survey burden on the populations we study. While we administer an incoming student survey on an annual basis, most other instruments are scheduled on a biennial basis. Many constituents across the institution are interested in receiving survey feedback about their particular units. To ensure we gather enough data to accommodate this desire, we believe the most efficient and economical approach for our campus is to survey entire target populations. Past experience has shown that relatively subtle changes occur in response patterns during subsequent years of survey administration. Therefore surveys are staggered over time in order to avoid over-surveying our populations and to improve response rates. Planned staggering also allows us to engage in longitudinal studies.

Demographic information collected in the majority of our surveys allows investigation into response differences by group (e.g. discipline, gender, race, etc.). Data gathered in many of our surveys can also be linked to other information contained in Penn data systems, allowing for more in depth analysis.

The majority of our undergraduate surveys are conducted in coordination with the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE). Participation in these initiatives allows us to compare Penn responses with student responses at other COFHE schools, such as our Ivy League peers. Involvement in the Association of American Universities Data Exchange (AAUDE) further allows us to investigate differences between Penn and other Doctoral/Research-Intensive institutions. AAUDE has developed sets of core questions to be administered within surveys that are distributed to graduating seniors, undergraduate alumni, Ph.D. recipients, and Faculty.

## Survey Repository

A [repository](#) is accessible via the IR&A website. For each survey, the repository contains:

- ❖ a copy of the survey instrument
- ❖ a survey inventory document
- ❖ a top-level summary of the survey results, requiring login and available only to the Penn Community.

## Survey Instruments

In an effort to inform constituents of data availability, survey instruments are accessible to the Penn community via the web (see Survey Repository, above). Broad awareness of current survey participation is intended to help avoid duplication in data gathering efforts on campus.

## Survey Inventory Documents

For each survey initiative, the Survey Inventory document provides information about each of the following:

- **Survey Instrument:** name of the instrument which will be used
- **Survey Owner(s):** the survey owner is responsible for final decisions on all aspects of survey administration and analysis
- **Survey Sponsor(s):** the survey sponsor advises on all aspects of the survey initiative
- **Study Population:** a complete definition of the population to be studied (e.g. undergraduate students, entering first-year students, Ph.D. recipients, members of the standing faculty)
- **Invited Participants:** a detailed description of the individuals who will be asked to participate, in most cases it will be the entire population. In others, it will be an appropriately selected sample from the population
- **Administration Schedule Plan:** the planned administration schedule (e.g. annual, biennial, every four years, etc.) and survey duration
- **Brief Survey Description**
- **Relationship to Other Instruments:** many surveys have overlapping questions allowing for longitudinal study of specific populations as well as comparisons across populations
- **Planned Survey Results**
  - a top-level institutional summary, which provides basic frequency counts for each survey item, will be compiled shortly after each survey closes
  - additional summaries will allow for the comparison between groups (discipline, gender, race, etc.)
  - when available, summaries comparing Penn's responses to peer institutions will be prepared
  - additional statistical analyses will be planned as appropriate
- **Result Distribution Plans**
  - In most cases, the top-level institutional summary will be available to the entire Penn community via the IR&A website
  - Additional plans for result distribution will be specified for each survey initiative

## **Top-level Summary of Survey Results**

In most cases, the top-level institutional summaries are available to the entire Penn community via the IR&A website. These summaries are designed to be immediately useful to campus constituents and, when necessary, include brief directions on how to read and interpret results.

## **Data Confidentiality and Security**

All unit record-level data is stored in secure environments accessible only by institutional research professionals. All reports shared with members of the campus community are aggregate in nature, and individual student responses are not identifiable.