

College Operating Procedures (COP)



Procedure Title: Student Surveys
Procedure Number: 03-0304
Originating Department: Provost

Specific Authority:

Board Policy Florida Statute n/a
Florida Administrative Code n/a

Procedure Actions: Adopted: 06/01/2010; 02/15/2011; 02/11/2019; 8/16/2021

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this procedure is to provide rules and guidelines related to the development and use of research surveys or polls used to determine dispositions, attitudes, and opinions about college programs, services, employer satisfaction with Florida SouthWestern State College (College) graduates, and community educational needs. Compliance with these rules and guidelines ensures that faculty, staff, and students employ standards of good practice in educational research and enables the College to demonstrate continuing improvement and accomplishment of the mission (instructional effectiveness).

Guidelines:

The College will periodically distribute surveys in order to obtain information useful in evaluating education programs, student services, and many other aspects of the College and its mission. These surveys may be administered through the web-based survey research software licensed by the College or, if necessary, in the classroom.

Procedures:

1.1 CENTRALIZED DOCUMENTATION OF SURVEYS AND RESULTS

The web-based survey research software should be used for the development and administration of surveys, except where a paper survey administered in the classroom is necessary. All faculty, staff, and students can create an account in the survey software via a College username and password, which is accessed through the College Portal.

1.2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS & SURVEY REGISTRATION

Each College school, individual department, or unit is responsible for their own surveys, however, any survey involving students as respondents must be registered with the Office of Academic Assessment and the Office of Accountability and Effectiveness (both parts of Team AASPIRE). This procedure addresses both *college-wide* and *departmental* surveys. College-wide surveys are those designed to sample from the population of the College students-at-large with the purpose of institutional improvement. Departmental surveys differ from college-wide surveys in the scope of survey goals. Typically, a departmental survey attempts to determine satisfaction with a particular program or service from students who are known to have participated in that program or used that service.

The Office of Academic Assessment and Office of Accountability and Effectiveness provide guidance and assistance to faculty and staff with survey development, administration, analysis, and use of results when requested. Survey registration is required to ensure a centralized point of inquiry to both expedite current studies (if previous studies from other parties have already gleaned information on a planned study) and inform future studies (if later studies from other parties need a baseline from which to begin their research).

Procedures 1.1 – 1.4 outline the steps that college faculty, staff, and students should take to assist the College in centrally documenting its research processes and results. Procedures 2.1 – 2.3 provide guidelines for the College faculty and staff who wish to conduct departmental surveys.

1.3 APPROVAL FOR SURVEY INITIATION

COLLEGE WIDE SURVEYS. All *college-wide* surveys must be approved by the Office of the Provost (handled by the Office of Accountability and Effectiveness (Team AASPIRE)).

DEPARTMENTAL SURVEYS. All *departmental* surveys must be approved by the applicable Department Learning Assessment Coordinator and Chair, or Director, or Dean, or Vice President.

1.4 SURVEY RESULTS

Electronic survey results are collected and stored in the web-based survey research software licensed by the College. Additionally, reports issued to the college by outside vendors, or internally to a department or discipline, are stored either on the webpages of the Office of Institutional Research or Office of Academic Assessment.

2.1 GUIDELINES ON SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Surveys distributed for research to be presented or published publicly must follow the College's Institutional Review Board guidelines to ensure human rights are protected (see [COP 03-1601](#)).

2.2 POPULATION & SAMPLING METHOD

The selection of a survey sample and question design should follow ethical guidelines for "human subjects research" documented by the College's Institutional Review Board Policy. Examples of these protections include parental consent for research on minor children (under age 18) and assurances of confidentiality to survey respondents.

A survey "population" may be defined as the entire set of individuals for which the survey has been designed. For example, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), conducted every two years, defines its target population as the set of students in traditional (face-to-face) on-campus classes who are 18 years of age or older and enrolled in credit-bearing classes in the Spring term. Because it would be impractical to survey all students, only students in a random selection of about 80 classes actually take the survey, yielding about

800-1,000 responses. Because the selection is random (and appropriate sample size), it is possible to infer that the results of the sample also apply to the larger population of students. The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is a product and service of the CCSSE, “with a more narrowed focus on early student experiences”. SENSE, usually administered in the early weeks of the fall academic terms, “helps community colleges discover why some entering students persist and succeed and others do not”. The CCSSE and SENSE are thus examples of *quantitative research*. These instruments seek to answer questions of *how much* engagement in learning activities different types of student’s report.

On the other hand, *qualitative research* seeks to answer questions such as *why or how* students might, for example, favor one type of learning over another. Qualitative methods include individual interviews and focus groups. The selection of individuals for these surveys may instead be purposeful (rather than random) in order to examine responses from a diverse group of students in greater depth. Statistical inference is not possible with this type of survey. However, an exploration of the *why and how* often provides a more nuanced view of student needs.

2.3 INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Two major concerns of survey research are *validity and reliability*. *Validity* is a concern about whether the survey questions cover the relevant areas of research need and whether the results of a survey sample may be validly inferred to the larger target population. Thus, the content of the survey questions and the sampling method are keys to ensuring validity of the research.

Reliability, on the other hand, is a concern about whether the questions on the survey were precise and whether the conditions of survey administration were such that the same results from the same student might have been expected during another administration of the survey. Thus, the student’s interpretation of the both the survey *directions* and *questions* are keys to ensuring the reliability of the survey instrument used to conduct the research.