

# UIS University Wide Survey Policy

## I. Policy Information

<b>Policy Title:</b>	UIS University Wide Survey Policy
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
<b>Responsible Official:</b>	Office of the Provost
<b>Approved by:</b>	Chancellor's Cabinet
<b>Date Approved:</b>	December 12, 2017
<b>Revised Date:</b>	<b>June 2, 2026</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	December 12, 2017
<b>Targeted Review Date:</b>	<b>June 2, 2029</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>Associate Provost for</b> Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE)

Contact the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness ([oire@uis.edu](mailto:oire@uis.edu))

Contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs ([ora@uis.edu](mailto:ora@uis.edu))

Contact Information Technology Services ([techsupport@uis.edu](mailto:techsupport@uis.edu))

### **Related Policies:**

Posted on the [UIS Institutional Survey website](#)

## II. Scope

This Policy applies to all unsolicited surveys and questionnaires (i.e. web-based, app-based, paper-based, or e-mail ) sent to a significant portion<sup>1</sup> of students, faculty, alumni, or staff. It does not restrict:

- Surveys sent by voluntary associations to their own members; for example, a registered student organization may freely poll its own members or a department may survey its own faculty and staff;
- Surveys sent out to all members of a voluntary e-mail list;
- Departmental surveys of their program students for assessment and outreach;
- Electronic collection of information required for employment or matriculation;
- Electronic communication between a faculty member and his or her students for non-research purposes;
- Post-service satisfaction surveys (i.e., tech support, workshop, health services, etc.);

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<sup>1</sup> "Significant portion" means a survey that is sent to at least 10% of the target population (see Appendix: FAQ 1)

- Surveys sent by academic colleges/units to students enrolled in programs or courses in their respective college/unit

### **III. Purpose**

Due to the prevalence and ease of administering surveys to a large population, “survey fatigue” is common among university populations. The lower response rates on surveys decreases their validity and strains the resources of student, faculty, alumni, and staff time, as well as expenses incurred for using nationally normed surveys (e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement).

Therefore, the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) is implementing this Policy to coordinate surveys at our university.

### **VI. Statement of Policy**

University-wide surveys will be conducted in a manner consistent with ethical considerations and security best practices. Since UIS students, faculty, alumni, and staff will be surveyed, the results will be considered the property of UIS with the expectation that they will be shared appropriately with the university community. Reasons for not sharing the results of a survey require an explanation, which must be provided when submitting a request to administer a university survey.

Respondent survey data must be kept confidential. Thus, data shared must not include personally identifiable information such as social security numbers or names, education records, etc. Reports in any format (paper, electronic, or verbal) using the data must not identify individual respondents.

Summary data with small subgroup sample sizes must not be reported if it could potentially reveal data about an individual person. In general, sample sizes of nine or fewer must not be reported; depending on the summary report, it may be necessary to set a higher threshold in some cases.

### **VII. Procedures**

For Internal Surveys. Requests to survey a significant portion and/or surveying for an extended time period a group of UIS students, faculty, alumni, and staff, or above the college level, shall be submitted to the OIRE for approval, using the UIS University Survey Administration Request Form. The OIRE will review the request and advise potential surveyors of possible scheduling conflicts, as published on the Institutional Survey Calendar. In the case of duplicate efforts, the OIRE will provide guidance on the use of current data sets.

When Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is needed as part of a survey effort, surveyors should obtain IRB approval prior to submitting a survey request. Submitted survey requests will be reviewed by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs to determine whether IRB approval is needed, and if so, whether the submitted survey request adheres to the plans approved by the IRB.

For External Surveys. In the case of a UIS student, faculty, or staff member receiving a request from an external party to share a survey link with the rest of the university, they should refer the inquirer to this policy and NOT forward the email. If the UIS community member thinks that the survey is valuable, they may request to take part in the survey themselves, or they can request to participate as a collaborator. Collaborative research involving university-wide survey data is encouraged with the understanding that the results will be shared with the university community. If the external surveyor is in collaboration with a member of the UIS community, then the survey will be considered of internal origin, and Section II of this Policy will apply. There must be a written agreement with any approved third party, ensuring compliance with this policy.

Email Procedure. Under current UIS email policies the ability to send emails to large portions of the UIS community are granted to a limited number of managers who are responsible for email lists (e.g., faculty, staff, first-year students...). Additionally, other university-wide communications are monitored by staff in Information Technology Services. When they receive a request to send a survey to one of their email lists, they will refer the inquirer to this Policy. The requestor should then submit a request to the OIRE in order to coordinate their survey of the university and ensure compliance with this Policy.

#### Restrictions on sample selection

- a. Students who have notified the Registrar that they wish to suppress all directory information under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) should never be included in a sample that is provided to a surveyor.
- b. By law, no person under the age of 18 may be surveyed without permission of a parent or guardian. All survey sample selections, including approved full population surveys, should exclude such persons. If it is not possible to exclude them from the invitation (e.g. when using aUIS email distribution list), the survey consent form must include a statement requiring the respondent to be at least 18 years of age.

The UIS Advancement Office maintains the official list of alumni and their contact information, so units must contact them in order to survey alumni. The Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts will coordinate survey requests with the OIRE, following the procedures described in this Policy.

## Confidentiality issues

Samples based on private information: When a survey sample is drawn based on non-directory information for students (see FERPA policy at <http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/staff/ferpa>) or sensitive or confidential information (for faculty and staff), the identities of the persons sampled may not be provided to the surveyor. Examples of private information include samples based on race/ethnicity, gender, age, and grade point average.

## Ensuring the confidentiality of respondents

When surveying for Human Subjects Research, surveyors must obtain IRB approval for procedures to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. When an IRB-approved informed consent agreement promises that responses will be confidential, the surveyor must aggregate responses to ensure that no individual responses are identifiable. In addition, the surveyor must ensure that all electronic records are secured adequately and access is limited to a small number of persons who understand the confidentiality requirements.

Where respondent identity is collected, e.g. by requiring the respondent to enter a unique code or using an authentication method such as network id and password, the identities of the respondents should be maintained separately from the responses. Unless the approved research design requires on-going contact with the respondents, respondent identity information should be destroyed after the survey is completed.

Free-form comments must be screened and parts of any comments that identify a respondent or other person must be redacted before publication.

Any promise of confidentiality may be superseded by a legal duty to take action when a survey response reveals a potentially dangerous situation or illegal activity or is the subject of a legal process. Surveyors should consult University Counsel in such situations.

## Data management plan

In order to maintain the confidentiality of research subjects, raw data must be securely stored. Additionally, a plan for how the data will be archived at the completion of the project is required. The UIS Information Security Policy and UIS Data Policy further describe these concepts and are compliance requirements. Questions about best practices for data management may be directed to the Office of Institutional Research. For questions related to the technical aspects of data security (servers, software, passwords, etc.), please contact ITS.

## Incentives

Incentives such as prize drawings or giveaways can improve survey response rates but may compromise the confidentiality of the responses. Research surveys should follow procedures for incentives approved by the IRB Office such as redirecting users to a second web site to register for or receive the incentive. Consult OBFS and Financial Aid policies regarding appropriate use of incentives for different populations in advance.

## **IV. Definitions**

**University-wide survey.** A survey of any group or unit within the UIS community which represents a significant portion (at least 10%) of the population (e.g. >600 students) or goes beyond the college level (e.g. “all first-year students” would include undergraduate freshmen from all four colleges, and so this Policy would apply).

**Surveys Originating Internally.** If the survey is being conducted by a member of the university system (UIS, UIUC, UIC, UI System Office) as part of their administrative duties, as part of a research project, or as part of a thesis or class assignment, refer to Section II. Surveys conducted by parties external to the System are covered in Section III.

**Surveys Originating Externally.** The UIS community maintains its rights to privacy, within the limits of the Freedom of Information Act and FERPA. Therefore, surveys of UIS students, faculty, alumni, and staff by external parties will be denied except in cases where a member of the university community is a research collaborator. In those cases, the policies and procedures of Section II will apply.

**Subgroup Sample Size.** A sample size for a subgroup is the number of respondents within a population from a specific group, such as an academic major. If only 9 students respond to a survey from a particular major, then reporting those responses at the level of major could jeopardize the privacy of those respondents’ answers. Standard practice is to only report cell sizes of 10 or greater.

**Anonymity** means that the source of the response to a survey cannot be identified, which is desirable when dealing with sensitive subjects. But even a supposedly anonymous online survey could be traced to an individual through their IP address, thus compromising the anonymity. Most survey data should be viewed as confidential, meaning that the results will be guarded. Raw results should not be made public. Best practices for reporting and securing the data are described on the UIS ITS website. Unless extraordinary measures are taken to eliminate electronic traces, surveyors should not promise anonymity.

## V. Consequences for Violations of this Policy

If any individual fails to follow the terms of this Policy prior to initiating a university-wide survey, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with relevant disciplinary procedures contained in the relevant statutes, handbooks, policies, procedures, practices or contracts.

## VI. Exceptions

Requests for exceptions to this Policy may be made in writing to the OIRE for review.

Date approval recommended by Chancellors Cabinet: 06/02/2026

Date approved by Chancellor: 06/10/2026

Chancellor Signature: 