

Administration of University of Mississippi Survey Panels

Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning

Policy Purpose

Centralized procedures for requesting student/faculty/staff/alumni sample panels for surveys

Definition

A sample panel is list of individuals who will be asked to complete a survey. This typically includes publically available directory information, but may include other data about individuals (e.g., classification, gender).

Background & Rationale

Numerous UM units receive internal and external requests for information related to surveys (e.g., email addresses, FERPA-protected student data, personnel and alumni addresses and data). With no established central guidance, diverse units could provide inconsistent responses and risk violations of federal and state regulations and individual privacy.

What this Policy Covers

This policy applies to all requests for sample panel information (e.g., email addresses, FERPA-protected student data, personnel and alumni addresses and data) for the purpose of directly soliciting individual participation from UM students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni in a survey – which is an online or paper-based data collection tool.

What is Excluded from this Policy

1. Surveys within an office or academic department where the survey author already has access to the sample panel
2. Surveys evaluating an event or program where the survey author already has access to the sample panel (e.g., surveys sent out to individuals who attended a workshop or event)
3. Institutional or organizational elections
4. Surveys that recruit participants indirectly using tools such as social media, UM Today, or the Daily Mississippian

What this Policy Aims to Accomplish:

- Coordinate surveys, potentially resulting in
 - a. higher quality surveys (through review and feedback)
 - b. less “survey fatigue” for UM students, faculty, staff, and alumni – who are frequently asked to do surveys
 - c. increased survey response rates resulting in more valid survey results (as a result of both a. and b. and ongoing research with UM samples and distribution methods)
- Ensure federal and state regulations and laws are met
- Protect personal information

Requests for sample panels for surveys from individuals or organizations outside of the University will rarely be approved. However, a paper copy of the UM directory can be purchased from the Office of the Registrar.

Procedural Steps

1. A central committee, the Survey Panel Group (SPG), receives survey-related requests and supporting materials submitted online, including:
 - a. Completed *Sample Panel Application* (see below)
 - b. Final survey
 - c. Documentation of IRB approval, if applicable
2. SPG reviews survey quality, purpose, value to UM, & timing (for conflicts)
3. SPG approves, suggests modifications, or denies request
4. If approved, Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning (IREP coordinates providing the sample panel to requestor

SPG Committee Members

SPG members come from:

- IREP
- Registrar
- Institutional Review Board
- General Counsel
- Alumni Affairs
- Information Technology

Process

The *Sample Panel Application* on IREP's website, <http://irep.olemiss.edu>, requires the following:

- Purpose of the survey and/or how it will be used
- Contact information, including department or unit
- Proof of IRB approval, if applicable
- Description of the sample, sample size, and justification for the sample size (requests for sample panels greater than 33% of the total population will rarely be approved)
- Information about the survey methodology including examples of similar surveys, if applicable
- Recruitment procedures and incentives
- Plan for disseminating aggregate survey results
- A final draft of the survey

IREP screens applications for completion and sends it to the SPG for review.

SPG review criteria:

- Survey has a clear and defined purpose
- The survey questions will likely meet the survey's purpose
- Survey is well written and error free
- Survey is an appropriate length
- A maximum of four (4) contacts (one initial recruitment and three subsequent reminders) for soliciting survey participation (some exceptions may be granted)
- Each solicitation must allow panel members to opt out of additional reminders
- Requested sample size is reasonable given the justification
- Survey adheres to all FERPA laws & relevant HR policies
- Aggregate results must usually be available to the university community
- Survey timing does not conflict with similar university-supported initiatives

SPG Review & Outcome:

- The SPG will review all materials in order to approve/disapprove the request for the sample
- Requests that require only directory information for sample panels will generally not require approval from General Counsel, however, requests for other student-related information require General Counsel approval to ensure compliance with FERPA
- If approved by SPG, individuals will be notified and given access by IREP to an appropriate sample

Survey Software Requirement

SPG requires that UM personnel using approved panels must use the survey software licensed by UM.

Register a free account at: <https://www.research.olemiss.edu/resources/surveys>

Survey Timing & Processing Priority

- Generally, requests for sample panels are filled on a first-come, first-served basis
- Surveys of an institutional nature or those required by a state, federal, or accreditation body have highest priority
- Potential moratorium periods for survey distribution, depending on target sample:
 - Final exam periods
 - Institution-wide survey time periods established by IREP or SPG

SPG and IRB

Internal researchers conducting surveys that are systematic investigations of individuals designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge must first submit an application to the IRB for approval. Surveys that receive approval from IRB to sample UM students, faculty, staff, and/or alumni do not automatically receive access to sample panel information.