The purpose of the Survey Policies and Procedures is to manage survey requests from the college community and external agencies. The OIRA serves as the College survey clearinghouse. **It requires that all surveys¹ intended for distribution to any members of the college (student, faculty, staff, and alumni) must be reviewed and approved by the office.** The goals are to prevent survey fatigue through coordinated sampling methods; protect confidentiality through standards of practice, and ensure that the data collected is valid, reliable, and used to inform decision-making.

The OIRA will approve and assist in the development, administration, design and analysis of surveys conducted by academic departments, committees and task forces, and administrative units.

Advance letters, survey invitations, and non-respondent follow-ups using any of the blast email distribution lists of the college are generally not permitted. The OIRA and the Student Activities Office work in consultation to ensure that the Hood email lists for students will not be used to send any surveys except for those approved by OIRA. Institutional assessment surveys are calendared and time and effort are budgeted accordingly. These surveys are the highest priority.


Requests requiring samples of more than 300 students or any subset (freshmen, sophomores, etc.) of all students, faculty or staff should be submitted for consideration at least three months (six months preferred) prior to the proposed administration. This will allow time for survey samples to be coordinated with other concurrent surveys as appropriate. Only under extraordinary circumstances will exceptions be made to this policy, with requests reviewed on a case-by-case basis and requiring final approval of the Provost. The survey may be approved for implementation by selecting prospective respondents who have not yet been included in other surveys' samples, to the extent possible.

Course assignments which involve surveying students only within that class or a small subset do not need to be approved by the OIRA. However, using the Hood e-mail system for larger samples is not allowed. The office will assist in identifying an alternative administration plan and improving the survey instrument for students requesting assistance.

As time permits, the OIRA will also extend assistance to faculty and staff with external projects. These projects will have the lowest priority for the office and will be calendared and prioritized by their submission time, ease of completion (or time commitment), and completion deadline.

¹ A data collection tool used to gather information about individuals.
The office, however, reserves the right to deny a request for assistance if office resources are unavailable.

All requests for population samples should include procedures to maintain confidentiality of prospective survey respondents, to make it clear that participation is voluntary, and to give survey respondents the opportunity to see the research results.

The use of incentives to encourage participation requires the collection of personal information from the respondents (i.e., name; email address etc.). If the respondents are promised anonymity collection of this information violates it. However, to circumvent the conflict, respondents can be assured that their responses will be kept confidential but not anonymous and the information will only be used for identifying the winners.

The OIRA subscribes to the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Code of Ethics\(^2\) and Code of Standards and Ethics for Survey Research for any survey protocols and procedures.

The OIRA does not supersede the policies and procedures of the college Institutional Review Board (IRB). Researchers are still responsible for obtaining required IRB exemptions or permissions before implementing any survey particularly if it pertains to asking questions of a “sensitive nature”\(^3\) and/or requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)\(^4\). The office may also notify the researcher/requester that an IRB review will be required before beginning work on the survey project. Information about human subjects’ research and the IRB process can be found on the IRB website at http://www.hood.edu/Academics/Provost-Office/Institutional-Review-Board.html.

The OIRA will conduct and/or assist on a wide variety of survey efforts for the college. The office specifically can assist on survey development and review; administration, data collection and analysis; and reporting.

Survey Development, Administration, Analysis and Reporting

- **Survey Development and Review**

  The office will develop (if requested) and review the survey instrument based on the following guide questions:
  1. Is the purpose of the survey clear and explained to the prospective respondents?
  2. Is the survey well-designed and of an appropriate length?
  3. Is the structuring of survey items/questions logical?
  4. Are the questions easily understood and interpreted?

\(^2\) Code of Ethics for Institutional Research, Association for Institutional Research (AIR), http://airweb.org

\(^3\) “Sensitive information,” according to the National Institutes of Health, includes (but is not limited to): information related to sexual attitudes/preferences/practices; information relating to the use of alcohol, drugs or other addictive products; information pertaining to illegal conduct; information that, if released, might be damaging to an individual’s financial standing, employability, or reputation within the community or might lead to social stigmatization or discrimination; information pertaining to an individual’s psychological well-being or mental health.

\(^4\) Non-public student data can be used without the student’s consent by college employees for “legitimate educational” purposes provided the data are not reported in such a way that individual students can be identified. All other users must receive written consent from the students to access non-public student data.
5. Are the questions addressing too many issues in a single question (double-barreled)?
6. Are there questions that should be omitted?
7. Are there other data available that will provide the required information?
8. Can the proposed survey be combined with another planned survey?
9. Has the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the project (if necessary)?

If it is necessary the office will ask to conduct a survey pre-test\(^5\) to check the way the instrument works.

- **Administration, Data Collection and Analysis**

Surveys may be administered using paper and pencil, phone, focus group, one-on-one in depth interview, or electronic formats.

Reviewing (or developing) the survey administration and data collection plans consist of the following:

1. Does it follow sound survey methods and practices?
2. What is the target population?
3. Will the entire population be surveyed or will a sample be generated?
4. Are the rights of the prospective respondents clearly explained?
5. What actions are taken to ensure the confidentiality of responses and/or anonymity of the prospective respondents?
6. How will responses be stored and protected?
7. When will the survey be conducted?
8. What is the optimal timing to ensure it does not compete with other college surveys and activities?
9. Does it ensure reliability and validity?

Copies of final reports generated on any college population (students, faculty, staff and alumnae/i) are required to be sent to OIRA for institutional assessment purposes. All data and reports remain the property of the researcher/office and will not be shared without permission.

**Survey Approval Process**

Individuals and offices wishing to conduct survey research must submit a Survey Request Form electronically.

The OIRA will review the survey proposal and will typically respond within 2 weeks of the date it is received.

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\(^5\) Evaluation of the survey questions lie on the premise that even when the questions appear to be good at the time the survey instruments is designed, it is still imperative to carry out a pre-test. This will help the researcher to appropriately fine tune the questions to make it clear, logical, and simple as possible for the prospective respondents.