

# CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

## Survey policy

### *Policy Statement*

The office of Institutional Research (IR) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will monitor and approve the conduct of College-sponsored surveys involving Champlain students through all phases of the cycle from prospect to alumni, as well as faculty and staff. The Institutional Review Board policy, specifically its definitions of research and associated exclusions, will provide direction for assigning responsibility to either of these groups.

The remainder of this policy will focus on the procedures to be followed for surveys not under the purview of the Institutional Review Board, which has established its own policy and procedure.

### *Rationale*

The office of Institutional Research (IR) will serve as the clearinghouse for non-academic surveys, both internal and external at Champlain College. In doing so, the office is charged with ensuring surveys are of professional quality and protect the safety, health, dignity and privacy of human subjects participating in research. Additionally, review is intended to maximize the benefits of any survey administration by: 1) ensuring good survey methodology, including that related to participant confidentiality and privacy, 2) maximizing responses rates, 3) reducing redundancy, 4) minimizing survey fatigue and 5) facilitating college-wide awareness of the survey results.

All such surveys must be approved by the IR office, which will provide support and oversight.

### *Eligibility*

All faculty and staff are expected to follow the policy provisions and procedures that follow. Faculty or senior administrative staff supervising students who are conducting survey projects not under the auspices of the IRB are responsible for ensuring alignment with this policy and procedure.

Anyone not affiliated with Champlain College but who wants to conduct surveys with College faculty, staff, and students must have a Champlain sponsor who is responsible for adherence to this policy.

### *Definitions*

Confidential: Where the identity of subjects is known or knowable by name, by specific data, or by appearance, it is usually necessary to make provisions for confidentiality. Data should be stored securely, accessible only to the investigator and his or her authorized staff or representatives. No identifying information, including personal and sensitive information, may be released except with the express permission of the subject.

Where confidentiality in reports of results or in reports of specific incidents of interest cannot be assured, this information must be included in the consent form. In those instances where unique information is received but was not anticipated at the time of consent, later consent for the release of identifying information must be obtained.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to break confidentiality. If this is foreseen, the study subjects should be informed of this possibility on the consent form.

Anonymous: Anonymity implies that the data, by virtue of the method of collection, can never reasonably be connected with the human subject(s).

Anonymous surveys do not require written consent, though explanations of the research protocol that are standard on a written consent form should be included at the beginning of the survey. Consent to participate is implied when a subject completes and returns the survey. An example would be a mailed questionnaire with directions for subjects not to sign their names, where no code is used, where responses to questions will not reveal identities, and where the subject group is sufficiently large to avoid inadvertent identification.

### *Scope*

All surveys conducted at the College that are not under the auspices of the Institutional Review Board are included in this policy. The following list is illustrative of the types of surveys that are included, but is not exhaustive:

- data gathering for the purposes of fundraising by the external affairs offices;
- market research for the purposes of admissions recruiting;
- recruiting efforts for faculty or staff;
- statistical data collected for the management of institutional level decision-making;
- attitudinal research of alumni, students, or parents for the purposes of institutional level decision-making;
- feedback collected in association with an on campus or online event;
- surveying within the membership of an office, committee, student club, governance organization etc. if its intention is to impact institutional level decision-making

### Exceptions

- surveying within the membership of an office, committee, student club, governance organization, etc. if its intention is to share results only with its members
- surveying students within a class to solicit formative feedback for the faculty member

The office of Institutional Research will provide support and resources to help community members develop and administer surveys that achieve the results described in the rationale.

### *Procedure*

Individuals and offices wishing to conduct a survey should submit a request at least one month in advance of the desired release date of the survey. Earlier submission is encouraged to allow time for consultation and revision to a survey that gains approval.

Student centric surveys should be scheduled at least one semester in advance.

This request shall contain information about the following:

1. Title/Description of the survey
2. Identification of the primary investigator

3. Purpose of the survey
4. Proposed schedule for survey administration, include begin and end dates
5. The population to be surveyed, including size, scope, and physical location
6. Identification of the survey administration platform
7. Current draft of the survey
8. Current drafts of the survey invitation and reminder(s) to be used in soliciting student responses, along with the plan for distribution
  - a. Includes information about voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy and access to results
9. Plans for using incentives

If the survey has been approved in a prior year, then only the proposed schedule needs to be approved unless the survey or its accompanying documents have significantly changed since the last administration.

The IR office will consult with the chairperson of the IRB to verify which body has responsibility for approval of this survey.

When appropriate, two members of the IR office will review the survey materials in accordance with the following:

1. Highest priority is given to surveys that are mandated by federal, state, or accrediting agencies
2. Information that the survey seeks is new information, not already available through another survey form.
3. The survey supports a particular aspect of the College's Strategic Plan.
4. Timing does not overlap with other surveys deemed to be of greater importance and does not result in any student being asked to complete more than two surveys per semester.
5. The application demonstrates adherence to the published survey guidelines, best practices and provides appropriate protections for human subjects.

The IR office will either approve the survey as presented or will indicate changes that need to be made in order to gain approval, consulting with the IRB as needed. A decision to not allow a survey to proceed may be appealed through the investigator's supervisor in consultation with the Provost's Office. Upon approval, the survey will be added to the published survey calendar.

Following administration of the survey, the investigator will share a copy of the summary report of results and raw data (as available) with the office of Institutional Research for inclusion in a comprehensive survey archive.

### *Policy Adherence*

The Provost is responsible for this policy.

### *Contact*

Questions regarding the interpretation of this policy should be directed to the Senior Associate Provost.

# Survey Guidelines

## *Respondent Rights*

- The survey or consent form must include contact information where respondents may question content, use and/or publication of survey results.
- All participants must be notified that their participation is voluntary.
- Participants must be notified in advance if data collected will not be anonymous.
- Respondents must be protected from risk of unreasonable harm, including any risks regarding health, safety, dignity or privacy.
- Both the survey and data analysis may be subject to Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.
- Surveys that request individual health information may be subject to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).
- Respondents should be made aware of how to request a summary of the survey results.
- Respondents should be informed about the intended distribution of survey results including internal publication (systematic investigation designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge would place the survey within the authority of the Institutional Review Board).
- If subjects are promised anonymity and a login is required to access the survey, the researcher must ensure that login information will not be collected and stored in a way that it can be connected to survey results.
- All surveys should clearly identify the group or person who is conducting the survey.
- The use of mass mail or email lists to promote or distribute a survey to faculty, staff, or students is limited to official surveys approved by the office of Institutional Research

## *Confidentiality*

- The investigator needs to be clear and precise when using the terms confidentiality and anonymity.
  - In the context of survey design, the principle of confidentiality applies when the researcher knows, or has the potential to know, the identity of the individual respondent. In such cases, the researcher has an obligation to protect the respondent's identity from others and to explain to the participant the degree of confidentiality that can be expected if participation in the survey is agreed to.
  - A claim of anonymity is appropriate when the researcher does not know the identity of the respondent because no identifying information, including web access/IP address information, has been collected during the conduct of the survey.

- Demographic information that has the potential to allow a respondent to be personally identified should be collected only as required in relation to the expressly stated purpose of research or a project.
- When incentives are part of the survey implementation design, the investigator must plan for awarding incentives while maintaining the anonymity of respondents (if promised) and these plans must be part of the survey approval process. The office of Institutional Research can provide guidance about such approaches.

### *Data Security*

- The preferred survey administration platform is Qualtrics. The survey review process will address the mechanism for taking advantage of this resource or approval for using an alternative platform, including those surveys that are restricted to the use of another platform as a result of contractual requirements.
- The Institutional Research office will consult with the investigator regarding any special data security provisions that apply to the survey population or circumstances, e.g. European Union General Data Protection Regulations
- The investigator assumes the full responsibility for the security and privacy of the data.
- The investigator is responsible for being aware of and ensuring compliance with all data policies established by the College, including those developed by the Information Systems department.
- The investigator is responsible for managing and releasing the data collected. Raw data from surveys are typically not shared with people outside of the College except under special circumstances (e.g. a data sharing consortium), which require approval of the Senior Associate Provost.