



Administrative Procedures Manual

Administrative Services Division

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Procedure No. IE#1
Title: Survey Research
Department: **Planning and Accreditation, Office of Institutional Effectiveness**
Contact: Patricia Gordin, Ph.D., ext. 1008, pgordin@edison.edu

AUTHORITY: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) *Principles of Accreditation*, Core Requirement 2.5.

PURPOSE: 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 Edison graduates, and community educational needs. Compliance with these rules and guidelines ensures that faculty, staff, and students employ minimum standards of good practice in educational research and enables the College to demonstrate continuing improvement and accomplishment of the mission (institutional effectiveness).

SCOPE: This procedure encompasses all research (web, paper, or telephone) conducted by or on Edison College faculty and staff and encompasses surveys conducted in the community at large.

EXCEPTIONS: This procedure does not apply to surveys, polling, and research conducted by students as part of their educational requirements. Informal surveys are also a valuable part of formative classroom evaluation. Such surveys do not require participation in this formal process as they can provide helpful feedback to individual faculty members on student progress in a course.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 CENTRALIZED DOCUMENTATION OF SURVEYS AND RESULTS

1.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In 2007, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness institutionalized a Calendar of Surveys for 2006-2007 to demonstrate compliance with the SACS requirement for institutional effectiveness. This calendar illustrated survey activity college-wide for both institutional and departmental surveys, as well as the benefits to the college accruing from this research. This

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procedure addresses two categories of surveys: *college-wide* and *departmental*. College-wide surveys are those on web, paper, or by telephone designed to sample from the population of Edison College students-at-large with the purpose of institutional improvement. Departmental surveys differ from college-wide surveys in the scope of survey goals. Typically, the department administering the survey wishes to determine satisfaction with a particular program or service from students who are known to have participated in that program or used that service.

Procedures 1.2 – 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 2.0 – 2.2 provides guidelines for Edison College faculty and staff who wish to develop their own departmental surveys.

1.2 APPROVAL FOR SURVEY INITIATION

COLLEGE WIDE SURVEYS.

All *college-wide* surveys must be approved by the District Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

DEPARTMENTAL SURVEYS

All *departmental* surveys must be approved by the applicable department director, dean, vice-president, campus president, or the District Provost.

The District Director of Institutional Effectiveness stands ready to provide assistance to faculty and staff with survey development. The contact for research projects is (239) 489-9008 (ext. 1008) and the email address is research@edison.edu.

1.3 DOCUMENTING SURVEYS

All surveys are to be submitted to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for central documentation of institutional effectiveness prior to distribution. Please include the following information:

- Name of principal researcher, phone, and e-mail
- *College-wide* or *departmental* survey (If departmental, state the *name* of the department)
- Survey instrument, frequency, description of population (target of survey), and sampling procedure
- Method of distribution (date, place, number of surveys distributed, end date of collection period, date of publication of survey results)
- Expected results and how they will be used (What is the useful information the researcher hopes the survey information will provide?) *or* if the survey is associated with an annual unit plan, provide year (e.g., 2008-2009) and the name of the planning unit (e.g., “Planning and Accreditation”).

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The following table shows a single row (example) of the survey documentation requested:

Example of Survey Documentation					
Principal Researcher	College-wide or Departmental (Provide Department Name)	Survey Instrument, Frequency, Target population, and Sampling Procedure	Method of distribution (date, place, number of surveys, end of collection period, publication date)	Expected Results/ Use of Results	Plan Year and Unit Name (If applicable)
Pat Gordin, Ph.D.	College-wide	Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE); Every three years; Stratified random cluster sample of on-campus, face-to-face Spring 2007 credit course sections (where students are 18 or older) to yield a sample greater than 400 and less than 1,000 students.	1,700 surveys were distributed in February 2007 through Deans' Council in packets sized to each course section in the sample. The final collection date was May 25, 2007. Results are expected to be returned to the College from CCSSE in August 2007.	Students will report their engagement with learning activities and college services in five areas: <i>Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners</i> . The results will be compared to the 2004 administration and reported to the media, faculty, staff, and District Board of Trustees.	2007-2008 Institutional Research

1.4 SUBMITTING RESULTS

Faculty and staff will submit results in electronic format to research@edison.edu.

2.0 GUIDELINES ON SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 POPULATION & SAMPLING METHOD

The selection of a survey sample and question design should follow ethical guidelines for “human subjects research” documented by the University of South Florida at http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb_policies/102.doc. 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 three 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 60 classes actually take the survey, yielding about 700-800 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

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students. The CCSSE is thus an example of *quantitative research*. It seeks to answer questions of *how much* engagement in learning activities different types of students 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.

Principal researchers with questions about sampling methods should contact the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at ext. 1008 or send questions to research@edison.edu.

2.2 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.

Principal researchers with questions about instrument development should contact the Director of Institutional Effectiveness at ext. 1008 or send questions to research@edison.edu.

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