

Overview of Considerations for Planning and Implementing a Campus Survey

Stakeholders

Who has the power to draw attention to and garner support for the climate survey?
Which stakeholders do we need support from for this to be successful?
Who needs to know that we are working on a campus climate survey so that no one is caught off guard or surprised?
Who should be asked for input on one or more drafts of the survey?
Who should be involved in developing the tool itself? In analyzing the data? In planning and executing a communication/dissemination plan?

Stakeholders vary by campus, but may include: members of the administration, the Chancellor, Dean of Student Life, Residential Life, Academic Advisors, Mental Health/Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Services, medical practitioners on campus, the disciplinary or judicial board staff, Institutional Research, Title IX office, News/Communications/Publicity office, sexual assault advocacy center or victim advocates (if there aren't any on your campus, bring in community-based advocates), education and prevention specialists that may want to know certain things specifically for educational programs, students (including specific groups like minority groups, those involved in Greek life, athletic teams, etc.), faculty, staff and other relevant offices or persons. Survivors of sexual assault are one of the most important groups of stakeholders, so be sure to include voices from the group in some capacity, e.g. through advocates, survivor support groups, focus groups, students groups that work on issues of sexual assault, etc.

Management and Logistics

How will the group working on the survey make decisions? What will the decision-making process look like? Is there a leader of the group?
When do we need this data by?
What is our timeline? What tasks need to be achieved by certain dates?
What approval do we need (e.g. from the IRB or other departments)?
Do the appropriate people in the group have the needed training and certification to do this (e.g. human subjects training)?

Communications and Branding

What will the survey title be? How might it be interpreted by various groups on campus?
What will our elevator pitch on the survey consist of? Who needs to hear this and at what point in the process?
How might the survey be viewed by different groups? Is there any potential for negative reactions? If so, what are they and how can we address them?

Goals of the Survey

Why are we doing this survey?
Broadly, what is it that we hope to learn?
What questions are we trying to answer with the resulting data? What do we want to be able to say once we have the data?

Survey

Participants

Who are we surveying? Whose opinions do we want? Whose experiences do we want to know about?
Which perspectives would be most helpful in answering our questions?
How are we selecting participants (i.e. randomly choosing individuals, selecting clusters, etc.)? What is the rationale behind our decision?
Do we need to oversample any groups?
Are there different groups that we will survey that require adaptation or tailoring of the instrument?
Do we need to create different versions of the survey for different groups with our population (e.g. students, staff, faculty, undergraduates, graduate students, etc.)?

Independent and Dependent Variables

What topic areas are we interested in collecting data on? What are we measuring? For example, do we want to **only** gauge students' perception of the campus culture around sexual violence? What will we compare it to?
Do we want to be able to demonstrate correlations between certain perceptions and other variables, like academic success?
What questions are we answering with which variables?
Do we have clear definitions of our variables?

Design

Who are we comparing our population to? Are we obtaining a baseline to measure against in the future?
Is it important to be able to compare data on a national level? To other schools in particular?
Are we more interested in gathering data on our campus **over time** than comparing ourselves to anyone else?
Do we want to be able to parse out groups **within** our population for comparison?
Do we want quantitative data or qualitative data (or both)?
Do we want to use other sources of information to inform and triangulate responses?
What do we need to ask in order to achieve our dissemination plans?

Selection of Survey Tool

What kind of tool best matches our population, setting, data collection and dissemination goals?
How do we choose one if several will work?
Does a new tool need to be created using existing items (keeping in mind the comparison repercussions of this)?
How much time should it take to complete the survey?
Will we need to use an incentive or use a larger incentive to compensate for a longer survey?

Development or Tailoring of Survey Questions

Does the organization and flow of the survey make sense?
Do the questions ask a single question, or are they double-barreled? Is there room for ambiguity or varying interpretations in the answers?
Do the answer choices account for all possible situations and responders?
Are open-ended questions included? If so, do the prompts make sense?

Based on what we would like to be able to say about our population using the data we collect, are we using correct question and answer formats?

Survey Administration Methods

Is this going to be administered online, given out in hard copy or through a combination?
How will participants be notified of the survey? Will there be reminders sent to participants? By whom?
How long do they have to complete it? Is it possible to complete part of it and finish it later?
When will the data collection period begin and end? Are these dates going to coincide with any other surveys being run on campus?

Data Collection Methods

Are the survey participants going to remain anonymous (rather than their identities remaining confidential)? If so, how are we going to do this?
Are we using unique identifiers?
Do we need to restrict access to the survey in some way (e.g. only students with a valid certificate or email address can access)?
Is the tool set up in such a way that one person is able to fill out multiple surveys?
Does that matter?

Data Cleaning and Analysis

Who is going to aggregate and clean the data? How are we going to clean the data? What are we going to do with missing data, answers that don't make sense, etc.? In other words, which statistical method are we going to use to deal with them (or are we going to throw them out)?
Are we going to do any recoding if open-ended responses listed under "other" match pre-existing categories? If so, what method will we use?
What are our thresholds or guidelines around cleaning?
Where is the data going to live?
Who has access to the data? For what period of time?
What are the potential risks associated with these choices around confidentiality?

Dissemination of Results

Are we going to display frequencies for each question anywhere (for public or private/internal use)?
How do we want to convey the survey results? What format would we like them to be in (e.g. formal report, shorter summary of most relevant findings, etc.)?
Who needs to see them? What might various audiences want to know from the survey results?
Who needs to receive these results for initiative development or other specific uses?
If the purpose of this survey is to provide evidence for a program, initiative, or something else, will the tool and questions we have chosen elicit the data we need in order to do this?

A Few Topic-Specific Issues and Questions to Consider

Area	Issues	Stages to Address
Experiences	<p>Is it important to collect data on firsthand experiences, secondhand experiences, and/or community experiences (i.e. relevant to community and may be talked about, but no direct ties to incident or victim)? Climate observations around sexual violence will likely vary widely depending on the participant's own direct or secondhand experiences, so it will probably be important to include a question explicitly asking about firsthand, secondhand and community experiences.</p> <hr/> <p>How much detail do we need on experiences of violence (including harassment)? Is it important to know where and when incidents took place, what kind of relationship the victim(s) had/have with the perpetrator, how long ago it took place? Are we interested in experiences prior to coming to MIT? What about childhood sexual abuse? I suggest using the Sexual Experiences Survey short form as it is relatively brief, effective, anatomically specific, behaviorally based, and has been studied and tested, and likely will collect valuable data that will be comparable to other data collected with the same tool.</p> <hr/> <p>How will resources be provided/offered while the participant is filling out the survey (in case they are triggered or upset by the questions)? For example, you could ensure that certain resources appear at the bottom of the screen for the entire duration of the survey, and are sent in the notification email.</p>	<p>Goals of the survey</p> <p>Variable development and definition</p> <p>Selection of tool and questions</p> <p>Survey administration</p>
Climate Surveys in General	<p>It is very important to be intentional about the items embedded in the survey and to be sure that they will yield relevant, clear, and scientifically valid data. Climate surveys that assess perceptions of campus climate through students and/or teachers are interesting, but tell us very little unless data is collected that allows us to observe relationships between attitudes and perceptions and other variables (e.g. gender, victim status, ethnicity, etc.). The impact of surveys in general increases immensely when administered more than once over significant periods of time, effectively enabling longitudinal assessment of change over time.</p>	<p>Goals of the survey</p> <p>Design</p>
Specificity	<p>The questions that inquire about the campus environment should be both specific and broad based on what the answers will be used for. For example, a question that asks if the participant has experienced ANY of</p>	<p>Goals of survey</p> <p>Design</p>

	<p>several forms of violence listed will allow us to say that x% of students have experienced one or more of these forms of violence, but that gives us very little information in terms of how many students have experienced one form of violence as compared to another, whether they have experienced more than one form of violence listed in the question, the number of times they have been victimized, etc.</p>	<p>Tool selection and development Dissemination plan</p>
Environment	<p>Individual experiences are very important, but questions about environmental experiences and impressions will give us a fuller picture of the campus climate. It would probably be more useful to be able to say something like this after all the data has been collected and analyzed: “(low)% of students are survivors of sexual assault, but (high)% have overheard rape jokes/heard victim-blaming comments in the presence of professors go unchallenged, etc.”. Possible topics to inquire about include comments and jokes made in public spaces/classrooms/meetings where an employee or faculty member was present, what the responses to those were (if any), beliefs of participants as well as peers regarding rape myths, etc.</p>	<p>Goals of survey Design Tool selection and development</p>