

 <p>RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE</p> <p>OFFICIAL POLICY</p>	<p><i>Survey Research</i></p>	<p>EFFECTIVE DATE/REVISION HISTORY: <i>new policy effective 2013/07/02</i></p>
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: <i>Institutional Research & Planning</i></p>	<p>POLICY OWNER: <i>Director, Institutional Research & Planning</i></p>	<p><u>LINK TO HOME PAGE OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICE</u></p>

PART 1. RATIONALE

Like most institutions of higher education, Rhode Island College routinely administers surveys to its students, staff, and other constituencies to gather information for research, planning, policy development, and program improvement. Surveys can be an effective tool for assessing institutional progress, but they must be used selectively and designed carefully.

As surveys have become easy to construct and disseminate, increasing numbers of departments and offices turn to them as a standard way to obtain information. However, students and other populations can be inundated with surveys that vary in quality and become less likely to respond. At times, the incentive to respond is unclear in the first place, particularly when the people being surveyed do not see the results.

In addition to internal surveys, individuals and organizations from outside an institution also request to use students and other groups for studies they are conducting. External surveys are yet another set of requests that RIC receives face and may further reduce response rates. When response rates are low and key subgroups of a population fail to complete a survey, the results become less meaningful and useful.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- A. Help determine whether a survey is necessary or whether the information sought is already available from another source.
- B. Ensure that topics of surveys conducted for administrative purposes by RIC administrators are relevant to mission, strategic plan, and/or operations of the college or some unit therein.
- C. Ensure that when RIC administrators use surveys for administrative purposes, those surveys adhere to principles of good survey design.
- D. Coordinate the timing of surveys so that RIC populations do not receive too many requests for surveys at any given time.
- E. Ensure that surveys are administered in a way that is likely to garner the best response possible (both in terms of rate of response and the extent to which respondents are representative of the target population), while being minimally burdensome.
- F. Encourage sharing of survey results, whenever possible, with survey completers and show how these results have been used to improve the college or one of its units.
- G. Facilitate communication about survey efforts conducted at RIC, so that duplication of effort is avoided and the college community can make use of existing survey data for a variety of purposes.

PART 2. SCOPE

- A. Policy applies to the following groups of people/organizations under the scenarios described:
1. Anyone using the college's email system to survey faculty, staff, or students outside of their departments or classes.
 2. RIC administrators, offices, or committees surveying students, faculty, or staff outside of their units or departments, regardless of recruitment method used (paper, email, etc.).
 3. Non-RIC researchers or research organizations surveying any RIC population, regardless of recruitment method used (paper, email, etc.).
- B. Policy does NOT apply to:
1. Any RIC individual or entity surveying non-RIC constituencies.
 2. RIC administrators surveying their direct reports.
 3. RIC faculty surveying students currently enrolled in their classes for the purposes of improving instruction.
 4. RIC students surveying other students in a class or other academic/student life groups of which they are currently a member.
 5. RIC faculty, administrators, or students who survey participants in an event or activity during that event or activity.
 6. Surveys conducted to support RIC faculty scholarship, unless the college's email system is used for distributing the survey.
 7. RIC academic leaders or faculty who survey current or former students in a program for the purposes of program evaluation, regardless of recruitment method used (paper, email, etc.).*

**Although such surveys are not subject to the policy, the Office of Institutional Research & Planning would like to know about such surveys and when they are administered, as there may be opportunities to coordinate their administration with other broader institutional surveys.*

PART 3. DEFINITIONS

Oversight/Responsibility/ Direct Relationship	Describes a condition in which an individual/office must interact with a population as part of the day-to-day duties or activities associated with the individual's or office's role at the college. Examples include faculty-student relationship in a class, supervisor-employee relationship in an office, or student-student relationship in a class.
RIC Administrative Project	A survey research project conducted on a RIC population primarily for official college purposes—to understand an issue at RIC, to analyze the effectiveness of a RIC program, to assess RIC policy, etc. Generally, such projects are conducted by RIC employees or faculty, but not always. Some may be managed by external consulting firms, although even these projects typically have a RIC sponsor.
RIC Constituency/ Population	A member of the current, future, or past Rhode Island College community. Includes prospective students, new students, currently enrolled students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni.

Survey	A data collection tool with one or more questions designed to gather information from some population or a sample of a population. Questions on a survey could be close-ended or open-ended, generating either quantitative or qualitative data.
Survey Administration	How a survey is distributed to the intended or target population. Refers both to the format of survey (paper or electronic) as well as the means by which the survey is sent to the population (via email, in person, at an event, etc.).

PART 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Any individual, office, or organization wishing to conduct a survey of a Rhode Island College constituency for which they do not have some responsibility, oversight, or other direct relationship must first notify the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to determine if approval is necessary. Note that this policy does not replace the college's "Institutional Review Board (IRB) Policies and Procedures". In cases where it is applicable, individuals must first seek IRB approval.

PART 5. PROCEDURES

- A. Notify Office of Institutional Research & Planning of intent to conduct a survey.
 1. Contact Director and discuss project.
 2. Prospective survey managers should seek IRB approval, if necessary, before they contact IR&P.
- B. Submit "Research Proposal"
 1. Complete appropriate "Research Proposal Form" available on IR&P website.
 2. Obtain permission from senior official (assistant vice president or higher) in administrative area through which the survey is being conducted. For external projects, there must be a sponsor from both RIC and an external organization. Verification of permission(s) must be sent to the Director of IR&P in the form of an email from the RIC sponsor.
 3. Submit completed "Research Proposal Form", along with a copy of the proposed survey instrument, to IR&P.
- C. Await Approval
 1. Director of IR&P reviews proposal and makes suggestions, and may require consultation with other parties, including PEC representative (VP of Academic Affairs, VP of Student Affairs, etc.) responsible for the individual or department proposing the survey.
 2. Approval process will normally take 1-2 weeks.
 3. Proposal will be returned to project manager electronically with an indication of whether it is "approved," "approved with revisions", or "not approved."
 - a. "Approved": administration of survey may begin; IR&P will suggest language to be included in correspondence to target population indicating that survey is "approved."
 - b. "Approved with revisions": required revisions will be documented in an email, on the proposal form, and/or on the survey instrument; and project must be resubmitted to IR&P with revisions for final approval.
 - c. "Not approved": although not currently approved, project may be resubmitted at a later date for consideration.

PART 6. GUIDELINES

N/A

PART 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Official	List of Responsibilities
Director of Institutional Research & Planning	1. Policy oversight 2. Policy implementation
President's Executive Cabinet	1. Provide final approval of certain policies 2. Policy enforcement
Various members of college faculty, administration, and staff	When necessary, provide guidance based on expertise required of given projects.

PART 8. CONTACTS

Subject	Office or Position	Telephone Number	Email
Policy Clarification	Director of Institutional Research & Planning	(401) 456-8998	irpo@ric.edu

PART 9. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

Violation(s)	Administering a survey under which this policy applies without prior approval.
Potential consequences	Results of survey will not be endorsed as "official" by the college.
Where to report violations	Send correspondence to Director of Institutional Research & Planning

PART 10. FORMS/TEMPLATES/REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Form, Template, or Document <i>(use hyperlink if available)</i>
Survey Research Proposal Form, RIC
Survey Research Proposal Form, Non-RIC