

HARTNELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
Operational Memorandum #103

Internal Research

Purpose: To establish a clear process for developing and administering internal research projects, such as college-wide surveys, focus groups, and interviews, to students and/or employees.

Background: The Office of Institutional Research is a designated survey administration unit. All college-wide research efforts to be administered internally and externally should be reviewed by IR to ensure appropriate research design, data integrity, confidentiality and administration. IR will work in collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Office and Web Services where appropriate to ensure that the instrument(s) and relevant communications meet professional standards in copy, design and college's approved branding.

Process

All major research efforts conducted by Hartnell College employees or students intended for distribution to any students, prospective students, employees, board members, or community members must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Institutional Research. This is to ensure quality and timing of research efforts, maximize benefit from research results, ensure objectivity in analyzing and reporting the results, and maintain compliance with ethical standards of research.

Examples of research projects that need to go through a review and approval process include the following:

- Projects that address current and former students, faculty, staff, board members, community members and alumni;
- Projects are aimed at a broad subset of the population (e.g. first-year students, adult learners, completing students, employees);
- Projects covering a variety of topics (e.g. use and satisfaction with various college services);
- Projects that involve sensitive content, such as discrimination, harassment, or mental health concerns;
- Projects in which the results will likely have a college-wide impact.

Small-scale or focused research projects do not have to get clearance from the Office of Institutional Research. Examples may include:

- Research projects developed as part of assigned coursework
- Evaluation of an event by participants
- Teaching evaluation forms
- Member surveys conducted by collective bargaining units

All researchers should submit the following to the Director of Institutional Research:

1. A brief statement providing the reasons why you wish to administer a survey, focus groups, interviews, or other data collection effort; which population you are targeting; how you will administer the survey or conduct interviews/focus groups; and how you intend to share the results. Please also share what steps you will take to ensure confidentiality and data security.
2. A copy of the research instrument(s) or protocol(s) you plan to use.
3. A copy of the informed consent form you plan to use.

4. In cases of survey research, please note whether you plan to administer the survey yourself, and if so, which platform you plan to use. If you'd like for the Office of Institutional Research to administer the survey using SurveyMonkey, please indicate that.

The Director of Institutional Research may reach out to you with additional questions or guidance.

These guidelines have been developed in an effort to:

- ensure the use of appropriate research methodology and design;
- prevent research participation fatigue by limiting the number and timing of research studies;
- avoid duplication of data;
- maximize participation and response rates;
- encourage sharing of results;
- ensure information provided by respondents remains confidential;
- ensure the projects in which students, faculty and staff participate are consistent with the college's mission and priorities.

Approved: October 15, 2024

Sample Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

We invite you to participate in a survey on [INSERT TOPIC] as part of a research project conducted by [NAME OF RESEARCHER]. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand the purpose of the survey, what your participation will involve, and any potential risks and benefits associated with your participation.

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to gather information about [INSERT TEXT]. The data collected will be used to [INSERT TEXT].

Participation: Participation in this survey involves completing an online questionnaire that should take about XX minutes to complete. The survey will ask you about [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION]. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this survey [OR, There is the risk of [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING THE LIKELIHOOD OF RISK].. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The benefits of participating in this survey include [INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION].

[OPTIONAL: You may feel uncomfortable or upset while answering questions about XXXXX. If you feel distressed as a result of participating in the survey and wish to talk with a professional, please contact [INSERT RESOURCE].]

Confidentiality: Your responses to the survey will only be accessible to the survey team.

Your name or any identifying information will not be linked to your responses in any reports resulting from this survey. [OR, IF NO EMPLOYEE INFO IS BEING COLLECTED] Your participation in this survey will remain anonymous, and no identifying information will be collected.

[IF YOU ARE A MANDATED REPORTER, AND IF THE SURVEY INCLUDES QUESTIONS THAT COULD RESULT IN DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT] If information is disclosed in the survey about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult, or elder, or incidents of sexual harassment or violence, we may be obligated under California and/or federal law to report the incident.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact [INSERT NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS]. Thank you for considering participation in this important effort.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF RESEARCHER]

[CHECK] I affirm that I am at least 18 years or older.

[CHECK] I consent to participating in this survey.