

Student and Academic Services Research Group
Research Proposal Form

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Department: Institutional Research and Planning

Title of Study: 2012 Senior Survey

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1. Purpose and goals of the study

The purpose of the study is to learn about seniors' undergraduate experiences at Cornell. The survey asks seniors about their educational and employment plans; involvement in campus activities; satisfaction with their undergraduate experience; and estimated changes in skills and abilities since entering Cornell; and perceptions of their undergraduate experience. Cornell has administered this survey to the Classes of 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010. We will examine whether and how the undergraduate experience differs for selected subsets of Cornell seniors (based on gender, race/ethnicity, and college affiliation) as well as between our seniors and those enrolled in peer institutions. We will also examine trends in seniors' reports of their undergraduate experience.

2. Importance of research to the University, SAS, your Department

Findings from this survey will be used to plan and improve programs and services for undergraduate students at Cornell. Results from this survey (and its earlier administrations) are regularly employed in analyses conducted for the Trustees, for programs, units and committees within SAS, and for the undergraduate colleges and academic departments.

3. Outline of research design

a) Target population and sampling frame (sample size and method of selecting)

All currently enrolled seniors will be invited to participate in the survey. This survey is also being conducted at peer institutions.

b) Data collection method, copies of instrumentation (e.g., survey, interview protocol—please attach) and estimated time required to participate

Data will be collected via a web-based survey. The survey will be programmed and hosted by the Survey Research Institute (SRI) at Cornell. The survey has undergone a major review and the number of core questions has been significantly reduced compared to the 2010 instrument. We anticipate it taking approximately 15 minutes to complete. An "almost final" draft of the survey instrument is attached. When we have the survey data file in hand, we will merge in sociodemographic and enrollment data from institutional files.

c) Use of incentives

Every 10th senior who completes the survey will receive \$10. Seniors will find out if they are a “winner” when they hit the final “submit” button on the last page survey.

d) Data security and protection of confidentiality of personally identifiable information (How will you ensure confidentiality? How/where will you store data?)

This will be a confidential, not anonymous survey. Student access to the survey will occur in one of two ways: IRP will send SRI a file with student names and netids (via the Registrar’s Dropbox) so that SRI can establish unique URLs for each student to access the survey; or, students will be sent a link to the survey website and will log in using their Cornell netid and password. SRI will maintain the survey data on a password-protected Microsoft SQL Server database that is not accessible from the web. Once the survey is closed, SRI will encrypt the data file and transfer it back to us. At IRP, the data will be stored on an internal server that is protected by a firewall and requires a password for access. Only the study investigators from IRP and our network administrators will have access to the folder in which the data are stored. All have signed non-disclosure agreements with Cornell University.

Study results will only be reported in the aggregate.

4. Proposed timing of study (start and end dates of data collection, dates of proposed communications with subjects)

We plan to open the survey the week after spring break (April 2nd) and to keep it open for three weeks. We will send an initial invitation email and a maximum of three reminder e-mails to non-respondents. The survey will close on April 20th.

5. Plan for analyzing and distributing results

Much of our analysis will be bivariate. Within Cornell, we will compare survey responses on the basis of gender, race/ethnicity and college affiliation. We will also compare responses for our respondents as a whole, over time, and to those of our peer institutions. These results will be posted on our website. Further, we expect to use survey results for ongoing assessment and research efforts within SAS and the Cornell University community, more broadly.