



Administrative Policy #: 1301
Survey Approval, Distribution, and Software
Effective Date: September 19, 2025

SECTION 1. PURPOSE & SCOPE

- 1.1. **PURPOSE:** This policy establishes a standardized process for the creation, approval, and distribution of surveys involving students, faculty, or staff at Fairmont State University. Its purpose is to ensure ethical practices, protect data integrity, and to minimize survey fatigue across the campus community. In addition, the policy provides guidelines for the appropriate and effective use of institutional survey software to ensure data integrity, privacy, consistency, and compliance with University policies and applicable regulations.
- 1.2. **SCOPE:** This policy applies to all faculty, staff, students, and external researchers who conduct surveys that use University resources, target members of the Fairmont State University community, or employ University-approved survey software.

SECTION 2. APPROVAL, DELEGATION & APPLICABILITY

- 2.1. **AUTHORITY:** Executive Director of Institutional Research.
- 2.2. **DELEGATION:** Implementation may be delegated to the Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff and Legal Counsel.
- 2.3. **APPLICABILITY:** Surveys conducted at Fairmont State University, with a list of exclusions (see paragraph 4.9).

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. **ANONYMOUS SURVEYS:** Surveys in which responses cannot be associated with an individual unless the participant responds in a way that uniquely identifies them in the survey.
- 3.2. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** The ethical and legal obligation to protect personal information provided by survey participants.
- 3.3. **DISTRIBUTION METHOD:** How a survey instrument is shared with respondents (e.g. email, Blackboard, QR code, etc.).

- 3.4. FERPA: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law that affords the right to access educational records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the educational records. When a student turns 18 or enters postsecondary education, FERPA rights transfer from the parents to the student. The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.
- 3.5. IRB: The Fairmont State University Institutional Review Board.
- 3.6. OIR: The Fairmont State University Office of Institutional Research.
- 3.7. PII: Personally Identifiable Information, data that can be used to identify or trace an individual's identity.
- 3.8. SECURE STORAGE: The practice of saving data in environments that meet university security standards.
- 3.9. SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR: A designated individual responsible for managing survey accounts, access, and compliance.
- 3.10. SURVEY FATIGUE: The overload of surveys that cause individuals to cease participation.
- 3.11. SURVEY ID NUMBER: A unique number that identifies a survey.
- 3.12. SURVEY INTENT FORM: The online form to gather information about a proposed survey.
- 3.13. SURVEY SOFTWARE: Any digital platform used for creating, distributing, collecting, and analyzing survey data (e.g. Qualtrics).
- 3.14. TARGET AUDIENCE: The individuals or types of individuals a survey intends to reach (e.g. students, staff, a particular college).

SECTION 4. POLICY

- 4.1. POLICY: It is the policy of Fairmont State University that surveys be submitted to, reviewed, and approved by OIR prior to distribution and adhere to all confidentiality, data storage, security, and retention requirements.
- 4.2. PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:

- 4.2.1. All survey proposals will be submitted at least three (3) weeks prior to the intended distribution date.
- 4.2.2. Proposals will be submitted via an online survey intent form.
- 4.2.3. The proposal will include:
 - 4.2.3.1. Purpose and goals of the survey
 - 4.2.3.2. Target audience
 - 4.2.3.3. Complete survey questions
 - 4.2.3.4. Data usage, storage, and privacy measures
 - 4.2.3.5. Proposed distribution method (email, QR code, etc.) and timeline
- 4.3. OIR REVIEW:
 - 4.3.1. OIR will review the survey proposals and evaluate them for the following:
 - 4.3.1.1. Alignment with institutional priorities,
 - 4.3.1.2. Ethical standards and legal compliance (including FERPA).
 - 4.3.1.3. Avoidance of survey fatigue and duplication.
 - 4.3.1.4. Sound methodological queries.
- 4.4. APPROVAL OR REVISIONS:
 - 4.4.1. Applicants will receive a formal decision (approval, denial, or revision request) within 10 business days of receipt.
 - 4.4.2. Approved surveys will be assigned a Survey ID Number and a confirmation email will be sent.
- 4.5. DISTRIBUTION:
 - 4.5.1. Survey distribution may not begin until official approval is received.
 - 4.5.2. All surveys must begin with a Consent Statement and the Survey ID Number clearly displayed.
- 4.6. CONFIDENTIALITY:
 - 4.6.1. Fairmont State University is committed to protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and rights of all survey participants.
 - 4.6.2. Any survey involving the collection, storage, or analysis of data must adhere to the following confidentiality and data protection standards:

4.6.2.1. Identifiable information (e.g. emails, names, student IDs, etc.) must only be collected if necessary and must be justified in the proposal.

4.6.2.2. All surveys must include a clear Consent Statement that explains:

4.6.2.2.1. Whether responses are anonymous or confidential

4.6.2.2.2. Who will have access to the data

4.6.2.2.3. How the data will be used

4.6.2.2.4. How long the data will be retained

4.6.2.2.5. The voluntary nature of participation

4.7. DATA STORAGE, SECURITY, AND RETENTION:

4.7.1. Data must be stored on university-approved, secure platforms.

4.7.2. Personal devices, unsecured third-party applications, or open-access databases may not be used for storing survey data.

4.7.3. Access to raw survey data must be limited to individuals named in the approved Survey Intent Form.

4.7.4. Survey data must be retained for only the time necessary to meet research or administrative goals.

4.7.5. Data used for publication or reporting must be stripped of all personally identifiable information (PII) unless specific consent is written by participants.

4.8. USE OF SURVEY SOFTWARE:

4.8.1. Surveys will be administered using Qualtrics.

4.9. EXCLUSIONS:

4.9.1. Course and program evaluations.

4.9.2. Anonymous short in-class surveys will the sole purpose of gauging classroom opinions on relevant course matters (e.g. preference for a class test date).

4.9.3. Staff and Faculty Candidate Evaluations.

4.9.4. Presidential Perception Surveys and Evaluations.

4.9.5. Evaluation feedback for administrators and coaches.

4.9.6. Elections for constituent groups (e.g., Staff Council, Faculty Senate, Student Government Association).

- 4.9.7. Unit-level polls (e.g., to schedule events).
- 4.9.8. Research surveys approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).
- 4.9.9. Pulse surveys in University-approved applications (e.g., Navigate).
- 4.9.10. Other instances as approved by the Executive Director of Institutional Research.

SECTION 5. COMPLIANCE

- 5.1. 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, *The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)*
- 5.2. 34 CFR Part 99, *FERPA Enacting Regulations*
- 5.3. 45 CFR Part 46, *The Common Rule*
- 5.4. BOG Policy 48, *Research Involving Human Subjects*

SECTION 6. REVISION HISTORY

- 6.1. FREQUENCY OF REVIEW: Every three years.
- 6.2. APPROVED: Approved by the President on September 19, 2025.