Information for Campuses Using Additional Questions

Adding Additional Questions to the Survey
Campuses have the option of adding up to 30 additional multiple choice questions and up to 5 open-ended questions of specific local interest at the end of their questionnaires. Information relevant to both types of additional questions is presented first, followed by specific information for each type of question.

We urge you to pilot test your additional questions with select faculty. Many campuses find faculty interpret questions differently than originally intended.

Although your campus is responsible for developing the local additional questions, HERI staff is available to review and comment on any of these materials. We would also appreciate receiving a courtesy copy of your additional questions and supplemental instructions. Please send them directly to heri@ucla.edu.

In addition to drafting, pilot testing, and incorporating your additional questions into the administration of the HERI Faculty Survey, it is important to consult with your local Institutional Review Board (IRB). Your campus may require you to submit any additional items for their review and approval. Additionally, if your campus believes an additional question to be of a sensitive nature, you must submit that question to HERI for our consideration at least one month before administration.

Asking Additional Questions of a Sensitive Nature
When designing additional questions, there are special circumstances to consider if you ask respondents to provide what would be considered “sensitive information” by the federal government. If this is the case, there are additional steps you need to take. HERI strongly urges you to consider very carefully whether asking for “sensitive information” is appropriate in the context of a general survey of faculty.

“Sensitive information,” according to the National Institutes of Health, includes (but is not limited to):

- information related to sexual attitudes/preferences/practices;
- information relating to the use of alcohol, drugs or other addictive products;
- information pertaining to illegal conduct;
- information that, if released, might be damaging to an individual’s
financial standing, employability, or reputation within the community or might lead to social stigmatization or discrimination; information pertaining to an individual’s psychological well-being or mental health. ¹

It is up to local officials at your institution, not HERI, to determine if your questions ask for “sensitive information.” If you have decided to ask such questions, you must 1) submit your sensitive questions to the UCLA IRB for review and approval before administering the HERI Faculty Survey, 2) obtain a NIH Certificate of Confidentiality,² and 3) modify the Survey Information Sheet to reflect that there are sensitive additional questions being asked, explain what “sensitive information” would be required to be reported (as explained in the next section), and describe the protections afforded by the Certificate of Confidentiality that your institution will obtain.³ The UCLA IRB must also review and approve your modified Survey Information Sheet.

Obligation to Provide Referrals
If your additional questions ask respondents to provide “sensitive information” such as drug use, binge drinking, eating disorders, sexual behavior and/or gambling, you must also provide information about referrals to mental health care programs and counselors. For example, if you were to ask about binge drinking, you should also include information about who to contact on or near your campus to address a substance abuse problem, and provide an address and phone number. You will need to provide an addendum to the Survey Information Sheet to include this information on the “Welcome” page. This addendum to describe the provision of referrals to mental health care programs and counselors must also be reviewed and approved by the UCLA IRB. Additionally, this type of information would be covered by a Certificate of Confidentiality and are not issues that would be reportable to a third party as detailed below.

Obligation to Report to a Third Party and Break Participant Confidentiality
In some states, the law requires researchers to disclose information they have concerning suicidal ideation, child abuse, and elder abuse to appropriate third parties. Thus, questions surrounding these areas are not just sensitive but require institutions to break subject confidentiality in order to protect the participant, or others, from harm. If you ask such additional questions, you must provide an addendum to the Survey Information Sheet that you provide to participants to inform them of the researcher’s obligation to disclose any respondent’s intent to harm him or herself (suicide ideation) or others (elder or child abuse). These modifications to the Survey Information Sheet must be reviewed and approved by the UCLA IRB.

¹ http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/policy/coc/faqs.htm
² http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coc/
³ The NIH Certificates of Confidentiality Kiosk identifies the nature of the information that must be provided to subjects to describe the protections afforded by the Certificate of Confidentiality, and also provides an example of appropriate language. [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coc/appl_extramural.htm]
Again, HERI strongly encourages that you consider the appropriateness of such additional questions in a general survey and recommends against asking about these issues with this survey instrument. HERI also suggests that you confer with your campus health officials before including questions of a sensitive nature and for any necessary referral information.

If you have questions about potentially “sensitive” items that you may be intending to ask as part of your set of additional questions, or would like more information about the process for obtaining approval to include these items, please contact John Pryor, Managing Director of HERI at (310) 825-1925 or heri@ucla.edu.

Closed-Ended Questions
Closed-ended questions will display on a separate page after the last question on the HERI Faculty Survey. Each question permits a maximum of five response options (A through E). Faculty may mark only one response option. Fewer than five response options may be used for any of the questions, in which case faculty should be instructed to choose only from those circles that apply, starting from the left.

Responses to closed-ended questions will be included in your data file, and the statistics for these questions will be included in your institutional profile report. Because the text of your additional questions and response options cannot be included in your data file or institutional profile report, we strongly suggest retaining a copy with your HERI Faculty Survey information.

Open-Ended Questions
Open-ended questions will display on a separate page, after any additional closed-ended questions you may offer. They cannot be mixed in with the closed-ended questions.

Because the text of your additional questions cannot be included in your response file, we strongly suggest retaining a copy with your HERI Faculty Survey information.