



### **Guiding Principles and Practices for Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness**

*The Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness (IRPIE) office at College of the Canyons uses as a guide the [Association of Institutional Research Ethical Principles](#), and more broadly, the [Belmont Report \(Health and Human Services\)](#) on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. College of the Canyons' IRPIE office affirms the following overarching principles regarding the use of data to facilitate decision-making and planning processes. These principles and practices summarized below guide the work of the IRPIE office and the use of data, analytics, information, and evidence to improve student outcomes and institutional effectiveness:*

- Ensure research integrity, recognizing the consequences of IRPIE work and noting that analytic algorithms and applications built and/or implemented, as well as policy decisions incorporating information analyzed and disseminated, impacts people and situations.
- Acknowledge that the individuals whose information is used have rights, including those commonly enunciated in Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols, as derived from legal and ethical principles that can cross national borders.
- Protect information from misuse or use that could cause subjects harm, and make intentional efforts to protect privacy and maintain confidentiality when collecting, compiling, analyzing, and disseminating information.
- Act as responsible data stewards, securing the data and information handled by IRPIE, following generally accepted guidelines and professional standards for physical and electronic security and data sharing.
- Provide accurate and contextualized information and do not knowingly or intentionally mislead the consumers of IRPIE information.
- Maintain transparency of data reporting and collection processes, while ensuring the confidentiality and privacy rights of students and other participants.
- Deliver information and analyses appropriate to the questions being asked, to the quality of the data available, and to the context in which the questions are asked.
- Be fair and transparent, minimizing personal biases in research assumptions, methodologies, and conclusions, and disclosing limitations where relevant.
- Avoid conflicts of interest, and disclose them when unavoidable acting in the best interests of our institutions, students, and stakeholders.
- Strive to make IRPIE work accessible to those who need data, information, and analysis to generate insight and make decisions.
- Share knowledge of the Institutional Research field and its application to help facilitate insights and promote common understanding to our institution and stakeholders.
- Affirm the value of lifelong learning and the enhancement of the research field, drawing on and contributing to relevant and emerging scholarship and keeping current on developing trends utilizing methods, techniques, knowledge, and capabilities.
- Recognize the ongoing impact of technological advancements on IRPIE work, while remaining committed to serving as educators and role models on the ethical and responsible use of data to benefit students and institutions.

Source: Adapted from the Association for Institutional Research website <https://www.airweb.org/ir-data-professional-overview/statement-of-ethical-principles/principles>



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**Balancing Privacy Risks Against Benefits.** Per the aforementioned protocols, including IRB standards, the institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall, at the planning and design stage of any project, thoroughly explore the potential degree of invasion of privacy and the risks of breach of confidentiality that are involved in the project, weigh them against potential benefits, and make a recommendation as to whether the project should be executed, and under what conditions.

**Developing Specific Guidelines.** Where appropriate, the institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall adopt a written description of any specific steps beyond the regular guidelines within the institutional research office that are necessary during a specific assignment to ensure the protection of aspects of privacy and confidentiality that may be at specific risk.

**Disclosure of Rights.** The institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall ensure that all subjects are informed of their right of refusal and of the degree of confidentiality with which the material that they provide will be handled, including where appropriate, the implications of any freedom of information statute. Any limits to confidentiality should be made clear.

**Appraisal of Implications.** The institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall apprise institutional authorities of the implications and potentially binding obligations of any promise to respondents regarding confidentiality and shall obtain consent from such authorities where necessary.

**Integrity of Reports.** The institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall make efforts to anticipate and prevent misunderstandings and misuse of reports within the institution by careful presentation and documentation in original reports, and by diligent follow-up contact with institutional users of those reports. The institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) shall make reasonable attempts to ensure continuity of meaning from original reports and correct any distortions in the use of reports whenever observed.

**External Reporting.** The institutional researcher (IRPIE staff) has an obligation to the broader community to submit and/or disseminate accurate information and engage in responsible reporting when requested by a legitimate authority, including federal, state, and other governmental agencies and accrediting bodies. With respect to private inquiries, such as those from guidebook editors, journalists, or individuals, the institutional researcher is bound by the same standards of accuracy, confidentiality, and professionally responsible interpretation.



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### **Survey Guidelines**

*The Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (IRPIE) at College of the Canyons directs institutional efforts for collecting, managing, and analyzing research related to key institutional stakeholders including student, faculty, and staff. In conducting surveys for the institution, the IRPIE office is guided by its mission to provide access to quality data and research findings for planning, reporting, and decision-making process than inform meaningful change towards equitable outcomes and institutional effectiveness. The Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (IRPIE) office at College of the Canyons utilizes the following protocol for the development, administration and analysis of survey data, including authoring of final research reports/briefs or data visualizations, for the dissemination of survey results:*

**Populations and Scope of Work.** IRPIE serves as a neutral party conducting research on behalf of institutional stakeholders. Populations that are typically surveyed by IRPIE include students, employees, and alumni.

**Survey Requesters/Sponsorship.** When conducting surveys, IRPIE office will always designate the survey sponsor transparently, indicating that the survey is being conducted by IRPIE on behalf of a sponsored party. Note that IRPIE is generally not involved in survey administration related to course instructor evaluations or employee evaluations other than limited logistical support in special circumstances, which includes agreement of involved parties. When surveys are identified as affecting multiple offices or units across campus, IRPIE will help to facilitate conversations among key stakeholders to avoid duplication of efforts and encourage data transparency. IRPIE may assist sponsors in various aspects of survey research, as requested. This assistance may include designing survey instruments, setting up survey collection using specialized software, administering data collection, and analyzing results.

In instances where a third-party is hired to design, administer and analyze surveys, IRPIE can provide support, according to the terms of the contract between the District and the third-party, ranging from preparing contact information to other logistics (e.g., sending the survey to the target audience using District communication tools). Where contact information is needed, it will be provided in a format that protects the privacy of the respondents according to the agreed upon design with the approval of the Vice President of Student Services to ensure FERPA compliance. In all other cases, IRPIE will work with the third-party to identify the plan for disseminating the survey link to the target audience.

**Survey Development.** During survey development, the IRPIE office will work with involved parties to establish objectives and goals to ensure that helpful guiding questions are asked, such as: What information is intended to be collected? How will survey findings be used? Will the survey meaningfully inform planning and decision-making needs? This practice encourages purposeful survey design with the goal of yielding practical action implications.

**Data Collection.** IRPIE utilizes procedures that will encourage survey success, and maximize response rates, while ensuring that the students, faculty, and staff are not overwhelmed with survey requests to



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produce survey fatigue. This requires efforts to keep surveys manageable with the number of question-items and limiting the range of topics addressed by one survey.

**Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Record Level Data.** Surveys administered by IRPIE will designate how the data will be used. Surveys listed as *confidential* will include unique identifiers that may be matched to other existing institutional records across campus including data found in the student information system, HR system, and others. Surveys indicating *anonymity* will not include any identifying information and will have no mechanism for including additional data. For all surveys, a disclaimer will be included specifying that *any response provided to open-ended questions will be made available to the survey requester(s) and/or others for whom the results have implications for their respective administrative unit after a redaction process of personally-identifying- information*. This disclaimer will include a suggestion to the respondent that they may avoid including identifiable information in free-response questions.

**Analysis.** For open-ended items (open fields and comments), qualitative analyses will be conducted, themes will be generated, and a frequency chart of themes will be provided. Disaggregation of open responses will be dependent upon the survey's stated purpose, need for data breakdowns, and the frequency and type of responses received. An exhaustive list of open-ended survey responses will be made available upon request. Open-ended responses are redacted in keeping with general research and college practices to protect the anonymity of respondents, and to keep the identities of the respondents confidential to protect the anonymity of implicated parties that are the subject of the comments, whether praiseworthy or critical. The identity of respondents and implicated parties are redacted while always maintaining the general sentiment of the comments. Note that surveys administered by IRPIE will look at patterns, practices, and themes and these positive and negative patterns and practices will remain in the document while redacting information per above in keeping with commonly accepted research practices.

Surveys administered by the IRPIE office will always include an identified time/date to close the survey and stop collecting responses during the planning phase. Once the survey is closed and analysis of the results has begun, the IRPIE office will only re-open the survey for additional responses under certain limited circumstances that would not jeopardize the integrity of the results.

**Results.** Each survey report will include subsequent action implications submission by the requestor and/or others whose areas may have implications related to the survey. Any need for further focused assessment(s) or follow-up analyses to continue to explore and/or verify findings of the initial survey will depend upon the nature of the findings in the initial report and requests for additional analysis.

**Timelines.** While IRPIE will abide by typical application deadlines and timelines, limited urgent circumstances may arise where immediate feedback from institutional stakeholders is necessary to facilitate decision-making processes. In these limited cases, typical timelines may be waived in order for data collection and analysis to be expedited.

**Summary and Further Resources.** Please note that this document is designed to provide a succinct overview of ethical principles, guidelines and practices for research conducted by the IRPIE office. Note that this document is not intended to provide a comprehensive or limiting description of all possible



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research practices and principles, which are often complex, dynamic, and situation-specific. This document will be updated periodically to reflect current practices and address emergent changes. Substantial additional information and resources are maintained online by the IRPIE office in an ongoing manner, and specific questions can be addressed to the office as needed. Additional information on survey, research design, use of data, and answers to many commonly asked questions is available at [www.canyons.edu/data](http://www.canyons.edu/data). Thank you for supporting and participating in a rich culture of data and inquiry at College of the Canyons.