



Confidentiality and Privacy for the HERI Faculty Survey

The HERI Faculty Survey is designed to document and understand the faculty experience. In order to be able to conduct research at the national level regarding the experience of specific subgroups of faculty of interest (e.g., untenured women in STEM disciplines, part-time faculty, underrepresented minority faculty at private universities, LGBTQ faculty, etc.), we ask questions that allow us to understand who faculty are; what they do; and whether, how, and why they are changing. Because we ask these questions, we take the confidentiality and privacy of our data very seriously. This document is intended to help facilitate conversations with faculty regarding why they are being asked to complete the survey and how the information they provide will be used by HERI and on your campus.

An important step in talking with faculty about the HERI Faculty Survey is to underscore why they are being asked to complete the instrument. At the national level, HERI uses the results to advance the national discussion about issues critical to higher education, including the role of adjunct and part-time faculty in higher education; the impact of technology on the curriculum; the status of women, underrepresented minority, and LGBTQ faculty within the academy; the nature and purpose of undergraduate education, etc. At the local level, the information faculty members provide will help your campus to better understand their experience. Results are frequently used to gauge the status of campus priorities; encourage discussions about best practices in teaching and learning; develop and enhance policies and practices for faculty; and improve curricula, instruction, and services. At both the national and campus levels, the results are confidential and will only be used to report aggregate findings.

The Instrument

The HERI Faculty Survey is an anonymous survey. Survey respondents will not be asked for their name, or other identifying information (identification number, address, telephone number, birth date).

The HERI Faculty Survey **does** ask respondents to provide their email address for potential follow-up surveys. Only if the respondent explicitly and voluntarily answers “yes” and provides their email will HERI retain this information. Respondent email addresses are stored only at HERI in a separate file from survey responses, and the two files are not linked. Email addresses provided by faculty are not included in the preliminary data file and they are not included in any of the files returned to institutions. A list of faculty who submit or opt out of the survey will be sent to the institution for the sole purpose of preventing these faculty members from receiving future reminder emails. This list is not tied to survey responses in any way, nor will the institution receive information about whether the faculty member completed the survey or opted out.

UCLA’s IRB has determined that all of the items on the HERI Faculty Survey are of minimal risk, however there may be items that faculty members would prefer not to answer. Respondents can leave any item on the instrument they are not comfortable answering blank.

At HERI

When the data are returned to HERI, they are returned in two separate files. The first file contains the names and email addresses of respondents who have given their permission to have their contact information retained by HERI. The second file contains the responses to the instrument.

The Results

The institutional reports that we prepare for you summarize the responses to survey items for your institution and comparison groups in several ways. Results (broken out by sex) are provided for: Full-time undergraduate faculty; Part-time undergraduate faculty; Graduate faculty; Full-time administrators; other respondents; and “all” survey respondents.

Any item with fewer than five respondents will be suppressed in order to protect confidentiality. For example, if an institution had four female part-time faculty respondents and 30 male part-time respondents, the female column in the part-time faculty report would be suppressed, while the male column would be returned, and 34 responses would be included in “all” part-time faculty.

HERI Data File

The HERI data file is an important resource for conducting additional meaningful analysis about your faculty. Many items on the survey can define potentially interesting sub-populations for investigation (e.g., full vs. part-time faculty; faculty in the sciences vs. faculty in the humanities). It is for this reason that we return the unit record data to participating campuses. The data file you receive will not contain names or email addresses. If a respondent gives permission to HERI to retain email address for follow-up surveys, that information is retained in a file separate from survey responses at HERI. It is not returned to campuses.

In order to receive the institutional data file, the appropriate campus representative must certify compliance with HERI’s confidentiality agreement. It states that data will be used solely for statistical analysis and reporting of aggregate information, and not for the investigation of specific individuals. While it might be possible to identify an individual based on their answers to the HERI Faculty Survey, the confidentiality agreement protects against this possibility. No one at your institution can have access to institutional data or results until this agreement has been signed, and they cannot investigate individual faculty responses.

On Your Campus

You may also want to reassure faculty regarding how the data and results are treated on campus. Relevant information might include the security of your data storage systems, who has access to the data, and how you will handle reporting on small sub-populations. This is also an additional opportunity to underscore that the results of the survey will be used to better understand the faculty experience.