Date: October 8, 2019

To: Nicholas Rowland
Dawn Blasko
Paula Brown
Renee Bishop-Pierce
Andrew Freiberg
Lisa Posey
Ira Saltz
Roger Egolf
Tim Robicheaux
Greg Shearer

From: Geoff Mamerow

Subject: USCC Survey Policy Review for Faculty Senate

Dear Dr. Rowland and Penn State Faculty Senators,

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider the proposed USCC policy and process documents. The USCC has worked diligently to find an appropriate balance on many issues related to surveying at Penn State; your comments highlight several challenges, and your collective feedback and insights will be invaluable going forward.

It is important to note that once the policy passed, the USCC will be reconstituted and charged by the Provost to implement it. This will be a new start for the USCC and we see implementation as an opportunity to make meaningful adjustments that will –hopefully—address your concerns.

Concerns about shared governance
Shared governance is a cornerstone of Penn State culture and the USCC’s discussions frequently touched upon this critical issue. In fact, our commitment to shared governance informed the decision to include a representative of the Faculty Senate on the committee.

Burdens on smaller units
The USCC drew upon perspectives across the Commonwealth when considering different thresholds for the “large-scale survey” definition. We recognized early on in our deliberations that any final measurement had the potential to impact differently sized units negatively. Striking a balance that minimizes burdens is our intention and we will continue to solicit feedback and make adjustments as appropriate.

Transparency and annual reporting
The idea of an annual report detailing the work of the committee is very much in keeping with other transparency practices previously discussed by the USCC. Our website https://pennstatesurvey.psu.edu/ has already set the tone with publication of our meeting minutes, as well as functioning survey calendar.

**Enforceability**
This is a perpetual issue, and as with many University policies, is dependent upon the cooperation and shared values of the community at large. We recognize that full compliance is likely an unachievable standard—especially at first. We hope that the benefits of the policy, over time, will encourage voluntary compliance.

**Interaction with IRB**
While the policy explicitly states that USCC approval is not contingent on IRB approval, it also emphasizes that the USCC is not a replacement for the IRB. Researchers can pursue either process in the order most convenient to them, and we want the USCC to play a supportive role in survey research at Penn State overall. Still, this is likely another aspect of the process that will become clearer through implementation and solicitation of additional feedback from the community.

**Formal designation of approval**
This is a challenge that was discussed at some length by the USCC but also appears to have few ready solutions. We will continue researching technologies or other approaches with the potential to address this challenge.

In summary, we very much appreciate the challenges you have identified. Some, we have given thought and attempted to address in the policy and process language. Others, we believe, can be addressed in implementation and judicious adjustments.

Again, we wish to thank the Faculty Senate for helping to strengthen the policy and the operations of the USCC through your feedback and input.

Sincerely yours,
Geoff

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