



The State University  
of New York

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[www.suny.edu](http://www.suny.edu)

**September 30, 2015**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To: SUNY Campus Presidents**

**From: Alexander N. Cartwright, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor**

**Subject: New Student Information Survey Ready; Informational Conference Calls Scheduled**

I am pleased to attach the final questions for the new student information survey, revised in response to the extensive feedback received from campus administrators as well as broad consultation with students and state and national experts as detailed below. I am asking that you work with your information technology team to have the survey in place beginning next month for students registering for the Spring 2016 semester.

The SICAS Center has developed the survey tool for Banner campuses to appear AFTER a student has completed the registration process. The SICAS Center will be hosting a conference call on implementation on October 7, 2015; a call for non-Banner campuses will be held on October 9, 2015. Details about registering for these calls appears at the bottom of this memo.

Note that implementation of this survey was endorsed by the SUNY Trustees at its September 2015 meeting.

As you will recall, the survey focuses on student characteristics about which there was little or no data at the System level. We recognize that this data may already be collected on some campuses or even on a SUNY, State or Federal form that we have access to at the System level; however, it cannot be easily paired with the central student information system. Our ability to connect the data to the central system is crucial as the goal of the survey is to look at outcomes over time to inform student support efforts.

The survey includes six questions on: first-generation status; employment on- and off-campus; sexual orientation; gender identity; whether a student has requested support services for a disability; and whether a student is active in the military or a veteran. The survey is voluntary with each one of the six questions including an "I prefer not to respond" option. We anticipate that it will take students about three minutes to complete.

We received extensive feedback on the draft survey circulated for comment; I want to thank you for your candid feedback. While some comments provided specific suggestions for improving the survey questions, others expressed concern about doing the survey at all. The most comments were received on the questions regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and disabilities and here again feedback was mixed. There were varying concerns expressed about how the questions might make students feel and whether or not students would understand the questions.

To Learn  
To Search  
To Serve



To explore this feedback further, we went directly to students via the SUNY Student Assembly—my sincere thanks to President Tom Mastro, the Student Assembly Executive Board, and the Student Assembly Equity and Inclusion Committee for their leadership and assistance.

We also spoke with executive staff from UCLA's Williams Institute, Research Director Gary Gates and Scholar of Public Policy Jody Herman, as well as representatives from the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals—both groups have studied how best to give students an opportunity to self-identify as LGBTQ+. We had the opportunity to speak with members of the UC System Presidents' Office (the UC System is now giving students an opportunity to self-identify as LGBTQ+ on the admissions application). We also consulted with the SUNY sector of the New York State Disabilities Services Council.

Feedback from these consultations was clearer. There was a sentiment expressed that all students want to be counted and they want their campus to be held responsible for ensuring an environment that promotes success. It was particularly motivating to hear from students pleased that the survey asked about disabilities and to learn about their ongoing efforts to de-stigmatize disabilities, particularly when it comes to tracking outcomes (a number of SUNY students are participating in an advisory group of the New York State Education Department). We also heard that having multiple responses for the questions on gender identity and sexual orientation was an important acknowledgement of the diversity of SUNY's student body. We also had the opportunity to hear directly from the individuals who had extensively studied how best to survey students in these areas.

It was in consideration of all of this feedback that we opted to move forward with the survey and revised the questions accordingly:

- **First-generation status:** Based on campus feedback we revised the question to ask about 'those who raised you' and also added technical or vocational education as a specific level of education.
- **Plans to work during the semester:** Based on campus feedback we expanded the question to ask about where students will work -- on campus or off.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** We did reduce the number of possible responses under each question (question wording was guided by the work of the Williams Institute and the Higher Education Consortium of LGBT Professionals). However, we also wanted to remain responsive to feedback from students who indicated that more options, including pansexual as a possible response for example, would be preferable.
- **Disability:** We revised this question to be framed as whether or not a student has requested support services. We made clear that if a student wants to request supports, they need to do so via their campus's office of student disabilities. We also included a System email address that goes right to my office for any students having trouble finding the right office. For data collection purposes we have organized possible responses into categories that are aligned with a new reporting structure that will be used by the state education department.
- **Active duty/veteran's status:** This is an area where we do have some central reporting, however, there are concerns about data quality and completeness. It was suggested that some students may be more comfortable identifying as a veteran via this type of voluntary information tool.

You will also see that we shortened the opening message significantly and added a specific paragraph on privacy protections.

I have no doubt that we will learn from the first administration of this survey and I am absolutely open to ongoing improvement as we move forward. I hope that students see this as part of SUNY's efforts to be inclusive and I know that results will inform System and ultimately campus student support efforts.

We have requested that data be transmitted to SUNY after registration closes, January 30<sup>th</sup> (or next business day) for Spring and September 30<sup>th</sup> (or next business day) for Fall. System will provide aggregate data to each campus about campus results, sector, and system-wide results.

Details about registering for the Banner and Non-Banner calls are below:

**Banner campuses:**

- October 7, 2015
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- Please use your member login at the SICAS center website: [sicas.oneonta.edu/](http://sicas.oneonta.edu/) to obtain the dial-in information.

**Non-Banner campuses:**

- October 9, 2015
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- The dial-in information will be e-mailed to chief technology officers, with a copy to Presidents.

If you have any questions in the interim or would like to discuss the survey generally, please do not hesitate to contact me at: [provost@suny.edu](mailto:provost@suny.edu).

Attachment

Copy: Chancellor Zimpher  
President, University Faculty Senate  
President, Faculty Council of Community Colleges  
President, Student Assembly  
Chief Diversity Officer Medina  
Campus Chief Academic Officers  
Campus Diversity Officers  
Campus Information Technology Officers  
Campus Registrars  
Campus Vice Presidents for Student Affairs  
Campus Institutional Research Directors

## System-wide Student Information Survey

Thank you for being a part of the SUNY family! Your campus is one of 64 SUNY campuses located across New York State. The following short survey is part of the SUNY System's continuing efforts to better serve our diverse student population and to ensure that all SUNY campuses provide a supportive and welcoming environment. The data we are seeking concerns first generation status, employment status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability services, and veteran status.

This survey has six questions (a few with multiple parts) and we estimate that it will take three minutes to complete. Each question gives you an option to choose not to respond.

Read about privacy protections in place for this survey.

[This will be a clickable box; for now, see last page for statement]

1) **Please indicate the highest level of education completed by those who raised you (you may respond regarding up to two people):**

Parent/Guardian 1

- a) Less than high school diploma
- b) High school diploma/GED
- c) Trade School / Vocational Training (BOCES, EOC)
- c) Associate degree
- d) Bachelor's degree or higher
- e) Don't know
- f) I prefer not to respond.

Parent/Guardian 2

- a) Less than high school diploma
- b) High school diploma/GED
- d) Trade School / Vocational Training (BOCES, EOC)
- c) Associate degree
- d) Bachelor's degree or higher
- e) Don't know
- f) I prefer not to respond.

2. ***Are you working (or will you work) on campus this semester?***

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I prefer not to respond.

***If yes:***

- a) Employed part-time - Less than 10 hours per week

- b) Employed part-time - Between 10 and 20 hours per week
- c) Employed part-time - 21 hours to 30 hours per week
- d) Employed full-time - 31 or more hours per week
- e) Undecided /Unknown

**2a. Are you (or will you) work off-campus this semester?**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I prefer not to respond.

**If yes:**

- a) Employed part-time – Less than 10 hours per week
- b) Employed part-time - Between 10 and 20 hours per week
- c) Employed part-time - 21 hours to 30 hours per week
- d) Employed full-time - 31 or more hours per week
- e) Undecided /Unknown

**3. Sexual Orientation – Do you consider yourself to be:**

- a) Straight (heterosexual)
- b) Gay
- c) Lesbian
- d) Bisexual
- e) Pansexual
- f) Queer
- g) Questioning or unsure
- h) An orientation not listed. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- i) I prefer not to respond.

**4. Gender Identity - How do you describe yourself?**

- a) Man
- b) Woman
- c) Trans man
- d) Trans woman
- e) Genderqueer/Gender-fluid
- f) Questioning or unsure
- g) A gender identity not listed. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- h) I prefer not to respond.

**4a. What sex were you assigned at birth (ex. on first birth certificate)?**

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) I prefer not to respond.

**5. Have you requested support services from the campus Office of Disability Services?**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I prefer not to respond.

Important Note: This survey provides information to SUNY System Administration, not campus disability offices. If you have a disability and are seeking support or accommodation, you will need to contact the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Coordinator for students on your campus. If you have questions or concerns, you can also email [provost@suny.edu](mailto:provost@suny.edu) and we will direct you to the appropriate person.

**5a. Do you have a disability as described below? (please select all that apply)**

*Neurodevelopmental*

- a) ADHD
- b) Communications/Speech
- c) Learning Disability
- d) Motor

*Sensory*

- a) Blind
- b) Low Vision
- c) Deaf
- d) Hard of Hearing

*Mental Health*

- a) Anxiety Disorders
- b) Autism spectrum, including Aspergers
- c) Bipolar Disorder
- d) Depression
- e) Dissociative Disorder
- f) Eating Disorder
- g) Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- h) Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- i) Schizophrenia

*Physical*

- a) Basic Chronic Medical condition
- b) Mobility
- c) Orthopedic

*Intersystem*

- a) Alcohol/Substance Abuse Recovery
- b) Complex Chronic Medical Condition
- c) Traumatic Brain Injury

A disability or impairment not listed above. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Active Military/Veteran Status (please select all that apply)**

- a) Active military duty
- b) Reserve or National Guard
- c) Dependent of Active Duty Military
- d) Dependent of Veteran Military
- e) Veteran
- f) None
- g) I prefer not to respond.

Thank you for completing this survey. Please see <http://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/institutional-research/Diversity-Data-Brief-Aug2015.pdf> for the System's latest data report on diversity. You will have the opportunity to update these responses next semester.

**Privacy Protection Statement**

The information collected from this survey will be transmitted from campus information technology offices to the information technology office at SUNY System Administration in Albany, New York. As with all student data, access is restricted and information is stored on secure servers. This data will always be reported at the aggregate level—such as by overall campus, sectors of campuses, or the system as a whole—never by individual student. Examples of information reported from this survey would be: 50% of students at Campus A plan to work between 10 and 20 hours per week; or 65% of students at all SUNY community colleges plan to work between 10 and 20 hours per week. This data is being collected for informational purposes to inform efforts by SUNY System to support student success and ensure inclusive campus environments.