You Don’t Know Faculty

CHARACTERISTICS OF FACULTY SURVEY NONRESPONSE

Kiernan Mathews, Ed.D. | Harvard University
Professional & Organizational Development Network | 6 November 2014
Outline

1. Reflection

2. Background, method, and findings

3. Interpretation

4. Discussion
Reflection

In the last **two years**, how many surveys have been administered to your faculty?

What were the response rates like?

What changed on your campus as a result of participation?
Faculty are oversurveyed...

Within the past year, # of survey requests from someone at your institution

- Four or more: 27%
- None
- One
- Two
- Three

n = 5,648
...and they’re cynical about it.

Faculty surveys play a somewhat or very unimportant role in determining my institution’s policies

51%

n = 5,610
The “ideal” response rate?

80%

20%
No “ideal” response rate

Different characteristics

80%

Similar characteristics

20%
“...ignoring the results of a study with a 10% response rate... is just as foolish as assuming that one with a response rate of 80% is unassailable.”

(Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007, p. 198)
No “ideal” response rate

Different characteristics
80%

Similar characteristics
20%
More likely missing ...

Demographic
• Male
• African-American and Asian/Asian-American
• Non-U.S. citizens

Professional
• “Hard,” “investigative,” “enterprising” disciplines
• Tenured
• Career age > 2 years
• Current rank > 3 years
• Associate professors > 6 years
More likely missing ...

Institutional setting

• Public
• Higher enrollment
• Lower graduation rate
• Urban/suburban
• Lesser degree of confidentiality
What predicts lower response?

Linear regression

- confidentiality of survey data
- fiduciary control
- enrollment size
- graduation rate
- degree of urbanization

Response rates are 29% of a standard deviation lower at urban/suburban campuses.

40% of variation in response rates
Abraham Wald & WWII

Source: The National World War II Museum,.
Let’s talk.
What can be done? Design

Prove it’s worth their time

• Tell them: Whom will the results help? How? What changed as a result of the last survey?

Leverage salience theory

• “Microtargeting” your population. Alternate message—and messenger.

Oversample

• Spend more time/resources recruiting those less likely to respond.

Use upfront incentives

• Inexpensive items such as pens or free coffee for everyone.
What can be done? Analysis

Focus group follow-up
- If an important population is underrepresented, follow up with a focus group. Ask them, “Why?”

Weighting and imputation
- Bias vs. estimate. Use weighting only when analyzing one variable, construct. Doesn’t solve MNAR data.

Honesty is the best policy
- Think and write about limitations of nonresponse. You’ll look smarter, and can “lean against the bias.”
What can be done? Strategy

Create a survey clearinghouse

• Institution-wide approval of all in-house and third party surveys. If survey invitation doesn’t include their seal of approval, faculty are free to ignore.

Feedback

• Develop and execute a comprehensive dissemination strategy. Be explicit when action stemmed from survey.

Stop. No, really, Just stop.

• Faculty are asked to respond to more surveys than you think. Just because it’s easy doesn’t mean you should do it. Give them a break!
Download materials

coahe.net/POD14_Kiernan

... or transfer from my thumb drive now.