



## ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

November 20, 2014

To: AAU Presidents and Chancellors  
From: Hunter Rawlings  
Subject: Update and Call to Action on AAU Sexual Assault Climate Survey

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Dear AAU Presidents and Chancellors:

I am following up on my November 14 request for action on the AAU sexual assault climate survey. As you know, I asked that Presidents and Chancellors indicate by December 1 that their university will participate in the survey.

This survey is a top priority for the AAU Board of Directors, and AAU undertook this effort at the request of presidents and chancellors. A number of you have signed up already. I appreciate your quick response. **As I wrote in my earlier communication, I strongly encourage all AAU Presidents and Chancellors to participate in this effort, even if your institution already has a climate survey in the field. Your involvement is critical to our overall success.**

We are very confident in our survey team's abilities, knowledge, and experience. Nearly all of the AAU [team members](#) are professionals with deep and direct experience, whether academic or practical, in survey research, sexual assault, gender issues, student affairs, or other related matters. Westat personnel also have deep expertise on research surveys in general, and on sexual assault surveys in particular.

For example, Dr. Bonnie Fisher, a nationally recognized expert on sexual assault, has been hired by Westat to work closely with the AAU-Westat team to shape the content and analysis of the survey. Her participation is a primary reason we retained Westat, and she is looking forward to working with us.

Dr. Sandy Martin, a senior researcher and research administrator at UNC Chapel Hill, is leading the AAU survey design team. Sandy asked me to convey to you her confidence in AAU's multi-disciplinary survey design team of researchers, practitioners, and professionals working in student services.

As you know, a group of researchers has written a letter expressing concerns about the AAU survey. While we respect their views, we strongly disagree with their conclusions. I want to take this opportunity to respond briefly to their communication.

First, our process for developing a valid and reliable survey has been transparent. We let you all know in June that the survey would be based on an instrument developed by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, and our press release last week also made that clear. Its primary author was Victoria Banyard, and Rutgers University recently conducted a pilot survey using that instrument. Each participating university will see

the instrument in draft form when it goes to the survey IRB (institutional research board) and when it goes through each university's own IRB processes.

We do not anticipate that the overall results will be the only ones released, although we believe they will provide extremely valuable information to policymakers and the public. As you know, we are leaving it to you to decide whether or not to release your individual survey results. We will encourage all who participate in the survey to be transparent with their results. Above all, our purpose is to help your universities craft the best-informed policies for protecting students from sexual assault and promoting campus safety. Our second goal is to collect data from across our universities that we hope will inform public policy and all other efforts to better understand this important and complex issue.

On another issue, we certainly understand concerns about one-size-fits-all surveys. It is important to note that AAU institutions are more alike in critical respects than they are different, which is why we believe that the overall data we obtain from this survey, with its combination of standardization and customization, will give us reliable collective data on the scope of the problem across universities, and will be instructive for such institutions as well as for the public and policymakers.

Finally, I certainly understand concerns about cost. These surveys are expensive because of the complexity of the instruments and the large number of students whom AAU and our universities want to reach. I am providing here a breakdown of the estimated \$85,000 cost per institution. The estimates below are based on 40 institutions participating in the survey.

- An estimated \$68,000 for the Westat team to (1) work directly with participating universities to implement the various tasks associated with the project, including survey promotion, obtaining student sampling data, and survey launch; (2) analyze university data and produce university specific reports; and (3) provide incentives for student participation (the portion of the \$68,000 attributable to these incentives is \$15,000).
- The remaining approximately \$17,000 is a percentage of the overall costs for the Westat team to develop and implement the survey and related procedures, including sampling, data analysis, reporting and communication plans.
- The final actual costs will vary depending upon the number of institutions participating, sample response rates, and additional costs incurred on an as-needed basis.

I have also attached a FAQ document that I hope will be useful to you.

The cost includes a series of deliverables, including but not limited to:

- a copy of the final survey instrument
- a survey toolkit to help with promotion of survey participation
- survey programming and launch, including outreach and reminders to students throughout open survey period
- helpdesk services throughout the survey period to provide university-specific resource information to students
- individual data analysis and reports, and
- final data files.

I hope this provides you with the information you need. Thank you for your expedited response.

*Attachment*