



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

November 14, 2014

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

I am very pleased to announce that AAU contracted with Westat, one of the largest and most well respected survey research firms in the country, to help design and administer the AAU sexual assault climate survey. This is a significant milestone in our effort to develop a survey that employs valid and reliable instrumentation to document the frequency and characteristics of campus sexual assault and sexual harassment, to assess campus climate across institutions in a comparable way, and to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

AAU worked very closely with two teams of campus experts over the last several months in coming to this decision. The RFP team was chaired by [Russell Carey](#), Executive Vice President, Planning & Policy, Brown University, and the survey design and implementation team that will now work very closely with the Westat team is chaired by [Sandra Martin](#), Professor and Associate Chair for Research, Department of Maternal and Child Health, Associate Dean for Research, Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. We are enormously grateful for the time and attention of these teams.

Westat is an internationally renowned leader in methodological and statistical expertise in survey design and implementation, and will bring deep and substantive experience and expertise to this challenging initiative. [Dr. Bonnie Fisher](#), a nationally recognized expert on sexual assault, will be working closely with the team to shape the content and analysis of the survey.

The AAU survey will be based, in part, on the survey instrument developed by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, which was included in the [notalone.gov](#)'s [April 2014 Report](#). [That survey instrument](#) was recently piloted by Rutgers University, and Rutgers has agreed to share lessons learned with AAU. AAU expects Westat to make necessary adjustments to survey questions based on the experience of Rutgers and other universities, the expertise of the AAU design team, as well as their in-house content experts.

Among the objectives of the anonymous multi-campus survey are the following:

- 1) Collect information used to estimate the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment experienced by university students (undergraduate, graduate and professional);
- 2) Collect information on students' attitudes towards sexual misconduct, including their perception of the adequacy of the university's response to sexual misconduct; and
- 3) Collect university-specific information on student experiences with programs and policies on their campuses. Five questions will be tailored with campus-specific program names, with the goal of assessing student familiarity with campus resources and support services and reporting mechanisms. Given the tight timeframe, Westat must keep individual variability in sampling and survey design and implementation across universities to a minimum.

A draft timeline of the scope of work is included with this communication. Westat will provide each university with an IRB package for the university-specific IRB approval process in December 2014, and then administer the survey in April 2015. They will summarize the results, and provide each participating institution with a report regarding the overall aggregated findings (summarized across institutions) and a report on the findings from their own university (note that university-specific information will be shared only with that university). In addition, each university will be supplied with a de-identified data file so that further data analysis can be undertaken by the university if desired. AAU plans to make the aggregated results (without institutional identifiers) public next fall and use the results to help inform national conversations with federal policymakers. The aggregated results will be based on the Westat's report on the findings. AAU will **not** use these data to benchmark or compare institutions to one another.

Westat will develop the online survey and implement it with eligible AAU member universities using a census approach with an embedded representative sample. The rationale for this approach is that, through the census, all students will be given a voice in the survey. However, to assure that the results are representative of the student body, a sample will be selected and analyzed. To increase response rates, incentives will be used: any student who visits the survey website will be automatically entered into a lottery to win \$500, and those students in the sample will be offered a \$5 Amazon gift card for completing the survey.

Detailed eligibility criteria for participation in the survey are also included in this communication. Schools will be required to sign a non-negotiable financial contract with AAU and a detailed MOU with Westat to participate.

Each participating school is responsible for the cost of the survey. The estimated cost per school is about \$85K, including an estimated \$15K for direct incentives and \$500 for the lottery. The final costs will vary depending upon the number of institutions participating, sample response rates, and additional costs incurred on an as-needed basis. The greater the number of participating institutions, the lower the costs will be for each institution.

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

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

We anticipate the cost of this complex undertaking to be highest in the first year and that, if it becomes an annual exercise, the expenses will diminish in subsequent years. Overall, we feel this is a reasonable per-institution investment in a national, professional, and highly-credible survey that will directly address a critical issue of utmost importance to us as individual institutions and as an association of higher education leaders.

In this first round, AAU has also invited the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) schools that are not a part of the AAU to participate.

It is crucial that we move forward together on this effort at an aggressive pace. In part, we want to be able to develop solid data and information before Congress and the White House mandate, as we expect, that every campus conduct a government-developed survey in the near future, which will likely be a one-size-fits all survey that does not reliably assess the campus culture on this issue.

The deadline for signing up to participate in the AAU survey is **December 1, 2014**. While we recognize that this requires a very fast turnaround, the aggressive overall timeline for this initiative dictates such a deadline. If you

would like to participate, please email AAUCampusClimate@westat.com. We request that in the initial email you:

- Identify a campus coordinator to serve as a liaison between Westat and his or her campus as we move forward with this initiative. A more detailed explanation of their role is included in the attached eligibility criteria. In your initial email please include name, title, department/division, contact information (email/phone/address), and assistant name and contact information as applicable. Upon receipt of the email, participating schools will receive a call from the Westat team within two business days to begin the engagement process. Each school will be assigned a point of contact to confer with throughout the entire survey process.
- Identify a financial point of contact to handle the institutional payments for the survey. Please provide name, title, and contact information (email/phone) in your initial email. AAU staff will contact the financial point of contact to execute the financial contract.

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 a critical component of our overall success.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact Mollie Benz Flounlacker at mollie_benz@aau.edu, and cc Liz Hartmann-Dow at liz.hartmann-dow@aau.edu.

Eligibility Criteria for Participation in AAU's Sexual Assault and Climate Survey

To participate in AAU's Survey of Sexual Assault and Campus Climate, universities must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- **Financial agreement with AAU.** Universities will be required to sign a non-negotiable contract with AAU by December 5 that stipulates the financial relationship between AAU and universities for the duration of this project. Universities will be required to identify a financial point of contact by December 1.
- **Memorandum of understanding.** Universities will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Westat, AAU's contractor for this effort. The MOU will specify the following requirements:
 - **University Coordinator.** Universities will be required to appoint a University Coordinator to mobilize and coordinate key university stakeholders to complete tasks and meet deadlines associated with this effort. The coordinator should be in place by December 1, 2014. At the very least, University Coordinators should have the following qualifications:
 - An understanding of university policies around the promotion and administration of ethical and responsible research on campus
 - An understanding of the university's IRB's policies, procedures and schedule
 - The ability to work collaboratively with Westat's Study Liaisons to complete tasks and meet deadlines¹.
 - **Institutional Review Board approval.** Universities will be required to have IRB approval for the survey and related procedures by February 27, 2015. While Westat will provide universities with a draft copy of the survey and procedures in late December 2014, final versions will not be available until late January 2015. This means that universities will not be able to provide their IRB with the final survey and procedures until early February, which restricts the IRB approval period to approximately four weeks.
 - **Incentives.** Universities will be required to provide incentives to a sample of students who complete the survey, as outlined in Westat's study protocol. Specifically, a sample of students will be provided with a \$5 Amazon gift card (via a web link) after completing the survey. A \$500 lottery will be used for the census.
 - **Sampling frame.** Universities will be required to submit specific information to allow Westat to draw the student sample that will receive incentives. Westat will provide universities with guidance around what information is required. Sampling data will be due to Westat no later than February 27, 2015.

¹ Universities might look to the Office of Research Administration (or similar office) to identify someone to serve in this position.

- **Commitment to promote the survey on campus.** To ensure success and increase response rates, universities will be required to promote the survey with its student body. Westat will develop a survey promotion “toolkit” that will provide universities with generic templates and ideas for survey promotion. However, universities will have discretion over how they promote the survey with their student population, including if and how they use Westat’s materials. We expect survey promotion activities to begin in early January 2015 and continue through the open survey period (April 1 – May 10, 2015).
- **Commitment to use all of Westat IRB-approved Survey.** Universities may not add or subtract from the survey, with the exception of some degree of customization for the module pertaining to campus-specific resources and policies.
- **Embargo on survey findings.** To manage communications around study findings, universities will be required to abide by AAU’s embargo on them. Specifically, AAU will require that universities agree NOT to publish or communicate survey findings internally (to the student population) or externally (to any external party) from July 1, 2015, when draft findings and data files are released to AAU and universities, to September 1, 2015, when final findings are released.
- **AAU release.** Schools must sign off on AAU releasing aggregated results based on Westat’s report findings (without institutional identifiers) next fall to help inform national conversations with federal policymakers. AAU will NOT use these data to benchmark or compare institutions to one another to assess progress or for other reasons.

