Guidelines for Administering Surveys to Alumni

Introduction

The opinions of our alumni are very important to RIT and as such, we periodically query alumni on a variety of topics under a variety of circumstances. However, we are conservative in our approach as we are sensitive to the threshold of tolerance our alumni have, especially those who might feel they are inundated with email and requests for assistance from the division and the university at large.

Guidelines

Given the need to be sensitive to the sheer volume of email sent to alumni, we need to be discerning as to what messages we communicate and when. Surveys are valuable tools which provide valuable information back to the division and university that provide not only feedback but also guidance on paths forward. As such, the following outlines circumstances and guidelines as to what is appropriate to query alumni and solicit feedback and opinions utilizing DAR specific resources:

Engage DAR to survey alumni in the following instances:

- Attitudinal research to capture alumni sentiment and alumni satisfaction with their university experience as well as experiences with the various components of the university
- Queries to assess alumni preferences with respect to communication channels, vehicles, and methods as well as preferences with respect to programming
- Surveys designed to provide insight into curriculum or program development
- Inquiries regarding post-graduation outcomes with respect to alumni employment, career path, salary history, and other career/employment status related information and data
- Demographic and psychographic queries to help maintain the integrity of the alumni database
- Philanthropy-focused surveys to better understand motivating factors with respect to charitable giving

Consult with DAR to determine the best way to survey alumni in the following instance:

- For the purpose of completing faculty research – it is understood that many faculty within the university already have access to alumni through the college, school or department within which they serve; it is recommended that route be pursued first; if additional survey participants are needed, please consult with representatives from DAR to further discuss the survey needs and parameters;
given the sheer volume of communications delivered to alumni, it is not always feasible for DAR to accommodate all faculty requests but in consultation, we can collectively work toward achieving mutual benefit; requests for alumni to participate in surveys can be considered through the following means:

- Postings in alumni-specific social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- Invitations included in the college-specific updates that are routinely delivered via email
- Links in the monthly e-newsletter Tiger’s Tale

- Faculty engaging DAR to assist in facilitating alumni surveys are highly encouraged to share any identifying data with DAR for the purposes of boosting alumni data integrity.

Don’t engage DAR to survey alumni in the following instances:

- For the purpose of completing student projects – while it is understandable and potentially required that students would like/need alumni feedback with respect to their individual assignments and projects, it is not feasible to accommodate student requests as helping one sets precedence for helping all.
  - Students are encouraged to join alumni-frequented social networks and are encouraged to solicit alumni feedback through those channels (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)
  - Students might also work within the construct of their respective colleges or programs regarding identifying and engaging survey participants

- For the purpose of promoting or soliciting feedback on a product or service not affiliated with RIT

Best practices to follow:

- Not more than one survey will be sent in any given month to alumni and each survey invitation sent will only be followed by one reminder so essentially, only two emails per survey allowed each month
- All surveys will be created to maximize honest and open feedback and survey constructs will not contain leading questions to solicit specific responses
- All surveys will be of reasonable length and all surveys will be built with consideration of the participant’s time; more lengthy surveys, where reasonably needed, will disclose the amount of time necessary for the participate to
adequately complete the survey; this information will be disclosed in the survey invitation and at the start of the survey instrument itself as part of the instructions

- Please proof read your surveys for grammar, punctuation, content and voice; all questions in the survey should be written in one voice always
- Whether or not to include an incentive for participation is at the discretion of the survey initiator; incentives are nice to have but are not mandatory

**Summary**

The above guidelines are intended to be exactly that – guidelines. If there is a need to survey alumni that is not covered under any of the points above, please feel free to contact the Executive Director of Communications and New Media ([cmsdar@rit.edu](mailto:cmsdar@rit.edu) or 475-2587) to discuss your initiative at greater length.