



June 5, 2012

The New Academic Department Survey: Providing Up-to-Date Information for Chairs

Dear XXXX:

The American Sociological Association (ASA) is conducting its first department survey since Academic Year (AY) 2005-06. The AY 2011-2012 survey responds to the many requests by department chairs, such as you, to provide updated information about faculty workloads, distance learning, graduate stipends, undergraduate assessment, faculty lines, and new curriculum. You will receive an email invitation to participate in this online survey within the next two weeks.

We need a high response rate so that we can allow chairs who complete the surveys to select 10 "peer" departments (which we will aggregate) for comparison purposes. These comparisons can be shown to deans and other administrators for purposes of planning and evaluation. In addition, we will provide aggregated comparisons by type of departments (using Carnegie classifications). Individual department data will not be made available to any other department or division besides your own.

Much of the survey is consistent with previous ones so that trend analysis is possible, but we have added new questions that chairs wanted and removed other questions. The result is a somewhat shorter survey than in prior years, consisting of four sections: changes in resources, curriculum, and technology; assessment of student learning; department structure (including baccalaureate and graduate programs); and characteristics and changes in faculty. Although the survey is online, you will be able to assign different sections to other faculty or staff in your department. For example, department assistants may know the information about numbers of majors and numbers of students taking courses.

The survey will benefit the entire discipline, and comparing like departments will help yours as well. If you have questions please contact Roberta Spalter-Roth, Director of Research, at spalter-roth@asanet.org or (202) 383-9005, ext. 317. We look forward to your participation. Please email Dr. Spalter-Roth if you are no longer the Department Chair.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sally T. Hillsman'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S'.

Sally T. Hillsman, PhD
Executive Officer