Survey of Organizational Research Climate (SORC)

The Survey of Organizational Research Climate (SORC) is the first validated instrument specifically designed to measure the climate of research integrity in academic organizations. It collects confidential responses from the members of an organization so the perspectives of the members of the institution represent the overall measures, once aggregated. Results can help individual academic and research institutions identify strong and vulnerable departments; assess efficacy of educational approaches; detect where research policies and practices (e.g., concerning data management, etc.) might be improved through RCR instruction and generally support efforts to bolster research integrity. Administering the SORC at intervals of three to five years will permit institutions to provide data to document changes over time and demonstrate commitment to improving the research integrity climate.

The advantages of administering SORC through NCPRE include:

- Partnering with a trusted, known organization
- Leveraging the expertise of the NCPRE SORC team
- Using a standardized approach with validated methodology
- Gaining access to comparative results and summary reports
- Actively demonstrating commitment to research integrity in your organization
- Contributing to the community of scholars through the de-identified norming database

For more information on how you can contract with NCPRE to administer the Survey of Organizational Research Climate at your institution, or if we can answer any questions or concerns for you, please contact us at: This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it. or the NCPRE Project Coordinator Jill Peckham at 217-265-5292

1. ADMINISTERING THE SORC USING NCPRE

Basics: The survey contains 32 items (rated on 5-point Likert scales) plus items to assess classification information about respondents (academic rank, departmental affiliation, type of highest degree). It takes 10-15 minutes to complete. It is possible for institutions to propose a small number of additional or customizing questions for the survey, subject to our review to assure that validity of results are not compromised and that responses could not be used to identify individual respondents.

Steps: After contracting with NCPRE, your institution provides emails and names of participants and NCPRE manages the rest of the survey administration. To encourage high response rates, it is helpful for respected institutional leaders to communicate in advance to alert potential participants to the coming survey, the reasons for the survey, and how its use will inform and benefit the research environment. Sample content will be provided upon request.

The NCPRE SORC team sends emails to the designated respondents via institutional email addresses seeking survey participation. The invitation contains a link to the survey and a passcode. Customized follow-up reminders are sent once a week in four succeeding weeks on alternating days of the week only to those who have not yet responded. Response rates during pilot studies have ranged between 40-50%.

The NCPRE SORC team performs data cleaning, statistical analyses, data summarization and report generation. As part of building an NCPRE SORC database of aggregated data for comparative purposes, NCPRE retains de-identified information with limited demographics for comparison and benchmarking. The only data
identifiers retained in the comparison database are institutional characterization (research-intensive, 4-year college, etc.), gender of recipient, stage of career (student, faculty member, etc.), and discipline/department, and region of the US.

An organization that wishes to employ NCPRE services to administer the SORC at their institution makes arrangements to do so with NCPRE. The fee is based on the number of proposed organizational units and individuals to be surveyed and level of NCPRE support and service selected. The NCPRE SORC team provides a customized report to the institution, as follows:

BASIC: standard set of reports based on standard classification questions, administration of the survey and no customization. Reports provided include department-level means, standard deviations (SDs) and percentile rankings for seven integrity climate scales; department-level summarization of each survey item (32 means, SDs); by statuses (e.g. graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, technicians). Summary report tables will be provided in standard spreadsheet formats.

BASIC PLUS: addition of a limited number of customized items

BASIC (OR BASIC PLUS) WITH TAILORED REPORT: Once the norming database is adequately populated, it will be possible to provide comparative data tailored to specific types of organizations. This might include a narrative interpretation of the survey results, along with one's own organizational scores compared to aggregate scores of user-specified types of organizations.

INTERPRETATION/INTERVENTION CONSULTATION: basic plus report plus a series of consultations providing experienced assistance interpreting the report; insights about what stands out about that institution based on its responses, assistance developing intervention possibilities; sub-setting data by more dimensions.

REPEAT SURVEYS: Institutions that plan to administer a repeat survey within five years of the initial survey are charged at a discounted package price.

2. VALIDATION

SORC provides empirical measures of organizational research climate in the form of seven scales of organizational climate. The instrument was developed by Thrush, Martinson and Wells in part through a collaboration with the Council of Graduate Schools and validated in a project with funding from the DHHS Office of Research Integrity. These measures of organizational climate correlate with self-reported research-related behavior of individuals at both the department level and individual level (Crain, Martinson & Thrush 2012).

Relationships Between the Survey of Organizational Research Climate (SORC) and Self-Reported Research Practices

Development and Validation of the Survey of Organizational Research Climate (SORC)

3. HOW NCPRE HANDLES DATA

NCPRE will report only aggregated results of the survey, with no individual information provided to the contracting institution; all responses are aggregated at the department or similar organization level. As each response is submitted, the NCPRE SORC system will separate individual answers from any of the identifying information and the identifying information will be permanently deleted. No individual responses or data will ever be reported and no group with fewer than five people responding will be reported. The very low risk of breach of confidentiality is protected against by removing identifiers and only reporting aggregated data. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary.

Because SORC administration and data analysis occurs at NCPRE, participating institutions are never aware of who has or has not responded to the survey.

Because no individually-identifiable data is ever associated with the results, retained by NCPRE or provided to the home institution, survey reports are not human subject research. All SORC administration procedures have been reviewed and approved by the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board.

Responses to the SORC are analyzed, summarized and reported to the organizational leaders in a position to respond to findings. At the request of the appropriate institutional representative, the NCPRE SORC team will provide the contracting institution (and only the contracting institution) its own respondent-level data, stripped of individual-level identifiers, but retaining identifying information about the departments with which individual-respondents are affiliated. It will be the responsibility of the contracting institution to ensure good stewardship of such data.

Aggregated, de-identified data is owned by NCPRE. All reports with aggregated information, and the individual-level data, if requested to be returned, belong to contracting institution; identifying data is always discarded as part of survey administration process, unless otherwise requested by organizational representatives. NCPRE retains rights to use the aggregated, de-identified data in the future for unanticipated purposes.

4. OTHER WAYS TO USE THE SORC

Making the SORC available through NCPRE has allowed us to automate as many aspects of the data collection, summarization and report generation as possible. As such, we believe that for most institutions, employing NCPRE services to administer the SORC will be more cost-effective than in-house survey administration. It also provides an opportunity for your organization to contribute to the development of a norming database that can be used for comparative purposes to inform and support advancement of institutional integrity across research institutions nationally and internationally.
If you are interested in using the SORC at your institution, but would prefer to conduct the survey fielding, data cleaning, analysis, summarization and report generation internally, the SORC can be licensed independently of NCPRE. If you are interested in pursuing such licensing, please contact Dr. Carol R. Thrush at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences at: This email address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it. or by phone at: 501-603-1217.

**HOW TO CONTACT NCPRE**

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Initiated with support from the National Science Foundation under Grant SES-1045412.

Supported by Engineering at Illinois.