January 2014

**New AAVMC Survey Policy Creates Centralized Process**

Faculty members in veterinary medicine and other academic disciplines, students conducting graduate research, professional organizations and societies, businesses, the media and other groups often survey personnel and students in our member institutions. The AAVMC recognizes the value of these endeavors and is committed to facilitating appropriate levels of high-quality survey research in our member institutions; however, there can be challenges associated with these efforts. Variations in the quality of survey instruments can affect the integrity and the value of the data acquired. Also, high volumes of survey activity can introduce the danger of “survey fatigue,” which can diminish the interest and capacity of individuals to participate in survey programs. Ultimately, that could affect the success of AAVMC survey programs that assist all member institutions. Because of this, our member institutions have always looked to the AAVMC for guidance and support in this area.

In order to improve this process, the AAVMC Board of Directors recently established a policy that formalizes this long-standing service. The policy creates a process by which surveys distributed to AAVMC member institutions can be monitored, standardized and enhanced by the AAVMC. Under the new policy, investigators are asked to contact the AAVMC with their survey proposal prior to the administration of the instrument. When investigators contact the AAVMC with their survey request, they may find that the data they seek already exists, or their efforts to acquire the information may be enhanced by AAVMC recommendations.

**AAVMC Survey Policy Guidelines**

Investigators seeking the approval of the AAVMC for dissemination of surveys to the AAVMC’s member institutions must submit a proposal to AAVMC Associate Executive
Director for Institutional Research and Diversity Lisa Greenhill. Submissions should be received by the AAVMC prior to seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from within their respective universities or organizations. Submissions should also be received for review at least one month prior to the anticipated start of data collection.

Required information for AAVMC study approval review includes:

- Who is conducting the study, title, organization/company, and contact information
- A brief project summary that describes the purpose/objectives of the study, how the study builds on previous work and how the project will benefit the AAVMC and veterinary medical education
- The audience or population targeted for completion of the study
- Which AAVMC member institutions do you wish to survey (i.e. all colleges, or specifically US, Canadian, International colleges, Departments of Veterinary Sciences, Departments of Comparative Medicine)
- A copy of the proposed study instrument along with any proposed introductory copy
- Estimate of time required to complete the survey based on a test with a representative from a similar target group
- Statement regarding how the results be used and shared? Will research findings be published?
- A statement of intentions regarding the confidentiality of those responding, and if identities will be confidential, how will that confidentiality be achieved
- A commitment to recognize AAVMC in an acknowledgment section of any published paper directly derived from this research

Study approval requests will be reviewed by the AAVMC’s Survey Committee. Revisions and additional information may be required during the process. Approval notification will include language to be incorporated into the survey’s introductory materials that acknowledges the AAVMC’s review and approval process. Investigators should be aware that AAVMC approval is not an endorsement of the survey project, but rather a qualitative statement concerning the project and the instrument. AAVMC member institutions will decide independently whether to participate in the project. Any surveys distributed outside of this centralized process to member institutions may result in member notification of the distribution of an unauthorized survey.

For additional information regarding the AAVMC Survey Policy, please contact Lisa Greenhill (lgreenhill@aavmc.org) or Data Analyst McKensie Carr (mcarr@aavmc.org). Proposed instruments can also be faxed to 202-842-0773.