PLANS TO ENSURE FACULTY SURVEY DATA ARE ANONYMOUS AND ANALYZE AND REPORT THE DATA

DESIGNING AND DISTRIBUTING THE SURVEY:

This survey is being conducted by the Geisel Faculty Council, a representative body of the faculty that is advisory to Geisel.

The survey was requested by the full Geisel faculty at a faculty meeting held in June 2016. Its primary purpose is to obtain a sense of the perspectives and opinions of Geisel faculty about the current and future status of Geisel Medical School, particularly in light of several major changes involving Geisel, Dartmouth College administration, and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock (D-H) health system.

The survey was designed by a committee of Geisel faculty, including some who are not members of the Faculty Council. The content was reviewed and approved by the Faculty Council.

This document has further detail on two topics:

- ENSURING ANONYMITY FOR ALL RESPONDENTS
- PLANS TO ANALYZE AND REPORT THE DATA

I. Ensuring Anonymity for All Respondents

The Faculty Council is committed to making sure that no individual respondent can be identified.

To do this, we developed two processes to make sure the data themselves cannot reveal identity, both of which will be used.

A. Ensure anonymity by having no direct identification:

In recording the answers for analysis, we do not keep track of the email address or any other way to identify you personally by name or another id.

B. Ensure anonymity by not allowing indirect identification:

Because we ask respondents to tell us several ‘facts’ about their faculty position and demographics, we have a process in place to ensure that no one at Dartmouth or D-H can have a copy of the data that will allow putting these facts together to uniquely identify anyone, regardless not having any personal identification in the data.

For example, supposed there was only one female faculty who is over 60 in The Dartmouth Institute who is a full professor. In such a case, the dataset could be used to identify this
individual’s responses simply by looking at the indirect identifying information finding data with her sex (female), age (62), primary department (TDI) and faculty rank (full prof).

We want to make sure this indirect way to identify any respondent cannot happen.

How do we ensure this cannot happen? A third party who is not associated with Geisel or D-H will be the only person who will have access to the full database of responses to the survey. Everyone else will only have access to two reduced databases that the 3rd party will prepare:

- The first database (referred hereafter as the ‘demographic subset database’) will consist only of the data from the last section of the survey, i.e., the answers to demographic questions and Geisel faculty-position questions. The first parts of the survey will be omitted.

- The second database (referred to hereafter as the ‘opinion subset database’) will consist of all other parts of the survey. This will include all of the opinion and perspective questions and the two questions about the respondent’s primary department and role. The last section of the survey will be omitted.

Each of these reduced databases will have a unique identification number assigned to a respondent, but these numbers will be randomly assigned, so that no one can link the study number to link the databases without a key. Only the third party will know the key to link these two databases.

As explained below, a few variables from the demographic subset database may be linked to the opinion subset database, but only after first ensuring there are at least five or more people in each data cell with indirect identifying information.

II. Plans to Analyze and Report the Data

A. Analyzing the demographic subset database

This information about each faculty member is already known to the Geisel and/or D-H administration, and so none if it is confidential or private per se. It cannot be linked to responses to the opinion or perspective questions.

There will be two main uses of this demographic subset database.

1. To report who has responded to the survey by faculty position, office location, gender, etc.

Geisel has more than 2000 faculty (compared to ~1000 in the College, Tuck and Thayer combined). We would like to understand more about the group of Geisel faculty who have responded, including which groups may be un- or underrepresented in this survey.

2. After determining which groups are represented well in the survey, we may decide that we would like to request the third party to link a few variables from this dataset to the opinion subset
database. For example, we might want to link sex and rank to the opinion questions to see whether men and women, or assistant professors vs. full professors, respond differently. Before allowing these variables to be linked to opinion subset, we will first examine the cross tabulation of all variables from the demographic database that we propose to add to the opinion subset database, to ensure that every filled cell in this cross tabulation has at least 6 or more people.

What if a variable is important to analyze but doesn’t pass this test? We would propose collapsing some categories (say, create a new variable that is dichotomous and simply says faculty rank is 1=associate and full professors vs. 0=assistant professors); this new variable (along with others to be added) would also have to pass the same size-of-cells test before being added to the opinion subset database.

B. Analyzing the opinion subset database

1. The opinion subset database will be analyzed first without adding any new variables to it. We will report the basic opinion and perspective data for all respondents and by department and by primary identification as a researcher, educator, or clinician.

2. Some questions may have too few answers (e.g., they are skipped or a large majority of people choose ‘no opinion’) or do not vary (i.e., nearly everyone gave the same answer). These will be moved to an appendix to the report and not analyzed further. Some patterns of answers may suggest combining the answers to several questions in an ‘index’. These index variables may be reported as the most useful responses in a report and the individual variables making up the index will be moved to an appendix or otherwise available if interested. In addition, we may want to create variables that combine respondents in all basic science departments vs all clinical departments and use that grouping to examine whether the opinions differ substantially based on being basic science or clinical.

3. Before completing our report, if there are any variables in the demographic subset that we wish to add to the opinion part of the survey, the third party will be asked to link these few specific variables from the demographic subset database to the opinion list (assuming all variables to be added first pass the size-of-cell test for anonymity).

C. Reporting the Results

The Faculty Council will first approve the report. Then it will be distributed to the Geisel faculty and made available to the administration at Geisel and D-H and the Vice Provost for Research at the College.