

Student Financial Wellness Survey (SFWS)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Should our institution provide incentives to students to complete the survey?

A: Trellis offers a survey-wide incentive – a random drawing for fifty \$50 Amazon gift cards, but we highly recommend that institutions provide an incentive for their students as well. We have found that, on average, institutions that provide an incentive achieve a response rate that is about two to three percentage points higher than institutions that do not provide an incentive.

The incentive does not need to be a large expense. Even a small incentive will help boost participation by showing your students that this survey is legitimate and important to you. Some ideas for incentives include:

- Bookstore gift cards
- Institutional swag – like bags, travel mugs, shirts, etc.
- Scholarships or stipends
- Headphones
- Visa gift cards
- Movie passes

Trellis will need to know about the incentive by the survey data deadline, including the details of what the incentive is. We include language in our emails to students about the Trellis incentive and any institution-provided incentive. We use the time between the survey data deadline and the survey launch date to program and test all messages for all institutions.

At the close of the survey, Trellis will perform a random drawing for the number of incentive winners each institution needs and provide that list to the institution. While Trellis sends out the Trellis-provided incentive to students, institutions will be responsible for making sure their drawing winners receive the institution-provided incentive.

Q: Can we change the timeline of when the survey is launched and/or closed, or when reminder emails sent from Trellis go out?

A: Trellis launches the Student Financial Wellness Survey with dozens of institutions each fall, and we have developed a timeline that works best for most institutions. We implement the survey to all schools as a group, so we can't change the timeline for one institution without impacting other institutions.

Q: We want to remind students to complete the survey more often than just the one time that is in the schedule. Would it be possible to get a file of our students who have not responded to the survey yet at another point in the implementation?

A: Absolutely! We can provide a non-responder file for schools as often as they would like.

Q: The data request asks for a "Unique SFWS Student Identifier." What is this?

A: The unique student identifier is an identifier that the institution assigns to the student just for the purposes of this survey. This allows both the institution and Trellis to have an identifier for the student that can be used to identify students rather than using personally identifiable information. We ask that institutions do not use the official student ID for this survey identifier. The SFWS unique student identifier can be alpha, numeric, or alpha-numeric. Please do not use any special characters (such as slashes or number signs) as these may not be read correctly in our data analysis software. The unique identifier can be as simple as numbering the students in the file starting with one, then two, then three, etc. If there are any duplicate ID numbers in the file that is sent to Trellis, you will be asked to re-assign the identifiers and re-submit the file.

Q: Can you give us the survey link that we can use on promotional materials?

A: The survey links are individualized for each student, so there isn't a single link that can be shared widely. While this may make it more difficult to promote the survey, the individualized links allow us to connect survey responses with the data we receive from institutions so we don't have to ask additional demographics questions of students in the survey, or rely on students to know how many credit hours they have earned, and we don't have to gather contact information for the incentive drawing.

Q: Can you put our school colors or school logo on the emails Trellis sends to students?

A: Unfortunately, we cannot add banners, pictures, or school colors in the survey invitation emails we send to students, or the survey instrument itself. These images are often not automatically downloaded by mail servers, and they can lead to the email being marked as spam.

Q: Does Trellis have its own IRB?

A: Trellis does not have a standalone IRB approval. The SFWS is administered at the institutional level, therefore each institution makes its own determination regarding IRB review. Trellis will work with each institution to ensure that all requirements are met.

Q: How will the institutional data we provide and the survey data collected be used?

A: Trellis does not use the institutional data shared or the survey data collected for any purposes other than for this research. Trellis will not contact students with marketing messages or distribute student-level data to third parties.

Trellis will never release individual-level data, even if de-identified, to anyone. Only summary level data will be shared outside of the Trellis Strategies team. Trellis will not share institution-level reports without the consent of the institution.

Additional questions? Contact:

Carla Fletcher, Senior Research Analyst and Project Lead
carla.fletcher@trellisstrategies.org | 512.219.4637