

TO: USF Students, Faculty, Staff and Community

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University of South Florida

DATE: March 28, 2025

SUBJECT: **Our Commitment to a Trauma-Informed Climate Survey**

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At USF, we are committed to fostering a safe and supportive campus environment. One way we assess our progress and identify areas for improvement is through a campus climate survey on sexual misconduct. This survey helps us understand the experiences of our students and employees, ensuring that our policies, prevention efforts, and support services truly meet the needs of our community.

We recognize that discussing topics related to sexual harassment, assault, and other forms of misconduct can be difficult. That's why we are utilizing a validated and peer reviewed survey that incorporates a trauma-informed approach, balancing the need for accurate data with sensitivity to the well-being of our participants.

#### **How the survey was designed using trauma-informed techniques:**

- **Clear and Compassionate Context**  
Before answering any questions, participants receive information about the survey's purpose and how the results will be used to improve campus safety and resources.
- **Content Warnings and Choice**  
The survey includes content warnings about sensitive questions, and participants can skip any question they do not wish to answer. If a participant prefers not to engage with certain topics, they can bypass those sections entirely.
- **Neutral, Non-Blaming Language**  
Research shows that many people do not label their own experiences as "sexual assault" or "harassment," even when those experiences meet legal or policy definitions. To avoid underreporting and ensure the most accurate data, the survey uses behaviorally specific language—asking about actions rather than labels. This means some questions may be direct or graphic, describing specific behaviors rather than using broad terms. While this language may be uncomfortable, it is necessary to ensure that all experiences are recognized, not just those that individuals have already identified as misconduct. Without this

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approach, the data could be significantly skewed, underestimating the true prevalence of these issues on our campus.

- **Anonymous and Confidential**

We do not collect any identifying information, and all responses are completely anonymous. There is no way for individual responses to be traced back to participants, allowing everyone to share their experiences openly and honestly.

- **Support Resources Available**

We understand that reflecting on these topics may be distressing. To ensure that support is available, we provide information about campus and community resources at the beginning and end of the survey. If you need assistance, we encourage you to reach out to the Student Counseling Center, Employee Assistance Program, Victim Advocacy, Title IX & VAWA Compliance, or the local crisis center (dial 211).

- **Expert Review and Pilot Testing**

The survey was reviewed by trauma-informed professionals, including mental health experts and advocates, to ensure that it is as considerate and supportive as possible.

- Validation study: Swartout, K. M., Flack, W. F., Jr., Cook, S. L., Olson, L. N., Smith, P. H., & White, J. W. (2018, August 6). Measuring Campus Sexual Misconduct and Its Context: The Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Consortium (ARC3) Survey. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0000395>

### **Why Your Participation Matters**

By completing the survey, you are helping us create a safer campus for everyone. Your anonymous responses will help shape policies, prevention programs, and resources that address the real needs of our community.

We appreciate your time and willingness to contribute to this important effort. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact USF Title IX Coordinator at [denney1@usf.edu](mailto:denney1@usf.edu).

Thank you for being a part of our commitment to a safe and supportive campus.