

**Marketing Research Design and Analysis
University of Michigan Business School**

Course Project Information Form

UNIVERSITY RECORD READERSHIP SURVEY

Section 1: Company Description

The University Record, a publication of the News Service, is the weekly (bi-weekly in summer) faculty and staff newspaper for the University of Michigan. The tabloid-size paper, that runs an average of 20 pages per week, has a circulation of more than 21,000 copies.

The publication can be found in racks throughout campus buildings, is sent directly to some units through campus mail and is available on the Web at www.umich.edu/urecord. Subscribers to a listserv receive an e-mail digest of the issue each week immediately after the Website is created. The brief summaries of stories in the e-mail link to full Web stories. More than 7,500 retirees also receive the newspaper through the mail.

The University Record is the primary internal communications tool for campus. It is used to deliver news from the regents, administration and various campus units to faculty, staff and retirees. It also serves as a means to recognize accomplishments of members of the campus community, share research discoveries and encourage participation in the many events across campus.

The Record publishes full-length stories from a variety of sources on a number of topics determined to be important to all members of its audience. For its faculty audience, it publishes Research Notes (a monthly feature that summarizes significant research on campus) and Accolades (a feature recognizing accomplishments, including but not limited to, awards and appointments). Under the belief that the Record was heavily focused on faculty, a newer feature, the Staff Spotlight, was instituted in 2002. It allows the Record to focus on staff members who often are the unsung heroes on campus. Staff members also are eligible for inclusion in Accolades.

Section 2: Project Description

The University Record staff members work very hard to put together what they consider a lively, interesting paper each week—one that they hope is recognized as the best source of information on campus. The goal of the staff is to retain its loyal readers, while also increasing readership. Staff members are interested in finding out if the campus community has the same perception of quality and, if not, responding to reader concerns when possible.

The Record, therefore, would like to find out who is reading the newspaper, the features they are reading and which they could do without. Additionally, the staff would like to know if there are other features or information not presented currently that would be useful for the audience.

The staff also would like to find out which format readers prefer for receiving the University Record—print or Web. If Web is preferable, the staff would like to know whether they like or would like a companion e-mail that summarizes the stories and points to the full Web version. Like most newspapers, the University Record has an online version in addition to its print edition. Unlike the major papers that can track circulation by paid subscriptions and hits to a Website, it is unclear to the Record staff how many people prefer to get their news online and how many prefer print. If a slow but steady growth in subscribers to our listserv, URonline, is any indication, it would seem an increasing number of people are interested in viewing the paper online and getting our e-mail summary of the stories. It would be better, however, not to assume and have clear evidence of the campus preference for the means of receiving the University Record, and to develop a marketing strategy for the listserv if we find people are interested in getting their news online. We would like to know, therefore, if there is a larger, untapped market for the URonline, and the demographic characteristics of the group that would be interested in such a service.

The Record would like to institute some new features, but the staff is reluctant without having adequate information as to whether the audience would be interested. Likewise, there are features we wonder about, in terms of their appeal and usefulness, that we would like to eliminate if the research shows they are not read. Our goal would be to make revisions at the beginning of the 2005-06 school year (if not earlier), providing the research supports such changes.

Section 3: Specific Research Questions

1. Who are the readers of the University Record – faculty, staff, retirees – and what are the percentages of readers in these categories?
2. What do they like to read in the paper by audience category?
3. What do they least like to read in the paper by audience category?
4. What features or information currently not offered would be helpful to include in the paper?
5. How do readers prefer to get University Record information: print or Web?
6. Do readers know they can receive an e-mail message with story summaries and quick links to the Web Record?
7. If not, would they be interested in having an e-mail summary of stories?
8. If so, what is the demographic group that would be most interested in such a service?
8. And if so, what do users think about the story tidbit presentation in the current e-mail digest of stories?
9. For those who like the e-mail summary does the current format work or is there a better way for the information to be presented?

Section 4: Any other pertinent information

A readership survey for the Record was last completed in 1998. ISR researchers conducted focus groups to gather feedback and the results have been used to guide editorial and design decisions for a number of years. A new staff redesigned both the print and Web versions 1½ years ago without having the benefit of fresh information, other than some informal research conducted with colleagues at the News Service. It would be helpful to know if the changes made based on minimal research were on target.

It is crucial to have feedback before any more changes are made or features added. As mentioned previously, Record staff members have some thoughts about interesting features that could be tested in the survey, if appropriate.

The Record staff would be happy to assist researchers should the students decide to use the print and/or online Record as the survey mechanism.

Section 5: Contact Information

Name: Laurel Thomas Gnagey

Title: Executive Editor

Mailing Address: 412 Maynard

Phone: 734-647-1841

FAX: 734-764-7084

e-mail(s): ltgnagey@umich.edu

Web Site Address(es), if applicable: www.umich.edu/urecord