

Executive Summary

College campuses are complex social systems. They are defined by the relationships between faculty, staff, students, and alumni; bureaucratic procedures embodied by institutional policies; structural frameworks; institutional missions, visions, and core values; institutional history and traditions; and larger social contexts (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, Alma, & Allen, 1998).

Institutional missions suggest that higher education values multicultural awareness and understanding within an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Academic communities expend a great deal of effort fostering a climate to nurture their missions with the understanding that climate has a profound effect on the academic community's ability to excel in teaching, research, and scholarship. Institutional strategic plans advocate creating welcoming and inclusive climates that are grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

The climate on college campuses not only affects the creation of knowledge, but also affects members of the academic community who, in turn, contribute to the creation of the campus climate. Several national education association reports and higher education researchers advocate creating a more inclusive, welcoming climate on college campuses (Boyer, 1990; AAC&U, 1995; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Ingle, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Because of the inherent complexity of the topic of diversity, it is crucial to examine the multiple dimensions of diversity in higher education. The conceptual model used as the foundation for this assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith (1999) and modified by Rankin (2002).

The University of Wisconsin System (UWS) has a long history of supporting diversity initiatives¹ as evidenced by the System's support and commitment to this climate

¹ For more information on UWS diversity initiatives see <http://www.uwsa.edu/vpacad/diversity.htm>

assessment project. In 2005, a taskforce committee of the UWS Inclusivity Initiative was formed to search for consulting firms that conduct climate assessments in higher education. Rankin & Associates (R&A) was identified as leader in conducting multiple identity studies in higher education. In 2006, R&A presented a proposal to the UWS Provosts and various constituent groups, which resulted in the formation by UWS administrators of the *Climate Study Working Group (CSWG)*² and subsequent contract with R&A to facilitate a System-wide climate assessment.

Fact-finding groups were held in September 2007 to discuss with University of Wisconsin System students, staff, and faculty their perceptions of the System climate. Informed by these fact-finding groups and by previous R&A work, the CSWG developed the final survey instrument template that would be administered to the five participating institutions in spring 2008.

UW-Whitewater was one of the four UWS institutions participating in the climate project in fall 2009. A Diversity Leadership Committee (DLC) was created at UW-Whitewater to assist in coordinating the survey effort on campus. The DLC reviewed the survey template and revised the instrument to better fit the campus context at UW-Whitewater. The final survey contained 89 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the findings of the UW-Whitewater campus-specific assessment, including the results of the campus-wide survey and a thematic analysis of comments provided by survey respondents.

All members of the campus community (e.g., students, faculty, academic staff, and classified staff) were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was designed for respondents to provide information about their personal experiences with regard to climate issues, their perceptions of the campus climate, and student and employee satisfaction, and respondents' perceptions of institutional actions, including

² The CSWG included 2 representatives from each of the first five participating institutions. The Provost from each institution was requested to appoint the two representatives.

administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding climate issues and concerns on campus. A summary of the findings, presented in bullet form below, suggests that while the UW-Whitewater has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges are found in higher education institutions across the country.³

Sample Demographics

3,239 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 26% response rate⁴
- 2,196 (68%) undergraduate students; 255 (8%) graduate students; 304 (9%) faculty; 179 (6%) academic staff; and 204 (6%) classified staff
- 418 (13%) People of Color;⁵ 2,777 (87%) White respondents
- 121 people (4%) who identified as having a physical disability
- 75 people (2%) who identified as having a learning disability
- 52 people (2%) who identified as having a psychological condition
- 168 people (5%) who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 26 (1%) who were questioning their sexuality; 3,004 people (93%) who identified as heterosexual
- 2,007 (62%) women; 1,209 (37%) men; 5 (>1%) transgender⁶
- 970 people (30%) who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian (including those with no affiliation)

³ Rankin, S. and Reason, R. (forthcoming). *Transformational Tapestry Model: A comprehensive approach for assessing and improving campus climates for underrepresented and underserved populations*. New York: Stylus Publications.

⁴ Caution in generalizing results for constituent groups with significantly lower response rates. Despite this limitation, the results provided here reflect participant's beliefs and concerns with regard to the campus climate.

⁵ While recognizing the vastly different experiences of people of various racial identities (e.g., Chicano(a) versus African-American or Latino(a) versus Asian-American), and those experiences within these identity categories (e.g. Hmong versus Chinese), Rankin and Associates found it necessary to collapse some of these categories to conduct the analyses due to the small numbers of respondents in the individual categories.

⁶ "Transgender" refers to identity that does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these (Oxford English Dictionary 2003). OED Online. March 2004. Oxford UW Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

Quantitative Findings

Personal Experiences with Campus Climate⁷

- **Some of respondents believed⁸ they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (hereafter referred to as harassment)⁹ within the past two years. Gender was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. People of Color, sexual minorities,¹⁰ and people with disabilities perceived such harassment more often than White people, heterosexual respondents, and nondisabled respondents. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 14% (n = 445) of respondents believed they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus.
 - The perceived conduct was most often based on the respondents' gender (29%, n = 129), age (25%, n = 113), university status¹¹ (25%, n = 110), physical characteristics (15%, n = 65), religious/spiritual views (12%, n = 53), and political views (12%, n = 52).
 - Compared with 13% (n = 359) of White people, 18% (n = 75) of People of Color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 48% (n = 36) stated it was because of their race.
 - Compared with 13% (n = 155) of men, 14% (n = 283) of women and 20% (n = 1) of transgender respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of the women who believed they had experienced this conduct, 37% (n = 105) stated it was because of their gender.

⁷ Listings in the narrative are those responses with the greatest percentages. For a complete listing of the results, the reader is directed to the tables in the narrative and Appendix B.

⁸ The modifier "believe(d)" is used throughout the report to indicate the respondents' perceived experiences. This modifier is not meant in any way to diminish those experiences.

⁹ Under the United States Code Title 18 Subsection 1514(c)1, harassment is defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose" (<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html>). In higher education institutions, legal issues discussions define harassment as any conduct that has unreasonably interfered with one's ability to work or learn on campus. The questions used in this survey to uncover participants' personal and observed experiences with harassment were designed using these definitions.

¹⁰ Sexual minorities are defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

¹¹ University status was defined in the questionnaire as "Within the institution, the status one holds by virtue of their position/status within the institution (e.g., staff, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, administrator)."

- Compared with 13% (n = 387) of heterosexual respondents, 27% (n = 45) of sexual minority respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 53% (n = 24) stated it was because of their sexual orientation.
 - Compared with 14% of all respondents, 27% (n = 19) of respondents with physical disabilities, 30% (n = 22) of respondents with learning disabilities, and 40% (n = 21) of respondents with psychological conditions believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of those that experienced harassment, 37% (n = 7) of respondents with physical disabilities, 41% (n = 9) of respondents with learning disabilities, and 52% (n = 11) of respondents with psychological conditions said the harassment was based on their disability.
 - 16% (n = 70) of participants made complaints to UW-Whitewater officials, while 17% (n = 74) did not know whom to go to, and 18% (n = 80) did not report the incident for fear of retaliation.
- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 7% (n = 220) believed that they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Whitewater.
 - 73 respondents (2%) believed that they had been sexually assaulted during their time at UW-Whitewater.
 - Of the 73 respondents, 30 (41%) believed they had been assaulted off-campus and 38 respondents (52%) believed they had been assaulted on campus.
 - Women respondents, heterosexual respondents, and people with learning disabilities and psychological conditions were more likely than other groups to believe that they had been sexually assaulted.
 - Most of the respondents who believed that they had been sexually assaulted were UW-Whitewater students (63 people), female (62 people), heterosexual (65 people), and White (59 people).
 - The alleged perpetrators of the perceived sexual assault were most often students (38%, n = 28), friends (26%, n = 19), strangers (12%, n = 9), and co-workers (8%, n = 6).

Satisfaction with UW-Whitewater

- **81% (n = 553) of UW-Whitewater employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Whitewater. 68% (n = 458) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Whitewater.**
 - Academic staff members were more satisfied with their jobs than were faculty members and classified staff.

- Classified staff members were much less satisfied than faculty and academic staff members with the way their careers had progressed at UW-Whitewater.
- **90% (n = 2,197) of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Whitewater, while 80% (n = 1,939) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Whitewater.**
 - A slightly lower percentage of Students of Color and sexual minority students were satisfied with their educations and with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Whitewater than were other students.
- **38% (n = 1,206) of all respondents have considered leaving UW-Whitewater.**
 - Among employees, 64% of men and 61% of women thought of leaving the institution.
 - 57% of Employees of Color, in comparison with 63% of White employees, have seriously considered leaving UW-Whitewater.
 - 67% of sexual minority employees, compared to 62% of heterosexual respondents, have seriously thought of leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 30% of women and 32% of men considered leaving the University.
 - 39% of Students of Color and 30% of White students thought of leaving UW-Whitewater, as did 34% of LGB students and 31% of heterosexual students.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Whitewater (88%, n = 2,845), in their departments or work units (86%, n = 2,749), and in their classes (87%, n = 2,451). The figures in the narrative show some disparities based on race.**
 - Compared with 90% of White people, 80% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall campus climate.
 - Compared with 87% of White people, 77% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments or work units.
 - Compared with 89% of White people, 75% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in classes.
- **Slightly less than one-quarter of all respondents indicated that they were aware of or believed they had observed harassment on campus within the past two years. The perceived harassment was most often based on sexual orientation. People of Color and sexual minorities were more aware of perceived harassment.**
 - 23% (n = 727) of the participants believed that they had observed or personally been made aware of conduct on campus that created an

- offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating working or learning environment.
- Most of the observed harassment was based on sexual orientation (39%, n = 282), race (28%, n = 203), ethnicity (25%, n = 179), gender (22%, n = 162), religion/spiritual status (20%, n = 143), and gender expression (17%, n = 126).
 - Compared with 27% (n = 606) of White respondents, 22% (n = 111) of Respondents of Color believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 22% (n = 643) of heterosexuals, 39% (n = 66) of sexual minorities believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 21% (n = 507) of students, 31% (n = 62) of classified staff, 30% (n = 91) of faculty and 29% (n = 52) of academic staff believed they had observed such conduct.
 - These incidences were reported to an employee or official only 10% (n = 70) of the time.
- **Some employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory employment practices and indicated that they were most often based on UW-Whitewater status and gender.**
 - 25% (n = 170) of employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - 12% (n = 79) believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Whitewater (up to and including dismissal).
 - 20% (n = 140) believed that they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

Institutional Actions

- More than half of the respondents (57%, n = 1,628) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the Chancellor’s office provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community while 3% (n = 98) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”
- Substantial percentages of respondents were unaware of the degree to which most campus offices had visible leadership to support diversity/inclusion.
- 58% (n = 1,681) of all respondents believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work.
- 63% (n = 1,824) felt welcome at campus diversity events.
- 47% (n = 302) of employee respondents thought providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families would positively affect the climate.
- 64% (n = 413) thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 57% (n = 365) thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
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- 75% (n = 481) of employees felt providing on-campus child care services would positively affect the climate.
- Many employees thought the following initiatives would also positively affect the climate on campus: improving, and promoting access to quality services for those individuals who experience sexual abuse (73%, n = 460), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (70%, n = 444), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the departmental level (75%, n = 479).

Qualitative Findings

Out of the 3,239 surveys received at UW-Whitewater, many of the respondents contributed remarks to one or more of the open-ended questions. No respondents commented on all open-ended questions. Respondents included undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty, academic staff, and classified staff. The open-ended questions asked whether their campus experiences differed from experiences in the surrounding community, for general elaboration on personal experiences and thoughts,¹² to name three things the respondent would like to see changed on campus and three

¹² The complete survey is available in Appendix C.

things they would like to see remain the same, and to describe the current classroom and campus climates.

A large number of respondents offered suggestions for how to improve the climate at UW-Whitewater. While some respondents indicated that UW-Whitewater provided a very welcoming environment, other respondents noted ways to improve specific aspects of the climate. Topics addressed by several respondents included improving accessibility issues for disabled persons; creating methods for recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, students, and Administrators of Color; becoming a more “LGBTQ aware campus” and eliminating the use of derogatory terms such as “gay” and “fag;” addressing institutional classism that negatively affects staff members, in particular; creating deliberate methods in which campus community members can routinely interact in meaningful ways; and encouraging the administration to take leadership roles in issues of diversity and inclusion. Some respondents were concerned that Christian and conservative viewpoints received much scorn, particularly during the 2008 presidential election cycle.

One of the open-ended items queried, “Are your experiences on campus different than those you experience in the community surrounding campus? If so, how are these experiences different?” Some respondents had similar experiences on and off campus, and most individuals acknowledged that both UW-System overall and UW-Whitewater specifically were primarily “White and middle class.” The majority of respondents, however, felt the campus was more diverse, more accepting of difference, and cohesive. Others respondents’ comments indicated they felt more comfortable voicing their conservative viewpoints in the community, rather than on campus.

Respondents were asked to “describe the climate in the classroom compared to the co-curricular climate.” In response, a number people reported that the climate in their classrooms and co-curricular activities was welcoming. Some people said the climates were less welcoming, yet they had similar experiences with diversity/inclusiveness in and

out of the classroom. Several individuals commented that their co-curricular activities were less structured than their classroom activities, and for some people this meant that the classroom climate was more respectful of difference.

When asked to “Please describe how you are involved with the UW-Whitewater community (e.g., organizations, social organizations),” respondents listed a variety of committees, groups, teams, and organizations with which they were involved. Other respondents indicated that they attended special functions (e.g., athletic competitions, theatre/dance performances, special events). Some people lamented that they were not able to be as involved as they would like due to their academic, work, and/or familial obligations. A few students said they “just wanted to concentrate on school” and “get out of here.” Likewise, a few employees suggested they preferred not to be involved with the UW-Whitewater community.

One of the open-ended items allowed respondents to elaborate on any of their survey responses, further describe their experiences, or offer additional thoughts about climate issues. Several respondents challenged the UW-Whitewater administration to actively set a tone for the University that values diversity and difference by supporting programs and initiatives to do the same. Comments also indicated that respondents want to see action and follow-up as a result of this survey and other climate-related issues on campus.

Several other topics emerged as a result of this question. Others felt, once again, that conservative and Christian viewpoints were silenced on campus. Respondents commented on institutional classism (specifically, lack of respect and mistreatment of staff members); accessibility issues for disabled community members; the lack of racial diversity on campus; concerns regarding how students and faculty who were non-native English speakers inhibit student learning; and specific interests of returning, non-traditional students. Of note, throughout all of the open-ended questions, many respondents took issue with the prevalent and derogatory use of terms such as “gay,”

“fag,” and “bitch,” and asked that the University take some initiative to keep people from using those terms.

Finally, a few respondents commented on the survey instrument and the project process. Quite a few respondents commented on the length of the survey. Some applauded the University’s participation in the assessment and wanted to make certain that the results were made public and used to better UW-Whitewater. Several respondents insisted that UW-Whitewater leadership share with its constituents the climate assessment findings and initiatives instituted as a result of the survey.