

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; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ingle, 2005; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). 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 assessment project. In 2005, a taskforce committee of the UW System Inclusivity Initiative was formed to search for consulting firms that conduct climate assessments in higher education. Rankin &

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

Associates (R&A) was identified as a leader in conducting multiple identity studies in higher education. In 2006, R&A presented a proposal to the UW System provosts and various constituent groups, which resulted in the formation by UW System 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 informed by previous R&A work, the CSWG developed the final survey instrument template that was administered to the five participating institutions in spring 2008.

UW-Marshfield/Wood County was one of thirteen UW Colleges campuses that participated in the initial climate project in 2007-2008. The UWC Diversity Leadership Committee, appointed by Chancellor David Wilson, reviewed the CSWG template and revised the survey instrument to better fit the context of the UW Colleges. The final survey contained 91 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. Each of the campuses will receive a campus-specific report. In addition, an aggregate report inclusive of all of the UW Colleges will also be developed.

This report provides an overview of the findings of the UW-Marshfield/Wood County campus-specific assessment. All members of the UW-Marshfield/Wood County 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, student and employee satisfaction, and respondents' perceptions of institutional actions, including administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding climate issues and concerns on campus.

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

A summary of the findings, presented in bullet form below, suggests that while the UW-Marshfield/Wood County has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges parallel those identified in higher education institutions across the country³.

Sample Demographics

221 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 34% response rate
- 166 (75%) undergraduate students, 5 (2%) graduate students, 27 (12%) faculty members, 13 (6%) academic staff members, and three (1%) classified staff members
- 12 (5%) People of Color⁴; 203 (92%) White respondents
- 7 (3.2%) people who identified as having a disability
 - 2 (29%) people who identified as having a physical disability
 - 4 (57%) people who identified as having a learning disability
 - One (14%) person who identified as having a psychological condition
- 12 (6%) people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; one (1%) who was questioning his/her sexuality; 205 (93%) who identified as heterosexual
- 147 (67%) women; 71 (32%) men; zero transgender⁵
- 56 (27%) people 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 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.

⁵ “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 University Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

Quantitative Findings

Personal Experiences with Campus Climate⁶

- **A percentage of respondents believed⁷ 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)⁸. Religion was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. The most common form of perceived harassment was being deliberately ignored or excluded. People of Color and sexual minorities⁹ perceived such harassment more often than White people and heterosexuals. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 15% (n = 33) 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 conduct was most often based on the respondents' religion/spiritual status (27%, n = 9), gender (24%, n = 8), or status¹⁰ (e.g., part-time status, faculty, staff, and student) (24%, n = 8).
 - Compared with 11% (n = 11) of White people, 58% (n = 7) of People of Color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 8% stated it was because of their race and 33% because of their ethnicity.
 - Compared with 20% (n = 14) of men, 12% (n = 18) of women believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of the women who experienced this conduct, 4% believed it was due to their gender.
 - Compared with 14% (n = 28) of heterosexual respondents, 42% (n = 2) of sexual minority respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 17% stated it was because of their sexual orientation.

⁶ 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 A.

⁷ The modifier “believe(d)” is used throughout the report to indicate the respondents’¹⁻²s perceived experiences. This modifier is not meant in any way to diminish those experiences.

⁸ 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.

⁹ This report uses the terms “LGB” and “sexual minorities” to denote individuals who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and those who wrote in “other” terms, such as “pan-sexual,” “homoflexible,” “fluid,” etc.

¹⁰ 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).”

- 21% (n = 7) of participants made complaints to UW-Marshfield/Wood County officials, while 12% (n = 4) did not know whom to go to
- 21% (n = 7) did not report the incident for fear of retaliation and 9 % (n = 3) did not report it for fear their complaint would not be taken seriously.
- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 4% (n = 9) believed they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Marshfield/Wood County.
 - Two people (1%) believed they had been sexually assaulted during the time they were enrolled or employed at UW-Marshfield/Wood County.

Satisfaction with UW-Marshfield/Wood County

- **89% (n = 39) of UW-Marshfield/Wood County employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Marshfield/Wood County. 72% (n = 31) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Marshfield/Wood County.**
 - Compared to other employees, faculty members were less apt to report high satisfaction with their jobs and more dissatisfied with the way their careers have progressed.
 - Men were more satisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Marshfield/Wood County than were women.
- **87% (n = 148) of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Marshfield/County, while 73% (n = 124) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Marshfield/Wood County. There were no differences based on race, gender, or sexual orientation.**
 - Students’ satisfaction with their educations and with the way their academic careers have progressed did not significantly differ by gender, race/ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- **37% (n = 80) of all respondents have seriously considered leaving UW-Marshfield/Wood County.**
 - Among employees, 60% of men and 54% of women thought of leaving UW-Marshfield/Wood County.
 - Fifty-seven percent of sexual minority employees, compared to 58% of heterosexual respondents, have seriously thought of leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 38% of women and 20% of men considered leaving the campus.
 - Twenty-two percent of Students of Color and 33% of White students thought of leaving UW-Marshfield/Wood County, as did 33% of LGB students and 33% of heterosexual students.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Marshfield/Wood County (87%, n = 191), in their departments or work units (82%, n = 181), and in their classes (87%, n = 177). There were no differences based on race, gender, or sexual orientation.**

- **Almost one-fifth of all respondents indicated that they were aware of or believed they had observed harassment on campus. The perceived harassment was most often based on sexual orientation. People of Color, sexual minorities, and faculty members were more aware of perceived harassment than were other respondent groups.**
 - Nineteen percent (n = 42) of the participants believed 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 race/ethnicity combined (43%, n = 18), sexual orientation (33%, n = 14), gender (29%, n = 12), age (21%, n = 9), religion/spiritual views (21%), and disability combined (physical, learning, and psychological) (19%, n = 8)
 - Compared with 18% (n = 167) of White respondents, 42% (n = 7) of Respondents of Color believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 17% (n = 35) of heterosexuals, 58% (n = 35) of sexual minorities believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 15% (n = 25) of students and 19% (n = 3) of staff, 48% (n = 13) of faculty believed they had had observed such conduct.
 - These incidents were reported to an employer or official only 12% (n = 5) of the time. Seven percent (n = 3) did not know whom to go to, and 5% (n = 2) did not report it for fear the complaint would not be taken seriously, with 2% (n = 1) not reporting it out of fear of retaliation.

- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with mobility and visual impairment, the learning support center (91%, n = 198), and the library (91%, n = 197) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
 - Five percent (n = 10) each ranked the theater, and information in alternative formats, as “very inaccessible.”

- **Some employee respondents believed they had observed discriminatory employment practices, and indicated that these practices were most often based on gender, psychological disability, or educational level.**
 - 22% (n = 9) of employee respondents believed they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - Nine percent (n = 4) believed they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Marshfield/Wood County (up to and including dismissal).
 - 14% (n = 6) believed they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

Institutional Actions

- At least two-thirds of the respondents “strongly agreed”/“agreed” that the Campus Dean/CEO (66%), faculty/IAS (classroom instructors) (67%), and academic staff (68%) provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 44% (n = 92) of all respondents believed the Chancellor’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 32% (n = 67) of all respondents believed the Provost’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- Half of all respondents (n = 102) believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work
- 62% (n = 127) felt welcome at campus diversity events.
- 61% (n = 26) thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
- More than three quarters thought the following initiatives would positively affect the climate on campus: providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (77%, n = 32), train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior (77%, n = 33), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (84%, n = 36) and departmental level (81%, n = 35).

Qualitative Findings

Respondents had the opportunity to answer several open-ended questions throughout the survey. Representatives from the UW Colleges requested that R&A include the responses from all of the UW Colleges’ respondents in a qualitative analysis in the aggregate report of the UW Colleges.