

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 UWS Inclusivity Initiative was formed to search

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

for consulting firms that conduct climate assessments in higher education. Rankin & 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 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 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-Richland 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-Richland campus-specific assessment. All members of the UW-Richland 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 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-Richland has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges parallel those identified in higher education institutions across the country.³

Sample Demographics

148 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 34% response rate⁴
- 78% (n = 112) undergraduate students, 1% (n = 1) graduate students, 10% (n = 14) faculty, 7% (n = 11) academic staff, and 3% (n = 5) classified staff
- 12% (n = 18) People of Color;⁵ 86% (n = 127) White respondents
- 3% (n = 5) people who identified as having a physical disability
- 5% (n = 7) people who identified as having a learning disability
- 3% (n = 5) people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 6% (n = 9) people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer
- 68% (n = 100) women and 32% (n = 47) men

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 participants' 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.

Quantitative Findings

*Personal Experiences with Campus Climate*⁶

- **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. Age was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. People of Color and women believed they had experienced harassment more often than White people and men, and many of them felt it was due to their race or gender. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 18% (n = 27) 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' age (37%, n = 10) and status⁹ (e.g., part-time status, faculty, staff, student) (26%, n = 7)
 - Compared with 18% (n = 23) of White people, 22% (n = 4) of People of Color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - 50% (n = 2) of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct stated it was because of their race.
 - Compared with 9% (n = 4) of men, 23% (n = 23) of women believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - 19% (n = 25) of heterosexual respondents and zero sexual minority¹⁰ respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - 52% (n = 14) of participants were angry, while 41% (n = 11) felt embarrassed, and 33% (n = 9) ignored it.
 - While 19% (n = 5) made a complaint to a campus employee/official, 7% (n = 2) did not know whom to go to.

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' 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 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)."

¹⁰ 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

- **A small percentage of respondents believed that they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 5% (n = 8) believed that they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful) while at UW-Richland.
 - One respondent believed that she/he had been sexually assaulted during their enrolled or employed UW-Richland. She/he offered that the alleged assault took place in a location other than either off-campus or on-campus.

Satisfaction with UW-Richland

- **83% (n = 24) of UW-Richland employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Richland. 69% (n = 20) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Richland.**
 - Employees of Color and classified staff were less satisfied than were other employees.
 - Heterosexual respondents and academic staff were most satisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Richland.
- **78% (n = 88) of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Richland, while 68% (n = 75) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Richland.**
 - A higher percentage of White and heterosexual students were satisfied with their educations.
 - Higher percentages of women students, White students, and heterosexual students were satisfied with the way their academic careers have progressed than were men students, Students of Color, or sexual minority students.
- **38% (n = 56) of all respondents have seriously considered leaving UW-Richland.**
 - Among employees, 43% (n = 3) of men and 73% (n = 16) of women thought of leaving the institution.
 - 100% (n = 3) of Employees of Color, in comparison with 62% (n = 16) of White employees, have seriously considered leaving UW-Richland.
 - Additionally, zero sexual minority employees, compared to 63% (n = 16) of heterosexual respondents, have seriously thought of leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 31% (n = 24) of women and 30% (n = 12) of men considered leaving the campus.
 - 27% (n = 4) of Students of Color and 31% (n = 31) of White students thought of leaving UW-Richland.
 - 44% (n = 4) of LGB students and 29% (n = 30) of heterosexual students thought of leaving UW-Richland.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Richland (89%, n = 131), in their departments or work units (87%, n = 128), and in their classes (95%, n = 123). The figures in the narrative demonstrate some disparities based on race.**
 - Compared with 90% (n = 115) of White people, 78% (n = 14) of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate.
 - Compared with 87% (n = 108) of White people, 100% (n = 18) of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments or work units.
 - Compared with 92% (n = 109) of White people, 100% (n = 16) of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

- **Almost a quarter 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 race and ethnicity. People of Color and sexual minorities were more aware of perceived harassment.**
 - 21% (n = 31) 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.
 - Compared with 16% (n = 20) of White respondents, 56% (n = 10) of Respondents of Color believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 20% (n = 26) of heterosexuals, 33% (n = 3) of sexual minorities believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 18% (n = 20) of students and 39% (n = 5) of faculty, 55% (n = 6) of academic staff believed they had observed such conduct.
 - Sixteen percent (n = 1) made a complaint to a campus employee/official, while 3% (n = 1) did not know whom to go to.

- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with disabilities, the cafeteria (91%, n = 128), websites (90%, n = 128), and other information systems (86%, n = 121), and the library (86%, n = 123) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
 - 8% (n = 11) ranked the 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 political views and religion/spiritual status.**
 - 17% (n = 5) of employee respondents believed they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - 24% (n = 7) believed they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Richland (up to and including dismissal).
 - 31%, (n = 9) believed they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

Institutional Actions

- More than 60% of the respondents “strongly agreed”/“agreed” that the Campus Dean/CEO, other Deans, Club advisors, the University Relations office, Student club presidents or leaders, the Student Government Association, Faculty/IAS (classroom instructors), Academic Staff, and the Office of Continuing Education provide visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 59% (n = 82) of all respondents believed the Chancellor’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 41% (n = 58) of all respondents believed the Provost’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 59% (n = 82) of all respondents believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work
- 70% (n = 99) felt welcome at campus diversity events.
- 48% (n = 13) of employee respondents thought providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families would positively affect the climate.
- 68% (n = 19) thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 64% (n = 18) thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
- Approximately half of all employees thought providing recognition and rewards for including diversity in course objectives throughout the curriculum and rewarding research efforts that evaluate outcomes of diversity training would positively affect the climate.
- 44% (n = 12) of employees felt providing on-campus child care services would positively affect the climate.
- More than half of all 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 (67%, n = 18), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (70%, n = 19), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (74%, n = 20) and at the departmental level (67%, n = 18).

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.