

## 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 initiatives<sup>1</sup> 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 &

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<sup>1</sup> 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)*<sup>2</sup> 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-Washington County was one of thirteen UW Colleges campuses that participated in the initial climate project in 2007-2008. The UW Colleges 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 finding of the UW-Washington County campus-specific assessment. All members of the UW-Washington County campus community (i.e., 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.

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<sup>2</sup> The CSWG included 2 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-Washington County has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges are found in many other higher education institutions across the country.<sup>3</sup>

### Sample Demographics

215 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 21% response rate<sup>4</sup>
- 165 (77%) undergraduate students, 2 (1%) graduate students, 29 (13%) faculty, 7 (3%) academic staff, and 8 (4%) classified staff
- 13 (6%) People of Color;<sup>5</sup> 200 (93%) White respondents
- 11 (5%) people who identified as having a physical disability
- 2 (1%) people who identified as having a learning disability
- 10 (5%) people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 9 (4%) people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 4 (2%) who were questioning their sexuality
- 128 (60%) women; 83 (39%) men; 2 (1%) transgender<sup>6</sup>
- 129 (60%) people who identified their spiritual affiliation as Christian

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Caution is suggested 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> "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 UP Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

## Quantitative Findings

### *Personal Experiences with Campus Climate*<sup>7</sup>

- **A percentage of respondents believed<sup>8</sup> 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)<sup>9</sup> within the past two years. Gender and age were most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
  - 13% (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 conduct was most often based on the respondents' gender (33%, n = 9), age (33%, n = 9), status<sup>10</sup> (19%, n = 5), and educational level (19%, n = 5).
  - Compared with 13% (n = 25) of White people, 15% (n = 2) of People of Color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 50% (n = 1) stated it was because of their race.
  - 13% of men (n = 11) and women (n = 16) believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of the women who experienced this conduct, 50% (n = 8) stated it was because of their gender.
  - Compared with 11% (n = 22) of all respondents, 18% (n = 2) of respondents with physical disabilities and 50% (n = 5) of respondents with psychological conditions believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of those that experienced harassment, 100% (n = 2) of respondents with physical disabilities and 80% (n = 5) of respondents with psychological conditions said the harassment was based on their disability.
  - 15% (n = 4) of participants made complaints to UW-Washington County officials, while 7% (n = 2) did not know whom to go to, and 11% (n = 3) did not report the incident for fear of retaliation, and 7% (n = 2) did not report it for fear their complaints would not be taken seriously.

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> The modifier "believe(d)" is used throughout the report to indicate the respondent's perceived experiences. This modifier is not meant in any way to diminish those experiences.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> University status was defined in the questionnaire as "Within the institution, the status one holds by virtue of their status/status within the institution (e.g., staff, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, administrator)."

- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
  - 2% (n = 5) believed they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Washington County.
  - 2 respondents believed they had been sexually assaulted during their time at UW-Washington County.

#### Satisfaction with UW-Washington County

- **86% (n = 38) of UW-Washington County employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Washington County. 75% (n = 33) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Washington County.**
  - Men were slightly more satisfied with their jobs than were other employees.
  - Academic Staff members were most satisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Washington County.
- **73% (n = 121) of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Washington County, while 60% (n = 100) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Washington County.**
  - A slightly lower percentage of men students and White students were satisfied with their education and with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Washington County than were other students.
  - Higher percentages of women students were satisfied with the way their academic careers have progressed than were other students.
- **43% (n = 93) of all respondents have seriously considered leaving UW-Washington County.**
  - Among employees, 44% of men and 67% of women considered leaving UW-Washington County.
  - Among students, 37% of men and 41% of women considered leaving the University.
  - 50% of Students of Color and 40% of White students considered leaving UW-Washington County, as did 40% of LGB<sup>10</sup> students and 41% of heterosexual students.

#### Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Washington County (86%, n = 184), in their departments or work units (86%, n = 180), and in their classes (83%, n = 164). The figures in the narrative demonstrate some disparities based on race.**

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<sup>10</sup> 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.

- **14% 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 religion/spiritual views.**
  - 14% (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.
  - Most of the observed harassment was based on religion/spiritual views (32%, n = 10), ethnicity (26%, n = 8), gender (26%, n = 8), and political views (26%, n = 8).
  - Compared with 13% of students, 24% of faculty, 29% of academic staff, believed they had observed such conduct.
  - These incidents were reported to an employee or official only 7% (n = 2) of the time.
  
- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with disabilities, the Administrative Offices (81%, n = 167), Learning Support Center (80%, n = 163), Academic Buildings (84%, n = 173), Web Site (86%, n = 177), other information systems (84%, n= 173), Classrooms (87%, n = 177), Computer Labs (85%, n = 174), Student Services Center (81%, n = 164), and the Cafeteria (82%, n = 163) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
  - The Bookstore (6%, n = 12) and Parking/Bus Stops (6%, n = 11) were rated as “very inaccessible.”
  
- **Some employee respondents believed they had observed discriminatory employment practices, and indicated that these practices were most often based on gender.**
  - 5% of employee respondents (n = 2) believed they had observed discriminatory hiring.
  - 5% (n = 2) believed they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Washington County (up to and including dismissal).
  - 7% (n = 3) believed they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

### *Institutional Actions*

- More than half of the respondents “strongly agreed”/“agreed” that Faculty/IAS (classroom instructors) (55%, n = 106) and Academic Staff (56%, n = 110) provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community
- A substantial percentage of respondents (40% or more) were unaware of the degree to which the Chancellor, Provost, Office of Academic Affairs, UW Colleges/UW-Extension Office of Equity and Workforce Development, Pre-college program leaders, University Relations Office, Senators, Campus Steering Committee, Collegium, Hiring Committees, and Non-UW Colleges institutional collaborators had visible leadership to support diversity/inclusion
- 30% (n = 58) of all respondents believed the Chancellor’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 24% (n = 47) of all respondents believed the Provost’s Office has visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.

- 43% (n = 85) of all respondents believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work
- 53% (n = 103) felt welcome at campus diversity events.
- 40% (n = 17) of employee respondents thought providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families would positively affect the climate.
- 55% (n = 23) thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 65% (n = 28) thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
- 54% (n = 23) 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 (58%, n = 25), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (63%, n = 27), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (65%, n = 27) and departmental level (64%, n = 27).

### **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 the UW Colleges' respondents in a qualitative analysis in the aggregate report of the UW Colleges.