

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 was formed to search for consulting firms that conduct climate assessments in higher education. Rankin & Associates (R&A) was identified as leader in

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

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 by previous R&A work, the CSWG developed the final survey instrument template that was administered to the five participating campuses in spring 2008.

UW-Stevens Point (UWSP) was one of the five UW System institutions that participated in the initial climate project in 2007-2008. A Diversity Leadership Committee (DLC) was created at UW-Stevens Point to assist in coordinating the survey effort on campus. The DLC reviewed the survey template and revised the instrument to better match the campus context at UW-Stevens Point. The final survey contained 96 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the findings of the internal assessment.

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, employees' work-life issues, and respondents' perceptions of institutional actions, including 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 UW-Stevens Point has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges are found in many other higher education institutions across the country.

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

Sample Demographics

1,901 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 18.4 percent response rate³
- 1,331 undergraduate students, 46 graduate students, 215 faculty, 149 academic staff, and 127 classified staff
- 190 people of color⁴; 1,673 White respondents
- 45 people who identified as having a physical disability
- 29 people who identified as having a learning disability
- 47 people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 94 people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 21 who were questioning their sexuality
- 1,250 women; 633 men; 5 transgender⁵
- 636 people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian (including those with no affiliation)

³ Caution is suggested 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.

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, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (hereafter referred to as harassment)⁸ within the past two years. Gender was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. People of Color and sexual minorities⁹ perceived such harassment more often than White people, and many of them felt it was due to their race or sexual orientation. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 17 percent of respondents believed that they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, 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 (41%), age (35%), and university status¹⁰ (23%).
 - Compared with 14 percent of White people, 35 percent of people of color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of respondents of color who reported experiencing this conduct, 38 percent stated it was because of their race.
 - Compared with 15 percent of men, 17 percent of women believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of the women who believed they had experienced this conduct, 52 percent stated it was because of their gender.
 - Compared with 16 percent of heterosexual respondents, 30 percent of sexual minority respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 64 percent stated it was because of their sexual orientation.
 - Compared with 16 percent of all respondents, 22 percent of respondents with physical disabilities, 52 percent of respondents with learning disabilities, and 38

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.

⁷ 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.

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 status/status within the institution (e.g., staff, full-time faculty, part-time faculty, administrator)."

percent of respondents with psychological conditions believed they had personally experienced such conduct.

- Of those that believed they had experienced harassment, 10 percent of respondents with physical disabilities, 27 percent of respondents with learning disabilities, and 33 percent of respondents with psychological conditions said the harassment was based on their disability.
 - 15 percent of participants made complaints to UW-Stevens Point officials, while 20 percent did not know who to go to, and 16 percent did not report the incident for fear of retaliation.
- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 9 percent believed they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Stevens Point.
 - 51 respondents believed they had been sexually assaulted during their time at UW-Stevens Point.
 - Women, people who identified as bisexual, and people with 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 students (48 people), female (46 people), heterosexual (45 people), and White (43 people).
 - The alleged perpetrators of the perceived sexual assault were most often students, friends, acquaintances, and strangers.

Satisfaction with UW-Stevens Point

- **80 percent of UW-Stevens Point employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Stevens Point. 74 percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Stevens Point.**
 - Academic staff were slightly more satisfied with their jobs than were other employees.
 - Classified staff were least satisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Stevens Point.

- **84 percent of percent of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Stevens Point, while 70 percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW-Stevens Point.**
 - 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-Stevens Point than were other students.

- **45 percent of all respondents have seriously considered leaving UW-Stevens Point.**
 - Among employees, 71 percent of men and 54 percent of women considered leaving UW-Stevens Point.
 - 50 percent of employees of color, in comparison with 61 percent of White employees, have seriously considered leaving UW-Stevens Point. Additionally, 64 percent of sexual minority employees, compared to 60 percent of heterosexual respondents, have seriously considered leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 38 percent of women and 40 percent of men considered leaving the University.
 - 40 percent of students of color and 38 percent of White students considered leaving UW- Stevens Point, as did 49 percent of LGB students and 38 percent of heterosexual students.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Stevens Point (86%), in their departments or work units (84%), and in their classes (85%). The figures in the narrative demonstrate some disparities based on race.**
 - Compared with 88 percent of White people, 73 percent of people of color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall campus climate.
 - Compared with 85 percent of White people, 75 percent of people of color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments or work units.
 - Compared with 88 percent of White people, 71 percent of people of color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

- **Slightly more than one-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 sexual orientation, ethnicity, and race. People of color and sexual minorities were more aware of perceived harassment.**
 - 27 percent of participants believed that they had observed or personally been made aware of conduct on campus that created an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working or learning environment.
 - Most of the perceived harassment was based on sexual orientation (41%), ethnicity (32%), and race (31%).
 - Compared with 25 percent of White respondents, 37 percent of respondents of color believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 25 percent of heterosexuals, 50 percent of sexual minorities believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 26 percent of students and 18 percent of classified staff, 33 percent of faculty and 30 percent of academic staff believed they had observed such conduct.
 - These incidences were reported to an employer or official only 7 percent of the time.

- **Some employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory employment practices, and indicated that these practices were most often based on gender.**
 - 22 percent of employee respondents believed they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - 9 percent believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Stevens Point (up to and including dismissal).
 - 18 percent believed that they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with mobility and visual impairment, labs (41%), residential facilities (32%), food facilities (47%), offices (46%), and snow removal (34%) were considered the least accessible (rated “somewhat accessible” or “very inaccessible”) areas of campus.**
 - 28 percent ranked snow removal as “very inaccessible.”

Institutional Actions

- More than half of the respondents “strongly agreed”/“agreed” that Multicultural Affairs, Student Diversity Groups, and FSGSA provided visible leadership that foster inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 34 percent of all respondents believed the Chancellor’s Office to have visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 52 percent of all respondents believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work
- 58 percent felt welcome at campus diversity events.

- 52 percent of employee respondents thought providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families would positively affect the climate.
- 62 percent thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 59 percent thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
- Less than 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.
- 78 percent of employees felt providing on-campus child care services would positively affect the climate.
- More than three-quarters 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 (80%), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (82%), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (84%) and departmental level (82%).

Qualitative Findings

Out of the 1,901 surveys received at UW-Stevens Point, several respondents contributed remarks to 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 of personal experiences and thoughts¹¹, to name three things the respondent would like to see changed on campus and three things they would like to see remain the same, and to describe the current classroom and campus climates.

Of the respondents who provided comments regarding these questions, they were divided between whether attention to diversity was a positive or negative aspect of UW-Stevens Point. Many praised UW-Stevens Point's efforts to create a welcoming atmosphere, asserted that the climate had improved in recent years, and/or suggested the campus would further benefit from

¹¹ The complete survey is available in Appendix C.

additional actions to promote diversity. Others believed, however, that diversity efforts were over-emphasized or have led to reverse discrimination. These comments indicate that many respondents believe not only that diversity efforts are unnecessary, but also that diversity efforts are actively harmful.

While many respondents reported positive experiences with diversity and diversity initiatives, some individuals described common experiences with a lack of adequate responses to specific types of complaints. It is not suggested that these experiences are typical, or that the conclusions drawn by the commenter are accurate representations of what happened. Rather, these examples “give voice” to the experiences reported in the quantitative findings of the report. As mentioned in the comments, some respondents indicated they would not report complaints because of perceived lack of support of the UW-Stevens Point.

Overall, the results in this report parallel those in similar investigations where people of color, women, sexual minorities, and people with disabilities tend to feel that the institution is not addressing systemic, structural, and informal issues as favorably as for their White, male, heterosexual, and able-bodied respondents. The next steps in this project are to use the results of this assessment to identify specific strategies for addressing the challenges facing the community and to support positive initiatives on campus.