

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 climates that 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).

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

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

*Climate Study Working Group (CSWG)*² and subsequent contract with R&A to facilitate a system-wide climate assessment.

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).

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

UW Oshkosh was one of the five UWS institutions participating in the initial climate project in 2007-2008. A Diversity Leadership Committee (DLC) was created at UW Oshkosh 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 Oshkosh. The final survey contained 91 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the findings of the internal 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, employees' work-life issues, and their 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,

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.

suggests that while the UW-Oshkosh has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges are found in higher education institutions across the country.

Sample Demographics

3,175 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 23 percent response rate
- 2,170 undergraduate students, 298 graduate students, 262 faculty, 218 academic staff, and 173 classified staff
- 259 people of color³; 2,890 White respondents
- 56 people who identified as having a physical disability
- 72 people who identified as having a learning disability
- 98 people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 130 people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 15 who were questioning their sexuality
- 2,112 women; 1,046 men; 7 transgender⁴
- 947 people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian (including those with no affiliation)

³ 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.

⁴ “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

Satisfaction with UW-Oshkosh

- **79 percent of UW-Oshkosh employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Oshkosh. 69 percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Oshkosh.**
 - Faculty and classified staff members were slightly less satisfied with their jobs than were academic staff.
 - Classified staff members were much less satisfied than faculty and academic staff members with the way their careers had progressed at UW-Oshkosh.
 - Women and employees of color were least satisfied with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Oshkosh.

- **85 percent of percent of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Oshkosh, while 71 percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at UW- Oshkosh.**
 - 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-Oshkosh than were other students.
 - 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, and sexual minority students.

- **43 percent of all respondents have considered leaving UW-Oshkosh.**
 - Among employees, 60 percent of men and 60 percent of women thought about leaving UW-Oshkosh.
 - 65 percent of employees of color, in comparison with 60 percent of White employees, have seriously considered leaving UW-Oshkosh. Additionally, 54 percent of sexual minority employees, compared to 61 percent of heterosexual respondents, have seriously thought about leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 38 percent of women and 40 percent of men considered leaving the University.
 - 43 percent of students of color and 38 percent of White students thought about leaving UW-Oshkosh, as did 57 percent of LGB students and 39 percent of heterosexual students.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Oshkosh (82%), in their departments or work units (83%), and in their classes (83%). The figures in the narrative show some disparities based on race.**

- Compared with 84 percent of White people, 67 percent of people of color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall campus climate.
- Compared with 84 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 85 percent of White people, 70 percent of people of color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in classes.
- **Slightly more 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.**
 - 28 percent of the 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 observed harassment was based on sexual orientation (49%), gender (30%), ethnicity (29%), race (28%), gender identity (24%), and gender expression (24%).
 - Compared with 27 percent of White respondents, 38 percent of respondents of color believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 26 percent of heterosexuals, 59 percent of sexual minorities believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 25 percent of students and 34 percent of classified staff, 42 percent of faculty and 39 percent of academic staff believed they had observed such conduct.
 - These incidences were reported to an employee or official only 7 percent of the time.
- **Some employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory employment practices and indicated that they were most often based on UW-Oshkosh status and gender.**
 - 21 percent of employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - 9 percent believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Oshkosh (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, the University website (74%), dining halls (60%), classroom materials (59%), grounds/campus (58%), and computer labs/adaptive technology (58%) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
 - 11 percent ranked parking/transportation as “very inaccessible”

Personal Experiences with Campus Climate⁵

- **A percentage of respondents believed⁶ 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)⁷ within the past two years. Gender was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. People of color and sexual minorities⁸ perceived such harassment more often than White people and heterosexual respondents, and many of them felt it was due to their race or sexual orientation. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 18 percent of respondents believed they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus. The percentage of respondents experiencing harassment at UW-Oshkosh is lower than the percentage of respondents who experienced harassment in studies of other institutions.⁹
 - The perceived conduct was most often based on the respondents’ gender (32%), age (27%), university status¹⁰ (23%), educational level (17%), and political views (15%).
 - Compared with 17 percent of White people, 33 percent of people of color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of respondents of color who reported experiencing this conduct, 52 percent stated it was because of their race.
 - Compared with 17 percent of men, 19 percent of women and 43 percent of transgender respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Sexual minorities are defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

⁹ Rankin’s (2003) national assessment of climate for underrepresented groups where 25% (n = 3767) of respondents indicated personally experiencing harassment based mostly on their race (31%), their gender (55%), or their ethnicity (16%).

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).”

- Of the women who believed they had experienced this conduct, 37 percent stated it was because of their gender.
 - Compared with 17 percent of heterosexual respondents, 38 percent of sexual minority respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 61 percent stated it was because of their sexual orientation.
 - 15 percent of participants made complaints to UW-Oshkosh officials, while 17 percent did not know who to go to, and 15 percent did not report the incident for fear of retaliation.
- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 8 percent believed that they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Oshkosh.
 - 75 respondents believed that they had been sexually assaulted during their time at UW-Oshkosh. Of these, 29 respondents believed they had been assaulted off-campus and 39 respondents believed they had been assaulted on campus.
 - Women, lesbians, 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-Oshkosh students (71 people), female (64 people), heterosexual (70 people), and White (69 people).
 - The alleged perpetrators of the perceived sexual assault were most often students, strangers, and acquaintances.

Institutional Actions

- More than half of the respondents (51%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the Chancellor’s office provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community while 7% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”
- A substantial percentage of respondents were unaware of the degree to which the Chancellor’s Office, Affirmative Action and Equity Office, Center for Academic Support and Diversity/MEC, college deans, Dean of Students, and governance and advisory groups had visible leadership to support diversity/inclusion.
- 53 percent of all respondents believed that diversity initiatives are relevant to their work.
- 55 percent felt welcome at campus diversity events.
- 50 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.
- 66 percent thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 60 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.
- 74 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 (76%), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (76%), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (81%) and departmental level (77%).

Qualitative Findings

Out of the 3,175 surveys received at UW-Oshkosh, 2,157 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 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.

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?” Of the 1,121 respondents that provided commentary, most of the remarks indicated that the campus climate was more diverse, more accepting of difference, and felt more comfortable and safe. Some individuals said that there was little difference between the community and the campus and some commented that the surrounding community was more accepting of people regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity than were people on campus.

A second open-ended question asked, “When considering the current campus climate, from where do you see leadership coming?” One thousand three hundred seventy-three (1,373)

¹¹ The complete survey is available in Appendix C.

individuals responded to this question. A number of respondents believed that students and student organizations (e.g., OSA, Greek life) were largely responsible for creating the leadership around campus climate issues. Some respondents said they believed that they saw leadership emanating from various University offices, including the Chancellor's office, deans' offices, and Residence Life. Several respondents pointed directly to the Counseling Center as an office that they believed was a leader in the movement to create a positive campus climate. Some respondents were not aware of which offices were in charge of diversity and others wished the upper administration, would be more proactive and vocal concerning diversity/inclusion/climate issues.

About half of the 1,289 respondents that described their perceptions of the classroom climate said that they believed that the climate was welcoming for all, including non-traditionally aged students, veterans, and others. Many respondents noted the make-up of the classroom was almost always all White, which reflected the UW-Oshkosh student body. Some respondents indicated they were not able to judge the classroom climate since they were members of majority populations. A number of non-majority respondents, including students of color and queer students, said they were often the sole "different" student in the classroom and believed that they encountered awkward and sometimes discriminatory behavior from classmates and faculty.

Of the 1,240 individuals that commented on the current campus climate, a number of respondents felt UW-Oshkosh was a safe and welcoming place. Others suggested the climate was good, but could be improved. Still others provided descriptions of what they believed to be discrimination, harassment, or subtle unwelcoming overtones they experienced or witnessed. Several respondents said they believed that the climate was most welcoming for those individuals in the majority (e.g., White heterosexuals) and least welcoming for sexual and racial minorities.

One of the open-ended items allowed respondents to elaborate on any of their survey responses, to further describe their experiences, or to offer additional thoughts about climate issues. Five hundred one (501) people contributed comments. Among them, individuals' responses were

divided as to whether diversity was a positive or negative aspect of the campus. Some thought UW-Oshkosh put too much emphasis on diversity, while others thought the University could do more in that respect. Several people commented about the lack of diversity on campus. Some respondents noted that the campus could do more to be truly accessible to people with disabilities. Additionally, some respondents indicated that they believed that the campus had few resources for and that campus community members were intolerant of gay and lesbian individuals. Others said they were tired of having the gay agenda forced on them. Some respondents of color, classified staff respondents, and women students gave specific examples of what they believed to be discrimination or harassment that they had experienced on campus.

Seven hundred eighty-seven (787) respondents offered suggestions for how to improve the climate at UW-Oshkosh. A number of respondents praised UW-Oshkosh's efforts with regard to diversity and asked for continued attention to and leadership on diversity issues. Some respondents wanted to see more people from underrepresented populations in the faculty and administrative ranks. Likewise, a few respondents asked that the University divert dollars away from diversity initiatives and allocate resources only to educating students. Several respondents described what they believed was a tension or animosity between faculty and classified staff and asked for efforts to resolve the perceived tensions. Many people asked that UW-Oshkosh continue to communicate with all constituents, employees, and students about the myriad of aspects of University life and UW-Oshkosh's diversity initiatives.

In addition, a few respondents commented on the survey instrument and the project process. 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-Oshkosh. Several respondents insisted that UW-Oshkosh leadership share with its constituents the climate assessment findings and initiatives instituted as a result of the survey.