

## 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).

Millersville University has a long history of supporting diversity initiatives<sup>1</sup> as evidenced by the institution's support and commitment to this climate assessment project. In 2002, the Social Equity Committee (SEC) with the full support of the President's Advisory Council (PAC) embarked on the initial campus climate project. The results of that report<sup>2</sup> informed the *Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Community: 2003-2008*. In 2009, the Social Equity Strategic

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on institution diversity initiatives see <http://www.millersville.edu/social/eq/>

<sup>2</sup> The 2001 report is available at <http://www.millersville.edu/services/social/eq/strategicplan/assessment.php>

Planning Advisory Committee (SESPAC) requested a follow-up assessment to examine the current climate at Millersville University. Rankin & Associates (R&A) was again retained to assist in the assessment process as an identified leader in conducting multiple identity studies in higher education.

SESPAC committee members reviewed the survey template and revised the instrument to better match the current campus context at Millersville University. The final survey contained 103 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, staff, and administrators) 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.

To allow constituent groups the opportunity to respond to the assessment findings and to provide suggested revisions and/or further clarifications members of SESPAC reviewed a draft of the final report in July 2009. A summary of the findings, presented in bullet form below, suggests that while challenges still exist with regard to diversity issues, similar challenges are found in many other higher education institutions across the country.<sup>3</sup>

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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.

## Sample Demographics

775 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 8% overall response rate<sup>4</sup>
- 479 (62%) undergraduate students, 13 (2%) graduate students, 13 (2%) non-school faculty, 90 (12%) teaching faculty, 96 (12%) staff members, 73 (9%) administrators/managers, and 7 (1%) department chairs
- 35 (5%) People of Color;<sup>5</sup> 711 (92%) White respondents
- 36 (5%) people who identified as having a physical disability
- 34 (4%) people who identified as having a learning disability
- 36 (5%) people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 58 (8%) people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 61 (8%) who identified as asexual; 6 (1%) who were questioning their sexuality
- 509 (66%) women; 249 (32%) men; 11 (1%) transgender<sup>6</sup>
- 316 (42%) people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian (including those with no affiliation)

## Quantitative Findings

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

- **Some respondents 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>8</sup> within the past two years. Gender was most often cited as the reason given for the harassment. Harassment largely went unreported.**

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<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. For a review of response rates by constituent group, please refer to Table 1 under *Description of the Sample*.

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

<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 B.

<sup>8</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.

- 23% (n = 177) of respondents 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' age (20%, n = 36), gender (19%, n = 33), political views (16%, n = 29), and race (15%, n = 26).
  - Compared with 23% (n = 162) of White respondents, 20% (n = 7) of People of Color had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 14% (n = 1) stated it was because of their race.
  - Compared with 22% (n = 55) of men, 24% (n = 119) of women had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of the women who experienced this conduct, 22% (n = 26) stated it was because of their gender.
  - Compared with 23% (n = 144) of heterosexual respondents, 22% (n = 13) of sexual minority respondents had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of sexual minority respondents who experienced this conduct, 69% (n = 9) stated it was because of their sexual orientation.
  - Compared with 21% (n = 145) of self described non-disabled respondents, 36% (n = 13) of respondents with physical disabilities, 50% (n = 17) of respondents with learning disabilities, and 36% (n = 13) of respondents with psychological conditions had personally experienced such conduct.
  - Of those that experienced harassment, 15% (n = 2) of respondents with physical disabilities, 24% (n = 4) of respondents with learning disabilities, and 39% (n = 5) of respondents with psychological conditions said the harassment was based on their disability.
  - 18% (n = 31) of participants made complaints to institution officials, while 18% (n = 32) did not know who to go to, 21% (n = 37) did not report the incident for fear of retaliation, and 14% (n = 25) did not report for fear that the complaint would not be taken seriously.
- **A small percentage of respondents had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
    - 15% (n = 116) of respondents believed that sexual harassment was a problem at Millersville.
    - 54 respondents (7%) indicated they personally had experienced sexual harassment at Millersville..
    - The perpetrators of the sexual harassment were most often students (41%, n = 22), friends (19%, n = 10), or acquaintances (17%, n = 9).
    - 14% (n = 105) thought sexual assault was a problem at the University
    - 12 people (2%) had been the target of sexual assault while at Millersville University.
    - The perpetrators of the sexual assault were most often students (75%, n = 9), acquaintances (33%, n = 4), friends (33%, n = 4), or strangers (17%, n = 2).

### Satisfaction with Institution

- **79% (n = 216) of Millersville University employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at institution. 62% (n = 170) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at Millersville University.**
  - Most employee groups (by selected demographics) held similar opinions about their satisfaction with their jobs, while a higher percentage of Employee Respondents of Color were satisfied.
  - Non-school faculty members were more satisfied with their jobs than were other employees.
  - Sexual minority employees were much less satisfied with the way their careers have progressed than were other demographic groups.
  - Staff were least satisfied with the way their careers have progressed.
- **41% (n = 318) of all respondents have seriously considered leaving Millersville University.**
  - 10% (n = 76) of all respondents felt pressured to leave the University.

### Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at Millersville University (72%, n = 557), in their departments or work units (74%, n = 571), and in their classes (79%, n = 473). The figures in the narrative demonstrate some disparities based on race.**
  - Compared with 63% of White respondents, 83% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall campus climate.
  - Compared with 74% of White respondents, 77% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments or work units.
  - Compared with 80% of White respondents, 63% of People of Color were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- **Some respondents had observed harassment on campus within the past two years. The majority of respondents (64%) did not respond to this question.**
  - 15% (n = 114) of the participants 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 (35%, n = 40), gender (33%, n = 38), position at the University (33%, n = 37), sexual orientation (26%, n = 30), and ethnicity (25%, n = 28).
  - Forms of harassment observed largely included: derogatory remarks (54%, n = 62) and someone being deliberately ignored or excluded (42%, n = 48).
  - 40% (n = 103) of White respondents and 40% (n = 4) of Respondents of Color had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.

- Compared with 30% (n = 36) of men, 49% (n = 77) of women had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
- Compared with 41% (n = 101) of heterosexuals, 47% (n = 8) of sexual minorities had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with mobility and visual impairment, campus buildings (62%, n = 469), classrooms (61%, n = 468), and restrooms (63%, n = 476) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
  - 10% (n = 79) ranked the on-campus parking as “very inaccessible.”
- **Some employee respondents observed discriminatory employment practices, and indicated that these practices were most often based on gender.**
  - 22% (n = 62) of employee respondents had observed discriminatory hiring.
  - 14% (n = 40) had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at Millersville University (up to and including dismissal).
  - 17% (n = 48) had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

### Institutional Actions

- **When asked about certain initiatives implemented since the previous assessment in 2002 to improve the campus climate, between 29 (n = 223) and 46% (n = 343) of all respondents did not know how the individual initiatives affected the climate.**
  - Half of all respondents (n = 380) thought campus programming had a positive impact on the campus climate.
  - 46% (n = 348) of all respondents indicated that expansion of community outreach linkages has a positive impact on the campus climate
- **The survey asked respondents to what degree they thought a number of potential initiatives would improve the climate at Millersville.**
  - Most employee respondents thought providing diversity training for staff (66%, n = 179) and faculty (64%, n = 174) would improve the climate.
  - 83% (n = 226) of employee respondents believed providing a clear and fair process to resolve conflicts would positively affect the climate.
  - 58% (n = 159) of employee respondents were in favor of providing more effective mentorship for new minority/new women faculty.
  - 50% of all employees thought providing recognition and rewards for including diversity in course objectives throughout the curriculum, increasing funding to support campus climate change efforts, including diversity-related activities a criterion for hiring and evaluation of employees, providing diversity training for search committees or tenure/promotion committees.
  - 75% (n = 368) of student respondents were in favor of providing an advocate to mediate student complaints of classroom inequity.

- Many students also thought the following initiatives would positively affect the climate: increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue among students; increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue between faculty, staff, and students; incorporating issues of diversity and cross-cultural competence more effectively into the curriculum; and providing more effective faculty mentorship of students.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Out of the 775 surveys received at Millersville University, several respondents contributed remarks to the open-ended questions. No respondents commented on all open-ended questions. The open-ended questions asked whether their campus experiences differed from experiences in the surrounding community and for general elaboration of personal experiences and thoughts.<sup>9</sup>

Of the respondents who provided comments regarding these questions, they were divided between whether attention to diversity was a positive or negative aspect of Millersville University. Many praised the institution'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 further actions to promote diversity. Others believed, however, that diversity efforts were over-emphasized or have led to reverse discrimination.

While many respondents reported positive experiences with diversity and diversity initiatives, some individuals described common experiences of 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.

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<sup>9</sup> The complete survey is available in Appendix C.

## Next Steps

Institutions of higher education seek to create an environment characterized by equal access for all students, faculty, and staff regardless of cultural, political, or philosophical differences, where individuals are not just tolerated but valued. Creating and maintaining a community environment that respects individual needs, abilities, and potential is one of the most critical initiatives that universities and colleges undertake. A welcoming and inclusive climate is grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

That stated, what do the results of this study suggest? At minimum, they add additional empirical data to the current knowledge base and provide more information on the experiences and perceptions for several sub-populations in the campus community. As to the findings themselves, aside from the aforementioned finding that a majority of respondents from historically marginalized groups experience harassment, the results parallel those from similar investigations at higher education institutions across the country.

A more interesting question than what do the results of this study suggest, is given that there is some structure in place to address diversity issues on campus, *how effective have their efforts been in positively shaping and directing campus climate with respect to diversity?*