



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Syracuse
University

Assessing our Learning,
Living, and Working
Environment
Executive Summary

September 2016



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Introduction

During the Spring 2016 semester, Syracuse University conducted a comprehensive survey of all students, faculty and staff for the purpose of developing a better understanding of the learning, living and working environment on campus. The origins of this effort can be traced to the work of the Chancellor's Work Group on Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence, Prevention, Education and Advocacy, which, in its final report (issued Dec. 17, 2014) detailed 24 recommendations, including a call for a climate survey.

Why is it important to look at the campus climate? Because Syracuse University affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of our campus community, and the University is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. It is through freedom of exchange over different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments that individuals develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Diversity and inclusion engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect.

The survey effort began in 2015 with the formation of the University's Climate Assessment Planning Committee (CAPC), with representation by students, faculty, staff and administrators, and co-chaired by Senior Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz and Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Assessment Libby Barlow. In summer and fall 2015, the committee worked in cooperation with project consultant Susan Rankin, principal of Rankin & Associates Consulting, to develop the survey mechanism.

In the first phase, Rankin & Associates conducted 20 focus groups composed of 117 participants (51 students; 66 faculty and staff). In the second phase, the CAPC and Rankin & Associates used data from the focus groups to construct questions for the campus-wide survey. The final survey instrument was completed in March 2016. It consisted of 118 items (29 qualitative and 89 quantitative) focused on the experiences and perceptions of various campus constituent groups related to sexual harassment and sexual violence, race, gender identity and gender expression,

sexual orientation, disability services, the academic environment for students, the workplace environment for faculty and staff, employee benefits and other topics.

The survey was made available from February 9-March 28, 2016, via a secure online portal as well as confidential paper surveys for individuals who did not have easy access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey. In total, nearly 6,000 people completed the survey.

The conceptual model used as the foundation for the survey was developed by Smith et al. (1997) and modified by Rankin (2003). A power and privilege perspective informs the model, one grounded in critical theory, which establishes that power differentials, both earned and unearned, are central to all human interactions (Brookfield, 2005). Unearned power and privilege are associated with membership in dominant social groups (Johnson, 2005) and influence systems of differentiation that reproduce unequal outcomes.

The CAPC implemented participatory and community-based processes to review tested survey questions from the Rankin & Associates question bank and develop a survey instrument for Syracuse to capture the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. In this way, the University's assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of campus climate, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups at Syracuse University. This report provides an overview of the results of the campus-wide survey.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The CAPC collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 20 focus groups, which were composed of 117 participants (51 students; 66 faculty and staff). In the second phase, the CAPC and R&A used data from the focus groups to co-construct questions for the campus-wide survey. The final survey instrument was completed in March 2016. Syracuse University's survey contained 118 items (29 qualitative and 89 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from February 9 – March 28, 2016.

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Syracuse University Participants

Syracuse University community members completed 5,617 surveys for an overall response rate of 21.5%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.¹ Response rates by constituent group varied: 17% ($n = 2,549$) for Undergraduate Students, 17% ($n = 1,052$) for Graduate Students, 29% ($n = 506$) for Faculty/Librarian, >100% ($n = 77$) for Administrators with Faculty Rank, 33% ($n = 146$) for Administrators without Faculty Rank, and 48% ($n = 1,414$) for Staff. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The percentages offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (n) for each demographic characteristic.²

¹One hundred-thirteen (113) surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and 42 duplicate submissions were removed. An additional response was removed because it was judged to have been problematic (i.e., the respondent did not complete the survey in good faith).

²The total n for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. Syracuse University Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	2,549	44.4
	Graduate or Law Student	1,052	18.3
	Faculty/Librarian/Administrator with Faculty Rank	583	10.1
	Administrator without Faculty Rank	146	2.5
	Staff	1,414	24.6
Gender identity	Man	2,129	37.1
	Woman	3,488	60.7
	Transgender	85	1.5
	Missing/Unknown	42	0.7
Racial identity	Asian/Asian American	769	13.4
	Black/African American	362	6.3
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	275	4.8
	Other People of Color	87	1.5
	White People	3,657	63.7
	Multiracial	390	6.8
	Missing/Unknown/Other	204	3.6
Sexual identity	LGBQ	604	10.5
	Heterosexual	4,791	83.4
	Missing/Unknown	349	6.1
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	4,499	78.3
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	1,046	18.2
	Multiple Citizenships	151	2.6
	Missing/Unknown	48	0.8
Disability status	No Disability	5,110	89.0
	Single Disability	433	7.5
	Multiple Disabilities	146	2.5
	Missing/Unknown	55	1.0
Military status	Military Service	157	2.7
	No Military Service	5,526	96.2
	Missing/Unknown	61	1.1
Faith-based affiliation	Christian Affiliation	2,506	43.6
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	669	11.6
	No Affiliation	2,027	35.3
	Multiple Affiliations	284	4.9
	Missing/Unknown	258	4.5

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at Syracuse University

Climate is defined as the “current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning the access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential.”³ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 67% ($n = 3,840$) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Syracuse University.
- 72% ($n = 2,276$) of Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Student respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 79% ($n = 3,278$) of Faculty and Student respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- The majority of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the criteria for tenure were clear (73%, $n = 245$).
- Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that teaching (73%, $n = 244$) was valued by Syracuse University.
- Non-Tenure-Track/Adjunct Faculty respondents felt that teaching (62%, $n = 85$) and research (87%, $n = 117$) were valued by Syracuse University.
- 68% ($n = 93$) of Non-Tenure-Track/Adjunct Faculty respondents noted that they believed that expectations of their responsibilities were clear.
- 67% ($n = 357$) of all Faculty respondents noted that they believed their colleagues included them in opportunities that will help their career as much as they do others in their position status.

³Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

- 78% ($n = 428$) of Faculty respondents indicated that Syracuse University is good place to work.

3. Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work

- 90% ($n = 1,329$) of Staff respondents reported that Syracuse University is a good place to work.
- A large majority of Staff respondents noted that they believed that vacation and personal time benefits (88%, $n = 1,330$), health insurance benefits (85%, $n = 1,250$), child care benefits (72%, $n = 896$), and retirement benefits (88%, $n = 1,262$) were competitive.
- 76% ($n = 1,146$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that there were clear expectations of their responsibilities.
- 71% ($n = 1,076$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that Syracuse University provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 71% ($n = 890$) of Staff respondents agreed that policies (e.g., FMLA) were fairly applied across Syracuse University.
- 69% ($n = 1,012$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that Syracuse University was supportive of flexible work schedules.
- 68% ($n = 1,017$) of Staff respondents thought their supervisors provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁴ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁵ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

All Student respondents

- The majority of Student respondents felt valued by Syracuse University faculty (70%, $n = 2,511$), by Syracuse University staff (67%, $n = 2,388$), and by their department/program (68%, $n = 2,393$).
- 75% ($n = 2,652$) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom.
- 63% ($n = 2,222$) of Student respondents felt valued by other students in the classroom and 60% ($n = 2,128$) by other students outside of the classroom.
- 73% ($n = 2,580$) of Student respondents had faculty whom they perceived as role models and 57% ($n = 2,007$) had staff whom they perceived as role models.

Graduate Student respondents

- A majority of Graduate Student respondents felt that their advisor (90%, $n = 869$), department faculty members (92%, $n = 886$), and department staff (95%, $n = 916$) responded to their emails, calls, or voicemails in a prompt manner.
- 84% ($n = 801$) of Graduate Student respondents felt comfortable sharing their professional goals with their advisor.
- 80% ($n = 772$) of Graduate Student respondents reported that their department advisor provided clear expectations.
- 78% ($n = 742$) of Graduate Student respondents noted that they believed that they received support from their advisor to pursue personal research interests.
- 76% ($n = 730$) of Graduate Student respondents felt that their department faculty members encouraged them to produce publications and present research.
- 76% ($n = 742$) of Graduate Student respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of advising they have received from their department.

Student Respondents – Perceived Academic Success

⁴Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁵Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

Analyses using the *Perceived Academic Success* scale revealed the following significant differences.

- Undergraduate Student Respondents of Color, Asian/Asian American Undergraduate Student respondents, Black/African American Undergraduate Student respondents, and Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ Undergraduate Student respondents have less *Perceived Academic Success* than White Undergraduate Student respondents. Black/African American Undergraduate Student respondents also have less *Perceived Academic Success* than Multiracial Undergraduate Student respondents.
- Student Respondents with a Disability had less *Perceived Academic Success* than Student respondents with No Disability.
- Low-Income Student Respondents had less *Perceived Academic Success* than Not-Low-Income Student respondents.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

1. Members of several constituent groups indicated that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.⁶ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.⁷ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 20% ($n = 1,160$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.⁸
 - 27% ($n = 311$) noted that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity, and 24% felt that it was each based on their position status ($n = 283$) and ethnicity ($n = 275$).
- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, ethnicity, and age. For example:
 - By gender identity, a higher percentage of Transgender respondents (46%, $n = 39$) than Women respondents (22%, $n = 774$) and Men respondents (15%, $n = 326$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.
 - Sixty-two percent ($n = 24$) of Transgender respondents, 31% ($n = 240$) of Women respondents, and 14% ($n = 44$) of Men respondents who indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct indicated that the conduct was based on their gender identity.

⁶Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

⁷Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

⁸The literature on microaggressions is clear that this type of conduct has a negative influence on people who experience the conduct, even if they feel at the time that it had no impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

- By position status, Faculty/Librarian/Administrator with Faculty Rank respondents (26%; $n = 149$) and Administrator without Faculty Rank respondents (25%, $n = 36$) were significantly more likely than other respondents to indicate that they had experienced this conduct.
 - Of those respondents who noted that they had experienced this conduct, 53% ($n = 19$) of Administrator without Faculty Rank respondents, 44% ($n = 142$) of Staff respondents, 30% ($n = 45$) of Faculty/Librarian/Administrator with Faculty Rank respondents, 22% ($n = 44$) of Graduate or Law Student respondents, and 7% ($n = 33$) of Undergraduate Student respondents thought that the conduct was based on their position status.
- By racial identity, significant differences were noted in the percentages of Black/African American respondents (29%, $n = 104$), Respondents of Color (28%, $n = 24$), Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents (24%, $n = 67$), Multiracial respondents (23%, $n = 91$), White respondents (19%, $n = 675$), and Asian/Asian American respondents (17%, $n = 133$) who noted that they believed that they had experienced this conduct.
 - Of those respondents who noted that they believed that they had experienced this conduct, significantly greater percentages of Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents (72%, $n = 48$), Black/African American respondents (60%, $n = 62$), Asian/Asian American respondents (56%, $n = 74$), Multiracial respondents (43%, $n = 39$), and Respondents of Color (38%, $n = 9$) than White respondents (4%, $n = 28$) thought that the conduct was based on their ethnicity.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at Syracuse University. Five hundred and eighty two respondents students, faculty, and staff contributed comments regarding these personal experiences. Three themes emerged from their narratives: concerns with the reporting process, hostile campus/work environment, and concerns regarding inclusion.

2. Several constituent groups indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus climate, workplace climate, and classroom climate.

Prior research on campus climate has focused on the experiences of faculty, staff, and students associated with historically underserved social/community/affinity groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, veterans).⁹

Several groups at Syracuse University indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- By gender identity: Men respondents were more comfortable than Women respondents and Transgender respondents with the overall climate at Syracuse University, the climate in their department/work units, and the climate in their classes.
- By racial identity: White respondents were more comfortable than other racial groups with the overall climate at Syracuse University, the climate in their department/work units, and the climate in their classes.
- By sexual identity: Heterosexual respondents were more comfortable than LGBTQ respondents with the overall climate at Syracuse University, the climate in their department/work units, and the climate in their classes.
- By disability status: Respondents with No Disability were more comfortable than respondents with a Single Disability and Multiple Disabilities with the overall climate at Syracuse University, the climate in their department/work units, and the climate in their classes.

⁹Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

3. Faculty and Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues

- 62% ($n = 359$) of Faculty/Librarian/Administrator with Faculty Rank respondents, 62% ($n = 90$) of Administrator without Faculty Rank respondents, and 52% ($n = 733$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving Syracuse University in the past year.
 - 51% ($n = 605$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of financial reasons and 44% ($n = 520$) because of limited opportunities for advancement.
- 70% ($n = 1,054$) of Staff respondents felt that a hierarchy existed within staff positions that allowed some voices to be valued more than others.
- 52% ($n = 761$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that their workload was permanently increased without additional compensation as a result of other staff departures.
- 64% ($n = 316$) of Faculty respondents and 20% ($n = 734$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that people who had children or elder care were burdened with balancing work and family responsibilities (e.g., evening and evenings programming, workload brought home, Syracuse University breaks not scheduled with school district breaks).

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 58% ($n = 189$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents and 56% ($n = 74$) of Non-Tenure-Track/Adjunct Faculty respondents thought that they performed more work to help students than did their colleagues.
- 49% ($n = 164$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents noted that they believed that they were burdened by service responsibilities (e.g., committee memberships, departmental/program work assignments) beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
- 22% ($n = 71$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research/scholarship agenda to achieve tenure/promotion.

- Forty-one percent ($n = 55$) of Non-Tenure-Track/Adjunct Faculty respondents felt pressured to do extra work that was uncompensated.
- Only 39% ($n = 194$) of Faculty respondents thought that salaries for adjunct professors were competitive.

Over four hundred Staff/Administrator respondents contributed comments regarding their employment related experiences. Three themes emerged from these comments: (1) Unsustainable workload, (2) ineffective evaluation process, and (3) Inconsistent application of the FMLA policy.

One hundred and seventy five Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding workplace climate. Two themes emerged from their comments. The first revolved around low morale among faculty. The second theme focused on inadequate salaries and benefits, particularly in light of workload expectations.

5. A small but meaningful percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual experiences.

In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* indicated that sexual assault is a significant issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. One section of the Syracuse University survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- Twelve percent ($n = 714$) of respondents indicated on the survey that they had experienced a form of unwanted sexual contact,¹⁰ with:
 - 1% ($n = 74$) of respondents experiencing relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting)

¹⁰The survey used the term “unwanted sexual contact” to depict any unwanted sexual experiences and defined it as “unwanted or unwelcome touching of a sexual nature that includes fondling (any intentional sexual touching, however slight, with any object without consent); rape; sexual assault (including oral, anal, or vaginal penetration with a body part or an object); use of alcohol or other drugs to incapacitate; gang rape; and sexual harassment involving physical contact.”

- 2% ($n = 132$) of respondents experiencing stalking (e.g., following me, on social media, texting, phone calls)
- 9% ($n = 488$) of respondents experiencing sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment)
- 4% ($n = 217$) of respondents experiencing unwanted sexual contact (e.g. fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent, or gang rape) while a member of the Syracuse University community
- Undergraduate Student respondents, Women respondents, Transgender respondents, LGBTQ respondents, and respondents with a Disability more often reported unwanted sexual experiences than their majority counterparts.
- Syracuse University students, acquaintances/friends, strangers, and current or former dating/intimate partners were identified as sources of unwanted sexual experiences.
- The majority of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual experience.

Conclusion

Syracuse University campus climate findings¹¹ were mostly consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.¹² For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “comfortable” or “very comfortable.” A slightly lower percentage (67%) of all Syracuse University respondents reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Syracuse University. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Syracuse University, a similar percentage of respondents (20%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also

¹¹Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹²[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.¹³

Syracuse University's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Syracuse University's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Syracuse University, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of any institution and unique aspects of each campus's environment must be taken into consideration when deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the Syracuse University community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Syracuse University, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position status to actualize its commitment to an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

¹³Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009

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