



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

University of Missouri -
St. Louis

Campus Climate
Research Study

September 2017



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Executive Summary

Introduction

History of the Project

University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community, and that they engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect. Free exchange of different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

UMSL also is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in UMSL's mission statement, “The University of Missouri-St. Louis provides excellent learning experiences and leadership opportunities for a diverse student body.”¹ To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at UMSL recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for the experiences and perceptions of its students, faculty, and staff. During the fall 2016 semester, UMSL conducted a comprehensive survey of all students, faculty, and staff to develop a better understanding of the learning, living, and working environment on campus.

In May 2016, members of UMSL worked with the University of Missouri System to form Systemwide Climate Study Team (SCST). The SCST was composed of faculty, staff, and administrators across the entire University of Missouri System. Ultimately, the University of Missouri System contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, “University of Missouri-St. Louis Climate for Learning, Living, and Working.” Data gathered via reviews of relevant UMSL literature and a campus-wide survey addressing the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups will be presented to the UMSL community. The community, upon receiving the report, will then come together to develop and complete two or three action items by spring 2018.

¹<http://www.umsl.edu/services/academic/About%20Us/mission.html>

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The conceptual model used as the foundation for UMSL’s assessment of campus climate 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. UMSL’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. This report provides an overview of the results of the campus-wide survey.

In total, 1,495 people completed the survey. In the end, the University of Missouri-St. Louis’ 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 UMSL.

UMSL Participants

UMSL community members completed 1,495 surveys for an overall response rate of 11%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.² Thirty-four percent ($n = 515$) of the sample were Undergraduate Students, 19% ($n = 279$) were Graduate/Professional Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars, Fellows, and Residents,³ 21% ($n = 310$) were Faculty members, including Administrators with Faculty Rank, and 26% ($n = 391$) were Staff, including Administrators without Faculty Rank. 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.⁴

²Fourteen surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and seven duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ($n = 15$). Any additional responses were removed because they were judged to have been problematic (i.e., the respondent did not complete the survey in good faith).

³Graduate/Professional Students and Post-Doctoral Scholars, Fellows, and Residents were collapsed into Graduate/Professional Students.

⁴The total n for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. UMSL Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	515	34.4
	Graduate/Professional Student, Post-Doctoral Scholar/Fellow/Resident	279	18.7
	Faculty (including Administrator with Faculty Rank and Emeritus Faculty)	310	20.7
	Staff (including Administrator without Faculty Rank)	391	26.2
Gender identity	Men	429	28.7
	Women	1,002	67.0
	Transspectrum	30	2.0
Racial/ethnic identity	African/Black/African American	192	12.8
	Additional People of Color	118	7.9
	White	1,061	71.0
	Multiracial	66	4.4
Sexual identity	LGBQ	163	10.9
	Heterosexual	1,236	82.7
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	1,307	87.4
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	162	10.8
Disability status	Single Disability	113	7.6
	No Disability	1,301	87.0
	Multiple Disabilities	63	4.2
Religious/spiritual identity	Christian Religious/Spiritual Identity	747	50.0
	Additional Religious/Spiritual Identity	86	5.8
	No Religious/Spiritual Identity	551	36.9
	Multiple Religious/Spiritual Identities	67	4.5

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

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at UMSL

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.”⁵ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 75% ($n = 1,120$) of the survey respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at UMSL.
- 72% ($n = 502$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their primary work area.
- 84% ($n = 927$) of Student and Faculty respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- 74% ($n = 217$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they believed that their colleagues included them in opportunities that would help their career as much as they do others in their position.
- 76% ($n = 89$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had opportunities to participate in substantive committee assignments.
- 78% ($n = 93$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that teaching was valued by UMSL; 83% ($n = 132$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that teaching was valued by UMSL.
- 87% ($n = 261$) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by students in the classroom.

⁵Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

3. Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work

- 79% ($n = 303$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had adequate resources to perform their job duties.
- 82% ($n = 314$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by coworkers in their department.
- 83% ($n = 319$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.
- 85% ($n = 324$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁶ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁷ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

All Student respondents

- 78% ($n = 612$) of Student respondents felt valued by UMSL faculty; 72% ($n = 564$) felt valued by UMSL staff.
- 74% ($n = 580$) of Student respondents felt that they had faculty whom they perceived as role models.
- 70% ($n = 548$) of Student respondents felt that the campus climate encouraged free and open discussion of difficult topics.
- 80% ($n = 626$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by UMSL faculty in the classroom.

Graduate/Professional Student respondents

- 92% ($n = 244$) of Graduate/Professional Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt comfortable sharing their professional goals with their advisors.

⁶Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁷Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

- 89% ($n = 225$) of Graduate/Professional Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they received due credit for research, writing, and publishing (e.g., authorship order in published articles).
- 83% ($n = 224$) of Graduate/Professional Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were satisfied with the quality of advising they had received from their departments.

Student Respondents *Perceived Academic Success*

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 15 on the survey. Analyses using these scales revealed no significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Student respondents by racial identity, sexual identity, disability status, first-generation status, income status, and citizenship status on *Perceived Academic Success*.

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.⁸ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.⁹ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 18% ($n = 272$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.¹⁰
 - 24% ($n = 66$) noted that the conduct was based on their position status,
 - 23% ($n = 62$) felt that it was based on their gender/gender identity, 20% (n

⁸Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

⁹Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

¹⁰The 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).

= 53) felt that it was based on their age, and 18% ($n = 48$) felt that it was based on their ethnicity.

- Differences emerged based on gender identity, position status, and racial identity.
 - By gender identity, 18% ($n = 178$) of Women respondents and 17% ($n = 74$) of Men respondents indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct within the past year.
 - A significantly higher percentage of Women respondents (26%, $n = 47$) than Men respondents (14%, $n = 10$) who noted that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct indicated that the conduct was based on their gender identity.
 - By position status, Faculty respondents (27%, $n = 82$) and Staff respondents (26%, $n = 102$) were significantly more likely than were Graduate/Professional Student respondents (9%, $n = 26$) and Undergraduate Student respondents (12%, $n = 62$) to indicate that they had experienced this conduct.
 - Of those respondents who noted that they had experienced this conduct, 32% ($n = 33$) of Staff respondents, 31% ($n = 25$) of Faculty respondents, 10% ($n = 6$) of Undergraduate Student respondents, and fewer than five Graduate/Professional Student respondents thought that the conduct was based on their position status.
 - By racial identity, 26% ($n = 17$) of Multiracial respondents, 18% ($n = 57$) of Respondents of Color, and 16% ($n = 173$) of White respondents believed that they had experienced this conduct.
 - Of those respondents who noted that they believed that they had experienced this conduct, 51% ($n = 29$) of Respondents of Color, 5% ($n = 8$) of White respondents, and fewer than five Multiracial respondents 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 UMSL. One hundred eighteen Student, Faculty, and Staff respondents contributed comments regarding these personal experiences. The predominant theme that emerged from the narratives was a feeling that UMSL was a hostile environment. Student respondents described a wide variety of incidents, ranging from experiences in the classroom with faculty and classmates to incidents in the community related to tensions around the community and police. Faculty and Staff respondents reported hostility in the workplace, often related to race and gender. Sources of the hostility ranged from supervisors, coworkers, and students in the classroom.

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).¹¹ Several groups at UMSL indicated that they were less comfortable than were their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- By gender identity, Men respondents (32%, $n = 135$) were more likely to feel “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UMSL than were Women respondents (25%, $n = 253$).
- By racial identity, White respondents (29%, $n = 311$) were significantly more likely to feel “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UMSL than were African/Black/African American respondents (19%, $n = 36$).
- By gender identity, Men Faculty and Student respondents (45%, $n = 135$) were more likely to feel “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes than were Women Faculty and Student respondents (34%, $n = 257$).
- By racial identity, White Faculty and Staff respondents (39%, $n = 207$) were significantly more likely to be “very comfortable” with the climate in their primary work area than were Faculty and Staff Respondents of Color (24%, $n = 26$).

¹¹Harper & 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

- 20% ($n = 76$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that staff salaries were competitive.
- 27% ($n = 104$) of Staff respondents noted that they believed that staff opinions were valued by UMSL administration.
- 19% ($n = 73$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that clear procedures existed on how they could advance at UMSL.
- 40% ($n = 151$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by UMSL senior administrators.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 34% ($n = 39$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they wanted more opportunities to participate in substantive committee assignments.
- 39% ($n = 112$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” that salaries for tenure-track faculty positions were competitive. Only 34% ($n = 99$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” that salaries for adjunct faculty were competitive, and 33% ($n = 92$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” that salaries for non-tenure-track faculty were competitive.

Ninety-three Staff respondents contributed comments regarding their employment-related experiences. Three themes emerged from these comments: 1) the poor quality of performance reviews, 2) lack of opportunities for career advancement, and 3) increased workload. Staff respondents felt that the performance evaluation process was “pointless” and not valued by the institution. Staff respondents also felt that a culture of “favoritism” prevented deserving individuals from advancing at UMSL. Finally, Staff respondents were concerned about the increased workload because of budget cuts and positions being unfilled or layoffs.

Seventy-four Faculty respondents elaborated on their experiences regarding workplace climate. Two themes emerged from their comments. One was the lack of “significant” compensation in terms of salary for both Tenured/Tenure-Track and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents. Faculty respondents were also concerned about the lack of professional development and advancement opportunities. They feared that budget cuts prevented them from being able to pursue the professional development opportunities that they felt that they needed in order to advance in their career.

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

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. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the UMSL survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 79 (5%) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual conduct while at UMSL.
 - 1% ($n = 17$) of respondents experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting) while a member of the UMSL community.
 - 1% ($n = 20$) of respondents experienced stalking (e.g., physical following, on social media, texting, phone calls) while a member of the UMSL community.
 - 2% ($n = 28$) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment) while a member of the UMSL community.
 - 1% ($n = 14$) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g., fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent) while a member of the UMSL community.
- Women respondents were more likely than were Men respondents to experience unwanted sexual interaction.

- The majority of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual experience.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual experiences. Three themes emerged among UMSL’s respondents who explained why they did not report unwanted sexual conduct. The primary rationale cited for not reporting was not knowing that the conduct was reportable or not knowing how to report. The second most common rationale provided for not reporting unwanted sexual conduct was feeling that reporting was not necessary. Finally, respondents often felt too embarrassed to report the incident.

Conclusion

UMSL climate findings¹² were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.¹³ For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable.” A similar percentage (75%) of UMSL respondents reported that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at UMSL. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At UMSL, a slightly smaller, percentage of respondents (18%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.¹⁴

UMSL's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses UMSL's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at UMSL, 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 UMSL community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a

¹²Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹³[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2016](#)

¹⁴Guiffreda, 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

deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. UMSL, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to promote an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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