

Campus Climate Survey Study Report:
Graduate Student Responses

Prepared for the University of Northern Colorado Campus Community

By

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, in an effort to attract and retain more faculty, staff, and students from diverse backgrounds to campus, the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) embarked on a campus-wide diversity initiative to foster a climate that is welcoming and inclusive to all. As part of the first phase in the larger campaign, a series of campus climate surveys were administered to students, faculty, and staff in the Spring of 2007. This report highlights the findings from the *Graduate Student Campus Climate Survey*. The purpose of the survey was to identify current challenges to diversity at UNC in general and, in particular, to explore diversity-related issues unique to graduate education. All enrolled graduate students were asked to participate in the online survey, which addressed several broad areas of interest including how graduate students perceive UNC's campus climate for diversity, how frequently students experienced or witnessed unfair treatment, harassment, and/or insensitivity based on personal characteristics, as well as how these perceptions and experiences relate to diversity-learning outcomes, satisfaction with enrollment, and feelings of belonging and comfort on campus.

METHOD

Procedure

The initial solicitation letter was sent via email to all enrolled graduate students both part and full-time through Bear mail addresses (N = 1,430). This initial letter contained instructions on how to log on to URSA and find the survey. Once student status was authenticated, survey participants were directed to a separate site in order to take the survey. The survey was based on an instrument that was used previously on graduate students at another university (Hutchinson & Hyer, 2000). The survey was conducted anonymously and no personally identifying information was collected. The complete version consisted of 100 items including demographic questions across several empirically-derived climate dimensions (See Appendix A: Table 1). A total of 367 completed surveys were collected for a 25% overall response rate. Reported response rates for climate surveys of this nature typically range from 25% to 60%.

Sample

Of the 367 graduate students responding, the majority (62%) were Master's level, (31%) were doctoral seeking, and 6% were either seeking a specialist's degree, were non-degree or were self identified as "other." A variety of programs on campus were represented; however (perhaps due to the nature of the survey) 18% of students preferred not to disclose their program. The median number of credits registered for spring was 9 (62% were enrolled full time in their programs), and 78% reported being on UNC's campus on a weekly or daily basis, although a small proportion (18%) of respondents reported that none of their classes are on UNC's campus. Further examination of off campus cases revealed that many of these students were in online or satellite campus programs (e.g., Lowry campus).

Table 1 contains demographic breakdowns of respondents compared to the population of all enrolled graduate students at UNC during the spring of 2007. The respondent pool consists of 64% female students, 78% White/Caucasian, 12% ethnic minority, 2% multiracial/multiethnic, and 4% international; 2% either left this question blank or indicated “prefer not to disclose.” Almost 40% of respondents were first generation college students (i.e., neither parent has a Bachelor’s Degree), 4% identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, 6% reported having a disability, 28% have dependent children in their homes. The majority of respondents reported Christianity as their religious faith (62%). It is important to note that although the sample and population look similar in their proportions of certain ethnic minority students, full and part-time students, and degree types, the responses collected constitute a convenience sample (i.e., a small group of self-selected survey volunteers) and the views and opinions of these students should not be considered representative of the views of all graduate students at UNC. Even given this qualification, the data reveal areas of strength and opportunities for diversity policy and programming at UNC.

Table 1
Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Participant Pool and Population

	Respondents	Population
	%	%
Degree Level		
Masters	62.3	60.2
Doctorate	31.4	23.4
Specialists	03.0	03.8
Non-degree	03.3	12.4
Gender		
Female	64.3	74.0
Male	35.7	26.0
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	1.9	1.6
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.8	0.9
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3.0	1.7
Hispanic	6.3	4.8
White/Caucasian	78.7	75.0
Multiracial/multiethnic	2.5	NC
Prefer not to disclose	0.3	7.6
Non U.S. Citizen/International	4.4	4.6
Unknown/Missing	2.2	3.8
First Generation Status		
Neither parent has BA	39.8	NC
One or both has BA	60.2	
Unknown		
Student Load		
Part Time	37.5	44.8
Full Time (≥ 9 credits)	62.5	55.2
Cumulative GPA	NC	3.76
Age	NC	33.55

Note: Sample n = 367, Population N = 1,430; NC = UNC does not collect this information or the survey did not collect this information.

Table 2
Diversity Experiences Prior to Coming to UNC

	%
Setting before coming to UNC	
Rural area	14.0
Small town or city	25.5
Suburb of a city	34.2
Large metropolitan area	24.6
Racial/ethnic composition of neighborhood before UNC	
All or nearly all the same race/ethnicity	41.5
Mostly the same race/ethnicity as me	34.8
About half the same/half different from me	16.7
All or nearly all of different race/ethnicity as me	7.0
Racial/ethnic composition of high school	
All or nearly all the same race/ethnicity as me	37.2
Mostly the same race/ethnicity as me	34.1
About half the same/half different race/ethnicity from me	20.4
All or nearly all of different race/ethnicity as me	7.5
Racial/ethnic composition of group of friends	
All or nearly all the same race/ethnicity as me	20.2
Mostly the same race/ethnicity as me	47.5
About half the same/half different race/ethnicity from me	24.4
All or nearly all of different race/ethnicity as me	7.9

RESULTS

The purpose of this survey was twofold; one goal was to describe the perceptions of the campus climate for all graduate student participants. A second goal was to explore differences across groups of students that have historically been excluded from the full benefits of higher education (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and/or have otherwise been marginalized, harassed, or targeted for unfair treatment as a result of personal characteristics (Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998; Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000) compared to those student groups who have not historically been subjected to these experiences on campuses. The comparison groups are: racial/ethnic minorities, women, sexual minorities (gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered), non U.S. citizens, and disabled individuals. Additional analyses by other students groups were also conducted (religious orientation and first generation status).

The results from the survey are thematically organized based on the 13 underlying campus climate dimensions contained within the survey. These dimensions explained unique aspects of the campus climate experienced by graduate students at UNC: (1) Perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity, (2) Attitudes towards diversity, (3) Experiences with unfair treatment or harassment due to personal characteristics, (4) Experiences with insensitive remarks or materials based on personal characteristics, (5) Perceptions of fair treatment by specific university community members, (6) Perceptions of a welcoming campus for diversity, (7) Faculty treatment, (8) Faculty mentoring, (9) Program level treatment, (10) Perceptions of cultural gains made at UNC, (11) Satisfaction with enrollment, (12) Feelings of belonging and comfort, and (13) Familiarity with diversity programs and services. These dimensions are presented and

defined in greater detail in Appendix A, Table 1 along with estimates of how reliably they were measured in this sample.

Overall Perceptions of UNC’s Campus Climate

- *Institutional Commitment.* The majority of graduate students responding to the survey showed positive support for UNC administrators and faculty in their efforts to promote tolerance and diversity on campus. More than 80% agreed that “top administrators are committed to increasing diversity” and that “faculty and administrators are committed to promoting respect and understanding of group differences.” Slightly less, however, believed that “UNC’s climate fosters diversity” (74%) or is “a good place to gain multicultural understanding” (64%).
- *Attitudes towards Diversity.* Overall, respondents reported very positive, supportive attitudes about the benefits of diversity and prejudice reduction at UNC. More than 90% agreed that “diversity is good for UNC and should be actively promoted by faculty, staff, and students” and that “when relevant, faculty should provide opportunities to discuss multicultural perspectives in class.” For some students (19%), however, “UNC is placing too much emphasis on diversity,” and over a third (36%) believe that “affirmative action leads to the admission of underqualified students.”
- *UNC’s Campus Climate for Diversity.* Items on this scale asked respondents to rate aspects of UNC’s climate for diversity using a 4 point scale ranging from “poor” to “excellent.” Results revealed a range of opinions. Most positively perceived were items related to university commitment to the diverse students, respect by faculty for minority students, and respect by students for minority faculty. Less positively perceived were items related to tolerance of faculty to different ideologies or perspectives, integration of diverse perspectives in the classrooms, interaction among students of different racial/ethnic groups outside the classroom, and racial/ethnic integration.¹

Table 3
Percent Rating for Various Aspects of UNC’s Campus Climate for Diversity as “Good” or “Excellent”

	%
University commitment to success of women students	90.9
Respect by faculty for students of different race/ethnicity	87.8
Respect by students for faculty of different race/ethnicities	84.5
Sensitivity of faculty and staff to gender issues	82.4
Racial/ethnic relations in classroom	82.2
University commitment to success of students of different race/ethnic groups	81.2
Friendship between students of different race/ethnicities	80.7
Tolerance of faculty to different ideologies or perspectives	75.2
Integration diverse perspectives classroom	73.9
Interaction among students of different racial/ethnic groups outside classroom	66.2
Racial/ethnic integration	55.8

¹ Note: For many of these items there was a sizeable proportion of graduate students who indicated that they had “no opinion” on these issues. (Missing data due to “no opinion” on these items ranged from a low of 11% to a high of 25%; percentages do not include “no opinion”).

- *Unfair Treatment/Harassment due to Personal Characteristics.* Items on this scale asked students to indicate the frequency with which they experienced unfair treatment or harassment due to various personal characteristics. To analyze these results, the four response options were collapsed into two categories; “never or rarely” to indicate little or no frequency of occurrence and “sometimes or often” to indicate greater frequency. Less than 5% of respondents reported experiencing unfair treatment and harassment “sometimes” or “often” due to the following personal characteristics: sexual orientation (4.7%), accent/dialect (4.4%), national origin (4.7%) and disability (3.3%). Slightly more respondents reported unfair treatment and/or harassment due to: race/ethnicity (8.3%), gender (11.9%), religion (13.5%), age (9.9%), and socioeconomic status (5.5%).

In an effort to parse out who (e.g., male or female, minority or non-minority) experienced the unfair treatment and harassment most frequently, comparative analyses were done by student groups (minority & non-minority, male & female, heterosexual & non-heterosexual, disabled & non-disabled, Christian religious orientation & Non-Christian, and U.S. Citizen & Non U.S.-Citizen. First generation status was used as a proxy for socioeconomic background and comparisons were also done by first generation & not-first generation. Statistical tests used to detect differences in proportions were used. Only significant differences are reported here ($\alpha = .01$).

- *Race/ethnicity.* The results suggest that a greater number of minority students (19%) reported frequently experiencing unfair treatment/harassment due to their race/ethnicity compared to (4.2%) of non-ethnic minority students ($X^2 = 16.51, p < .01$).
- *Sexual orientation.* Although the number of students identifying with a sexual minority group (e.g., gay, lesbian, bi-sexual) was small, 38% reported frequently experiencing unfair treatment/harassment due to their sexual orientation compared to 2.7% for heterosexuals ($X^2 = 40.51, p < .01$).
- *Citizenship.* International students have unique experiences of unfair treatment and harassment. Non-U.S. citizens reported significantly more negative experiences based on three personal characteristics: race/ethnicity ($X^2 = 42.64, p < .01$), accent/dialect ($X^2 = 49.82, p < .01$), as well as national origin ($X^2 = 34.40, p < .01$) compared to U.S. Citizens.
- *Insensitive Remarks and Materials.* Not surprisingly, more respondents have read, heard, or seen insensitive remarks or materials on campus about members of diverse groups than have reported experiencing unfair treatment or harassment. Students reported “sometimes” or “often” witnessing insensitivity towards the following groups: non-heterosexuals (21%), racial and ethnic minorities (17%), individuals from different national origins (14%), women (13%), and individuals with disabilities (10%).
- *Fair Treatment by University Community Members.* On this scale, students rated how fairly they have been treated by various UNC and Greeley community members.

Overwhelmingly, respondents reported fair treatment from UNC students, staff, and faculty. Less positively viewed were members of the Greeley community. Several open ended comments retold incidents of how the larger Greeley community was perceived as less welcoming.

- *Perceptions of a Welcoming Campus for Diversity.* Overall, the majority of the students responding to the survey believe UNC’s climate for members of various diverse groups is welcoming. However, a small minority of students rated the climate as hostile for the following groups: gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals (14%), people from different religious backgrounds (12%), racial and ethnic minorities (10%), people with disabilities (8%), and women (3%).
- *Faculty Treatment and Faculty Mentoring.* Students overwhelmingly had high opinions about faculty treatment, respect, and mentoring. Very few (less than 10%) reported problems with faculty ignoring their questions or comments in class, being disrespectful, or unsupportive of academic pursuits. Slightly more respondents (17%), however, held negative views regarding faculty sensitivity to the needs of all students. With regards to mentoring, this survey indicates that faculty at UNC are perceived by students as doing an excellent job providing mentoring: 89% report having a mentor, 88% have someone they can talk to if needed, 80% believe that they receive adequate guidance from their faculty, and 80% believe their advisor is sensitive to their needs and concerns.
- *Program Level Treatment.* This scale contained items that address the allocation of graduate student opportunities and resources, as well as the perceived effort made by programs to recruit diverse students. A sizeable proportion of graduate students agreed that they received equal opportunity to be involved in teaching (67%) and research (77%) activities.² Thirty-five percent to twenty-seven percent indicated that teaching and research opportunities were “not applicable.”³ Nearly 70% believe their program awards financial assistance fairly, and 76% believe a serious effort is made to recruit diverse students.⁴
- *Cultural Gains Made at UNC.* A slight majority of students surveyed reported that UNC has had a “moderate” to “major impact” on their acquisition of cultural pluralism skills. The greatest impact was made on “getting along with people whose attitudes and opinions are different from mine” (66% reported a moderate to major impact), “talking and interacting comfortably with people who are different from me” (66%), and “taking the perspective of the other” (65%). Less impact was reported for “understanding and appreciating cultural and ethnic differences between people” (62%), “relating to people from various cultures, race, and backgrounds” (58%), and “gaining a global or diverse cultural perspective” (57%). For most of these skills, close to 20% of graduate students indicated that these skills were “not applicable.”

² Reported percentages do not include missing data.

³ The majority of those indicating that research and teaching were “not applicable” were Master’s degree students.

⁴ (Note: for both financial assistance and diversity recruitment, 25% and 16% of students, respectively, indicated that these were “not applicable” to their programs. Minorities were more likely to disagree that a serious effort is made to recruit diverse students.)

- *Satisfaction with Enrollment.* Overall, respondents hold positive views about finishing their degree at UNC (96%), continuing their education at UNC (89%), recommending UNC to others (86%), and believing that UNC was the right choice for them (86%). These proportions are high, which indicates that respondents were, overall, satisfied with their enrollment at UNC.
- *Belonging and Comfort.* Most respondents (approximately 90%) reported feeling comfortable on campus and that they belong in their programs. Slightly less agree that they “have a social network of friends or supportive others on campus” (83%). A small proportion indicated that they “have to change personal characteristics in order to fit in at UNC” (18%).
- *Familiarity with Services.* Graduate students reported most familiarity with services and programs associated with the Disability Student Services (39%), Women’s Resource Center (34%), and the Center for International Education (27%). Less familiarity was observed for the services and programs associated with the cultural centers: Cesar Chavez Cultural Center (28%), Marcus Garvey (22%), APASS (22%), and Native American Student Services (19%). Not surprisingly, more minority students were aware of the cultural centers’ services than non-minority students.⁵

Perceptions of UNC’s Campus Climate by Groups

In an effort to determine if specific groups of students feel differently about UNC’s climate, scale scores for 12 of the 13 climate dimensions were calculated and statistical comparisons between marginalized/majority groups were made. The groups tested were those based on protected classes such as minority & non-minority⁶, male & female, heterosexual & non-heterosexual, and disabled & non-disabled, as well as categories of individuals who have more recently reported difficulty or hostility on college campuses, such as first generation & non-first generation students, U.S. citizens & non U.S. citizens, and Christian & non-Christian students. Only those groups and scales where statistically significant differences were observed are reported ($\alpha = .01$). Prior to investigating significance, statistical assumption violations were checked, and where violations were found, appropriate non-parametric tests were used.

Attitudes towards Diversity

The items on this scale broadly assessed supportive attitudes towards diversity on campus, and administrator and faculty commitment to promoting diversity.

- Tests by gender revealed statistically significant differences between attitudes for males and females ($p = .006$), where females, on average, held more positive views towards diversity than males. (See Figure 1).

⁵ This difference was statistically significant for two of the four centers; Cesar Chavez Cultural Center and Marcus Garvey Cultural Center.

⁶ “Minority” consisted of students self-identifying as Asian American, African American, Hispanic, Native American or some combination of these identities.

- Tests by minority status found differences between ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority graduate students, where minorities held more positive attitudes towards diversity. (See Figure 2).

Figure 1

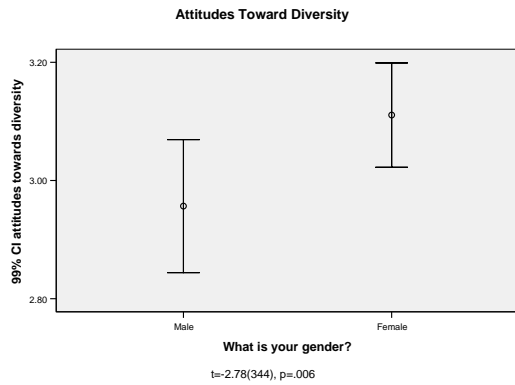
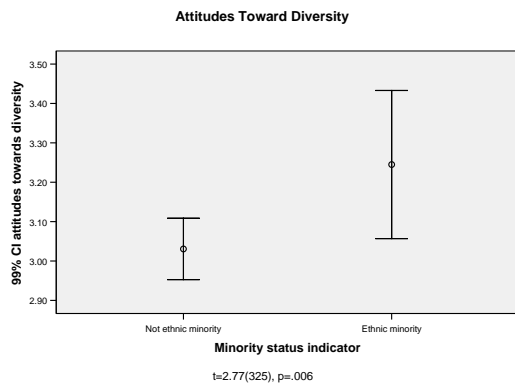


Figure 2



UNC's Climate for Diversity

This scale contained a variety of items that addressed issues of broad importance for diversity on UNC's campus, such as integration, interaction, and friendships among racial/ethnic groups, university commitment to the success of females and students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and a few questions about tolerance, integration, and relations in the classroom.

- Tests by minority status found significant differences between minority and non-minority students' perceptions, where minority students, on average, rated various aspects of the climate for diversity at UNC less positively than non-minority students. (Figures 3 & 4). The following selected items in Figure 4 emphasize some of these differences:

Figure 3

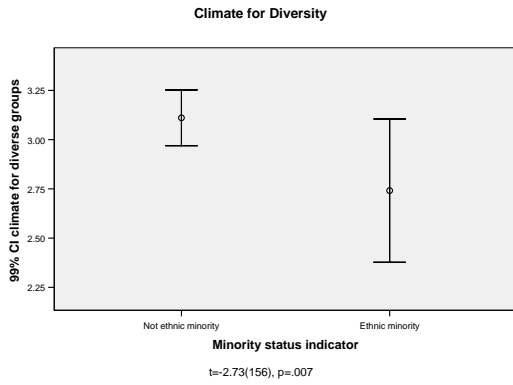
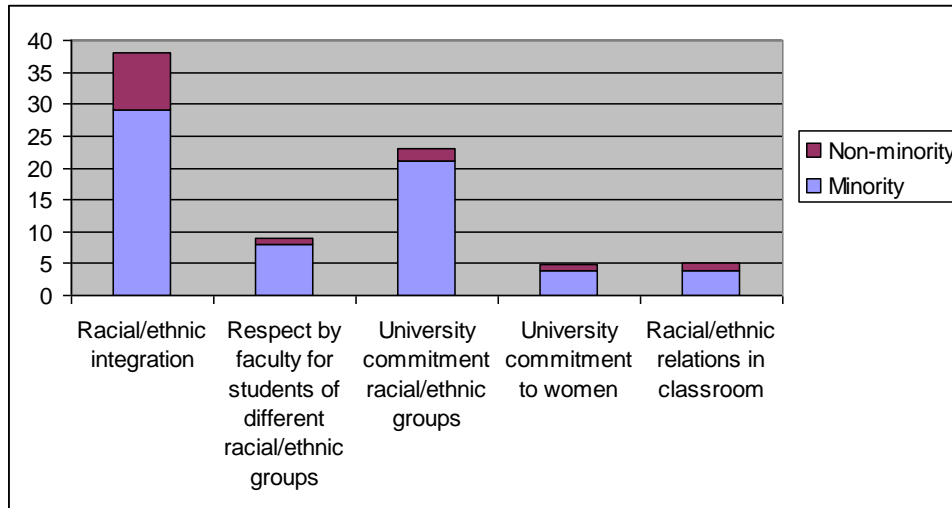


Figure 4

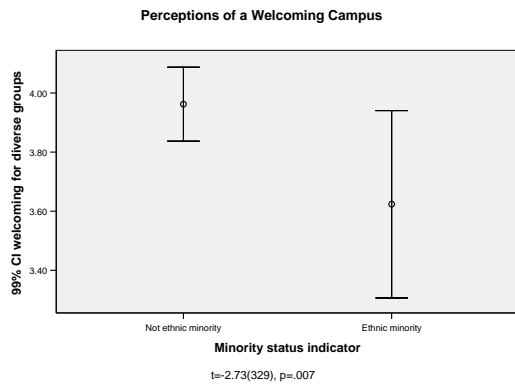
Proportion giving a rating of “poor” on selected items from UNC’s Campus Climate for Diversity scale by minority status



Perception of a Welcoming Campus for Diversity

- Tests revealed differences by minority group with minority students rating the climate for all diverse student groups as less welcoming. In particular, ethnic minority students rated the climate less welcoming for persons with disabilities, women students, racial/ethnic minorities, GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered) students, and students with different religious backgrounds (Figure 6).

Figure 6



Unfair Treatment and Harassment Based on Personal Characteristics

- Tests revealed differences in perceptions of unfair treatment and harassment by minority group status and national origin, with minorities and non-U.S. citizens reporting more unfair treatment and harassment based on several personal characteristics. (See Figures 7 & 8).

Figure 7

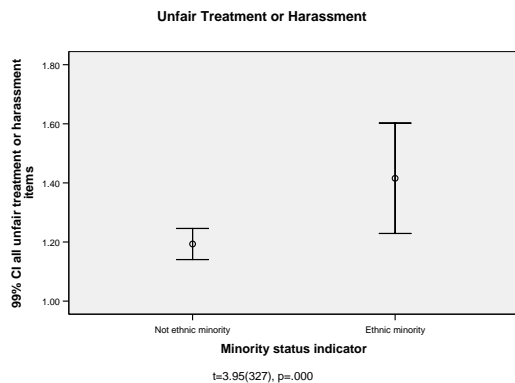
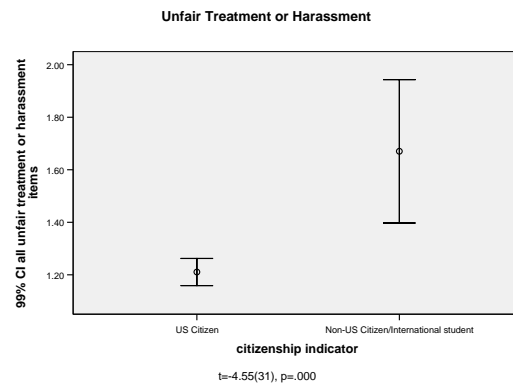


Figure 8



DISCUSSION

While caution is advised in generalizing the results of this survey to the entire population of enrolled graduate students at UNC, three themes of relevance to the upcoming diversity initiative emerged from the findings. This survey provided information about how a volunteer sample of UNC's graduate student population perceived the climate for diversity, how frequently these students experienced or witnessed unfair treatment, harassment, and/or insensitivity, as well as how these perceptions and experiences relate to diversity-learning outcomes, satisfaction with enrollment at UNC, and feelings of belonging and comfort. The results of this survey should be cross-validated with other information gathered from institutional data sources, and the issues raised should be further explored through focus groups and open forums.

Perceptions of the campus climate for diversity

Perceptions of the campus climate assess student experiences with faculty, staff, and students on campus, opinions about diversity policies and programs (affirmative action, in-class discussions), and perceived levels of tolerance for diverse perspectives and people, commitment to diversity, and integration on campus. Overall, across all scales and items that addressed larger attitudes and opinions of the climate, respondents generally agreed that UNC's people, i.e., administrators, faculty, and other students, are committed to diversity, tolerant, open to prejudice reduction, and fair in their treatment of all persons. For example, respondents had extremely positive things to say about faculty treatment and mentoring: 89% of respondents reported that they have a mentor, or someone they can go to for advice and guidance. UNC's graduate students are reporting higher rates of mentorship than doctoral students surveyed nationally, who reported having a mentor only 69% of the time (Nettles & Millet, 2006).

UNC as an institution, however, with visible policies, programs, and services addressing diversity education, was less positively perceived by respondents. Overall, the total number of graduate students reporting diversity-related learning outcomes was low, with many students reporting these skills as "not applicable." While it is not clear if these students felt that they already had these skills, and therefore UNC would have had little to no impact on their development, or, that these skills were not applicable to their chosen discipline or field, either way, given the global reach of graduate education, this finding deserves further exploration among graduate students and faculty. Of particular importance to the diversity initiative, is there a need for more diversity learning opportunities in UNC's graduate programs, many of which are charged with preparing educational leaders in their respective fields? Another explanation for this finding could be that students felt that multicultural skills such as these were not applicable to them (and their programs) due to the lack of racial/ethnic diversity on campus. In particular, students may have perceived little or no opportunity to learn skills, such as how to interact with people from various cultural backgrounds and perspectives, and appreciate cultural differences because many of UNC's programs lack racial/ethnic diversity. At the conclusion of the survey, some students openly offered that the very few numbers of ethnic minorities in UNC graduate programs makes the campus inherently unwelcoming for other students (and faculty) from these backgrounds.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) identify two issues of importance for campus administrators to consider when planning a diversity initiative: "(a) How diverse does the campus look in its representation of different cultural groups? and (b) to what extent do campus operations demonstrate that racial and ethnic diversity is an essential value? (p.11)." The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in graduate enrollments at UNC poses a great challenge to the success of any diversity-related education initiatives at the graduate level, and while other types of diversity are important, research shows that more diversity learning occurs on campuses with visible opportunities for students from diverse cultural backgrounds to interact with one another (Chang, 1999). Increased efforts to systematically enroll and retain more diverse graduate

students should also be highly visible, with intentions as to why diversity is valued made clear in program brochures and information, and recruitment and retention efforts should be vigorously pursued and systematically monitored. Clearly, a concentrated and visible focus on increasing racial and ethnic diversity across all graduate programs is critical to the success of other diversity efforts on campus, as well as within the graduate school (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Although inevitably some resources will need to be devoted to achieving greater diversity in UNC's graduate programs, this survey suggests that increasing the awareness of existing diversity-related programs and services would be a good place to start. Very few graduate students responding to this survey reported "some to a lot" of familiarity with the following programs: Cesar Chavez Cultural Center (28% reported they were "somewhat to very familiar" with the program), Marcus Garvey (22%), APASS (22%), and Native American Student Services (19%). If these programs are intended to serve all students, this lack of awareness of services in the graduate student population is an area where diversity efforts can be immediately affected. Graduate programs across the country are charged with expanding the cultural and global perspectives of their students as an essential part of graduate preparation and necessary for increasing American competitiveness and national security (Council of Graduate Schools [CGS], 2007). Every graduate program at UNC is directly affected by diversity issues, either because of the under-enrollment of certain ethnic minority members within the program (e.g., science, technology, and mathematics fields), and/or by the need for expanded diversity-related learning opportunities (e.g., educational psychology, educational leadership, or nursing). It is recommended that graduate programs explore the possibility of graduate education partnerships with the cultural centers to provide extra-curricular or co-curricular learning opportunities for students. Administrators may also want to find ways to expand the opportunities for graduate students from different backgrounds to learn from each other, both within and across disciplines. At the very least, graduate education faculty and administrators could begin the discussion as to how UNC will begin expanding diversity learning within graduate programs.

Experiences with harassment, unfair treatment, and insensitivity due to personal characteristics

The reported levels of harassment, unfair treatment, and insensitivity on campus were fortunately not widespread. This finding, however, is not surprising, given the relatively homogeneous sample (consisting of responses of overwhelmingly Caucasian, females). More students reported witnessing insensitivity towards members of diverse backgrounds than reported experiencing unfair treatment or harassment because of various personal characteristics. Overall, racial/ethnic minorities, sexual minorities (gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.) and non U.S. citizens more frequently reported these types of negative behaviors than other groups. Specific analyses by protected classes revealed that across all scales, minority students reported a disproportionate amount of unfair treatment, harassment, and insensitivity compared to non-minority students. Similar patterns, although not as ubiquitous, were observed for members of other marginalized student groups such as sexual minorities, disabled students, and non US citizens. Many of

these perceptual differences were statistically significant, which provides evidence that they are not simply due to random fluctuation, but rather, are the result of an unfavorable climate for these groups.

These results are consistent with over 30 years of research on campus climate, which has revealed differences in perceptions by members of historically excluded/marginalized groups on predominantly White campuses (Sedlacek, 1999). Members of certain ethnic minority and other marginalized groups report less positive perceptions of the campus climate for diversity (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Evans, 2002; Fischer & Good, 1994; Sedlacek, 1999; Whitt, Edison, Terenzini, & Pascarella, 1999). These negative perceptions, in turn, have been shown to be associated with diminished feelings of belonging, adjustment, and a desire to remain enrolled (Ellis, 2001; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Pewewardy & Frey, 2002). These results are important for UNC administrators, because a critical aspect of building a more inclusive welcoming campus will be the creation of a conflict resolution/complaint process for persons who feel they are being mistreated or harassed due personal characteristics, such as racial/ethnic heritage, religious orientation, and sexual orientation. Such a publicized, formalized process would send students, faculty, and staff a clear message that such behavior is not tolerated and will be appropriately handled (Davis, 2002). In addition, separating out reported incidences of discrimination and hate-speech from other student offenses would allow for continued monitoring and evaluation of their occurrence over time. Trend analyses could be done to see how the prevalence and nature of these events changes over time. Such a process would provide a proactive and transparent response to the occasional yet highly publicized incidences that occur on campus.

Feelings of belonging and comfort and satisfaction with enrollment at UNC

Higher education policy makers at the national, state, and local institutional levels have the challenge of a persistent achievement gap in the enrollment and degree completion rates of students from certain ethnic minority groups (African American, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino). The achievement gap is especially wide for some ethnic minorities and genders in some graduate programs (CGS, 2005). While oftentimes institutions focus efforts on diversifying the undergraduate student body, the diversity imperative plays a special role in graduate education, because a quality graduate degree is required for entry into the professoriate, where diversity is also desired but not realized (Thurgood, Golladay, & Hill, 2006). Diminished feelings of belonging and comfort and perceptions of a hostile climate have been shown to be related to lower doctoral program completion rates for women in some graduate fields, and for certain ethnic minority groups (Ellis, 2001; Lewis, , 2004).

The results from this survey suggest that an overwhelming majority of students feel comfortable at UNC and that they belong here, and most are satisfied with their enrollment and most plan to continue until their degree is completed. Some students openly stated that they plan to remain at UNC in spite of perceptions of a hostile climate because the career ramifications of leaving are too high a cost. The pressure to remain

enrolled even when hostility is perceived may be unique to graduate students. Even though those students may not depart, negative perceptions of the campus climate may exert an effect on alumni relations and future program enrollments. Self-report information on satisfaction and intent to remain enrolled should be cross-validated with alumni survey information, as well as compared with trend data on the enrollment and graduation of students from diverse backgrounds. Bauman et al. (2005) emphasized this point, and added that the monitoring of equitable educational outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds is a critical component to any diversity initiative:

“...a campus with a diversity agenda that does not incorporate equity into its educational outcomes as a measurable goal cannot truly be inclusive. Moreover, an institution that does not produce equitable educational outcomes and has not made equity a priority cannot truly be educationally excellent” (p.10).

Sophisticated analyses of existing data sources providing comparative information on program and college level retention and graduation rates by ethnic minority status, gender, and other groups is recommended to supplement these results and identify programs that have had success with retaining and graduating diverse student groups over time.

Limitations/conclusions

There are limitations to these results, including those which relate to the use of surveys. There are two types of problems that limit the accuracy of the statistics generated from surveys; these are sampling and nonsampling errors. Sampling errors occur when only a portion of the population of interest provides information. The response rate for this survey was 25%, which means that of the 1,430 graduate students sent the email notice, only 367 responded. Thus the majority of UNC’s enrolled graduate students did not weigh in on these issues. Low response rates are a problem only if the non-respondents perceive the climate differently than those who responded. Since this survey was anonymous, there is no way to follow-up with non-respondents and ask them why they chose not to participate or whether they even received the initial notice. This limits the generalizability of the results from this sample to the population of all graduate students at UNC. Inspection of the population of graduate students in comparison to the sample obtained from the survey illustrates that overall the proportions of ethnic minorities and women, as well as proportions of specific degree types and full time enrollees are fairly similar providing some evidence of the representativeness of the sample on these variables only.

For climate surveys such as this one however, conclusions that are generalizable and representative of the overall population are not the only important results to consider. For example, this survey reveals that even though negative experiences on campus were not frequently reported, the findings that certain groups of students on campus (e.g., ethnic minorities, non-U.S. citizens, and non-heterosexuals) reported more frequent experiences with harassment, unfair treatment, and insensitivity poses a challenge to creating an inclusive and welcoming campus. Questions regarding program level

treatment and equitable access to research and teaching opportunities revealed that (while the majority of students agreed that these resources were distributed equitably), between 20% to 30% of students did not agree. Thus, even though the majority of respondents did not report inequities, the survey provides evidence that these kinds of negative incidences are perceived by some graduate students. With regards to the use of statistical tests of group differences, inflated Type I error rates occur when multiple tests are done on one sample. No adjustment for inflated error rates were done for these results. Because the intent of this survey was to scan the environment for possible threats to planned diversity initiatives as well as to provide a voice to underrepresented and marginalized groups on campus, adjustment procedures would have resulted in a very small significance level which would have diminished the ability to detect possible problems. Nonetheless, a risk of not adjusting is that some significant results reported here could be due to chance. Cross validation of formally reported incidences of this nature could corroborate these findings and give administrators an idea of how prevalent these problems are on UNC's campus.

Measurement error and missing data are examples of nonsampling errors occurring in surveys. Reliability estimates of measurement error for the scales used in this survey provide evidence that most were measured without a lot of error. Individual items, however, are prone to more error and interpretive problems. In particular, some items on this survey could have been perceived as ambiguous and open to a variety of interpretations. Also some of the questions on this survey were sensitive, and students may have provided a socially desirable response instead of an honest one. These are limitations that are present in all attitude and opinion surveys, nonetheless, they place limits on our understanding of the campus climate at UNC. For these reasons, Morrow, Burris-Kitchen, and Der-Karabetian (2001) strongly recommend following up large scale climate surveys, such as this one, with focus groups to obtain greater detail on certain policy issues. Jones, Castellanos, and Cole (2002) provide an example of a focus group process to examine ethnic minority students' experiences on a predominantly White campus. In 2003, UNC students initiated a campus climate survey with the support of the Provost's Office, and the results from that survey were followed by a more in-depth investigation using focus group methodologies (Posselt & Scheffel, 2004). Equivocal results should be followed up in this manner.

With regards to missing data, fortunately, most respondents answered all of the questions using the response options available (that is, there was little undefined missing data), however, for many items across several scales, respondents chose "not applicable" to indicate their opinion or perception of a given item. Defined missing data of this type poses an interpretive problem. Did respondents choose "not applicable" because they felt the item didn't apply to them, to their program, or to UNC? On the cultural gains scale, for example, a sizeable minority of students (between 33% and 50%) reported that UNC has had a little to no impact on their acquisition of cultural pluralism skills, and close to 20% indicated that these were not relevant. This may be something future surveys and/or focus groups or open forums can explore more deeply, perhaps as part of the planned initiative. One explanation for these findings offered previously is that UNC's graduate programs' lack of racial/ethnic diversity results in limited opportunity for graduate

students to interact across different racial and ethnic groups. Students in the sample come from relatively homogeneous backgrounds.

Conclusions

Even given these limitations, this survey provides information on the campus climate for diversity that would not otherwise be available to assist with the development and implementation of the President's diversity initiative. In particular, these results reveal several areas of strength at UNC, such as fair treatment by university staff and faculty, faculty mentoring, and low levels, overall, of harassment, discrimination, and insensitivity. The survey also highlights areas in need of attention, if the diversity initiative is to be successful for graduate students. In particular, the differential experiences of harassment, unfair treatment, and insensitivity perceived by ethnic minority, non-heterosexuals, and non-U.S. citizens poses an area of challenge and opportunity.

APPENDIX A

Table 1
Graduate student campus climate dimensions

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>á</i>
Faculty Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * My current advisor is sensitive to my needs and concerns. * I have at least one faculty mentor in my program I can rely on for professional/academic advice. * When I have a concern or problem, I feel that there is a faculty member or administrator in my program whom I can talk to. * I feel that I have received adequate guidance from faculty in my program. * I feel that there are faculty or administrator role models for me at UNC. 	.845
Faculty Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * In my classes at UNC, I feel that my professors ignore my comments and questions. * Faculty members in my program treat me with respect. * Faculty members in my program are supportive of my academic pursuits. * Faculty members in my program are sensitive to the needs of all students. * I feel that I have the opportunity to succeed at UNC. 	.814
Program Level Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A serious effort is made my program to award financial assistance fairly. * I feel that I have received the same opportunity to teach classes as other graduate students in my program. * I feel that I have received the same opportunity to work on research projects as other graduate students in my program. * A serious effort is made by my program to recruit a diverse group of graduate students. 	.807
Institutional Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * UNC has a climate which fosters diversity. * UNC is a good place to gain understanding about multicultural issues and perspectives. * Top university administrators are genuinely committed to increasing diversity at UNC. * Faculty and administrators at UNC seem to be committed to promoting respect for and understanding of group differences. 	.850
Attitudes Towards Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Diversity is good for UNC and should be actively promoted by faculty, staff, and students. * UNC is placing too much emphasis on diversity. * Affirmative action leads to the admission of underqualified students. * When relevant, faculty should provide opportunities to discuss multicultural perspectives in class. 	.712
Climate for Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Racial/ethnic integration on campus. * Respect by faculty members for students of different racial and ethnic groups. * University commitment to the success of students of different racial and ethnic groups. * Respect by students for faculty of different racial and ethnic groups. * University commitment to the success of women students. * Friendship between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. * Racial and ethnic relations in the classroom. * Interaction among students of different racial and ethnic groups outside of the classroom. 	.940

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tolerance of faculty to different ideologies or perspectives. * Sensitivity of faculty and staff to gender issues. * Integration of diverse group perspectives into classroom learning. 	
Welcoming for Specific Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * People with disabilities * Women * Racial/ethnic minorities. * Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual & transgendered students. * People with different religious beliefs & backgrounds. 	.874
Unfair Treatment or Harassment Based on Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Race/ethnicity * Gender * Sexual orientation * Religion * Age * Accent/dialect * National origin * Disability * Socioeconomic/income level 	.834
Insensitive Remarks or Materials Based on Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Race/ethnic minorities * Women * Individuals with disabilities * Non-heterosexuals * Individuals with different national origins * Religious groups 	.898
Fair Treatment by University Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Professors/Instructors * Top/senior administrators * Other graduate students * Members of the Greeley community * Office and other departmental staff 	.828
Cultural Gains Made at UNC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Relate to people from various cultures, races, backgrounds, etc. * Understand and appreciate cultural and ethnic differences between people. * Understand the interaction of human beings and the environment. * Get along with people whose attitudes and opinions are different from mine. * Gain a global or diverse cultural perspective of issues relevant to my field of interest. * Take the perspective of another person. * Talk and interact comfortably with people who are different from me. 	.943
Satisfaction With Enrollment at UNC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I plan to continue my education at UNC. * I am certain the UNC was the right choice for me. * I would recommend UNC to someone who asked my opinion. * It is important for me to finish my education at UNC. 	.833

Comfort & Belonging at UNC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I feel comfortable in my program at UNC. * UNC's campus is a welcoming place. * I don't fit in well with other students in my program. * I have a social network of friends and/or supportive faculty/staff persons on campus. * I often feel that I have to change some of my personal characteristics in order to fit in. 	.755
Familiarity with Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Women's Resource Center * Cesar Chaves Cultural Center * Marcus Garvey Cultural Center * Asian American/Pacific American Student Services * Native American Student Services * Center for Human Enrichment * McNair Scholars Program * Center for International Education * Disability Access Center 	NC

NC = internal consistency reliability not computed

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