



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

University of
Northern Colorado

Assessment of
Campus Climate
Executive Summary

March 2017



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Executive Summary

Introduction

University of Northern Colorado (UNC) affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community. 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.

University of Northern Colorado is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in UNC's vision statement, “The University of Northern Colorado strives to be a leading student-centered university that promotes effective teaching, lifelong learning, the advancement of knowledge, research, and a commitment to service.”¹ In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at UNC recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for UNC students, faculty, and staff.

To that end, members of UNC formed the Climate Working Group (CWG) in September 2015. The Climate Working Group was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, UNC contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, “University of Northern Colorado Assessment of Campus Climate.” Data gathered via reviews of relevant UNC literature, focus groups, and a campus-wide survey centered on the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The CWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 18 focus groups comprised of 123 participants (61 students and 62 faculty or staff). In the second phase, the CWG and R&A used data from the focus groups to co-construct questions for the campus-wide survey. The final survey instrument was completed on July 2, 2016. UNC's

¹<http://www.unco.edu/pres/mission.html>

survey contained 111 items (22 qualitative and 89 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from September 20, 2016 to October 26, 2016. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

The conceptual model used as the foundation for UNC'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. The CWG implemented participatory and community-based processes to generate survey questions as a means to capture the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. In this way, UNC'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. The full report provides the context necessary to fully understand the findings in the Executive Summary.

University of Northern Colorado Participants

UNC community members completed 2,574 surveys for an overall response rate of 18%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.² Response rates by constituent group varied: 45% ($n = 1,159$) of the sample were Undergraduate Student respondents, 24% ($n = 626$) were Graduate Student respondents, 20% ($n = 507$) were Staff respondents, 8% ($n = 192$) were Faculty Tenure-Track respondents, 2% ($n = 47$) were Faculty Non-Tenure-Track Academic Appointment respondents, 1% ($n = 37$) were Adjunct respondents, and < 1% ($n = 6$) were Post-Doc/Research Associate respondents. The percentages

²Twenty-seven (27) surveys were removed because at least 50% of the survey was not completed, and 10 duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ($n = 40$). 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).

offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (*n*) for each demographic characteristic.³ Response rates are offered in Table 3 of the narrative.

Table 1. University of Northern Colorado Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	1,159	45.0
	Graduate Student	626	24.3
	Post-Doc/Research Associate	6	0.2
	Faculty Tenure-Track	192	7.5
	Non-Tenure-Track Academic Appointment	47	1.8
	Adjunct	37	1.4
	Staff	507	19.7
Gender identity	Woman	1,806	70.2
	Man	704	27.4
	Transspectrum	51	2.0
	Other/Missing/Not Reported	13	0.5
Racial/Ethnic identity	American Indian/Alaskan Native	11	0.4
	Asian/Asian American	76	3.0
	Black/African American	73	2.8
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	228	8.9
	Middle Eastern/Southwest Asian	19	0.7
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	< 5	---
	White/European American	1,799	69.9
	Multiracial	300	11.7
Other/Missing/Not reported	65	2.5	
Sexual identity	Heterosexual	2,112	82.1
	LGBT	333	12.9
	Asexual/Other/Unknown	129	5.0
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	2,279	88.5
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	206	8.0
	Multiple Citizenships	78	3.0
	Missing/Unknown	11	0.4

¹Response rates are provided only for those demographics where population data was provided by UNC.

³The total *n* for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1 (cont.)

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Military service	No Military Service	2,476	96.2
	Military Service	84	3.3
	Missing/Unknown	14	0.5
Generation status	First-Generation	751	29.2
	Not-First-Generation	1,038	40.3
	Missing/Not Asked	785	30.5
Income status	Low-Income	478	18.6
	Not-Low-Income	1,271	49.4
	Missing/Not Asked	825	32.1
First-generation and income status	Not-First-Generation and Low-Income or Unknown	1,531	59.5
	First-Generation and Low-Income	260	10.1
	Missing/Not Asked	783	30.4
Disability status	Single Disability	259	10.1
	No Disability	2,176	84.5
	Multiple Disabilities	119	4.6
	Missing/Unknown	20	0.8
Faith-based affiliation	Christian Affiliation	1,275	49.5
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	138	5.4
	No Affiliation	983	38.2
	Multiple Affiliation	110	4.3
	Missing/Unknown	68	2.6

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 University of Northern Colorado

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.”⁴ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 74% ($n = 1,909$) of the survey respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at UNC.
- 74% ($n = 519$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 83% ($n = 1,712$) of Student and Faculty respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- 82% ($n = 156$) of Faculty Tenure-Track respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that teaching was valued by UNC.
- 80% ($n = 66$) of Faculty Non-Tenure-Track respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that teaching was valued by UNC.
- 59% ($n = 161$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were positive about career opportunities at UNC.
- 70% ($n = 191$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt that they had job security.
- 62% ($n = 168$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they would recommend UNC as a good place to work.
- 63% ($n = 169$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that UNC provided them with resources to pursue professional development (e.g., conferences, materials, research and course design, traveling).

⁴Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

3. Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work

- 71% ($n = 356$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that UNC provided resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 74% ($n = 372$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were valued by their supervisor/manager.
- 81% ($n = 406$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their supervisor was supportive of taking leave.
- 71% ($n = 356$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that UNC provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 70% ($n = 350$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had job security.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁵ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁶ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

All Student respondents

- 76% ($n = 1,348$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by UNC faculty.
- 83% ($n = 1,486$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were performing up to their full academic potential.
- 80% ($n = 1,417$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were satisfied with their academic experiences at UNC.
- 85% ($n = 1,509$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their academic experience has had a positive influence on their intellectual growth and interest in ideas.

⁵Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁶Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

- 79% ($n = 1,411$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their interest in ideas and intellectual matters had increased since coming to UNC.
- 92% ($n = 1,630$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they intend to graduate from UNC.

Graduate Student respondents

- 94% ($n = 585$) of Graduate Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that department staff members responded to emails, calls, or voice mails in a prompt manner.
- 92% ($n = 566$) of Graduate Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that department faculty members responded to emails, calls or voicemails in a proper manner.
- 89% ($n = 548$) of Graduate Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt comfortable sharing their professional goals with their advisor.
- 79% ($n = 490$) of Graduate Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they were satisfied with the quality of advising they have received from their department.
- 76% ($n = 476$) of Graduate Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their advisor provided clear expectations.

Student Respondents *Perceived Academic Success*

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 12 on the survey. Analyses using these scales revealed:

- A significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Undergraduate and Graduate Student respondents by gender identity and racial identity. A significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Graduate Student respondents by sexual identity, disability status, and income status on *Perceived Academic Success*.
- Transspectrum Graduate Student respondents had less *Perceived Academic Success* than did both Women and Men Graduate Student respondents.
- These findings suggest that Black/African American Undergraduate Student and Multiracial respondents had less *Perceived Academic Success* than did White Undergraduate Student respondents.
- Graduate Student Respondents with a Single Disability had less *Perceived Academic Success* than did Graduate Student Respondents with No Disability.

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.⁷ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.⁸ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 20% ($n = 515$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.⁹

⁷Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

⁸Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

⁹The 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).

- 26% ($n = 145$) noted that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity, 24% ($n = 121$) felt that it was based on their position (e.g., staff, faculty, student), 21% ($n = 106$) felt that it was based on their age, and 17% ($n = 88$) felt it was based on their ethnicity.
- Differences emerged based on gender identity, position status, age, and racial identity:
 - By gender identity, a higher percentage of Transgender respondents (39%, $n = 20$) and Women respondents (21%, $n = 375$) than Men respondents (16%, $n = 112$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.
 - Seventy percent ($n = 14$) of Transgender respondents, 25% ($n = 94$) of Women respondents, and 23% ($n = 26$) 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.
 - By position status, Faculty respondents (26%, $n = 74$) and Staff respondents (27%, $n = 139$) 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, 37% ($n = 52$) of Staff respondents, 30% ($n = 22$) of Faculty respondents, 27% ($n = 29$) of Graduate Student respondents, and 9% ($n = 18$) of Undergraduate Student respondents thought that the conduct was based on their position status.
 - By age, respondents aged 55 to 64 years (25%, $n = 45$) and respondents aged 45 to 54 years (28%, $n = 61$) were more likely to indicate that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive and/or hostile conduct than those respondents who were 19 years or younger (14%, $n = 70$). Of those respondents who noted that they had experienced this

conduct, no significant difference was found among respondents who thought that the conduct was based on their age.

- By racial identity, significant differences were noted. Black/African American respondents (41%, $n = 30$) were more likely than Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents (23%, $n = 53$), Multiracial respondents (19%, $n = 56$), and White respondents (19%, $n = 333$) to indicate 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 (53%, $n = 28$), Black/African American respondents (50%, $n = 15$), Asian/Asian American respondents (60%, $n = 9$), Multiracial respondents (21%, $n = 12$), and Respondents of Color (56%, $n = 5$) than White respondents (6%, $n = 16$) believed that the conduct was based on race/ethnicity.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at UNC. Two hundred thirty-three respondents contributed comments regarding these personal experiences. Two themes emerged from their narratives: 1) hostility and fear of retaliation and 2) inclusion concerns. The hostility that respondents reported was often expressed in tandem with a fear of retaliation by the perpetrator. The inclusion concerns involved concerns that they were being singled out because of their racial, sexual, or gender identities.

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).¹⁰

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

- By gender identity, Transspectrum respondents were more likely to feel “uncomfortable” with the overall climate at UNC compared with Men respondents and Women respondents. Men respondents were more comfortable than were Women respondents with the climate in their classes.
- By racial identity, Respondents of Color were more likely to be “very uncomfortable” with the overall climate at UNC than were White respondents. White Faculty and Staff respondents were more likely to be “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units than were Faculty and Staff Respondents of Color and Multiracial Faculty and Staff respondents.
- By sexual identity, Heterosexual respondents were more likely to be “very comfortable” than were LGBTQ respondents with the overall climate at UNC and the classroom climate.
- By disability status, Respondents with No Disability were more likely to be “very comfortable” than were Respondents with a Single Disability with the climate in their classes.
- By generation status, First-Generation Student respondents were more likely to be “very comfortable” with the overall climate and were more likely to be “uncomfortable” with the climate in their classes than were Not-First-Generation Student respondents.
- By generation/income status, First-Generation, Low-Income Student respondents were more likely to be “uncomfortable” with the overall climate and the climate in their classes than were Not-First-Generation, Not-Low-Income Student respondents.

¹⁰Harper & 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

- 52% ($n = 146$) of Faculty respondents and 55% ($n = 281$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving UNC in the past year.
 - 53% ($n = 226$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of financial reasons.
 - 38% ($n = 164$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving indicated that they did so because of limited opportunities for advancement.
 - A higher percentage of Faculty Tenure-Track respondents (59%, $n = 114$) than Faculty Non-Tenure-Track respondents (36%, $n = 32$) had seriously considered leaving.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 14% ($n = 36$) of Faculty respondents felt that UNC provided adequate resources to help manage work-life balance.
- 48% ($n = 90$) of Faculty Tenure-Track respondents felt that service contributions were valued by UNC.
- 33% ($n = 62$) of Faculty Tenure-Track respondents felt that their opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators.
- 34% ($n = 28$) of Faculty Non-Tenure-Track respondents felt that they had job security.

One hundred nineteen Staff respondents contributed comments regarding their employment-related experiences. Two themes emerged from these comments: 1) high workload and 2) need for child care. With regard to workload, Staff respondents frequently felt overwhelmed by their workload, often working more than 40 hours per week. Concerns about child care centered on the need to have adequate child care on campus.

Sixty-four Faculty respondents elaborated on their experiences regarding workplace climate. Two themes emerged from their comments: 1) discontentment with salary and 2) unhappy with benefits, including child care. Faculty respondents who elaborated on salary felt that faculty salaries were low and below that of other universities. Faculty respondents also felt that the lack of child care on campus had a negative effect and made their jobs more difficult.

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 highlighted that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the UNC survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- Two hundred thirty (9%) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual conduct while at UNC.
 - 2% ($n = 39$) of respondents experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting) while a member of the UNC community.
 - 2% ($n = 40$) of respondents experienced stalking (e.g., physical following, on social media, texting, phone calls) while a member of the UNC community.
 - 5% ($n = 116$) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment) while a member of the UNC community.
 - 1% ($n = 35$) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g., fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent) while a member of the UNC community.
- Undergraduate Student respondents, Women respondents, and Respondents with a Single or Multiple Disabilities more often reported unwanted sexual experiences than did their majority counterparts.

- UNC students, acquaintances/friends, 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.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual experiences. The primary rationale cited for not reporting unwanted sexual contact incidents was a lack of faith in the reporting process. The most common rationale provided for not reporting unwanted sexual interaction was uncertainty regarding what was considered a reportable incident. The most common rationale provided for not reporting stalking and relationship violence was a desire to manage the problem independently.

Conclusion

University of Northern Colorado climate findings¹¹ were 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 “very comfortable” or “comfortable.” A similar percentage (74%) of UNC respondents reported that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at UNC. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At UNC, a similar percentage of respondents (20%) 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.¹³

UNC's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses UNC's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at UNC, 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

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

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

¹³Guiffreda, 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

additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the UNC community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. UNC, 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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