Grand Rapids Community College

Campus Climate Project Executive Summary

October 2014
Executive Summary

Introduction
In accordance with the values of Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC), President Ender charged the Equity Affairs Office to examine the campus climate. This project will assist in addressing the GRCC values of Diversity, Respect, and Integrity as outlined in GRCC’s mission and values statements:  

- Diversity – We create an inclusive learning and working environment that recognizes the value and dignity of each person.
- Respect – We treat others with courtesy, consideration and civility.
- Integrity – We commit to GRCC values and take personal responsibility for our words and actions.

GRCC contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide “Grand Rapids Community College Climate Assessment for Learning, Living, and Working.” The purpose of the survey was to gather a wide variety of data related to institutional climate, inclusion, and work-life issues so that GRCC is better informed about the living and working environments for students, faculty, and staff. Based on the findings, GRCC will develop action plans and strategic initiatives to improve the overall campus climate.

Project Design and Campus Involvement
The GRCC Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) CSWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 17 focus groups comprising 73 participants (23 students, 50 faculty/staff). Data from the focus groups informed the CSWG and R&A in constructing the survey items. The GRCC survey contained 93 items, including several open-ended questions so that respondents could provide commentary. The survey was available from March 15, 2014, through April 12, 2014, via a secure online portal. Confidential paper surveys were available to those who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

1http://cms.grcc.edu/mission
GRCC Participants
GRCC community members completed 3,289 surveys for an overall response rate of 19%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses. Response rates by constituent group varied: 17% \((n = 2,771)\) for Students, 26% \((n = 204)\) for Faculty, and 48% \((n = 314)\) for Staff/Administrators. 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 the specific demographic characteristic.\(^2\)

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. **High levels of comfort with the climate at GRCC**
   Climate is defined as “the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential.”\(^3\) The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.
   - 84% \((n = 2,775)\) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at GRCC
   - 76% \((n = 393)\) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units
   - 88% \((n = 2,424)\) of Student respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes
   - 86% \((n = 174)\) of Faculty respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes

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\(^2\)The total \(n\) for each demographic characteristic will differ as a result of missing data.

\(^3\)Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264
2. Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents – Positive attitudes about work-life issues

Campus climate\(^4\) is constituted in part by perceptions of work, sense of balance between work and home life, and opportunities for personal and professional development throughout the span of one’s career. Work-life balance is one indicator of campus climate.

- 87% \((n = 442)\) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents acknowledged that GRCC provided them with resources to pursue professional development opportunities
- 65% \((n = 326)\) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents acknowledged that their supervisors provided ongoing feedback to help improve their performance
- Many Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents reported that GRCC demonstrated that it valued a:
  - diverse staff \((77\%, n = 390)\)
  - diverse faculty \((73\%, n = 370)\)
  - diverse administration \((65\%, n = 331)\)
- 73% \((n = 372)\) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents indicated that they had colleagues/co-workers at GRCC who gave them career advice or guidance when they needed it
- 73% \((n = 369)\) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents felt that they had supervisors who provided them with resources to pursue educational/professional development opportunities

\(^4\)Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006
3. Students – 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.

- 86% \((n = 2,356)\) of Student respondents reported that their academic experience has had a positive influence on their intellectual growth and interest in ideas
- 84% \((n = 2,304)\) of Student respondents were satisfied with their academic experience at GRCC
- 84% \((n = 2,289)\) of Student respondents were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development since enrolling at GRCC
- 82% \((n = 2,246)\) of Student respondents believed that many of their courses this year have been intellectually stimulating
- 80% \((n = 2,204)\) of Student respondents reported that they were performing up to their full academic potential
- 78% \((n = 2,138)\) of Student respondents indicated that their interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to GRCC
- 75% \((n = 2,044)\) of Student respondents reported that they performed academically as well as they had anticipated they would

4. Students – High level of satisfaction with diversity of course materials

- A majority of Student respondents indicated that the courses offered at GRCC included sufficient materials, perspectives, and/or experiences of people based on a variety of personal characteristics (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender identity, marital status, racial identity, sexual identity).

\(^5\)Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005
Key Findings – Challenges

1. Members of several constituent groups were differentially affected by 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.

- In questions that focused on exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct, 11% (\(n = 344\)) of respondents indicated that they personally experienced such conduct.

- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics including gender identity, sexual identity, position, and age. For example,
  - A higher percentage of Genderqueer/Transgender respondents and Women respondents reported having experienced exclusionary conduct than did Men respondents.
  - A higher percentage of LGBQ respondents reported having experienced this conduct than did Heterosexual and Asexual/Other respondents.
  - A higher percentage of Staff/Administrator respondents and Faculty respondents reported having experienced exclusionary conduct than did Student respondents.
  - A higher percentage of respondents over age 30 reported having experienced exclusionary conduct than did younger respondents.

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

\(^{7}\)Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

\(^{8}\)Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999
groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, and veterans). Several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- By position: Staff/Administrator respondents and Faculty respondents were less comfortable with the overall campus climate at GRCC than were Student respondents.
- By gender: Women respondents were less comfortable with the overall climate than were Men respondents.
- By disability status: Respondents With Multiple Disabilities were less comfortable with the overall climate than were respondents With a Single Disability and respondents With No Disabilities.
- By disability status: Student and Faculty respondents With Multiple Disabilities were less comfortable with the classroom climate than were Student and Faculty respondents With a Single Disability and Student and Faculty respondents With No Disabilities.
- By sexual identity: LGBQ Faculty and Student respondents and Asexual/Other Faculty and Student respondents were less comfortable with the climate in their classes than were Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents.

3. A small but meaningful percentage of respondents reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact.

In 2014, Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault indicates 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 GRCC survey requested information regarding unwanted sexual contact.

• 1% \( (n = 31) \) of respondents reported that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at GRCC.

• 67% \( (n = 13) \) of these respondents indicated that the unwanted sexual contact occurred within the previous three years, and an additional 21% \( (n = 5) \) indicated that the contact occurred four to nine years ago.

• Higher percentages of LGBQ respondents (4%, \( n = 9 \)) than Heterosexual respondents (1%, \( n = 18 \)) and of respondents with Multiple Disabilities (2%, \( n = 5 \)) than respondents with a Single Disability (1%, \( n = 9 \)) and respondents with No Disabilities (1%, \( n = 15 \)) reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact.

**Conclusion**

The GRCC campus climate findings\( ^{10} \) are consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country based on the work of R&A Consulting.\( ^{11} \) For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “comfortable” or “very comfortable”; 84% of respondents in the GRCC survey reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at GRCC. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct; at GRCC, 11% of respondents believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also parallel the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups.\( ^{12} \)

The GRCC climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, addressing the GRCC values of Diversity, Respect, and Integrity outlined in GRCC’s mission and values statements. While the findings in and of themselves may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at GRCC, it is important to note that

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\( ^{10} \)Additional findings disaggregated by position and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.


\( ^{12} \)Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles et al., 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009
the cultural fabric of an institution and unique aspects of each campus’s environment must be taken into consideration when considering additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the GRCC community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths but also develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. GRCC, with the support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.
### Table 1. GRCC Sample Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position Status</strong></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2,771</td>
<td>84.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff/Administrator</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>204</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender Identity</strong></td>
<td>Man</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>1,987</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Genderqueer/Transgender</td>
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<td><strong>Racial Identity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other People of Color</td>
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<td></td>
<td>White</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Sexual Identity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Undocumented Resident</td>
<td>&lt; 5</td>
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<td><strong>Disability Status</strong></td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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Note: The total n for each selected demographic characteristic differs as a result of missing data.
References


