

Executive Summary

College campuses are complex social systems. They are defined by the relationships between faculty, staff, students, and alumni; bureaucratic procedures embodied by institutional policies; structural frameworks; institutional missions, visions, and core values; institutional history and traditions; and larger social contexts (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998).

Institutional missions suggest that higher education values multicultural awareness and understanding within an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Academic communities expend a great deal of effort fostering climates that nurture their missions with the understanding that climate has a profound effect on the academic community's ability to excel in teaching, research, and scholarship. Institutional strategic plans advocate creating welcoming and inclusive climates that are grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

The climate on college campuses not only affects the creation of knowledge, but also affects members of the academic community who, in turn, contribute to the creation of the campus climate. Several national education association reports and higher education researchers advocate creating a more inclusive, welcoming climate on college campuses (Boyer, 1990; AAC&U, 1995; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Ingle, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

The University of Wisconsin System has a long history of supporting diversity initiatives¹ as evidenced by the system's support and commitment to this project. In 2005, a taskforce committee of the UW System Inclusivity Initiative was formed to search for consulting firms that conduct climate assessments in higher education. Rankin & Associates (R&A) was identified as leader in conducting multiple identity studies in

¹ For more information on UW System diversity initiatives see <http://www.uwsa.edu/vpacad/diversity.htm>

higher education. In 2006, R&A presented a proposal to the UW System Provosts and various constituent groups, which resulted in the formation by UW System administrators of the *Climate Study Working Group (CSWG)*² and subsequent contract with R&A to facilitate a system-wide climate assessment.

Because of the inherent complexity of the topic of diversity, it is crucial to examine the multiple dimensions of diversity in higher education. The conceptual model used as the foundation for this assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith (1999) and modified by Rankin (2002).

Fact-finding groups were held in September 2007 to discuss with University of Wisconsin System students, staff, and faculty their perceptions of the UW System campus climates. Informed by these fact-finding groups and by previous work of R&A, the CSWG developed the final survey instrument template that would be administered to the five participating campuses in spring 2008.

Five institutions (UW Colleges, UW-La Crosse, UW- Oshkosh, UW-Milwaukee and UW-Stevens Point) volunteered to participate in the first year, 2007-2008. The Tier II institutions who participated in 2008-2009 included UW-Eau Claire, UW-Parkside, UW-River Falls, and UW-Whitewater. UW-Superior was one of the Tier III campuses that participated in 2010-2011. The other Tier III institutions included UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison (CALs), UW-Platteville, UW-Stout as well as UW-Extension.

A Diversity Leadership Committee (DLC), a sub-committee of the Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Task Force (CIETF), was created at UW-Superior to assist in coordinating the survey effort on campus. The DLC reviewed the survey template and revised the instrument to better match the campus context at UW-Superior. The final survey contained 88 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to

² The CSWG included 2 representatives from each of the five participating institutions. The provost from each institution was requested to appoint the two representatives.

provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the UW-Superior campus-specific findings of the internal assessment, including the results of the campus-wide survey and a thematic analysis of comments provided by survey respondents.

All members of the campus community (e.g., students, faculty, academic staff, and classified staff) were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was designed for respondents to provide information about their personal experiences with regard to climate issues, their perceptions of the campus climate, student and employee satisfaction, and respondents' perceptions of institutional actions, including administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding climate issues and concerns on campus.

A summary of the findings, presented in bullet form below, suggests that while the UW-Superior has several challenges with regard to diversity issues, these challenges are found in higher education institutions across the country.

Sample Demographics

869 surveys were returned representing the following:³

- 23% response rate⁴
- 529 undergraduate students (61% of respondents), 54 graduate students (6%), 106 faculty (12%), and 163 staff (19%)
- 143 (17%) People of Color;⁵ 708 (83%) White respondents
- 15% (n = 128) people indicated that they had a disability that substantially affects major life events
 - 11 (1%) people who identified as having mobility impairments; 11 (1%) who had sensory impairments; 9 (1%) people who identified as having learning disabilities; 58 (7%) people who identified as having mental health disorders; 20 (2%) people who identified as having chronic health disorders
- 42 (5%) people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer; 792 (91%) as heterosexual; 7 (<1%) who were questioning their sexuality
- 561 (65%) women; 294 (34%) men; 3 (<1%) transgender⁶
- 479 (55%) people who identified as Christian; 138 (17%) people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian 87 (22%) people who identified as atheist, agnostic, and no affiliation.

³ Note that throughout the narrative “n” refers to the number in the sample and “N” refers to the number in the population.

⁴ Caution is suggested in generalizing results for constituent groups with significantly lower response rates. Despite this limitation, the results provided here reflect participant’s beliefs and concerns with regard to the campus climate.

⁵ While recognizing the vastly different experiences of people of various racial identities (e.g., Chicano(a) versus African-American or Latino(a) versus Asian-American), and those experiences within these identity categories (e.g., Hmong versus Chinese), Rankin and Associates found it necessary to collapse some of these categories to conduct the analyses due to the small numbers of respondents in the individual categories.

⁶ “Transgender” refers to identity that does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these (Oxford English Dictionary 2003). OED Online. March 2004. Oxford UW Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

Quantitative Findings

*Personal Experiences with Campus Climate*⁷

- **Some of respondents believed⁸ they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (hereafter referred to as harassment)⁹ within the past two years. University status (position) was most often cited as the reason given for the perceived harassment. People of Color and sexual minorities¹⁰ perceived such harassment more often than White people and heterosexual respondents, and many of them felt it was due to their race or sexual orientation. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.**
 - 24% (n = 210) of respondents believed they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus. The percentage of respondents experiencing harassment at UW-Superior is lower than the percentage of respondents who experienced harassment in studies of other institutions.¹¹
 - The perceived conduct was most often based on the respondents' university status (33%, n = 69), gender (21%, n = 45), age (22%, n = 46), and educational level (17%, n = 36).
 - Compared with 23% of White people (n = 164), 28% of People of Color (n = 40) believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 48% (n = 19) stated it was because of their race.
 - Compared with 26% of men (n = 76), 23% of women respondents (n = 130) believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of the women who believed they had experienced this conduct, 26% (n = 34) stated it was because of their gender.

⁷ Listings in the narrative are those responses with the greatest percentages. For a complete listing of the results, the reader is directed to the tables in the narrative and Appendix.

⁸ The modifier "believe(d)" is used throughout the report to indicate the respondents' perceived experiences. This modifier is not meant in any way to diminish those experiences.

⁹ Under the United States Code Title 18 Subsection 1514(c)1, harassment is defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose" (<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html>). In higher education institutions, legal issues discussions define harassment as any conduct that has unreasonably interfered with one's ability to work or learn on campus. The questions used in this survey to uncover respondents' personal and observed experiences with harassment were designed using these definitions.

¹⁰ Sexual minorities are defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

¹¹ Rankin's (2003) national assessment of climate for underrepresented groups where 25% (n = 3767) of respondents indicated personally experiencing harassment based mostly on their race (31%), their gender (55%), or their ethnicity (16%).

- Compared with 24% of heterosexual respondents (n = 186), 41% of sexual minority respondents (n = 17) believed they had personally experienced such conduct.
 - Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 41% (n = 7) stated it was because of their sexual orientation.
 - 28% of respondents (n = 58) made complaints to UW-Superior officials, while 18% (n = 37) did not know whom to go to, and 15% (n = 32) did not report the incident for fear of retaliation.
- **A small percentage of respondents believed they had been sexually harassed or sexually assaulted.**
 - 6% (n = 51) believed that they had been touched in a sexual manner that made them feel uncomfortable or fearful while at UW-Superior.
 - 20 (2%) respondents believed that they had been sexually assaulted during their time at UW-Superior.
 - Of these, 3 respondents believed they had been assaulted off-campus and 15 respondents believed they had been assaulted on campus.
 - Women, bisexual respondents, People of Color, and disabled persons were more likely than other groups to believe that they had been sexually assaulted.
 - The alleged perpetrators of the perceived sexual assault were most often students, strangers, and friends.

Satisfaction with UW-Superior

- **70% of UW-Superior employees (n = 188) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at UW-Superior. 59% (n = 156) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at UW-Superior.**
 - All employee groups (faculty, academic staff, and classified staff) were similarly satisfied with their jobs. Faculty members were most satisfied with the way their careers had progressed at UW-Superior.
 - Employees of Color and men were least satisfied with the way their jobs at UW-Superior. LGBTQ employees were much more satisfied with the ways their careers had progressed at UW-Superior.

- **85% of students (n = 494) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at UW-Superior.**

- **48% of all respondents (n = 413) have considered leaving UW-Superior.**
 - Among employees, 65% of men (n = 66) and 66% of women (n = 104) thought of leaving the institution.
 - 61% of Employees of Color (n = 14), in comparison with 66% of White employees (n = 154), have seriously considered leaving UW-Superior.
 - 62% of sexual minority employees (n = 8), compared to 66% of heterosexual respondents (n = 159), have seriously thought of leaving the institution.
 - Among students, 37% of women (n = 142) and 46% of men (n = 84) considered leaving the University.
 - 43% of Students of Color (n = 50) and 38% of White students (n = 174) thought of leaving UW-Superior.
 - 62% of LGBTQ students (n = 18) and 38% of heterosexual students (n = 200) thought of leaving the institution.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at UW-Superior (77%, n = 662) and in their departments or work units (75%, n = 644). 81% (n = 622) of faculty and students were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” in their classes. The figures in the narrative show some disparities based on race.**
 - People of Color were less comfortable than White people with the overall climate for diversity at UW-Superior and the climate in their classes. Similar rates of comfort in departments/work units were reported by People of Color and White respondents.
 - Women and men reported similar rates of comfort at UW-Superior, in their departments and work areas, and classes.

- LGBQ respondents were more comfortable with the overall climate and climate in their departments/work units, but less comfortable than heterosexual respondents in the classroom.
- **Slightly more than one-quarter of all respondents indicated that they were aware of or believed they had observed harassment on campus within the past two years. The perceived harassment was most often based on sexual orientation. People of Color and sexual minorities were more aware of perceived harassment.**
 - 27% of the respondents (n = 232) believed that they had observed or personally been made aware of conduct on campus that created an offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating working or learning environment.
 - Most of the observed harassment was based on ethnicity (27%, n = 62), gender (23%, n = 53), race (23%, n = 53), sexual orientation (22%, n = 52), country of origin (22%, n = 51), and English language proficiency/accent (19%, n = 44).
 - Compared with 26% of White respondents (n = 180), 31% of Respondents of Color (n = 44) believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 26% of heterosexuals (n = 204), 43% of sexual minorities (n = 18) believed they had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 18% of students (n = 104) and 39% of classified staff (n = 31), 47% of faculty (n = 50) and 49% of academic staff (n = 40) believed they had observed such conduct.
 - These incidences were reported to an employee or official only 11% of the time (n = 26).
- **Some employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory employment practices and indicated that they were most often based on gender, age, and race.**
 - 27% of employee respondents (n = 72) believed that they had observed discriminatory hiring.
 - 18% (n = 47) believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at UW-Superior (up to and including dismissal).
 - 27% (n = 73) believed that they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.
- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with mobility and visual impairment, the student union (66%, n = 547), elevators (60%, n = 496), dining facilities (57%, n = 475), the library (54%, n = 451), restrooms (54%, n = 448), and the University website (51%, n = 418) were the most accessible (rated “fully accessible”) areas of campus.**

Institutional Actions & Recommendations to Improve the Climate

- The majority of the respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the Student Government Association (57%, n = 320), Student Organizations (71%, n = 402), Admissions (66%, n = 372), NSE/Study Abroad (67%, n = 374), Athletics (57%, n = 319), Academic Service Learning (66%, n = 365), academic departments (73%, n = 406), Multicultural Affairs (74%, n= 418), the First Year Experience (59%, n = 334), and ResLife (54%, n = 303) provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
- 60% of all respondents (n = 462) believed that diversity initiatives were relevant to their work.
- 69% (n = 564) felt welcome at campus diversity events. Employees of Color and LGBTQ respondents consistently indicated that they felt the workplace climate was not as welcoming based on gender, race, and sexual orientation when compared to their White and heterosexual counterparts, and men and women.
- 43% of employee respondents (n = 113) thought providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families would positively affect the climate.
- 64% (n = 165) thought it would be a good idea to train mentors and leaders within departments to model positive climate behavior.
- 60% (n = 154) thought offering diversity training/programs as community outreach would positively affect the climate.
- 69% of employees (n = 176) felt providing on-campus child care services would positively affect the climate.
- The majority of all employees thought the following initiatives would also positively affect the climate on campus: improving, and promoting access to quality services for those individuals who experience sexual abuse (69%, n = 176), providing mentors for minority faculty/students/staff new to campus (69%, n = 179), and providing a clear protocol for responding to hate/hostile incidents at the campus level (83%,n = 213) and departmental level (79%, n = 204).

Qualitative Findings

Out of the 869 surveys received at UW-Superior, 775 respondents contributed remarks to one or more of the open-ended questions. No respondents commented on all open-ended questions. Respondents included undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty, academic staff, and classified staff. The open-ended questions asked whether their campus experiences differed from experiences in the surrounding community, for general

elaboration on personal experiences and thoughts,¹² for suggestions to improve the campus climate, and whether where faculty and staff lived affected campus climate.

Approximately 307 respondents offered suggestions for how to improve the climate at UW-Superior. A few of the respondents indicated they thought the climate at UW-Superior was positive and needed no improvement. Several respondents offered concrete suggestions to improve the climate, including: encouraging interactions between domestic and international students; increasing the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups on campus; creating and filling a Diversity Officer position, offering workshops or trainings; opening lines of communication between administrators, faculty, staff, and students; hiring a Chancellor¹³ committed to “inclusive excellence,” etc. A number of respondents wanted more on-campus parking.

One of the open-ended items queried, “Are your experiences on campus different than those you experience in the community surrounding campus? If so, how are these experiences different?” Four hundred eight (408) people answered the question. About half the respondents said they had similar experiences on and off campus. Some individual described “institutional classism” on campus, where the “hierarchy” of positions created tensions between faculty and other employees. Non-faculty employees felt more respect off campus than on campus. Most of the remaining respondents indicated that UW-Superior was more welcoming, inclusive, comfortable, and safe than the surrounding community.

Question 86 allowed respondents to elaborate on any of their survey responses, further describe their experiences, or offer additional thoughts about climate issues. About 187 people offered additional comments regarding their experiences and opinions. Several respondents thought UW-Superior was “moving in the right direction” in trying to create a more inclusive campus climate. Others thought the university was “going too far” in

¹² The complete survey is available in Appendix C.

¹³ The assessment was distributed during the search for a new Chancellor. This comment does not refer to Chancellor Wachter.

focusing on diversity and inclusiveness to the detriment of “morals, “ethics,” and academics. Again, several respondents described incidents of institutional classism, where some employees are “patronizing or denigrating” to others based on degrees earned and positions held at UW-Superior. Staff felt tensions from administrators and faculty.

The last open ended question asked respondents whether they thought campus climate was influenced by where faculty and staff lived. One hundred twenty-one (121) answered the question. About half of the respondents felt that where faculty and staff lived had no effect on campus climate. Some people thought of the Duluth/Superior area as “one big community.” Other respondents felt that faculty and staff who lived outside Superior did not respect or like the community, and that that attitude could affect how those employees felt about UW-Superior.

In addition, a few respondents commented on the survey instrument and the project process. Some applauded the University’s participation in the assessment and wanted to make certain that the results were made public and used to better UW-Superior. Several respondents insisted that UW-Superior leadership share with its constituents the climate assessment findings and initiatives instituted as a result of the survey.

Summary of Strengths and Potential Challenges

Two strengths/successes emerged from the quantitative data analysis. These findings should be noted and credited. First, more than half of employees were highly satisfied or satisfied with their jobs at UW-Superior (70%, n = 188) and how their careers have progressed (59%, n = 156). Higher percentages of students were highly satisfied and satisfied with their education at UW-Superior (85%, n = 494).

Second, 77% (n = 662) of employees and students reported that they were very comfortable and comfortable with the overall climate at UW-Superior, and 75% (n = 644) with their department or work unit. Eighty-one percent (n = 622) of faculty and students

were very comfortable or comfortable with the classroom climate. These quantitative results were also supported by various voices offered in response to the open-ended questions. These voices echoed positive experiences with the UW-Superior campus climate. However, disparities existed where respondents from underrepresented groups typically reported less satisfaction and comfort with the overall campus climate, their department/work unit climate, and their classroom climate at UW-Superior than the majority counterpart respondents. These underrepresented groups include People of Color, LGBTQ people, women, people with a disability, and classified staff.

Five potential challenges were also revealed in the assessment. The first challenge relates to racial tension. More Respondents of Color (28%, n = 40) reported personally experiencing exclusionary (e.g., shunned, ignored), intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct (harassing behavior) that has interfered with their ability to work or learn at UW-Superior when compared to their White counterparts (23%, n = 164). Forty-eight percent (n = 19) of Respondents of Color said the harassment was based on their race, while only two percent (n = 3) of White respondents indicated the basis as race. People of Color were also more likely to indicate racial profiling (20% vs. 0%), stares, feeling isolated or left out because of identity and when working in groups, someone assuming they were admitted or hired because of their identity, receiving derogatory remarks, being deliberately ignored or excluded, and receiving low performance evaluations as the form of experienced harassment when compared to their White counterparts. White respondents were more likely to indicate feeling intimidated and bullied (46% vs. 20%), and receiving derogatory/unsolicited e-mails and written comments.

Respondents' observations of others being harassed also contributed to their perceptions of campus climate. People of Color were also more likely than White people to observe offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct. Of all respondents who observed harassment, 27% (n = 62) believed it was based on ethnicity, followed by gender, and then race (23%, n = 53). Employees of Color were also more likely than White employees to believe they had observed discriminatory hiring practices,

discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions, and discriminatory practices related to promotion at UW-Superior.

People of Color were less comfortable than White respondents with the overall climate for diversity at UW-Superior and the climate in their classes. Similar rates of comfort in departments/work units were reported by People of Color and White respondents. A further evaluation of the classroom climate indicates that while 82% (n = 369) of White students thought the classroom climate was welcoming based on race, only 63% (n = 72) of Students of Color agreed.

Differences also existed between Employees of Color and White employees. While 62% (n = 166) of all respondents thought the workplace climate was welcoming based on race, about 46% (n = 11) of Employees of Color agreed. White employees were more likely to report support from decision makers/colleagues who support their career advancement and that their research/professional interests are valued by colleagues. Employees of Color were more likely than White faculty and staff to report that: colleagues expect them to represent “the point of view” of their identity; they believe they have to work harder than their colleagues in order to be perceived as legitimate; others seem to find it easier to “fit in;” they are reluctant to bring up issues that concern them for fear that it will affect performance evaluations or tenure decisions; they feel pressured to change their methods of teaching to achieve tenure/be promoted; and, there are many unwritten rules concerning how one is expected to interact with colleagues.

The experiences shared by LGBQ respondents’ calls attention to the second challenge at UW-Superior: homophobia and heterosexism. LGBQ respondents were 17% more likely than heterosexual respondents to believe that they had experienced harassment. Of those who believed they had experienced this type of conduct, 41% (n = 7) of LGBQ respondents versus one percent (n = 1) of heterosexual respondents indicated that this conduct was based on sexual orientation. Significantly higher rates of sexual minority respondents believed they had observed offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating

conduct than did heterosexual respondents (43%, n = 18 compared with 26%, n = 204), and of all respondents who observed misconduct, close to one quarter felt it was based on sexual orientation (22%, n = 52). Finally, 62% of sexual minority employees, compared to 66% of heterosexual respondents, have seriously thought of leaving the institution, and 62% of LGBQ students versus 38% of heterosexual students seriously considered leaving.

A third challenge is gender disparities experienced or perceived between women and men. Gender was the most observed reason for discriminatory employment. Of the respondents who believed they had observed discriminatory employment practices, 22% felt discriminatory hiring was based on gender, 26% indicated employment-related disciplinary actions were based on gender, and 22% reported gender as the basis for discriminatory practices related to promotion. Gender was reported third (21%, n = 45) as the bases for personal experiences of offensive, hostile, exclusionary, and/or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with one's ability to work or learn at UW-Superior. Similar rates of women (23%, n = 130) and men (26%, n = 76) reported personal mistreatment, but over twice as many women (26%, n = 34) than men (12%, n = 9) believed that the mistreatment was based on their gender. Gender was the second most reported basis for those who observed harassment (23%, n = 53).

The final challenge relates to differential treatment by university status at UW-Superior. Of all respondents who experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct, university status (33%, n = 69) was most often cited as the basis for the mistreatment and at a significantly higher rate than the other main reasons of gender, age, and educational level. Fifty-four percent (n = 43) of classified staff respondents reported personally experiencing harassment, which is significantly higher than any other employee group. Of those classified staff who reported experiencing such misconduct, 49% (n = 21) said it was based on their status at UW-Superior.

Classified staff reported observing discriminatory hiring, discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions, and discriminatory practices related to promotion more than any other employee group. Over 10% of all respondents indicated university status as the reason for unfair and unjust hiring practices (6th leading cause) and discriminatory practices related to promotion (3rd leading cause) at UW-Superior. Classified staff members, while equally satisfied with their jobs as academic staff and faculty, were less satisfied the way their careers have progressed when compared with other employee groups.

Fifteen percent (n = 128) of respondents indicated that they had a disability that substantially affects major life events. Of these respondents, the majority identified as having mental health disorders (n = 58, 45%; or 7% of all respondents) and chronic health disorders (n = 20, 16%; or 2% of all respondents). A higher percentage of people who reported having a disability or condition that substantially affects a major life activity (37%, n = 47) than self-identified, non-disabled people (21%, n = 151) believed they had experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct. Forty-seven percent (n = 22) of those respondents with disabilities who believed they had experienced harassment said the conduct was based on their disabilities. The majority of students and faculty felt that the courses they took or taught included materials, perspectives, and/or experiences for many listed groups except for those with mental health issues (46%, n = 330), learning disabilities (46%, n = 324), and physical disabilities (47%, n = 337). Less than half of all employee respondents thought the workplace climate was welcoming for employees based on mental health status (38%, n = 102) and learning disability (43%, n = 115).