



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

# West Chester University

## Assessment of Assessment of Campus Climate and Community Executive Summary

June 2016



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

West Chester University (WCU) 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.

WCU is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in WCU's mission statement, "West Chester University, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, is a public, regional, comprehensive institution committed to providing access and offering high-quality undergraduate education, selected post-baccalaureate and graduate programs, and a variety of educational and cultural resources for its students, alumni, and citizens of southeastern Pennsylvania."<sup>1</sup> In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at WCU recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for WCU students, faculty, and staff.

To that end, members of WCU formed the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) in 2015. The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, WCU contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "WCU Assessment of Campus Climate and Community." Data gathered via reviews of relevant WCU literature, focus groups, and a campus-wide survey focused on the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups. Based on the findings of this study, community forums will develop and complete two to three action items by fall 2017.

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<sup>1</sup><http://catalog.wcupa.edu/general-information/university-information/mission-vision-value-statement/>

## **Project Design and Campus Involvement**

The CSWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. The final survey instrument was completed in Summer 2015. WCU's survey contained 99 items (19 qualitative and 80 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from October 13, 2015 through November 13, 2015. 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 WCU'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 CSWG 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, WCU'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.

## **WCU Participants**

WCU community members completed 2,147 surveys for an overall response rate of 12%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.<sup>2</sup> Response rates by constituent group varied: 10% ( $n = 1,430$ ) for Undergraduate Students, 10% ( $n = 229$ ) for Graduate Students, 38% ( $n = 307$ ) for Staff, and 19% ( $n = 181$ ) for Faculty. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The

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<sup>2</sup>Fourteen surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ( $n = 22$ ) or if they were duplicate responses ( $n = 9$ ).

percentages shown in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (*n*) for each demographic characteristic.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1. WCU Sample Demographics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>% of Sample</b>
Position status	Undergraduate Student	1,430	66.6
	Graduate Student	229	10.7
	Faculty	181	8.4
	Staff/Administrator	307	14.3
Gender identity	Man	569	26.5
	Woman	1,538	71.6
	Transgender	5	0.2
	Genderqueer	23	1.1
	Other/Not listed	12	0.6
Racial identity	Person of Color	344	16.3
	White	1,642	77.8
	Multiracial – POC/White	124	5.9
Sexual identity	LGBQ	221	10.4
	Heterosexual	1,759	83.1
	Other	137	6.5
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	2,021	94.1
	Non-U.S. Citizen	124	5.8
Disability status	Single Disability	433	21.0
	No Disability	1,536	74.4
	Multiple Disabilities	95	4.6
Military service	Military Service	25	1.2
	No Military Service	2,079	98.2
Faith-based affiliation	Christian Affiliation	1,206	56.2
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	145	6.8
	No Affiliation	674	31.4
	Multiple Affiliations	90	4.2

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

<sup>3</sup>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 WCU

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

- 81% ( $n = 1,731$ ) of the survey respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at WCU.
  - Graduate Student respondents (30%) were significantly more comfortable (“very comfortable”) with the overall climate at WCU than were Staff/Administrator respondents (24%), Undergraduate Student respondents (23%), and Faculty respondents (19%).
- 76% ( $n = 373$ ) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 85% ( $n = 1,553$ ) of Faculty and Student respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
  - Graduate Student respondents (92%) and Faculty respondents (92%) were significantly more comfortable (“very comfortable” or “comfortable”) with the classroom climate than were Undergraduate Student respondents (82%).

### 2. Faculty and Staff/Administrator Respondents – Positive attitudes about work-life issues

Campus climate<sup>5</sup> 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.

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<sup>4</sup>Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

<sup>5</sup>Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006

- 78% ( $n = 374$ ) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents were comfortable taking leave that they were entitled to without fear that it may affect their job/careers.
- 55% ( $n = 262$ ) of employee respondents believed that the process for determining salaries/merit raises was clear.

### **3. Staff/Administrator Respondents – Positive attitudes about staff/administrative work**

- 83% ( $n = 249$ ) of Staff/Administrator respondents thought that WCU provided them with resources to pursue professional development opportunities.
- 81% ( $n = 244$ ) of Staff/Administrator respondents thought that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 80% ( $n = 242$ ) of Staff/Administrator respondents believed that their supervisors were supportive of flexible work schedules.
- 77% ( $n = 233$ ) of Staff/Administrator respondents believed that WCU provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities

### **4. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work**

#### Tenure-Track Faculty respondents

- The majority of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the criteria for tenure were clear (85%,  $n = 126$ ) and standards were reasonable (84%,  $n = 125$ ).
- 89% ( $n = 132$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that their service contributions were important to tenure/promotion.
- 59% ( $n = 85$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents agreed that the tenure standards/promotion standards were applied equally to all faculty.

### All Faculty respondents

- The majority of Faculty respondents (84%,  $n = 150$ ) had peers/mentors who gave them career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 80% ( $n = 143$ ) of Faculty respondents indicated that their department provided them with resources to pursue professional development opportunities.
- 77% ( $n = 136$ ) of Faculty respondents believed their colleagues included them in opportunities that will help their careers as much as those colleagues include others in their position.

## **5. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences**

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

- 90% ( $n = 1,483$ ) of Student respondents reported that their academic experience has had a positive influence on their intellectual growth and interest in ideas.
- 88% ( $n = 1,452$ ) of Student respondents were satisfied with their academic experience since enrolling at WCU.
- 87% ( $n = 1,437$ ) of Student respondents were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development since enrolling at WCU.
- 78% ( $n = 1,283$ ) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom.
- 72% ( $n = 1,181$ ) of Student respondents reported that they had faculty whom they perceived as role models.
- 65% ( $n = 1,071$ ) of Student respondents believed that the campus climate encourages free and open discussion of difficult topics.

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<sup>6</sup>Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

<sup>7</sup>Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

## 6. Student Respondents – Perceptions of *Academic Success*

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 11 on the survey. Analyses using these scales revealed:

- Women Undergraduate Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Men Undergraduate Student respondents.

### Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

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

- 14% ( $n = 304$ ) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.<sup>10</sup>
  - 20% ( $n = 61$ ) noted that the conduct was based on their ethnicity, 18% ( $n = 54$ ) felt that it was based on their age, and 17% ( $n = 53$ ) felt that it was based on their position status.
- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, ethnicity, age, and position status. For example:
  - A higher percentage of Transgender respondents (36%,  $n = 10$ ) than Women respondents (15%,  $n = 227$ ) and Men respondents (11%,  $n = 61$ ) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary conduct.
  - Respondent of Color (22%,  $n = 74$ ) were significantly more likely to report they had experienced exclusionary conduct than Multiracial respondents (16%,  $n = 20$ ) and White respondents (12%,  $n = 199$ ).

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

<sup>9</sup>Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

<sup>10</sup>The 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 effect (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

- Significantly higher percentages of respondents ages 45 through 54 years (23%,  $n = 38$ ) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary conduct than did other respondents.
- Graduate Student respondents (11%,  $n = 25$ ) and Undergraduate Student respondents (12%,  $n = 177$ ) were significantly less likely than employee respondents to indicate that they had experienced this conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. One hundred and fifteen WCU respondents elaborated on personal experiences of exclusionary (e.g., shunned, ignored), intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct (bullied, harassed). Intimidation in tandem with hostility was the most prevalent theme. Respondents described specific incidents of intimidation and hostility with supervisors, colleagues, peers, and strangers on and off campus. Concerns regarding race and sexual violence also substantiated minor themes reflected in the data provided by WCU respondents. Racially-biased exclusionary conduct that resulted from Yik-Yak, reactions to protests on campus, and interactions with law enforcement were described in detail. Acts of sexual misconduct, including street harassment and rapes, and the lack of avenues to report (and lack of response when a report was filed) were emphasized by 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 groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, veterans).<sup>11</sup>

Several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

<sup>12</sup>Results offered regarding overall campus climate include all faculty, staff, and student respondents, workplace includes faculty and staff respondents, and classroom climate includes faculty and student respondents.

- Differences by gender identity:
  - 85% of Men respondents, 80% of Women respondents, and 60% of Transgender/Genderqueer respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate.
  - A significantly higher percentage of Men Faculty and Student respondents (35%) than Women Faculty and Student respondents (28%) felt “very comfortable” in their classes.
- Differences by racial identity:
  - Multiracial respondents (74%) and Respondents of Color (71%) were less likely than White respondents (84%) to feel “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at WCU.
  - Faculty and Student Respondents of Color (21%) and Multiracial Faculty and Student respondents (26%) were significantly less likely than White Faculty and Student respondents (32%) to feel “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- Differences by sexual identity:
  - LGBTQ respondents (76%) and Other respondents (76%) were less likely to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate than were Heterosexual respondents (82%).
  - LGBTQ (22%,  $n = 43$ ) and Other (24%,  $n = 29$ ) Faculty and Student respondents were less likely to feel “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes than were Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents (31%,  $n = 463$ ).
- Differences by disability status:
  - Multiple Disabilities (68%) and respondents with a Single Disability (76%) were significantly less likely than were respondents with No Disability (83%) to feel “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate.

- Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents with Multiple Disabilities (21%) and with a Single Disability (23%) were significantly less likely than were Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents with No Disability (42%) to feel “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- Faculty and Student respondents with Multiple Disabilities (75%) were significantly less likely to feel “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their classes than were Faculty and Student respondents with a Single Disability (83%) and those with No Disability (86%).

### **3. Faculty and Staff/Administrator Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues**

- 52% ( $n = 160$ ) of Staff/Administrator respondents and 43% of Faculty respondents had seriously considered leaving WCU in the past year.
  - 45% ( $n = 108$ ) of those Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents who seriously considered leaving identified financial reasons as a top reason.
- Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents observed unjust hiring practices (23%,  $n = 112$ ), unfair or unjust disciplinary actions (11%,  $n = 52$ ), or unfair or unjust promotion/tenure/reclassification (28%,  $n = 133$ ).
- Heterosexual Faculty and Staff/Administrative respondents (79%,  $n = 312$ ) were statistically more comfortable taking leave than were LGBTQ employee respondents (73%,  $n = 30$ ).

Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with work-life issues. Many Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents provided greater details on their perceptions and experiences of the workplace climate at WCU. Dominant themes among the voices of respondents included inclusion (i.e., acceptance and inclusion based on gender identity, racial identity, position status, and sexual identity) and salary (i.e., raises and promotions were unfair especially for staff).

Staff/Administrator respondents who provided further detail on their experiences at WCU involving flex time, professional development, and leadership support noted inconsistencies. The two dominant themes were inconsistencies related to flex time (i.e., supportive/unsupportive supervisors with regard to work schedules) and leadership (i.e., supportive/unsupportive policy and practice of leadership and administration).

#### **4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work**

- 53% ( $n = 93$ ) of all Faculty felt that they performed more work to help students beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
- 41% ( $n = 60$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that they were burdened by service responsibilities beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance.
- 23% ( $n = 34$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research agenda to achieve tenure/promotion.

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work and work-life issues. Many Tenure or Tenure-Track respondents expounded on their experiences with tenure policy and practice, and described inconsistencies involving many layers of the tenure process. Others elaborated on their experiences related to children, child care, housing, professional development, and service modifications. Some Faculty respondents addressed issues involving faculty with children. A majority of Faculty respondents' perceived child care to be inadequate and others perceived modifications based on faculty member's parent status to be unfair. Faculty respondents also elaborated on their perceptions about service, research, teaching, professional development, and merit recognition, and shared feelings about the inconsistencies and a lack of transparency in merit recognition processes.

**5. A small but meaningful percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact.**

In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* indicated that sexual assault is a significant issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the WCU survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 4% ( $n = 89$ ) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at WCU.
- 36% ( $n = 32$ ) of these respondents did nothing in response to the unwanted sexual contact.
- 16% ( $n = 14$ ) didn't know to whom to go.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. Some of these respondents described feelings of fear, shame, and embarrassment as their rationale for not reporting. Others described a lack of understanding of what transpired at the time of the incident, or the perception or concern that it was not important.

Respondents who reported unwanted sexual contact to a campus official or staff member also had the opportunity to elaborate. Dominant themes noted by many respondents were negative encounters with campus officials in the reporting process, and the perception that no action was taken as a result of their reports.

## Conclusion

WCU campus climate findings<sup>13</sup> varied when compared with similar higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A.<sup>14</sup> For example, 70% to 80% of all respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “comfortable” or “very comfortable.” A similar percentage (81%) of WCU respondents reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at WCU. However, 20% to 25% in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At WCU, a lower percentage of respondents (14%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. Many of the results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.<sup>15</sup>

WCU’s climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses WCU’s mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at WCU, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of any institution and unique aspects of each campus’s environment must be taken into consideration when deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the WCU community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. WCU, with 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.

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<sup>13</sup>Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

<sup>14</sup>[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

<sup>15</sup>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 et al., 2009

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