

Executive Summary

Introduction

Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) aims to foster a healthy and inclusive environment for all members of the university community. In the words of President Donald J. Bachand, a welcoming and inclusive campus for all students, staff, and faculty “happens in a climate that is grounded in mutual respect, nurtured by honest dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.”¹

SVSU is dedicated to creating and maintaining a community environment that respects individual needs, abilities, and potentials. As part of an ongoing effort to foster a healthy and inclusive environment for all members of the university community, SVSU has focused on campus climate and its influence across faculty, staff, and student experiences. Campus 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.”² In order to better understand the campus climate, various constituents at SVSU (including students, faculty, administrators and staff) recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for students, faculty, and staff across the university.

To that end, a few members of the SVSU community formed the Campus Climate Survey team in fall 2013. In 2014, the Campus Climate Survey team expanded to include faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, SVSU contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study, entitled the “SVSU Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working.” Goals for the project include “identifying successful initiatives, uncovering any challenges facing members of [the SVSU] community, and developing strategic initiatives to build on the successes and address the challenges.”³ Based on findings, the Campus Climate Survey team will

¹<http://www.svsu.edu/climatesurvey/messagefromthepresident/>

²<http://www.svsu.edu/climatesurvey/whyitmatters/>

³<http://www.svsu.edu/climatesurvey/supportfromsupportstaffassociation/>

develop strategic actions in fall 2015, and initial implementation of actions will occur in 2015–2016.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The Campus Climate Survey team collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. SVSU's survey contained 101 items (17 qualitative and 84 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from November 4 through December 5, 2014. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

SVSU Participants

SVSU community members completed 2,358 surveys for an overall response rate of 21%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.⁴ Response rates by constituent group varied: 17% ($n = 1,537$) for Undergraduate Students, 5% ($n = 46$) for Graduate Students, 51% ($n = 384$) for Faculty, 93% ($n = 173$) for Staff, and 55% ($n = 218$) for Administrative Professionals. 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.⁵

⁴Twenty-four respondents were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey.

⁵The total n for each demographic characteristic differs as a result of missing data.

Table 1. SVSU Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position Status	Undergraduate Student	1,537	65.2
	Graduate Student	46	2.0
	Faculty	384	16.3
	Staff	173	7.3
	Administrative Professional	218	9.2
Gender Identity	Man	709	30.3
	Woman	1,612	68.8
	Transgender	< 5	--
	Genderqueer	7	0.3
	Gender not listed	13	0.6
Racial Identity	White	1,964	83.3
	Person of Color	240	10.2
	Multiracial – POC/White	99	4.2
Sexual Identity	LGBQ	180	7.6
	Heterosexual	1,940	82.3
	Asexual/Other	161	6.8
Citizenship Status	U.S. Citizen	2,166	91.9
	Non-U.S. Citizen	145	6.1
	Undocumented	< 5	--
	Multiple Citizenships	33	1.4
Disability Status	No Disability	1,940	82.3
	Single Disability	180	7.6
	Multiple Disabilities	161	6.8
Religious/Spiritual Affiliation	Christian Affiliation	1,566	66.4
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	46	2.0
	No Affiliation	583	24.7
	Multiple Affiliations	97	4.1
	Other	77	3.3

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at SVSU

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.”⁶ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 82% ($n = 1,931$) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at SVSU.
- 72% ($n = 554$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 85% ($n = 1,663$) of Undergraduate Student, Graduate Student, and Faculty respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professionals – Positive attitudes about work-life issues

Campus climate⁷ 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.

- 67% ($n = 508$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents found SVSU supportive of flexible work schedules.
- 60% ($n = 457$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents indicated that they had supervisors at SVSU who gave them career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 64% ($n = 483$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents indicated that their supervisors provide them with resources to pursue professional development opportunities.

⁶<http://www.svsu.edu/climatesurvey/whyitmatters/>

⁷Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006

- 62% ($n = 473$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents agreed that their supervisors provide ongoing feedback to help improve their performance.

3. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- More than half of Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the tenure/promotion process was clear (51%, $n = 192$) and reasonable (53%, $n = 198$).
- 56% ($n = 210$) of Faculty respondents felt that their service contributions were important to tenure/promotion at SVSU.
- Few (14%, $n = 50$) Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research agendas to achieve tenure or be promoted at SVSU.
- More than half (63%, $n = 233$) of Faculty respondents felt that their colleagues include them in opportunities that will help their career as much as they do others in their position.

4. Students – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁸ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁹ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 84% ($n = 1,295$) of Student respondents indicated that many of their courses this year have been intellectually stimulating.
- 81% ($n = 1,283$) of Student respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development since they enrolled at SVSU.
- 80% ($n = 1,259$) of Student respondents indicated that their interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since they enrolled at SVSU.

⁸Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁹Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

5. Students – Academic Success and Intent to Persist

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on two scales; “Academic Success” and “Intent to Persist.” The scales were derived from Question 12 on the survey.

Analyses using these scales revealed:

- Women Undergraduate Student respondents perceived greater academic success than Men Undergraduate Student respondents.
- White Undergraduate Student respondents perceived greater academic success than Undergraduate Student Respondents of Color.
- Heterosexual Undergraduate Student respondents perceived greater academic success than Asexual/Other Undergraduate Student respondents.
- Undergraduate Student respondents with No Disability perceived greater academic success than Undergraduate Student respondents with a Single Disability.

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.¹⁰ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.¹¹ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 24% ($n = 555$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.¹²

¹⁰Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

¹¹Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

¹²The 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).

- 11% ($n = 60$) of respondents who reported having experienced the conduct said that it was “very often”/“often” based on their ethnicity, and 11% ($n = 59$) felt that it was based on their major field of study. Others said that they “very often”/“often” experienced such conduct based on their physical characteristics (10%, $n = 55$) and on their age (19%, $n = 103$).
- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, ethnic identity, and age. For example:
 - A higher percentage of Women respondents (25%, $n = 395$) than Men respondents (20%, $n = 140$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.
 - In terms of racial identity, 22% ($n = 428$) of White respondents, 20% ($n = 20$) of Multiracial respondents, and 35% ($n = 82$) of People of Color respondents indicated that they had experienced this conduct.
 - A greater percentage of respondents aged 40–49 indicated that they had experienced exclusionary conduct than did other respondents. However, a greater percentage of respondents aged 24–39, as compared to other age groups felt that the conduct was based on their age.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. One hundred-ninety respondents elaborated on their experiences regarding how they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile behavior at SVSU. The themes included: (1) *Bullying*, several respondents offered that the exclusionary behavior they experienced was in the form of bullying. The experiences of being bullied were shared by both Faculty/Staff and Student respondents; (2) *Hostile environment*, respondents felt that their environments were very hostile (e.g., source of conduct was staff, supervisors). Such conduct left respondents feeling a variety of negative feelings. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

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, etc.).¹³ Several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- Differences by Position Status:
 - Staff respondents were less comfortable (“very uncomfortable”) with the overall climate at SVSU than were Undergraduate Student respondents, Graduate Student respondents, Faculty respondents, and Administrative Professional respondents.
 - A slightly higher percentage of Faculty respondents (39%) than Staff respondents (30%) or Administrative Professional respondents (36%) were “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units at SVSU.
- Differences by Gender Identity:
 - Women respondents were significantly less likely than Men respondents to feel “very comfortable” with the overall campus climate and the climate in their departments/work units.
 - A significantly greater percentage of Men Faculty and Student respondents (34%) than Women Faculty and Student respondents (26%) felt “very comfortable” in their courses.
- Differences by Racial Identity:
 - A lower percentage of Respondents of Color (22%) than White respondents (31%) and Multiple Race respondents (28%) were “very comfortable” with the overall climate at SVSU.

¹³Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

- Employee Respondents of Color were less comfortable with the climate in their departments/work units than were Multiple Race respondents and White respondents.
- Faculty and Student Respondents of Color were significantly less comfortable with the climate in their classes than were other respondents.
- Differences by Sexual Identity
 - LGBQ respondents were less comfortable with the overall climate than were Heterosexual respondents and Asexual/Other respondents.
 - Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents were more comfortable with the climate in their courses than were other respondents.
- Differences by Military Status
 - 71% of respondents with Military Service and 83% of respondents with No Military Service were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at SVSU.
- Differences by Ability Status
 - Respondents with a Single Disability or with Multiple Disabilities were less comfortable with the overall climate than were respondents with No Disabilities.
 - Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents with Multiple Disabilities were less comfortable with the climate in their departments/work units than were Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents with Single Disabilities or No Disabilities.
 - Faculty and Student respondents with a Single Disability and with Multiple Disabilities were less comfortable with classroom climate than were Faculty and Student respondents with No Disabilities.

3. Staff, Faculty, and Administrator Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues

- 45% ($n = 351$) of all respondents had seriously considered leaving SVSU.
 - Forty-one percent of those Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because they saw limited opportunities for advancement at SVSU ($n = 145$) or for financial reasons ($n = 143$).
- 32% ($n = 243$) of employee respondents felt that they had to work harder than their colleagues/coworkers did to achieve the same recognition.
- 31% ($n = 238$) of employee respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were reluctant to bring up issues that concerned them for fear it would affect their performance evaluations or tenure/merit/promotion decisions.
- 22% ($n = 168$) of employee respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their colleagues/coworkers expect them to represent “the point of view” of their identities.
- 21% ($n = 120$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Professional respondents indicated that people who do not have children are burdened with work responsibilities (e.g., stay late, off-hour work, work weekends) beyond those who do have children.

Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with work-life issues. One hundred-seventy respondents provided written commentary. The themes included: (1) *Lack of salary clarity*, respondents indicated that the process for determining salary increases were unclear and inconsistent across colleges and departments; and, (2) *Ability to take leave*, respondents noted that they were not completely comfortable taking leave because of others’ reactions. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 34% ($n = 125$) of Faculty respondents believed that they performed more work to help students than did their colleagues.
- 22% ($n = 82$) of Faculty respondents reported feeling that tenure standards/promotion standards were not applied equally to all SVSU faculty.
- 17% ($n = 66$) of Faculty respondents felt burdened by service responsibilities beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
- Less than one-third (28%, $n = 104$) of Faculty respondents felt that their diversity-related contributions have been/will be valued for promotion or tenure.

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. More than eighty Faculty respondents elaborated on their experience of work life related to tenure and advancement processes. The major theme that emerged from responses was not related to a specific statement, but instead to a specific identity. The theme included: (1) *Adjunct status*, many respondents indicated that this section did not apply to them because adjunct faculty don't receive any of the benefits listed. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

3. A small but meaningful percentage of respondents experienced unwanted physical 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 SVSU survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 2% ($n = 54$) of respondents indicated in the survey that they had experienced unwanted physical sexual contact while at SVSU.

Conclusion

SVSU's campus climate findings¹⁴ are consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country based on the work of R&A Consulting.¹⁵ For example, 70% to 80% of all respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "comfortable" or "very comfortable." A slightly higher percentage of all SVSU respondents reported that they were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at SVSU. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At SVSU, 24% of respondents 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.¹⁶

SVSU's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, addressing the university's mission for creating and maintaining a community environment that respects individual needs, abilities, and potentials. While the findings in and of themselves may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at SVSU, it is important to note that 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 do provide the SVSU community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths but also develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. SVSU, 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.

¹⁴Additional findings disaggregated by position and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹⁵[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

¹⁶Guiffrida, 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

References

- Aguirre, A., & Messineo, M. (1997). Racially motivated incidents in higher education: What do they say about the campus climate for minority students? *Equity & Excellence in Education, 30*(2), 26–30.
- Flowers, L., & Pascarella, E. (1999). Cognitive effects of college racial composition on African American students after 3 years of college. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 669–677.
- Guiffrida, D., Gouveia, A., Wall, A., & Seward, D. (2008). Development and validation of the Need for Relatedness at College Questionnaire (nRC-Q). *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(4), 251–261. doi: 10.1037/a0014051
- Hale, F. W. (2004). What makes racial diversity work in higher education: Academic leaders present successful policies and strategies: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Harper, S., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, no.120, p7–24.
- Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2004). Taking seriously the evidence regarding the effects of diversity on student learning in the college classroom: A call for faculty accountability. *UrbanEd, 2*(2), 43–47.
- Hart, J., & Fellabaum, J. (2008). Analyzing campus climate studies: Seeking to define and understand. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(4), 222–234.
- Hurtado, S., & Ponjuan, L. (2005). Latino educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 4*(3), 235–251. doi: 10.1177/1538192705276548
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research* (Vol. 2). San Diego: Jossey-Bass.
- Rankin, S., & Reason, R. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of color and white students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups. *Journal of Student College Development, 46*(1), 43–61.
- Rankin, S., & Reason, R. (2008). Transformational tapestry model: A comprehensive approach to transforming campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(4), 262–274. doi: 10.1037/a0014018

- Sears, J. T. (2002). The institutional climate for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual education faculty. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 43(1), 11–37. doi: 10.1300/J082v43n01_02
- Settles, I. H., Cortina, L. M., Malley, J., & Stewart, A. J. (2006). The climate for women in academic science: The good, the bad, and the changeable. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30(1), 47–58. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00261.x
- Silverschanz, P., Cortina, L., Konik, J., & Magley, V. (2008). Slurs, snubs, and queer jokes: Incidence and impact of heterosexist harassment in academia. *Sex Roles*, 58(3–4), 179–191. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9329-7
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Waldo, C. (1999). Out on campus: Sexual orientation and academic climate in a university context. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 745–774. doi: 10.1023/A:1022110031745
- Whitt, E. J., Edison, M. I., Pascarella, E. T., Terenzini, P. T., & Nora, A. (2001). Influences on students' openness to diversity and challenge in the second and third years of college. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 72(2), 172–204.
- Worthington, R. L., Navarro, R. L., Loewy, M., & Hart, J. L. (2008). Color-blind racial attitudes, social dominance orientation, racial-ethnic group membership and college students' perceptions of campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 1(1), 8–19.
- Yosso, T. J., Smith, W. A., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. G. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659–690, 781, 785–786.