Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Stetson University Gulfport

Assessment of the Climate for Learning, Living, and Working
Executive Summary

July 2016

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Introduction

Stetson University 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.

Stetson University is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Stetson University's mission statement, "Our mission at Stetson University is to provide an excellent education in a creative community where learning and values meet, and to foster in students the qualities of mind and heart that will prepare them to reach their full potential as informed citizens of local communities and the world."[1] In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Stetson University recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for Stetson University students, faculty, and staff.

Throughout the 2013-2014 academic year, the Stetson community was invited to take part in conversations about the strategic priorities that would guide the following 5 years. At the end of that year, the senior administrators unveiled the 2014-2019 Strategic Map. At the base of the map lies the foundational goal, "Be a Diverse Community of Inclusive Excellence." To advance that goal, Stetson University President Wendy B. Libby appointed the Diversity Inclusion Task Force. In 2015, the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) was developed out of the Task Force. The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Stetson University contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Stetson University Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working." The project was developed to provide separate analyses and reports for the Deland[2] campus and the Gulfport campus[3]. Data gathered via reviews of relevant Stetson

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[1]http://www.stetson.edu/other/about/mission-and-values.php
[2]The Deland campus also included data from the Center at Celebration campus

University 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 be sponsored on both campuses to assist in the development and implementation of two to three action items.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The CSWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 14 focus groups at the Deland campus comprised of 88 participants (29 students, 42 faculty, and 17 staff) and nine focus groups at the Gulfport campus comprised of 60 participants (24 students, 13 faculty, and 23 staff). In the second phase, the CSWG and R&A used data from the focus groups to co-construct questions for the campus-wide survey. The final survey instrument was completed in December 2015. The final survey contained 110 items (28 qualitative and 82 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from February 2 to March 7, 2016. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

The conceptual model used as the foundation for Stetson University'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, Stetson University'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 at Stetson University College of Law (Stetson Law).

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[3]The Gulfport campus also included data from the Tampa Law Center

Stetson Law Participants

Stetson Law community members completed 371 surveys for an overall response rate of 34%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.[4] Response rates by constituent group varied: 31% (n = 259) for Graduate Students, 31% (n =35) for Faculty[5], and 39% (n = 52) for Staff only. 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 each demographic characteristic.[6]

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[4]Three surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and 1 duplicate submission was removed.
[5] The population of Faculty at Stetson Law used for this project included all faculty at Stetson Law (N = 114). The sample of faculty in this project (n = 35) includes 32 tenure/tenure track faculty and 3 full-time non-tenure track.
[6]The total n for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. **Stetson Law Sample Demographics**

Characteristic	Subgroup	*n*	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	< 5	---
	Graduate/Professional Student	259	69.8
	Faculty	35	9.4
	Administrator	23	6.2
	Staff	52	14.0
Gender identity	Man	140	37.7
	Woman	225	60.6
Racial identity	Black/African American/Afro-Caribbean	27	7.3
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	22	5.9
	People of Color	9	2.4
	White	255	68.7
	Multiple Races	41	11.1
Sexual identity	LGBQ	40	10.8
	Heterosexual	319	86.0
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	335	90.3
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	34	9.2
Disability status	Disability	36	9.7
	No Disability	312	84.1
	Multiple Disabilities	21	5.7
Faith-based affiliation	Christian Affiliation	187	50.4
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	20	5.4
	No Affiliation	130	35.0
	Multiple Affiliations	22	5.9

Note: No missing data existed for the primary categories in this question; all respondents were required to select an answer.
Missing data existed for the sub-categories, as indicated.

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. **High levels of comfort with the climate at Stetson Law**

   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."[7] The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

   - 70% ($n = 260$) of the survey respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at Stetson Law.
   - 70% ($n = 76$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their departments/work units.
   - 77% ($n = 221$) of Student and Faculty respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.
   - 83% ($n = 166$) of White Respondents were significantly more likely to be "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their classes than were Faculty and Student Respondents of Color.
   - 74% ($n = 104$) of Men respondents and 69% ($n = 155$) of Women respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the overall climate on campus.

2. **Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work**
   - Tenure-Track Faculty[8] respondents felt that teaching (81%, $n = 25$) and research (100%, $n = 32$) were valued by Stetson University-Gulfport/Tampa Campus.
   - Only 18% ($n = 5$) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents thought that faculty members in their departments/programs who used family accommodation (FMLA) policies (e.g., child care, elder care) were disadvantaged in promotion and/or tenure.

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[7]Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264
[8]Tenure Track faculty include both tenured faculty and tenure-track faculty

3. **Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work**

- 82% (*n* = 60) of Staff respondents believed that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.
- 78% (*n* = 58) of Staff and Administrator respondents thought that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 74% (*n* = 53) of Staff respondents believed that the campus provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 71% (*n* = 48) of Staff respondents indicated that the campus was supportive of taking extended leave (e.g., FMLA, parental).
- 79% (*n* = 55) of Staff respondents indicated that Stetson Law was a good place to work.
- 84% (*n* = 53) of Staff and Administrator respondents felt that Stetson Law provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.

4. **Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences**

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.[9] Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.[10] Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 75% (*n* = 195) of Student respondents felt valued by Stetson Law faculty, 81% (*n* = 209) felt valued by staff, and 63% (*n* = 160) felt valued by senior administrators.
- 72% (*n* = 185) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom.
- 85% (*n* = 219) of Student respondents had faculty whom they perceived as role models.

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[9]Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005
[10]Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

5. **Student Respondents – Perceptions of *Academic Success***

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

   - Subsequent analyses on *Perceived Academic Success* for Students was significantly different for Men and Women. These findings suggest that Women Students have less *Perceived Academic Success* than Men Students.

   - Significant differences for Low-Income and Not-Low-Income were found. These findings suggest that Low-Income Students groups have more *Perceived Academic Success* than Not-Low-Income Students.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

1. **Members of several constituent groups indicated that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.**

   Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.[11] Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.[12] The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

   - 25% ($n = 92$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.[13] Of those respondents:

     - 32% ($n = 29$) felt that it was based on their gender/gender identity, 26% ($n = 24$) felt that it was based on their ethnicity, 24% ($n = 22$) noted that the conduct was based on their position status, and 20% ($n = 18$) felt that it was based on their racial identity.

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[11]Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001
[12]Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999
[13]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 impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

- Differences emerged based on ethnicity/racial identity.
  - Higher percentages of Black/African/African American respondents (67%, $n = 6$), Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents ($n < 5$), Multiple Race respondents (46%, $n = 5$), and other Respondents of Color ($n < 5$), than White respondents (11%, $n = 6$), believed that they had experienced this conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. Thirty-five respondents from all constituent groups contributed further data regarding their personal experiences of exclusion, intimidation, and hostility at Stetson Law. Respondents mainly elaborated on who the source was, why, and the reporting process. Several respondents reported misconduct by supervisors and faculty. Many respondents stated that race and gender played a role in why they were mistreated. Most respondents felt the reporting process was not handled very well and/or they were upset with the outcomes because they were made to feel trivial and felt suppressed.

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).[14] Several groups at Stetson Law indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

   - Differences by racial identity:
     - Respondents of Color (59%, $n = 34$) were less likely to be "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the overall climate at Stetson Law than were White respondents (75%, $n = 192$).

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

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

    - 57% ($n = 20$) of Faculty respondents and 64% ($n = 47$) of Staff/Administrator respondents had seriously considered leaving Stetson Law in the past year.
        - 48% ($n = 32$) of those Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of tension with supervisor/manager.
    - 19% ($n = 21$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents observed unjust hiring, (33%, $n = 35$) unfair/unjust disciplinary actions, and (37%, $n = 39$) unfair or unjust promotion, tenure, and/or reclassification.
    - 46% ($n = 34$) of Staff and Administrator respondents felt that they were pressured by departmental/program work requirements that occurred outside of normally scheduled hours.
    - 51% ($n = 36$) of Staff and Administrator respondents believed that people who have children or elder care were burdened with balancing work and family responsibilities.
    - 59% ($n = 20$) of Faculty respondents felt valued by Stetson Law senior administrators.
    - 63% ($n = 45$) of Staff respondents reported that they were able to complete their assigned duties during scheduled hours.

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

    - 37% ($n = 11$) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that faculty opinions were valued within Stetson Law committees.
    - 26.3% ($n = 10$) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research/scholarship agenda to achieve tenure/promotion.
    - 55% (n = 17) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that they were burdened by service responsibilities.
    - 63% ($n = 20$) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that tenure standards/promotion standards were applied equally to all faculty in their academic unit.

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. Ten respondents elaborated on their responses to previous statements. Most spoke of the value of teaching. Many spoke of the need for creativity when teaching, using modern pedagogical focus and perspectives. They also spoke of the need to have effective teaching workshops and professional development.

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 Stetson Law survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

   - 6% of all respondents ($n = 22$) indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact of any kind while at Stetson Law.
   - All of the respondents who experienced unwanted sexual contact of any kind were Graduate/Professional Students; 77% ($n = 17$) were Women.
   - These respondents rarely reported to anyone at Stetson Law that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. Respondents did not report relationship violence because they did not want more attention or to cause trouble. The respondents also stated that they were concerned about the consequences of reporting the issue and the time involved. They also thought that they could handle it themselves. However, some did report the unwanted sexual contact and were disappointed with outcomes. In some of the cases, alcohol was involved and affected outcomes.

Conclusion

Stetson Law climate findings[15] were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.[16] For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "comfortable" or "very comfortable." A similar percentage (70%) of all Stetson Law respondents reported that they were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at Stetson Law. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Stetson Law, a similar percentage of respondents (25%) 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.[17]

Stetson Law's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Stetson Law's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Stetson Law, 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 Stetson Law community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Stetson Law, 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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[15]Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

[16]Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015

[17]Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009

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