



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Stetson University  
Deland

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

July 2016



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## Executive Summary

### 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."<sup>1</sup> 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 (DITF). In 2015, the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) was developed out of the DITF. 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<sup>2</sup> campus and the Gulfport campus<sup>3</sup>. Data gathered via reviews of relevant Stetson

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.stetson.edu/other/about/mission-and-values.php>

<sup>2</sup>The Deland campus also included data from the Center at Celebration

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 the Deland campus.

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<sup>3</sup>The Gulfport campus also included data from the Tampa Law Center.

### **Stetson University Deland Campus Participants**

Stetson University Deland Campus community members completed 1,082 surveys for an overall response rate of 26%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.<sup>4</sup> Response rates by constituent group varied: 22% ( $n = 624$ ) for Undergraduate Students, 18% ( $n = 56$ ) for Graduate Students, 29% ( $n = 154$ ) for Faculty, and 46% ( $n = 455$ ) for Staff. 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Fourteen surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and four duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ( $n = 0$ ).

<sup>5</sup>The total  $n$  for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

**Table 1. Stetson Deland Sample Demographics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Subgroup</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>% of Sample</b>
Position status	Undergraduate Student	624	57.7
	Graduate/Professional Student	56	5.2
	Faculty	154	14.2
	Administrator	37	3.4
	Staff	211	19.5
Gender identity	Man	333	30.8
	Women	708	65.4
Racial identity	Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean	36	3.3
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	74	6.8
	Other People of Color	81	7.5
	White	752	69.5
	Multiple Race	90	8.3
Sexual identity	LGBQ	148	13.7
	Heterosexual	876	81.0
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	962	88.9
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	113	10.4
Disability status	Disability	86	7.9
	No Disability	937	86.6
	Multiple Disability	51	4.7
Faith-based affiliation	Christian Affiliation	565	52.2
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	46	4.3
	No Affiliation	372	34.4
	Multiple Affiliation	55	5.1

**Note: 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 Stetson Deland

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>6</sup> The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 75% ( $n = 814$ ) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Stetson Deland.
- 77% ( $n = 309$ ) of Faculty and Staff respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 84% ( $n = 701$ ) of Student and Faculty respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- 78% ( $n = 260$ ) of Men respondents and 75% ( $n = 532$ ) 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 respondents felt that teaching (80%,  $n = 91$ ) and research (95%,  $n = 105$ ) were valued by Stetson Deland.
- Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that teaching (92%,  $n = 35$ ) was valued by Stetson Deland.
- 81% ( $n = 122$ ) of Faculty respondents felt that their teaching was valued.
- 59% ( $n = 88$ ) of Faculty respondents felt that their research/creative activity was valued.
- Only 11% ( $n = 11$ ) 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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<sup>6</sup>Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

- 97% ( $n = 143$ ) of Faculty respondents would recommend Stetson Deland as a good place to work.

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

- 61% ( $n = 149$ ) of Staff respondents reported that they were able to complete their assigned duties during scheduled hours.
- 84% ( $n = 65$ ) of Staff respondents believed that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.
- 83% ( $n = 205$ ) of Staff and Administrator respondents thought that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 82% ( $n = 200$ ) of Staff respondents believed that the campus provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 85% ( $n = 197$ ) of Staff respondents indicated that the campus was supportive of taking extended leave (e.g., FMLA, parental).
- 84% ( $n = 204$ ) of Staff respondents indicated that Stetson Deland is a good place to work.

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

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.<sup>7</sup> Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.<sup>8</sup> Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 82% ( $n = 551$ ) of Student respondents felt valued by Stetson Deland faculty, 72% ( $n = 484$ ) felt valued by Stetson Deland staff, and 38% ( $n = 252$ ) felt valued by Stetson Deland senior administrators.
- 78% ( $n = 522$ ) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom.
- 80% ( $n = 495$ ) of Student respondents had faculty whom they perceived as role models.

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<sup>7</sup>Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

<sup>8</sup>Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quayle, 2004

## 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 significant for three comparisons: Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean versus Other People of Color, Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ versus Other People of Color, and White<sup>9</sup> versus Other People of Color. These findings suggest that Students of Color (defined in these analyses as Students who identify with racial/ethnic minority groups other than Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean or Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@) have less *Perceived Academic Success* than Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean, Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@, or White 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.<sup>10</sup> Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.<sup>11</sup> The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 23% ( $n = 246$ ) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> White references respondents that reported identifying as White and no other race or ethnicity.

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

<sup>11</sup> Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

<sup>12</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 impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).



- 27% ( $n = 66$ ) noted that the conduct was based on their position status, 19% ( $n = 47$ ) felt that it was based on their ethnicity, 18% ( $n = 43$ ) felt that it was based on their gender/gender identity, and 16% ( $n = 39$ ) felt that it was based on their age.
- Differences emerged based on ethnicity/racial identity:
  - Significantly greater percentages of Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean respondents (37%,  $n = 27$ ) and Other People of Color (31%,  $n = 11$ ) believed that they had experienced this conduct than White respondents (21%,  $n = 155$ ),

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. More than 100 respondents from all constituent groups contributed further data regarding their personal experiences of exclusion, intimidation, and hostility at Stetson Deland. One common theme emerged from Student and Faculty respondents: students were often the perpetrators or considered harsh or destructive. Among Employee (Faculty, Staff, and Administrators) respondents, group conflict and workplace were two common topics. Employee respondents noted feeling like “second-class citizens,” and disrespected. Student respondents wrote about discrimination. They noted racist remarks online, derogatory slurs in person, and being heckled. The respondents who wrote about discrimination noted it was based on race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, politics, and faith-based affiliations.

## **2. One constituent group indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus 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, Other People of Color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, veterans).<sup>13</sup>

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

- Differences by racial identity:
  - Respondents of Color (69%,  $n = 131$ ) were less likely to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at Stetson Deland than were White respondents (78%,  $n = 585$ ).

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

- 57% ( $n = 66$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents, 63% ( $n = 12$ ) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents, and 51% ( $n = 127$ ) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving Stetson Deland in the past year.
  - 52% ( $n = 113$ ) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of financial reasons.
- 19% ( $n = 75$ ) of Faculty and Staff respondents observed unjust hiring; (15%,  $n = 59$ ) observed unfair, unjust disciplinary actions; and (22%,  $n = 87$ ) observed unfair or unjust promotion, tenure, and/or reclassification.
- 40% ( $n = 98$ ) of Staff and Administrator respondents felt that they were pressured by departmental/program work requirements that occurred outside of normally scheduled hours.
- 52% ( $n = 124$ ) of Staff respondents felt that Stetson Deland provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.
- 40% ( $n = 90$ ) of Staff respondents believed that people who have children or elder care were burdened with balancing work and family responsibilities.
- 39% ( $n = 60$ ) of Faculty respondents felt valued by Stetson Deland senior administrators.

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

- 32% ( $n = 35$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that faculty opinions were valued within Stetson Deland committees.
- 58% ( $n = 22$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that tenure standards/promotion standards were applied equally to all faculty in their schools/division.

- 18% ( $n = 18$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research/scholarship agenda to achieve tenure/promotion.
- 38% ( $n = 40$ ) of Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that they were burdened by service responsibilities.
- 84% ( $n = 32$ ) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt burdened by service responsibilities beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
- 46% ( $n = 17$ ) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that their opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. Primarily, many respondents were concerned with the decision-making process used by the administration, particularly as it related to faculty input. Faculty respondents also wrote about the high service burden, lack of participation in substantive committees, and expected conformity within committees. Additionally, Faculty respondents remarked that while the tenure and promotion process is clear, it is easy to discriminate, and guidelines were not applied fairly.

##### **5. A 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 Deland survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 125 (12%) respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at Stetson Deland.
- 113 (90%) of the 125 respondents who experienced unwanted sexual assault were Undergraduate Students; 97 (77%) were Women.
- These respondents rarely reported to anyone at Stetson Deland that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. Two themes emerged among Stetson Deland’ respondents who explained why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. The primary rationale offered by respondents for not reporting these incidents was that the incident was not significant enough to report. Respondents also mentioned negative perceptions and possible consequences should they choose to report the incident.

### **Conclusion**

Stetson Deland climate findings<sup>14</sup> were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.<sup>15</sup> For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “comfortable” or “very comfortable.” A similar percentage (75%) of all Stetson Deland respondents reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Stetson Deland. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Stetson Deland, a similar percentage of respondents (23%) 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.<sup>16</sup>

Stetson Deland’s climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Stetson Deland’s mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Stetson Deland, 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 Deland community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Stetson Deland, with

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<sup>14</sup>Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

<sup>15</sup>[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

<sup>16</sup>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

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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