



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Kent State University Regional Campuses

Campus Climate Research Study Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Kent State 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.

Kent State is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Kent State University's mission statement, "We transform lives and communities through the power of discovery, learning and creative expression in an inclusive environment."¹ In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Kent State recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for Kent State students, faculty, and staff.

To that end, members of Kent State University formed the Climate Study Steering Committee (CSSC) in 2014. The CSSC was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Kent State contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Kent State University Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working." Data gathered via reviews of relevant Kent State 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, strategic action initiatives will be developed.

¹<http://www.kent.edu/strategicvisioning#mission>

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The CSSC collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 17 focus groups, comprised of 87 participants (44 students; 43 faculty and staff). In the second phase, the CSSC 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 November 2015. Kent State's survey contained 104 items (20 qualitative and 84 quantitative) and was available through a secure online portal from March 8 to April 8, 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 Kent State'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 CSSC 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, Kent State'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.

Kent State University - Regional Campuses' Participants

Kent State University - Regional Campuses' community members completed 1,587 surveys for an overall response rate of 13%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.² Response rates by constituent group varied: 9% ($n = 971$) for Undergraduate Students, 80% ($n = 16$) for Graduate Students, 17% ($n = 266$) for Staff, 19% ($n =$

²Ten surveys were removed because at least 50% of the survey was not completed, and eight duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the aggregate data file if the respondent did not provide consent ($n = 80$). An additional 1 response was removed due to illogical responses.

300) for Faculty, and >100% ($n = 34$) for Administrators with Faculty Rank.³ 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.⁴

³Respondents were provided the opportunity to self-select their position status, as such the sample n may not reflect the overall N of the Kent State University – Regional Campuses population.

⁴The total n for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. Kent State University – Regional Campus Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	Population		Sample		Response Rate
		<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Gender Identity ^a	Woman	7,781	62.5	1,088	68.6	13.98
	Man	4,672	37.5	463	29.2	9.91
	Genderqueer			10	0.6	N/A
	Transgender			< 5	---	N/A
	Other/Missing/Unknown			24	1.5	N/A
Race/Ethnicity ^b	Alaskan/Native American	34	0.3	< 5	---	---
	Asian/Asian American	132	1.1	21	1.3	15.91
	Black/African American	680	5.5	54	3.4	7.94
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	291	2.3	17	1.1	5.84
	Middle Eastern			< 5	---	N/A
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	10	0.1	< 5	---	---
	White/European American	10,600	85.1	1,353	85.3	12.76
	Two or More	284	2.3	75	4.7	26.41
	Missing/Unknown/Not Specified/Other	362	2.9	40	2.5	11.05
	International	60	0.5	21	1.3	35.00
Position Status ^c	Undergraduate Student	11,023	88.5	971	61.2	8.81
	Graduate/Professional Student	20	0.2	16	1.0	80.00
	Faculty	863	6.9	300	18.9	34.76
	Administrator with Faculty Rank	18	0.1	34	2.1	>100.0
	Staff	529	4.2	266	16.8	50.28
Citizenship ^d	U.S. Citizen	12,243	98.3	1,558	98.2	12.73
	Permanent Resident	83	0.7	12	0.8	14.46
	Visa Holder	42	0.3	8	0.5	19.05
	Other Status			< 5	---	N/A
	Unreported/Missing	85	0.7	8	0.5	9.41

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

^a $X^2(1, N = 1,551) = 38.38, p < .001$

^b $X^2(7, N = 1,584) = 87.51, p < .001$

^c $X^2(4, N = 1,587) = 1,775.31, p < .001$

^d $X^2(3, N = 1,586) = 3.15, p = .369$

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at a Kent State University - Regional Campus

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.”⁵ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 79% ($n = 1,254$) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at a Kent State University - Regional Campus.
- 73% ($n = 440$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 86% ($n = 1,123$) of Student and Faculty respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- 79% ($n = 86$) of People of Color respondents, 80% ($n = 1,089$) of White respondents, and 82% ($n = 62$) of Multiracial respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at a Kent State University - Regional Campus.

2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- 68% ($n = 218$) of Faculty respondents felt that teaching was valued by Kent State.
- 81% ($n = 82$) of Tenure and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents indicated that they found Kent State was supportive of the use of sabbatical/faculty professional improvement leave.
- 75% ($n = 136$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that their points of view were taken into account for course assignment and scheduling.
- 89% ($n = 284$) of Faculty respondents felt valued by students in the classroom.

⁵Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

3. Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work

- 94% ($n = 244$) of Staff respondents felt that Kent State was supportive of staff taking leave.
- 77% ($n = 193$) of Staff respondents felt they had colleagues/coworkers who provided them with job/career advice when they needed it.
- 82% ($n = 107$) of Staff respondents felt they had adequate access to administrative support to do their job.
- 78% ($n = 208$) of Staff respondents felt valued by coworkers in their unit.
- 74% ($n = 194$) of Staff respondents felt valued by their supervisors or managers.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

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

- 77% ($n = 785$) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom.
- 72% ($n = 705$) of Student respondents felt that Kent State faculty were genuinely concerned with their welfare.
- 72% ($n = 706$) of Student respondents believed that the campus climate encouraged free and open discussion.

5. Undergraduate Student Respondents – *Perceived 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:

- Woman Undergraduate Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Men Undergraduate Student respondents.
- No Disability Undergraduate Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Single Disability Undergraduate Student respondents and Multiple Disabilities Undergraduate Student respondents.

⁶Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁷Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

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

- 16% ($n = 258$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.¹⁰
 - 29% ($n = 75$) noted that the conduct was based on their position status.
 - 21% ($n = 54$) felt that it was based on their faculty status.
 - 21% ($n = 53$) felt that it was based on their age.
- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, ethnicity, and age. For example:
 - Significantly higher percentages of Faculty respondents (28%, $n = 93$) and Staff respondents (28%, $n = 73$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct than did Student respondents (9%, $n = 92$).
 - Higher percentages¹¹ of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents (39%, $n = 40$) than Tenure-Track Faculty respondents (31%, $n = 33$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.
 - A higher percentage¹² of Women respondents (17%, $n = 183$) than Men respondents (14%, $n = 64$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

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

⁹Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

¹⁰The 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).

¹¹These differences were not significant.

¹²These differences were not significant.

- Significantly higher percentages of respondents ages 49 through 65 years (27%, $n = 95$) and ages 35 through 48 years (20%, $n = 63$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct than did all other age group respondents.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. More than 200 respondents from all constituent groups contributed further data regarding their personal experiences of exclusion, intimidation, and hostility at a Kent State University - Regional Campus. Two themes emerged from narratives provided in this data: public bullying and hostility/intimidation. The respondents described that the public bullying and hostility/intimidation they experienced on campus made them feel foolish, awkward, humiliated, and fearful of their positions at the institution – both employees and students. The data suggested that at some of the regional campuses respondents either do not trust the reporting process or are fearful of retaliation should they reveal their concerns.

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).¹³

Several groups at the Kent State University - Regional Campuses indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- Differences by gender identity:
 - 79% ($n = 363$) of Men respondents and 80% ($n = 869$) of Women respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at a Kent State University - Regional Campus¹⁴.

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

¹⁴These differences were not significant

- Differences by racial identity:
 - People of Color Faculty and Staff respondents (74%, $n = 23$) and White Faculty and Staff respondents (75%, $n = 388$) were less likely to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units at a Kent State University - Regional Campus than were Multiracial Faculty and Staff respondents (86%, $n = 18$).
- Differences by sexual identity:
 - Asexual/Other Faculty and Student respondents (81%, $n = 75$) and LGBTQ Faculty and Student respondents (81%, $n = 91$) were less likely to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their courses at a Kent State University - Regional Campus than were Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents (87%, $n = 924$).

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

- 45% ($n = 150$) of Faculty respondents and 55% ($n = 147$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving a Kent State University - Regional Campus in the past year.
 - 56% ($n = 166$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of financial reasons.
- Faculty and Staff respondents observed unjust hiring (18%, $n = 107$), unjust disciplinary actions (10%, $n = 56$), or unjust promotion, tenure, and/or reclassification practices (29%, $n = 170$).
- 54% ($n = 149$) of Faculty respondents thought that their departments provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.
- 70% ($n = 164$) of Staff respondents felt that their supervisors provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.
- 53% ($n = 166$) of Faculty respondents believed that they performed more work to help students beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- Less than one-third of Tenure and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents (29%, $n = 30$) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that tenure standards, promotion standards, and/or reappointment standards were applied equally to all faculty.
- Slightly more than half (55%, $n = 172$) of Faculty respondents felt that their service contributions were valued.
- 38% ($n = 119$) of Faculty respondents believed that faculty voices were valued in shared governance.

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. Leadership at the regional campuses was a major concern for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents. They expressed that the academic leaders at the campuses were ill trained and were often not on the same page as what was being espoused from the central administrative offices. Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents offered that their perceived value by their full-time faculty counterparts was what troubled them most, as they did not feel respected or valued by their tenure and tenure-track colleagues. Overall, Faculty at the Kent State – Regional Campuses expressed concerns regarding their teaching loads, lamenting the excessive hours and the limited pay they received for the work they produced.

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 Kent State survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 1% ($n = 14$) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at a Kent State University - Regional Campus.

- 10 of the respondents who experienced unwanted sexual contact were Undergraduate Students
- 8 of the respondents who experienced unwanted sexual contact were Women.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. However, owing to the small number of responses and in an effort to protect the confidentiality of the respondents their narratives were not analyzed to create a thematic narrative of their shared experiences.

Conclusion

Kent State University - Regional Campuses' climate findings¹⁵ 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 (79%) of all Kent State University - Regional Campuses' respondents reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at a Kent State University - Regional Campus. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At the Kent State University - Regional Campuses, a smaller but still meaningful percentage of respondents (16%) 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

The Kent State University - Regional Campuses' climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Kent State's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at the Kent State University - Regional Campuses, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of any institution and unique

¹⁵Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹⁶[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

¹⁷Guiffrida, 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

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 Kent State University - Regional Campuses' communities with an opportunity to build upon their strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Each Kent State University - Regional Campus, 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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