California State University, Dominguez Hills

Campus Climate
Report

Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice

Fall 2023

Campus Climate
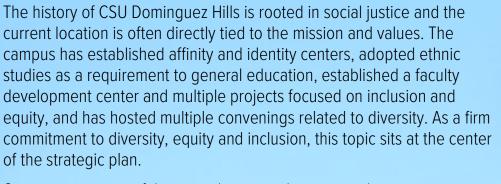
Report

About this Report

The newly established Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion led by Vice President, Dr. Bobbie Porter, led an effort to understand the climate of inclusion. This included gleaning perceptions and input from the campus community through a review and analysis of existing efforts from the past five years. Each effort had a different focus, from engagement to equity, leadership aspirations to ratings of the extent to which CSUDH represents a multicultural institution.

How to Read This Report

his report is organized by the themes identified in the data with a summary of the evidence to describe and bring life to the perceptions expressed across campus.

Background

The history of CSU Dominguez Hills is rooted in social justice and the current location is often directly tied to the mission and values. The campus has established affinity and identity centers, adopted ethnic studies as a requirement to general education, established a faculty development center and multiple projects focused on inclusion and equity, and has hosted multiple convenings related to diversity. As a firm commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, this topic sits at the center of the strategic plan.

Our campus is one of the most diverse in the state and region. Our student body closely represents the demography of the region. While the staff and faculty are not as representative, the gap is less than at many other California State Universities and as compared to national averages.

The campus recognizes that representation is just one pillar to consider toward creating an inclusive campus. Although there is still work to be done, the campus has made considerable progress in the area of access. CSU Dominguez Hills has been recognized as a leader in economic mobility, noting that those students who complete their degree have positive outcomes.[1]

However, the campus has significant work to do to achieve its goals for degree completion and close the opportunity gaps for students by racial and ethnic identities, men, and first-generation students.

Campus Climate Overview

Overall, students, faculty, staff, and administrators consider CSUDH to be welcoming to diverse groups of students, staff, faculty, and administration. Staff report this less strongly when compared to all other groups, and their perspective is the most divergent from that of students, who report the strongest agreement about the campus' welcoming climate for all groups. Faculty and administrators fall in between these two groups. Students and staff often positively note the diversity of the campus.[2, 4, 10]

On questions about belonging from the 2020 National Survey of Student Engagement, 92% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel comfortable being themselves at CSUDH, 88% feel valued by CSUDH, and 87% feel like part of the CSUDH community.[6] In focus groups conducted in 2021, students noted that they identified with the campus because of its diversity, the opportunities offered, community and belonging, family and friendship, representation, and faculty support. Some students underscored that a strength is connecting with peers who have different life experiences, like non-traditional and first-generation students, those with families or former foster youth, or students from different nationalities or ethnicities.[10] Supportive interactions across campus are a key element of the student experience (see more details below).

In 2017, faculty reported both their department and the campus as welcoming to female faculty and ethnically underrepresented faculty and that departments appreciate student diversity and help retain faculty of color. Survey results indicate very few incidents of harassment or discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity reported by faculty at that time.[3] However, in the 2018-19 Climate survey, LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as those who identify as having a disability, report less agreement that CSUDH is welcoming and respectful of these identities.[2]

When faculty were asked questions about feeling valued and having a voice in decision making and operations, there were differences in response by identity group, e.g., higher ratings were given by men, full-time faculty, and those who identified as White or Asian (see Table 1).[3] Similar patterns were found when faculty were asked about the level of support faculty of color receive compared to white faculty (see Table 2).[2]

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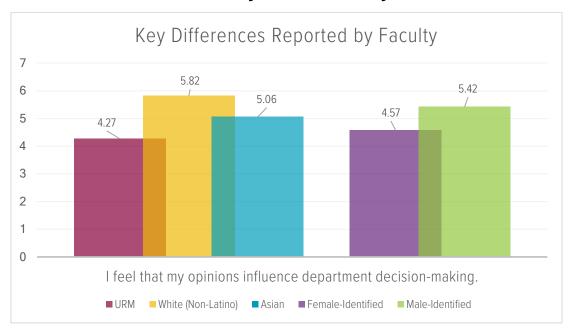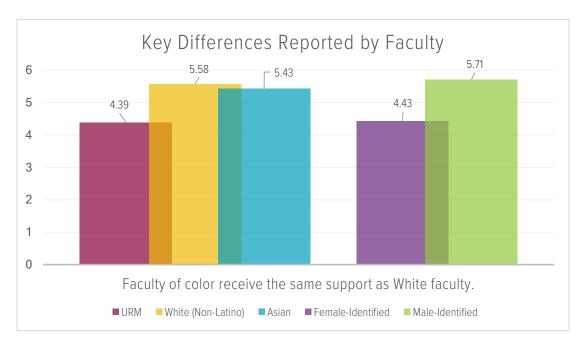## Table 1 – Faculty Climate Survey, 2017

Key Differences Reported by Faculty

	URM	White (Non-Latino)	Asian	Female-Identified	Male-Identified
I feel that my opinions influence department decision-making.	4.27	5.82	5.06	4.57	5.42

Table 2 – Campus Climate Survey, 2018-2019

Key Differences Reported by Faculty

	URM	White (Non-Latino)	Asian	Female-Identified	Male-Identified
Faculty of color receive the same support as White faculty.	4.39	5.58	5.43	4.43	5.71

Notably, respondents in both climate surveys [2,3] expressed doubts in the comments sections that their input would result in real change. These doubts suggest alignment with the "Symbolic Change" and "Identity Change" perspectives identified by faculty and staff in the Multicultural Institutions Survey, rather than the "Structural Change" and "Fully Inclusive Anti-racist" categories on the continuum that include substantive changes that dismantle racism, structural inequality, and work toward full inclusivity. Despite these expressed doubts, the quantitative findings of the 2018-19 Climate survey indicated wide agreement across all groups that campus leadership see the promotion of diversity and inclusion as critical and important. Thus, the question seems to be whether the beliefs and values are being translated enough into action.

Supportive Interactions

Students broadly cited caring, high-quality faculty and staff as contributing factors to their sense of belonging and others cited communicative leaders as valuable.[7] Students described staff and faculty as caring and making concerted efforts to help and support students.[8] Students also described the following qualities that they identified with "what it means to be a Toro," further explicating some of the facets within the ideas of 'community and belonging' and 'family and friendship' that they identify as part of their CSUDH experience: hard working achievers, resilient in the face of challenges, fearless and proud, supportive of each other (especially through COVID-19), driven and perseverent.[10]

Students who identified across racial identities reported high quality of interactions with people across campus, and faculty specifically.[6] A deeper look into the classroom experience identified some differences; despite Black/African American students rating student-faculty interactions higher than their Hispanic/Latino peers, they also perceived an environment that was not as supportive and teaching practices that were not as effective, as compared to Hispanic/Latino students. Further, Hispanic/Latino students, comparatively, perceived lower levels of collaborative learning and discussions with diverse others (see Table 3).[6] Similarly, first-generation students reported lower scores on both the quality of interactions and in experiencing effective teaching practices compared to non-first-generation students.[6] These findings were validated by other studies that found students who reported lower levels of engagement also had a lower sense of belonging and thriving.[6, 7]
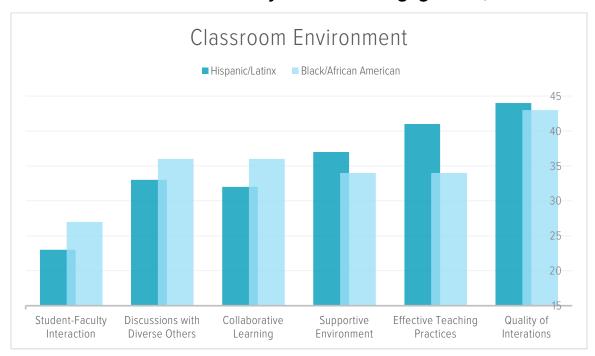
Table 3 – National Survey of Student Engagement, 2020

Classroom Environment

■ Hispanic/Latinx ■ Black/African American

The 2018-19 Campus Climate Survey findings identified which groups might benefit from targeted efforts. Students reported that the campus was more welcoming for cis-gender students as compared to non-binary and regarding race and ethnicity, was most welcoming for multi-racial and Asian American students and least welcoming for Middle Eastern and Native students (see Table 4).[2]
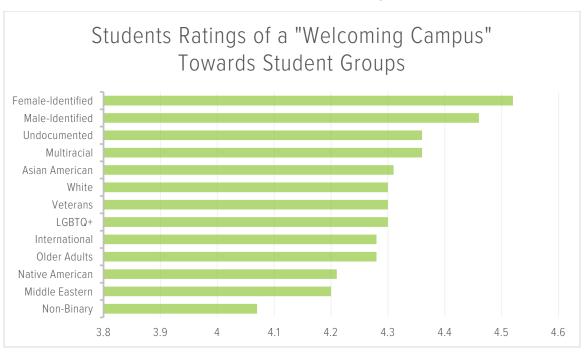
Table 4 – Campus Climate Survey, 2018-2019

Students Ratings of a "Welcoming Campus" Towards Student Groups

Responsiveness

Despite students generally reporting feeling welcome at CSU Dominguez Hills and cared for by faculty and staff, there is also a call for more responsiveness to student feedback. Some perspectives included improving response to students, expanding outreach programs, improving resources for affinity centers, improving accessibility, and increasing staffing of support services to realize the goal of a student centered and equitable environment. [8] Additionally, students noted that challenges such as food and housing insecurity, need for better public transportation, and student debt were paramount to increasing access and inclusion.[8]

While students reported that they were at times taught by professors who got to know them, responded to requests right away, and included their culture and familiar perspectives in class, others did not. This included students feeling uncomfortable being asked in class to speak on behalf of the views of the identity group to which they belong.[8] Students also reported that faculty or advisors may wait two weeks to reply to email, or not reply at all. [10]

Additionally, students would like faculty to address what is going on in the world including the range of social and political movements, to address race explicitly, and to identify what is being done to dismantle inequalities.[8] Despite these calls for paying more attention explicitly to the state of the world, students notably identified CSUDH as a "Fully Inclusive Anti-racist" institution in the Multicultural Institutions Survey much more than did faculty and staff, who were more critical of CSUDH on the Multicultural Institutions continuum; they rated the campus between "Symbolic Change" and "Identity Change," suggesting campus needs to do more to dismantle systems that support and reproduce inequality. This was particularly true for Black and White respondents (who were most likely faculty and staff) compared to Latinx, Asian, and Mixed-Race respondents who were most likely students – suggesting different experiences and perspectives among these racial and ethnic (and campus role) groups.[4]

Transparency

Transparency and awareness about efforts to change things is important to impact campus climate. Findings in both the 2018-19 Climate Survey and of the Gender Equity Task Force report led to recommendations about holding campus events, discussions, town halls, etc. to facilitate a space "...where we speak openly about barriers to specific kinds of equity and justice and how we are addressing them, report our progress on closing equity gaps for faculty and staff as well as for students, and celebrate successes of women and BIPOC" (p. 6).[5]

The campus community would like to see greater willingness to talk about inequities as an ongoing practice and to link the recommendations to action without retaliation.[5]

Faculty in 2017 did not agree that departments provided transparency in budgeting or that promotions were fair and objective.[3] They were neutral in their agreement that merit was the most important criteria used in evaluation, and they noted that standards for promotion and tenure were unclear and informal. They were also neutral in feeling free to express their opinion without fear of reprisal.[3]

Part-time faculty also expressed neutral ratings when asked if assignments were handled transparently and if the evaluation process is fair and equitable.[3] While the faculty were somewhat positive about the California Faculty Association positively representing their interests, they were less positive about the effectiveness of Academic Senate.[3]

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Faculty in 2017 did not agree that promotions were fair and objective.

Faculty were less positive about the effectiveness of Academic Senate

Equitable Labor & Recognition

Faculty, staff, and administrators who identified as women experienced a gendered expectation around service and described feeling like they are doing more service and volunteer work on campus (i.e., serving on committees and sometimes being asked to lead them, advising, and serving the role of department chair).[5] Many women believed increased service takes time away from work and getting work done during the typical workday. The assumptions that women would take on the overload, combined with limited operational support, led to many reporting operational exhaustion.[5] Women in staff positions reported commonly feeling passed over for promotions, leadership, and professional development opportunities that would better position them for advancement.[5] The Gender Equity Task Force concluded that identity taxation and service imbalances are endemic throughout campus.

Female-identified employees described feeling like they were doing more service and volunteer work on campus.	Female-identified staff reported commonly feeling passed over for promotions, leadership, and professional development opportunities.	Employees of color reported experiencing cultural taxation.	Faculty agreed that bias, racism, and sexism routinely structure interactions on campus

In addition to the gendered experience of faculty who identify as women, faculty and staff also reported experiencing cultural taxation, with people of color (especially women of color) feeling like they do a greater share of service and volunteering that supports students and the community, to the detriment of their regular responsibilities, and their personal health and wellbeing.[5] Faculty agreed that bias, racism, and sexism routinely structure interactions on campus and they point to a lack of diversity in the higher ranks, which they attribute to a retention more than a hiring problem. Some progress has been made in more recent years to support faculty of color and women faculty in STEM,[9] and these efforts should be continued. Further, women especially shared multiple suggestions to see, hear, and address the issues. For example, additional tracking for service combined with awards and compensation are necessary.[8]

Professional Development & Training

When asked about how to make the campus more inclusive, faculty and staff sought to enhance the campus community through actions such as campus wide anti-racist conversations, increasing the diversity of the faculty and staff, and enhancing professional development to strengthen the diverse, equitable and inclusive climate.[8] Racism was cited as a major issue that is impacting higher education, particularly for people of color. Faculty noted that they felt invited and supported by administration in doing anti-racist work. However, to address this adequately, they noted that additional resources will be needed to clarify expectations, goals, and definitions and then to develop robust, on-going, sustained professional development programming.[8] The Anti-Racism in the Academy Taskforce specifically recommends adding anti-racism training into the curriculum for everyone on campus: faculty, staff, administrators, and students alike.[4]

Students cited a need for training for faculty and staff, seen as critical for creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment.[8] Faculty want training beyond the minimum required for compliance (delivered by CSU via portal), and they want it to be regular and ongoing, comprehensive, engaging, and applicable (especially regarding difficult dialogue), and for all faculty (tenured or tenure track and non-tenure track).[2, 4, 5] This aspect can be linked to equitable workload and taxation; faculty noted that additional training would prepare more faculty to mentor and advise students across racial and ethnic backgrounds, thereby reducing the burden on the few faculty who share identities with historically marginalized identities.[8]

Additionally, faculty identified specific training as critical for certain service on campus, such as participation on a search committee or in a leadership role. Further, faculty recommended training to advance transformation of policies and procedures, especially around leading change through governance processes.[8]

The campus community seeks to enhance professional development to strengthen the diverse, equitable and inclusive climate.

Recommendations

Be more responsive to student concerns and transparent in plans to address them. Be more transparent in practices and processes. This includes creating space for all members of the community to feel valued and to openly express their opinions, even when they are dissenting. Create clear connections between campus input and decision making. Clarify standards and process for reappointment tenure and promotion, other merit-based recognition and awards, and budgeting.

Be more attentive to and address the different experiences of communities that feel marginalized. This includes Black and African American, Middle Eastern, Women, Native American, International students, and LGBTQ+ members of the DH community. Strive to remove equity gaps in belonging and feeling valued for part-time faculty instructors and staff – and especially the women in these populations.

Establish campus commitment to ongoing engagement with climate via a Campus Climate Committee that will collect and engage continuously with information such as: conducting surveys, focus groups, and comparative analyses with other campuses; disseminate findings and lead discussions; design interventions, create, and enact plans of action; and review progress.

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Be more attentive to and address the different experiences of communities that feel marginalized.

References

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[3] Faculty Climate Survey, 2017
[4] Multicultural Institutions Survey, 2021
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[8] Strategic Plan Qualitative Analysis, 2021
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