

Executive Summary

College campuses are complex social systems. They are defined by the relationships between faculty, staff, students, and alumni; bureaucratic procedures embodied by institutional policies; structural frameworks; institutional missions, visions, and core values; institutional history and traditions; and larger social contexts (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, Alma, & Allen, 1998).

Institutional missions suggest that higher education values multicultural awareness and understanding within an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Academic communities expend a great deal of effort fostering a climate to nurture their missions with the understanding that climate has a profound effect on the academic community's ability to excel in teaching, research, and scholarship. Institutional strategic plans advocate creating welcoming and inclusive climates that are grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

The climate on college campuses not only affects the creation of knowledge, but also affects members of the academic community who, in turn, contribute to the creation of the campus climate. Several national education association reports and higher education researchers advocate creating a more inclusive, welcoming climate on college campuses (Boyer, 1990; AAC&U, 1995; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ingle, 2005; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). The reports suggest that in order to provide a foundation for a vital community of learning, a primary mission of the academy must be to create a climate that cultivates diversity and celebrates difference. Because of the inherent complexity of the topic of diversity, it is crucial to examine the multiple dimensions of diversity in higher education. The conceptual model used as the foundation for this assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith (1999) and modified by Rankin (2002).

Carleton College supports diversity initiatives¹ as evidenced by its support and commitment to this climate assessment project. In the spring of 2007, the Carleton Diversity Initiative Group (DIG) contacted Rankin & Associates (R&A), a leader in conducting campus climate assessments in higher education. DIG invited R&A to present a proposal to the Carleton community and various selected constituent groups, which resulted in Carleton contracting with R&A to facilitate a campus-wide climate assessment.

Fact-finding groups were held in January 2008 to gather information from Carleton College students, staff, and faculty about their perceptions of the system climate. Using the information garnered in the fact-finding groups, R&A and a sub-committee of DIG developed the survey instrument that was administered to campus in April 2008.

The Diversity Initiative Committee (DIG) sub-committee assisted in coordinating the survey effort on campus. The DIG sub-committee reviewed the survey template and revised the instrument to better match the campus context at Carleton College. The final survey contained 100 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the findings of the internal assessment.

All members of the campus community (e.g., students, faculty, and staff) were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was designed for respondents to provide information about their personal experiences with regard to climate issues, their perceptions of the campus climate, student and employee satisfaction, and respondents' perceptions of institutional actions, including administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding climate issues and concerns on campus.

The DIG sub-committee reviewed a draft of the final report in August 2008. A summary of the findings suggests that while Carleton College faces several challenges with regard to climate issues, these challenges parallel those identified in higher education institutions across

¹ For more information on Carleton's diversity initiatives see <http://apps.carleton.edu/governance/diversity/> and Appendix D that contains the *Carleton College Mission & Statement on Diversity*.

the country². The quantitative and qualitative findings uncovered three areas where respondents felt that Carleton was succeeding with regard to climate issues and respondents also identified four major challenges that revolve around an overarching theme of power and privilege. Three strengths/successes emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data. First, many respondents spoke positively about campus climate. These findings should be noted and credited. However, upon further reflection and analysis of the data, many of the respondents who shared encouraging and affirmative feedback about the campus climate were members of majority groups. Most respondents who provided discouraging comments and less confident feelings about the campus climate were from less privileged groups, particularly people of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Institutional support for faculty and staff towards professional development was indicated as a major strength of the College, and an important reason why many employees were satisfied with their jobs and how their careers have progressed at Carleton. Student respondents were also very complementary about faculty and their professionalism, knowledge, and skills. A final strength is the appreciation and excitement expressed by a number of respondents for this survey and the initiatives to address and improve the climate taken by the College.

There were also several challenges uncovered in the assessment. The first challenge is institutional classism, which was a source of difficulty for many students and staff members. Numerous student respondents underscored the socioeconomic differences among the student body, and an overall sense of elitism on campus. Twenty seven percent of students reported experiencing harassment on the basis of their socioeconomic status and that the most common source of that harassment were other students. Student respondents referred to the “typical” Carleton student as being privileged with regard to their affluence and educational backgrounds. Socioeconomic differences became evident to many student respondents through conversations where students discussed expensive vacations, having more than one home, or parental careers. One student stated “the rich kids hang out with the rich kids and the poor kids hang out with the poor ones.” Students who do not have to work while at Carleton were described as having more opportunity to excel academically. Recommendations to increase socioeconomic diversity

² Rankin, S. and Reason, R. (forthcoming). *Transformational Tapestry Model: A comprehensive approach for assessing and improving campus climates for underrepresented and underserved populations*. New York: Stylus Publications.

among the student body were offered by student respondents. Similar findings were reported by staff members where perceived inequities between exempt and non-exempt staff were emphasized during the fact-finding groups and in both the quantitative and qualitative findings. Exempt staff respondents were perceived by many to have greater status and therefore greater privilege within the institution than non-exempt staff members. Staff members in general were more likely than faculty and student respondents to experience harassment, and more than one-quarter identified the basis for the harassment as institutional status. Other respondents noted unfair differences between faculty and staff members particularly mentorship opportunities and how some staff members reported feeling like “second class citizens” when compared to faculty.

The second challenge relates to race. More than twice as many people of color reported experiencing harassment than white people at Carleton. Race was the second most common basis for harassment for all respondents at Carleton. A more in-depth analysis suggested fifty-nine percent of respondents of color who experienced harassment indicated it was based on their race as compared to only five percent of white respondents. When compared with white students, students of color felt less valued by faculty and students, and felt faculty, staff, and administrators were less concerned about their welfare. Students of color were also more likely to think faculty pre-judged their abilities based on their identity, and that there were racial/ethnic tension both in the classroom and social situations than their white counterparts. As first-year students, Students of color felt less confident of their abilities to succeed at Carleton and less academically prepared for Carleton than white students. Faculty and staff of color reported that they were more likely to have thought about leaving Carleton compared to white faculty and staff. Throughout the qualitative responses, many white respondents described hearing about experiences with racism both on campus and in the surrounding community, and many respondents of color described experiencing racism in the aforementioned locations.

The experiences shared by women respondents and sexual minority respondents call attention to the third and fourth challenge at Carleton: gender and sexual orientation. Slightly more women reported experiencing harassment than their male counterparts. Of the twenty-one percent of women who reported experiencing harassment, thirty percent indicated the harassment was based on their gender. The results suggest that women were more likely than men to be

sexually harassed and assaulted. When reviewing these results by position women students were the primary target. More than half of sexual minority respondents who experienced harassment indicated it was based on their sexual orientation while less than one percent of heterosexual respondents attributed the harassment to their sexual orientation. Many sexual minority respondents shared their experiences with homophobia on campus and in the surrounding community in their qualitative responses.

Following are summaries of the demographic characteristics of respondents, quantitative data, and qualitative comments. Readers are encouraged to review the full report for more specific details.

Sample Demographics

A total of 1,523 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 56 percent response rate
- 1,056 undergraduate students
 - 300 first year students, 263 second year students, 273 third year students, 220 fourth year students
- 161 faculty members
 - 131 faculty members (tenure/tenure track), 14 adjunct/PEAR faculty members, and 16 visiting faculty members
- 306 staff members
 - 159 exempt staff members, 101 non-exempt/non-union staff members, 40 non-exempt/union staff members, 5 Sodexo staff members
- 340 people of color³; 1,160 white respondents
- 20 people who identified as having a physical disability
- 43 people who identified as having a learning disability
- 48 people who identified as having a psychological condition
- 169 people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer, or pansexual
- 907 women; 603 men; 9 transgender/gender queer⁴
- 899 people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian
- 61 people who identified as having international status.

³ While recognizing the vastly different experiences of people of various racial identities (e.g., Chicano(a) versus African-American or Latino(a) versus Asian-American), and those experiences within these identity categories (e.g., Hmong versus Chinese), Rankin and Associates found it necessary to collapse some of these categories to conduct the analyses due to the small numbers of respondents in the individual categories.

⁴ Transgender” refers to identity that does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these (Oxford English Dictionary 2003). OED Online. March 2004. Oxford UW Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

Quantitative Findings

Personal Experiences with Campus Climate⁵

- **Within the past two years, 23 percent of respondents (n = 348) had personally experienced exclusionary (e.g., shunned, ignored), intimidating, offensive and/or hostile conduct (harassing behavior) that has interfered with their ability to work or learn on campus (hereafter referred to as harassment)⁶. Gender was most often cited as the reason given for the harassment. Women, respondents of color, sexual minorities⁷, and people with disabilities experienced such harassment more often than their men, white, heterosexual, and able-bodied counterparts. Many of them felt it was due to their gender, race, sexual orientation or disability status.**

Harassment largely went unreported.

- Twenty-three percent of respondents had personally experienced offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus.
- The conduct was most often based on the respondents' gender.
- Compared with 18 percent of white people, 38 percent of people of color had personally experienced such conduct.
- Of respondents of color who reported experiencing this conduct, 59 percent stated it was because of their race.
- Compared with 21 percent of men, 24 percent of women had personally experienced such conduct.
- Of the women who experienced this conduct, 39 percent stated it was because of their gender.
- Compared with 21 percent of heterosexual respondents, 34 percent of sexual minority respondents had personally experienced such conduct.
- Of sexual minority respondents who experienced this conduct, 51 percent stated it was because of their sexual orientation.

⁵ Listings in the narrative are those responses with the greatest percentages. For a complete listing of the results, the reader is directed to the tables in the narrative and Appendix A.

⁶ Under the United States Code Title 18 Subsection 1514(c)1, harassment is defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose" (<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html>). In higher education institutions, legal issues discussions define harassment as any conduct that has unreasonably interfered with one's ability to work or learn on campus. The questions used in this survey to uncover participants' personal and observed experiences with harassment were designed using these definitions.

⁷ Sexual minorities are defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and pansexual.

- Faculty and staff respondents were likely to indicate that the harassment was based on their status at Carleton College. Specifically, more than one-third (34%, n = 26) of staff respondents who experienced offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct reported that it was due to their status as staff, while one-quarter (26%, n = 7) of faculty respondents indicated it was due to their status as faculty.
- Ten percent of participants made complaints to Carleton officials, while 22 percent did not know who to go to, and 10 percent did not report the incident for fear of retaliation.
- Although International respondents were almost equally as likely to have experienced offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct at Carleton when compared with U.S. citizen respondents, they were nine times more likely to report that these experiences were based on their country of origin than U.S. citizen respondents.
- **A small percentage of respondents had been sexually harassed.**
 - Six percent of respondents had been sexually harassed during their time at Carleton College.
 - Women, people of color, and people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and pansexual were more likely than other groups to have been sexually harassed.
 - Most of the survivors of sexual harassment at Carleton were students (n = 77), female (n = 73), heterosexual (n = 70), and white (n = 58).
 - The perpetrator of the sexual harassment was most often a student (67%).
- **A small percentage of respondents had been sexually assaulted.**
 - Two percent of respondents had been sexually assaulted during their time at Carleton College.
 - Women, people of color, and people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and pansexual were more likely than other groups to have been sexually assaulted.
 - The perpetrator of the sexual assault was most often a student (77%).

Satisfaction with Carleton College

- **Eighty-four percent of Carleton College faculty and staff members were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at Carleton. Sixty-six percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at Carleton College.**
 - Staff members were slightly less satisfied with their jobs and how their careers have progressed than were faculty members.
 - Women were most satisfied with their jobs at Carleton College, while respondents of color were less satisfied.
 - Respondents of color were most satisfied with how their careers have progressed.
 - Non-Exempt/Union staff members were less satisfied than Non-Exempt/Non-Union and Exempt staff members with their jobs and how their careers have progressed.

- **Ninety-one percent of percent of students were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their education at Carleton, while 77 percent were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their academic careers have progressed at Carleton College.**
 - A slightly lower percentage of students of color and sexual minority students were satisfied with their educations and with the way their academic careers have progressed at Carleton College than were other students.
 - Higher percentages of men students, white students, and heterosexual students were satisfied with the way their academic careers have progressed than were women students, students of color, and sexual minority students.

- **Thirty-eight percent of all respondents have seriously considered leaving Carleton College.**
 - Thirty-five percent of students, 44 percent of faculty, and 43 percent of staff have seriously considered leaving Carleton College.
 - Thirty-eight percent of men faculty and 50 percent of women faculty thought of leaving the College.
 - Forty-nine percent of men staff and 39 percent of women staff thought of leaving.
 - More than half (52%) of faculty of color thought of leaving Carleton compared to 41 percent of white faculty.
 - Fifty percent of staff of color thought of leaving Carleton compared to 41 percent of white Staff.
 - Sixty percent of LGBQQP staff thought of leaving Carleton while 41 percent of their heterosexual counterparts thought of doing so.
 - Among students, 35 percent of women and 34 percent of men considered leaving the College.
 - Forty-nine percent of students of color and 30 percent of white students thought of leaving Carleton College, as did 43 percent of LGBQQP students and 34 percent of heterosexual students.

Perceptions of Campus Climate

- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at Carleton College (81%), in their departments or work units (75%), and in their classes (82%). The figures in the narrative demonstrate some disparities based on race and gender.**
 - Compared with 85 percent of white people, 66 percent of people of color were comfortable with the overall campus climate.
 - Compared with 77 percent of white people, 69 percent of people of color were comfortable with the climate in their departments or work units.
 - Compared with 85 percent of white people, 66 percent of people of color were comfortable with the climate in their departments or work units.
 - Women were slightly less comfortable with the climate at Carleton College, in their departments and work areas, and classes than were men.

- **Almost half (46%) of all respondents were aware of or had observed harassment on campus. The observed harassment was most often based on race. People of color and sexual minorities were more aware of such harassment.**
 - Forty-six percent of the participants had observed or personally been made aware of conduct on campus that created an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working or learning environment.
 - Most of the observed harassment was based on race.
 - Compared with 41 percent of white respondents, 61 percent of respondents of color had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 44 percent of heterosexuals, 65 percent of sexual minorities had observed or personally been made aware of such conduct.
 - Compared with 49 percent of students, 44 percent of faculty and 36 percent of staff had observed such conduct.
 - Exempt staff members were more likely to observe this conduct than Non-Exempt staff members.
 - Non-tenured faculty members were more likely to observe this conduct when compared to tenured faculty members.
 - These incidences were reported to an employee or official only 4 percent of the time.

- **Some employee respondents observed discriminatory what they perceived to be employment practices, and indicated that these practices were most often based on gender.**
 - Ten percent of employee respondents were aware of discriminatory hiring.
 - Eleven percent believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at Carleton College (up to and including dismissal).
 - Seven percent had observed promotion practices that they deemed discriminatory.

- **Student respondents, in general, agreed with the majority of statements that assessed positive feelings of being valued and concerned for by faculty, staff, and students. A more in-depth analysis, however, underscored differences in how white students and students of color responded to these statements.**
 - Forty-five percent of student respondents perceived racial/ethnic tensions in social situations, and 27 percent of students perceived racial/ethnic tensions in the classroom. Students of color were more likely to report that they felt racial/ethnic tensions both in the classroom and social situations than white students.
 - Twenty-two percent of students thought faculty pre-judged their abilities based on their identity/background. Students of color were more likely to have felt pre-judged by faculty than their white counterparts.
 - The majority of students (66%) also felt confident of their abilities to succeed academically at Carleton and academically prepared for Carleton. Students of color felt less confident to succeed academically at Carleton and less prepared academically for Carleton.
 - More than half of the respondents (56%) believed the campus climate encourages free discussions of difficult topics. Students of color were more likely to disagree with this statement than white students.

- **With regard to campus accessibility for people with disabilities, the College website (55%), restrooms (48%), classrooms and labs (38%), and the Wellness Center (38%) were considered the most accessible (rated “very accessible” or “accessible”) areas of campus.**
 - Ten percent and 11 percent, respectively, of respondents rated on-campus parking and information in alternative formats as “very inaccessible”

Institutional Actions

- **The majority of respondents were supportive of recommendations to improve the climate.**
 - More than half of the respondents “strongly agreed”/“agreed” that Admissions, the Chapel, Dean of Student’s Office, Faculty, GSC, International Student Programs, OIL, Student Organizations, and TRIO/Student Support Services provided visible leadership that fosters inclusion of diverse members of the campus community.
 - A substantial percentage of respondents were unaware of the degree to which the Board of Trustees, CSA, Dean of the College Office, DIG, and President’s Office had visible leadership to support diversity/inclusion.
 - More than half of all students and faculty felt the courses they took or taught included materials, perspectives, and/or experiences of people from diverse groups. The exceptions included gender expression, learning disability, physical characteristics, psychological condition, and sexual orientation.
 - Over 60 percent of respondents thought providing immersion experiences for students in civic engagement projects with lower socioeconomic populations, providing, promoting and improving access to quality counseling for people who have experienced sexual assault/harassment, providing more effective mentorship for new minority/new women faculty, providing a clear and fair process to resolve conflicts, increasing funding to support campus climate change efforts, and increasing the diversity of the faculty and staff as well as the student body would be positive steps towards improving the campus climate.
 - Additionally, approximately half of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that providing tenure clock options with more flexibility for promotion/tenure for faculty/staff with families, requiring diversity training for college staff and faculty, providing immersion experiences for faculty-staff in civic engagement projects with lower socioeconomic populations, providing diversity and equity training to search and tenure committees, and increasing staff representation in College governance.
 - Less than half of all employees thought providing recognition and rewards for including diversity in course outlines across the curriculum and including diversity related activities as one of the criteria for hiring and/or evaluation of faculty/staff would positively affect the climate.

Qualitative Findings⁸

Out of the 1,523 surveys received at Carleton College, approximately 675 respondents contributed remarks to the open-ended questions. Respondents included undergraduate students, faculty members, and staff members. The two open-ended questions asked whether their campus experiences differed from experiences in the surrounding community, and for general elaboration of personal experiences and thoughts as well as suggestions for improvement of the campus climate⁹.

With regard to the similarities and differences between campus experiences and experiences in the surrounding community, responses generally indicated that Carleton College provides a “bubble” that cuts off community members from the “real world.” Two distinct categories emerged from these responses: those who indicated that the “bubble” was positive and comfortable, and those who indicated the “bubble” was harmful and limiting. For those who described the “bubble” as positive, they shared they feel as though they “fit in” among the student body, and therefore benefit from the overall campus climate. Those who described the “bubble” as negative attributed their experiences to a discriminating and homogenous student and employee body. Carleton's climate was described as “seemingly warmer towards ‘typical’ Carleton students (i.e. affluent, ambitious, intellectual) and colder towards those who may not fit this model.” Respondents also elaborated on their experiences with bias on campus that was based on race, socioeconomic status and intellectual ability. Experiences with harassment in the surrounding community that was based on race, sexual orientation, and gender were also noted.

Themes emerged from respondents’ suggestions for improvement of the campus climate. Primarily, respondents recommended that the College and administration strive to increase diversity among students, faculty, and staff. Many respondents, however, expressed concern that increasing diversity means lowering standards. Diversity training was a second theme that emerged. There were mixed perspectives on diversity training: many supported the idea of

⁸ Analyses for 13 of the 15 qualitative questions are included within the narrative as these comments allowed respondents to elaborate on specific quantitative questions. The analysis of the final 2 qualitative questions will be provided as an addendum to the final report as the qualitative comments in this section are still under review to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents.

⁹ The complete survey is available in Appendix B.

having structured training activities that provided education on multiculturalism to students, faculty, and staff, but others feared the training would force individuals to talk about diversity in ways that were not comfortable and thus they may become resistant. Many respondents offered the suggestion of increasing dialogues on campus that promote communication about difference. Others underscored the need for more diversity to be represented in the curriculum. Finally, financial support was mentioned as a necessity in order to recruit and retain students of difference.

Throughout the qualitative responses, it was evident that white, heterosexual, non-religiously affiliated individuals were more likely to describe the campus climate as welcoming and accepting, while non-majority community members reported experiencing a very different climate that was discriminatory and homogenous. Nonetheless, many respondents expressed hope that Carleton would respond to the outcomes of this survey by increasing diversity and addressing the needs of students, faculty, and staff on campus and in the surrounding community.

Next Steps

Institutions of higher education seek to create an environment characterized by equal access for all students, faculty, and staff regardless of cultural, political, or philosophical differences, where individuals are not just tolerated but valued. Creating and maintaining a community environment that respects individual needs, abilities, and potential is one of the most critical initiatives that universities and colleges undertake. A welcoming and inclusive climate is grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

That stated, what do the results of this study suggest? At minimum, they add additional empirical data to the current knowledge base and provide more information on the experiences and perceptions for several sub-populations in the campus community. As to the findings themselves, aside from the aforementioned finding that a majority of respondents from historically marginalized groups experience harassment, the results parallel those from similar investigations at higher education institutions across the country.

A more interesting question than what do the results of this study suggest, is given that there is some structure in place to address diversity issues on campus, *how effective have their efforts been in positively shaping and directing campus climate with respect to diversity?*

The current campus climate assessment, beginning in 2007, was a proactive initiative by Carleton College to review the campus climate. It was the intention of the Diversity Initiative Group that the results be used to identify specific strategies for addressing the challenges facing the Carleton community and support positive initiatives already in place on campus. The first “next” step in the process is to present the results of the assessment to the campus community via a series of town meetings. These meetings are to provide feedback regarding the assessment findings and continue to elicit feedback from the community. Following the town meetings a half-day retreat will be conducted to begin addressing the challenges through specific strategic initiatives in areas that based on the literature influence campus climate: (1) access/retention (2) research/scholarship, (3) inter- and intra-group relations, (4) curriculum and pedagogy, (5) university policies and service, and (6) external relations. The final actions will identify well-defined goals, specific intervention actions, person(s) responsible for carrying out the actions, participants involved in the action, time-frames, costs, outcomes, and assessment/accountability.