

Executive Summary

One of the primary missions of higher education institutions is unearthing and disseminating knowledge. Academic communities expend a great deal of effort fostering an environment where this mission is nurtured, with the understanding that institutional climate has a profound effect on the academic community's ability to excel in research and scholarship

Millersville University seeks to create an environment characterized by equal access for all students, faculty and staff regardless of cultural differences, and 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 Millersville University supports. It is a crucial part of the University's mission to increase multicultural awareness and understanding, within an environment of civility, mutual respect and cooperation. A welcoming and inclusive climate is grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction. The first step in creating such an environment is to assess the current campus climate in order to identify important issues and then to create ways for individuals, departments and the university to address them.

The purpose of this study was to examine the climate for diversity at Millersville University. A summary of the findings presented in bullet form below suggest that while Millersville has several challenges in regards to diversity issues, these challenges are not unique. The results of the research will be used to identify specific strategies for addressing the challenges and supporting positive diversity initiatives.

- Surveys were distributed to 2991 students, 440 faculty, 378 staff, and 181 administrators during the spring semester, 2001. Surveys were submitted by 328 students, 118 faculty, and 111 staff, and 30 administrators for response rates of 11 percent, 27 percent, 29 percent, and 17 percent, respectively.
- The majority of respondents indicated that the overall campus climate was accepting of the various populations listed except for American Indians/Alaskan Natives (47% thought the climate was accepting). Respondents indicated that they were uncertain of the climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons.
- Thirty-eight percent reported they had attended a cultural program at Millersville in the last year. Less than 10 percent attended a residence hall or Social Equity Office diversity program in the past year.
- Twenty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they had experienced conduct that had interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (harassment). These experiences were primarily due to gender (48%) and race (27%).
- The harassment experienced was most frequently in the form of derogatory remarks (63%) and experienced more often by bisexual persons (78%), lesbians (71%), American Indians/Native Alaskans (63%), and gay men (40%).
- One third of the respondents indicated that they observed conduct on campus that created an offensive, hostile, or intimidating working or learning environment mainly due to race (49%), gender (40%), and sexual orientation (40%).
- Forty percent of respondents reported observing discriminatory hiring based on the characteristics presented. However, only nine percent and five percent observed discriminatory firing and promotion respectively.
- The respondents indicate that the campus thoroughly addresses issues related to racism (63%), ethnicity (55%), and sexism (52%). Respondents indicated they were uncertain how the campus has responded to issues related to gender identity, non-native English speakers, and veterans.
- A substantial portion of the respondents (58%) feel that the campus' leadership visibly fosters diversity, and 44 percent feel that the curriculum adequately represents the contributions of different groups of people.
- Less than half felt that the classroom climate was welcoming for people from underrepresented groups and 50 percent felt that the workplace climate was welcoming for employees from underrepresented groups.
- Only 35 percent of the respondents felt their departments or units value their involvement in diversity initiatives on campus.
- At least half of the respondents indicated that providing more sensitivity/awareness workshops would increase the University community's awareness of issues related to race, disability status, and ethnicity.

- Over one-fifth of the respondents believed the University grounds were inaccessible for disabled people.
- Over half of the respondents felt that requiring all University students and staff to take at least one class that focuses on issues, research, and perspectives about gender, race, ethnicity, and disability will improve the campus climate for these groups.
- Forty-three percent of the participants reported that if service that enhances the University's climate for diversity was included as a criterion for faculty and staff evaluation, the climate would improve.