Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Michigan Technological University

Campus Climate Research Study Executive Summary

September 2018

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Executive Summary

History of the Project

Michigan Technological University affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community and that they engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect. Free exchange of different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments encourages students, faculty, and staff to develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Michigan Technological University also is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in the Michigan Technological University mission statement,

> "We deliver action-based undergraduate and graduate education and discover new knowledge through research and innovation. We create solutions for society's challenges through interdisciplinary education, research, and engagement to advance sustainable economic prosperity, health and safety, ethical conduct, and responsible use of resources. We attract exceptional students, faculty, and staff who understand, develop, apply, manage, and communicate science, engineering, technology, and business to attain the goal of a sustainable, just, and prosperous world. Our success is measured by accomplishments and reputation of our graduates, national and international impact of our research and scholarly activities, and investment in our University."[1]

To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Michigan Technological University recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for the experiences and perceptions of its students, faculty, and staff. During the fall semester, 2017, Michigan Technological University conducted a comprehensive survey of

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[1]https://www.banweb.mtu.edu/pls/owa/strategic_plan.p_display

students, faculty, and staff to develop a better understanding of the learning, living, and working environment on campus.

In fall semester, 2016, members of the Climate Survey Working Group (CSWG) began the process at the institution. The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Michigan Technological University contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Assessment of Working, Living, and Learning." The experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups will be presented at community forums during the fall semester, 2018, at which time, a plan of action will be developed highlighting two or three action items that will be recommended for the campus

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The conceptual model used as the foundation for Michigan Technological 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 (A. Johnson, 2005) and influence systems of differentiation that reproduce unequal outcomes. Michigan Technological 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.

The Climate Survey Working Group collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. Together, they implemented a participatory and community-based process to review tested survey questions from the R&A question bank and developed a survey instrument for Michigan Technological University that would reveal the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. The final Michigan Technological University survey queried various campus constituent groups about their experiences and perceptions regarding the academic environment for students, the workplace environment for faculty and staff, employee

benefits, sexual harassment and sexual violence, racial and ethnic identity, gender identity and gender expression, sexual identity, accessibility and disability services, and other topics.

Two thousand four hundred thirteen (2,413) people completed the survey. In the end, the assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of the campus climate, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups at Michigan Technological University.

Michigan Technological University Participants

Michigan Technological University community members completed 2,413 surveys for an overall response rate of 27%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.[2] Forty-seven percent ($n = 1,132$) of the sample were Undergraduate Students, 14% ($n = 348$) were Graduate/Professional Students, 9% ($n = 221$) were Faculty, 1% ($n = 30$) were Academic Administrators with Faculty Rank, and 28% ($n = 678$) were Staff/Senior Administrator without Faculty Rank. 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.[3]

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[2]Thirteen surveys were removed because the respondents did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and 9 duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ($n = 62$). Any additional responses were removed because they were judged to have been problematic (i.e., the respondent did not complete the survey in good faith).

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

Table 1. **Michigan Technological University Sample Demographics**

Characteristic	Subgroup	Sample	
		n	**%**
Position status	Undergraduate Student	1,132	46.9
	Graduate/Professional Student	348	14.4
	Post-Doctoral Scholars	< 5	---
	Faculty	221	9.2
	Academic Administrator w/Faculty Rank	30	1.2
	Staff/Sr Administrator w/o Faculty Rank	678	28.1
Gender identity	Woman	979	40.6
	Man	1,353	56.1
	Transspectrum	30	1.2
	Missing	51	2.1
Racial/ethnic identity	Asian/Asian American	173	7.2
	Additional People of Color	132	5.5
	White/European American	1,934	80.1
	Multiracial	103	4.3
	Missing	71	2.9
Sexual identity	LGBQ	241	10.0
	Heterosexual	2,025	83.9
	Asexual	18	0.7
	Missing	129	5.3
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	2,046	84.8
	Non-U.S. Citizen/U.S. Citizen, Naturalized	346	14.3
	Missing	21	0.9
Disability status	Single Disability	167	6.9
	No Disability	2,132	88.4
	Multiple Disabilities	98	4.1
	Missing	16	0.7

Table 1. **Michigan Technological University Sample Demographics**

Characteristic	Subgroup	Sample	
		n	*%*
Religious affiliation	Christian Religious Affiliation	1,162	48.2
	Additional Faith-Based Affiliation	168	7.0
	No Religious Affiliation	912	37.8
	Multiple Religious Affiliations	85	3.5
	Missing	86	3.6

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

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

- **High levels of comfort with the climate at Michigan Technological University**

  Climate is defined as the "current attitudes, behaviors, and standard of faculty, staff, administrators, and students – as well as the campus environment and university policies – that influence the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential."[4] The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

  o 83% (*n* = 1,998) of survey respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate at Michigan Technological University.

  o 76% (*n* = 686) of Faculty and Staff respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their departments/work units.

  o 84% (*n* = 1,429) of Student[5] and Faculty respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

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[4]Rankin & Reason (2008)

[5]Throughout this report, the term "Student respondents" is used to refer to the experiences of both Undergraduate Student respondents and Graduate Student respondents.

- **Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work**

Tenured and Tenure-Track

- o 72% (*n* = 107) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the criteria for tenure were clear.

Non-Tenure-Track

- o 82% (*n* = 59) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that research was valued by Michigan Technological University.

All Faculty

- o 73% (*n* = 161) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by faculty in their department/school.

- o 71% (*n* = 156) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by their department chair/school dean.

- **Staff[6] Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work**

- o 73% (*n* = 494) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.

- o 76% (*n* = 509) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.

- o 71% (*n* = 471) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.

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[6]The term "Staff respondents" is used throughout the executive summary to address the experiences of Staff respondents and Senior Administrators without Faculty Rank.

- **Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences**

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

  - 75% ($n = 1,109$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by Michigan Technological University faculty.

  - 73% ($n = 1,070$) "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by Michigan Technological University staff.

  - 77% ($n = 1,135$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by Michigan Technological University faculty in the classroom.

  - 71% ($n = 1,030$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by other students outside of the classroom.

  - 70% ($n = 1,020$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had faculty whom they perceived as role models.

- **Student Respondents *Perceived Academic Success***

  A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 11 on the survey. Analyses using this scale revealed:

  - A significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Student respondents by disability status on *Perceived Academic Success*.

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[7]Pascarella & Terenzini (2005)
[8]Hale (2004); Harper & Hurtado (2007); Harper & Quaye (2004)

Examples of Findings

- o Undergraduate Student respondents with a Single Disability had less *Perceived Academic Success* than Undergraduate Student respondents with No Disability.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

- **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.[9] Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.[10] The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

  - o 16% ($n = 389$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.[11]

    - ▪ 28% ($n = 108$) noted that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity, 20% ($n = 76$) noted the conduct was based on their position status (e.g., staff, faculty, student), and 17% ($n = 66$) felt it was based on their political views.

  Differences based on position status and gender/gender identity:

  - o By position status, higher percentages of Faculty respondents (25%, $n = 55$), Staff respondents (21%, $n = 139$), and Academic Administrator with Faculty Rank respondents (21%, $n = 6$) than Undergraduate Student respondents (14%, $n = 157$)

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[9]Aguirre & Messineo (1997); Flowers & Pascarella (1999); Pascarella & Terenzini (2005); Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora (2011)
[10]Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley (2008); Waldo (1998)
[11]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 et al., 2009).

and Graduate Student respondents (9%, $n = 32$) noted that they believed that they had experienced this conduct.

- Higher percentages of Staff respondents (35%, $n = 48$), Faculty respondents (18%, $n = 10$), and Graduate Student respondents (16%, $n = 5$) than Undergraduate Student respondents (8%, $n = 13$) thought that the conduct was based on their position status.

o By gender identity, higher percentages of Transspectrum respondents (37%, $n = 11$) and Women respondents (21%, $n = 205$) than Men respondents (12%, $n = 161$) indicated that they had experienced this conduct.

- Higher percentages of Transspectrum respondents (73%, $n = 8$) and Women respondents (41%, $n = 84$) than Men respondents (8%, $n = 12$) who had experienced this conduct indicated that the conduct was based on their gender identity.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at Michigan Technological University. One hundred fifty-six respondents elaborated on experiencing exclusionary (e.g., shunned, ignored), intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct (e.g., bullied, harassed) that interfered with their ability to work, learn, or live at Michigan Technological University. Two themes emerged from Employee (Faculty, Academic Administrator with Faculty Rank, and Staff) responses: hostile supervisors and treated as second-class citizens. Two themes were specific to Student (Graduate and Undergraduate) respondents: hostile/discriminatory actions directed toward women and verbal harassment/hostilities directed toward minorities.

- **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, and veterans).[12] Several groups at Michigan Technological University indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

Examples of Findings for Overall Climate at Michigan Technological University

- o 25% ($n = 248$) of Women respondents compared with 38% ($n = 511$) of Men respondents felt "very comfortable" with the overall climate.

- o 27% ($n = 66$) of LGBQ respondents compared with 34% ($n = 689$) of Heterosexual respondents felt "very comfortable" with the overall climate.

Examples of Findings for Department/Program and Work Unit Climate

- o A lower percentage of Women Faculty and Staff respondents (33%, $n = 156$) than Men Faculty and Staff respondents (42%, $n = 186$) felt "very comfortable" with the climate in their department/school or work unit.

Examples of Findings for Classroom Climate

- o A lower percentage of Faculty and Student Multiracial respondents (26%, $n = 24$) compared with Faculty and Student Asian/Asian American respondents (39%, $n = 66$), Faculty and Student Additional People of Color respondents (36%, $n = 41$), and Faculty and Student White respondents (36%, $n = 470$) were "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

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[12]Harper & Hurtado (2007); Hart & Fellabaum (2008); Rankin (2003); Rankin & Reason (2005); Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart (2008)

- o 6% each of Faculty and Student Respondents with a Single Disability ($n = 8$) or Multiple Disabilities 7% ($n = 5$) compared with 2% ($n = 36$) of Faculty and Student Respondents with No Disability felt "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

- **Employee Respondents – Seriously Considered Leaving Michigan Technological University**

  - o 62% ($n = 136$) of Faculty respondents, 53% ($n = 16$) of Academic Administrator with Faculty Rank respondents and 50% ($n = 335$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving Michigan Technological University in the past year.

    - ▪ 41% ($n = 56$) of those Faculty respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of low salary/pay rate and 36% ($n = 49$) each because of interest in a position at another institution and/or institutional support (e.g., tech support, lab space/equipment).

    - ▪ 53% ($n = 177$) of those Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of low salary/pay rate and 45% ($n = 152$) because of limited opportunities for advancement.

Ninety-nine Faculty and 177 Staff respondents elaborated on why they had seriously considered leaving Michigan Technological University. From the Faculty responses, two themes emerged: poor leadership practices and spouse faced difficulties obtaining employment. From Staff responses, three themes emerged: excessive workload, hostile or bullying supervisor(s), and lack of advancement opportunities.

- **Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues**

  o 53% (*n* = 354) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that a hierarchy existed within staff positions that allowed some voices to be valued more than others.

  o 36% (*n* = 243) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their workload increased without additional compensation as a result of other staff departures.

  o 26% (*n* = 172) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that clear procedures existed on how they could advance at Michigan Technological University.

  o 48% (*n* = 319) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt positive about their career opportunities at Michigan Technological University.

One hundred fifty-six Staff respondents elaborated on their perceptions of the work-place climate at Michigan Technological University. Two themes emerged from the responses: lack of available/affordable child care and excessive workloads.

- **Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work**

  o 16% (*n* = 34) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that child care was accessible.

  o 39% (*n* = 58) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents and 43% (*n* = 31) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were burdened by service responsibilities (e.g., committee memberships, departmental/program work assignments) beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.

  o 43% (*n* = 63) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they performed more work to help students (e.g., formal

and informal advising, thesis advising, and helping with student groups and activities) than did their colleagues.

Faculty respondents elaborated on statements regarding their perceptions of work-life balance at Michigan Technological University. Various themes emerged, including poor faculty-administration relations and overburdened by service expectations.

- **A small, but meaningful, percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual conduct.**

  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 substantial 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 Michigan Technological University survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

  - 8% ($n = 188$) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact/conduct while at Michigan Technological University.

    - 1% ($n = 32$) experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting).

    - 2% ($n = 53$) experienced stalking (e.g., following me, on social media, texting, phone calls).

    - 4% ($n = 106$) experienced unwanted sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment).

    - 3% ($n = 60$) experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g. fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent).

  - Respondents identified Michigan Technological University students, current or former dating/intimate partners, acquaintances/friends, and students as the sources of unwanted sexual contact/conduct.

o   The majority of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual contact/conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report the unwanted sexual contact/conduct. Rationale cited for not reporting these incidents was that the incidents were not significant enough to report and that the respondents wanted to move past the incident. Respondents also noted that they decided not to report the incident because alcohol was involved, and/or the perpetrator was intoxicated.

Conclusion

Michigan Technological University climate findings[13] differed slightly than those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.[14] For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "very comfortable" or "comfortable." A higher percentage (83%) of Michigan Technological University respondents indicated that they were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate at Michigan Technological University. Whereas, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct, at Michigan Technological University, a slightly lower percentage of respondents (16%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.[15]

Michigan Technological University's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Michigan Technological University's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Michigan Technological University, 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

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[13]Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.
[14]Rankin & Associates Consulting (2016)
[15]Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward (2002); 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)

provide the Michigan Technological University community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Michigan Technological University, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to promote an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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