



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

University of Missouri -  
System Offices

Campus Climate  
Research Study  
Executive Summary

September 2017



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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

#### **History of the Project**

The University of Missouri System Office (UM System Offices) 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 encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

The UM System Offices also is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in UM System Offices' mission statement, "The university promotes learning by its students and lifelong learning by Missouri's citizens, fosters innovation to support economic development, and advances the health, cultural, and social interests of the people of Missouri, the nation, and the world."<sup>1</sup> To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at UM System Offices 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 2016 semester, the UM System Offices conducted a comprehensive survey of all staff to develop a better understanding of the learning, living, and working environment on campus.

In May 2016, members of UM System Offices worked with the University of Missouri System to form Systemwide Climate Study Team (SCST). The SCST was composed of faculty, staff, and administrators across the entire University of Missouri System. Ultimately, the University of Missouri System contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a study entitled "University of Missouri System Office Climate for Learning, Living, and Working." Data gathered via reviews of relevant literature and a campus-wide survey addressing the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups will be presented to the UM System Offices community. The community, upon receiving the report, will then come together to develop and complete two or three action items by spring 2018.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/about/mission>

## **Project Design and Campus Involvement**

The conceptual model used as the foundation for the UM System Offices' 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. UM System Offices' 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 SCST collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. Together, they implemented a participatory process to review tested survey questions from the R&A question bank and develop a survey instrument for UM System Offices that would reveal the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. The final UM System Offices 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. The UM System Offices received a tailored version of that survey that focused distinctly on the experiences of UM System Offices employees.

In total, 142 people completed the survey. In the end, the UM System Offices assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of the climate, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups at the UM System Offices.

## **UM System Offices Participants**

UM System Offices community members completed 142 surveys for an overall response rate of 27%.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey

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<sup>2</sup>Three surveys were removed because the respondents did not give consent to participate in the survey.

respondents. The percentages offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (*n*) for each demographic characteristic.

**Table 1. UM System Offices Sample Demographics**

Characteristic	Subgroup	Sample	
		<i>n</i>	%
Gender identity	Woman	80	56.3
	Man	57	40.1
	Transpectrum	0	0.0
	Other/Missing/Not Reported	5	3.5
Racial/ethnic identity	American Indian/Alaska Native	< 5	---
	Asian/Asian American	< 5	---
	Black/African American	6	4.2
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	< 5	---
	Middle Eastern/Southwest Asian	0	0.0
	Multiracial	5	3.5
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0.0
	White/European American	116	81.7
	Missing/Unknown/Other	9	6.3
Position status	Administrator with Faculty Rank	< 5	---
	Administrator without Faculty Rank	9	6.3
	Staff – Hourly	37	26.1
	Staff - Salary	94	66.2
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	133	93.7
	Non-U.S. Citizen	6	4.2
	Missing/Unknown	< 5	---

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

## **Key Findings – Areas of Strength**

### **1. High levels of comfort with the climate at UM System Offices**

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.”<sup>3</sup> The level of comfort experienced by staff, faculty, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 80% of respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their primary work area.

### **2. Positive attitudes about staff work**

- 94% believed their supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.
- 86% of respondents believed that vacation and personal time packages were competitive and 82% believed that health insurance benefits were competitive.
- 86% of respondents believed that their supervisors were supportive of their taking leave (e.g., vacation, parental, personal, short-term disability).
- 83% of respondents felt valued by coworkers and 82% felt valued by their supervisors/managers.

### **3. Positive attitudes about UM System Offices practices**

- 83% of respondents believed that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.
- 81% of respondents believed that they had supervisors and 79% believed they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 75% of respondents reported that they were able to complete their assigned duties during scheduled hours.

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<sup>3</sup>Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

## 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.<sup>4</sup> Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.<sup>5</sup> The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 19% of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.<sup>6</sup>
  - 22% of respondents each indicated that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity or position status, while 19% of respondents noted that the conduct was based on their age.
  - 48% of the respondents who indicated on the survey that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct identified coworkers and/or colleagues as the source of the conduct; 37% identified their supervisor or manager.
  - 85% of respondents did not report the conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at UM System Offices. Twelve respondents contributed comments regarding these personal experiences. A primary theme among the respondents who elaborated on their personal experience was that they elected to not report harassment because of perceived barriers, such as a fear of retaliation.

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<sup>4</sup>Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

<sup>5</sup>Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

<sup>6</sup>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, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

## **2. Constituent groups indicated that they were less comfortable with aspects of the climate.**

Prior research on campus climate had 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).<sup>7</sup> Women Staff respondents and Hourly Staff respondents at the UM System Offices indicated that they were less comfortable than were their colleagues with aspects of the campus climate.

- 27% of Women Staff respondents reported observing unjust behavior, procedures, or employment practices related to promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification compared to 13% of Men Staff respondents.
- 45% of Salary Staff respondents and 17% of Hourly Staff respondents “agreed” that they felt positive about their career opportunities at the UM System Offices.
- 43% percent of Salary Staff respondents and 19% of Hourly Staff respondents “agreed” that their department/program encouraged free and open discussion of difficult topics.

## **3. Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues**

- 50% ( $n = 71$ ) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving UM System Offices in the past year.
  - Low salary/pay rate (52%), limited opportunities for advancement (48%), and a lack of a sense of belonging (38%) were the top three reasons given for seriously considering leaving the UM System Offices.
- UM System Offices employees had observed unfair or unjust hiring practices (18%,  $n = 25$ ), unfair or unjust disciplinary actions (6%,  $n = 9$ ), or unfair or unjust promotion, tenure, reappointment, and/or reclassification (22%,  $n = 31$ ).
  - Age, gender identity, nepotism/cronyism, racial identity, ethnicity, and position status were the top perceived bases for many of the reported discriminatory employment practices.

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<sup>7</sup>Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

#### 4. Staff Respondents – Challenges with workplace climate

- 62% of Staff respondents believed that a hierarchy existed within staff positions that allowed some voices to be valued more than others.
- 32% of Staff respondents believed that staff salaries were competitive and 23% indicated that child care benefits were competitive.
- 25% of Staff respondents believed that staff opinions were valued by UM System Offices/University of Missouri faculty.
- 32% of Staff respondents thought that senior administrators had taken direct actions to address the needs of at-risk/underserved students; 25% ( $n = 34$ ) indicated the same of faculty and 24% ( $n = 32$ ) of students.

Eighteen Staff respondents elaborated on their responses to the survey questions regarding benefits, salary, professional development, leave, and staff opinions. The single greatest concern expressed in regard to their experiences as a University of Missouri staff member related to a perceived lack of job security.

#### Conclusion

UM System Offices climate findings<sup>8</sup> were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.<sup>9</sup> For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable.” At the UM System Offices, 63% of respondents reported that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at UM System Offices and 80% of respondents reported that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their primary work area. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At the UM System Offices, a similar percentage of respondents (19%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also

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<sup>8</sup>Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

<sup>9</sup>[Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015](#)

paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.<sup>10</sup>

The UM System Offices' climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses the UM System Offices' mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at the UM System Offices, 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 provide the UM System Offices community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. The UM System Offices, 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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<sup>10</sup>Guiffreda, 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

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