

July 23, 2018

Considering An External Climate Study

Perspectives, Benefits, Cost, Recommendation, and Resources.

Introduction.

The Provost asked the AVP for Cross Disciplinary Studies and Diversity Engagement to convene an ad hoc committee for the purpose of reviewing information about campus climate studies and considering which agencies might serve our purpose. The committee: AJ Morey (English; AVP for CDSDE), Andreas Broscheid (Political Science; CFI), and Kevin Apple (Chair, Psychology; VPAD's committee that brought New Point Strategies to campus).

We recommend an externally administered climate study that is tailored to our context, includes the entire JMU community of staff, faculty, students and administration and is embedded in a five-year strategic plan that reinforces a longitudinal analysis. If other areas of the university do not want to join us, we recommend that the Provost implement this recommendation for Academic Affairs.

Perspectives.

According to the draft memo of the subcommittee on employee climate (President's Task Force on Inclusion) all of JMU's thirteen peer institutions have conducted formal climate studies. Nine of these institutions had the study conducted by an external consultant (six by Rankin, three by HERI).¹

JMU has never conducted a climate study. However, JMU has participated in several COACHE surveys (2008, 2012, 2016) and those results were processed by subsequent task forces. The 2012 survey was limited to tenure-track, non-tenured faculty, and one outcome of that survey was to create the New Faculty Academy. <https://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/documents/coache.shtml>. The 2016 survey included all faculty. Careful analysis of this most recent COACHE data indicates continued areas of concern for JMU, specifically in matters pertaining to family life, spousal accommodation, race, and gender. <https://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/policies-and-reports/coache.shtml>.

The drawback to COACHE data is that it is a survey about faculty job satisfaction, excluding staff and administrator experiences, and does not ask

¹ JMU's peer cohort is: Appalachian State University, Clemson University, College of Charleston, Grand Valley State University, Illinois State University, Miami University of Ohio, Rowan University, Binghamton University, Towson University, UNC Wilmington, University of Northern Iowa, West Chester University, and Western Washington University.

July 23, 2018

specific questions about issues that are central to inclusion for marginalized groups.

Realizing that letting the COACHE data disappear without address, and in response to troubling events on campus involving faculty and/or students, Vice Provost for Academic Development Johnson initiated a year-long opportunity for deans, department heads, and diversity councils to participate in diversity intelligence workshops administered by an external agency, New Point Strategies.

Concluding recommendations from participants included the following action items:

1. Invest in an externally administered climate study; establish specific measurable objectives; be transparent about the findings; take action on the findings and communicate about the actions taken.
2. Embed this climate study and its findings within a five year plan to address diversity intelligence in all aspects of the University—students, faculty, staff and administration.
3. Create systems that support diversity intelligence. Doing so will mean reviewing policies and procedures; insisting upon a fair and consistent application of policies; changing the financial model that excludes minority and low-income students from scholarships, and ensuring safe spaces so that all voices can be heard.
4. Increase visibility of “diversity intelligence” at JMU through institutional, college and departmental media outreach that is backed by substantive speech and action from senior administration demonstrating JMU’s determination to excel in this area.
5. Invest the money, the people and the time to create and sustain change.

The diversity intelligence experience with New Point Strategies ended in spring 2018. Issues regarding race and gender remain, perhaps more exposed but inadequately addressed. This brings us to the matter of climate study. JMU faculty have been requesting a climate study for at least the last decade. It’s time to consider the benefits and costs of such an endeavor.

Benefits.

1. JMU already has information that indicates areas for improvement, but our information is not intersectional or deep.
2. Supporting our mission. “We are a community committed to preparing students to be educated and enlightened citizens who lead productive and meaningful lives.” Understanding our own community is a critical step toward more fully realizing our mission pledge to students. We must model real engagement with difficult issues as well as providing multiple opportunities for students to encounter different and challenging worlds.

July 23, 2018

3. Recruitment of students and faculty will be improved by an acute self-understanding of where we are and where we want to be in terms of diversity.
4. Retention of faculty and students will be improved by JMU's dedication and enthusiasm for improving our inclusive climate.
5. Risk Management. A long-range plan for climate study is also a long-range plan for risk-management. It will enable senior administration to work and speak pro-actively, confidently, and with the authority that comes from knowing we are doing more than just talking. We are acting in good conscience.

Cost. Cost involves funding, but also must be calculated in terms of community and relationships and difficult dialogues. The two agencies mentioned here are discussed in detail in "Resources."

1. HERI: \$15,600—but depends on how we might customize any of the three surveys.
2. Rankin and Associates: \$98K—but depends on whether we opt for the full package.
3. We might find out things we don't want to know about institutional culture.
4. We might not get the response rate we need to push change forward.
5. If we do not fully include marginalized groups in our preparation and implementation we risk further alienating those groups we most want to support. <https://medium.com/@wocfaculty/a-collective-response-to-racism-in-academia-35dc725415c1>
6. If we do not prepare for a longitudinal commitment, we will be wasting our funding, and compounding cynicism or disengagement.

Recommendation.

We recommend an externally administered climate study that is tailored to our context, includes the entire JMU community of staff, faculty, students and administration and is embedded in a five year strategic plan that reinforces a longitudinal analysis. If other areas of the university do not want to join us, we recommend that the Provost implement this recommendation for Academic Affairs.

1. The recommendation is for a study, not a survey.
 - A study is comprehensive.
 - A study involves multiple methods for gathering data, including focus groups, document analysis, interviews with administration and previous surveys.

July 23, 2018

- The study can be adapted to context, with input by JMU constituencies. Any instrument can use common indicators with group-specific modules when data need to be drilled down further.
2. The recommendation is for a study that includes the entire JMU community.
 - Faculty, staff, and students are all equally affected by climate, and their experiences are intersectional.
 - Data from marginalized groups are welcomed without isolating them.
 - Sampling is not the most accurate portrait of a community and may create a sense of exclusion.
 3. The recommendation is for an external climate study.
 - An external study reduces concerns about confidentiality, retaliation, or intimidation.
 - An external study reduces bias.
 - An external study increases the response rate.
 - Plan to invest in and administer an external climate study every two-to-eight years.
 - This investment will allow measurement of growth and change, and permit areas for further opportunity to grow in our diversity intelligence.

Resources.

Given that so many of our peer institutions relied on the same agencies, we narrowed our focus rather than reinventing the wheel.

1. HERI. Higher Education Research Institute, based at UCLA.

<https://heri.ucla.edu/>

- Offers a broad survey of faculty experience, with sections for graduate and part-time faculty. Institutions can add questions, and comparison with peer institutions is possible. A climate module can also be added for no additional cost.
- Offers student surveys and staff surveys as separate instruments.
- HERI fees cover administration/registration of the instruments. HERI provides follow-up information about how to understand the data gathered.
- Total cost for three surveys—faculty, staff and students: \$15,600. See attachment for a more detailed discussion of what HERI offers.
- We wonder if it would be difficult or even desirable to separate our faculty from staff, for more than one reason.

July 23, 2018

- This instrument seems to be more of a survey than a study. It would be entirely up to us to follow up. That is, we'd need a thoughtfully constructed, enthusiastically implemented strategic plan in place for addressing whatever turns up in the survey.
- HERI's list of past clients for faculty surveys over time is available at <https://heri.ucla.edu/researchers/parthist/FAC.Participation.History.pdf>

2. Rankin and Associates Consulting, based at Penn State.

<https://rankin-consulting.com/>

- Offers a comprehensive study, divided into "phases," from meeting with constituents to working with the community to develop strategic actions. We can opt out of some phases for a lower cost. Fees are calibrated according to the size of the survey population. AVP Morey sent Rankin current data on the number of students, faculty (full time, part time, AP) and staff, and Rankin's estimate of cost is based on those figures.²
- Total for the entire package: \$98,812.00. (See attachment for a timeline and budget breakdown).
- Total does not include travel costs, which will be supplied upon request.
- Rankin's 2017 clients: Iowa State University, Lock Haven University, Loyola University – New Orleans, Miami University of Ohio, Michigan Technological University, New York University, Rockhurst University, Shippensburg University, St Joseph's College, UCSF - School of Dentistry, University of San Francisco, Vassar College, and Winona State University. A list of past clients is available at <https://rankin-consulting.com/clients>

3. Grand Valley State University—not a consulting agency, but a good model.

Grand Valley State, one of our peer institutions, has conducted five climate surveys since 1994. The most recent one was 2015, and that was followed by a 2017 report from faculty, staff, and students in response to the data. Here's the link to the 2015

report. <https://www.gvsu.edu/mygvsu/mygvsu-climate-survey-2015-38.htm>

² Total student enrollment: **22,667**

Undergraduate students: **20,779**

Graduate: **1,888**

Male/female ratio: **40/60%**

Full-Time Instructional Faculty: **925**

Part-Time Instructional Faculty: **450**

Classified Staff: **1386**

Administrative Professionals: **332**

July 23, 2018

The 2015 survey was administered for GVSU by a “full service customer survey market research service,” Amplitude Research <http://www.amplituderesearch.com/>. The 2015 survey was based on the consulting work and instrument developed with Rankin and Associates in 2011.

On their website, GVSU provides a detailed model for implementing campus climate recommendations. Their goals are transparency and communication with constituents. They have an easily accessible Action Updates page, so anyone can see what was recommended and whether or how it has been addressed. <https://www.gvsu.edu/mygvsu/your-voice-will-help-drive-action-10.htm>.

Grand Valley’s longitudinal approach, their facility in building upon past surveys and studies, and their open and deliberate address of ongoing concerns would be a good model for us.

In concluding, we note that climate studies, if not carefully conducted, run the risk of unequally burdening marginalized faculty/staff while simply reaffirming status quo practices. In this document we commit to an open and critical study, paying attention to multiple voices, and committing to using results in a way that improves the experience of marginalized populations.

The following groups endorse the idea of an external climate study:

- The Provost’s Faculty Diversity Council
- Participants in the New Point Strategy experience (department heads, deans, and diversity-champion faculty)
- College of Arts and Letters Diversity Council
- Madison Caucus for Gender Equality
- College of Science and Math Diversity Council
- The Libraries Diversity Council

Additionally, the following groups have engaged in internal climate surveys:

- The College of Integrated Science and Engineering commissioned an internal “college culture” survey, results still pending.
- The College of Science and Math implemented a student-centered climate survey, results still being processed.