

CAL Diversity Committee Nov. 11, 2016

**MEETING ON CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEYS and POST-ELECTION CLIMATE ON CAMPUS**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Frances Flannery

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In attendance: Dean David Jeffrey, Flannery, Scheuerman, Pass, Montes de Oca, Byrne, Cavanagh, Chappell, Vilela, Buckley

**OVERVIEW: The recent election has prompted concerns about campus climate, including reports of: hate speech on campus, reports of violent and hateful graffiti, police intervening in physical fights between supporters from different political camps, many tears in the classroom, students not feeling safe, students escorted to the counseling center in crisis. Some members of the higher administration have not been supportive of an external campus climate survey, but the CAL Diversity Council is now vigorously in support of such a study. In addition, this body recommends that departments integrate a campus climate survey on assessment day that includes some of the same questions as found in Madison Matters.**

I. Discussion about the importance and role of the committee after a divisive election. Concerns about student welfare included reports of: hate speech on campus, reports of violent and hateful graffiti, police intervening in physical fights, many tears in the classroom, students not feeling safe, students escorted to the counseling center in crisis.

Some groups of faculty members have drafted letters to upper administration expressing concerns and a strong response.

II. Report on Campus Climate survey by student representatives From the Cultural and Racial Diversity Studies Lab (CARDS), Dept. of Psychology:  
Kat Donovan, Kristen Mack, Chris Hogan, Will Esswein

Definition of Campus Climate: “Current attitudes, behaviors, and standards and practices of employees and students of an institution” (Rankin and Reason, 2008).

The last assessment was conducted in 2009.

White students felt more comfortable; Black, Asian, non-Christian, disabled and female students reported high levels of discrimination. Madison Matters (MM) expanded demographic categories: LGBTQ and international students too.

A PDF OF MADISON MATTERS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED SOON TO ALL CAL FACULTY VIA THIS BODY.

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

Methods for collection for Madison Matters: Survey for class credit, advertised on the commons, bulk email, raffle, etc. Administered through Qualtrics.

**Demographics** (Note: many important minority populations were recorded by the survey, e.g. 14 transgendered students, but here I just report the disproportionate majorities included in the sample).

Total N= 1445, disproportionately white (1193), biological female (1099), gendered female (1083), and heterosexual (1318). Also 826 first-years, 1398 US born, 1057 VA residents, 1336 English native language, 982 Christian, 1068 no disability, 792 with parental income over \$80,000 (494 over \$100,000), 1393 non athletes.

**Sections of Survey:** Psychological wellbeing, general perceptions of campus climate, campus experiences of discrimination, classroom experiences. Only highlights from the statistically significant differences are reported here.

### **Mental health:**

Transgendered students reported significantly worse mental health as compared with male and female students.

Female students reported significantly worse mental health as compared with male students.

Students who identify sexually as “other” (pansexual, homosexual, queer, asexual, etc) reported significantly worse mental health as compared with heterosexual students.

### **Sense of belonging:**

Black/African-American students reported significantly lower feelings of belonging at JMU compared to white and Hispanic/Latino peers.

Transgender students reported significantly lower feelings of belonging at JMU compared to cisgender male and cisgender female peers.

Both bisexual-identifying students and students who identified their sexual orientation as “other reported significantly lower feelings of belonging at JMU compared to their heterosexual peers.

Bilingual/multilingual students reported significantly lower feelings of belonging compared to students who are native English speakers.

Students with mental health issues reported significantly lower feelings of belonging at JMU than their non-disabled peers.

Students in the less than \$20,000 income bracket reported significantly lower feelings of belonging at JMU than students in the 80,001-100,000 income bracket.

### **Experiences of Discrimination:**

Some highlights – 19.3% of students report discrimination based on biological sex, 12.9% based on race/ethnicity, 16.9% based on religious background, 14.0% based on socioeconomic status.

30.3% of respondents report experiencing discrimination based on verbal harassment, 27.8% by online/social media remarks, 19.6 based on fear of negative consequences from disclosing some aspect of your identity to an instructor, administrator, supervisor, or peer. 7.8% of respondents report fear or threat of physical violence or assault, 2.5% report actual physical violence of assault.

Close to 37.9% of those experiencing discrimination report it happening in a residence hall, 13.6% report it came in the classroom. 9.1% of students report experiencing discrimination from faculty, 65.5% from other students.

8/10 students answered, “The best class you have taken at JMU educating about diversity issues was . . .” by listing a course from CAL.

### **CAL Diversity Committee Conclusions:**

- Students have vastly different experiences based on identity, social location, and disability/ability.
- No faculty or staff are represented in the Madison Matters survey.
- The pool of respondents is small and not representative of the student body due to the methods of collection. The study has many limitations although it is a small, positive start.
- The survey is only a start. What is needed is a much more rigorous campus climate survey that is larger and more inclusive.
- There is a definite need for an external campus climate survey.

**Some members of the higher administration have not been supportive of an external campus climate survey, but this body is now vigorously in support of such a study. In addition, this body recommends that departments integrate a campus climate survey on assessment day that includes some of the same questions as found in Madison Matters, and will write a letter to that effect to upper administration.**

It is also vital that faculty turn out to see the Provost candidates.