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**WSU Vancouver Fall 2020 Campus Climate Survey Results**

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**Summary**

The WSU Vancouver student and employee campus climate surveys were administered during the Fall 2020 term to help understand community attitudes concerning campus diversity and to evaluate the effectiveness of current diversity and equity initiatives. Analysis of survey responses revealed:

-While the majority of student respondents (68%) were satisfied with their experience at WSU Vancouver, student satisfaction levels have declined since Spring 2018. Meanwhile, employee satisfaction increased since the last employee survey in Spring 2017 with 84% satisfied this year.

- Support for efforts to recruit, retain, or support populations that are underrepresented on campus has increased considerably in the past few years amongst both students and employees.

-Students have experienced a wide impact of the pandemic upon their learning environment and more broadly their lives. In comments, many report difficulty adapting to the on-line learning environment. 34% of student respondents experienced a loss of employment due to the pandemic.

-Differences between student and employee sub-populations such as those aligning with race or gender have decreased in recent years. In particular, participants report fewer differences in personal experience than previous surveys. However, attitudes about equity and diversity efforts remain correlated with race, gender, disability status, sexual orientation, and parental status.

The WSU Vancouver campus climate survey was administered during the fall 2020 term to help understand campus attitudes concerning the campus diversity climate, to evaluate the effectiveness of current diversity and equity initiatives, and to look for differences in the student experience corresponding to differences in personal background. Variants on this survey have been presented to the student body every other year for many years. For the first time this fall, overlapping versions of the survey were simultaneously administered to students and employees.

272 Students and 115 employees participated in the survey with 190 students fully completing and 115 employees completing. The short summary below focuses on changes to campus attitudes in recent years, new areas of information covered by this year’s survey, and particularly noteworthy findings.

**General Climate**

*Students*

68% of students were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their experience at WSU Vancouver**.** 21% were dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied. This represents a noticeable decline from Spring 2018, the last time the survey was administered to students, when 78% were satisfied. Notably, when students were asked to rate satisfaction of major components of their educational experience, declines were less noticeable. 77% were satisfied with support from faculty and staff (compared to 78% in 2018), 73% for Academic Advising (75%), and 69% for Learning Opportunities (69%). However, when asked about relationships with other students at WSU Vancouver, only 57% were satisfied (Compared to 73% in 2018). In the context of transition to remote learning, these results suggest that students may be experiencing the greatest impact in terms of their ability to interact with each other.

Factor analysis of survey data suggest a high-degree in overlap between questions and suggests a small number of attitudinal dynamics govern participant response. Similar to previous iterations of the survey, the strongest of these may be considered to reflect general enthusiasm toward an individual’s experience at WSU Vancouver. When viewed individually many items received somewhat diminished average response from previous years, consistent with decreased enthusiasm during distanced learning.

*Employees*

84% of employees were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their experience at WSU Vancouver, with only 9% dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied. This represents an increase in satisfaction from Fall 2017 when 76% were satisfied. All categories of satisfaction were higher compared to the prior survey administration. As with student results, employee responses to many items within the survey are correlated. The high degree of general enthusiasm is detectable across many survey items.

**Diversity and Equity Climate**

*Students*

Several questions asked for participant assessment of campus climate specifically as it relates to equity and diversity. While the majority of these statements reflect a shared campus commitment to equity objectives, this recognition was not universal. For instance, 67% of students agreed or strongly agreed “WSU Vancouver is committed to promoting diversity and equity on our campus.” (Down from 73%). However, only 61% agreed that “Faculty are skilled in teaching about diversity and equity.” In cases where agreement was less strong, a large percentage of respondents selected a neutral response (“Neither agree nor disagree”), suggesting not disagreement but inexperience or deemphasis on the theme of the question. For instance, only 58% agreed “WSU Vancouver courses provide sufficient opportunity to learn about the history, culture, and societal issues associated with specific ethnic or cultural groups” but 29% neither agreed or disagreed.

A subset of questions related directly to whether the participant’s own experience was seen as equitable, for instance “I have opportunities for academic success similar to those of my classmates.” These statements were viewed generally positively (74% agreement). Importantly, there were few differences between populations (discussed further below).

*Employees*

Employee assessment of campus climate suggests a difference in perception between campus goals and its ability to achieve an equitable environment. 87% of respondents agreed that “WSU Vancouver is committed to promoting diversity and equity on our campus.”

However, evaluation of the following statements was lower and uneven.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Combined Agree and Strongly Agree |
| WSU Vancouver recruits faculty and staff from diverse communities. | 62% |
| WSU Vancouver retains faculty and staff from diverse communities | 35% |
| Faculty and staff are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability status. | 55% |
| WSU Vancouver respects perspectives of people like me. | 71% |

**Support for diversity action**

*Students*

Several questions gauged participants’ personal support for increased recruitment and retention efforts consistent with the campus’s equity goals. Two trends are notable below in the student response. First, since these questions were first asked in 2016 there has been a marked increase in support. Second, while a considerably larger percentage agree than disagree with these priorities, a sizeable percentage of responses fell in the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ category, consistent with previous years, suggesting either lack of interest in the priorities or recognition of cultural bias within the university toward agreement.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neither Agree nor Disagree (2020) | Combined Agree and Strongly Agree (2020) | Combined Agree and Strongly Agree (2016) |
| The university should recruit and retain more faculty and staff of color. | 37% | 54% | 41% |
| The university should recruit and retain more students of color. | 39% | 51% | 44% |
| The university should increase gender diversity of faculty and staff. | 43% | 43% | 29% |
| The university should increase lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer representation. | 43% | 42% | 30% |
| The university should increase support for faculty, staff and students with disabilities. | 38% | 61% | 53% |

*Employees*

Employee responses are presented in the same format below for comparison. An even greater increase in support is visible from employees between 2015 and 2020. It is also evident that the employee population as a whole is more supportive than the student population of policy and practices that are geared toward increases in campus diversity.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Neither Agree nor Disagree (2020) | Combined Agree and Strongly Agree (2020) | Combined Agree and Strongly Agree (2015) |
| The university should recruit and retain more faculty and staff of color. | 14% | 80% | 56% |
| The university should recruit and retain more students of color. | 13% | 82% | 64% |
| The university should increase gender diversity of faculty and staff. | 33% | 60% | 37% |
| The university should increase lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer representation. | 13% | 63% | 37% |
| The university should increase support for faculty, staff and students with disabilities. | 13% | 83% | 68% |

**Respondent Profile**

The following figures display demographic characteristics of survey respondents. 43% of student respondents who chose to identify their racial/ethnic background selected identities of color. As such these groups were slightly overrepresented compared to the general student population (33% students of color). Each individual was asked to select as many identity groups as appropriate. 25% of employees selected identities of color.

**Other**

**White**

**Middle Eastern**

**Latinx**

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**

**Black/African American**

**Asian**

**American Indian or Alaska Native**

**American Indian or Alaska Native**

**Asian**

**Black/African American**

**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**

**Latinx**

**Other**

**White**

**Middle Eastern**

**Figure 1 |** Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds identified by respondents. Respondents were asked to select as many backgrounds as appropriate. Summed percentages equal greater than 100%.

**Figure 2** Age and Sexual Orientation identified by respondents. Respondents were asked to select as many backgrounds as appropriate. Summed percentages equal greater than 100%.

**Figure 3** | Gender identified by respondents. Similar to other identity questions, respondents were asked about gender via a question that allowed a respondent to choose multiple options. In the interest of parity, options included transgender and cisgender. Only 14% of student respondents and 18% of employee respondents selected cisgender, suggesting most respondents are either unfamiliar with this terminology or choose not to describe themselves with this label.

2020

Further demographic questions revealed 19% of student participants and 40% of employees have one or more dependent children. 11% of students and 16% of employees identified as having a disability that substantially impairs one or more major life functions. 36% of students come from families in which they will be the first to attend higher education. 7% of students and 5% of employees identified as veterans. 2% of student respondents were in foster care at some point in their youth. Finally, the percentage of undergraduate respondents who transferred from another college or university was 70%. The margin of error most of these questions was between 5% and 7%.

**Food and Housing Insecurity (2020)**

In keeping with increased national attention to issues of food and housing insecurity in higher education, food and housing security assessments were first added to student surveys in 2018. In that year, 36% of respondents were found to be “food insecure” and 37% showed marginal housing security or worse. By comparison this year, only 20% of respondents were “food insecure”, with 14% having low or very low food security. 32% showed marginal housing security or worse[[1]](#footnote-1). Responses to individual survey statements were as follows:

*Housing*

Please select all statements that apply to your experience. At any time during this academic year, since October 2019, have you ever...

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **% Selected** |
| Been unable to pay full amount of rent or mortgage? | 18% |
| Been unable to pay full amount of utilities? | 17% |
| Moved in with other people due to financial problems? | 18% |
| Not known where you were going to sleep at night, even for one night? | 4% |
| Stayed at an abandoned building, in an automobile, or any other place not meant for housing, even for one night? | 1% |
| Not had a home? | 3% |

*Food*

Please select all statements that apply to your experience. At any time during this academic year, since October 2019,...

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **% Selected** |
| The food that I bought just didn’t last and I didn’t have enough money to get more. | 8% |
| I couldn’t afford to eat balanced meals. | 14% |
| I cut the size of meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food. | 11% |
| I cut the size of meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food for 3 or more days. | 9% |
| Ate less than I felt I should because there wasn’t enough money for food. | 10% |
| Was hungry but didn’t eat because there wasn’t enough money for food. | 7% |

It is difficult to know if lower percentages of students identifying as food and housing insecure this year suggests improvement in basic needs precarity with a small survey focused on a wider set of issues. Students vulnerable to basic needs concerns may be less likely to engage with survey participation. Continued close monitoring of these issues will be necessary to understand their impact on the WSU Vancouver community.

**Negative Impact and incidents of discrimination**

In questions designed to quantify the frequency of bias on campus, 10% of student respondents identified as having been impacted negatively based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability status, gender, veteran status, or other identity attribute. 4% had experienced discriminatory acts. 8% witnessed acts of discrimination against others. These are the lowest percentages presented since these questions were first asked in 2016. While declines represent improvements, they should be viewed within the context of decreased formal and informal interpersonal interactions during distanced learning. Each dimension of identity was associated with some percentage of the described offense, with the exception of veteran status. The most selected dimensions were gender, race, and disability status.

Questions of bias incidence asked of employees suggested higher frequencies. 24% of employee respondents identified as having been impacted negatively based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability status, gender, veteran status, or other identity attribute (up from 20% in 2017) 7% had experienced discriminatory acts (10% in 2017). 30% witnessed acts of discrimination against others (18% in 2017).

**Pandemic**

In order to better understand the impact of the pandemic upon living situations of campus community, respondents were asked “Has the pandemic affected the employment situation of your household? Has a member of your household experienced ...” Results were as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Students | Employees |
| Experienced a loss of employment | 34% | 6% |
| Working from home | 47% | 63% |
| Working outside the home | 25% | 14% |
| Experienced a decrease in employment | 34% | 17% |
| Needed to move homes due to the financial impact of the pandemic | 11% | 3% |
| Experienced an Increase in roommates or family members living within my household | 15% | 9% |
| Have increased caregiving responsibilities (such as for a child, parent, or other family member who requires care) | 20% | 30% |

**Differences between populations**

*Students*

*Race/Ethnicity*

Previous climate surveys exposed systematic differences in the student experience between student demographic groups. Notably, in 2014 it was found that students from underrepresented race/ethnicity groups (African American, Latinx, Native American, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander) were more likely to be considering withdrawal from WSUV and views on withdrawal were strongly correlated to views on the diversity climate. In 2016, these patterns were absent, however strong differences existed in support for diversity action along lines of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. In the past two survey administrations differences tied to demographic group have diminished further. Some statistically significant differences are still evident in comparisons between demographic groups. The following represent the most significant of these:

Two areas were tied to differences between racial/ethnic groups. Participants identifying as students of color were more likely to express satisfaction in relationships with other students than were white students, with students from underrepresented groups rating the highest (4.0 out of 5 compared to 3.5 for white students). The only other area to reach significance was participation in programming associated with the Center for Intercultural Learning and Affirmation (CILA) or other diversity and equity initiatives where participation was higher amongst Students of Color. Furthermore, there was a relationship between these two items. The 39% of Students of Color who participated in CILA programming were more likely to be satisfied with student relationships than were Students of Color who did not participate in CILA.

*Gender*

Attitudes toward changes in recruitment and retention practices were significantly different between gender groups. Consistent with previous year’s surveys, women were more likely than men to express support for recruiting and retaining more faculty and staff from underrepresented groups as well as students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Women also agreed that the university should increase more gender diversity of faculty and staff and increase lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer representation. The only demographic support focus area examined to not show greater backing from women was support for faculty, staff, and students, with disabilities. However, this area enjoys the most widespread support across population groups (61% agreement vs. 53% for recruit and retain more faculty and staff from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, 53% recruit and retain more students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups., 42% increase gender diversity of faculty and staff, 42% increase lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer representation).

*Sexual Orientation*

Participants identifying under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella (See demographic section for detail) demonstrated a number of differences in answering compared to those identifying as heterosexual. These questions tended to cluster around issues of perceived equity and fairness on campus. For instance, LGBTQIA+ were less likely to agree with the following statements:

“WSU Vancouver is committed to promoting diversity and equity throughout its programs” (54% vs. 72%).

“Faculty and instructors give feedback and evaluate students fairly, regardless of student's race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability status.” (42% vs. 69%).

“Students, faculty and staff at WSU Vancouver are diverse” (54% vs. 75%).

*Parents*

The only group to demonstrate a significantly different pattern of response regarding questions of general satisfaction was participants with dependent children. Satisfaction was greater for this group in comparison to other participants, for instance:

Your experience at WSU Vancouver (85% satisfied vs. 66% for students without children).

I feel the university has provided the opportunity to build community. (82% of parents agree vs. 55%).

I would be happy to continue the rest of my education at this university. (85% of parents agree vs. 74%).

Interestingly, these differences were not exhibited in analyses of student age groups.

*Students with disabilities*

As with previous climate surveys, participants answering yes to “Do you have a disability that substantially impairs one of more of your major life functions” had more negative perceptions of equity on campus than students without disabilities:

I do not feel that campus resources are welcoming to people of my background. (20% agreement vs. 10%)

I feel my community is valued and respected at WSU Vancouver. (45% vs. 65%)

I have opportunities for academic success that are similar to those of my classmates (60% vs 84%)

CILA and other WSU Vancouver equity and diversity programming are effective at creating an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming environment (16% vs. 39%)

*Pandemic Disparities*

Impact of the pandemic has not been experienced equally across student populations. Women were more likely than men to experience disruptions in their living situation, as were transfers students. The greatest differences have been experienced by parents of dependent children, who cited increases caregiving responsibilities. Finally, Students of color were more likely to have changed living circumstances due to pandemic.

*Employees*

Low numbers of respondents for the employee survey may have contributed to relatively few significant differences between sub-populations. Two demographic variables that did overlap with prevalent response differences were disability status and sexual orientation. Employees with disabilities were less likely to be satisfied than their peers with their employment (63% vs. 88%) or professional relationships with other employees (58% vs. 93%). 37% of employees with disabilities agreed that they “do not feel a strong sense of belonging to WSU Vancouver” compared to 17% of their colleagues. They were also more likely to answer that they were “impacted negatively at WSU Vancouver because of my race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability status, gender, veteran status, or other identity attribute” (63% vs. 21% of colleagues). However, when asked to specify the attribute tied to negative impact, responses were spread evenly across all of the listed attributes with only two respondents selecting disability status.

Employees identifying as LGBTQIA+ showed significant differences in perception of the campus climate from their colleagues. For instance, only 33% agreed that “Faculty and staff are treated fairly regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability status” (compared to 63% of their colleagues). While this difference in perception was evident across several items, significant differences were absent from questions asking about employees’ own treatment. LGBTQIA+ employees were not more likely to have experienced discrimination than their peers.

For most employee survey questions, racial background was not associated with significant differences in response. The notable exception was with regard to perception of representation. Only 29% of Employees of Color agreed “I can see my community represented across the curriculum.” Results from white colleagues were also low with only 59% agreeing with that statement.

**Respondent Comments**

*Students*

In the provided comment sections, a dominant theme of student discussion centered on the experience of attending WSU Vancouver during the pandemic and adoption of on-line learning. While many commenters were appreciative of the work of their instructors to meet the demands of suddenly altered course delivery, many students were focused on barriers in the current environment. Students repeatedly emphasized their difficulty learning and especially their difficulty connecting with each other and forming community. For instance:

My enjoyment of going to school has been lost. I go to zoom and fail to learn anything, I am expected to learn everything from a book and nowhere else. I have had massive stress and anxiety and the lack of easily accessible support from my college is apparent. I miss being with people. I miss being in class learning. I do not feel like any part of distance learning is helpful and I may have to drop out from the experience.

And

Due to the structure of zoom meetings, I find it extremely hard to make any bonds with other students. I have also been struggling with my class workload due to the big difference between online classes vs. in-person classes and find it hard to connect in any events.

Elaborated reactions to equity-focused efforts were varied. Several respondents pointed to specific course content areas of focus that lack full representation on campus, such as Asian language and culture classes, Native American literature, LGBTQ+ culture/history/literature, and the need for a Spanish major. A few responses called for more “professors of color or who understand underserved communities”.

As with previous survey versions, some respondents suggested equity and diversity efforts are not relevant to the college experience sought by some students and are extraneous to some majors. Some respondents suggested that students with conservative views are not treated fairly by the campus community.

*Employees*

Many employees used the provided comment areas to write about the exhaustion produced by working in current conditions, balancing altered teaching obligations, care-giving responsibilities, challenges to research productivity, and limitations from lack dedicated work space.

Several responses also emphasized how the pandemic work environment has differentially impacted employee sub-groups. Here are three typical responses:

There is a disproportionate impact on non-tenure track faculty (especially care-takers), as a result of the pandemic. While tenure-track faculty research was halted, non-tenure faculty (clinical, scholarly, Instructors) workload was increased ten-fold, due to the online transition. Most of these faculty teach 3-6 times the amount of non-tenure faculty; the pay gap between the two types of faculty did not appropriately (nor equitably) represent the disparity between workloads, due to the pandemic. This was exacerbated in the spring, but continues on now into the fall. I think more teaching and learning incentives (monetarily) and professional development initiatives should be given for our non-tenure faculty, who are doing a majority of the teaching on this campus. And whose workload has significantly increased, while tenure track faculty research has halted.

My research productivity has been severely limited because of my parenting responsibilities. I have to take care of my school-age child and support his learning, while doing my own work. It is very stressful. Also, many of my students, especially Students of Color, have required more support from me as a Faculty of Color. This has taken additional hours of time from my already tight schedule

I appreciate the importance WSU Vancouver puts on promoting diversity and equity issues. At the same time, these seem to be primarily directed towards students, and this can put a lot more pressure/stress on faculty and staff. For example, amidst the recent events there have been many messages to provide support/flexibility to students. However, faculty/staff are being impacted significantly as well, and it feels this has been overlooked and infrequently acknowledged.

Several commenters described a sense of positive movement at the Vancouver with regard to achieving a more equitable campus. “We are moving in the right direction, but we still have room to improve.” “I like the way the environment is training and building support for diverse communities.”

Another common sentiment was expressed, “I appreciate the efforts being made on campus. I think Vancouver has really been leading the WSU system on this matter. I'd like to see a bit more recognition of this from the WSU President and upper administration.”

**Discussion**

Survey results from Fall 2020 reflect a campus undergoing great amounts of both internal and external change. Attitudes of respondents were generally appreciative of campus efforts to mitigate the challenges of moving through continued social unrest, injustice, a pandemic and accompanying shutdown. However, those challenges loomed large. Students and employees alike experienced sizeable losses in employment, living situations, and social isolation on top of a completely transformed learning experience.

Support for inclusion, equity and diversity efforts is rapidly increasing amongst both students and employees. Navigating the next few years successfully for the campus is likely to require going beyond a return to normal as we knew it before the pandemic. This campus transformation will necessitate *transformative* strategies, building on current equity-minded, culturally sustaining efforts in a way that acknowledges the collective difficulties of the past year and a half.

1. Survey modules were based upon the USDA’s “U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module” (https://www.ers.usda.gov/media/8282/short2012.pdf) and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab’s study of homelessness (See for instance, http://wihopelab.com/publications/Hungry-and-Homeless-in-College-Report.pdf) Each module included six statements of food or housing risk. Selection of at least one statement was coded as an ‘insecure’ respondent. For food insecurity, selection of two or more statements was coded as low or very low food security. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)