

Baylor Academic and Work Environment Survey: Executive Summary

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The Academic and Work Environment Survey was commissioned by the President's Advisory Council on Diversity at Baylor University and administered by the University of Illinois at Chicago Survey Research Laboratory (SRL). The study aimed to assess perceptions of the work and academic climate at Baylor University among faculty, staff, and students. In addition to the survey, which was fielded in April 2017, SRL was asked to conduct 14 focus groups with faculty, staff, and students on campus to initially explore the issues to be covered in the Academic and Work Environment Survey; these took place in late 2016. This document summarizes key findings from these activities.

Summary of Survey Findings

The faculty, staff, and students at Baylor University each reported having generally positive perceptions of the campus climate.

Faculty

- Faculty were most satisfied with the climate in their primary department/unit and with their job in general, and least satisfied with the climate in their school or college, although the differences are small.
- Perceptions of professional work environment and fairness & resource allocation are most important to ratings of overall campus climate for faculty. Both of these areas are considered strengths for Baylor.
- Among faculty, promotion decisions, opportunities for career advancement, and allocation of space and equipment received low satisfaction ratings.
- Other findings indicate that women and nonwhite faculty perceive gender and race discrimination as larger problems than do white male faculty. They also are less satisfied with their professional work environment and the diversity of the student body.

Staff

- Among staff, there was little variability in perceptions across dimensions of campus climate, indicating staff are equally positive about all aspect of overall climate.
- Perceptions of inclusion and personal identity and professional work environment were most important to staff ratings of overall campus climate. While the former is a strength, the latter is an area of concern.
- Among staff, professional work environment is strongly related to satisfaction with the institution's overall climate, pointing to an obvious area for improvement. In particular, staff are not satisfied with their opportunities for advancement, having a say in shaping their work environment, being recognized for their contributions, and do not have confidence that they can file a complaint without negative consequences.

Students

- Students rated the overall climate at Baylor University to be good and indicated that they would strongly recommend Baylor to other students.
- Perceptions of belonging and satisfaction with diversity were most important to student ratings of overall campus climate. The former is an overall strength for Baylor, while the latter is an area of concern.
- The results of the student survey reveal one consistent finding that Baylor Administration could address—African American students and students who do not identify as Christians consistently give

lower ratings to the climate at Baylor. African American students are the only group whose rating of overall campus climate falls beneath the threshold that distinguishes strengths from areas of concern. Similarly, overall climate is an area of strength for Christian students, but not for agnostics or students with no specific religious identity. Although belonging is important to overall climate and is an area of strength overall, for African American students and non-Christians, it is an area of concern. Satisfaction with diversity is an important correlate of overall climate and is an area of concern for all students. In particular, students are not satisfied with the diversity in academic settings and residence halls. In addition, they do not rate Baylor high on inclusiveness or political/ideological diversity.

Summary of Focus Group Findings

The strength of surveys is that they can collect reliable data from large samples in a fairly short amount of time. While they can provide data on a number of topics, the treatment of specific topics is often shallow. Qualitative methods, such as focus groups, can often provide greater texture and nuance to those same areas. The focus groups conducted at Baylor in late 2016 both accentuate some of the survey findings as well as highlight issues not apparent from the survey.

The results of the survey summarized above point to some ways in which women and nonwhite members of the Baylor population experience climate, but the focus groups offer much more detail:

- Across all groups, there is agreement that Baylor is trying to address racial and gender diversity.
- All levels of participants feel that Baylor is not addressing the needs and concerns of the LGBT and non-Christian student communities, and that if Baylor is accepting them to the university, they should be recognized formally and allowed to meet on campus.
- There is also a strong consensus that as the student body becomes increasingly diverse, particularly with regards to an increasing number of non-Christian students enrolling at Baylor, that providing all students equal privilege will be an important issue for Baylor to address.

Faculty

- Faculty are proud that Baylor has maintained its Christian mission, but worry as the school tries to become a Tier 1 research university that the university will become more secular over time.
- The faculty focus groups identified the recruitment of minority and female faculty as one of Baylor's biggest challenges, and cite layers of administrative control as one of the major barriers they face in hiring more generally.
- In particular, it is believed that the lack of representation among faculty sends a message for women and minorities to not bother applying to Baylor, the work environment is not safe or welcoming, and faculty are primarily interested in hiring other faculty who look like them.
- The tenure process is different for minority faculty because they are so underrepresented on campus that they have to provide a disproportionate amount of service to students of color across campus that leaves them less time for research and writing.

Staff

- Staff are very dedicated to the students they serve, and are sensitive to the needs of non-white and differently abled students.

- Consistent with the survey, staff identified problems with recruitment and retention such as bias in hiring, lack of opportunities for promotion, and fear of retaliation by HR staff if they report unfair treatment; the latter point was supported in the survey data about their lack of confidence that they can file a complaint without negative consequence.
- Staff do not feel that there are fair or transparent processes in place for internal promotions, and reported many examples of 'overnight' promotions without due process.

Students

- All students who attended the focus groups are proud to be studying at Baylor.
- Minority students feel as though Baylor communicates its commitment to diversity by giving preference to organizations that emphasize white majority traditions (such as Panhellenic), to the point that multicultural organizations feel invisible on campus.
- Latino students, more than African-American or Asian students, shared discriminatory or excluding behaviors in the classroom.
- Transfer students provided several recommendations for improving their academic and social assimilation on campus, including allowing them to meet with academic advisors on Transfer Fridays; establishing a mentor program where incoming transfer students are paired with an established transfer student; and creating social opportunities to integrate transfer students with the larger student body, as they feel largely isolated from the student Baylor experience.