

SECTION 1. GOALS AND VALUES

Section 1 focuses on how university goals and values regarding a socially just workplace are perceived and experienced by A&F employees. The section includes presentation and analysis of responses to survey questions and focus group information.

Is UMass really diverse? Is diversity an institutional value?

UMass as an institution of higher education promotes itself as a place which places a high value on diversity and which welcomes people of many backgrounds and orientations. The executive area of Administration and Finance reflects this institutional value and makes it visible in several ways. A&F has clearly published Vision and Value statements that include a commitment to issues of diversity. Specifically, the Vision statement says:

Administration and Finance strives to provide high quality and responsive service through a knowledgeable, innovative and customer-focused staff who honor diversity and who are part of an organization that is recognized as a rewarding place to work.

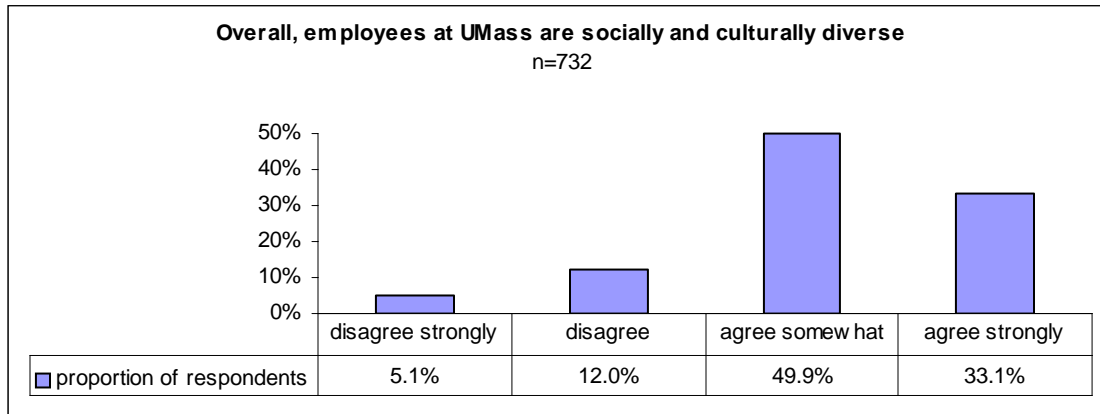
All new employees in A&F are required to participate in a new employee orientation. During this orientation, employees are introduced to the executive area; its structure, mission, goals and values. Included among them are the explicit value of diversity and the expectations concerning employees' responsibility to support and promote a workplace where differences are respected and discrimination is not tolerated. In addition, all supervisors in Administration and Finance are required to participate in a Supervisory Leadership Development Program which aims to develop in supervisors and managers the competencies necessary to manage and promote a diverse workforce.

Within the context of these efforts to promote a diverse, socially just workplace by the university in general and A&F in particular, the survey and focus groups probed the extent to which A&F employees perceived that diversity to be real and to be valued.

UMass as an institution has advertised itself as a place which sets a high value on diversity and which welcomes people of many backgrounds and orientations. When trying to assess the question of whether UMass in general and, A&F in particular, is a diverse workplace, we examined the demographic profile of the divisions and departments within Administration and Finance. The Diversity Demographic Profile for each unit within a particular division is located in Appendix 5.

The survey and focus groups probed the extent to which A&F employees perceived that diversity to be real, and to be valued. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement "Overall, employees at UMass are socially and culturally diverse": Most employees (83.0%, n=607) agreed "strongly" or "somewhat". See Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1



As one focus group respondent put it:

“Workplace [is] great, very welcoming too, and interested in people with different cultures, e.g. respects social customs, ways of greeting etc... Why does it work?-exposure. Office has to be that way because it deals with diverse clientele. Department provides training.”

Another respondent commented:

“We have Portuguese, Puerto Rico and people from all over. There are different ethnicities in the 36 of us... We all seem to work together and we all seem to be treated equally.”

It's important to also acknowledge that perceptions of diversity on the campus vary tremendously with one's individual characteristics and experiences. For example, there is evidence that race, gender, and job classification all had a bearing on how people responded to the idea that UMass employees are culturally and socially diverse.

Race appears to have a significant bearing on the proportion of respondents who agree that the UMass staff is diverse. People of color were twice as likely as Whites to disagree “strongly” or “somewhat” with this statement (31.3% v. 14.9%) ($\chi^2=17.55, p=.001$).

A pattern of difference was also apparent when examining the responses to this question across racial groups.¹ Of those who responded to the question, 504 of 592 Whites (85.1%), 31 of 40 Asians (77.5%), 7 of 12 Latinos (58.3%), and 10 of 19 Blacks (52.6%) agreed that UMass is socially and culturally diverse.

¹ Although not statistically significant, perhaps due to the small sample size of most racial groups other than White, the pattern of difference across racial groups is deemed too important to exclude from mention.

An employee talking about the gender breakdown at different levels said:

“I was thinking how ironic it is that at the very lowest grades, you know, which is the environment that I’m in, there is a lot of sexual [gender] diversity. I don’t know what the breakdown is...but there seems to be almost as many men as women and whatever it is, it is just odd that it works at that level, you know, and then as it starts to percolate up, you begin to get the divisions.”

A classified staff member who is also a person of color commented:

“When sitting in Steward’s meeting you do not see diversity - lacks outreach, no postings”

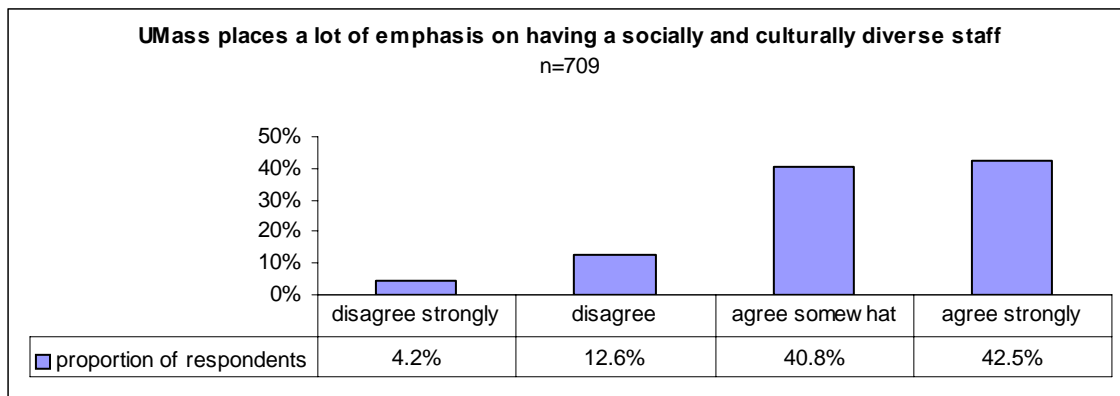
Perceptions of diversity are reflected in this comment by another person of color::

“Not surprised, disappointed maybe that you know...the last four classes were the most diverse...we had four people of color....Usually one maybe out of 20-30. Doesn’t seem to be changing really.”

Overall, a similar proportion of survey respondents (83.3%, n=590) agreed “strongly” or “somewhat” with the statement “UMass places a lot of emphasis on having a socially and culturally diverse staff.” (See Figure 1.2) People of color were more likely than Whites (14.8% v. 29.2%) to disagree “strongly” or “somewhat” with the statement ($\chi^2=12.63$, $p=.006$).

The responses to this question suggest differences, perhaps in perception of what constitutes a “socially and culturally diverse staff,” across racial groups.¹ 487 of 571 Whites (85.3%) agreed that UMass places emphasis on staff diversity, compared to 33 of 40 Asians (82.5%), 11 of 18 (61.1%) Blacks and 6 of 10 (60.0%) Latinos.

Figure 1.2



Several comments from focus groups supported the overall idea that the University emphasizes diversity:

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"I think everybody is aware that it is the University's mandate to respect diversity, to have diversity, to be culturally, racially receptive."

"One of the very first things stressed to me was diversity, and the management of our department has stressed that."

"Good job valuing and welcoming workplace particular...interested where from...the group responding to a person with a mental illness. Considered a problem – legitimate concern...supervisor met with behavioral program asked what could be working better in the workplace for him."

"...we have rule books so pretty much you're basically a number and it doesn't matter if you're blue, green, black or brown. You open it and it has all the things you need to do and the sequence..."

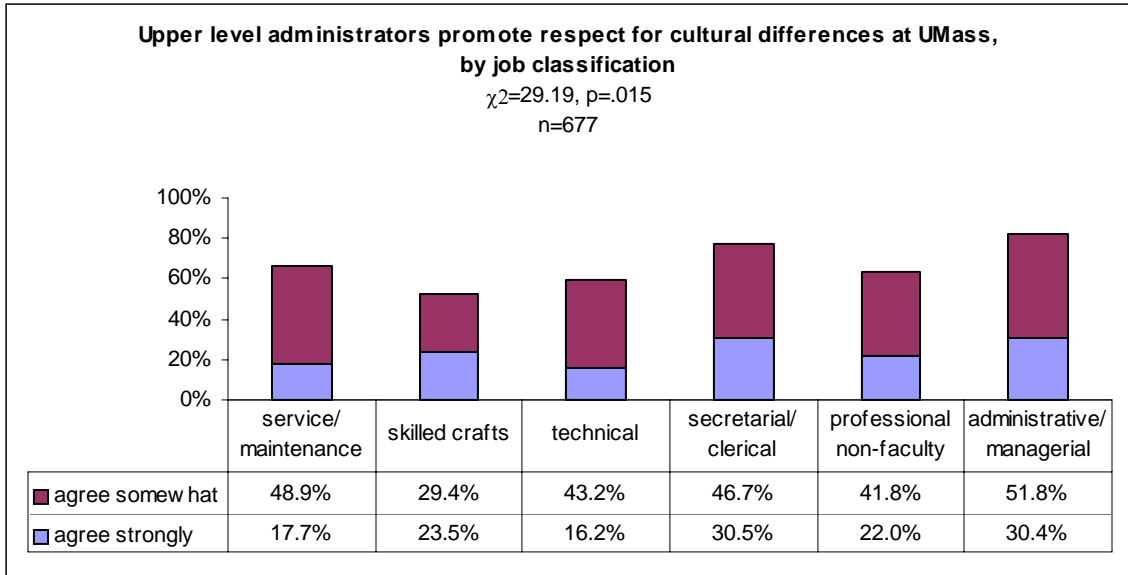
"My husband took skills he learned at the university and it has helped him in his new job... now he's happy it [diversity training] was 'jammed down his throat'."

Despite the generally positive response to questions about overall diversity, there were more mixed responses when people were asked if the values on diversity were promoted by the leadership on the campus.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement "Upper-level administrators promote respect for cultural differences at UMass". Approximately one third of survey respondents (32.5%) disagreed with the statement. (See Figure 1.3)

The ratings varied significantly by job classification ($\chi^2=29.19$, $p=.015$), with administrative/managerial staff most likely to agree with the statement (82.2%), and skilled crafts workers most likely to disagree (47.1%). See Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3



Again, the responses to this question appear to vary across racial groups.¹ 8 of 17 Blacks (47.1%), 5 of 11 Latinos (45.5%), 169 of 544 Whites (31.0%) and 11 of 40 Asians (27.5%) disagreed with the statement that upper level administrators promote respect for cultural differences.

Comments from focus groups also indicated that many staff members were uncomfortable with the lack of leadership from upper level administrators on matters of social justice.

“A lot of that is a culture within UMass and when people bring things up, the further up they go, the more you get pressure from the people higher up, ‘I don’t want to know about it, deal with it, fix it.’ It comes back to you, we heard that so many times. We heard it from administration of Whitmore who are basically ‘I don’t want to know about it’

“Leaders need to start showing true leadership”

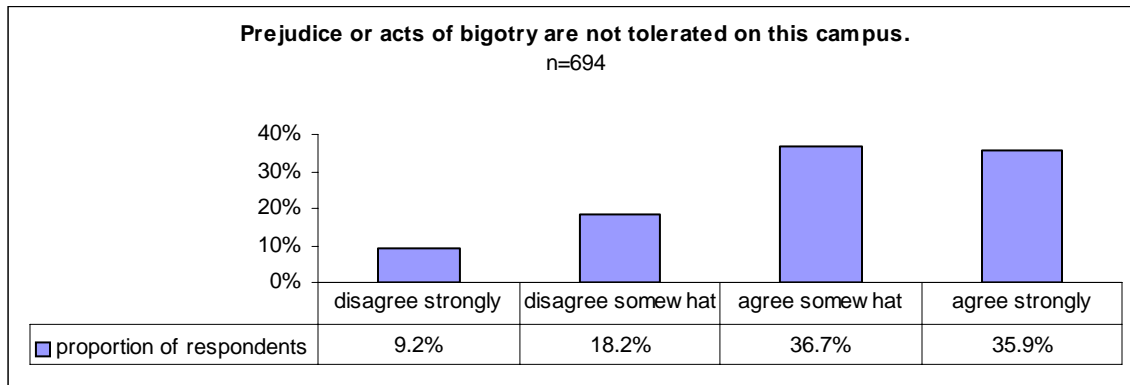
Immediate supervisors fared no better when employees were asked about their active support for diversity. Over one-third of respondents (64.2%, n=460) disagreed with the statement “My supervisor communicates the importance of valuing diversity.”

When asked to rate their agreement with the statement “Prejudice and/or acts of bigotry are not tolerated on this campus,” less than three-quarters of respondents (72.6%, n=504) agreed “strongly” or “somewhat.” (See Figure 1.4) Responses to this item do not appear consistent when examined across racial groups.¹ 31 of 37 Asians (83.7%), 414 of 560 Whites (73.9%), 5 of 12 Latinos (58.3%) and 11 of 19 Blacks (57.9%) agreed that prejudice is not tolerated.

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Figure 1.4



When asked to rate their agreement with the statement “Emphasis on creating an inclusive community has made UMass a better place to work,” about three-quarters of respondents (74.1%, n=488) agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat.” The pattern of responses differed significantly between Whites and people of color ($\chi^2 = 16.57$, $p = .001$). People of color were more likely than Whites to “agree strongly” (34.7% v. 16.8%), and Whites more likely than people of color to “agree somewhat” (57.7% v. 45.3%) with the statement.

Further analyzing this question by racial groups yielded some differences.¹ 37 of 40 Asians (92.5%), 391 of 525 Whites (74.5%), 11 of 17 Blacks (64.7%) and 6 of 11 Latinos (54.6%) agreed that the emphasis on creating an inclusive community has made UMass a better place to work.

Employees generally agreed that the University is diverse and that it places emphasis on diversity, although racial affiliation (especially) seems to have had a bearing on how these issues are perceived. Significant minorities of employees said that neither upper level administration nor their own supervisors promoted respect for diversity. There was concern that bigotry is sometimes tolerated, and a somewhat mixed message about the extent to which the emphasis on creating an inclusive community has improved UMass as a place to work.

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Recommendations

Visibility

- Include and make visible diversity and CDSJ values in the mission and vision statements of each division and where appropriate, in the mission statement of individual units and offices. Make the mission and vision statements visible on bulletin boards or in other public places.
- Establish goals for improvement in the area of CDSJ annually for each division and incorporate into the PMP process

Are we really diverse?

- Establish standards (not quotas) for improvement in the representation of diverse populations in each of our departments.