

## WHAT IS CDSJ?

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Given the current racial tension on campus, many of us find ourselves wondering if the University is taking any action to ensure a more inclusive community. This article introduces reader to the Community, Diversity and Social Justice (CDSJ) Initiative, a long term, campus-wide, change process that has been operating for the past six years. Its primary goal is to create a more inclusive and equitable teaching, learning, working and living community here at UMass Amherst. The CDSJ Initiative is unique because it is based on assessments of CDSJ issues which are conducted and acted on by teams in each of the five administrative divisions on campus. What results are many changes throughout the five administrative divisions. A continuing cycle of CDSJ assessments evaluates the effectiveness of these changes.

**Where did the CDSJ Initiative come from?** In the mid-nineties, then Chancellor David Scott asked a campus advisory group to help him develop a new approach to addressing CDSJ issues on the campus and issue a report on its findings. This report, "A New Approach to Promoting Community, Diversity and Social Justice," reviews and critiques the past 40 years of campus efforts regarding social justice and diversity issues and concludes that *what* the campus had been doing was creative, innovative and often effective, but that *how* the campus had been approaching CDSJ issues was problematic if not self-defeating at times.

This report cites the reactive leadership style of the campus as a key problem, one which resulted in the campus addressing CDSJ issues only when it was driven to do so by crises, incidents or building takeovers. As a corrective, the report proposes a longer-term, decentralized approach in which each of the five administrative divisions of the campus conducts its own assessment of CDSJ issues to determine needed changes. These local CDSJ assessments are then used to develop local change plans in the administrative divisions and the departments within them.

When the report was published in 1998, Chancellor Scott also appointed a campus-wide CDSJ Team of faculty, staff and students to implement its recommendations. Later on, after additional CDSJ teams were formed in each of the five administrative divisions (also called executive areas) of the campus, this campus-wide team was renamed the University CDSJ Coordinating Group.

**Why is the CDSJ Initiative decentralized?** For more than two decades, central offices at UMass Amherst have collected extensive data about undergraduates and their experiences on the campus, especially regarding social climate. Efforts to make changes based on this information often ran into difficulties. One major roadblock was that key departments and individuals often didn't see the data as important since they hadn't had a hand in collecting it and thus didn't "own" it. To address this ownership issue, the CDSJ Initiative deliberately uses a model in which local teams collect local CDSJ assessment data. The expectation is that "ownership" of the assessment results will lead to local initiatives which address local shortcomings.

**How does the CDSJ Initiative work?** A campus-wide University CDSJ Coordinating Group provides coordination, support and resources for this large scale, long term change effort. Each executive area on the campus (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, University Advancement and the Chancellor's Area) formed its own CDSJ team three years ago.

Over the past three years each of the five executive area teams conducted a local assessment of how its executive area performs with regard to issues of community, diversity and social justice. The results of these assessments are currently being disseminated within each executive area resulting in an analysis of strengths and areas of needed improvement. Focusing on the needed improvements, each executive area and the organizational units within them then develop specific change plans.

Since the five executive areas all vary with regard to size and their organizational cultures, this process has taken slightly different forms in each of the executive areas and operates on different timelines. Each executive area team will perform a second cycle of CDSJ assessment, some as early as this coming spring, to see what has improved and what still needs attention.

Within Academic Affairs, for example, the Academic Affairs CDSJ Team issued its report for their entire area in January 2004. Due to the large size of Academic Affairs, addition "sub-teams" were formed in each school, college and major administrative unit (Provost's Office, Dubois Library) last spring through this fall. The purpose of these sub-teams is to analyze, disseminate and act on the CDSJ assessment data for each school, college and major administrative unit. After a period of time has passed, Academic Affairs will conduct a second CDSJ assessment and begin the cycle again.

**How many faculty, staff and students are involved in the CDSJ Initiative?** More than 70 members of the campus were involved when the five executive area teams were first appointed three years ago. Since then, with retirements, lay-offs, turnover and students graduating, the numbers have declined to about 50, but with the creation of teams in each of the schools, colleges and major administrative units in Academic Affairs, the number will likely climb to more than 100.

**How were the assessments conducted?** The CDSJ teams utilized a number of sources of data including analysis of demographic data of faculty, staff and students, examination of policies and practices, interviews, focus groups and climate surveys of faculty, staff and graduate employees and undergraduate students. The first three pages of the climate survey for faculty and staff was largely the same across all five executive areas, allowing for cross-campus comparisons. An additional survey of a sample of undergraduates examined student experiences in the classroom, in workplaces and more generally on campus. A copy of this student survey should be available soon on the main web site for the CSDJ Initiative.

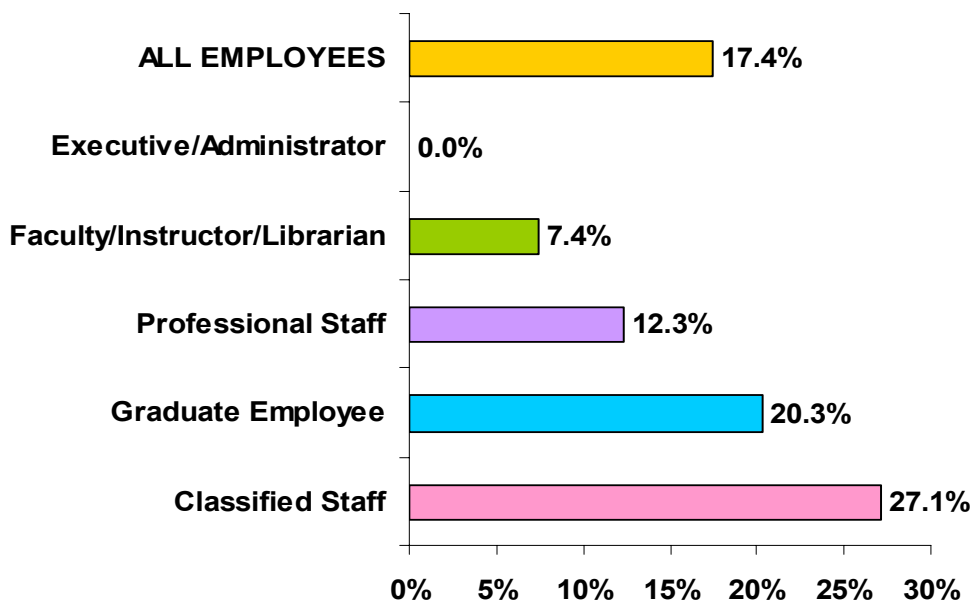
**Are there any reports available about the CDSJ Assessments?** Each executive area will have a final assessment report this fall and additional reports will be available over time as they are completed. Currently, the report most relevant to graduate students and undergraduates is the Academic Affairs CDSJ Assessment Report.

**What sorts of changes will the CDSJ Initiative bring about and when?** The key to understanding the CDSJ Initiative's effort to create a more inclusive and equitable campus is it involves a large number of smaller changes made at the local, departmental level and a much smaller number of campus-wide changes. In essence, every part of the formal organization of the campus is being asked to use CDSJ assessment data to make changes to create a more inclusive and equitable local environment .

At this point, most of the CDSJ Teams are just starting to formulate specific change plans but some have already moved on to the implementation stage. For example, change plans already being implemented at the local level include improved internal communications, new policies prohibiting bullying and other inappropriate behavior, new programs and strategies for attracting staff of color, exit interviews of departing employees to gain valuable feedback, and enhanced professional development programs aimed increasing personal and supervisory sophistication with CDSJ issues. This list will grow significantly over time.

Since some needed improvements (e.g., enhanced approaches to recruiting and retaining employees of color) will be similar for a number of campus departments, even across executive areas, it is likely that these departments will collaborate in shaping solutions. Likewise, some issues are so common across the entire institution that both local and campus-wide changes will be needed.

One issue which clearly requires both local and campus-wide attention is unfair treatment based on job classification (or employment status). The climate survey administered across all five executive areas revealed that this type of unfair treatment is experienced by more than a quarter of "classified" or "non-exempt" employees and one fifth of graduate employees.



**Experienced Unfair Treatment because of Job Classification  
(in immediate work environment during the past year)**

Among the CDSJ teams across the campus, these issues have been labeled as issues of social class and “employment caste,” in that person’s treatment by others is clearly related to her or his employment status. Not surprisingly, a quick search of the higher education literature reveals a growing awareness of class/caste issues throughout American higher education and their corrosive effects on the morale and job performance of faculty, staff and graduate employees. This literature also examines the impact of social class on the quality of the undergraduate experience.

“Class/caste” issues stand as important examples of the sort of institutional problems for which both local and campus-wide problem-solving is necessary in order to appropriately address specific behavior at the departmental level as well as establish a more inclusive and equitable tone for the larger campus.

### **How can I get more information about the CDSJ Initiative?**

General information about the CDSJ Initiative is available at:

<http://www.umass.edu/ohr>

For “A New Approach to Promoting Community, Diversity and Social Justice” report:

[http://www.umass.edu/ohr/cdsj\\_report1.htm](http://www.umass.edu/ohr/cdsj_report1.htm)

An organizational chart of UMass Amherst showing the five executive areas and the departments within them:

[http://www.umass.edu/oapa/publications/organization/organization\\_chart.pdf](http://www.umass.edu/oapa/publications/organization/organization_chart.pdf)

For the Academic Affairs Assessment Report:

<http://www.umass.edu/wost/cdsj/January2004Report.pdf>

For the climate survey used for faculty, staff and graduate employees with in Academic Affairs:

<http://www.umass.edu/wost/cdsj/survey.pdf>

For reports on campus climate surveys of undergraduates:

[http://www.umass.edu/sareo/pp\\_home.html](http://www.umass.edu/sareo/pp_home.html)

More detailed information may be available depending upon on the specific executive area and/or organizational unit in question. In Academic Affairs, for example, there is an overall report cited above, but additional CDSJ Teams have been formed for most schools and colleges as well, and these teams have access to their local CDSJ assessment data.

For more information about the School and College Teams within Academic Affairs, contact the Academic Affairs CDSJ Team’s Co-chairs, Matt Ouellett ([mlo@acad.umass.edu](mailto:mlo@acad.umass.edu)) or Anne Herrington ([anneh@english.umass.edu](mailto:anneh@english.umass.edu)).

For more information about the campus-wide CDSJ Initiative and presentations which include examples of assessment data for faculty, staff and graduate employees as well as for undergraduates, contact Grant Ingle ([ingle@admin.umass.edu](mailto:ingle@admin.umass.edu) or 545-0851) who serves on the campus-wide University CDSJ Coordinating Group.

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This short article is the first in a series focusing on the CDSJ Initiative. Future articles will include more assessment results and examples of specific change plans being developed across the campus.