DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS & CAMPUS LIFE
UNDERGRADUATE CAMPUS CLIMATE STUDY
SPRING 2012
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
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Campus Climate Assessment at UMass
UMass has a long history of surveying undergraduates regarding a number of separate campus climate issues, including sexual harassment, racial and ethnic issues, anti-Semitism, and gay, lesbian, and transgendered issues. This research was the result of a long-term collaboration between the Office of Human Relations and the Division of Student Affairs.

The most recent, institution-wide assessment of campus climate for students was conducted by the Division of Student Affairs in Spring 2003, in conjunction with the university’s Community, Diversity & Social Justice Initiative. This telephone survey examined undergraduate students’ experiences generally on the campus, in the classroom and at their workplaces.

Purpose of 2012 study
One of the main purposes for the study is to identify general baseline conditions in various realms, as they existed at the close of academic year 2011-2012:

- Student connections
- Student engagement
- Student perceptions and experiences of diversity on campus
- Harassment and violence on campus

Methods
Two separate Campus Climate survey instruments (A & B) were fielded to a random sample of undergraduate students during April & May, 2012.

Transfer students and ALANA students were oversampled for both surveys.

Campus Climate Survey A focused on students’ communication technology practices, perceptions of campus staff and support, outside-of-classroom activities, barriers to campus involvement, and off-campus living experiences.

Campus Climate Survey B focused on students’ perceptions of diversity within the University community, with particular attention to dynamics of race/ethnicity, and to various types and manifestations of harassment or violence that they have observed or personally experienced. This instrument also examined students’ perceptions of campus resources and their confidence in University responses to incidents of harassment and violence.

Reports
The Campus Climate aggregate findings will be presented in one summary report and shared widely with the university community. Subsequent custom reports will address key student groups, including: ALANA, transfers, Commonwealth Honors College, and on-campus residents.
“Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that...cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.”

(NSSE, 2010)

STUDENT CONNECTIONS

The Campus Climate study explored students’ perceptions and experiences interacting with UMass faculty and administrators.

KEY FINDINGS

UMass undergraduates hold generally positive feelings and connections to the university – over 75% of respondents are enjoying their student experience, see themselves as part of the campus community, and feel a sense of pride in being UMass students. A large proportion agrees that they would recommend the university to others or choose UMass again if they had it to do over.

Staying connected and enrolled at UMass may be superseded by financial concerns for some, however. This concern is especially pronounced among ALANA students and Juniors.

In terms of technology and digital connections, students are mobile! Laptop computers were nearly ubiquitous among respondents, and were the primary internet device for the vast majority.

Despite students’ digital connections, only faculty can confidently rely upon email to be a consistently effective method for connecting with students. Students are far less attentive to email communication from their Schools, Colleges or other University administrators throughout their college years. The contrast is particularly stark between first-year students and seniors, who are significantly less attentive to emails from campus administration.

Compared to upper level students, first-year students on average perceive University staff to be more welcoming, and significantly more respectful and helpful toward students; after the first year, however, students’ perceptions of respect and helpfulness among UMass staff decline. This is to be expected to a certain degree, given the campus-wide, intentional nature of the first-year experience. At the same time, students appear more apt to cultivate individual connections with faculty and staff as they progress through college, on average – particularly in their junior and senior years.

Q: I may have to choose between financially supporting myself and/or my family, and going to college

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALANA</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White only</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year student</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ Responses to Emails from Campus Offices

- Always read
- Sometimes read
- Rarely read
- Never read

Students’ Connections with Faculty & Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* statistically significant at p<.05

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- **How strongly are students connected to UMass?**
- **How do students use technology?**
- **How well are faculty and staff connecting with students?**
**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

The Campus Climate study assessed three distinct elements of engagement: studying, co-curricular involvement and working.

**KEY FINDINGS**

Most students do not have difficulty finding quiet places to study, but some may have difficulty finding (or making) the time to study. One in four respondents averaged less than 1 hour per day of studying outside of class.

Connecting to the campus through co-curricular and other social involvement is an important component of college success for many students. Nearly 75% of respondents experienced at least some degree of success finding fun social events on campus when they wanted to, and 60% participated in campus programs/events sometimes or frequently. When students chose not to participate, the most prevalent barriers were:

- Inconvenient timing
- Uninteresting offerings
- Lack of information about activities

In addition to campus programs and events, 69% of respondents participated in some form of structured, on-campus co-curricular activity in 2011-12. Most prevalent were:

- Registered Student Organizations (RSOs)
- Community service or volunteer projects
- Recreational athletics

85% Found quiet places to study on campus

74% Found fun social activities to attend on campus

69% Participated in structured, on-campus co-curricular activities

60% Attended campus programs and events sometimes or frequently

59% Worked for pay

The majority of employed respondents spent roughly 1-2 hours a day working, primarily to help fund their college attendance. These findings suggest a need to better understand students’ off-campus employment. Although UMass upholds a clear position and process for moderating students’ on-campus work hours, we do not have comparable knowledge of the extent to which 38% of employed students may be committed – or over-committed – to off-campus jobs. Better information about students’ off-campus work hours may enable us to support their academic, co-curricular and work success more effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Student Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimally engaged (0-5 hrs/wk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately engaged (6-15 hrs/wk)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavily engaged (16+ hrs/wk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Studying</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-curricular activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working for pay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

- **What types of diversity are most supported and least supported at UMass, in students’ view?**
- **How well does the University express its commitment to diversity?**
- **How are students exploring and experiencing diversity on personal levels?**

**STUDENT PERCEPTIONS & EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS**

Students who responded to Campus Climate Survey A provided their perspectives about general university support for different types of diversity on campus. Since racial/ethnic diversity was the featured target emphasis for this year’s study, students who responded to Campus Climate Survey B offered more detailed observations and satisfaction for various dynamics specific to racial/ethnic diversity.

**KEY FINDINGS**

Undergraduates find the UMass university climate overall to be most supportive of diverse sexual orientations, nationalities and ethnicities, and least supportive of physical disabilities.

With respect to racial/ethnic diversity, UMass is successful promoting the appreciation of cultural differences at an institutional level but is challenged to enact the value in concrete ways. There is room, in particular, to increase and improve the ways that campus administrators personally communicate diversity values to students. Students also reported somewhat lower satisfaction with the levels of diversity among UMass faculty or staff, compared to student diversity.

Students are exploring and experiencing diversity in a variety of ways during their college years as well. Three out of four respondents (74%) had been involved in at least one type of diversity-focused experience since enrolling at UMass. The most prevalent were:

- Attending a diversity-focused presentation, performance or art exhibit (49%)
- Publicly communicating their opinion about a cause (36%)
- Taking a social justice course (31%)
- Participating in a racial/ethnic or cultural center activity (20%)

That being said, 18% of respondents hadn’t engaged in a single conversation about a personally important topic with a student of a different race or ethnicity than themselves during 2011-12. This finding highlights a need to continue growing opportunities for meaningful interactions and dialogues between White and ALANA students.
A safe campus environment is one in which students, faculty, and staff are free to conduct their daily affairs, both inside and outside the classroom, without fear of physical, emotional or psychological harm. Personal safety is a basic human need that must be preserved if the mission of the university is to be pursued.” (Higher Education Center for Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse & Violence Prevention, 2004)

HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS

The Campus Climate study explored the types and manifestations of harassment or violence that students had encountered, together with their perceptions of campus resources and confidence in University responses to incidents of harassment and violence.

KEY FINDINGS

One in five respondents (21%) indicated that they had either experienced or witnessed some type of harassment or violence during the past year. Gender and racial/ethnic harassment or violence, followed by sexual orientation, were the most prevalent types, and most frequently manifested in verbal comments.

Most respondents appear to feel fairly empowered and inclined to respond proactively to many types harassment or violence, but may be constrained from doing so by lack of knowledge about the appropriate campus resources or actions to take, or lack of confidence in the university’s ability to respond to incidents effectively.

- 71% or more respondents would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to report incidents of harassment or violence.
- In most instances, only 1 in 3 respondents were aware of the proper campus procedures for reporting harassment or violence (31-35% for all types, except sexual harassment or violence at 44%).
- Across various types of harassment or violence, 26% - 40% of respondents were unconfident in the university effectiveness.
- Relationship violence: Respondents were least likely to report incidents that happen to themselves, and least confident in the university’s ability to respond effectively.

These findings identify distinct opportunities for the university to cultivate a supportive, responsive climate for students by increasing outreach efforts, visibility of campus resources, and transparency of reporting procedures and outcomes.

By and large, there does not appear to be a prominent or widespread “culture of physical violence” at UMass:

- 78% of respondents had not observed or participated in any physical fights involving UMass students last year.
- On average, respondents perceived violence between students to be a problem only to a little extent (2.16, on a 5-point scale).
- 75% of respondents are “very confident” or “somewhat confident” in the University’s ability to respond effectively to riots on campus.

Students’ Attitudes & Responses to Harassment/Violence

- "Very likely" to report their own experiences
- "Very likely" to report observed incidents
- Aware of campus reporting procedures
- "Very confident" in University's ability to respond effectively

- Sexual harassment/violence: 56% likely, 41% confident
- Sexual orientation harassment/violence: 44% likely, 38% confident
- Relationship violence: 41% likely, 38% confident
- Racial/ethnic harassment/violence: 45% likely, 41% confident
- Gender identity harassment/violence: 45% likely, 44% confident