**WELCOME!**

Now that we’ve explored feelings of belonging and the connections and friendships in which we engage, this next Climate Survey Report reflects on our lived experiences at UMass – how we perceive the general campus climate, the racial climate, and the campus commitment to inclusion. Our perceptions about the campus arise from our lived experience within its systems, policies, and procedures and those lived experiences differ by our roles on campus as well as our identities.

How do we understand the meaning and implications of the perspectives shared through the Climate Survey data when viewed through a lens of equity and inclusion? From this equity lens, we might interrogate how our systems, policies, and procedures influence the experiences of people in their differing roles and their multiple identities at the wider, ‘global’ campus level. By contrast, do we have different experiences in our many ‘local’ climates? Do we experience the climate of our department, office, dorm or apartment differently than the climate of the campus as a whole? Consider the idea of “microclimates”—an oasis in a desert, the cool river air on a hot day, or a steamy sidewalk in a corner of the city. An individual experience of “climate” can often differ depending upon the level we are considering and the unique systems, policies and procedures which shape it.

As you use this toolkit, take time to think about both global AND local perceptions of campus climate, and notice the unique insights and understandings available at each level of lived experience.

**Barb Chalfonte,**  
Associate Provost of Analytics & Assessment

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**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

- Thinking about your own experiences and interactions, please rate the campus overall on each scale below:
  - Unwelcoming ↔ Welcoming
  - Hostile ↔ Friendly
  - Unsafe ↔ Safe
  - Not Collaborative ↔ Collaborative
  - Disrespectful ↔ Respectful
  - Not Inclusive ↔ Inclusive
  - Intolerant ↔ Tolerant
  - Not Diverse ↔ Diverse
  - Unsupportive ↔ Supportive
  - Weak ↔ Strong sense of community

- How likely are you to recommend UMass Amherst to others?
- How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the racial climate at UMass Amherst?
- How committed or uncommitted to inclusion is UMass Amherst as an institution?

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**KEY FINDINGS**

**Undergrad & Graduate Students**

- For both undergraduate and graduate students, the overall mean on the campus climate measure is 3.7. Groups whose ratings fall below this mean include Black, Multiracial, LGB, and transgender and nonbinary students, as well as students with a mental health disability. Conversely, groups whose ratings exceed the mean include International and heterosexual students, as well as cisgender men.
- Satisfaction with overall campus climate is highest among International and Asian students, while only 26% of Black and 25% of Multiracial graduate students reported being Very Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied with the campus racial climate.
- Non-binary students and students with a mental health disability were more likely to perceive the University as uncommitted to inclusion than their cisgender and non-disabled counterparts.
- When it comes to perceptions of safety, cisgender, heterosexual, male students are notable statistical outliers. This demographic was 22% more likely to rate safety at a 4 or 5 than the UMass mean of 61%. By comparison, students who identify as Black, LGBTQ+, or multiply-disabled were 13 - 25% less likely to report a strong sense of safety than the UMass mean.

**Staff & Faculty**

- The overall mean on the campus climate measure was similar for both staff (3.5) and faculty (3.6). Groups with a higher perception of campus climate include Asian staff, staff in managerial roles, and male faculty members.
- Similar to the data from student demographics, staff and faculty groups whose ratings fell below the mean include Black and Latinx staff, as well as disabled faculty and staff, who were 15 - 18% more likely to perceive the institution as uncommitted to inclusion than their non-disabled peers.
- Among both staff and faculty, Asian employees were most likely to indicate satisfaction with the campus racial climate, whereas Black, Latinx, and Multiracial employees were least likely to indicate satisfaction.
When reflecting on this climate data, it is crucial to intentionally apply an equity lens throughout our inquiry. While equality focuses on everyone having an identical experience, equity asks, “what does each unique individual or group need in order to have equitable access to resources and opportunities for success?” This mode of thinking focuses on both recognizing patterns of inequitable outcomes and getting curious about the attitudes, assumptions, and actions that might be contributing to those patterns.

Building individual and collective awareness of the ways that systemic inequity shapes data is a necessary first step towards challenging and disrupting the underlying cultural factors at play.

In the process of equity-minded sense-making, we shift our tendency to move immediately from data to action-oriented ‘improvement plans’. Instead, we open up a space between information and action to ask questions that lead us to the heart of the “WHY”.

**Equity-minded inquiries could include...**

- Who is represented in this data? Who is not? Why?
- How might my own identities, experiences, assumptions, and/or biases contribute to my interpretation of the data?
- Whose experiences and perspectives should we learn more about to understand this data more deeply? What else do we need to know, and how will we access that information?
- Are there barriers in our practices, policies, and systems? What root causes might explain the outcomes we are observing?
- Who and what should be prioritized to improve equity?

**SPOTLIGHT ON: THE OKANOGAN CHARTER**

The Okanagan Charter, which was developed on the territory of the Okanagan Nation, is a call to action for higher education institutions to embed health into all aspects of campus culture.

Shared aspirations of the Okanagan Charter include infusing health into everyday operations, business practices, and academic mandates. By doing so, health promoting universities and colleges enhance the success of our institutions; create campus cultures of compassion, well-being, equity and social justice; improve the health of the people who live, learn, work, play and love on our campuses; and strengthen the ecological, social and economic sustainability of our communities and wider society.

The charter takes a system level approach as it takes into consideration the many intersections between people, place, and the planet. UMass has adopted the following 4 pillars of wellbeing to be embedded in all aspects of our campus culture: **Health and Wellness, Sustainability, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Built and Natural Environment.**

To learn more, visit: We Are a Health Promoting University
When engaging with data regarding perceptions of campus climate, it may be tempting to dismissively equate “perception” with “opinion”, especially when confronted with information that does not feel reflective of our own lived experience. The waters get murkier when the data involves or evokes emotions, which mainstream U.S. culture often treats as less meaningful or valuable than more objective forms of quantitative data. One challenge we may encounter when engaging with the Campus Climate Survey results is our openness to a multiplicity of truths – a recognition that perception IS reality, and that multiple realities can and do co-exist.

Of course, in an ideal world, all members of our campus community would have similarly positive perceptions of the campus climate. But our perceptions of and attitudes about the social settings we inhabit are shaped by our varied – and sometimes inequitable – lived experiences, including our interactions with other members of the campus community. It is crucial to recognize the minoritized groups whose experiences fall outside of the aggregate norms, because there are valuable stories and insights that reside there. What might we learn if we attune to the margins instead of the center?

If your personal experience hews closely to the campus mean, consider this an invitation to practice seeking to understand, before seeking to be understood. One gift of this climate data is the opportunity to practice sitting with truths that differ from our own, but are equally as real for those who inhabit them.

What would it look like to prioritize the needs of the most marginalized among us? To invest in the work of equity and justice is to remember that inclusion hurts no one, and that all ships rise with the tide.

**Questions for Group Reflection & Discussion**

- How do you recognize defensiveness in yourself and others when it occurs? What does deflection look and sound like to you?
- Where do you think this defensiveness comes from? How is it trying to help or protect?
- What do you need in order to move through deflection and become available for reflection?
- How can we, as team members, best support one another in this learning? How will we name and disrupt defensiveness when it threatens to derail or distract from our growth?

In the recent toolkit focused on Connections and Friendships, a series of independent reflection questions invited individuals to consider the potential role of defensiveness and deflection in responding to campus climate data. In utilizing this engagement guide on Campus Climate, groups and teams are encouraged to continue this exploration by sharing the results of that reflection in dialogue with one another.