



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Iowa State
University

Campus Climate Survey for
Learning, Living, and
Working
Executive Summary

April 2018



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History of the Project

Iowa State University affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community and that they engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect. Free exchange of different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments encourages students, faculty, and staff to develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Iowa State University also is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Iowa State University's mission statement, it is the university's mission to "Create, share, and apply knowledge to make Iowa and the world a better place" and "as the world has gotten smaller, the scope of Iowa State's mission has increased. ISU faculty, staff, and students are dedicated to improving lives around the nation and the world."¹ To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Iowa State University recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for the experiences and perceptions of its students, faculty, and staff. During fall 2017, Iowa State University conducted a comprehensive survey of students, faculty, and staff to develop a better understanding of the learning, living, and working environment on campus.

In spring 2017, members of Iowa State University formed the Climate Study Work Group. The Climate Study Work Group was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Iowa State University contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Iowa State University Campus Climate Survey for Learning, Living, and Working." Data gathered via reviews of relevant Iowa State University literature and a campus-wide survey addressing the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups will be presented to the Iowa State University community at forums during spring 2018, which will then develop and complete two or three action items.

¹<https://www.president.iastate.edu/mission>.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The conceptual model used as the foundation for Iowa State University's assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith et al. (1997) and modified by Rankin (2003). A power and privilege perspective informs the model, one grounded in critical theory, which establishes that power differentials, both earned and unearned, are central to all human interactions (Brookfield, 2005). Unearned power and privilege are associated with membership in dominant social groups (A. Johnson, 2005) and influence systems of differentiation that reproduce unequal outcomes. Iowa State University's assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of campus climate, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups. This report provides an overview of the results of the campus-wide survey.

The Climate Study Work Group collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. Together, they implemented participatory and community-based processes to review tested survey questions from the R&A question bank and developed a survey instrument for Iowa State University that would reveal the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. The final Iowa State University survey queried various campus constituent groups about their experiences and perceptions regarding the academic environment for students, the workplace environment for faculty and staff, employee benefits, sexual harassment and sexual violence, racial and ethnic identity, gender identity and gender expression, sexual identity, accessibility and disability services, and other topics.

Seven thousand three hundred twenty-six (7,326) people completed the survey. In the end, the assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of campus climate, with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups at Iowa State University.

Iowa State University Participants

Iowa State University community members completed seven thousand three hundred twenty-six (7,326) surveys for an overall response rate of 17%. Response rates for subgroups are provided in the full report. One should use caution when generalizing specific results to the Iowa State University population for that subgroup when response rates are less than 30%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.² Fifty-four percent ($n = 3,939$) of the sample were Undergraduate Students, 11% ($n = 817$) were Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Students, 25% ($n = 1,813$) were Staff, and 10% ($n = 757$) were Faculty. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The percentages offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (n) for each demographic characteristic.³

²Seventy-eight surveys were removed because the respondents did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and 46 duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent ($n = 121$). Any additional responses were removed because they were judged to have been problematic (i.e., the respondent did not complete the survey in good faith).

³The total n for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. Iowa State University Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	3,939	53.8
	Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student	817	11.2
	Faculty	757	10.3
	Staff	1,813	24.7
Gender identity	Woman	4,213	57.5
	Man	2,918	39.8
	Transspectrum/Multiple/Other	145	2.0
	Missing	50	0.7
Racial/ethnic identity	White/European American	5,731	78.2
	American Indian/Native American/First Nation	7	0.1
	Alaska Native	1	0.0
	Asian/Asian American	456	6.2
	Black/African American	194	2.6
	Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@	234	3.2
	Middle Eastern	41	0.6
	South Asian	113	1.5
	Native Hawaiian	2	0.0
	Pacific Islander	5	0.1
	Multiracial	367	5.0
	Other/Not Listed	51	0.7
	Missing	124	1.7
Sexual identity	LGBQ	727	9.9
	Heterosexual	6,261	85.5
	Missing	338	4.6
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	6,227	85.0
	Not-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	1,049	14.3
	Missing	50	0.7
Disability status	Single Disability	596	8.1
	No Disability	6,410	87.5
	Multiple Disabilities	271	3.7
	Missing	49	0.7

Table 1. Iowa State University Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Religious affiliation	Christian Religious Affiliation	4,143	56.6
	Other Religious Affiliation	365	5.0
	No Religious Affiliation	2,353	32.1
	Multiple Religious Affiliations	276	3.8
	Missing	189	2.6

Note: The total *n* for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at Iowa State University

Climate is defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning the access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential.⁴ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 79% ($n = 5,791$) of survey respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at ISU.
- 73% ($n = 1,871$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 85% ($n = 4,667$) of Student and Faculty respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

Tenured and Tenure-Track

- 87% ($n = 419$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that research was valued at ISU.

Non-Tenure-Track

- 84% ($n = 162$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that research was valued by ISU.

All Faculty

- 80% ($n = 594$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by students in the classroom.
- 85% ($n = 635$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that health insurance benefits were competitive.
- 70% ($n = 523$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they would recommend ISU as a good place to work.

⁴Rankin & Reason (2008)

3. Staff Respondents –Positive attitudes about staff work

- 82% ($n = 1,472$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by coworkers in their department.
- 76% ($n = 1,367$) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their supervisor provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.
- The majority of Staff respondents indicated that they had supervisors (67%, $n = 1,200$) and colleagues/coworkers (73%, $n = 1,319$) who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 71% ($n = 1,275$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that ISU provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- Staff respondents indicated that vacation and personal time packages (87%, $n = 1,553$), health insurance benefits (88%, $n = 1,572$), and retirement benefits (78%, $n = 1,381$) were competitive.
- 74% ($n = 1,331$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they would recommend ISU as a good place to work.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁵ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁶ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 75% ($n = 3,543$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by Iowa State faculty, 74% ($n = 3,495$) felt valued by ISU staff, and 76% ($n = 3,584$) felt valued by ISU faculty in the classroom.
- 72% ($n = 3,369$) of Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had faculty whom they perceived as role models.
- 82% ($n = 668$) of Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt they had adequate access to their advisors.

⁵Pascarella & Terenzini (2005)

⁶Hale (2004); Harper & Hurtado (2007); Harper & Quaye (2004)

- 81% ($n = 658$) of Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their advisor responded to their emails, calls, or voicemails in a prompt manner.
- 82% ($n = 659$) of Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” they felt comfortable sharing their professional goals with their advisor.

5. Student Respondents Perceived Academic Success

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 11 on the survey. Analyses using this scale revealed:

- A significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Student respondents by gender identity, racial identity, sexual identity, disability status, and citizenship status on *Perceived Academic Success*.

Examples of Findings

- Asian/Asian American, Black/African American, and Multiracial Undergraduate Student respondents all had lower *Perceived Academic Success* scores than White Undergraduate Student respondents.
- LGBTQ Undergraduate Student respondents’ scores indicated lower *Perceived Academic Success* than Heterosexual Undergraduate Student respondents. The same was found for Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents.
- U.S. Citizen Undergraduate Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Not-U.S. Citizen Undergraduate Student respondents.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

1. Members of several constituent groups indicated that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.⁷ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.⁸ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 19% ($n = 1,375$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.⁹

☐ Most of the exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct was based on ethnicity, gender/gender identity, and position status.

Differences based on position status, gender identity, and racial identity

- By position status, a higher percentage of Faculty respondents (25%, $n = 188$), Staff respondents (25%, $n = 444$), and Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents (23%, $n = 186$) than Undergraduate Student respondents (14%, $n = 557$) noted they believed that they had experienced this conduct.

☐ Of those respondents who noted that they had experienced this conduct, a higher percentage of Staff respondents (38%, $n = 170$) thought that the conduct was based on their position status compared with Faculty respondents (23%, $n = 43$) and Graduate/Veterinary Medicine Student respondents (20%, $n = 37$), with Undergraduate Student respondents (4%, $n = 24$) indicating that the conduct was based on their position status the least of the four groups.

⁷Aguirre & Messineo (1997); Flowers & Pascarella (1999); Pascarella & Terenzini (2005); Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora (2011)

⁸Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley (2008); Waldo (1998)

⁹The literature on microaggressions is clear that this type of conduct has a negative influence on people who experience the conduct, even if they feel at the time that it had no impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009).

- By gender identity, 31% ($n = 44$) of Transspectrum respondents, 22% ($n = 919$) of Women respondents, and 14% ($n = 399$) of Men respondents indicated that they had experienced this conduct.

69% ($n = 31$) of Transspectrum respondents, 35% ($n = 325$) of Women respondents, and 14% ($n = 56$) of Men respondents who had experienced this conduct indicated that the conduct was based on their gender identity.

- By racial identity, a higher percentage of Respondents of Color (28%, $n = 308$) and Multiracial respondents (31%, $n = 113$) indicated that they had experienced this conduct than White respondents (16%, $n = 924$).

60% ($n = 185$) of Respondents of Color, 44% ($n = 50$) of Multiracial respondents, and 5% ($n = 42$) of White respondents who had experienced this conduct indicated that the conduct was based on their ethnicity.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at ISU. Five hundred ninety-two (592) respondents elaborated on experiences with this conduct. Two hundred ninety respondents (290) were ISU Employees. Four themes emerged from the Employee responses: hostile colleague or coworker, hostile supervisor, negative work environment, and negative perceptions of ISU's harassment reporting processes. Three hundred and two (302) Student respondents elaborated on their experiences with exclusionary, intimidating, offensive and/or hostile conduct. Four themes emerged from the Student responses: hostile campus climate for political conservatives, hostile campus climate for Women Students, harassment based on individuals' race or ethnicity, and sexual assault/harassment.

2. Several constituent groups indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus climate, workplace climate, and classroom climate.

Prior research on campus climate has focused on the experiences of faculty, staff, and students associated with historically underserved social/community/affinity groups (e.g., women, People of Color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, and veterans).¹⁰ Several groups at Iowa State University indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

Examples of Findings for Overall Climate at Iowa State University

- A higher percentage of Transpectrum respondents (18%, $n = 26$) than Women respondents (7%, $n = 281$) or Men respondents (5%, $n = 156$) felt “uncomfortable” with the overall climate.
- 83% ($n = 4,725$) of White respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the overall climate at Iowa State University compared with 67% ($n = 735$) of Respondents of Color and 66% ($n = 245$) of Multiracial respondents.
- 16% ($n = 119$) of LGBTQ respondents compared with 28% ($n = 1,730$) of Heterosexual respondents felt “very comfortable” with the overall climate.

Examples of Findings for Department/Program and Work Unit Climate

- 38% ($n = 284$) of Faculty respondents compared with 43% ($n = 787$) of Staff respondents felt “comfortable” with the climate in their department/program or work unit.
- A higher percentage of White Faculty and Staff respondents (43%, $n = 937$) than Faculty and Staff Respondents of Color (33%, $n = 85$) felt “comfortable” with the climate in their department/program or work unit (Multiracial Faculty and Staff respondents (43%, $n = 31$) were not significantly different in their responses to being “comfortable” with the work climate).

¹⁰Harper & Hurtado (2007); Hart & Fellabaum (2008); Rankin (2003); Rankin & Reason (2005); Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart (2008)

- 33% ($n = 8$) of Transspectrum Faculty and Staff respondents, compared with 11% ($n = 158$) of Women Faculty and Staff respondents and 8% ($n = 80$) of Men Faculty and Staff respondents felt “uncomfortable” with the climate in their department/program or work unit.

Examples of Findings for Classroom Climate

- 24% ($n = 229$) of Faculty and Student Respondents of Color and 23% ($n = 74$) of Multiracial Faculty and Student respondents, compared with 36% ($n = 1,486$) of White Faculty and Student respondents, were “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- 24% ($n = 150$) of LGBTQ Faculty and Student respondents compared with 35% ($n = 1,599$) of Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents felt “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- A higher percentage of Faculty and Student Respondents with No Disability (34%, $n = 1,635$), compared with Faculty and Student Respondents with a Single Disability (26%, $n = 124$) and Faculty and Student Respondents with Multiple Disabilities (23%, $n = 49$), were “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

3. Faculty and Staff Respondents – Seriously Considered Leaving Iowa State University

- 54% ($n = 411$) of Faculty respondents and 50% ($n = 908$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving ISU in the past year.
 - 53% ($n = 481$) of those Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of low salary/pay rate. Other reasons included limited opportunities for advancement (49%, $n = 443$), increased workload (33%, $n = 301$), inability to effect change (32%, $n = 293$), and tension with supervisor/manager (31%, $n = 280$).
 - 47% ($n = 192$) of those Faculty respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of low salary/pay rate, 40% ($n = 164$) because of interest in a position at another institution/organization, 37% ($n = 152$) because of increased workload, 31% ($n = 128$) because of a desire to live

in a different location, 30% ($n = 123$) because of an inability to effect change, and 30% ($n = 122$) because of being recruited or offered a position at another institution.

4. Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues

- 23% each of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that staff salaries ($n = 404$) or child care benefits ($n = 413$) were competitive.
- 33% ($n = 587$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that staff opinions were valued by ISU faculty and administration.
- 58% ($n = 1,040$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that a hierarchy existed within staff positions that allowed some voices to be valued more than others.
- 41% ($n = 738$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the performance evaluation process was productive.
- 43% ($n = 774$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that ISU provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance (e.g., child care, wellness services, elder care, housing location assistance, transportation).
- 36% ($n = 641$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that Iowa State University policies (e.g., FMLA) were fairly applied across ISU.
- 22% ($n = 390$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that clear procedures existed on how they could advance at ISU.
- 39% ($n = 690$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt positive about their career opportunities at ISU.

Staff respondents elaborated on their perceptions of the workplace climate at ISU.

Several themes emerged from the responses including: overwhelming workload, supervisor experiences, inequitable treatment, compensation, job security concerns, inadequate professional development support, lack of advancement opportunities, flexible scheduling, and leave options.

5. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 37% ($n = 275$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that salaries for tenure-track faculty were competitive and 23% ($n = 169$) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that salaries for non-tenure-track professors were competitive.
- 23% ($n = 163$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that child care benefits were competitive.
- 33% ($n = 241$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that ISU provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance (e.g., child care, wellness services, elder care, housing location assistance, and transportation).
- 39% ($n = 184$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that faculty opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators.
- 25% ($n = 48$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators.
- 35% ($n = 67$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that criteria used for contract renewal were applied equally to all positions.
- 37% ($n = 72$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had job security.

Faculty respondents elaborated on statements regarding their perceptions of work-life balance at ISU. Three themes emerged from the Faculty respondents’ comments: salary concerns, resources/support, and inadequate child care. In addition, Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents elaborated on faculty input, service responsibilities, committee work, the interplay of research and teaching, and issues of inequality. Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents commented on job security concerns, not feeling valued, and salary concerns .

6. A small, but meaningful, percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual conduct.

In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* indicated that sexual assault is a substantial issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the Iowa State University survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 11% ($n = 770$) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact/conduct while at ISU.
 - 11% ($n = 80$) experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting).
 - 22% ($n = 157$) experienced stalking (e.g., following me, on social media, texting, phone calls).
 - 38% ($n = 554$) experienced sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment).
 - 33% ($n = 221$) experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g. fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent).
- Respondents identified ISU students, current or former dating/intimate partners, strangers, and acquaintances/friends as sources of unwanted sexual contact/conduct.
- 80% - 90% of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual contact/conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact/conduct. The rationales cited for not reporting these incidents included a fear of consequences, that the conduct was not serious enough to report, and that they handled it themselves.

Conclusion

Iowa State University campus climate findings¹¹ were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.¹² For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “very comfortable” or “comfortable.” A similar percentage (79%) of Iowa State University respondents indicated that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at Iowa State University. Twenty percent to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Iowa State University, a slightly lower percentage of respondents (19%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.¹³

Iowa State University's campus climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Iowa State University's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Iowa State University, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of any institution and unique aspects of each campus's environment must be taken into consideration when deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the Iowa State University community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Iowa State University, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to promote an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

¹¹Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹²Rankin & Associates Consulting (2016)

¹³Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward (2002); Harper & Hurtado (2007); Harper & Quaye (2004); Hurtado & Ponjuan (2005); Rankin & Reason (2005); Sears (2002); Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart (2006); Silverschanz et al.(2008); Yosso et al. (2009)

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