# Rankin & Associates, Consulting

## Assessment • Planning • Interventions

# University of Georgia

# Campus Climate Research Study

## Executive Summary

# July 2016

Rankin & Associates, Consulting

## Executive Summary

**Introduction**

UGA is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in UGA's mission statement, "the University of Georgia endeavors to prepare the University community and the state for full participation in the global society of the twenty-first century. Through its programs and practices, it seeks to foster the understanding of and respect for cultural differences necessary for an enlightened and educated citizenry. It further provides for cultural, ethnic, gender and racial diversity in the faculty, staff and student body. The University is committed to preparing the University community to appreciate the critical importance of a quality environment to an interdependent global society."[1] In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at UGA recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for UGA students, faculty and staff.

To that end, UGA formed the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) in 2015. The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, UGA contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "University of Georgia – A Research Study of Climate for Learning, Living and Working." Subsequently, the University of Georgia will develop strategic action initiatives based on the findings of this research.

**Project Design and Campus Involvement**

The CSWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. After reviewing existing data, the CSWG and R&A constructed questions for the campus-wide survey. The final survey instrument was completed in August 2015. UGA's survey contained 109 items (21 qualitative and 88 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from October 20, 2015 through November 20, 2015. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

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[1]http://www.uga.edu/profile/mission

The conceptual model used as the foundation for UGA'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 (Johnson, 2005) and influence systems of differentiation that reproduce unequal outcomes. The CSWG, in consultation with the consultant, selected, contextualized, and crafted survey questions as a means to capture the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. In this way, UGA's assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of campus climate. This report provides an overview of the results of the campus-wide survey.

**UGA Participants**

UGA community members completed 10,539 surveys for an overall response rate of 23%. Only surveys that were at least 50% complete were included in the final data set for analyses.[2] Response rates by constituent group varied: 52% (*n* = 5,478) for Undergraduate Students, 17% (*n* = 1,765) for Graduate Students, 1% (*n* = 58) for Post-Doctoral Students, 23% (*n* = 2,398) for Staff, and 8% (*n* = 840) for 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]

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[2]Eighty-eight (88) surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey and 497 duplicate responses were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent (*n* = 86).

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

*Table 1*. **UGA Sample Demographics**

| Characteristic | Subgroup | *n* | % of Sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Position status | Undergraduate Student | 5,478 | 52.0 |
| | Graduate Student | 1,765 | 16.7 |
| | Post-Doctoral Student | 58 | 0.6 |
| | Faculty | 840 | 8.0 |
| | Staff | 2,398 | 22.8 |
| Gender identity | Man | 3,344 | 31.7 |
| | Woman | 7,053 | 66.9 |
| | Transgender | 16 | 0.2 |
| | Genderqueer | 50 | 0.5 |
| | Other/Missing/Not Reported | 76 | 0.7 |
| Racial identity | American Indian/Alaskan Native | 19 | 0.2 |
| | Asian/Asian American | 811 | 7.7 |
| | Black/African American | 1,174 | 11.1 |
| | Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(a) | 297 | 2.8 |
| | Middle Eastern | 67 | 0.6 |
| | Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 10 | 0.1 |
| | White | 7,393 | 70.1 |
| | Two or More | 597 | 5.7 |
| | Other/Unknown/Not Reported | 171 | 1.6 |
| Sexual identity | LGBQ | 1,058 | 10.0 |
| | Heterosexual | 9,241 | 87.7 |
| | Asexual | 23 | 0.2 |
| | Other/Missing/Not Reported | 217 | 2.1 |
| Citizenship status | U.S. Citizen, birth | 9,400 | 86.2 |
| | U.S. Citizen, naturalized | 509 | 4.7 |
| | Permanent Resident | 507 | 4.7 |
| | Visa Holder | 425 | 3.9 |
| | Undocumented Resident | 5 | 0.0 |
| | Other Citizenship | 24 | 0.2 |
| | Missing/Unknown/Not Reported | 29 | 0.3 |

*Table 1 (cont.)*

| Characteristic | Subgroup | *n* | % of Sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Disability status | Single Disability | 793 | 7.5 |
| | No Disability | 9,463 | 89.8 |
| | Multiple Disabilities | 235 | 2.2 |
| Faith-Based affiliation | Christian Affiliation | 6,190 | 58.7 |
| | Other Faith-Based Affiliation | 640 | 6.1 |
| | No Affiliation | 3,047 | 28.9 |
| | Multiple Affiliations | 507 | 4.8 |
| Military status | Military Service | 231 | 2.2 |
| | No Military Service | 10,539 | 97.2 |
| | Missing/Unknown | 155 | 1.5 |

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 UGA**

   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 the campus climate.

   - 81% (*n* = 8,532) of the survey respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at UGA.

   - 75% (*n* = 2,474) of Faculty/Post-Doctoral Students and Staff respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their departments/work units.

   - 84% (*n* = 6,779) of Student and Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

   - 85% (*n* = 6,259) of White respondents were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the overall climate at UGA as were 82% (*n* = 662) of Asian/Asian American respondents, 78% (*n* = 308) of Other People of Color respondents, 78% (*n* = 467) of Multiracial respondents, and 62% (*n* = 723) of Black/African American respondents.

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[4]Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

- 84% ($n$ = 5,613) of Not-First-Generation Student respondents were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the climate in their classes as were 81% ($n$ = 458) of First-Generation Student respondents.
- 84% ($n$ = 5,213) of Christian Affiliation respondents were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the overall climate as were 80% ($n$ = 514) of Other Faith-based Affiliation respondents, 76% ($n$ = 2,322) of No Affiliation respondents, and 75% ($n$ = 379) of Multiple Affiliation respondents.

2. **Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work**
- 90% ($n$ = 476) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that research was valued by UGA.
- The majority of Non-Tenure-Track/Adjunct Faculty respondents (93%, $n$ = 309) also "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that research was valued by UGA.
- 88% ($n$ = 379) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents indicated that they had access to graduate student advisees.
- 84% ($n$ = 446) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the criteria for tenure were clear.

3. **Staff Respondents – Positive attitudes about staff work**
- 90% ($n$ = 2,114) of Staff respondents felt that their supervisors were supportive of their taking leave (e.g., vacation, parental, personal, short-term disability).
- 87% ($n$ = 2080) of Staff respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that UGA provided them with adequate resources to pursue professional development.
- 84% ($n$ = 2,015) of Staff respondents thought that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 83% ($n$ = 2,002) of Staff respondents felt valued by coworkers in their department.

4. **Student Respondents[5] – Positive attitudes about academic experiences**

   The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.[6] Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.[7] Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

   - 73% ($n$ = 5,261) of Student respondents felt valued by UGA faculty; 72% ($n$ = 5,168) felt valued by UGA staff; and 47% ($n$ = 3,380) felt valued by UGA senior administrators (e.g., president, provost, dean, vice provost, vice president).

   - 75% ($n$ = 5,395) of Student respondents felt valued by faculty in the classroom and 65% ($n$ = 4,663) felt valued by other students in the classroom.

   - 73% ($n$ = 5,219) of Student respondents had faculty whom they perceived as role models and 56% ($n$ = 3,994) had staff whom they perceived as role models.

5. **Student Respondents – Perceptions of *Academic Success***

   A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale, *Perceived Academic Success*, derived from Question 12 on the survey.

   - Analyses using these scales revealed:
     - White Undergraduate Student respondents have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Undergraduate Student respondents of other racial groups other than Other People of Color.[8]
     - Other People of Color Undergraduate respondents and Multiracial Undergraduate respondents have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Asian/Asian American and Black/African American Undergraduate Student respondents.

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[5]Throughout the report, the term "Student respondents" refers to all Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional Student respondents.
[6]Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005
[7]Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004
[8]The term "Other People of Color" refers to a category created by the CSWG which represents respondents who identified on the survey as "Alaskan Native," First Nation/American Indian/Indigenous,"
"Latin@/Chican@/Hispanic," "Middle Eastern/Southwest Asian," "Native Hawaiian," and "Pacific Islander."

- And, Asian/Asian American Undergraduate Student respondents have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Black/African American Undergraduate Student respondents.
  - Heterosexual Undergraduate Student respondents have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than LGBQ Undergraduate Student respondents.
  - Undergraduate Student respondents with No Disability have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Undergraduate Students with Single or Multiple Disabilities.

**Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement**

1. **Members of several constituent groups were differentially affected by 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.[9] Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.[10] The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

   - 16% ($n = 1,650$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.[11]
     - 26% ($n = 433$) of these respondents indicated that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity; 23% ($n = 384$) felt that it was based on their ethnicity; 22% ($n = 355$) indicated that it was based on their position status at the institution; and 19% ($n = 320$) felt that it was based on their racial identity.
   - Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, age, and ethnicity. For example:

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[9]Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

[10]Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

[11]The 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, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

- A higher percentage of Transspectrum respondents (47%, $n = 31$) experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct compared to Women respondents (16%, $n = 1,155$) and Men respondents (13%, $n = 434$).
- Significantly[12] greater percentages of Black/African American respondents (27%, $n = 319$) and Alaskan Native/American Indian respondents (26%, $n = 5$) indicated that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct, compared to other racial identity groups.
- Higher percentages of respondents ages 55 through 64 years (28%, $n = 39$) and ages 45 through 54 years (33%, $n = 6$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct than did other respondents based on age.
- Undergraduate Student respondents (12%, $n = 642$) were significantly less likely than other respondents to indicate that they experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. More than 700 respondents from all constituent groups contributed further data regarding their personal experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at UGA. Two themes emerged from narratives provided in this data: discrimination and hostile work environment. Students described discrimination in the form of racism and homophobia. Faculty and Staff respondents elaborated on the hostile working environments they experienced from interactions with both their supervisors and their colleagues. The qualitative data for students and employees who have personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at UGA suggested that how they are treated, in their respective environments, does not seem to matter to anyone.

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[12] The word "significantly" references a chi-square analyses wherein significance was determined beyond the $p <$ .05 significance level.

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, veterans).[13] Several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

   - Differences by gender identity:
     - 55% ($n = 36$) of Transspectrum respondents were significantly less likely to indicate that they were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the overall climate at UGA compared to other gender/gender identity groups
       - 80% ($n = 5,647$) of Women respondents
       - 84% ($n = 2,818$) of Men respondents.
   - Differences by racial identity:
     - 65% ($n = 608$) of Black/African American Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Student respondents were significantly less likely to indicate they were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the climate in their classes compared to other racial identity groups.
       - 78% ($n = 412$) of Multiracial Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Undergraduate Student respondents,
       - 79% ($n = 278$) of Other Persons of Color Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Undergraduate Student respondents,
       - 80% ($n = 607$) of Asian/Asian American Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Undergraduate Student respondents,
       - And, 80%, ($n = 4,785$) of White Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Undergraduate Student respondents.

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[13]Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

- Differences by sexual identity:
  - 68% ($n = 721$) of LGBQ respondents were significantly less likely to indicate that they were "very comfortable"/"comfortable" with the overall climate compared to other sexual identity groups.
    - 78% ($n = 18$) of Asexual/Other respondents
    - And 83% ($n = 7,638$) of Heterosexual respondents.

3. **Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues**
   - 57% ($n = 1,873$) of Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Staff respondents noted that they had seriously considered leaving UGA in the past year.
     - 64% ($n = 1,201$) of those Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of financial reasons (e.g., salary, resources).
   - 22% ($n = 706$) of Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Staff respondents observed unjust hiring practices, 11% ($n = 369$) observed unfair or unjust disciplinary actions, and 29% ($n = 932$) observed unfair or unjust promotion, tenure, or reclassification practices.
   - 54% ($n = 124$) of Women Tenure and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents and 37% ($n = 103$) of Men Tenure and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that they were burdened by service responsibilities beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
   - 55% ($n = 1,260$) of Staff respondents felt that UGA provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.
   - 36% ($n = 274$) of Faculty/Post-Doctoral Students respondents thought UGA provided adequate resources to help them manage work-life balance.

Faculty/Post-Doctoral Student and Staff respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with work-life issues. Both Faculty/Post-Doctoral Students and Staff respondents overwhelmingly suggested that a major challenge with work-life balance was related to salaries. Respondents articulated that they did not believe salaries

were competitive with either peer institutions or private sector work near UGA. Additional mention of the lack of raises over the past several years was also raised when discussing salary concerns.

4. **Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work**
   - Two-thirds (66%, $n = 345$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that tenure standards/promotion standards are applied equally to all faculty.
   - 26% ($n = 130$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt pressured to change their research/scholarship agenda to achieve tenure/promotion.
   - 40% ($n = 208$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that faculty opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators (e.g., president, provost, dean, vice provost, vice president).

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. Faculty expressed concerns with the administration at UGA, drawing specific attention to faculty governance issues as well as being fearful of members of the administration. Faculty also indicated that they felt as if their opinions were not welcomed by members of the administration and some noted the backlash they have received from supervisors when attempts to provide feedback have been made.

5. **A meaningful percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact.**
   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 significant 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 UGA survey requested information regarding sexual assault.
   - 6% ($n = 577$) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at UGA.
   - 524 of the 577 respondents who experienced unwanted sexual contact were Students; 516 were Women.

- Only 8% ($n = 45$) of these respondents reported to anyone at UGA that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual misconduct. Two themes emerged from respondents who explained why they did not report unwanted sexual misconduct. The primary reason respondents offered indicated that they did not perceive the sexual misconduct as that big of a deal. It was suggested that the type of conduct they had experienced was a regular occurrence for these respondents. The second reason respondents offered for not reporting the sexual misconduct was related to the perceived level of support they would receive from the institution. Respondents suggested that they often did not believe the support they needed was available after experiencing the unwanted sexual misconduct.

**Conclusion**

UGA campus climate findings[14] were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.[15] For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "comfortable" or "very comfortable." A slightly higher percentage (81%) of all UGA respondents reported that they were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at UGA. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At UGA, a lower percentage of respondents (16%) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results, though slightly different, parallel the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.[16]

UGA's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses UGA's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at UGA, 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

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[14]Additional findings disaggregated by position and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

[15]Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015

[16]Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles et al., 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009

deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the UGA community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. The University of Georgia, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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