



Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

Ithaca College

Campus Climate
Research Study
Executive Summary

April 2017



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Introduction

History of the Project

Ithaca College 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 encourage students, faculty, and staff to develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Ithaca College also is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Ithaca College's guiding principles, "We embrace diversity as an integral part of the educational experience and of the community we create."¹ To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Ithaca College 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 the fall 2016 semester, Ithaca College conducted a comprehensive survey of all students, faculty, and staff to develop a better understanding of the learning, living, and working environment on campus.

In December 2015, members of Ithaca College formed the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG). The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Ithaca College contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working." Data gathered via reviews of relevant Ithaca College literature, campus focus groups, and a campus-wide survey addressing the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups will be presented at community forums, which will develop and complete two or three action items by fall 2017.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The conceptual model used as the foundation for Ithaca College's assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith et al. (1997) and modified by Rankin (2003). A power and privilege

¹<http://www.ithaca.edu/about/mission/>

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. Ithaca College'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 CSWG 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 develop a survey instrument for Ithaca College that would reveal the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. In the first phase, R&A conducted 19 focus groups, which were composed of 139 participants (54 students, 71 faculty and staff, and 14 who did not disclose their position at Ithaca College). In the second phase, the CSWG and R&A used data from the focus groups to co-construct questions for the campus-wide survey. The final Ithaca College 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.

In total, 3,823 people completed the survey. In the end, the College'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 at Ithaca College.

Ithaca College Participants

The 3,823 surveys that were returned resulted in a 46% overall response rate. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.² Of all respondents, 70% ($n = 2,672$) were Undergraduate Students, 4% ($n = 157$) were Graduate Students, 12% ($n = 466$) were Faculty respondents, and 14% ($n = 528$) were Staff respondents. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The percentages in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (n) for each demographic characteristic.³

²Thirty-two respondents out of the 3,936 total (0.8%) completed less than half of the survey. Of those 32, five were faculty (15.6%), three were staff (9.4%), three were graduate students (9.4%), and 21 were undergraduate students (65.6%). 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. Ithaca College Respondent Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position status	Undergraduate Student	2,672	69.9
	Graduate Student	157	4.1
	Faculty	466	12.2
	Staff	528	13.8
Gender identity	Man	2,446	64.0
	Woman	1,257	32.9
	Transspectrum	96	2.5
Racial/ethnic identity	Asian/Asian American	172	4.5
	Black/African American	160	4.2
	Latin@/Chican@/Hispanic	144	3.8
	Additional People of Color	38	1.0
	White	2,883	75.4
	Multiracial	314	8.2
Sexual identity	LGBQ	652	17.1
	Heterosexual	3,038	79.5
	Asexual	33	0.9
Citizenship status	U.S. Citizen	3,532	92.4
	Non-U.S./Naturalized Citizen	263	6.9
Disability status	Single Disability	390	10.2
	No Disability	3,190	83.4
	Multiple Disabilities	210	5.5
Religious/spiritual identity	Christian Affiliation	1,500	39.2
	Additional Faith Based Affiliation	399	10.4
	No Affiliation	1,629	42.6
	Multiple Affiliation	212	5.5

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 Ithaca College

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.

- 70% ($n = 2,659$) of the survey respondents were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at Ithaca College.
- 83% ($n = 2,733$) of Student respondents 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 Faculty respondents (86%, $n = 238$) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that teaching was valued by Ithaca College.
- 78% ($n = 358$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by faculty in their department/program.
- 79% ($n = 357$) of Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by their department/program chairs.

3. Staff Respondents – Positive attitudes about staff work

- 70% ($n = 367$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that Ithaca College provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 81% ($n = 424$) of Staff respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt valued by coworkers in their department.

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

⁴Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

⁵Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁶ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 81% ($n = 2,289$) of Student respondents felt valued by Ithaca College faculty and 73% ($n = 2,048$) felt valued by Ithaca College staff

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 these scales revealed:

- A significant difference existed in the overall test for means for Students by racial identity, sexual identity, disability status, income status, and citizenship status on *Perceived Academic Success*.
- Subsequent analyses on *Perceived Academic Success* for Undergraduate Student respondents was significant for two comparisons—People of Color vs. White People and Multiracial vs. White People. These findings suggest that White People Undergraduate Student respondents have greater *Perceived Academic Success* than People of Color and Multiracial 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 about experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 20% ($n = 753$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary (e.g., shunned, ignored), intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile

⁶Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

⁷Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

⁸Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

(bullied, harassed) conduct that had interfered with their ability to work, learn, or live at Ithaca College within the past year.⁹

- Of the respondents who experienced such conduct, 27% ($n = 204$) indicated that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity, 21% ($n = 157$) noted that the conduct was based on their ethnicity, and 18% ($n = 135$) felt that it was based on their position at Ithaca College (e.g., staff, faculty, student).
- Differences emerged based on gender identity, racial identity, and position status:
 - By gender identity, a significantly greater percentage of Transspectrum respondents (44%, $n = 42$) than Women respondents (21%, $n = 507$), and Women respondents than Men respondents (15%, $n = 193$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct within the past year
 - In terms of ethnic/racial identity, a significantly lower proportion of White respondents (16%, $n = 467$) believed that they had experienced this conduct than Asian/Asian American (27%, $n = 46$), Black/African American (33%, $n = 52$), Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents (33%, $n = 47$), Multiracial respondents (29%, $n = 90$), and Additional People of Color respondents (40%, $n = 15$).
 - Of those respondents who noted that they believed that they had experienced this conduct, larger percentages of Asian/Asian American (67%, $n = 31$), Black/African American (54%, $n = 28$), Hispanic/Latin@/Chican@ respondents (51%, $n = 24$), Multiracial respondents (41%, $n = 37$), and Additional People of Color respondents (33%, $n = 5$) than White respondents (5%, $n = 25$) thought that the conduct was based on their ethnicity/race.
 - 29% ($n = 136$) of Faculty respondents, 28% ($n = 147$) of Staff respondents, 17% ($n = 456$) of Undergraduate Student respondents, and 9% ($n = 14$) of Graduate Student respondents believed that they had experienced this conduct.

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).

- Of those respondents who noted that they had experienced this conduct, 43% ($n = 63$) of Staff respondents, 27% ($n = 36$) of Faculty respondents, and 8% ($n = 35$) of Undergraduate Student respondents thought that the conduct was based on their position status.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at Ithaca College. A total of 289 students, faculty, and staff respondents contributed comments regarding these personal experiences. Three themes emerged from their narratives: Student respondents discussed experiences of harassment and bullying from various groups on campus and described experiencing exclusionary conduct based on race and gender. Student respondents described incidents of exclusionary conduct either in the classroom or involving interactions with professors or advisors. Employee respondents also described experiences with bullying and harassment, including incidents of racism and exclusionary conduct perpetrated by colleagues and supervisors.

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).¹⁰ Several groups at Ithaca College indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- Staff respondents who are exempt/senior administrator without faculty rank (34%, $n = 107$) were significantly more likely to have felt “very comfortable” with the climate in their department/program or work unit at Ithaca College than were Staff respondents who are non-exempt (25%, $n = 52$).
- By gender identity, Men respondents (23%, $n = 290$) were significantly more likely to have felt “very comfortable” with the overall climate at Ithaca College

¹⁰Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

than Women respondents (18%, $n = 438$) or Transspectrum respondents (13%, $n = 12$).

- Significant differences occurred in respondents' level of comfort with the overall climate based on sexual identity. LGBTQ respondents (15%, $n = 100$) were less likely to feel "very comfortable" with the overall climate than were Heterosexual respondents (21%, $n = 622$).
- Christian respondents (23%, $n = 347$) were more likely to feel "very comfortable" with the overall climate than were respondents with No Affiliation (17%, $n = 282$) or Multiple Affiliations (15%, $n = 31$).
- Respondents with a Single Disability (13%, $n = 52$) and respondents with Multiple Disabilities (13%, $n = 28$) were significantly less likely to be "very comfortable" with the overall climate than were respondents with No Disability (21%, $n = 659$).
- Low-Income Student respondents (15%, $n = 42$) were significantly less likely to feel "very comfortable" with the overall climate than were Not-Low-Income Student respondents (23%, $n = 569$).

3. Faculty and Staff Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues

- 49% ($n = 230$) of Faculty respondents and 57% ($n = 303$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving Ithaca College in the past year.
 - 51% ($n = 270$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving did so for financial reasons (e.g., salary, pay rate).
 - 46% ($n = 244$) of those Faculty and Staff respondents who seriously considered leaving indicated that they did so because of limited opportunities for advancement.
- By faculty status: 54% ($n = 157$) of Tenure-Track Faculty, 37% ($n = 38$) of Non-Tenure Track Faculty, and 50% ($n = 34$) of Adjunct/Part-Time Faculty seriously considered leaving Ithaca College.
- By racial identity: 35% ($n = 8$) of Asian/Asian American Employee respondents, 64% ($n = 16$) of Black/African American Employee respondents, 71% ($n = 20$) of

Latin@/Chican@/Hispanic Employee respondents, 57% ($n = 25$) of Multiracial Employee respondents, 88% ($n = 7$) Employee respondents who are Additional People of Color, and 53% ($n = 432$) of White Employee respondents seriously considered leaving Ithaca College.

- By disability status: 53% ($n = 39$) of employee respondents with a Single Disability, 79% ($n = 30$) of employee respondents with Multiple Disabilities, and 52% ($n = 455$) of Employee respondents with No Disabilities seriously considered leaving Ithaca College.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- A slight majority of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the criteria for tenure were clear (53%, $n = 147$) and less than half felt that tenure standards/promotion standards were applied equally to faculty in their schools/division (44%, $n = 122$). There were no differences across groups.
- 22% ($n = 60$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they felt pressured to change their research/scholarship agenda to achieve tenure/promotion. There were no differences across groups.
- Only 6% ($n = 45$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that faculty opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators, and 18% ($n = 50$) thought that faculty opinions were sought out by senior administrators.

151 Staff respondents (including Senior Administrators without Faculty Rank) elaborated on the workplace climate at Ithaca. The two themes that emerged were increased workload and poor supervision. Regarding work-life balance, Staff respondents discussed difficulties with feeling valued, adequate benefits, lack of opportunity for advancement, poor pay, and lack of job security.

98 Faculty Tenure-Track respondents elaborated on their workplace climate. Three themes emerged: distrust of administration, issues with tenure/promotion, and increased

committee work. Regarding work-life balance, Faculty respondents discussed difficulties with low salary and lack of childcare benefits.

5. 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 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 Ithaca College survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 15% ($n = 555$) of respondents indicated on the survey that they had experienced unwanted sexual conduct.
 - 2% ($n = 57$) experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting).
 - 2% ($n = 88$) experienced stalking (e.g., following me, on social media, texting, phone calls).
 - 8% ($n = 285$) experienced sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment).
 - 3% ($n = 125$) experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g. fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent, or gang rape) while a member of the Ithaca College community.
- Student respondents, Transspectrum and Women respondents, LGBTQ respondents, and respondents with a Disability more often experienced relationship violence or reported unwanted sexual experiences than their majority counterparts.
- Ithaca College students, strangers, and acquaintances/friends were identified as sources of unwanted sexual experiences.
- The majority of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual experience.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual experiences. Three themes emerged among Ithaca College's respondents who explained why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. The primary rationale cited for not reporting these incidents was a belief that the incident was not serious. The second most common rationale provided for not reporting unwanted sexual contact was that respondents were unsure of how to address catcalling and the third most common rationale was having an excuse to not report.

Conclusion

Ithaca College 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 “comfortable” or “very comfortable.” A similar percentage (70%) of Ithaca College respondents reported that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” with the climate at Ithaca College. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Ithaca College, a similar percentage of respondents (20%) 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

Ithaca College's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses Ithaca College's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making regarding policies and practices at Ithaca College, 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 Ithaca College community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Ithaca College, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to

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

¹²Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015

¹³Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; 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

actualize its commitment to promote an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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