

# Rankin & Associates, Consulting

Assessment • Planning • Interventions

## Salem State University

Assessment of Campus Climate Executive Summary

October 24, 2017



#### **Executive Summary**

#### **Introduction: History of the Project**

Salem State University affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community and 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.

Salem State University is committed to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Salem State's mission statement, "Salem State's mission is to provide a high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society...."<sup>1</sup> To better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Salem State 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 spring 2017 semester, Salem State 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 February 2016, members of Salem State University formed the Climate Study Working Group (CSWG). The CSWG was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Salem State contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Salem State University Assessment of Climate for Learning, Working, and Living." Data gathered via reviews of relevant Salem State 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>https://www.salemstate.edu/salem-state-difference/mission-vision-and-strategic-plan

#### **Project Design and Campus Involvement**

The conceptual model used as the foundation for Salem State'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. Salem State'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 Working Group (GSWG) 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 Salem State University that would reveal the various dimensions of power and privilege that shape the campus experience. In the first phase, R&A planned 17<sup>2</sup> focus groups, which were composed of 103 participants (39 students; 64 faculty and staff). 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 Salem State 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, 3,086 people completed the survey. In the end, the University's assessment was the result of a comprehensive process to identify the strengths and challenges of campus climate,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Although 17 groups were planned, 16 were conducted. Owing to a miscommunication regarding the time of the Veteran Students group, it was not held. Attempts to reschedule the group on the same day were not successful. An email with focus group questions was sent to Veteran student participants by the R&A lead facilitator with no response. Communications between R&A and the CSWG led to the planning of two additional focus groups to conducted during the week of November 7<sup>th</sup> via telephone. These groups targeted Veteran Students and International Students.

with a specific focus on the distribution of power and privilege among differing social groups at Salem State.

#### **Salem State University Participants**

Salem State University community members completed 3,086 surveys for an overall response rate of 31%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.<sup>3</sup> Sixty-two percent (n = 1,920) were Undergraduate Students, 11% (n = 325) were Graduate Students, 7% (n = 201) were Staff, 8% (n = 247) were Administrators, and 13% (n =393) 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.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Seventy-three surveys were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey, and 32 duplicate submissions were removed. Surveys were also removed from the data file if the respondent did not provide consent (n = 176). 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).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>The total *n* for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

		Undergraduate Student		Graduate/Prof Student		Faculty		Administrator		Staff		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender identity <sup>5</sup>	Woman	1,371	71.41	247	76.00	242	61.58	151	61.13	112	55.72	2,123	68.79
	Man	489	25.47	74	22.77	139	35.37	87	35.22	77	38.31	866	28.06
	Transspectrum/ Multiple/Other	52	2.71	< 5		5	1.27	< 5		0	0.00	63	2.04
	Missing	8	0.42	< 5		7	1.78	6	2.43	12	5.97	34	1.10
Racial identity	Asian/Asian American	67	3.49	15	4.62	16	4.07	5	2.02	< 5		105	3.40
	Latin@/Chican@/ Hispanic	242	12.60	21	6.46	16	4.07	5	2.02	23	11.44	307	9.95
	Black/African American	197	10.26	20	6.15	18	4.58	13	5.26	9	4.48	257	8.33
	White	1,197	62.34	247	76.00	296	75.32	198	80.16	129	64.18	2,067	66.98
	Multiracial	167	8.70	13	4.00	16	4.07	12	4.86	7	3.48	215	6.97
	Other Person of Color	15	0.78	< 5		5	1.27	< 5		< 5		28	0.91
	Missing/Unknown/ Other	35	1.82	5	1.54	26	6.62	12	4.86	29	14.43	107	3.47
Sexual identity	LGBQ <sup>6</sup>	358	18.65	50	15.38	51	12.98	31	12.55	11	5.47	501	16.23
	Heterosexual	1,456	75.83	263	80.92	317	80.66	200	80.97	155	77.11	2,391	77.48
	Missing/Other/ Asexual	106	5.52	12	3.69	25	6.36	16	6.48	35	17.41	194	6.29

#### Table 1. Salem State University Sample Demographics

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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Transpectrum is a re-coded variable collapsing the response choices on the survey of Genderqueer, Transgender, and any write-in responses that were outside the gender binary of "man" or "woman".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> LGBQ is a re-coded variable collapsing the response choices on the survey of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Pansexual, Queer, Questioning, and any write-in responses that were not "heterosexual".

#### **Key Findings – Areas of Strength**

#### 1. High levels of comfort with the climate at Salem 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."<sup>7</sup> The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 75% (n = 2,407) of the survey respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate at Salem State University.
- 74% (*n* = 619) of Faculty and Staff/Administrator respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 83% (*n* = 2,178) of Student and Faculty respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

#### 2. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- 80% (*n* = 311) of Faculty respondents felt valued by their department/program chairs.
- 68% (n = 261) of Faculty respondents felt valued by other faculty at Salem State.
- 89% (n = 338) of Faculty respondents felt valued by students in the classroom.
- 74% (*n* = 284) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their teaching was valued.
- Only 20% (*n* = 76) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that faculty in their departments/programs prejudged their abilities based on their perception of their identity/background.
- 13% (n = 51) of Faculty respondents thought that their department/program chairs prejudged their abilities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

#### 3. Staff/Administrator Respondents –Positive attitudes about work

- 63% (n = 281) of Staff/Administrator respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had supervisors who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 71% (n = 309) of Staff/Administrator respondents believed that their supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.
- 26% (*n* = 112) of Staff/Administrator respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were burdened by work responsibilities beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.
- 69% (*n* = 299) of Staff/Administrator respondents believed that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.
- 63% (*n* = 278) of Staff/Administrator respondents would recommend Salem State as a good place to work.
- 64% (*n* = 281) of Staff/Administrator respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had job security.

#### 4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.<sup>8</sup> Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

#### All Student respondents

- 72% (n = 1,612) of Student respondents felt valued by Salem State faculty.
- 68% (n = 1,520) of Student respondents felt valued by Salem State staff.
- 50% (*n* = 1,121) of Student respondents felt valued by Salem State senior administrators.
- 69% (n = 1,549) of Student respondents believed that the campus climate encourages free and open discussion of difficult topics.

<sup>8</sup>Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

• 71% (n = 1,589) of Student respondents indicated that they have faculty whom they perceive as role models.

#### Graduate and Professional Student respondents

- 68% (*n* = 219) of Graduate Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were satisfied with the quality of advising they had received from their departments.
- 74% (n = 240) of Graduate Student respondents felt they had adequate access to their advisors.
- 71% (n = 229) of Graduate Student respondents believed that their advisors provided clear expectations.
- 81% (*n* = 263) of Graduate Student respondents felt comfortable sharing their professional goals with their advisors.

#### 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 Students by sexual identity and disability status for Undergraduate Student respondents on *Perceived Academic Success*. No significant differences existed for Graduate Student respondents.
- LGBQ Undergraduate Student respondents had a lower *Perceived Academic Success* score than Heterosexual Undergraduate Student respondents.
- The Undergraduate Student respondents who indicated No Disability had a higher *Perceived Academic Success* score than Single Disability Undergraduate Student respondents and Multiple Disabilities 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 nondiscriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.<sup>11</sup> The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 17% (n = 528) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.<sup>12</sup>
  - 22% (n = 118) noted that the conduct was based on their gender/gender identity, 19% (n = 101) felt that it was based on their position status, and 19% (n = 95) felt that it was based on their ethnicity.
- Differences emerged based on gender/gender identity, position status, and racial identity:
  - By gender identity, a higher percentage of Transspectrum respondents (35%, n = 22) than Women respondents (17%, n = 365) or Men respondents (15%, n = 131) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.
    - 41% (n = 9) of Transspectrum respondents, compared with Women respondents 18% (n = 66) and 15% (n = 20) of Men respondents who noted they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct indicated the conduct was based on their gender identity.
  - By position status, 25% (n = 97) of Faculty respondents, 23% (n = 46) of Staff respondents, 22% (n = 54) of Administrator respondents, 11% (n =

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>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).

37) of Graduate Student respondents, and 15% (n = 294) of Undergraduate Student respondents believed that they had experienced exclusionary conduct.

- Of those respondents who noted they had experienced exclusionary conduct, a higher percentage of Staff respondents (52%, n = 24) and Administrator respondents (44%, n = 24) thought that the conduct was based on their position status, compared with Faculty respondents (19%, n = 18), Undergraduate Student respondents (11%, n = 33), and Graduate Student respondents (n < 5).</li>
- By racial identity, significant differences emerged with White respondents (16%, n = 320) indicating that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct within the past year less than Multiracial Respondents (21%, n = 46) and Respondents of Color (19%, n = 135).
  - Of those respondents who reported experiencing this conduct, higher percentages of Multiracial Respondents (28%, n = 13) and Respondents of Color (43%, n = 58) than White respondents (7%, n = 21) believed the conduct was based on their race.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at Salem State University. Fifty-four students, faculty, and staff contributed comments regarding their personal experiences. Twenty-five respondents elaborated on the types of disrespectful conduct that they reported. Forty-eight respondents described a lack of follow-through after reporting.

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).<sup>13</sup> Several groups at Salem State indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- By racial identity: a significantly smaller proportion of Respondents of Color (47%, n = 327) were "comfortable" with the overall climate at Salem State than were White respondents (53%, n = 1,102). A higher percentage of White Faculty and Student respondents (30%, n = 522) were "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes than were Faculty and Student Respondents of Color (23%, n = 145).
- By sexual identity: a smaller percentage of LGBQ respondents (22%, n = 99) felt "very comfortable" with the overall climate than Heterosexual respondents (30%, n = 603).
- By disability status: a higher percentage of No Disability respondents (25%, n = 633) than Respondents with a Single Disability (19%, n = 62) were "very comfortable" with the overall climate. A higher percentage of respondents with No Disability (30%, n = 635) than respondents with a Single Disability (21%, n = 62) and respondents with Multiple Disabilities (21%, n = 37) were "very comfortable" with the classroom climate.

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

- 46% (n = 182) of Faculty respondents, 42% (n = 82) of Staff respondents, and 56% (n = 137) of Administrator respondents had seriously considered leaving Salem State in the past year.
  - $\circ$  47% (*n* = 187) of those Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents who seriously considered leaving did so because of limited opportunities for advancement.
  - 45% (n = 179) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents each indicated that they did so because of lack of instructional support and/or low salary/pay rate.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

- By faculty status: 54% (n = 122) of Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty respondents and 36% (n = 55) of Adjunct Faculty respondents seriously considered leaving Salem State.
- By staff status: 50% (n = 63) of AFSCME Staff respondents and 27% (n = 19) of NUC/Chartwells/Contract Staff respondents seriously considered leaving Salem State.
- By citizenship status: 49% (n = 349) of U.S. Citizen Employee respondents and 38% (n = 41) of Not-U.S. Citizen Employee respondents seriously considered leaving Salem State.
- By religious/spiritual identity: Employee respondents with No Religious/Spiritual Identity (54%, n = 145) and Christian Employee respondents (41%, n = 157) seriously considered leaving Salem State. Employee respondents with Multiple Religious/Spiritual Identities (55%, n = 24) and Employee respondents with Additional Religious/Spiritual Identities (46%, n = 38) were not statistically different from the other two groups.

#### 4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- 21% (n = 81) of Faculty respondents thought that salaries for tenure-track faculty positions were competitive and 19% (n = 70) thought that salaries for adjunct/full-time temporary professors were competitive.
- 8% (*n* = 31) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that child care benefits were competitive.
- 32% (n = 72) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents thought that tenure standards/promotion standards were applied equally to faculty in their schools/division and 14% (n = 31) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that Salem State faculty who would benefit from delaying their tenure-clock felt empowered to do so.
- 19% (n = 42) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents believed that faculty opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators.

- 25% (n = 43) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the criteria used for contract renewal was applied equally to all positions.
- 28% (n = 44) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that their academic advising was valued.
- 32% (n = 52) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents felt that their opinions were taken seriously by senior administrators (e.g., chair, dean, provost).
- 15% (n = 24) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they have job security.

Ninety-Six Staff/Administrator respondents contributed comments regarding their employment-related experiences. Three themes emerged from these comments: 1) lack of advancement opportunities and professional development, 2) salary imbalances and workload, and 3) short-comings of leadership,

When asked to elaborate on their responses, Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents noted inconsistent expectations in service and inclusion concerns based on race and sexuality. Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents described concerns with job security and a low sense of belonging. Faculty respondents, in general, described challenges with funding for research and professional development, as well as, dissatisfaction with their salaries.

### 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 substantial issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. One section of the Salem State survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

• Two hundred and forty (8%) respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual conduct while at Salem State.

- $\circ$  1% (*n* = 39) of respondents experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting) while a member of the Salem State community.
- $\circ 2\%$  (*n* = 71) of respondents experienced stalking (e.g., physical following, on social media, texting, phone calls) while a member of the Salem State community.
- $\circ$  5% (*n* = 142) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual interaction (e.g., cat-calling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment) while a member of the Salem State community.
- $\circ 2\%$  (*n* = 53) of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g., fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent) while a member of the Salem State community.
- Over half of the Undergraduate Student respondents who had indicated they had experienced unwanted sexual conduct of any type reported that it occurred during their first year and often during the first semester.
- Higher percentages of Non-Transfer Student respondents, Women and Transspectrum respondents, LGBQ respondents, U.S. Citizen respondents, Respondents with Multiple Disabilities, Respondents with a Single Disability, and Campus Housing Student respondents reported experiencing unwanted sexual conduct of any type than their colleagues.
- Eighty to ninety percent of respondents who experienced unwanted sexual conduct did not report it.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual experiences. Five themes emerged: 1) fear of blame, 2) belief nothing would be done, 3) conduct was insignificant, 4) conduct was significant, but commonplace, and 5) lack of support.

#### Conclusion

Salem State University climate findings<sup>14</sup> were consistent with those found in other higher education institutions across the country based on the work of R&A Consulting.<sup>15</sup> For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "comfortable" or "very comfortable." A similar percentage (75%) of Salem State respondents reported that they were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate at Salem State. Likewise, 20% to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Salem State, a lower percentage of respondents (17%) 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.<sup>16</sup>

Salem State's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion and addresses Salem State's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Salem State, 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 on additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the Salem State community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Salem State, 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Guiffrida, 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

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