

# Impact of Campus Diversity on Student Learning and Development

## KEY FINDINGS

Research supports the principle that students' experience with diversity helps them to become better learners and to be more open to seeing themselves in relation to others. To determine how Ohio States' campus diversity helps students achieve these outcomes, students were asked to respond to a series of questions about changes in their values and beliefs; their ability to work and get along with different groups; their self-awareness; their ability to deal with problems and solutions in class; and their personal commitment to justice, social change, and combating oppression. Findings are derived from the responses of the aggregate sample. Also presented are differences in reported changes between and among racial/ethnic groups.

Generally speaking, students agreed that experiences with diversity helped them to be more motivated and better prepared to live and work in a complex society. When students were asked about how their experience with diversity at OSU shaped some of their values and beliefs:

- Over 72% of students agreed that diversity experiences helped them develop the belief that differences are valuable and that learning about others who are different from them is necessary and rewarding.
- Sixty-seven percent (67%) of students also agreed that diversity experiences helped them be more open to change and to develop the belief that differences do not interfere with effective communication or meaningful relationships.
- Approximately the same number of students (69.9%) agreed that their experience with diversity at OSU helped them develop a willingness to self-examine, and when necessary, to challenge and change their personal values, worldview, assumptions, and biases.
- Only 10% of students disagreed that diversity experiences helped them change their values, beliefs, or willingness to look at things differently.

Students were asked if diversity experiences helped them work more effectively or get along better with people different from themselves.

- Responses varied depending on the type of difference referenced – with respect to members of other races or cultures, more than 63% of students agreed that diversity experiences increased their ability to work more effectively with others.
- Over 52% expressed that they were better able to work with members of different religions, and over 48% believed that diversity experiences helped them work better with persons with disabilities and different sexual orientations.

Students were also asked how diversity experiences promoted self-awareness of their own behavior and cultural heritage.

- The majority of students (72.8%) agreed that diversity experiences helped them develop an awareness of their own behavior and its impact on others.
- Over 63% of students agreed that diversity experiences also created an awareness of their own cultural heritage and how it affects their worldview, values, and assumptions.

Students were also asked if their attitudes about persons with a different racial/ethnic background, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, citizenship, and with a disability had changed since coming to OSU.

- Although a majority of students expressed that their attitudes had not changed toward members of different racial/ethnic groups, a percentage of respondents did indicate that they had become “more accepting” of African American/Black (27%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (25.6%), and Hispanic American/Latino (20%) students.
- Approximately 24% of students indicated that they had become more accepting of gay men and lesbians. In contrast, approximately 10% of students reported their attitudes as being “less accepting” toward persons of different sexual orientations since coming to OSU.
- Over 24% of students expressed that their attitudes about persons with disabilities, and persons from other countries and religious background, were “more accepting” since coming to OSU.

In addition to looking at findings based on responses of the aggregate sample, responses were also analyzed to identify differences in reported changes between and among racial/ethnic groups.

- Consistently, Asian American/Pacific Islander students were more likely than all other racial/ethnic groups to agree that diversity experiences helped them:
  - 1) develop positive values and beliefs about differences;
  - 2) be more open to change and the belief that change is necessary and positive;
  - 3) work more effectively or get along better with persons different from themselves; and
  - 4) be aware of their own behavior and its impact on others and their own cultural heritage and how it affects their worldview, values, and assumptions.
- Moreover, African American and American Indian/Alaskan Native students were generally the least likely to agree that diversity experiences had assisted them in developing values and personal competencies than the other racial/ethnic groups.