

Section One

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Introduction

It has been twelve years since the last student affairs staff survey. In July 1993, a division-wide committee, lead by Assistant Vice president Mary Daniels, was charged with assessing employee perceptions about climate of mutual respect in the workplace, identifying necessary improvements, and making recommendations. Offices were supported in reviewing results and making changes to improve climate. In addition, results of this study were used to support efforts such as diversity training participation and opportunities for staff in many areas.

In light of both specific efforts to improve staff climate and the multiple structure and management changes that Student Affairs has undergone the last twelve years, it was felt that a follow-up assessment was necessary. This follow-up is being designed in a manner that it can be administered every 2-3 years in order to monitor the impact of general changes or of specific efforts to improve staff climate.

To fulfill this long-term goal of monitoring climate, the survey is designed to measure climate in a broad sense. Based on research and theory from literature in higher education, management, and leadership, the survey addresses eight general aspects of climate. The following section details how each of these aspects was addressed in constructing the instrument, a brief list of the eight purposes includes:

- 1) **Describe the Working Climate:** Determine to what extent Student Affairs has succeeding in creating a positive environment. This will be accomplished by summarizing the results of the survey to create a profile of staff satisfaction.
- 2) **Provide Departmental Comparative Information:** Provide comparative information to individual departments for assessing their climate in relation to that of other areas within student affairs.
- 3) **Assess Training Needs:** Identify specific training and development opportunities that staff members indicate are of the most interest to them.
- 4) **Determine the relationship of demographic characteristics and climate:** To determine if there are demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.) that are related to employees' satisfaction with work climate.
- 5) **Establish baseline data:** Establish a baseline measure of satisfaction on both the broad (outcome) measure of overall satisfaction, of 12 more specific constructs related to satisfaction, and of training information. This baseline can be used in the future to determine the impact of targeted programs and policies.
- 6) **Determine the most influential factors in staff climate:** Identify which of the scaled constructs might be most influential in altering overall satisfaction. For example, findings might show that the series of items inquiring about 'overall job satisfaction' were more closely related to whether or not there was good communication within one's immediate work team than it was related to whether

or not someone felt communication in student affairs overall was strong. This outcome would imply that the most efficient way of improving overall job satisfaction might be to provide communication and teambuilding workshops for individual work teams, rather than to focus on marketing efforts needed to increased communication in the division as a whole.

- 7) **Compare staff to student experiences/perceptions:** Survey results will allow comparison of staff and student experiences and perceptions. Two sources of comparison information include 1) student employee response to the survey instrument developed for this project and, 2) results from an unrelated student climate survey that was conducted of all students in 2000, 2003, and 2006.
- 8) **Investigate work-life balance:** To investigate work-life balance in relation to the university's work-life initiative, and central human resources efforts regarding policy and program efforts to improve work-life balance for staff.

Instrument Development

Following is an overview containing more detail regarding the background and development of the survey with regard to each of the eight areas described in the previous section.

1) Describing the Work Climate

Literature from multiple fields including education, organizational theory, leadership theory, management, and unpublished projects from other institutions was reviewed to determine the most appropriate aspects of climate for inclusion in the survey instrument. After determining the factors to be included, the factors were then designed into the survey as latent variables. Further review of the literature, review of the items by a panel, as well as a pilot test were then conducted to develop an appropriate measurement scale (between 5 and 12 items) to evaluate each factor.

2) Provide Departmental Comparative Information

This comparison is accomplished by allowing individual departments to compare to the overall division standard, without releasing information about individual departments outside of their unit. Each scale on the survey and the individual items within it are reported back to departments in a manner that allows easy comparison to the overall averages within the division.

3) Assess Training Needs

A recent research article in the *NASPA Journal*, "An Assessment of Skills and Competencies Necessary for Entry-Level Student Affairs Work" (Waple, J., 2006) surveyed staff during their first three years in student affairs positions to determine if their masters degree curriculum was relevant to their job experiences.

Results indicate a discrepancy between the priority topics during their formal training and the skills they report needing most in their employment after graduation. Skills and knowledge demonstrating the largest gaps in terms of being attained at a high level in training and used at a low level in practice included history of higher education, history of student affairs, and research methods. Topics demonstrating the largest gaps in terms of being attained at a low level in training and needed at a high level in practice included use of microcomputers, budget and fiscal management, strategic planning, and supervision of staff.

While the topics from this current research are of particular interest, the overall purpose of this section is to determine what training opportunities would be most valued by student affairs staff. This section serves the very practical purpose of determining the priority, in terms of predicted popularity, of different types of training or in-service opportunities.

4) Determine the Influence of Demographic Characteristics

Multiple demographic variables are collected by the survey instrument to allow for analysis of the results related to respondent demographics. Each scale in the survey is analyzed with relation to respondent demographics including gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, years of service, position type (A&P, CCS), and other variables to assure that there are no patterns of dissatisfaction or negative work experience that are related to employee demographic qualities.

5) Establish baseline data

The use of scales in the survey increases the likelihood that it will be reliable and valid over time, so that results should be comparable if used repeatedly every 2-3 years to study climate differences. In addition, the qualitative items allow for the observation of any current issues or events that might be influencing responses to the scaled items.

6) Determine the most influential factors for overall climate

The February issue of *Research in Higher Education* article, “Breaking the Silence Achieving a Positive Campus Climate from the Staff Perspective” (Mayhew, Grunwald, Dey, 2006) attempts to identify factors that create a positive campus climate for diversity. This study included staff from all areas of a large mid-western research university. Findings indicated that factors influencing perception of climate (beyond a staff member’s personal characteristics of race, gender, education, and age) are primarily based on experience and perceptions in the immediate work environment. In talking to the lead author, Mathew Mayhew, he suggested that the immediate work environment may be a stronger influence on perception than is structural diversity or department and unit policies or initiatives.

The instrument that we are using is designed both to further explore these findings regarding perception of diversity and also to explore the influences of diversity on perception of overall job satisfaction, student affairs, and the overall university.

7) Compare staff to student experience

This survey is being conducted in slightly different versions for union, nonunion and student staff. However, versions are similar enough that comparison is possible between groups. In addition, a student climate survey has been conducted on campus every three years since 2000 and results from that instrument will be used to determine whether student affairs staff and current students (undergraduate, graduate and professional) share similar experiences and opinions regarding campus climate.

8) Work-Life Balance

Following two surveys in August 2001 (staff) and February 2003 (faculty), the University issued a report (Mickey-Boggs, March 2004) and a 3 to 5 year plan initiating multiple efforts to improve work-life balance and the wellness of staff. These efforts include promoting staff awareness of flextime and other benefits and initiating the “your plan for health” program. The present survey is intended to build upon some of the previous survey’s baseline measures. In addition, the present survey asks many demographic questions to determine staff needs regarding work-life balance.

Instrument Description and Scale Reliability

The survey contained 170 items that are approximately described as fitting into the following categories:

- ❖ 99 items are included in the construction of 13 scales
- ❖ 28 items inquire about the need for specific training
- ❖ 25 demographic items
- ❖ 10 referenced areas of employment within individual departments

About Scales

A scale is a series of questions designed to measure one latent variable. Latent variables are constructs that cannot be measured with one question but can be estimated by a series of questions that are conceptually related. Scales included on the instrument consist of between three and eleven questions each. Examples of latent variables include communication, leadership, management, diversity and culture. One measure of the reliability of a scale is Chronbach’s Alpha, this measure describes the intercorrelation between items within the scale. The generally accepted minimal standard for scale reliability is .700 or above (measure ranges from 0 to 1), all survey scales are above this standard. Reliability measures on each scale are provided in Section Two of the report.

Overall Satisfaction and Commitment

- 1) I believe the work I do plays an important role in Student Affairs.
- 2) I have had a chance to learn and grow in my job this year.
- 3) I am happy with my job.
- 4) I enjoy working in my immediate work unit.
- 5) Top campus leaders are genuinely trying to promote respect and understanding of group differences and diversity at OSU.
- 6) OSU is welcoming to all people.
- 7) My immediate work unit is welcoming to people of all backgrounds.
- 8) I am proud to tell people that I work in Student Affairs.
- 9) Student Affairs is a well run organization.
- 10) I am satisfied with Student Affairs as a place to work.

Communication

- 1) My DEPARTMENT clearly shares information I need to know.
- 2) STUDENT AFFAIRS clearly shares information that staff needs to know.
- 3) I clearly understand my job duties.
- 4) My supervisor (the person I report to) shares the values and mission of my department with me.
- 5) My supervisor clearly shares day-to-day matters and things I need to know for my job as needed.
- 6) I would like to know more about my department's strategic plan.
- 7) I understand the role of my department in overall Student Affairs goals.
- 8) I usually hear important information through rumors, rather than formal channels.
- 9) I am aware of the work going on in other departments of Student Affairs.

Supervisory Scale

- 1) My supervisor has clear visions about the future of my department/office/division.
- 2) I receive regular feedback about how I'm doing in my work.
- 3) When my supervisor gives me feedback, it is done in a helpful way.
- 4) My supervisor understands my abilities and skills.
- 5) I have strong respect for my supervisor.
- 6) I have trust in the leaders in my department.
- 7) I am urged to think of new or better ways of doing our work.
- 8) Supervisors in my department/office lead by example.

Culture and involvement

- 1) I have a sense of belonging with the people I work with most.
- 2) I feel safe sharing my opinions about work related issues with my co-workers.
- 3) I have honest and trusting relations with my co-workers in my work unit.
- 4) I have trusting and honest relations with staff in other Student Affairs departments.
- 5) In general, staff members are involved in the decision-making process in my work unit.
- 6) I have input before decisions that affect me are made.
- 7) Staff members are prepared for major changes in work processes or conditions in Student Affairs.
- 8) I get to make decisions to solve problems related to my work assignments.
- 9) I feel included in the work done by my work unit.
- 10) I feel included in social relations in my work unit.

Diversity

- 1) My department provides a workplace that is fair, without prejudice or undeserved favoritism toward any employee.
- 2) My workplace fosters respect for people
- 3) In my department, having diverse staff members is seen as good.
- 4) I feel at ease when co-workers share or express their culture or personal background.
- 5) I feel at ease sharing or expressing my culture or personal background at work.
- 6) People with disabilities are given what they need to do their jobs in Student Affairs.
- 7) I feel at ease being open about my sexual orientation at work.
- 8) Staff members of different sexual orientations are treated equally at OSU.
- 9) Staff members of different races and ethnicities are treated equally at OSU.
- 10) Student Affairs supports diversity in our policies and practices.
- 11) Student affairs overall is open and accepting of different political views.

Reward/Recognition

- 1) Considering my job duties, I am paid fairly.
- 2) Compared with similar staff jobs in Student Affairs, I am paid fairly.
- 3) The work evaluation I receive honestly and fairly reflects my work.
- 4) Rewards and recognition in my department are based on work performance.
- 5) The reward system in my department is clear and fair.
- 6) There is enough recognition for long-term service to Student Affairs.
- 7) I believe I will be promoted in the next three years.

Work/Life Balance

- 1) My job schedule can be adjusted to meet personal or family needs when needed.
- 2) My supervisor shows concern for my well-being.
- 3) I get a chance to learn and stretch my skills at work.
- 4) My work continues to interest me.
- 5) My supervisor helps me to balance personal needs with needs of my job.
- 6) Student Affairs helps me to balance personal needs with needs of my job.
- 7) My co-workers will help staff with personal problems like domestic violence, illness in the home, or a crisis.

Work/Life Balance

- 1) When I go home from my job, I am too tired to do work needed there.
- 2) Sometimes I feel burned out by my job.
- 3) I am expected to stay in touch with work outside of my scheduled work hours.
- 4) I feel pressure to work more than I would like to work.
- 5) I regularly work unpaid overtime.

Cooperation and Teamwork

- 1) When I need to work with other Student Affairs departments, we work together very well to get the job done.
- 2) Departments in Student Affairs are willing to share information and resources with each other.
- 3) A tone of teamwork and helping one another exists at OSU in general.

General Functions

- 1) The physical comfort (noise, lighting, cleanliness, temperature and workspace) at my workplace is satisfactory.
- 2) The physical security (concerning assault or theft) at my workplace is satisfactory.
- 3) The physical safety (safe, accident-free working conditions) at my workplace is satisfactory.
- 4) I have access to the equipment or services I need to do my job.
- 5) I know my sick/vacation/other leave benefits and how to use them.
- 6) I know what to do or who to contact if I am not treated fairly.

Biased Remarks by SA Staff

- 1) Heard Biased Remarks based on- race/ethnicity
- 2) Heard Biased Remarks based on- gender
- 3) Heard Biased Remarks based on- sexual orientation
- 4) Heard Biased Remarks based on- political views
- 5) Heard Biased Remarks based on- religion

Biased Remarks by Non-SA Faculty or Staff

- 1) Heard Biased Remarks based on- race/ethnicity
- 2) Heard Biased Remarks based on- gender
- 3) Heard Biased Remarks based on- sexual orientation
- 4) Heard Biased Remarks based on- political views
- 5) Heard Biased Remarks based on- religion

Biased Remarks by Students

- 1) Heard Biased Remarks based on- race/ethnicity
- 2) Heard Biased Remarks based on- gender
- 3) Heard Biased Remarks based on- sexual orientation
- 4) Heard Biased Remarks based on- political views
- 5) Heard Biased Remarks based on- religion

Academic Support

Included in Student Survey ONLY

- 1) My job schedule can be adjusted to support academic needs when needed.
- 2) My supervisor shows concern for my academic success.
- 3) My work is related to my area of academic interest.
- 4) I get a chance to learn and use skills at work that will be of benefit in my later career opportunities.

Training

In addition to items in the survey instrument scales regarding professional development, one section of the survey included a series of potential training opportunity topics, and asked respondents which topics they would be likely to attend if offered. Opportunities included in this section of the survey are listed below.

- Diversity skills
- Using employee benefits
- Teamwork
- Decision-making/problem solving
- Strategic planning
- Characteristics/opinions of our students
- Ethical issues in Student Affairs
- Legal issues in Student Affairs
- Hiring and orienting new staff
- Computer/software skills
- Networking on campus
- Data management
- Personal financial planning
- Health related topics
- Program evaluation and assessment
- Presentation skills
- Meeting management skills
- Leadership
- Oral and written
- Communication skills
- Advising students and student organizations
- Crisis and conflict management
- Program planning and implementation
- Management theory
- Campus and community relations
- Resume writing
- Work-life balance
- Personal stress management
- Budget and fiscal management

Demographic Items

Given that one purpose of the survey was to determine how personal characteristics might influence work climate for Student Affairs employees, many demographic items were included in the survey instrument. These items include the following:

- Department of Employment
- Employment Category (A&P, CCS, Union, Non-Union)
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Financially contribute in the support of Children, Elders, or Partner/Spouse
- Main caregiver for Children, Elders, or Partner/Spouse
- Hold more than one paying job
- Political Viewpoint
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Relationship Status (partner/spouse, single, etc)
- Length of employment in current department
- Length of employment in student affairs
- Length of employment at OSU
- Highest education level
- OSU graduate or current student
- Items were asked to determine whether, based on the structure of personnel in their department they were in the minority or in the majority based on the race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and political orientation.

Report Structure

The information from the three surveys (nonunion, union, student staff) is being reported independently. This reporting structure is appropriate because of the variation in staff structure between departments. If these three groups were combined it would result in some departments' reports primarily reflecting the experience of only one of the three groups.

Section One: Project Overview

This is the current report. It describes the project purpose, scope, methodology and reporting plan.

Section Two: Overall Report

This report contains departmental response rates, a brief description of the results from each scale, a frequency count on each item within the scale, and information about the scales relation to overall satisfaction.

Section Three: Demographic Comparisons

This section contains overall student affairs findings as they relate to demographic characteristics of the respondent.

Section Four: Departmental Comparison

Each department will receive an individual report that provides comparison of its performance on each scale compared to the overall performance of student affairs as a whole. This report will be released only to area directors, with the expectation that it will be shared with the department staff in an effort to make a plan for improvement or maintenance.

Appendix:

Comment Summary

Comments referring to overall student affairs, which do not disclose identifying information about the respondent or anyone about whom they are referring, have been grouped into ten topical areas and are included primarily in unedited format in the appendix of the report.

Training Needs

A listing of all of the training needs that was included on the survey and the percent of respondents' expressing interest.

Copy of the Instrument

A copy of the instrument with noted variations between version is included.

Vice President's Reports

- a) A report, released only to the Vice President and to be shared at his discretion, includes a department-by-department comparison of confidence intervals on each item as well as on the overall scale.
- b) A report of confidential comments (comments that threaten the confidentiality of the respondent or staff members they reference).

***TO PROTECT RESPONDENT CONFIDENTIALITY, NO REPORT WILL BE RELEASED THAT CONTAINS RESPONSES FROM LESS THAN THREE STAFF. If appropriate based on staff size, directors may request further response broken down by demographic variables. However, no report will be provided unless at least three staff provided response to the survey.**

Interpretation of results

It is important to recognize that, even though the data lends itself to quantitative analysis, climate is an inherently qualitative construct. Directors are encouraged to look for patterns in the information that they receive, to discuss findings openly with their staff, and to encourage staff to participate in providing insight to how staff climate can be improved or maintained. The staff of the Student Affairs Assessment Office is available to give a presentation on the survey and its findings relative to individual departments, answering any questions that department directors or staff might have about the survey results.

This survey is a pilot. The instrument has performed well based on statistical measures of reliability and validity, and there are focus group follow-ups planned to further explore the findings. While accepted professional practices have been adhered to in terms of assuring the reliability and validity of this assessment, all staff members are welcome to participate in validating findings. If any staff member feels that the findings or conclusions of these reports are misleading, or do not accurately describe the work climate they are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Affairs with feedback or suggestions. We understand that our results are only as accurate as staff responses on the instrument; we are interested in any method we might use to increase accuracy.

This survey and subsequent reports are meant to provide insights that will assist in making training and leadership development decisions. Human resources staff may use results to rethink orientation or to plan professional development opportunities. Leadership may utilize results to identify both areas that need assistance and areas that are currently exhibiting best practice. Individual departments will receive information that informs them about their departmental climate in regard to the overall student affairs climate, allowing recognition of what areas might need attention. All consumers of the survey results are strongly encouraged to use the information in a developmental and formative manner rather than a punitive manner. If survey results appear to indicate any substantial management issues, further investigation and other sources of information should also be explored in addition to these findings prior to making any decisions. The survey findings, on their own, should be one source but not the sole source of information regarding substantial management decisions.

