

Oakland University Climate Survey

Executive Summary

June 2017

Overview

The 2017 Oakland University Climate Survey was conducted in the early part of 2017, by the Office of the Senior Advisor to the President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Office of Inclusion at Oakland University, under the direction of the Office of the President. It was designed to assess perceptions of inclusiveness, friendliness, cooperation, professionalism, recognition, support and opportunities for advancement and academic success at Oakland University. The UIC Survey Research Laboratory (SRL) assisted with the survey. SRL previously also assisted with a similar survey for Oakland University in 2013.

All faculty, staff, and students at Oakland University were invited to participate in this study. There was a separate questionnaire for faculty, staff and students, responses to which were collected online. The original frame included 18,624 students and employees. Of these, 2,668 completed the questionnaire, for an overall response rate of 14.5%. The response rate varied from 9.3% among students to 29.3% among staff employees. These numbers represent a general increase from the 2013 survey during which 2,207 respondents completed the survey for an overall response rate of 9.2%

Results

Highlights of the results are presented below with a much richer set of data available in the full reports.

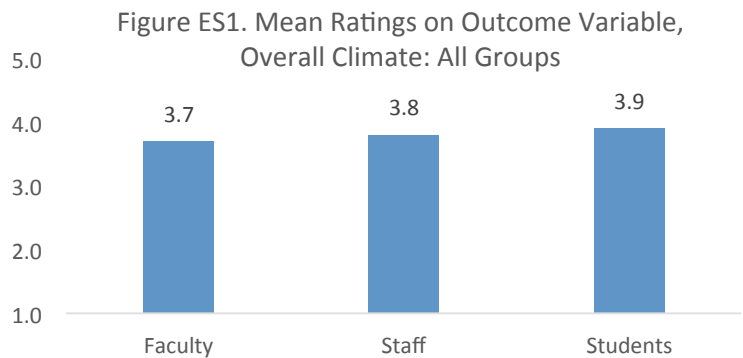
Overall Climate

Computing an Outcome Variable: Overall Climate. For each stratum—faculty, staff, and students—an outcome variable was created based on questions from each survey instrument that best captured respondent opinions of the overall climate at Oakland University.

- For faculty and staff, the outcome variable included five items: overall climate on campus, overall climate in their department or unit, overall climate in their school/college/major administrative office, satisfaction with Oakland University as a good place at which to work, and recommendation of Oakland University to others.
- For students, the outcome variable included two items: overall climate on campus and recommendation of Oakland University to other students.

Mean Ratings on Overall Climate

- Mean ratings on overall climate for all groups are shown in Figure ES1. All ratings are above the midpoint of a 5-point scale where 1 is least favorable and 5 is most favorable.



- Each of these mean scores is up .2 scale points from the survey conducted in 2013. Just as in 2013, faculty provide the lowest rating and students provide the highest rating.
- Among both faculty and staff, the ratings on overall climate are highest for those employed at the university for 5 years or less (mean ratings range from 3.8 to 4.3) as compared to those employed at the University for Longer.
 - In addition, among staff, lower scores on overall climate are also evident for those who report having some type of disability, and those who identify as African American/ Black or Multiracial (mean ratings range from 3.3 to 3.4).
 - Among faculty, lower scores on overall climate are also seen for tenured faculty, those who report an “other” sexual orientation, and those who report following a specific religion other than Christianity or those who did not respond to the question about religion (mean ratings for these groups range from 3.2 to 3.4); also, overall climate ratings are higher for faculty employed at the university for between less than 1 to less than 5 years and those 60 years or older (mean ratings between 3.9 and 4.0).
- Among students, the highest ratings are evident among White and Asian students (mean = 3.9), graduate and professional students, older students, those enrolled for the least or most semesters (mean ratings range from 3.9 to 4.1). The lowest ratings are evident among those among African American students and those in the “Lesbian” or “Queer or other” sexual orientation categories (mean ratings range from 3.4 to 3.6).
 - Unlike for staff, low ratings are not seen for students with some type of disability.

Predictors of Overall Climate

Deriving Explanatory Components. In the 2013 study, to understand which specific aspects of climate help explain the variation in the overall climate ratings, SRL first used a standard technique known as principal components analysis to organize the large number of items on the questionnaire into fewer groups—components—based on their correlations with each other. For the 2017 Oakland Climate Survey, we are using the same components as in 2013, with some minor changes to take into account changes in the questionnaire between the two years. There were six such explanatory components for faculty, eight plus one individual item for staff, and seven for students. A score was computed for each component by averaging responses to the items within each.

Priority-Performance Grids. To understand the relationship between the outcome variable—overall climate—and these components, SRL conducted a regression analysis which made it possible to order the explanatory components in terms of most to least predictive of the outcome variable. A component was designated as primary if it was strongly associated with overall climate or secondary if it fit was relatively less strongly associated with overall climate. The mean ratings on the component were used to designate it as a strength (higher mean ratings) or an area of concern (lower mean ratings). Thus each explanatory component could be designated as a primary strength, a secondary strength, a primary area of concern, or a secondary area of concern. The same sort of classification in terms of priority and performance was also performed for each individual item within a component.

Explanatory Components and Items: Areas of Strength and Concern

Faculty

- “Professional work environment” emerged as the component which is a key driver of overall climate ratings. This component measures mainly satisfaction with relationship with supervisors and/or leadership at the university, recognition for work done, and career advancement.
 - This component is a primary area of concern for faculty, as it is strongly associated with overall climate ratings, but overall ratings on this component are lower than 3.5 (on a 5-point scale).
 - Within this component, primary areas of concern for faculty are career advancement, growth, recognition for work, and confidence in being able to voice complaints without fear of negative consequences.
 - Ratings are lowest among faculty who are tenured, between 39 to 49 years, employed for 5 years or longer, identify as something other than heterosexual, and identify as following a specific religion other than Christian.
 - Ratings are highest among faculty who did not specify their sexual orientation, are 60+ years old and have been employed at the University for between 1 to 5 years.
- “Campus-wide diversity & fair and equitable practices” is the other primary driver of overall climate and is another area of concern with a mean rating of 3.4 on a 5-point scale. This component includes mainly perceptions of commitment of various entities to student diversity; fairness and equitability of promotion reviews, salary decisions, and access to staff, space and resources; how beneficial actions of various entities on campus are with respect to promoting diversity; and how well the campus meets the needs of those with disabilities. The majority of the items in this component are areas of concern with mean ratings below 3.5.

Staff

- As for faculty, a component termed “Professional work environment” is the key driver of overall climate ratings for staff. This component measures mainly satisfaction with relationship with supervisors and/or leadership at the university, recognition for work done, career advancement, and having access to resources needed to do one’s job well.
 - This component is a primary area of strength for staff, as it is strongly associated with overall climate ratings and the mean rating is higher than 3.5.
 - There are some areas for concern within this component, however. Primary areas of concern for staff are career advancement, growth, and recognition for work.

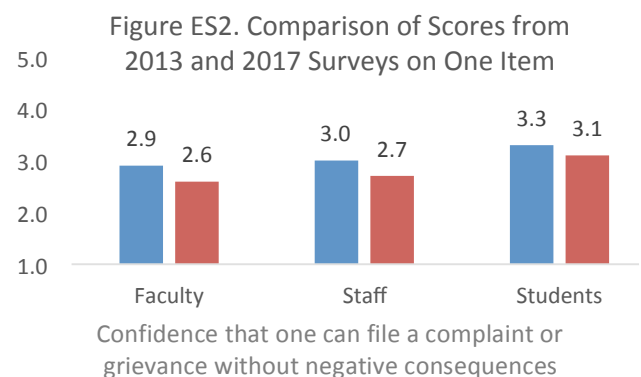
- Ratings are lowest among staff who are multiracial and have been at the university for 5 years or more.
- Ratings are highest among staff who identify as “other” race or who did not respond to the question about race, and have been employed at the University for less than 1 year.
- The other primary driver of overall climate ratings is “Personal Identity and Belongingness,” which is also a primary strength for Oakland with a mean rating of 3.9.
 - The component includes primary strength areas such as low frequency of instances of intimidation and disrespectful remarks, comfort with expressing one’s personal identity, relative lack of feelings of isolation, and fairness of recruitment policies. The one primary area of concern is confidence in being able to voice complaints without fear of negative consequences.

Students

- Among students, the primary component associated with overall climate ratings is called “Belongingness and Personal Identity.”
 - This component is a primary strength for students, as it is strongly associated with overall climate ratings and overall ratings on the component are higher than 3.5 (on a 5-point scale).
 - Within this component, primary strengths include comfort expressing personal identity, and satisfaction with social and cultural activities that reflect one’s personal identity.
 - However, this component also includes areas of concern including having a say about things affecting academic success, confidence in being able to voice complaints without fear of negative consequences, and work-life balance.
- For students, the other primary component associated with overall climate ratings are termed “Diversity,” which is also a primary strength with a mean rating of 3.9.
 - Within this component primary strengths are satisfaction with diversity in the classroom and the student center, and satisfaction with diversity among faculty, staff and students. There are no areas of concern within this component.
- On both components, student ratings are lower among those in the “African American” race/ethnicity category, and among the “Lesbian” and “Queer or other” sexual orientation categories.
- Ratings are generally highest among graduate and professional students, the oldest students, and those enrolled at the university longer.

2013 and 2017 Surveys

In general, scores on most items have increased in the 2017 survey as compared to the 2013 survey. For example, even though confidence in being able to voice complaints without fear of negative consequences emerged as a primary area of concern for faculty, staff, and student groups, scores on this item have improved since the 2013 survey for all groups (see Figure ES2).



In conclusion

- In the 2017 Oakland University Climate survey, faculty, staff and students rate overall climate as good to excellent (close to 4.0 on a 5-point scale). Scores on overall climate have increased as compared to the climate survey conducted in 2013.
- Key drivers of overall climate ratings have been identified for all three groups. For faculty, the key drivers have been identified as areas for action as scores are lower than 3.5 (on a 5-point scale).
- Scores on the majority of items within the key drivers have increased as compared to the climate survey conducted in 2013. Nevertheless, some continue to remain areas for action with scores lower than 3.5 on a 5-point scale.
- Detailed reports are forthcoming. These reports also provide details on how scores on overall climate and its drivers vary by categories of interest (such as gender groups, race/ethnicity groups, age groups and similar).