

FOOTHILL-DE ANZA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT DIVERSITY CLIMATE SURVEY, SPRING 2003

Executive Summary, April 5, 2004

Purpose

The purpose of the diversity climate survey is to provide benchmark information for the colleges and Central Services to use in planning and guiding decisions about our diversity efforts. The survey attempts to ascertain the extent to which the colleges foster student success in an equitable manner and provide climates that are welcoming to all students and employees. The district intends to collect data at regular three- to five-year intervals to measure progress.

Survey Design

Four versions of the survey were designed for this project: one each for students, classified employees, faculty and administrators, including supervisors. Over a period of two years, several versions of the survey were drafted and revised by the District Diversity Advisory Committee. A research consultant with expertise in designing diversity surveys and in survey validity conducted a further review of the survey to ensure that it would yield useable information.

As part of the process for validating the survey, the departments of Human Resources and Institutional Research and Planning conducted cognitive laboratories: two-hour interviews during which students and employees of diverse ethnic backgrounds were asked to think aloud as they completed the survey. The purpose of the cognitive laboratories was to gather information about participants' understanding of the survey items and response scales in order to guide further modifications to the survey. After reviewing the lab results, significant changes were made to all versions of the survey to improve readability and validity. The Advisory Committee also designed a Spanish version for classified employees who communicate more effectively in Spanish. A native Spanish speaker translated the English version of survey and two other native Spanish speakers of different cultural backgrounds reviewed it to address any cultural bias that might have occurred as a result of translation from English to Spanish.

The final stage of the survey design included producing and testing Web-based survey forms for the three employee groups (classified employees, faculty and administrators) and scannable paper forms for students, classified employees without computer access, and Spanish-speaking employees.

Data Collection

After the forms were reviewed and approved by the committee, the data collection stage began. This included:

1. Sending messages from both presidents and the interim chancellor to encourage all employees to participate as respondents and as facilitators of student surveys.
2. Contacting and visiting campus leadership groups to encourage participation.
3. Selecting a random sample of 267 course sections (146 for De Anza College; 121 for Foothill College) for a target sample of 6,000 students (3,500 at De Anza College; 2,500 at Foothill College).
4. Notifying instructors of selected course sections of the survey and encouraging them to participate.
5. Printing 6,000 student surveys.
6. Developing a script for instructors to use when administering the student survey.
7. Preparing and delivering 257 student survey packets.
8. Sending notifications and reminders through e-mail to all employees encouraging them to complete the survey.
9. Sending follow-up messages to all instructors of selected course sections.

Response Rates

It was expected that at least 30% of each of the main groups would respond. The actual response rates for each group far exceeded those expectations.

Group	Number Surveyed	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Students	6,000	2,980	49.6%
Classified Employees	495	238	48.0%
Faculty	524	202	38.5%
Administrators/Supervisors	109	60	55.0%

Demographics

The demographic profile for each sample group who completed the survey was compared to the profile of the corresponding population group. The survey sample's ethnic profile closely matches that of the corresponding population's ethnic profile. This finding provides further support for the representative nature and validity of the results.

Summary of Findings

This section highlights survey findings, providing sample of the valuable information gleaned from the responses.

Findings from the Student Survey – Foothill and De Anza Colleges

- 1) Students responded as follows regarding the language they speak:

- 33% report that “English is the only language I speak”
- 34% report that “English is my primary language, but I speak one or more other languages” and
- 33% report that “English is not my primary language”

The virtually equal distribution of responses to each of these categories is one of the most important findings of the survey. There is a great diversity of languages and the impact on student services and programs and instruction is substantial.

2) Students were presented with a set of bipolar scales describing nine aspects of the general climate, such as friendly vs. hostile and caring vs. indifferent. On a scale of 1 to 5—with “1” being the most positive—a neutral response would be 3.0. The average student response on these nine climate descriptive items was 1.9. This response indicates that students evaluate the climate as, on average, mostly friendly, caring, respectful, accessible to persons with disabilities, non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic and welcoming.

3) An analysis that tested for group differences with regard to the general climate showed no statistically significant differences among ethnic, gender, sexual orientation or disability groups. That students generally experience both Foothill and De Anza colleges as welcoming, helpful, respectful and caring is another key finding of the study.

Findings from the Student Survey – Foothill College

In the area of interactions with teachers, the Foothill Staff Development/Diversity Committee is focusing on the following survey results:

1) Approximately 30% of students surveyed indicate a lack of comfort in approaching teachers outside the classroom. More specifically, 9% of the students report that “few or none” of their teachers are approachable outside of the classroom and 21% report that only “some” of the teachers are approachable. Even though the majority of students find teachers approachable—a commendable result—the committee is concerned that the proportion reporting otherwise is too high, and regards this area as one that merits further investigation.

2) Approximately 33% of students responding to the survey perceive that, in general, teachers do not demonstrate sensitivity to their needs. More specifically, slightly more than 8% of the respondents said that “few or none” of their teachers show sensitivity and nearly 25% describe only “some” teachers as sensitive to student needs. This response also warrants further investigation.

3) A review of the survey results indicates that language is a major factor influencing the quality of student interactions with teachers. The data consistently show that students whose native language is English evaluate teachers as more approachable outside of the classroom, more sensitive to students’ needs, and as showing more care/concern than students whose native language is not English.

Because language is a major factor influencing the results of the survey, the Foothill Staff Development/Diversity Committee feels that further investigation is needed to determine more precisely the level of language proficiency that may affect the quality of student life at Foothill.

4) Just over 9% of Foothill students report having a disability (85 of the 907 students responding to this item). Of these, 42% report having a learning disability while 17% report having a psychological disability. The Foothill Staff Development/Diversity Committee believes that these numbers and types of disability significantly affect the scope, breadth and provision of student services and instruction.

5) Overall, the survey results verify the broad range of diversity—in race, gender, ability, language, culture, religion and other characteristics too numerous to list—that students bring to the classroom. This presents new challenges and opportunities. The Foothill Staff Development/Diversity Committee notes that the survey findings reflect what instructors are observing in the classroom and see the need to develop support programs for faculty to meet the challenges of diversity in the classroom.

Findings from the Student Survey – De Anza College

The De Anza Diversity Advisory Council is focusing its attention on those areas that reflect significant differences in responses of students from different ethnic, racial and cultural groups.

1) Group differences were found among ethnic groups in their perceptions of teachers' care and concern for all students. White students report a significantly higher proportion of teachers that show care/concern for their students, regardless of the student's race/ethnicity, than most other ethnic groups report.

2) Similarly, students whose primary language is English report a higher proportion of teachers show care/concern for their students regardless of the student's accent/language than students whose primary language is not English.

3) Generally, the frequency with which students have "heard or seen negative comments or actions" against women, ethnic groups, homosexuals/bisexuals/transgender people, or persons with disabilities is rare. When such comments or actions occurred, they related most frequently to race and ethnicity, followed by sexual orientation. The results consistently show that these actions or comments were initiated mostly by "other students" rather than teachers or staff.

4) The survey found differences relating to race/ethnicity, age and language in students' perceptions of the support they have from teachers in meeting their educational goals.

- White students perceive higher support than non-whites. African-American students perceive the least support of any ethnic group.
- Students age 31 and older perceive higher support from their teachers than those 30 and under.

- Students for whom English is the primary language perceive higher teacher support than students for whom English is not their primary language.

5) Overall, the survey findings inform the college that differences do exist among student groups, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity and language. In addition, an analysis of survey results shows that student-to-student interactions merit attention and will require further investigation by the Diversity Council. In particular, the council is interested in pursuing two questions:

- What is the instructor's role or responsibility in building positive student-to-student interactions?
- What is the instructor's role or responsibility in intervening in negative student interactions?

Findings from the Employee Surveys

The following highlights the findings from the survey of employees:

1) Employees report that the climate throughout the district is friendly, helpful, caring and welcoming. When asked to indicate the degree to which the colleges and Central Services have achieved a positive environment for the acceptance of group differences/diversity on a scale of "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (4), administrators responded at an average of 1.7, classified staff at 2.0 and faculty at 1.9. A neutral response would be 2.5.

These response levels are both encouraging and challenging. Almost 65% of employees responding to the survey report that they have attended two or more activities at Foothill-De Anza related to diversity issues. Fully 27% report attending five or more. The District Diversity Advisory Committee credits the Diversity in the Workplace series and the diversity activities, celebrations and related events sponsored and supported at each of the colleges for creating this level of acceptance. The committee also acknowledges the need to continue such efforts to retain and enhance this positive environment.

2) When employees were asked about whether they have been treated disrespectfully or have been discriminated against by other groups of employees, most responses (about 75% to 90%) fall in the "never" or "rarely" category. Nevertheless, the committee regards the number of responses in the "occasionally" category (6% to 20%) as too high, and those in the "frequently" category, while in the 4% to 5% range, as unacceptable.

3) Many of the negative experiences are reported to occur within an employee group. For example, 19% of faculty report that they have been treated disrespectfully by other faculty compared with 17% reporting being treated disrespectfully by either classified staff or administrators. On the other hand, nearly 30% of classified staff report being occasionally (20%) or frequently (9%) treated disrespectfully by administrators, and 35% report occasional (28%) or frequent (6%) disrespectful treatment by faculty. The Diversity Committee plans to develop training and additional strategies in these areas to improve the climate.

Conclusions

The response rates from every target group exceeded expectations. The response rate and the demographic profile of the respondents strongly support the assumption that the results are representative and telling for the district.

The findings show that, as a whole, we have much to be proud of in the area of diversity for both students and employees. We can clearly demonstrate that we have a welcoming, caring environment that accepts and respects the diversity and differences of who we are and whom we serve.

At the same time, the results show that we have work to do in meeting the challenges of working and learning in a diverse environment. We must pay closer attention to language, the quality of student interactions with teachers, student-to-student interactions, and the range of diversity and its impact on student services and instruction. We must improve our interactions with one another and continue to provide support for diversity training and development among employees.

Next Steps

The diversity committees at each college will use the findings to develop plans to guide their activities. The District Diversity Advisory Committee will evaluate the findings to develop districtwide strategies to meet the challenges identified in the survey. More work will be done in “drilling down” into the employee responses to identify specific areas of concern (that is, by race or gender and by employee group and location). These findings will be shared with the Human Resources Advisory Committee for use in developing additional training and professional development activities for employees.

The survey results will be helpful in developing the questionnaire for the accreditation self-study, particularly in assessing our commitment to diversity. We may also be able to use the self-study questionnaire to focus on a particular area of concern. The Human Resources Advisory Committee is interested in pursuing areas of mutual respect among and between employee groups and will use the data to guide its activities.