VOICES
Findings
Fall 2018

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STUDY BACKGROUND

Conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis and sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs and the Vice Provost for Education

Designed to help university leadership, including the President's Task Force on Campus Climate, understand students' experiences related to cultural diversity and inclusion of the campus environment, and to inform educational initiatives and plans for creating a campus environment that engages and supports students across all backgrounds and experiences

Administered between November 2018 and January 2019

Low response rates (22.9% overall) do not support quantitative analysis of the data; however, the data were rich enough to be analyzed for themes and actionable patterns across the populations.

If these data had been gathered using interviews or focus groups, what follows could be considered a phenomenological approach

In other words, the text of students' survey responses were used to describe their experiences of our climate in a non-numeric manner

FRAMEWORK AND THEMATIC AREAS

The survey items are based on the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model, developed by the National Institute for Transformation and Equity (NITE) at Indiana University Bloomington.

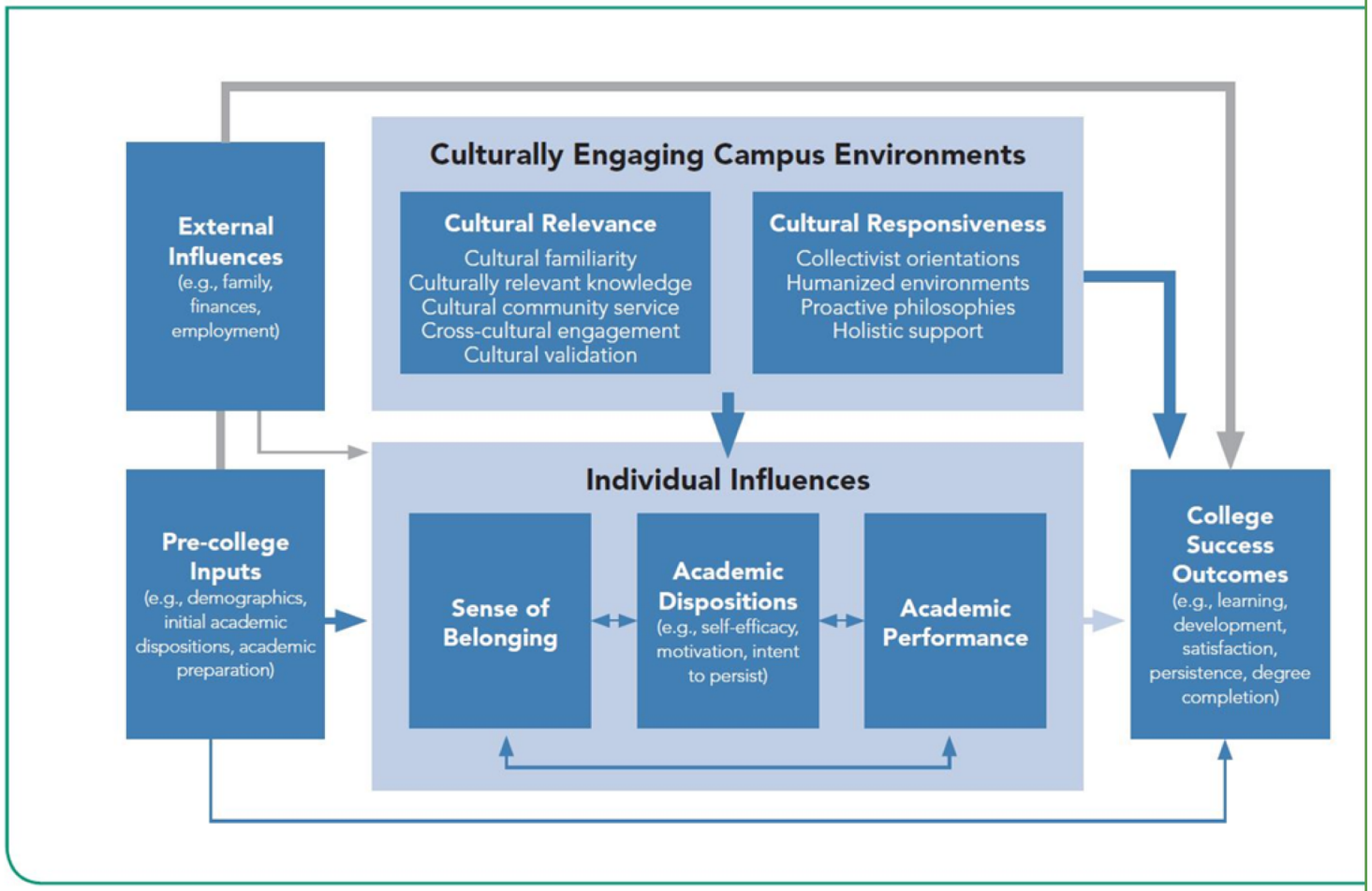
NITE developed the model to move beyond generating data about problems and shift toward what campuses must do to cultivate more equitable and inclusive institutions.

The CECE model points to dimensions that support student success and helps to identify specific areas for action toward increasing student access to culturally engaging campus.[1]

Analysis was organized by nine indicators across three domains: Cultural Responsiveness, Sense of Belonging, and Cultural Relevance.

[1] Museus, S.D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2017). The impact of culturally engaging campus environments on sense of belonging. *The Review of Higher Education 40(2),* 187-215. doi:10.1353/rhe.2017.0001

Figure 3 | *The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model*



Note. Adapted from Museus (2014). Copyright © 2014 Springer. Reprinted with permission.

"The CECE model acknowledges that external influences (e.g., financial factors, employment, and family influences) and precollege inputs (e.g., academic preparation and academic dispositions at the time of entry) shape college success (e.g., learning, satisfaction, persistence, and degree completion). However, the focal point of the CECE model emphasizes that college students' access to culturally engaging campus environments is positively correlated with individual influences (e.g., sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, motivation, expectation or intent to persist, and performance) on success and an increased probability of succeeding in college." https://www.indiana.edu/~cece/wordpress/cece-model/

Cultural Responsiveness Domain

Speaks to the extent to which the campus is responsive to needs and norms of diverse students

Indicators:

1. **Collectivist Cultural Orientation:** Campus cultures emphasize a collectivist orientation characterized by teamwork and pursuit of mutual success rather than individual success and competition
2. **Humanized Educational Environments:** Environments in which students are able to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and staff who care about and are committed to their success
3. **Proactive Philosophies:** Disposition among faculty, administrators and staff to proactively make students aware of important information, opportunities and support services, rather than waiting for students to seek them out
4. **Holistic Support:** Students have access to at least one faculty or staff member whom they trust and are confident will provide information they need, offer help when sought, or connect them with information and/or support they require regardless of issue

Sample Survey Items:

Cultural Responsiveness

Collectivist Cultural Orientations

- *People at CMU help each other succeed, support each other, and work toward common goals.*

Humanized Educational Environments

- *Educators at CMU are caring human beings who are committed to students' success.*

Proactive Philosophies

- *People at CMU check in with me to see if I need support and often send me information about learning opportunities.*

Holistic Support

- *I know people at CMU who I trust to give me support, help me solve problems, and give me information I need.*

Cultural Relevance Domain

Describes the extent to which environments engage and reflect the backgrounds, communities and identities of students

Indicators:

1. **Cultural Familiarity:** Spaces and opportunities for students to connect with faculty, staff and peers who understand their cultural backgrounds and experiences
2. **Culturally Relevant Knowledge:** Students are able to learn and exchange knowledge about their own cultural communities via culturally relevant (competent) curricular and co-curricular activities
3. **Cultural Community Service:** Opportunities for students to positively impact and/or give back to cultural communities with which they identify
4. **Cross Cultural Engagement:** Programs and practices that facilitate educationally meaningful cross cultural interaction focused on addressing real social and political issues
5. **Cultural Validation:** Campus culture that validates the cultural backgrounds, knowledge and identities of diverse students

Sample Survey Items:

Cultural Relevance

Cultural Familiarity

- *It is easy to find people at CMU whose backgrounds are similar to mine and to find people who want to understand my experiences and struggles.*

Culturally Relevant Knowledge

- *There are enough opportunities at CMU to learn about the important issues and challenges that exist within my own communities.*

Cultural Connection and Impact

- *There are enough opportunities at CMU to positively impact and improve the lives of people in my own communities.*

Meaningful Cross-cultural Engagement

- *There are enough opportunities at CMU to discuss important issues with people from different cultural backgrounds.*

Cultural Validation

- *People at CMU value my cultural communities and our experiences.*

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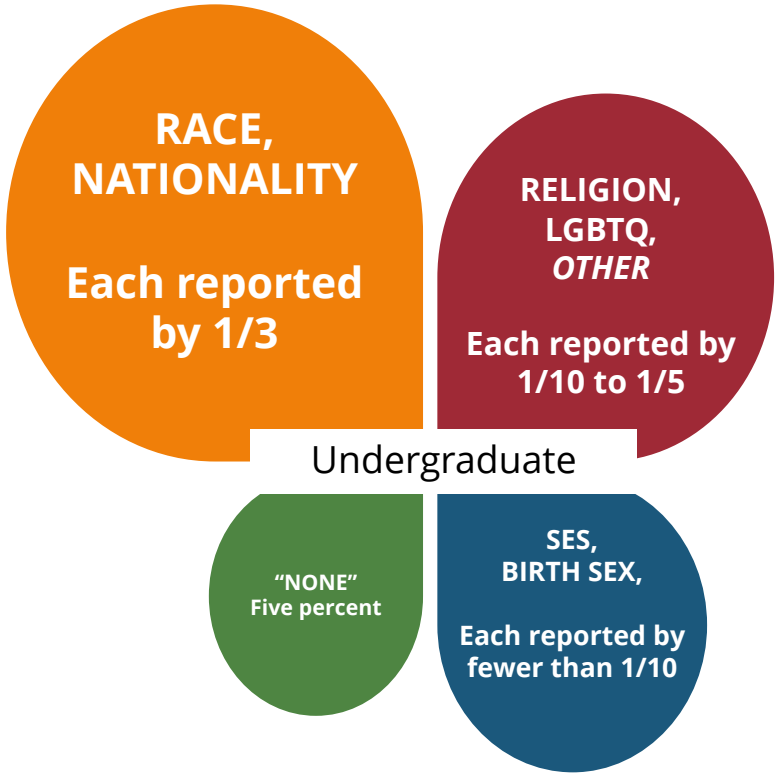
REPORTED CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

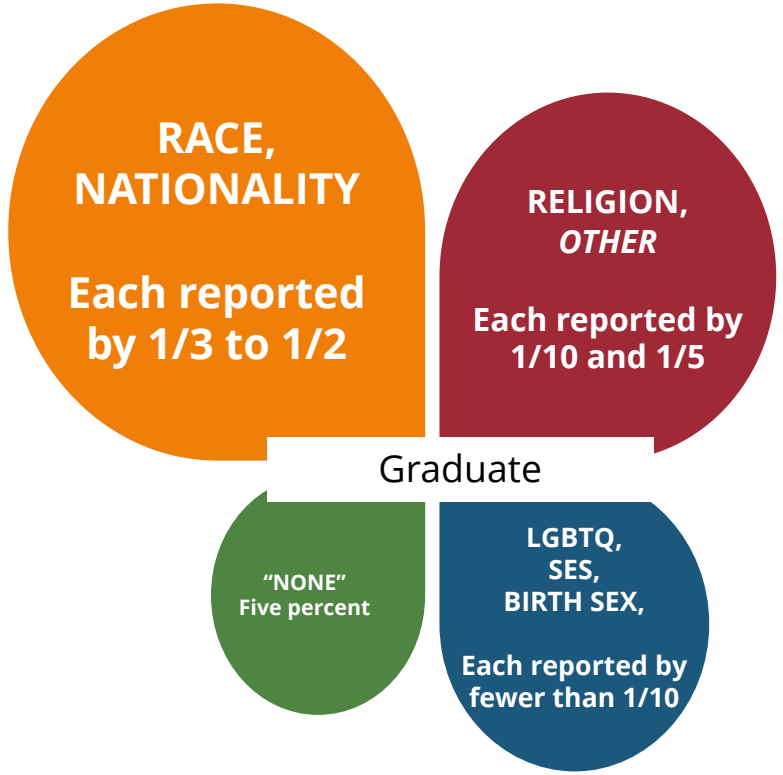
This instruction was provided before the survey items:

The term "cultural communities" can mean many things. It can refer to a national community, a racial or ethnic community (Asian American, Black, White, etc.), a religious community, a LGBTQIA+ community, or even a community in the neighborhood where you grew up or currently live. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements regarding your own cultural communities?

Upon completion, students were asked:

Which cultural communities came to mind when you answered the questions above?





Major categories in "other" include political affiliation, those with disabilities, CMU organizations, city of Pittsburgh.

KEY FINDINGS

Culturally Responsive

Participants generally agree with items characterizing CMU as a place with opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and staff, to receive proactive and holistic support for well-being, and, on the whole, as being interested in students' success. However, it is important to note:

- Different from their peers who agreed, Hispanic undergraduate women were neutral across most responsiveness indicators; likewise, Black women were neutral on one indicator.

- Masters student response patterns differ substantively from undergraduate and doctoral students. Masters level student responses were largely neutral in regard to the presence of proactive philosophies (outreach communication, checking-in, connecting) across cultural identities. Additionally, there were differences along gender lines and with Hispanic students related to the presence of holistic support (relationships with trusted support people and consideration of the whole self in advising).

- There was more uniform agreement across doctoral student responses with notable exceptions of neutral perceptions among women, transgender, and non-binary students for certain responsiveness indicators.

KEY FINDINGS

Culturally Relevant

Participant responses among culturally relevant dimensions are far more varied. These items measure the degree to which students' believe their culture is known, considered, and valued in how the campus operates and educates. For example:

- Women overall did not view CMU's environment to be as relevant (validating, connected, and representative) as men across race and ethnic identities
- Hispanic women's experiences, in both undergraduate and graduate domains, were in stark contrast to White and Asian men and women. Across the Hispanic student experience, students did not agree that campus operates and educates in ways that validate their backgrounds and lived experiences.
- Black students did not agree, on almost all indicators, that the environment on campus was culturally relevant. Black women masters' students reported a strong pattern of disagreement with characterizing CMU as relevant to or validating their experiences.
- LGBQ, Transgender, and Non-binary identifying students were largely neutral on their views about CMU as culturally relevant.

KEY FINDINGS

Sense of Belonging:

In addition to culturally responsive and culturally relevant domains, the study examined students' connection or belonging to CMU.

Participant response patterns for belonging tend to follow the patterns in the culturally relevant domain, though not always.

In other words, when culturally responsive (or care and concern) indicators were more positive, belonging indicators did not always follow suit; when culturally relevant indicators were less positive, belonging often appeared more neutral.

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HOW TO READ THE FINDINGS TABLES

Indicators (white cells) are nested within themes (dark gray cells)

Degree Level	Cultural Responsiveness				Cultural Relevance					Belonging
	Collectivist Cultural Orientations	Humanized Educational Environments	Proactive Philosophies	Holistic Support	Cultural Familiarity	Culturally Relevant Knowledge	Cultural Connection and Impact	Meaningful Cross-cultural Engagement	Cultural Validation	
Demographic and structural groups are listed here										

Each cell is highlighted to represent the feeling of the majority of the students in the named group

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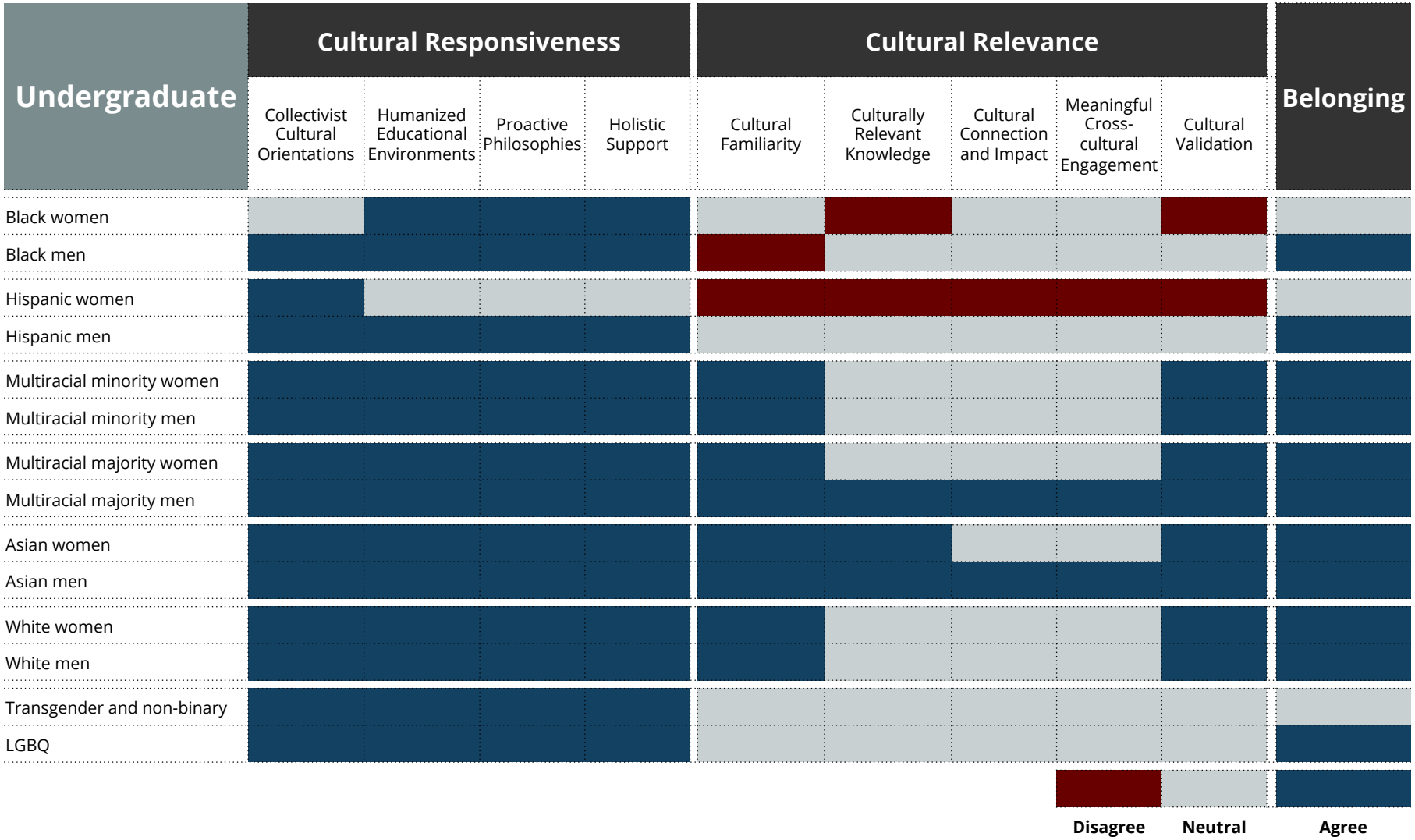

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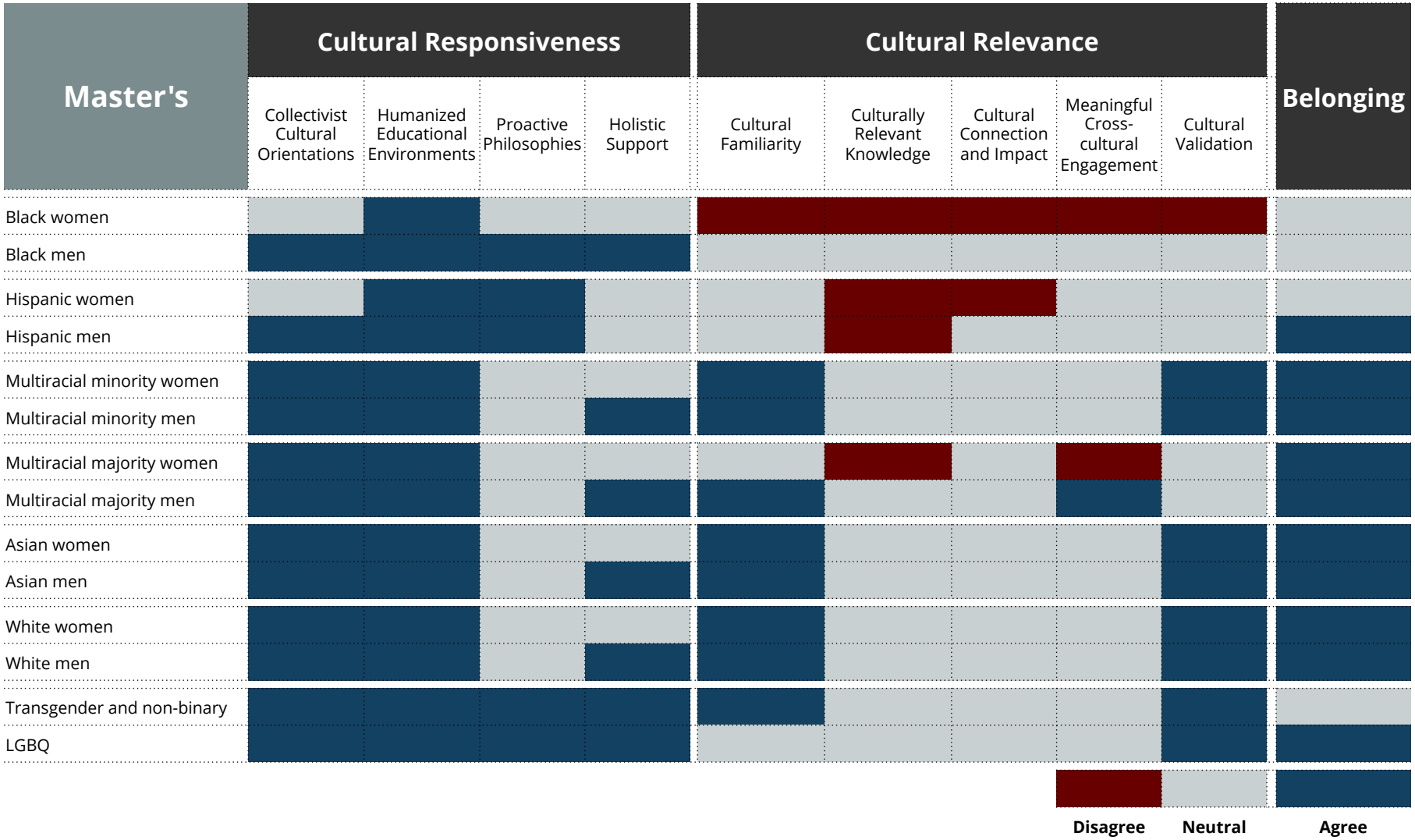

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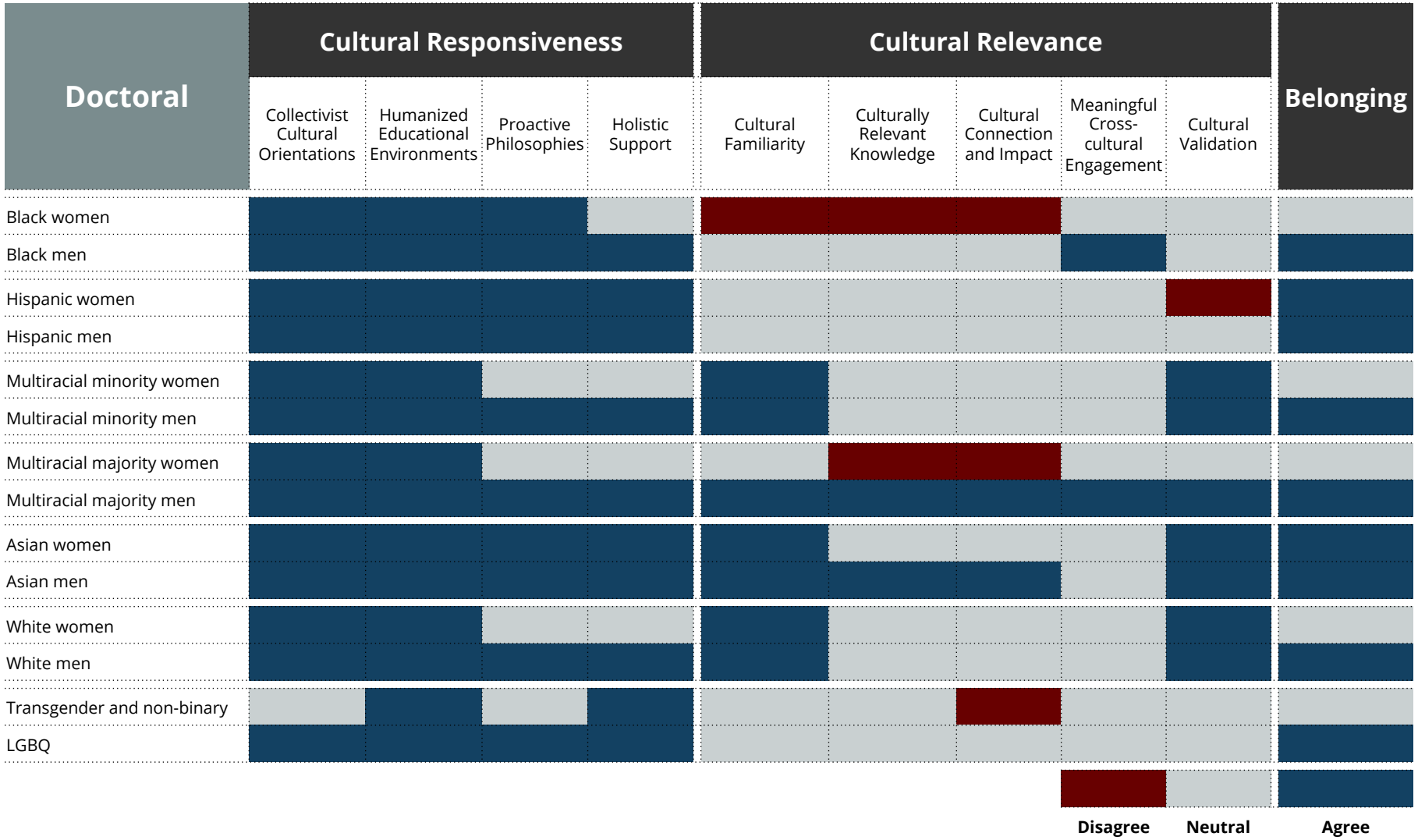

INSIGHTS

Positive impacts on student success require our environment to be both culturally responsive and culturally relevant.

- Cultural relevance dimensions help us see the impact of historical legacies and current practices of exclusion in the academic disciplines generally and at CMU.
- Cultural relevance includes but goes beyond numbers and representation, expecting cultural understanding and validation throughout the environment.
- Sense of belonging results are consistent with research in the field illustrating authentic connection and validation as drivers of belonging for students with marginalized identities[2].
- Alienation and even demeaning peer and faculty interactions, particularly in academic settings, damage the transformational potential of CMU's learning environment for all students.

[2] Vaccaro, A. & Newman, B. (2016). Development of a Sense of Belonging for Privileged and Minoritized Students: An Emergent Model. *Journal of College Student Development*. 57. 925-942. 10.1353/csd.2016.0091.

IMPLICATIONS

We have gathered a lot of information and now we must act. It is time to focus on the cultural relevance of our campus environments.

Representation matters.

ACTION: The Provost has directed the Deans to create action plans that offer resources, leadership, and accountability for increases in recruitment, yield, and retention across student, staff, and faculty populations.

All members of the campus community need opportunities to continuously reflect on own identities and informing sense of self in relationship to others.

ACTION: The Center for Student Diversity has proved to be a valuable resource. Through the Center's work, we have learned that students are seeking greater engagement with faculty and fellow students on these issues and we are committed to making the strategic investments needed to expand the impact of the Center's work. To that end, the Center is currently revising the curriculum of key educational programs and will be increasing the student leadership capacity for social change through the creation of a Peer Advocates program.

IMPLICATIONS continued

The curriculum must reflect the cultural diversity of the world and our campus. Pedagogical practices must reflect the diversity of student experiences, learning styles, and backgrounds.

ACTION: The Provost Inclusive Teaching Fellows program will launch this spring that expands on the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation's efforts to advance inclusive teaching practices among our faculty and instructional staff.

Ensure that students are finding authentic validation and belonging in and out of the classroom.

ACTION: The Core Competency Initiative is identifying key skills for all CMU students that focus on inclusion and intercultural competencies to be taught across the curriculum and co-curriculum.

ACTION: The Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion will extend its support for graduate students to include faculty mentoring and development of opportunities for mentorship relationships with undergraduate students.

ACTION: This fall, the Tartan Scholars program began at CMU to meet the unique needs of our incoming first-year students who are academically high-achieving and come from limited-resource backgrounds. The Tartan Scholars program will be expanded to include culturally-relevant academic support, an increased first year student cohort size for fall 2020, and continuous support available to eligible students throughout their time at CMU.

References and Resources

Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model: https://www.indiana.edu/~cece/wordpress/cece-model/

President's Task Force on Campus Climate: https://www.cmu.edu/campus-climate/index.html

Discriminatory and Sexual Harassment Study: https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity/learning-and-development/dash-study.html

Carnegie Mellon Demographic Data: https://www.cmu.edu/ira/university-information/index.html

Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: http://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity

The Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation: https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/

[1] Museus, S.D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2017). The impact of culturally engaging campus environments on sense of belonging. The Review of Higher Education 40(2), 187-215. doi:10.1353/rhe.2017.0001

Museus, S. D., Zhang, D., & Kim, M. J. (2016). Developing and evaluating the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Scale: An examination of content and construct validity. Research in Higher Education. DOI 10.1007/s11162-015-9405-8

[2] Vaccaro, A. & Newman, B. (2016). Development of a Sense of Belonging for Privileged and Minoritized Students: An Emergent Model. Journal of College Student Development. 57. 925-942. 10.1353/csd.2016.0091.