Fall 2018

CMU VOICES

Study of Inclusion and Climate Experiences

I. Executive Summary

The CMU VOICES study, conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, was 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.

The VOICES Study (conducted between November 2018 and January 2019) expanded upon CMU's previous DASH (Discriminatory and Sexual Harassment) Study by incorporating additional campus climate and engagement indicators researched and developed by the National Institute for Transformation and Equity (NITE). The goal was, and continues to be, to leverage the results of this study to inform educational initiatives and plans for creating a campus environment that engages and supports students across all backgrounds and experiences.

A. VOICES Theoretical Foundation: Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model:

- The National Institute for Transformation and Equity developed the CECE 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 environments.[1]

> "The CECE Model and Survey provides colleges with a roadmap regarding how they may intentionally structure campus environments to maximize success among diverse students."
>
> - NITE Director Samuel D. Museus, PhD

- The CECE model survey:
    - measures the degree to which students **agree** or **disagree** about the presence of 9 unique indicators of either **Culturally Responsive** or **Culturally Relevant** environments (sample items in D. Appendix);
    - includes indicators correlated with **sense of belonging**, **academic self-efficacy**, and **academic motivation**; and
    - enables campuses to create plans for transforming environments to more effectively allow a diverse student body to thrive.

B. Key Themes

- Despite lower than desired response rates on both the undergraduate and graduate surveys, the results were rich enough for analysis of overarching themes and actionable patterns across the populations.
- **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.

---

[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

- **Culturally Relevant:** Participant responses among culturally relevant dimensions are far more varied. These items examined 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 agreed that campus does not operate and educate 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.
- **Sense of Belonging**: In addition to culturally responsive and culturally relevant domains, the CECE Model Survey examined students' connection to CMU or sense of belonging. Participant response patterns for sense of 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.

C. Implications

- **Positive impacts on student success require our environment to be both culturally responsive <u>and</u> 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 suggest findings consistent with research in the field that indicate sense of belonging for students of color and minoritized students must go beyond a surface-level feeling of connection and care (i.e. culturally responsive indicators) and ALSO involve deeper connections that value their authentic and whole selves (I.e. culturally relevant indicators)[2].
  - Alienation and even demeaning peer and faculty interactions, particularly in academic settings, continue to damage the transformational potential of CMU's learning environment for all students.

- **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.
  - 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.
  - 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.

_____

[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.

D. Appendix

- Example of Culturally Engaging Campus Environments 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.*

Belonging

- *I feel a strong connection to CMU and feel like I belong to the CMU community.*

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.*

- Detailed results by degree level, race, and gender identity

Undergraduate	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	
Black women										
Black men										
Hispanic women										
Hispanic men										
Multiracial minority women										
Multiracial minority men										
Multiracial majority women										
Multiracial majority men										
Asian women										
Asian men										
White women										
White men										
Transgender and non-binary										
LGBQ										

Disagree   Neutral   Agree

Master's	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	
Black women										
Black men										
Hispanic women										
Hispanic men										
Multiracial minority women										
Multiracial minority men										
Multiracial majority women										
Multiracial majority men										
Asian women										
Asian men										
White women										
White men										
Transgender and non-binary										
LGBQ										

Disagree   Neutral   Agree

Doctoral	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	
Black women	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Neutral	Agree
Black men	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Neutral	Agree
Hispanic women	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Disagree	Agree
Hispanic men	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree
Multiracial minority women	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Agree
Multiracial minority men	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Agree
Multiracial majority women	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Multiracial majority men	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Asian women	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Agree
Asian men	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Agree	Agree
White women	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Neutral
White men	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Agree	Agree
Transgender and non-binary	Neutral	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Disagree	Neutral	Neutral	Agree
LGBQ	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Disagree	Neutral	Agree

Legend: Disagree | Neutral | Agree