

Spring 2005 Social Climate Survey Report and Recommendations

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I. CONTEXT: WHY A SOCIAL CLIMATE SURVEY?

The 2005 Social Climate Survey was initiated by the IPFW Diversity Council in response to Goal 2 of the IPFW Strategic Plan: to create an exceptional campus environment for a diverse community of learners. While the goal encompasses much more than campus climate per se, it seemed clear that we could not measure progress toward this goal without assessing the campus climate.

The IPFW Campus Climate had not been systematically studied in the past. Surveys conducted from time to time over the years yielded snapshots of information about student and/or faculty perceptions of the climate for diversity at IPFW. Those surveys, constructed by different groups for different reasons, could not be directly compared with each other; thus, there were no baseline data against which progress could be measured. Some patterns of responses suggested possible areas for improvement, for example:

- women and minorities were somewhat less likely than white male students to characterize the IPFW campus climate as diversity-friendly (various surveys);
- minority students supported a diversity requirement in the curriculum somewhat more strongly than majority students (Survey of Student Racial Attitudes and Opinions, conducted by Sociology students and faculty, 2001);
- IPFW students reported fewer serious conversations with diverse others than students at other four-year institutions (NSSE data, spring 2003).

Response patterns similar to the above were also found in the 2005 Climate Survey.

The earlier surveys focused primarily on race/ethnicity and to a lesser extent on gender. The Diversity Council agreed that measuring progress toward an exceptional campus environment for a diverse community of learners would require data on other aspects of diversity as well, in keeping with the definition the Council had developed:

The term diversity encompasses differences of culture, background and experience among individuals and groups. Such differences include, but are not necessarily limited to, differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, and disabilities, as well as political and religious affiliation and socioeconomic status.

The February 2005 survey attempted to address all of the above categories.

Administration of the Survey. All IPFW students enrolled in spring 2005 received email notification of the online survey and instructions for accessing it via my.ipfw.edu. Because my.ipfw had just been mounted, students were not yet accustomed to using it; therefore, extra efforts were made to call attention to the survey. These included posters, flyers, announcements in classes and at student club meetings, and *Communicator* ads. In addition, members of the Diversity Council handed out post-card sized announcements in busy areas of Kettler and Walb and verbally encouraged students to complete the survey.

II. RESPONSE RATE AND RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS.

Completed surveys were submitted by 660 students, or about 6% of the student body. An additional 331 students logged in and started to fill out the survey but did not complete it. Possible explanations for this behavior include the length of the survey and the fact that some students were presumably not very interested in the issues (both of these factors had surfaced during pilot administrations of the survey). Other explanations are possible as well. In any event, the small sample size must be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

The demographic data indicate that the sample was reasonably representative of the IPFW student body with respect to academic standing and gender/ethnicity. In addition, respondents represent almost every academic major offered at IPFW. For most other categories, either the data are inconclusive or there is no basis for comparison.

1. Academic Standing and GPA. The following table compares the class rank of the respondents with that of the IPFW student body in fall 2004.

	First Year	Soph	Junior	Senior	Grad. Stu	Other
Total IPFW	43.5%	21.3%	11.6%	14.8%	6.1%	2.4%
Survey Responses	29%	21.3%	17.7%	25.8%	6.3%	N.A.

In the survey sample, first-year students are underrepresented and seniors are somewhat overrepresented; however, the other categories are either virtually identical for both the survey and the IPFW student body (sophomores and graduate students) or reasonably close (juniors).

More than 90% of the respondents reported a GPA of 2.0 or better:

No credits earned	GPA 1.99 or less	GPA 2.0-2.99	GPA 3.0 - 3.99	GPA 4.0
5.8%	4.0%	27%	55.2%	8.1%

2. Gender and Ethnicity. The following table shows that women and most minorities are slightly overrepresented in the survey sample, compared to IPFW overall. A possible explanation may be that women and minorities tend to be more interested in the issues (a finding of some of the earlier surveys cited above and confirmed by findings at other colleges and universities). Also, it is well known that women are more likely than men to respond to surveys.

	IPFW	Survey
Women	57.9%	64.2%
Men	42.1%	35.8%
White/Caucasian	86.5%	83.3%
African-American	5.2%	7%
Hispanic	2.5%	3.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.0%	2.7%
American Indian	0.4%	0.0%
Other	3.5%	2.6%

3. US Citizen/International Students. The great majority of respondents to the survey were US citizens (91.8%) or permanent residents (5.5%). Only 1.5% checked non-US citizen, and 0.6% checked “other.” International students on campus, most of whom are presumably non-US citizens, were 2% of the IPFW student body in fall 2004.

4. Sexual Orientation. Since this category is not tracked by the IPFW Office of Institutional Research, no comparison of the survey data with other data is possible. The great majority of respondents (87.9%) checked Heterosexual and the next highest category was Bisexual (4.1%). The other categories, in descending order, were Other (3.1%), Gay (1.7%), and Lesbian (1.4%).

5. Age. Because of a programming error, the data on respondents’ ages was not valid.

6. Disability. Five types of disability were reported by 39 respondents. In descending order of frequency, these were: psychiatric disability (1.7%); chronic illness and/or medical condition (1.5%); attention deficit disorder (1.4%); significant mobility impairment (1.1%); and respiratory impairment (0.3%).

7. Religion. A majority of respondents (73.4%) checked Christianity as their religious affiliation; the next-highest choices were Non-religious (13.4%) and Other (7.3%). The remaining categories, in descending order, were: Buddhism (3%), Atheism (1.7%), Islam (1.4%), and Judaism (0.3%).

8. Parents' Education. Over half of the respondents indicated that one or both parents had some education beyond high school. A higher percentage of mothers than fathers had no education beyond high school and fewer mothers had advanced degrees. The breakdown is:

	Father	Mother
less than high school	8.3%	7.8%
high school	31.3%	40.3%
trade school	10.0%	3.2%
some college	14.7%	15.1%
Associate degree	6.4%	10.0%
Bachelor's degree	17.6%	14.6%
Master's degree	8.0%	7.9%
Professional degree	2.1%	.5%
Doctorate	1.5%	.6%

9. Socioeconomic status. Income level may serve as a very rough gauge of socioeconomic status. The survey data must be treated with caution, since just over 25% of respondents were not sure what their parents' income was while they were growing up, and others presumably took a guess. Not surprisingly, given the above data on educational level, more mothers showed up in the lowest income categories. The breakdown is as follows:

	Father	Mother
Not sure	26.8%	27%
Not applicable	5.8%	8.0%
0-\$9,999	2.9%	13.6%
\$10,000-19,000	6.6%	12.9%
\$20,000-29,000	9.5%	15.9%
\$30,000-39,000	11.5%	9.8%
\$40,000-49,000	10.7%	7.0%
\$50,000-59,000	9.2%	2.5%
\$60,000 and up	17.0%	3.4%

10. Full-time/Part-time. Full-time status is defined as enrollment in 12 or more credit hours. In fall 2004, 57% of IPFW students were full-time according to this definition. The breakdown of the survey respondents is:

credit hours enrolled	1 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 9	10 - 12	more than 12
% of respondents	5.9	13.7	9.1	34.8	36.5

Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell how many respondents who checked 10-12 were full-time, i.e., enrolled for 12 credit hours. Thus, we can only say that full-time students appear to be underreported in the survey data.

11. Employment while Enrolled at IPFW. While more than 50% of the respondents reported working 20 hours per week or more, it is interesting that just over 26% reported working not at all (18.9%) or only 10 hours per week or less (7.5%). The breakdown is as follows:

do not work	less than 10	10-19 hr/wk	20-29 hr/wk	30-39 hr/wk	40 or more
18.9%	7.5%	19.6%	24.5%	12.6%	16.9%

12. Major Program of Study. Respondents to the survey came from nearly every department and program on campus. The largest numbers were from Education (16.1%), Business and Management Sciences (13.9%), Public and Environmental Affairs (6.5%), and Nursing (6.0%). The following table compares these percentages with IPFW overall:

	IPFW	Survey
Education	13.9%	16.1%
Business/Management Sci	6.6%	13.9%
Public/Environmental Affairs	4.1%	6.5%
Nursing	8.6%	6.0%

It is clear that the academic majors are not represented in proportions approximating those of the university as a whole. Given the small sample size, this is perhaps less important than the fact that the respondents do represent almost every major offered at IPFW. In addition, 6.2% were Undecided, and 5.4% indicated their major was not among the 42 choices listed.

III. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SURVEY ITEMS

Responses on the Climate Survey presented in the following sections were evaluated in terms of similarities and differences with respect to gender and race/ethnicity.

A. ISSUES ON WHICH RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS WERE SIMILAR

1. Interactions with Faculty and Other University Staff

Respondents did not differ regarding the quality of their interactions with faculty and other university staff. Average ratings for all groups were greater than 4.28 on scales ranging from 1 to 6, with 4 indicating *somewhat agree* and 5 indicating *agree*. Specifically, the issues concerned faculty commitment to meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, faculty being respectful of them as individuals, staff meeting the needs of students from all backgrounds, and staff being respectful of them as individuals.

2. Perceptions of Advisors

Respondents had similar responses on all ratings of advisors, except the belief that their advisor is respectful of them as an individual. In the case of the latter issue, African American students endorsed the belief that their advisor was respectful of them at higher levels than other racial-ethnic groups; however, all groups had average ratings above 5, labeled as *agree* on the rating scale. The other ratings regarded the issues of comfort with sharing aspects of their cultural identity with their advisor, advisors understanding the diversity issues that may affect their studies, advisors being accessible to them, and the belief that their advisor would advocate for them if they were treated unfairly as a result of their cultural values and beliefs. Again, average values for all ratings were fairly high, greater than 4.57 on scales ranging from 1 to 6, with 4 indicating *somewhat agree* and 5 indicating *agree*.

3. Social Contact Among Students from Diverse Backgrounds

Students of different backgrounds were generally perceived similarly by respondents in terms of the extent to which they have contact with one another. The ratings concerned students from diverse backgrounds interacting on a regular basis and developing friendships, students of different genders interacting on a regular basis, and students of different nationalities interacting on a regular basis. Most respondents appear to believe that students from different backgrounds interact to some extent, given that the average values for ratings ranged from 2.33 to 3.35 on a scale of 0 to 4; the value of 2 on the rating scales is labeled as *sometimes* and that of 3 is labeled as *frequently*. The exception to the general similarity of values for these ratings was that Asian American students perceived less frequent interaction between women and men than other racial/ethnic groups.

4. Frequency of Harassment

Ten or fewer respondents of non-European American racial/ethnic groups responded to ratings of whether they had been harassed or had seen others harassed based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, accent/dialect, national origin, disability, or social class. Consequently,

meaningful comparisons among racial/ethnic groups are not possible. No gender differences were found, with the exception of harassment because of sexual orientation. Slightly more men indicated that they had been subjected to harassment for this reason.

Overall, 51 respondents (8.7%) reported that they had been harassed (e.g., experienced offensive treatment or verbal abuse) by someone because of their personal characteristics (although only 50 respondents completed the ratings concerning the reason for the harassment). Twenty-one respondents (3.2%) were harassed because of their race/ethnicity, 33 (5.0%) because of their gender, 12 (1.8%) because of their sexual orientation, 16 (2.4%) because of their religion, 24 (3.6%) because of their age, 6 (0.9%) because of their accent or dialect, 10 (1.5%) because of their national origin, 6 (0.9%) because of their disability, and 22 (3.3%) because of their social class origin.

In contrast, 164 respondents (24.8%) indicated that they had seen other people at IPFW treated badly because of their personal characteristics. The following table presents the number of respondents observing others being treated badly for the range of personal characteristics examined in the survey.

Personal Characteristic	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Very Frequently
Race/Ethnicity	42	54	20	8
Gender	50	48	19	6
Sexual Orientation	28	57	31	14
Religion	39	43	14	9
Age	35	55	17	10
Accent/Dialect	40	41	17	9
National Origin	40	38	17	8
Disability	38	36	15	8
Social Class	31	44	17	13

Sexual orientation is the factor for which individuals report seeing others harassed most frequently. Race, age, and social class also appear to be the basis for harassment fairly frequently, taking into account the number who indicate that it occurs *sometimes* or more frequently.

5. Perceptions of Instructors

A number of ratings of instructors did not vary in terms of the race/ethnicity or gender of respondents. These ratings were that instructors actively encourage the full participation of all students, maintain the same high academic expectations for all students, invite all students to seek them out whenever necessary, and use language that is respectful of diverse populations. Average values across these ratings ranged from 4.0 (*somewhat agree*) to 5.0 (*agree*).

6. Experience in the Classroom

Many of the ratings about comfort in the classroom were very similar across gender and racial/ethnic groups. These ratings focused on comfort with interacting with students and/or faculty from backgrounds different from those of the respondents, asking questions in the classroom, and participating in group activities. Average values across the various groups ranged from 3.87 to 5.27, where 4 was *somewhat comfortable* and 5 was *comfortable*. The exception was with respect to the rating *expressing my opinions about issues of diversity*. African American respondents reported being more comfortable (the average value was 4.81) compared to Asian Americans (3.60), respondents of other racial/ethnic groups (4.00), and European Americans (4.16).

Respondents were very similar in their perceptions of the frequency with which males and females, as well as students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, participate equally in discussions and learning activities. Average values across the groups ranged from 2.59 to 3.05. The response options for this rating were 0 (*never*), 1 (*rarely*), 2 (*sometimes*), 3 (*frequently*), and 4 (*very frequently*).

B. ISSUES ON WHICH RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS WERE DIFFERENT

1. Overall Perceptions of Diversity at IPFW

African American respondents were less likely to see IPFW as welcoming to people with diverse backgrounds (the average rating was 4.56) than other ethnic groups (averages were greater than 4.65 on a 6-point scale, with 4 labeled as *somewhat agree* and 5 labeled as *agree*). African American participants were more likely to express concern about diversity issues as a student at IPFW (the average was 4.83) than Hispanic American participants, European American participants, and participants of other ethnic groups (averages were less than 4.18). Women indicated that IPFW makes them feel as though they belong to a greater extent (the average was 4.45) than was the case for men (the average was 4.24).

2. Experience Outside of the Classroom

Differences in perceptions about experiences outside of the classroom occurred on five of the seven ratings on these issues. One exception was for feeling that respondents belonged at IPFW, with no differences based on race/ethnicity or gender; averages ranged from 4.00 to 4.46, with 4 labeled as *somewhat agree* and 5 labeled as *agree*. The other exception regarded the belief that people expect them to do well on some things and not others because of gender. All averages for

ratings were less than 3.61, with 3 labeled as *somewhat disagree*.

Asian American respondents were more likely to report that they felt they need to minimize aspects of their identity to fit in at IPFW (average = 3.27) than European American students (average = 2.49), while men (average = 2.76) in general felt a greater need to do this than women (average = 2.43). The value of 2 was labeled as *disagree* and 3 was labeled as *somewhat disagree*. African American and Asian American students believed that expectations of their ability to achieve are based on their racial/ethnic background to a greater extent (averages were 3.93 and 4.07, respectively) than was true for European American students, Hispanic American students, and students of other backgrounds (averages were 2.38, 2.55, and 2.53, respectively).

African American and Asian American students indicated that they feel that others expect them to represent their identity group to a greater extent (averages were 4.23 and 3.80, respectively) than other racial/ethnic groups (averages were less than 3.10). With respect to the belief that IPFW is committed to developing a learning climate that is positive for all students, Hispanic American students indicated less agreement (the average was 3.95) than did European American students and those in the “other” racial/ethnic group (averages were 4.68 and 4.71, respectively). Women were also more likely to agree that IPFW is committed to developing such a learning environment (the average was 4.69) than men (the average was 4.48).

African American respondents were less likely to believe that students from certain groups (e.g., ethnicity, gender, race) receive special treatment (the average was 2.74) than respondents identifying themselves as belonging to the “other” racial/ethnic group (the average was 3.65). These two groups, however, were not different in their ratings from Asian, European, and Hispanic American respondents. Women were also less likely to endorse this belief (the average was 3.02) than men (the average was 3.34).

3. Remedies for Unfair Treatment

African American and Asian American students were less likely to report that they are aware of procedures to use if they are treated unfairly at IPFW (averages were 3.65 and 3.27, respectively) than were European American students (the average was 4.18). Men were also less aware of these procedures (the average was 3.91) than women (the average was 4.18).

4. Perceptions of Instructors

African American and Asian American students were less likely to disagree with the statement that instructors assume that all people who look like them hold the same beliefs (averages were 3.12 and 3.60, respectively) than European Americans (the average was 2.47); the value of 2 was labeled as *disagree* and 3 was labeled as *somewhat disagree*. Men were also less likely to disagree with the statement (the average was 2.78) than women (the average was 2.45). Additionally, African American respondents were less likely to feel that material presented by

instructors reflect the contributions of people from diverse backgrounds (the average was 3.74) compared to European American students (the average was 4.45).

5. Perceptions of Diversity in the Classroom

European American students evaluated the learning environment in the classroom related to diversity as more positive (the average was 4.82) than African American students (the average was 4.40) and students who identified themselves as belonging to the “other” racial/ethnic group (the average was 4.29). African American students were less likely to agree with the statement that the learning environment at IPFW is enhanced by the interaction of a diverse student population (the average was 3.98) than Asian American and European American students (averages were 4.73 and 4.57, respectively). Men were similarly less likely to agree with the statement (the average was 4.32) than women (the average was 4.65). Women tended to agree that students’ cultural identities are respected by their peers to a greater extent (the average was 4.62) than did men (the average was 4.41).

6. Experiences Within the Classroom

African American students indicated that they were made to feel the need to speak for their identity group more frequently (the average was 2.10) than all other racial/ethnic groups (averages were less than 1.48); 1 was labeled as *rarely* and 2 was labeled as *sometimes*. African American students, Asian American students, and students identifying themselves in the “other” racial/ethnic group reported that they more frequently felt as though they did not belong based on their cultural identity (averages were greater than 1.06) compared to European American and Hispanic American students (averages were less than 0.69). The value 0 was labeled as *never*.

The three same groups of students (African American, Asian American, and “Other” students) indicated that they had experienced incidents in which they felt discriminated against in the classroom more frequently (averages are greater than 1.05) than did European and Hispanic American students (averages were both less than 0.48). Asian American students reported that they witnessed incidents in which a classmate had been discriminated against more frequently (the average was 1.33) compared to European and Hispanic American students (averages less than 0.64).

Men indicated that they had felt as though they did not belong more frequently (the average was 0.68) compared to women (the average was 0.51).

7. Willingness to Recommend IPFW to Other Students

African American students and those in the “other” racial/ethnic group were less likely to agree that they would recommend IPFW to other students regardless of their background (averages were 4.36 and 4.35, respectively) than were European American students (the average was 4.96). Men were also less likely to say that they would recommend IPFW (the average was 4.73) than women (the average was 4.97).

III. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the outset, we want to emphasize that, because of the low response rate and some difficulties related to the design and distribution of the Campus Climate Survey, all lessons learned must be considered provisional. The survey is most appropriately viewed as a pilot study that suggests some positive elements as well as some challenges related to IPFW's campus climate. We hope to administer the survey every two years to determine whether the campus climate is in fact improving and to track any trends that emerge.

One of the most striking aspects of the survey results is the fact that respondents from all groups answered similarly on many questions. In particular, responses related to interactions with faculty, academic advisors, and other staff were largely positive across groups. This suggests that faculty and staff take seriously their commitment to help students be successful, treat them with respect, and actively encourage them to participate. The respondents' perceptions of how students from different groups interact with each other were also similar across the board.

Less positive, but not surprising, is the finding that minority students are less likely to see IPFW as welcoming (African Americans), less likely to agree that IPFW is committed to creating a positive learning environment for all students (Hispanics), more likely to feel that expectations of their ability to achieve are based on their race (African Americans, Asians), and in general, more likely to respond in ways that reflect a sense that others may be prejudiced against them. These perceptions tend to confirm our belief that efforts to educate the campus community about diversity must continue.

A few responses fell out differently along gender lines. For example, women were more likely than men to agree that IPFW is committed to creating a positive learning environment for all students and more likely to feel that they "belong." Women and African Americans were less likely to believe that certain groups get special treatment and less likely to say they would recommend IPFW to potential students regardless of background. Results such as these are similar to the findings of previous IPFW surveys and are consistent with what has been found at other colleges and universities as well. Findings such as these also suggest a need for ongoing efforts to enhance the campus climate for diversity and also, perhaps, a need to collect more qualitative data that could help us understand differences among groups in their perceptions of the campus climate.

Perhaps the most unsettling findings concerned the questions about harassment based on one's background or other individual characteristics (p. 7 above). Harassment was defined as "offensive treatment or verbal abuse." Very few respondents reported having experienced harassment, but about 25% reported having witnessed harassment based on sexual orientation, age, social class, race, and other factors. To cite just one example: of the 164 respondents who answered this question, 102 indicated they had observed instances of harassment based on sexual orientation sometimes (N=57), frequently (N=31) or often (N=14). Of course, these findings,

like all the findings in the survey, must be viewed with caution. Here again, qualitative data based on methods such as interviews and focus groups should be conducted to shed more light on the situation.

We have also identified aspects of the survey instrument that should be modified. Clearly, we must repair the coding for the questions related to age and adjust the response options for the question intended to identify full-time and part-time students. In addition, because we have reason to believe that the length was a factor for students who logged in and started but did not complete the survey, we plan to shorten it. The challenge will be to decide which questions can be omitted without detriment to our goal of identifying trends that emerge over time.

Other possible changes are more technical in nature. For example, the new online survey software may be preferable to html-database. We may be able to take advantage of computer classrooms for online administration and we could consider using paper-and-pencil versions in classrooms in addition to online administration in order to improve response rates. We will also revisit the question of when to administer the survey in the hope of identifying the most opportune time frame. Finally, we will explore possible inducements for students to complete the survey.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the contributions of all who worked on the survey. Barry Hancock, Director and Assistant Dean of SPEA, and Erin Frew, Director of Assessment, prepared the first draft of the survey, which was modified several times based on feedback collected during pilot administrations and from all Diversity Council members. Bob Mitchell in ITS constructed and mounted the online survey. Sandy McMurtrie, Academic Advisor in General Studies, took the lead in developing a plan for publicizing the survey to students. Craig Hill, Associate Professor of Psychology, conducted the lion's share of the data analysis and presented preliminary findings at the Diversity Initiatives Showcase in March 2005.

We encourage questions and feedback about this report. Those who have an interest in seeing the full data set should contact Erin Frew (frew@ipfw.edu) or Craig Hill (hillc@ipfw.edu).

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