Climate Assessment Final Report

Penn State
The Dickinson School of Law

Prepared by:
Susan R. Rankin
Penn State
Center for the Study of Higher Education
Executive Summary

College campuses are complex social systems. They are defined by the relationships between faculty, staff, students, and alumni; bureaucratic procedures embodied by institutional policies; structural frameworks; institutional missions, visions, and core values; institutional history and traditions; and larger social contexts (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, Alma, & Allen, 1998).

Institutional missions suggest that higher education values multicultural awareness and understanding within an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Academic communities expend a great deal of effort fostering climates that nurture their missions with the understanding that climate has a profound effect on the academic community’s ability to excel in teaching, research, and scholarship. Institutional strategic plans advocate creating welcoming and inclusive climates that are grounded in respect, nurtured by dialogue, and evidenced by a pattern of civil interaction.

The climate on college campuses not only affects the creation of knowledge, but also affects members of the academic community who, in turn, contribute to the creation of the campus climate. Several national education association reports and higher education researchers advocate creating a more inclusive, welcoming climate on college campuses (Boyer, 1990; AAC&U, 1995; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Ingle, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

The Penn State Dickinson School of Law (“DSL”) has a history of supporting diversity initiatives as evidenced by the community’s support and commitment to this climate assessment project. In spring 2010, DSL partnered with the Center for the Study of Higher Education to facilitate a school-wide climate assessment.

1 For more information on Dickinson Law School initiatives see http://law.psu.edu/office_for_student_services/diversity_initiatives.
Because of the inherent complexity of the topic of diversity, it is crucial to examine the multiple dimensions of diversity in higher education. The conceptual model used as the foundation for this assessment of campus climate was developed by Smith (1999) and modified by Rankin (2002).

Informed by this previous work, DSL’s Diversity Committee\(^2\) developed the final survey that was administered in October 2010. The final survey contained 106 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. This report provides an overview of the findings of the DSL-specific assessment, including the results of the school-wide survey and a thematic analysis of comments provided by survey respondents.

All members of the DSL community were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was designed for respondents to provide information about their personal experiences with regard to climate issues, their perceptions of the campus climate, student and employee satisfaction, and respondents’ perceptions of institutional actions, including administrative policies and academic initiatives regarding climate issues and concerns on campus. A bulleted list of the quantitative results\(^3\), a review of the qualitative findings, and a summary of the successes and challenges uncovered in the analyses are provided. While DSL has several challenges with regard to climate issues, these challenges parallel those found in higher education institutions across the country.\(^4\)

---

\(^2\) DSL’s Diversity Committee was made up of staff members, faculty members, and students representing various constituent groups from across the Law School, including representation from both the Carlisle and University Park campuses.

\(^3\) For the purposes of this discussion, descriptive statistics are offered in both the executive summary and the narrative. In some instances, discussions concern small subgroups of interest (i.e., discussions of staff and/or faculty). However, the importance of the findings concerning the experiences of these groups should not be neglected.

Sample Demographics

A total of 345 surveys were returned from DSL members of both the Carlisle and the University Park campuses, representing the following:

- An overall response rate of 43%
- Group response rates, where population data was available, are presented below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American/White</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino(a)/Hispanic</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured Faculty</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Track Faculty</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Tenure Track Faculty</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Service</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Citizen</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Resident</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A total of 268 (78%) students, 9 (3%) tenured faculty, 4 (1%) tenure track faculty, 18 (5%) non-tenure track faculty, 36 (10%) staff, 2 (1%) technical service, and 8 (2%) administrators
- Of the students, 94 (36%) were first years, 105 (40%) were second years, and 65 (25%) were third year students
- Forty percent (137) of the respondents were at the Carlisle campus and 60% (203) were at the University Park campus
- Seventy-three (24%) People of Color, 235 (76%) White respondents
- A total of 281 (81%) reported not having a disability; 64 (19%) identified as having a disability, of those, 14 (22%) reported Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and 11 (17%) reported a chronic disorder.
- There were 301 (87%) heterosexual people, and 31 (9%) who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.
- There were 183 (54%) women, and 156 (46%) men.
- A total of 198 (59%) of the respondents were affiliated with a Christian denomination.

Quantitative Findings

*Personal Experiences with Campus Climate*

Some of the respondents believed they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (hereafter referred to as harassment) within the past year. Gender and views regarding law school policies and practices were most often cited as the reasons for harassment. People of Color, students (particularly third-year students), and sexual minorities perceived such harassment more often than their counterparts. Perceived harassment largely went unreported.

---

5 While recognizing the vastly different experiences of people of various racial identities (e.g., Chicano(a) versus African-American or Latino(a) versus Asian-American), and those experiences within these identity categories (e.g., Hmong versus Chinese), Rankin and Associates found it necessary to collapse some of these categories to conduct the analyses due to the small numbers of respondents in the individual categories.

6 Listings in the narrative are those responses with the greatest percentages. For a complete listing of the results, the reader is directed to the tables in the narrative and Appendix.

7 The modifier “believe(d)” is used throughout the report to indicate the respondents’ perceived experiences. This modifier is not meant in any way to diminish those experiences.

8 Under the United States Code Title 18 Subsection 1514(c)(1), harassment is defined as “a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose” (http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html). In higher education institutions, legal issues discussions define harassment as any conduct that has unreasonably interfered with one’s ability to work or learn on campus. The questions used in this survey to uncover participants’ personal and observed experiences with harassment were designed using these definitions.

9 Sexual minorities are defined, for the purposes of this report, as people who identify as lesbian, gay,
- Fifteen percent of respondents (n = 53) believed they had personally experienced offensive, hostile, exclusionary, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus. The percentage of respondents experiencing harassment at DSL is lower than the percentage of respondents who experienced harassment in studies of other institutions.\(^{10}\)

- The perceived conduct was most often based on the respondents’ gender (26%, n = 14), views regarding law school policies and practices (26%, n = 14), race (25%, n = 13), and ethnicity (25%, n = 13).

- Compared with 12% (n = 28) of White people, 21% (n = 15) of People of Color believed they had personally experienced such conduct.

- Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 73% (n = 11) indicated it was because of their race. Compared with 16% (n = 25) of men, 15% (n = 27) of women believed they had personally experienced such conduct.

- Of the women who believed they had experienced this conduct, 41% (n = 11) stated it was because of their gender.

- Compared with 15% (n = 45) of heterosexual respondents, 19% (n = 6) of sexual minority respondents believed they had personally experienced such conduct.

- Of sexual minority respondents who believed they had experienced this conduct, 33% (n = 2) stated it was because of their sexual orientation.

- A larger proportion of students report experiencing this conduct (17%, n = 46), compared to faculty (10%, n = 3); staff (11%, n = 4), and administrators, none of whom reported experiencing harassing conduct.

- Staff, however, appear more likely to report that this conduct was based on their position as a staff member (75%, n = 3). Two out of three faculty members, however, believe that the conduct was based on their gender (55%), race (31%), or their sexual orientation (16%).

---

\(^{10}\) Rankin’s (2003) national assessment of climate for underrepresented groups where 25% (n = 3767) of respondents indicated personally experiencing harassment based mostly on their race (31%), their gender (55%), or their ethnicity (16%).
indicated that they also were subjected to this behavior due to their respective position as faculty (67%, n = 2). Only 7% of students reported that their experiences of harassment were based on being a student (n = 3).

- Respondents from each of the campuses, Carlisle and University Park, reported experiencing harassment in equal proportions (15%, n = 21 and 15%, n = 31, respectively).
- Of the respondents that experienced harassment, 11% (n = 6) confronted the harasser, while 9% (n = 5) confronted the harasser later. Nine percent of respondents (n = 5) sought support from a staff member and 6% sought support from counseling services (n = 3).

**Sexual Harassment.**

- Eight percent of respondents (n = 26) knew someone who had been sexually harassed while at DSL.
- Three percent of respondents (n = 10) personally had been victims of sexual harassment at DSL.
- Sixty percent of respondents (n = 207) believed sexual harassment was not a problem at DSL.
- The majority of respondents would know where to get help in situations of sexual harassment (59%, n = 202).
- The majority of respondents who indicated that they were the victims of sexual harassment did not use the formal support processes available.
- Less than a quarter understood DSL’s formal procedures to address complaints of sexual harassment (24%, n = 84).

**Sexual Assault.**

- Two percent (n = 5) knew someone who had been sexually assaulted at DSL.
- Less than one percent of respondents (n = 2) had been the victims of sexual assault while at DSL.
A total of 61% of respondents (n = 209) believed sexual assault was not a problem at DSL.

The majority of respondents would know where to get help in situations of sexual assault (61%, n = 210).

Less than half understood DSL’s formal procedures to address complaints of sexual assault (25%, n = 86).

*Satisfaction with Dickinson School of Law*

- A total of 79% (n = 38) of DSL’s employees were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their jobs at DSL. 62 % (n = 47) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with the way their careers have progressed at DSL.
  - Staff were least satisfied with their jobs and with their career progression than faculty and administrators. All of the administrators report being both satisfied with their jobs and with their career progression at DSL. For example, among faculty, staff, and administrators, staff appear least satisfied with eight percent (n = 3) indicating they were dissatisfied with their jobs.
  - Employees at Carlisle appear somewhat less satisfied with their jobs than those at University Park. Seventy-three percent (n=22) of the employees at Carlisle indicate that they are satisfied with their jobs, while 83% (n=35) of employees at University Park indicate the same.
  - LGBQ employees appear least satisfied with their jobs than do others. Fifty-seven percent of LGBQ respondents (n=4) report being satisfied with their jobs at DSL. In contrast, 84% of heterosexual employees (n=51) are satisfied with their jobs.
  - People of Color appear least satisfied with the way their careers have progressed than others. While 67% of White employees (n=34) report being satisfied with their career progression, 50% of People of Color (n=3) report the same.
Faculty and Staff Satisfaction at DSL.

- A total of 82% (n = 66) were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their access to health benefits.
- Half of the employee respondents were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their compensation as compared to that of law school peers with similar levels of experience (50%, n = 38).
- Forty-four percent (n = 33) of all employee respondents and 65% (n = 20) of faculty respondents were “highly satisfied” or “satisfied” with their access to research support as compared to their colleagues’ access.

- A total of 16% (n = 56) of all respondents have considered leaving DSL because of the campus climate.
  - Of employees who considered leaving DSL because of climate, all are employees at Carlisle (26% of employees at Carlisle, n = 8). Six of the eight employees who considered leaving are Carlisle staff.
  - A total of 18% of students have considered leaving DSL. Of those, 30% of Students of Color (n = 20), compared to 10% of White students (n = 19) have considered leaving DSL.
Perceptions of Campus Climate

- Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate at DSL (77%, n = 265), in their departments or work units (62%, n = 211), and, among students and faculty, in their classes (76%, n = 222).
  - People of Color were slightly less comfortable with the overall campus climate, the climate in their departments or work units, and with the climate in their classes than were White respondents. For example, 16% of Faculty and Students of Color report being uncomfortable with the climate in their classes, but 8% (n=16) of White Faculty and Students indicate the same discomfort.
  - Students seem less comfortable with the classroom climate than faculty. Twelve percent of students (n=31) and only one faculty member (3%) indicate being uncomfortable with the classroom climate. Among students, third year students show greater levels of discomfort than their first- and second-year peers. Seventeen percent of third year students (n=11), 10% of second year students (n=10), and 11% of third year students (n=10) indicated they were uncomfortable with the climate in their classes.

- Twenty-two percent of all respondents (n = 76) indicated that they had observed harassment on campus within the past year. The perceived harassment was most often based on race. Students in the third quartile of their class and third year students were most aware of perceived harassment.
  - Most of the observed harassment was based on race (24%, n = 18), ethnicity (16%, n = 12), political views (16%, n = 12), and sexual orientation (15%, n =11).
  - Forty-two of students in the ranked in the third quartile of their class (n = 10) perceived harassment, compared to only 24% of those in the first quartile (n = 12) and fourth quartile (n = 4), and 35% of those in the second quartile (n = 17).
Third year students perceived higher proportions of harassment compared to other students, with 38% of third year students reporting awareness of harassment (n = 25).

None of the respondents indicated that they reported these incidents to a campus official.

Some employee respondents believed that they had observed unfair or unjust employment practices and indicated that they were most often based on position, and gender.

Nine percent (n = 7) of employee respondents believed that they had observed discriminatory hiring.

Three percent (n = 2) believed that they had observed discriminatory employment-related disciplinary actions at DSL (up to and including dismissal).

Nine percent (n = 7) believed that they had observed discriminatory promotion practices.

Faculty/Staff Work-Life Attitudes and Experiences

The majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that they were comfortable asking questions about performance expectations (68%, n = 52).

Almost all employees thought that DSL understands the value of a diverse faculty (90%, n = 69) and diverse staff (86%, n = 66).

Fifty-six percent (n = 42) felt that supervisors/managers consistently communicate/interpret/implement DSL policies.

The majority of faculty members thought their research interests were valued by their colleagues (83%, n = 10).

More than half of all employees believed that they were provided:

Career advice or guidance when they need it (66%, n = 58);
• The equipment and supplies they needed to adequately perform their work (86%, n = 65); and
• Support from decision makers/colleagues for their career advancement (66%, n = 49).

**Students’ Attitudes and Experiences**

- More than half of all student and faculty respondents felt that the classroom climate was welcoming for students based on most demographic characteristics.
  - 35% of the faculty and student respondents (n = 101) felt that the climate was welcoming for students with a learning disability.
- Many students felt student groups enhanced the climate for students.
  - Organizations that focused on students’ respective areas of interest (64%, n = 215) and other activities, such as Project STAFF and intramurals (61%, n = 203) were thought to enhance DSL’s climate the most. Fewer students, however, felt that participation in student government enhanced the climate for students at DSL.
- The majority of students felt valued by faculty (66%, n = 174) and other students (51%, n = 134) in the classroom, and that faculty (65%, n = 172) and staff (67%, n = 175) were genuinely concerned with their welfare.

**Recommendations Offered by Participants to Improve the Climate**

- More than half of all students and faculty felt the curriculum included materials, perspectives, and/or experiences of people based on race, gender and political views.
  - More than half of the faculty and student respondents either marked “didn’t know” or “neither agree nor disagree” concerning inclusion of materials, perspectives, and experiences in the curriculum concerning learning disabilities, psychological disorders, and veterans/active military.
• More than 70% of employees indicated that the following would influence DSL’s climate:
  o providing, promoting and improving access to counseling for people who have experienced harassment (78%, n = 56);
  o providing more effective mentorship for new staff (73%, n = 52); and
  o providing a clear and fair process to resolve conflicts (72%, n = 51);
• The majority of students felt the following would positively affect the climate:
  o Providing more effective faculty mentorship of students (71%, n = 178).
  o Providing a person to address student complaints of classroom inequity (68%, n = 174);
  o Increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue between faculty, staff, and students (60%, n = 154) and among students (60%, n = 155);
  o Increasing the diversity of the student body (55%, n = 141);
  o Providing diversity training for all faculty (55%, n = 141) and staff (52%, n = 135); and
  o Incorporating issues of diversity and cross-cultural competence more effectively into the curriculum (53%, n = 136).
Qualitative Findings

Out of the 345 surveys received, 237 respondents contributed remarks to one or more of the open-ended questions. No respondents commented on all open-ended questions. Respondents included students, as well as faculty members, staff, and administrators. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to comment on a variety of aspects of the climate at DSL including their experiences with and/or observations of harassment, sexual assault, and/or unjust hiring practices; their reasons for persisting at DSL; aspects of work-life balance and equitable treatment of employees; accessibility of facilities; and any other comments or concerns regarding the climate on campus that they wished to share. The responses to the open-ended items are summarized in the narrative of this report with the aim of illustrating and “giving voice” to the quantitative findings of this assessment. However, there were some themes that cut across each of the respective items that warrant acknowledgment.

Conflicting Campus Cultures.
Negotiating two campus cultures appears to be a challenge for a number of Carlisle students. Some students describe feeling “left out” or being included as “an afterthought.” One student explained that there is “significant bias between University Park and Carlisle campus.” Another student noted that leadership may be a key element in helping to maintain this divide: “The hostility towards Carlisle and any remnant of the pre-Penn State school is thinly veiled and quite offensive considering the large number of alumni in the area.”

Contested Classroom Climate
It appears that several power dynamics are at play simultaneously in the “cut-throat” law school classrooms. A number of students commented on offensive remarks about minorities being made during classes. For example, a student described a situation in which a faculty member said in class that students’ grades would be affected by their

11 The complete survey is available in Appendix B.
political views. Other comments suggest that faculty members avoid difficult topics during classroom discussions or leave them untended. For example, one student described the need for constructive classroom conversations: "I cannot stress enough the ability of faculty and students to talk about the hard topics in a classroom setting as opposed to lecturing on topics with no real understanding of how it effects [sic] those of different classes."

Others remarked that some discussions, particularly those about race, are tense. This has the potential for creating an environment in which students are uncomfortable talking about difference: "There is not enough student diversity in my classrooms so at times it is difficult to talk about issues such as race without feeling like I am putting some students on the spot." In fact, minorities do describe being put on the spot. For example, a Latino student explained:

> When hanging out with "friends," others make racist comments which make me uncomfortable. In class, I am often hesitant to speak because I feel that I am not as smart as others in the room. I feel that because I am a minority, I must always have a near perfect answer for people to take me seriously. One person always giggles a little when teachers call me by my real name. That pisses me off to no end.

Through these sorts of behaviors, which might be considered "microaggressions\textsuperscript{12}," members of the Carlisle community run the risk of succumbing to stereotype threat in an environment that is already stressful. This is complicated by an environment in which student success appears to rely on faculty perceptions of students. A student explained that a teacher-centered approach to instruction can stifle student engagement in the classroom: "The ‘professor is center of the universe’ approach to classroom teaching does nothing to promote education and actually discourages meaningful student participation."

The power dynamics between faculty and students transcend the classroom boundaries and influence the course of action students pursue when support might be needed. For

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Microaggressions} are "subtle verbal and non-verbal insults directed toward non-Whites often done automatically or unconsciously. They are layered insults based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent or surname" (Solorzano, Allen, & Carroll, 2002, p. 17).
example, when a student described why an incident of sexual harassment was not reported, a female student explained that “As a first year student, it is very intimidating to report a professor’s inappropriate comment to the administration.”

*A Lack of Diversity*

Several respondents commented on the lack of diversity in its many forms on campus, including racial, political, and sexual. Strikingly, some appeared to suggest that the presence of diversity might be equated with a sacrifice of academic excellence. For example, one student explained. “I've talked with some of my African-American friends and they still feel, even in the law school, that white law students too often dismiss successes by black students as based on affirmative action.” A female African-American student explained that her outgoing personality had helped her overcome a number of obstacles, but that she “can see how the climate would be daunting to a student who is not white, upper class, or used to competing with majority white, straight, privileged peers.” A lack of diversity or a climate that fosters its appreciation was also cited by many when they explained their reasons for considering departure from the institution.

*Summary of Successes and Challenges*

As colleges and universities continue to more accurately reflect the diverse makeup of society, institutions have focused on the importance of creating a campus environment that includes, welcomes, and accepts people of difference and also responds to issues of diversity (Rankin & Reason, 2008; Smith, 2009; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy & Hart, 2008). Although colleges and institutions attempt to foster welcoming and inclusive environments, they are not immune to negative societal attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. As a microcosm of the larger social environment, some college and university campuses reflect the pervasive prejudices of society (Smith, 2009). The literature suggests that the campus climate may be experienced as “racist” for students and employees of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005), “chilly” for women (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Hall & Sandler, 1984), and “hostile” for LGBTQ
people (Eliason, 1996; Malaney, Williams, & Gellar, 1997; Rankin, 2003; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

The data reveal several strengths and successes at DSL. There were also a number of challenges identified that reflect the trends cited in the literature above. That said, while the challenges uncovered in this assessment parallel those existing in our culture, DSL has chosen to identify these challenges by naming them, which in and of itself is laudable. Calling attention to them is an important first step toward institutional change.

The Strengths and Successes

A number of strengths and successes emerged from data. These findings should be credited. First, the percentage of respondents that reported experiencing harassment at DSL is lower than the percentage of respondents who report experiences of harassment in similar studies of postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, rather small proportions of the assessment participants report experiencing or observing sexual harassment or assault. Similarly, relatively few employees reported being aware of unjust hiring or disciplinary practices in DSL.

Second, most students and faculty felt the classroom climate was welcoming based on most demographics. The majority of students felt valued by faculty and other students in the classroom, and that faculty and staff were genuinely concerned with their welfare. Most faculty members thought their research interests were valued by their colleagues.

Other strengths and successes that emphasize positive perceptions of climate should be noted. Seventy-seven percent (n = 265) of respondents reported that they were very comfortable or comfortable with the climate at DSL. Most students and faculty were also comfortable with the climate in their respective classes (76%, n = 222). However, a smaller proportion of employees and students indicated they were comfortable with the climate in their departments or work units (62%, n = 211).
The Challenges

A number of challenges became evident during the analysis of the assessment data. First, while few members of the DSL community indicate having experienced any forms of harassment, of those that do, these often come in the form of what has been coined “microaggressions.” A DSL student describes this best: “For me, there are many small incidents and a few large, memorable ones.” Small incidents might include feeling isolated or left out, feeling ignored or excluded, or being subjected to derogatory remarks in the form of indirect comments. For example, one student described an instance in which, after an absence, she reviewed a recorded class session. When the instructor made a comment about her “family situation,” a number of students made comments to themselves, perhaps unaware that the classroom microphones recorded their comments. Other students describe incidents in which they overhear their peers making inappropriate jokes or giggles at inappropriate moments. These smaller incidents in most instances are difficult to detect or, for those experiencing them, difficult to describe. In turn, those subjected to the microaggressions tend to internalize the negative stimuli. For example, rather than reporting incidents of harassment, victims will respond by getting angry (57%, n = 30), telling a friend (43%, n = 23) or feeling embarrassed (42%, n = 22).

Within DSL, institutional classism appears to exist based on one’s relative position in the school. Students, for example, report experiencing a greater proportion of harassment. Faculty and staff, however, report a greater proportion of harassment based on the positions they hold in DSL’s community (See Figure 3.) Consistently, staff report lower levels of satisfaction with their experiences as employees at DSL. Qualitative comments suggest that the delineation between the roles of staff and faculty are muddy and, at the same time, there appears to be inequitable treatment among staff. This is reinforced by the fact that of the eight employees who considered leaving, all work at the Carlisle campus and six of these are staff members. Overall, staff are less satisfied with their jobs and with their career progression than other employees. Administrators on the other hand
neither reported experiencing or observing any harassing behavior and all appeared satisfied with their jobs and career progression.

Another challenge appears to be a lack of diversity in DSL and a lack of understanding about the educational and professional benefits of diversity. A number of students in both the majority and minority expressed discomfort concerning discussions of diversity both in and outside of the classroom. Others explained that the community at DSL was much less diverse than their home communities. As supported by the qualitative and quantitative data, classroom discussions, particularly concerning politics and race, appear to be tense and at times contentious. One student explained:

In one particular class, the discussions of race were so charged and one-sided as to practically vilify another racial minority group. If I had been a member of that racial minority group, I would have been very upset and would have filed a complaint.

A number of qualitative comments reinforce this notion and suggest that conversations about diversity tend to become contentious rather than constructive. These observations and experiences are supported by respondents who indicate that the inclusion of a multitude of perspectives in the curriculum was missing. Given that DSL acknowledges that diversity is an asset, respondents felt that this value should be more fully reflected in a more inclusive curriculum.

Next Steps

Given that there already is some structure in place to address diversity issues in DSL, how effective have these efforts been in positively shaping and directing DSL’s climate? The current study’s findings add additional empirical data to the current knowledge base and provide more information on the experiences and perceptions for several sub-populations in the DSL community. The results parallel those from similar investigations.

This project was implemented with the aim of identifying specific strategic initiatives that might foster and support positive programming that addresses the challenges facing the
DSL community. Climate might be difficult to describe and alter; as one student remarked, "Climate is in the eye of the beholder and can greatly differ from one person to another." With this climate assessment, DSL leadership has taken a positive first step in understanding the various perspectives of members of the DSL community. As the DSL Diversity Committee and other DSL constituent groups move forward with this understanding, the findings of this assessment should be used to educate members of the community about its collective successes and challenges regarding climate and also should be used to lay the groundwork for future initiatives.