

Executive Summary

Introduction

Kansas State University (K-State) affirms that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community. It is through freedom of exchange over different ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments that individuals develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Diversity and inclusion engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect.

Kansas State University is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in K-State's mission statement, Kansas State University "...embraces diversity, encourages engagement and is committed to the discovery of knowledge, the education of undergraduate and graduate students, and improvement in the quality of life and standard of living of those we serve."¹ Further, *K-State 2025: A Visionary Plan for Kansas State University* calls for "a work environment that encourages creativity, excellence, and high morale in faculty and staff, responds to changing needs, embraces diversity, values communication and collaboration, and is respectful, trusting, fair, and collegial for all."² In order to better understand the campus climate, Kansas State University recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate metrics for students, faculty, and staff across K-State.

To that end, members of K-State formed the University Climate Survey Committee (UCSC) in 2013. The UCSC was composed of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Kansas State University contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Kansas State University Climate Assessment for Learning, Living, and Working." Data gathering focused on the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups. Based on the findings, two to

¹<http://www.k-state.edu/about/mission.html>

²<http://www.k-state.edu/2025/>; <http://www.k-state.edu/2025/initiatives/climate-survey>

three action items will be developed through community forums and completed by fall 2015.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The UCSC collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In April 2014, R&A conducted 13 focus groups comprised of 113 participants (40 students; 73 faculty and staff). Data from the focus groups informed the UCSC and R&A in constructing questions for the campus-wide survey.

Kansas State University's survey contained 100 items (20 qualitative and 80 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from October 14 through November 19, 2014. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

Kansas State University Participants

Kansas State University community members completed 7,411 surveys for an overall response rate of 25%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.³ Response rates by constituent group varied: 20% ($n = 3,986$) for Undergraduate Students, 18% ($n = 819$) for Graduate Students, 49% ($n = 914$) for Faculty, 55% ($n = 215$) for Administrators and 49% ($n = 1,477$) for Staff.⁴ Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The percentages offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (n) for the specific demographic characteristic.⁵

³Sixty-four respondents were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey.

⁴The wording of several survey items indicated that they were for "Faculty and Staff only." These questions also were answered by Administrators, as the UCSC intended for Administrators to be directed to respond to Staff questions in the survey.

⁵The total n for each demographic characteristic will differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. Kansas State University Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Subgroup	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Position Status	Undergraduate Student	3,986	53.8
	Graduate Student	819	11.1
	Faculty	914	12.3
	Administrator	215	2.9
	Staff	1,477	19.9
Gender Identity	Genderqueer	22	0.3
	Man	2,887	39.0
	Transgender	5	0.1
	Woman	4,429	59.8
	Gender identity not listed above	29	0.4
Racial Identity	White	5,984	80.7
	Person of Color	885	11.9
	Multiple Race – POC/White	385	5.2
Sexual Identity	LGBQ	438	5.9
	Heterosexual	6,345	85.6
	Asexual/Other	410	5.5
Citizenship Status	U.S. Citizen	6,529	88.1
	Non-U.S. Citizen	610	8.2
	Undocumented Resident	< 5	---
	Multiple Citizenships	238	3.2
Disability Status	No Disability	5,710	77.0
	Single Disability	991	13.4
	Multiple Disabilities	265	3.6
Military Status	Military Service	587	7.9
	Military Connected	876	11.8
	No Military Service	5,530	74.6
	Multiple Military	162	2.2
Faith-Based Affiliation	Christian Affiliation	5,082	68.6
	Other Faith-Based Affiliation	231	3.1
	Spiritual	540	7.3
	No Affiliation	1,390	18.8
	Multiple Affiliations	62	0.8

Note: The total *n* for each selected demographic characteristic differs as a result of missing data.

Key Findings – Areas of Strength

1. High levels of comfort with the climate at Kansas State University

Climate is defined as “the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential.”⁶ The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

- 84% ($n = 6,187$) of the survey respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Kansas State University.
 - Graduate Student respondents (82%) and Undergraduate Student respondents (91%) were significantly more comfortable (“very comfortable/comfortable”) with the overall climate than were Staff (71%), Administrators (79%), and Faculty respondents (71%).
- 69% ($n = 1,802$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their departments/work units.
- 85% ($n = 3,166$) of Undergraduate Student respondents and 79% ($n = 643$) of Graduate Student respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.
- 72% ($n = 654$) of Faculty respondents were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate in their classes.

2. Staff, Faculty, and Administrator Respondents – Positive attitudes about work-life issues

Campus climate⁷ is constituted in part by perceptions of work, sense of balance between work and home life, and opportunities for personal and professional development throughout the span of one’s career. Work-life balance is one indicator of campus climate.

⁶Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264

⁷Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006

- 77% ($n = 1,986$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents were comfortable taking leave that they were entitled to without fear that it may affect their job/careers.
- 73% ($n = 1,818$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents found Kansas State University supportive of flexible work schedules.
- 76% ($n = 1,906$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents indicated that they had colleagues/coworkers who gave them job/career advice or guidance when they needed it.
- 72% ($n = 1,812$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents agreed that K-State provided them with resources to pursue professional development opportunities.

3. Faculty Respondents – Positive attitudes about faculty work

- 71% ($n = 623$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the tenure/promotion process was clear.
- 79% ($n = 679$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the tenure/promotion process was reasonable.
- 83% ($n = 677$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their research contributions have been/will be valued for tenure and promotion.
- 57% ($n = 392$) of Faculty respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their diversity-related activities have been/will be valued for promotion or tenure.

4. Student Respondents – Positive attitudes about academic experiences

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.⁸ Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.⁹ Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 79% ($n = 3,776$) of Student respondents reported that many of their courses this year have been intellectually stimulating.

⁸Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

⁹Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

- 83% ($n = 3,948$) of Student respondents reported being satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development since enrolling at K-State.
- 80% ($n = 3,824$) of Student respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their academic experience at K-State.

5. Students – Academic Success and Intent to Persist

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on two scales; “Academic Success” and “Intent to Persist.” The scales were derived from Question 12 on the survey.

Analyses using these scales revealed:

- Graduate Student respondents experienced greater academic success than did Undergraduate Student respondents; both groups indicated their intent to persist.
- Women Student respondents experienced greater academic success than did Men Student respondents: both groups indicated their intent to persist.
- White Student respondents experienced greater academic success than did Student Respondents of Color or Multiple Race Student respondents; all groups indicated their intent to persist.
- Student respondents who were not Low-Income/First-Generation Students experienced greater academic success than Low-Income/First-Generation Student respondents; both groups indicated their intent to persist.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

1. Members of several constituent groups were differentially affected by exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.¹⁰ Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.¹¹ The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

- 19% ($n = 1,400$) of respondents believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.¹²
- Of those respondents who reported having experienced such conduct, 24% ($n = 332$) indicated that the conduct was based on their position at K-State. Nineteen percent ($n = 266$) of these respondents said that the conduct was based on their age, and 18% ($n = 246$) reported that it was based on their gender/gender identity.
- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including position, age, and gender identity. For example:
 - Significantly lower percentages of Undergraduate Student respondents (14%, $n = 568$) and Graduate Student respondents (18%, $n = 144$) than Faculty respondents (24%, $n = 222$), Administrator respondents (26%, $n = 56$), and Staff respondents (28%, $n = 410$) reported having experienced this conduct.
 - A greater percentage of respondents' ages 35 through 67 reported believing that they had experienced exclusionary conduct than did other respondents.

¹⁰Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001

¹¹Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

¹²The literature on microaggressions is clear that this type of conduct has a negative influence on people who experience the conduct, even if they feel at the time that it had no impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

- Higher percentages of respondents who identified with a Gender Not Listed on the survey (43%, $n = 7$) and Genderqueer respondents (32%, $n = 7$) than Women respondents (20%, $n = 900$) and Men respondents (16%, $n = 466$) reported believing that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. Over 400 respondents elaborated on their experiences regarding how they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile behavior at K-State. The themes included: (1) *Ignored*, respondents offered that often felt ignored. Student respondents offered that when they sought assistance, they were ignored. Other respondents indicated that when a situation was brought to the attention of a supervisor, department head, or other K-State official that the issue/complaint was not taken seriously; (2) *Public forms of harassing conduct*, respondents indicated that the conduct they experienced was often in a public setting (e.g., in a classroom, in a work space, in front of peers). The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

2. Several constituent groups indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus climate, workplace climate, and classroom climate.

Prior research on campus climate has focused on the experiences of faculty, staff, and students associated with historically underserved social/community/affinity groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, veterans).¹³ Several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

¹³Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008

- Differences by Position:
 - Administrator respondents were more comfortable than were Faculty and Staff respondents with the overall campus climate at Kansas State University.
- Differences by Racial Identity:
 - Significantly lower percentages of Respondents of Color (26%) and Multiple Race respondents (31%) than White respondents (40%) were “very comfortable” with the overall climate at Kansas State University.
- Differences by Sexual Identity:
 - LGBTQ respondents were less comfortable with the overall climate, the climate in their departments/work units, and the climate in their classes than were Heterosexual respondents and Asexual/Other respondents.

3. Staff, Faculty, and Administrator Respondents – Challenges with work-life issues

- Forty-six percent ($n = 696$) of those Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents who seriously considered leaving did so for lack of salary/benefits.
- Twenty-three percent ($n = 586$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents reported that they were uncomfortable with taking leave they were entitled to for fear that it may affect their job/career.
- Twenty-five percent ($n = 639$) of Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents observed unfair or unjust practices related to promotion/tenure/reappointment/reclassification at Kansas State University.
- Thirty-seven percent ($n = 517$) of Staff respondents felt the annual performance evaluation process is not clear.

Faculty, Staff, and Administrator respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences with work-life issues. More than 470 respondents provided written commentary. The themes included: (1) *Lack of salary clarity*, respondents indicated that the process for determining salary increases were unclear and inconsistent across colleges and departments; (2) *Ability to take leave*, respondents noted mixed reviews indicating that while some supervisors were supportive of taking leave others were not. Others felt that taking leave would be detrimental to their career; (3) *Favoritism/Nepotism*, respondents indicated that decisions regarding promotion/tenure/reclassification were related to a person's friendship or relationship with key decision-makers. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

4. Faculty Respondents – Challenges with faculty work

- Forty-three percent ($n = 470$) of Faculty respondents reported feeling that tenure standards/promotion standards were not applied equally to all K-State faculty.
- Forty-six percent ($n = 392$) of all Faculty respondents felt they performed more work to help students than did their colleagues.

Faculty respondents were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences regarding faculty work. Two hundred and forty Faculty respondents elaborated on their experience of work life related to tenure and advancement processes. The themes included: (1) *Tenure standards/promotion standards are not applied equally*, respondents indicated that there was no consistent application of the policies, and the standards for promotion and tenure vary across colleges and departments; (2) *Tenure/promotion process is not clear*, Faculty respondents indicated that the tenure and promotion process is not clear and that the tenure standards need to be reviewed so that they are less vague. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

5. A small but meaningful percentage of respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact.

In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* indicated that sexual assault is a significant issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the Kansas State University survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 3% ($n = 198$) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at Kansas State University.
- These respondents rarely reported to anyone at K-State that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact. One hundred and twenty respondents provided written responses. The themes included: (1) *I felt responsible*, respondents indicated that they were, in part, responsible for and too embarrassed to report the incident; (2) *Not that serious*, respondents indicated that they felt the incident was minor and that they did not want to make it a big deal; (3) *Alcohol was involved*, respondents offered that since they had also been drinking and therefore were responsible for the unwanted sexual contact; (4) *No clear support*, respondents offered that they worried nobody would believe them or were concerned that they would be blamed if they reported the incident, (5) *Seriously considered leaving K-State*, respondents in another section of the survey were asked to offer why they seriously considered leaving K-State. Several respondents specifically mentioned that they considered leaving K-State because of a sexual assault-related experience. The themes and selected comments that support each theme are provided in the full report.

6. K-State 2025

K-State 2025: A Visionary Plan for Kansas State University calls for “a work environment that encourages creativity, excellence, and high morale in faculty and staff, responds to changing needs, embraces diversity, values communication and collaboration, and is respectful, trusting, fair, and collegial for all.”¹⁴ One question in the survey queried respondents about their opinions regarding how they thought that the K-State 2025 vision and plan positively contribute to various items.

- The majority of respondents (63% to 78%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the K-State 2025 plan positively contributes to all of the items offered. Differences emerged when examining these items by position status.
- Overall, Faculty respondents were less likely than Students, Staff, and Administrator respondents to “strongly agree” or “agree” to all of the items offered.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on how the K-State 2025 vision and plan influenced the K-State climate. Eight hundred and seventy respondents provided written responses. The themes included: (1) *Unaware/Uninformed*, respondents offered that they were either unaware of the plan’s impact on the climate; (2) *Focus on Research*, respondents indicated that plan emphasized research over teaching.

Conclusion

Kansas State University campus climate findings¹⁵ are consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.¹⁶ For example, 70% to 80% of all respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be “comfortable” or “very comfortable.” A slightly higher 84% of all K-State

¹⁴<http://www.k-state.edu/2025/>; <http://www.k-state.edu/2025/initiatives/climate-survey>

¹⁵Additional findings disaggregated by position and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.

¹⁶Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2015 <http://www.rankin-consulting.com>

respondents reported that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate at Kansas State University. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Kansas State University, 19% of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.¹⁷

Kansas State University’s climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, addressing both K-State’s mission and the goals outlined in *K-State 2025: A Visionary Plan for Kansas State University*. While the findings in and of themselves may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Kansas State University, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of an institution and unique aspects of each campus’s environment must be taken into consideration when deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the Kansas State University community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths but also to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Kansas State University, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

¹⁷Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles et al., 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009