

Overview of Campus Climate at Rutgers University – New Brunswick

Introduction

Universities are becoming increasingly more diverse, and the concept of campus climate has gained a considerable amount of attention in higher education research, literature, and practice (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Inclusive campus climates have been linked to student success and persistence (Munoz & Murphy, 2014), and many institutions have begun to internally assess the climate of their campus to understand how different groups of people are impacted and interact with their surrounding environment (Hurtado, Carter, and Kardia, 1998). Campus climate is defined as the current opinions, perceptions, beliefs or patterns of behavior that characterize an institution (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). These beliefs held by students are influenced by the objective climate (what can be observed directly), perceived climate (how institutional patterns and behaviors are viewed), and the psychological or felt climate (how individuals feel about their institution) (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). One's perception of campus climate is linked to the many identities that one holds in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and a multitude of additional characteristics (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Since campus climate is ephemeral, malleable, and encompasses a broad set of people and identity characteristics, it must be assessed thoroughly and consistently in order to bring about positive change (Peterson & Spencer, 1990).

Analysis

The experiences of undergraduate students at Rutgers University are examined with a focus on race and ethnicity, gender, disability status, religion, and sexual orientation. Data was collected from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey which was administered

in the spring of 2016 to Rutgers-New Brunswick, Rutgers-Newark, Rutgers-Camden, and Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences undergraduate students.

The following SERU questions were examined in which students were asked to state their level of agreement on a 6-point scale:

Overall Perceptions of Campus Climate

The following questions were used to measure student perceptions of their overall experience at Rutgers-New Brunswick.

- Overall, I feel comfortable with the climate for diversity and inclusiveness at Rutgers University
- Rutgers University is a safe and secure campus
- Rutgers University is a welcoming campus

Perceptions of Campus Climate Based on Identity Characteristics

The following questions were used to measure student perceptions of their experience at Rutgers-New Brunswick based on various aspects of their personal identities.

- Students of my race/ethnicity are respected on this campus
- Students of my gender are respected on this campus
- Students with a physical, psychological, or learning disability like mine are respected on this campus
- Students of my religious beliefs are respected on this campus
- Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus

The following report has been prepared to review the campus climate of Rutgers-New Brunswick across a broad array of student identity characteristics. It is our hope this this

information will provide information regarding how various aspects of campus life can be further improved. As campus climate is based on the current perceptions of students, it must be consistently monitored to accurately represent the campus community. The SERU survey is a rich and comprehensive resource that is administered and analyzed each academic year by the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning. This survey can be used to continually study campus climate and use its results to further develop an inclusive environment at Rutgers University.



















