

IR's role in developing recommendations for
improvement based on survey and institutional
data

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The campus-wide committee took a broad approach to climate assessment

How well were the campus and graduate programs meeting student needs for educational support services and providing a supportive social climate for diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Different levels of IR's involvement

in a Campus Climate study

Stages	Low involvement	High involvement
1. Design	Use an existing survey instrument	Design/revise an instrument based on feedback from the target group of respondents
2. Implementation	Use an external survey company	Set up and run data collection (targeted messages, monitoring response rates)
3. Data analysis	Conduct basic descriptive analysis	Develop several specific multivariate analyses
4. Reporting	Frequency tables	Prepare issue-specific reports and evidence-based recommendations

Issue-specific reports

Training of teaching assistants (TAs)

Key survey findings

- TAs across campus need more training on issues of diversity, student resources, supportive learning environment, and conflict resolution.
- Significant gender differences in student satisfaction with TA training for teaching diverse student populations, with nearly twice as many women reporting insufficient preparation compared to men.
- No significant differences among students with different racial/ethnic backgrounds in their TA training, needs and experiences.

TA training

Based on the survey results, the committee recommends that

- departments review the findings specific to their program, and engage faculty members and invite on-campus specialists to provide training sessions for all TAs;
- the campus create a training program in college teaching (with a certificate issued upon completion) and re-establish the Center for Teaching Excellence;
- the Graduate Student Association (GSA) consider institutionalizing the “TA Question and Answer” panel as part of the yearly GSA New Student Orientation.

A sense of belonging to the program (department) and the university

Survey questions: To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements:

1. "I feel a sense of belonging to my department"
2. "I feel a sense of belonging to the university"

Findings

A majority of PhD students felt that they belonged to their departments and to the university.

Overall, students indicated a somewhat stronger sense of belonging to their departments than to the university.

Some students did not feel a sense of belonging, especially to their departments:

- About 23% of PhD students in Humanities, Social Sciences and Engineering,
- A quarter of underrepresented minority (URM) students.

We also found that URM students were more likely to report lack of support in their program for students from a low income background compared to White, non-Hispanic students.

Preparedness to engage in various professional tasks

Survey questions: rate your level of preparation to do the following

1. Conduct independent research
2. Write scholarly articles
3. Prepare grant proposals etc.

Key survey findings

Underrepresented minority students and women reported significantly lower levels of professional preparation.

There was a positive correlation between students' preparedness to engage in professional tasks and their perceptions of a supportive environment in their program (regardless of gender and race/ethnicity).

Implications

Providing all students with more opportunities for professional development is an important step towards creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for a diverse student population.

Professional development opportunities

The majority of respondents across programs indicated that they needed professional development opportunities in the following areas:

- writing and publishing scholarly articles,
- conducting dissertation research, and
- conducting academic and non-academic job search and interviews.

Some programs did not offer such workshops/classes and many did not offer them regularly.

Professional development

Based on the survey results, the committee recommends that departments

- evaluate the existing workshops and professional development opportunities and the campus make a more concerted effort to organize and promote such opportunities on the departmental, divisional and campus-wide level;
- inform students and faculty about new online resources available at the university's Career Center website for graduate students such as "Versatile PhD for Humanities and Social Sciences",
- invite alumna to share their experiences on the academic and non-academic job markets and their early career experiences.

Next steps

The Committee recommends that

- responsibility for follow-through on these recommendations be formally designated to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, and academic deans depending on the scope of actions;
- recommendations and the reports be sent to academic deans and departmental chairs who could share them with graduate students;
- these three areas of concern (TA Training, Professional Development, and Student Voice) be again evaluated in Spring 2013 via the Graduate Student Survey conducted by IR.

Summary: Outcomes of IR's involvement

Stages	involvement	Outcomes
1. Design	Design/revise instruments based on feedback from the target group of respondents	Comprehensive data on specific concerns, existing practices, and possible actions
2. Implementation	Set up and run data collection, send targeted messages	Achieved high response rates (49-51%) in every department
3. Data analysis	Share the preliminary results of comparative, multivariate analysis	In-depth analysis incorporates feedback from the committee
4. Reporting	Prepare issue-specific reports and evidence-based recommendations	<u>An action plan is based on the evidence</u>
5. Assessment of actions	<u>Revise the existing survey instrument</u>	Next survey will measure the impact of actions

Institutional outcomes of IR's involvement

- **Specific action plan based on evidence**
- **Survey results used to the fullest extent**
- **Impact to be assessed in the next survey administration**
- **Diversity, equity, and inclusion to become an important and permanent part of assessment**
- **Sustained improvement of student experience**