

ASSESSING MINORITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTRITION AT A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The enrollment, retention, persistence, and overall college experience of minority students are topical issues in colleges and universities, and even more so in predominantly White institutions (PWI) where minority students encounter difficulties adjusting to the campus environment (Bennett & Okinaka, 1989; Jay & D'Augelli, 1991).

This study employed a mixed method that used institutional data to investigate changes in minority students' attrition patterns, as well as the sensitivity to demographic characteristics, at a PWI that has conducted campus climate (CC) studies and progressively implemented survey recommendations (CCSRs). On-line survey data and information from focus group interviews were also used to analyze students' perception of CC at the PWI, and the sensitivity of perceptions to students' demographic characteristics.

There was no significant impact on minority students' overall attrition pattern following the implementation of CCSR at the PWI; however, male minority students were more likely, than their female peers, not to attrite following CCSR implementation – in contrast to recent evidence on gender-specific attrition patterns. Although minority students were generally aware and appreciative of efforts to enhance CC at the PWI, their perceptions were strongly unfavorable for three critical CC-related variables – level of diversity, level of inclusion in the decision-making process, and minority students' feeling of obligation to prove self in the classroom. Overall, minority students' gender and class were critical variables in their perception of different CC-related issues, with implications in the design of CC-related efforts at the PWI as well as for further studies. The findings underscore the importance for PWIs to match commitments with actions on CC-related issues.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Education is crucial in offering opportunities to the citizens of any nation. With a higher education degree, there is a higher potential to be exposed to even greater opportunities. For instance, data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveals that men and women who have completed at least a bachelor's degree have higher earnings, more than 60%, when compared to their counterparts with a high school diploma only (United States Department of Education [USDE], 2006). According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), higher education is the most possible way to enter mainstream America and a prerequisite to advancement in the American society (AACU, 1995). For minority populations therefore, the attainment of success in higher education constitutes a fundamental path to participating effectively in the mainstream activities of a nation, and sharing in the benefits thereof.

Pope, Reynold, and Mueller (2004) noted that the 1960s and 1970s saw dramatic increase of multicultural dynamics in higher education, in the United States, as the Civil Rights Movements and the Vietnam War became contentious and controversial issues on campuses. This was enhanced by an important act of Congress, the Higher Education Act of 1968, which "committed this nation to the goal of equal opportunity for higher education for all Americans, regardless of race or economic circumstance" (National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders[NACCD], 1968, p. 452). Following this Act of Congress, crafting and implementing strategies to create a more favorable environment to attract diverse student populations has been an overarching agenda in most institutions of higher learning in the United States.

The dream to enter mainstream American by minority students depends in large part on the experiences that they each have as they make their way through college. Students' experiences are often shaped by the opportunities and constraints that they encounter throughout their college years that are usually reflected by the nature of the campus climate. To this extent, most colleges and universities, in the past decades, have taken a series of steps to foster a more inclusive campus that addresses the needs of all campus constituents especially those of the minority populations. Some colleges and universities, for instance, have carried out concerted efforts to increase minority student enrollment, as well as promote diversity and social justice, which have led to drastic transformation of the students' body over the years. However, Altbach and Lomotey (1991) noted that social inequalities continued to thrive in the schools systems. According to the AACU (1995), our nation's campuses have increasingly become "a highly visible stage, of which the most fundamental question about differences, equality, and community are being enacted" (p. xv).

The enrollment, retention, and persistence of minority students in our nation's colleges and universities will be greatly enhanced by an enabling environment that is defined by a positive campus climate. But alienation, marginalization, stereotyping, and discriminatory treatment are still predominant themes in the literature of minority students as well as women, the disabled, and other non traditional groups (Smith, 1989; Grieger & Toliver, 2001). Favorable conditions for minority students, to ensure they can effectively integrate mainstream America, might therefore be absent in most colleges and universities, despite the increased cognizance of the importance of diversity, campus climate, multiculturalism, and minority population-related concerns.

Problem Statement

Diversity, campus climate, multiculturalism, and minority population-related concerns, are highly topical subject areas for debate in the educational sector in the United States. Shenkle, Snyder and Bauer (1998) noted that, “the issue of campus climate rates high on the list of current concerns among most institutions of higher education and more so considered a ‘hot topic’ when reflected in the form of diversity” (p. 81). Moreover, it is still unclear how much of this awareness has been integrated into the core values, beliefs, and practices at the different universities and colleges, and the impact it is having on the related concerns of minority populations especially in predominantly White institutions (PWIs). How students connect to their college environment and interact and make use of available resources, as defined by their individual experiences, will determine how they perceive and respond to college campus climate.

Studies (Antonio et al., 2004; Gurin, 1999; Smith et al., 1997; Astin, 1993) have revealed the positive impact of a favorable campus climate to students’ college success, including recruitment, retention and graduation rates. In PWIs, minority students generally encounter a lot of difficulties adjusting to the campus environment (Peterson et al., 1978; Bennett & Okinaka, 1989; Jay & D’Augelli, 1991), with attendant consequences on retention and overall college experience. For instance, the retention rate of minority students, especially African Americans, is relatively lower than that of their White counterparts at PWIs, as well as that of African American students at historically Black colleges and universities (Carter & Wilson, 1994; Smith et al., 1997; Astin, Tsui, & Avalos, 1996; Benson, 1996; Patterson Research Institute Fund [PRIF]/UNCF, 1997).

For minority students in PWIs, in addition to confronting the same developmental challenges that every student faces, they must confront the challenge of adapting to another culture. Wright and Littleford (2002) noted that, minority students in PWIs “perceive greater levels of hostility and racism, reported more feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation, and a lesser sense of commitment to their institutions than did White students” (p. 3). In addition, those who experience isolation or perceive the campus environment as unsupportive and unwelcoming may find it difficult to go through college (Granados & Lopez, 1999). This explains why, like other universities and colleges in the country, PWIs are mobilizing institutional resources to implement recommendations aimed at enhancing a positive campus climate and foster minority students’ recruitment, retention, graduation rates as well as overall college experience.

PWIs, like all other higher education institutions, face fundamental challenges related to student retention, persistence, and attrition rates. Yorke and Longden (2004) noted that student retention was an issue that affected higher education the world over. The number of students who enter college but leave prior to completing and obtaining their degree is a continuous cause for concern. For instance, over one-fourth of the college students entering four-year institutions are estimated to depart after their first year (Tinto, 1993). This is even more so in the case of minority students (Cross, 2005; Flemming, 1984; Gloria, Robinson, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999). Furthermore, this is happening in the backdrop of initiatives, in different colleges and universities across the United States that address diversity-related issues, and formulate recommendations to specifically enhance the college experience of minority students; for instance, to promote inclusion, provide needed support for academic excellence, and an enabling environment for persistence.

Despite several studies (Seidman, 2005; Spady, 1971; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977; Terenzini, Lorang, & Pascarella 1981; Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993) on college students-related issues like retention, graduation rates, persistence, and overall college experience, there is still much that is unknown especially as regards the dynamics related to minority populations. Most studies, for instance, have focused on attrition-related concerns in the first year, at the detriment of subsequent years in college (Seidman, 2005; Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn, & Pascarella, 1996). In particular, little seems to have been done to assess minority students' perceptions and attrition patterns across undergraduate years, following campus climate studies and implementation of recommendations, especially in PWIs. In addition, while studies such as Canabal (1993) and Tinto (1987) emphasized the value of assessing students' perceptions as a function of variables such as ethnicity, sex and class standing, most of the studies on minority students in PWIs have not focused much on the relationships of the findings with the demographic characteristics of the students.

This study contributes to the literature on campus climate-related issues in higher education. Whereas most studies in this area have employed a qualitative analytical framework, this study explores a mixed methodology to enrich the literature related to in analyzing student recruitment, retention, graduation, and campus climate-related issues. Specifically it works to incorporate institutional data into the policy process. The findings are discussed in the light of previous studies focusing on predominantly White institutions (PWIs), as well as studies focusing on higher education institutions in general.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine minority students' attrition patterns and potential decisions to drop-out, following campus climate studies and implementation of

recommendations at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Northeastern United States. The study also explored minority students' use of, and satisfaction with, diversity enhancing programs and other services on campus. It further explored minority students' perceptions of campus climate-related issues and how drop-out decisions could potentially be affected. The relationship of the findings as a function of minority students' demographic characteristics, especially ethnicity and gender, and their class levels are also explored.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What observable changes in pattern, if any, are there in minority student attrition at the PWI, following the campus climate study and progressive implementation of recommendations?
2. How do observed attrition patterns of minority students at the PWI relate to their demographic characteristics, especially with regard to ethnicity and gender?
3. What perceptions do minority students at a PWI, that has carried out a campus climate study and was actively implementing ensuing recommendations, have regarding campus climate and potential barriers to educational attainment?
4. What are the levels of use of, and satisfaction with, services on campus that are susceptible to enhance a favorable campus climate, by minority students, and the relationship to characteristics like ethnicity, gender, and class?

Context of the Study

The setting of the study was the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta (SUNY Oneonta) – a PWI in Northeastern U.S. SUNY Oneonta is a state-

supported, comprehensive, coeducational college of the liberal arts and sciences. It was a founding member of the State University of New York system in 1948 (SUNY College at Oneonta, 2010). The fall 2010 enrollment statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2011) reveals that the College had an undergraduate enrollment of 5,822 full- and part-time students distributed as follows: 57.7% female, 42.3% male, and 11.7% minority students (including students who self identified as mixed race).

The chronology of SUNY Oneonta's institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion shows that it was in 2003 that the first Diversity Advisory Council was convened. The council developed a Diversity Statement that was adopted by the President's Cabinet in December 2004. In 2005, the council conducted a campus wide survey on the Campus Climate for Diversity, and the final report was submitted in March 2006 (SUNY College at Oneonta, 2006a). The objectives of the campus climate project were two-fold: (a) SUNY Oneonta would learn how constituent groups currently felt about living and learning at the College and how they felt the institution responded to community challenges and concerns, and (b) SUNY Oneonta would develop specific objectives and action plans to address institutional changes and cultural shifts needed to embrace and enhance the working and learning environment, such as employee development seminars.

A key recommendation from the campus climate survey results was the establishment of an Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI), managed by a Director also serving as the College's Affirmative Action Officer, and reporting directly to the College President. The OIE was charged with the responsibility of communicating and implementing the campus vision for equity, diversity, and inclusion. At the end of March

2006, the College President charged the OEI to create the College's Strategic Action Plan on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (SUNY College at Oneonta, 2006b).

Some of the key considerations in the development of the College's Strategic Action Plan on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (SAPEDI) were: promoting and fostering an environment in which the quality of life is affirming and strives for the emotional safety of all students, faculty, and staff; creating an academic environment that appreciates and values cultural and social differences; developing a curriculum that guides students to think critically about social justice issues and provides faculty with the tools to teach inclusively with regard to social justice issues; recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented students, faculty, and staff; and, creating an environment that recognizes and celebrates cultural differences and socially constructed differences, such as gender and race.

From the fall of 2006, progressive but concerted efforts were envisaged to improve institutional commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and foster a positive climate for all campus constituents. These efforts were meant to boost the recruitments and retention of diverse students, the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff, teaching and learning-related initiatives, and initiatives to boost campus climate. With regard to efforts directed towards minority students, for instance, some of the initiatives instituted include: minority students' admission-driven initiatives including the hiring of a Multicultural Recruiter; the reinforcing of existing programs like the Center for Multicultural Experiences (CME), the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and others; the creation of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs charged among others with coordinating the AALANA Mentor Program;

incorporating diversity-related activities in the programming of most programs and offices on campus like First Year Experience (FYE), Residence Life and Housing, and others.

Another key outcome from the campus climate survey recommendations since fall 2006 includes a Diversity Statement for the College (revised and approved by the President's Council on Diversity, 2007):

“The College at Oneonta is an academic community that values diversity. Diversity at the College is an inclusive value that encompasses race and ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity and gender expression, age, ability, socio-economic status, and other aspects of identity. As a campus community, we believe that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We are committed to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students, and to fostering a learning environment, which draws strength from, celebrates, and honors diversity. We strive to eliminate prejudice and discrimination; to respect the dignity of all persons; and to learn from differences in people, ideas, experiences, and opinions.”(SUNY College at Oneonta, 2006b)

Significance of Study

Assessing campus climate is of vital importance to educational institutions in understanding how students and employees learn and work in a diverse environment. Over the years institutions have seen increase in their diverse population with attendant opportunities and challenges. This is even more so in PWIs where minority students are additionally confronted with unique set of circumstances.

Addressing campus climate concerns, for instance, is key to identifying any roadblocks towards student success. This involves looking at the practices and patterns in the college or university that can influence whether an individual/group feels welcomed, valued, safe, listened to, and treated fairly and with respect. It relates to not only students' interpersonal relationships but also the academic interactions with faculty.

The consequences of not seriously providing the needed environment for students to study as well as reviewing existing campus climate survey results underscore the significance of this study. This study contributes to diversity-, equity-, multicultural affairs- and student affairs-related issues in higher education. In order to effectively enhance a positive campus climate, and foster institutional educational goals, it is imperative to consider among other factors, students' varied perceptions of a multicultural campus environment.

This study specifically strove to assess minority students' attrition patterns in a PWI following the conduct of a campus climate study that led to the development of a strategic plan on diversity, equity and inclusion, and the progressive implementation of ensuing recommendations. Student retention and attrition issues in general, have policy significance for institutions of higher learning and the governments. Policy makers have been known to use retention and graduation rates as indicators of performance for colleges and universities (Titus, 2004). High levels of drop-out raise questions about an institution's ability to fulfill its commitment to students, while high retention levels invariably lead to reputational benefits accruing in part from the success of students (Yorke & Longden, 2004).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context of this study as follows:

AALANA: It is an acronym for African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American students.

Attrition: This term will be used in the study in relation to student drop-out.

Campus Climate: This is defined as the current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define an institution and its members” (Peterson & Spencer, 1990), and focusing on “specific sections or parts” (Bauer, 1998, p. 2).

Campus Climate Survey Recommendations: Campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) refers, in this study, to the outcome of the campus climate study conducted at the PWI, especially the strategic action plan on diversity, equity, and inclusion, created following the study, as well as the recommendations in the strategic plan.

Diversity: Diversity is a representation of people that exemplifies cultural and congenital differences (Krishnamurthi, 2003), that includes age, ethnic heritage, gender, physical ability/qualities, and sexual orientation. It encompasses individual and group differences and other characteristics that identify people and make them unique individuals such as thoughts and attitudes. It refers to the variety created in any society by the presence of different points of view and ways of making meaning – influenced by differences in cultural and religious heritage, and differences in how we socialize (AACU, 1995).

Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism is a quality or process that embraces similarities and differences in an organization. It seeks to promote the valuing of diversity and equal opportunity for all people through understanding of the contributions and perspectives of people of differing race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical abilities and disabilities (Morey & Kitano, 1997).

Ethnicity: Ethnicity refers to the sharing of a strong sense of identity with a particular religious, racial, or national group.

Minority Students: In this study, minority students are defined as the students who, during the admission and registration process, self-identified as African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

Persistence: Persistence refers to students' ability to complete degree requirements (Yorke & Longden, 2004).

Prejudice: Prejudice is bias expressed through negative or positive opinions, beliefs, or feelings toward an individual (s) who belong to a certain group or fit a certain category (Sue, 2004). Racial prejudice has three major components - negative in nature (hatred, fear, or dislike), based on faulty or unsubstantiated data/assumptions, and typically rooted in an inflexible generalization.

Race: Race in this study is used in the context of a social political construct of what it means to have certain physical features designed to categorize broad population groups in the United States. This information is not anthropologically or scientifically based (Helms, 1990; Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

Racism: The concept of racism refers to “any, attitude, action, or institutional structure or any social policy that subordinates persons or groups because of their color” (Sue 2004, p. 31). Racism involves the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices in a broad and continuing manner, and based on racial prejudices that could be cultural, institutional, or individual (Tatum, 2000).

Stereotype: This is defined as, “rigid and inaccurate preconceived notions that one holds about all people who are members of a particular group, whether it is defined along

racial, religious, sexual, or other lines” (Sue, 2004, p. 25). Stereotypes are usually judgments that are inaccurate, and evaluated from some group perspectives. Information received and analyzed is always distorted to fit ones bias mechanism - serving as a positive reinforcement to the person stereotyping, who feels better about himself or about the members of his group while looking low on the other.

Delimitations of Study

Only minority undergraduate students at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta, a PWI in Northeastern United States, were the focus of the study. Furthermore, the definition of “minority students” in the study was limited only to the context of race and ethnicity. Very little focus was given to the other diversity criteria for which minority status can be defined such as sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, age, and ability level.

Limitations of Study

A major limitation of the study is the fact that it was limited to minority undergraduate students attending the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta, a PWI in Northeastern United States. Time and resource constraints also limited the ability to expand the study to other colleges of similar standing. Given that issues related to diversity can be controversial and sensitive, the focus group interview and survey questions were designed to attract unbiased responses from respondents as well as high response/participation rates. Finally, the Campus Climate Survey (CCS) at the PWI was conducted in the very recent past, and the implementation of some of the recommendations is not yet in very advanced state. While the findings of the study can help provide information for more informed adjustments, if at all, to be made in implementing CCSRs,

the relatively short timeframe of the implementation of these recommendations at the PWI most probably constituted a limitation to the study.

Organization of Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the introduction. It included the definition of key concepts, the problem statement, research questions and objectives, and significance of study. Chapter 2 presents the review of relevant literature based on key themes related to the research questions. The themes addressed include, diversity and campus climate issues in higher education, minority students' college experience, and issues in predominantly White institutions. The theoretical foundation for the study is also presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 provides and explains the results, while Chapter 5 summarizes the study and also provides conclusions and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study examined minority students' attrition patterns at a predominantly White institution (PWI), and the impact of the implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) on such patterns. It also examined minority students' perceptions of campus climate-related issues and how drop-out decisions could potentially be affected. The relationship of the findings as a function of minority students' demographic characteristics, especially ethnicity and gender, are also explored. Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature to the study and focuses on the following research questions-based themes:

- diversity and campus climate issues in higher education
- minority students' college experience
- issues faced in PWIs, and
- theoretical foundation for the study

Diversity and Campus Climate Issues in Higher Education

To better assess issues related to minority students' perception of campus climate and the variables that could be of relevance to this study, this section reviews literature in the following sub-categories: benefits of diversity to college and university communities; campus climate and perceptions; and, factors that determine the nature of campus climate.

Benefits of Diversity to College and University Communities

A growing body of research indicates that diversity and multiculturalism promote personal growth and healthy society; strengthen communities and workplaces; and enhance the nation's economic competitiveness (Krishnamurthi, 2003; Morey & Kitano, 1997),

through the education of a diverse student population for the society and the business sector (Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Other studies (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000), have supported the importance and benefit of diversity to colleges and university students as well as employees. These studies all attest to the premise that increasing campus cultural and ethnic diversity will contribute to achieving some key goals for higher education institutions such as: increased social and cognitive gains for students through interaction with diverse peers; increased cross-cultural interaction and the development of informal training from peers which could improve some vital skills; improved communication among various constituents and marketing strategies in the global world; benefits to the economy and the private sector; and, transformation of college students and better preparing them for the competitive world.

Hurtado, Dey, Gurin, and Gurin (2003) noted that several elements link diversity to student learning, including factors related to individual development and the environments within which students are educated. The authors highlight the following three themes explored in other studies: (a) Individuals who are educated in diverse settings are well grounded and far more likely to work and live in racially and ethnically diverse environments after completing college; (b) In an increasingly globalize world, individuals who study and discuss issues related to race and ethnicity in their academic courses and interact with a diverse set of peers in college are better prepared for life; and (c) Increasing the compositional diversity of the student body is essential to create the kind of learning environment that will give opportunities for students to interact with peers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The authors also note that it is crucial for campus leaders

to create conditions that maximize the learning and democratic outcomes associated with being educated in racially and ethnically diverse environments.

Chang, Astin, and Kim (2004), have suggested that students who interact with peers of different backgrounds realize positive intellectual, social and civic development skills. An earlier study by Gurin et al. (2002) examined the relationship between students' experiences with diverse peers in higher education institutions and their educational outcomes. The results of the study emphasized the educational and civic importance of cross-racial interaction while students are at college. Even when White students had less contact with students from different backgrounds, the experiences are described as positive for both the White and minority students (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

Some studies also revealed that students, who take courses offering diverse perspectives, demonstrate greater growth in critical thinking skills (Chang, 2002; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2005). The incorporation of diversity was found to enhance the classroom experiences by allowing a broader variety of experiences to be shared and by raising new issues and perspectives. When students experience cross-racial interaction they tend to be more engaged in learning, and they report greater satisfaction and positive self gains (Hu & Kuh, 2003). The benefits of diversity, however, can be strongly mitigated by the nature of the campus climate and the way it is perceived by the different campus constituents.

Campus Climate and Perceptions

Campus climate is often used to describe the racial climate at institutions of higher education especially with respect to diversity and multiculturalism. Campus climate is constituted of the attitudes, perceptions, or observations that campus constituents have

about the environment (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). A college or university climate is reflected in its structures, policies, and practices; the demographics, attitudes and values of its members and leaders; and the quality of interaction among its members. Racial climates however are often marked by ambivalence, especially in PWIs as often important racial concerns may be identified but the policies and practices put in place either ignore or refute them (Thompson & Carter, 1997).

Several studies (Brown, 2004; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer 2005) have identified unfavorable campus climate in several higher education institutions involving different aspects of diversity. Rankin and Reason (2005) examined whether students from different racial groups have differing experiences related to their campus climate. The results showed minority students experienced very high rate of harassment compared to White students. White female students also reported high rates of gender harassment. With respect to racial concerns, minority students reported perceiving the climate as racist and less accepting than did the White students.

Brown (2004) investigated the issues of diversity in higher education from the perspective that an institution's commitment to diversity should not be a peripheral activity, and must be reflected by the diversification of the faculty and student population. Brown reviewed a campus climate survey conducted at Virginia Tech in March 1998 that specifically addressed the following: opinions on departments and classroom climate, faculty and student relations, perceptions of discrimination, actions relative to diversity, service provided by the university, and the campus climate in general. The results of the study showed an overwhelming perception of dissatisfaction of the campus climate among females, faculty of color, and students of color. For instance, the perceptions of White

faculty and students, especially males, were more inclined to be in dis-accordance with those of minority groups on issues related to race relations and feelings of acceptance. White faculty and White students held a much more positive perception of the campus climate than faculty of color, students of color, and females. Minority groups and females in general were much more sensitive to issues of diversity, and had themselves experienced, or were aware of others who had had negative experiences on the campus.

The results reported by Brown (2004) are consistent with findings reported by Rankin (2005) in a study that examined the perception of the campus climate on colleges and university campuses nationwide, with a focus on the experiences of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders (LGBT). Over 89% of undergraduate LGBT students reported that they had received some form of derogatory remarks. About 48% had been victims of harassments or threats and another 89% had been physically assaulted with peers being the perpetrators. In addition to these overwhelming concerns, 41% reported that their colleges or universities did not thoroughly address issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity on the campuses.

Parasnis, Samar, and Fischer (2005), examined the attitudes of students, at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), to racial and ethnic diversity-related issues. The results showed that the perception of NTID's commitment to enhancing diversity was similar among ethnic groups. However, the results differed significantly on some items related to campus climate and role models. There were great differences in campus comfort levels, racial conflicts, and friendship patterns. The study found a correlation between educational satisfaction and campus comfort level, indicating discrimination and racial conflict were a hindrance to a positive campus climate. The

results showed that, although students' perception of the campus climate may vary from one individual to another, the level of comfort of the students with the campus environment will determine the degree to which they interact with their peers and are involved with the campus activities.

Factors that Determine the Nature of Campus Climate

The importance of a positive campus climate for students' success can not be overemphasized. Fostering a good campus climate is about moving beyond the numbers (Hurtado, 2007) and looking at the quality and extent of interaction between the various groups and individuals on the college/university campus. Several studies have been carried out in recent years to highlight factors that can help enhance this component as well as the impact on students' persistence and academic success.

Mayhew, Grunwald, and Dey (2006) examined the factors that create climate for diversity and how they predict outcomes related to achieving a positive campus climate for diversity. Participants were staff members from a predominantly White public university. The major question addressed factors that influence staff perceptions of their campus community as having achieved a positive climate for diversity. The institution's ability to achieve a positive climate for diversity was found to reflect the personal characteristics of the staff members (race, gender, educational level and age) as well as their perception of the immediate work environment.

The findings of Mayhew et al. (2006) were consistent with an earlier study by Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1998) that focused on students. Hurtado et al. suggested that the focus on race/ethnicity should be considered as only an element of the campus climate because all the other elements also require equal attention for students to

be able to feel comfortable. These elements constitute key areas for focusing efforts to improve on the climate as well as increase diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Other factors such as students' pre-college interactions and the incorporation of diversity into college curriculum can influence the nature of the campus climate. Mayhew et al. (2005), in a study at a PWI, found that students' perception of the institution's ability to achieve a positive climate for diversity was a reflection of their pre-college interactions with diverse peers, as well as the institution's ability to incorporate diversity related issues into its curriculum.

Chang (2002) examined if a required diversity-related course actually improved students' racial attitudes, particularly towards Africans Americans. The study used independent samples of students of all races drawn from the population of undergraduate students at the college under review. The results showed that students who were near completion of such requirements made significantly more favorable judgments of Blacks than those who had just started their requirement. The results also showed that given the broad nature of the concepts covered in the courses offered, learning about one significant difference in the U.S. society (gender/class differences) might also transfer well to thinking about other differences, and subsequently reduce multiple types of prejudice.

Minority Students' College Experience

What occurs within the college, both in and out of the classroom, plays a very important role in determining the success of minority students (Allen, 1988; Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedon, 1999; Donovan, 1984; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986; Nora et al., 1996; Smedley, Myers, & Harrell, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). This section reviews literature in the following areas:

students' involvement in campus activities and social interactions; and college retention- and persistence-related issues.

Involvement in Campus Activities and Social Interactions

Kuh et al. (1991) noted that students grow and develop best in academic communities that foster both in- and out-of-classroom opportunities. Kuh (1995) examined students' out- of-class experiences and how they were related to various student learning outcomes and personal development opportunities. The results showed that in addition to students benefiting from their curriculum, which is the organizing framework for academic institutions, students also benefited from out-of-class experiences. The benefits ranged from critical thinking to relational organizational skills, attributes that are highly correlated with satisfaction and success after college. However, the participation and involvement of minority students in such opportunities are most often hindered by their race, ethnicity and cultural background (Rendon, 1994) – and could be a reason why minority students tend to prefer ethnic organizations.

Ethnic organizations enable minority students to retain a sense of ethnic identity while also enhancing their college experiences (Padilla, Trevino, & Gonzalez, 1997). Involvement in such groups provides for some form of a conducive and safe environment for the students to share their experiences and seek the support of other students with similar concerns (Guiffrida, 2003). The importance of participation in cultural organizations to students' college persistence has been reiterated in studies by DeSousa and Kuh (1996), Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek (1987), and McClung (1988). The emphasis in these organizations is to provide a nurturing environment and a sense of ethnic identity for minority students (Padilla et al., 1997).

Research has shown that, unlike White students whose social integration occurs primarily through informal associations with their peers (Guiffrida, 2003), social interaction for minority students on PWIs is influenced by formal forms of minority organizations and clubs (Tinto, 1993). These organizations have been found to be very important in the social integration and retention of minority students' on PWIs (Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987; McClung, 1988; Hurtado, 2002; Granados & Lopez, 1999; Zirkel, 2002). The participation of minority students in these organizations enabled them to seek comfort among their peers with whom they are able to share their concerns. Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) studied the participation of Hispanics and Native Americans students in cultural organizations. The results showed that participation in these organizations enabled the students to shrink the larger campus to "enclaves" (p. 436). Participation in such organizations, it was found, served as a springboard to participating in the broader campus community and acquisition of lifelong experiences.

Lee, Keough, and Sexton (2002) examined the relationship between social connectedness, social appraisal of the campus climate, and perceived stress among female and male students. Majority of the participants (79%) were minorities (African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics and others). The results showed a negative direct effect of social connectedness on perceived stress for college women which was partially mediated by a negative appraisal of the campus climate. Men, it was found, were more likely to negatively appraise the campus climate, and social connectedness was more negative related to perceived stress for men than for women. The authors noted that though the different findings for college women and men were unexpected, it nonetheless supported, to a certain extent, previous research on gender differences in social connectedness.

Antonio et al. (2004) examined the extent to which college and university campuses can constitute supportive communities for minority students. This included the experiences, meanings, and values involved in male students interactions within and without their friendship groups, and descriptions of such groups' characteristics and racial composition. The results of the study revealed that students formed clusters on campus based on the races that they identified themselves with, consistent with the findings of Wright and Littleford (2002): when students are experiencing racial prejudice and exclusion on college campuses, they tend to unite for protection and develop an accepting community within their own ethnic group.

An earlier study by Antonio (2001) on the same college campus, revealed a welcoming environment, with 46% of participants indicating that the most common friendship group is racially and ethnically mixed. In this study only 17% of the respondents had really had ethnically homogenous friendship groups. Nonetheless, the results of both studies, Antonio et al. (2004) and Antonio (2001), showed that although students experienced diversity on both a behavioral and perceptual level, on the psychological dimension students still see their campus as racially segregated, thus emphasizing the need for a continuous campus climate assessment.

Support organizations are critical for college persistence, especially for minority students. Minority students, especially African Americans students, who do not establish supportive communities at PWIs often experience feelings of discomfort, social isolation, and stress which can lead to student attrition (Grieger & Toliver, 2001; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Lang & Ford, 1992; Ponterotto, 1990; Sailes, 1993).

College Retention and Persistence

Suen (1983) examined the causes of alienation and attrition of Black college students in a predominantly White university. Participants in the study consisted of 162 Black and 250 white undergraduate students. The results of the study indicated that Black students felt more alienated within a predominantly White campus than White students, and also had a higher level of drop-out. The results were consistent with other studies that found that African American and Hispanic students are less likely to graduate with an associate or bachelors degree than their White counterparts (Carter & Wilson, 1994; Nettles, McHugh, & Gottfredson, 1993; Smith et al., 1997), even though an academic variable such as GPA was significantly related to attrition among Blacks and Whites (Suen, 1983).

Zea, Reisen, Beil, and Caplan, (1997) examined ethnic minority and non-minority students' intention to remain enrolled in college. The predictors used included: coping with college; self esteem; academic integration; identification with the university; and, experience of disrespect because of race, ethnicity, or religion. The participants for the study were 139 ethnic minority and 507 nonminority students at a northeastern university in the U. S. The relationship between academic achievement and the commitment to remain in college was found to be very strong for ethnic minority students. However, when students perceived the environment as unwelcoming because of race, ethnicity or religion, their desire to continue attending the college diminishes. Ethnic minority students in this study were more likely than White students to report experiencing disrespect. The results underscored the importance for colleges and universities to put in place strategies to enhance a welcoming and conducive environment for minority populations.

Chang (2005) examined the level of faculty-minority student interaction in community colleges. Data collected from the Transfer and Retention of Urban Community College Students (TRUCCS) survey was used for the study. The study examined how student characteristics correlated with faculty contact and the interaction among different racial subgroups of students. A negative relationship was found between the perception of racial difficulties and the level of interaction with faculty, especially for Asian American/Pacific Islander students. The results also revealed low levels of interaction especially between Asian American/Pacific Islander and Latino students. It was shown that there was a positive correlation between positive perceptions (from students to academic counselors) of the college environment and level of interaction with other members of the institution.

In a comparative study that examined the perceptions of Native American students and higher education institution members (board representatives, university presidents, and faculty and staff) at three Northwestern universities (Washington State University, the University of Idaho, and Montana State University), Guillory and Wolveton (2008), found that Native Americans and institution members held somewhat contrary views about what drives Native Americans to finish college. While institutional representatives viewed financial support as a very important factor to college persistence, the students identified family and tribal community as key in providing the determination and desire to finish college. The results also indicated that contrary to institutional perceptions that academic programs with strong appeal to Native American would be valuable, the students see the need for social support as critical to their college persistence. The students agreed with

institutional representative that lack of money is pervasive, but it wasn't a persistent factor or barrier to overcome, compared to the campus climate and related support.

Issues Faced in Predominantly White Institutions

A low completion rate is one of the issues discussed in the literature related to minority students in higher education. Love (1993) examined the reasons why college completion rates of Black students in predominantly White institutions of higher education have been a course of concern. Love used a qualitative approach, to catalogue factors that were identified in the literature into seven categories, including: White racism, institutional leadership, finances, social interaction, cultural dissonance and environmental incongruence, interaction with faculty, student services, and student characteristics. The results of the study indicated that most of the programs on college and university campuses do not address several of the factors listed above which definitely affects Black students college life and experiences.

Minority students in PWIs are not only faced with a different culture but also with challenges regarding the relatively few numbers of minority students, faculty and, staff in these institutions (Allen, 1992). "Being lost in a crowd is a common experience for all college students at large universities, but being lost in a sea of White faces elevates the common problem to another level of difficulty for Black students" (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 2002, p. 177) and other minority students. It follows that the feeling of being lost in a crowd can lead to issues related to minority student's inability to effectively fit-in and adjust with the campus life which can ultimately negatively impact persistence and overall college experience. For instance, studies by Carter and Wilson (1994), Nettles, McHugh, and Gottfredson (1993), and Smith et al. (1997), on retention and graduation rates at PWIs

found that minority students are less likely to graduate with a degree than their white counterparts.

Grieger and Toliver (2001) noted that many minority students in colleges and universities, and especially in PWIs, have been victims of physical assault, threats of violence, graffiti, hate flyers, racist jokes and epithets. The authors also referred to studies which indicate that minority students experience feelings such as “social isolation, alienation and marginalization, stereotyping, invisibility, discriminatory treatment by faculty and staff, language barriers, difficulty with acculturation, lack of student services, lack of faculty and administrative role models, criticism for self segregation, and hostility regarding affirmative action” (Grieger & Toliver, 2001, p. 827). This is consistent with the conclusions of Wright and Littleford (2002): minority students on PWIs campuses perceived greater levels of hostility and racism and reported more feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation than did the Caucasian students.

Fries-Brit and Turner (2002) investigated the experiences, challenges, and academic success of Black male students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and at a Training Within Industry (TWI) program – a predominantly White program. The study addressed students’ college experiences of academic and social integration. The results showed that students from the HBCU felt at home and made meaningful connections with faculty. On the other hand, students in the TWI program felt there was lack of a critical mass of black peers, and faculty was mostly geared toward Whites. In addition, students attending HBCU described gaining enhanced energy through faculty and peer interactions, while the TWI program students described their energy as diverted away from their studies by their role as the “token” representative – the “Black Voice” whenever

they speak, especially about racial and cultural issues. This is another issue commonly faced by minority students at PWIs.

How minority students perceive campus climate depends on the individual student, ethnic affiliations, and other factors common to all minority groups. Some climate studies have shown that “each racial and ethnic sub-group often has differing views on what diversity means to them and what kind of diversity would aid their comfort and satisfaction with campus life” (Hurtado, Carter, et al., 1998, p. 56). A major criterion for assessing the overall quality of an institution therefore lies in its ability to provide equitable education and access (Grieger & Toliver, 2001) as well as a welcoming and conducive climate.

Theoretical Foundation for Study

Tinto’s (1993) Theory of College Student Departure attributes attrition largely to a lack of fit between the student and the institution. The theory stipulates that college students who perceive their norms, values and ideas as compatible with those of the institutions will be more likely to be academically and socially integrated into the system. On the other hand, if students’ norms, values and ideas are not compatible, there will be difficulty integrating and very likely they will drop out of school.

Tinto (1993) however made a distinction between academic and social integration. Even though the two are related, academic integration deals with the formal aspects of education that the students receive, meanwhile social integration involves the interaction among students and their peers, faculty and staff outside of the institution’s academic environment. Thus the importance for aspects from both academic and social integration in the retention of students cannot be over emphasized.

In addition to strategies to integrate minority students academically, there is also the need for social integration strategies to be exploited in order to fully integrate minority students at PWIs as well as the need to provide a positive, conducive and welcoming climate. Minority students, African Americans for instance, are mostly likely to face different kinds of challenges in PWIs because their norms, values and ideas may be perceived as incompatible with those of the institution (Tinto, 1993) thus the difficulty to fully integrate both academically and socially.

Tinto (1975) and Tinto (1993) pointed out that, students enter a college or university with varying patterns of personal, family, and academic characteristics and skills, including initial dispositions and intentions with respect to college attendance and personal goals. These intentions and commitments are subsequently modified and reformulated on a continuing basis through a longitudinal series of interactions between the individual and the structures and members of the academic and social systems of the institution. Satisfying and rewarding encounters with the formal and informal academic and social systems of the institution are presumed to lead to greater integration in those systems and thus to student retention. Negative interactions and experiences tend to reduce integration, to distance the individual from the academic and social communities of the institution, promoting the individual's marginality and, ultimately, withdrawal.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) proposed a model for factors that influence the climate for racial and ethnic diversity. The authors emphasized the importance and benefit of diversity and the impact of positive racial or ethnic environment on students learning. Their development of a conceptualization of the campus climate was seen as a much-needed foundation for planned change in practice or policy. The model can

be adjusted to incorporate other diversity indicators like gender, age, and religious background. This model, in conjunction with the attrition model developed by Tinto (1993) and Tinto (1975), is useful for this study especially the following sub-dimensions:

1. Behavioral dimension, which looks; at social interaction across race/ethnicity (and other indicators), campus involvement and diversity, and classroom diversity.
2. Psychological climate; which looks at perception of racial/ethnic (and other indicators) tensions, perceptions of discrimination, and attitudes and reduction of prejudice.

Figure 1 provides a framework for a better understanding of the various dimensions of the campus climate as indicated by Hurtado et al. (1999).

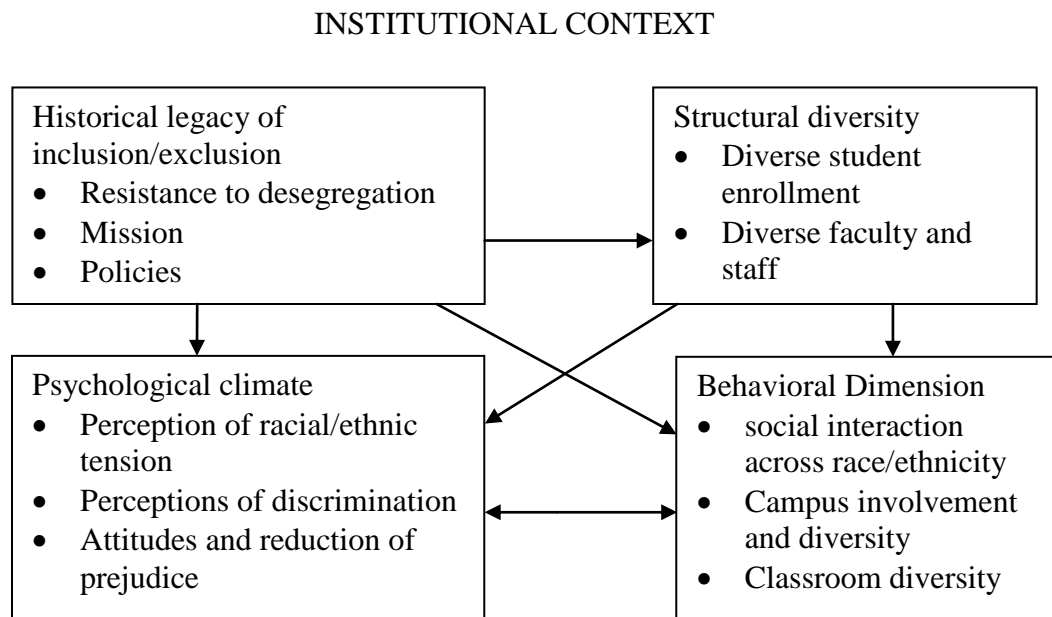


Figure 1. Elements influencing the climate for racial ethnic diversity (Hurtado et al., 1999)

Hurtado et al. (1999) noted that campus climate can be examined from various components, such as: (a) the impact of structural diversity - the number of underrepresented students on a campus; (b) the psychological climate - prejudice, and behavioral dimensions relating to students and their peers; and (c) students, and instructors as well as instructor's pedagogical approach. According to the authors, the focus on race/ethnicity should be considered as only an element of the campus climate because all the other diversity-related elements also require equal attention for students to be fully integrated into the campus community. The other elements such as gender, age, sexual orientation, religious background, and socio-economic status, also require attention and constitute key areas for focusing efforts to improve on the climate as well as increase diversity.

The notion that students are educated in distinct racial contexts where learning and socializing occur, is central to the conceptualization of a campus climate for diversity (Hurtado et al., 1999). These sub-environmental contexts in higher education, the authors note, are shaped by larger external and internal institutional contexts. External environment contexts include the influence of governmental policy, programs and initiatives such as changing financial policies and other policies and programs as well as the impact of socio-historical forces.

The institutional context is formed by the dynamics of an institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion of various racial/ethnic groups, its structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups, the psychological climate, which includes perceptions and attitudes between and among groups, and behavioral dimension that is characterized by relations among groups on campus (Hurtado

et al., 1999). The institutional climate for diversity is therefore conceptualized as a product of these various elements and their dynamics.

The different perspectives on the climate for diversity are not only informed by distinct experiences but also are valid because they have real consequences for the individual. Clearly assessing campus climate will therefore mean looking at the conceptual framework and answering the question: how does each of these aspects affect students? (Hurtado et al., 1999).

The foregoing review of the literature highlights the fact that while the benefits associated with diversity have been documented, there are still ongoing issues related to the plight of minority students on college campuses. Unfavorable campus climate and low retention and graduation rates of minority students continue to persist, especially at PWIs. How has the progressive implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) for instance affected the perception of campus climate by minority students at a PWI in the Northeastern region of the U.S., and what has been the relationship with students' persistence and attrition patterns? Chapter 3 provides the research methods that guide this study.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD OF STUDY

Introduction

Minority students, to a very great extent, are confronted with issues related to retention, college persistence, graduation rates, and overall college experience. This appears to be even more acute in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) where minority students generally encounter difficulties adjusting to the campus environment (Peterson et al., 1978; Bennett & Okinaka, 1989; Jay & D'Augelli, 1991). Studies (Antonio et al., 2004; Gurin, 1999; Smith et al., 1997; Astin, 1993) have revealed the positive impact of a favorable campus climate to students' college success, including recruitment, retention and graduation rates. However, despite efforts to conduct campus climate studies, and ensuing actions from such studies in most colleges and universities, it appears that specific concerns related to attitudes, perceptions, and student interactions across differences are still prevalent (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998; Hurtado, 1992).

This study used a mixed method – quantitative and qualitative research approach, to examine minority students' attrition patterns and potential decisions to drop-out, as well as minority students' perceptions of campus climate-related issues and how drop-out decisions could potentially be affected at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Northeastern United States. A key recommendation from the results of the campus climate survey (SUNY College at Oneonta, 2006a) at the PWI was related to developing a strategic plan on equity, diversity, and inclusion (SUNY College at Oneonta, 2006b). The following specific research questions guided this study:

1. What observable changes in pattern, if any, are there in minority student attrition at the PWI, following the campus climate study and progressive implementation of recommendations?
2. How do observed attrition patterns of minority students at the PWI relate to their demographic characteristics, especially with regard to ethnicity and gender?
3. What perceptions do minority students at a PWI, that has carried out a campus climate study and was actively implementing ensuing recommendations, have regarding campus climate and potential barriers to educational attainment?
4. What are the levels of use of, and satisfaction with, services on campus that are susceptible to enhance a favorable campus climate, by minority students, and the relationship to characteristics like ethnicity, gender, and class?

Chapter 3 presents the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis with specific reference to the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative inquiries served as the foundation for the methodology to ascertain an understanding of minority student perceptions of the campus climate at PWIs. To address research questions 1 and 2, historic enrollment, graduation, and dropout data obtained from the Office of Institutional Research, were analyzed. To address research questions 3 and 4, the results of focus groups interviews were transcribed and coded and data from an on-line survey of a representative sample of minority students on campus were analyzed.

The rest of Chapter 3 is arranged into sections that include (a) study setting, participants, and steps (b) the quantitative research approach, (c) the qualitative research approach, and (d) trustworthiness of the research process.

Setting, Participants, and Steps

The study took place at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Oneonta – a PWI in Northeastern U.S. Minority undergraduate students at the institution were invited to participate in this study – the study did not focus on comparative analysis between minority and non minority students, for which substantial literature abounds, but rather on a closer examination of the dynamics, for instance sensitivity to demographic characteristics, as it relates specifically to minority students, especially in a PWI.

The first step that guided the design and collection of data for this study involved obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The researcher obtained IRB approval from SUNY College at Oneonta, the setting of the study, in 2009 followed by IRB approval from North Dakota State University on April, 2010 (APPENDIX I). The next steps which involved obtaining historic institutional data, requesting the participation of minority students for the study, conducting focus group interviews, conducting a pilot survey with a cohort of students, and administering an on-line survey, are further described in the quantitative research approach and qualitative research approach sections of this chapter.

The Quantitative Research Approach

The quantitative research approach involved the collection and analysis of historic data as well as primary data from an on-line survey. The quantitative research approach is addressed under the following sub-headings:

- historic data collection process
- primary data collection process, and
- data analysis

Historic Data Collection Process

Following the IRB approvals, the researcher requested and obtained historic institutional data relevant to the study from the SUNY Oneonta Office of Institutional Research, in May 2009. Historic enrollment, graduation, and drop-out data of minority students from fall 2003 to spring 2009 were obtained. The timeframe for the data covered the period prior to the start of the implementation of CCSRs at the PWI (fall 2003 to spring 2006) and the period after the start of the implementation of CCSRs (fall 2006 to spring 2009). The raw data were provided in an excel spreadsheet.

Primary Data Collection Process

An on-line survey was designed and administered to the minority students in April and May 2010. This subsection describes the following: (a) the population used in the study, (b) instrumentation, and (c) data collection.

Population. The population size for the study was the entire body of minority students on campus ($N = 601$). The entire population size was used in the primary data collection process ($n = N = 601$). The targeted survey return rate for the study was 30%.

Instrumentation. The survey instrument was developed by the researcher and critiqued by her advisor. The constructs and items explored issues related to the research questions of the study, such as:

- awareness of the diversity component of the College's mission and vision statements
- awareness and level of use of campus services to foster a positive campus climate

- perception of inclusion/campus climate related issues both in and out of the classroom
- nature and scope of participation in campus activities/organizations
- expectations towards graduation from the college
- knowledge and opinion on attrition related-issues in the college

With the exception of key items related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the survey instrument explored respondents' opinions in a four-point Likert-type scale coded as follows: 1 = "strongly disagree", 2 = "disagree", 3 = "agree", 4 = "strongly agree." Opinions expressed as "I don't know" were coded as null. A number of items that explored respondents' level of participation in campus activities were also defined in a four-point Likert-type scale and coded as follows: 1 = "none", 2 = "one to three times", 3 = "four to six times", and 4 = "seven times and above."

To improve on the internal validity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted, from April 7 to April 10, 2010, with a randomly selected group of 30 students who were not included in the final administration of the survey. The pilot study procedure proposed by Peat, Mellis, Williams, and Xuan (2002) was adopted. The pilot questionnaires were administered on-line. The pilot participants were also requested, in cover e-mail (APPENDIX II) requesting their participation in the pilot study, to (a) voluntarily provide written feedback to help identify ambiguities and difficult questions, and (b) record the time taken to complete the questionnaire and indicate whether it was reasonable. The returned questionnaires and feedback from pilot participants were evaluated to:

discard all unnecessary, difficult, or ambiguous questions; assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses; establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required; check that all questions are answered; re-word or re-scale any questions that are not answered as expected; and shorten, revise and, if possible, pilot again. (Peat et al., 2002, p. 123)

Cronbach's Alpha was used, where a score of 0.7 and above indicated acceptable internal consistency and reliability. Feedback from the pilot survey led to very limited adjustment of the final survey instrument. The final Cronbach's Alpha of the survey was 0.89.

Data collection. The final survey was administered on-line to the minority student population on April 12, 2010. The survey link was included in a cover e-mail (APPENDIX II) that provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, as well as reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality in the treatment of data obtained. The survey was set up such that entries could only be made by clicking on the link in the e-mail body and multiple entries were not possible. E-mail reminders were sent out to the students every week for 4 successive weeks, at the end of which the survey link was closed.

Data from the online survey (APPENDIX III) were uploaded unto excel and then to SPSS. An analysis of missing values was performed to clean the data pool and set it up for further analysis. The listwise deletion technique was used to eliminate cases for which there were missing values. The listwise deletion technique was deemed appropriate under the assumption that missing data were MCAR (missing completely at random), where it has been shown to yield unbiased parameter estimates (Wothke, 2000). A descriptive analysis of the cases deleted showed that they were not circumscribed to any of the

demographic characteristics of interest. Furthermore, no direct correlation could be established between demographic characteristics of respondents in the study and the other variables of interest in the study. Finally, since the number of excluded participants (4.58%) was small, the adopted approach led to very little or no loss in efficiency, or power, of the final analysis. The final data pool of 208 respondents meant a survey response rate of 34.6% percent was achieved.

Data Analysis

The analysis of quantitative data is approached under the following sub-headings:

- analysis of historic trend data
- analysis of primary on-line survey data

Analysis of historic trend data. The first part of quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to attempt to capture the impact (if any) of the implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) on the attrition patterns of minority students in the PWI. Data from fall 2003 to spring 2009, relative to minority students, were used and analyzed (a) to determine any shifts in the attrition pattern following the implementation of CCSRs (research question one), and (b) to get an insight into the sensitivity of attrition patterns when minority students are sub-categorized by ethnicity and gender (research question two). Data analysis included the following variables: dropout rate, ethnic background, and gender.

Impact on attrition patterns. Let the variables of interest be defined as follows:

P_1 is the period, 2003-2004 to 2005-2006, prior to the start of the implementation of CCSRs

P_2 is the period, 2006-2007 to 2008-2009, during the implementation of CCSRs

W_i is the proportion, W of minority students who drop-out in the fall or spring semester in academic year i (2003-2004, 2004-2005 ... 2008-2009).

W is a weighted proportion, for instance, of attriting minority students to total college attrition, and helps to ensure that changes to the attrition patterns due to non-CCSR-related variables, like changes in the economy, are compensated for. Changes due to non-CCSR-related variables affect total college attrition irrespective of students' minority or majority status. The impact of CCSRs on minority students' was analyzed by examining the pattern of trend data, with W_i as the variable of choice, over P_1 and P_2 .

t-test analysis, using 0.05 as the alpha level of significance ($p \leq 0.5$), was used to compare means of W_i over P_1 and P_2 to further ascertain if there was a significant difference in minority students' attrition over the two periods.

The following hypothesis was tested:

$H_o: m_1 = m_2$ (means of the two periods are equal)

$H_a: m_1 \neq m_2$ (means are not equal)

Where,

H_o is the null hypothesis

H_a is the alternate hypothesis

m_1 is the mean of W_i over P_1 , and

m_2 is the mean of W_i over P_2

The null hypothesis, H_o , states that the average attrition of minority students in the period prior to the implementation of the CCSRs is not different from that of the period during the implementation of the CCSRs.

Shifts in the attrition pattern of minority students at the college from P_1 to P_2 were examined using trend data of the following W , the defined variables of interest:

- proportion/ratio of minority students who attrite as a function of the total college enrollment in the fall or spring semester in a given academic year
- proportion/ratio of minority students who attrite as a function of the minority students college enrollment in the fall or spring semester in a given academic year
- proportion/ratio of total number of students (minority and non-minority) who attrite as a function of the total college enrollment in the fall or spring semester in a given academic year
- proportion/ratio of non-minority students who attrite as a function of the total college enrollment in the fall or spring semester in a given academic year

Sensitivity of attrition patterns to demographic characteristics. Insight into the sensitivity of attrition patterns when minority students are sub-categorized by ethnicity and gender (research question two) was obtained as follows: the sensitivity of the shifts in the attrition pattern of minority students to their gender or ethnic background, in P_1 and P_2 , were examined using drop-out trend data for the demographic variable of interest weighted as ratio of (i) the total number of minority students enrolled in the college, (ii) the total number of minority students who dropped out from the college.

Analysis of on-line survey data. Research questions three and four were answered in part through the analysis of the on-line survey data. Data from the on-line survey were used for summary/descriptive and relational statistics. Descriptive analysis included the

computing of frequency tables, means, standard deviations, and percentages of data related to students' perception of campus climate.

The chi-square test of independence was used to determine the relationship between different opinion variables from the online survey instruments on the one hand and participants' independent characteristics such as ethnic background, gender, and class/level. The chi-square test of independence was performed using SPSS and controlled for the following key assumptions: none of the expected values may be less than 1, and no more than 20% of the expected values may be less than 5. As DeCoster (2004) noted, "the p -values produced by a chi-square test are inappropriate if the expected count is less than 5 in 20% of the cells or more" (p. 41). For all statistical outputs for which the expected count was less than 5 in 20% of the cells or more, the recommendation to redefine the coding scheme, by combining categories or cases with low cell counts (DeCoster, 2004) was adopted.

The chi-square test of independence was used to test the research hypothesis that there is a relationship between different opinion variables (y_n) from the online survey instruments, on the one hand, and the categorical independent variables (x_n) – ethnic background, gender, and class/level of the respondents, on the other hand. The chi-square test was set up as follows:

Let $y_1, y_2, y_3 \dots y_n$, be the dependent or test variable (opinion variable of interest)
from the opinion survey, and

Let x_n represent the independent or group variable (the categorical variables
representing ethnic background (x_1), gender (x_2), and class/level (x_3))

In this study, the chi-square test of independence tests the influence of x_n , – the survey respondent’s gender, class, or ethnic background, on y_n – the respondents’ opinion on a campus climate-related theme of interest. The following hypothesis was tested, where H_o is the null hypothesis and H_a is the alternate hypothesis:

H_o : the occurrence of y_n and x_n is statistically independent

H_a : the occurrence of y_n and x_n is not statistically independent

The *chi-square test* of independence was performed using SPSS with an alpha level of significance of 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$). H_o was rejected when the generated *p-value* was less than or equal to 0.05. Accepting H_a was interpreted as follows: the occurrence of y_n and x_n was not statistically independent, meaning that the finding supported the research hypothesis – the opinion of the respondent was dependent on his or her ethnic background, gender, or class/level at the 5% level of significance.

Insights into the results from the analysis of the on-line survey data were further ascertained from the qualitative research component of the study.

The Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research methodology employed in this study gave the researcher the opportunity to emphasize the value placed on participants’ perspectives of their words (Creswell, 1994) by seeking to have a better understanding of how they viewed and perceived the environment around them. The focus group approach was used to help provide a better understanding of minority students’ perceptions of campus climate-related issues. It involved a carefully planned series of discussions on campus climate-related issues in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Group members were able to influence each other by sharing perspectives, and responding to other’s ideas (Krueger &

Casey, 2000). The qualitative research approach is addressed in this section under the following sub-headings:

- the focus group process, and
- data analysis

The Focus Group Process

Focus group interviews provided a more natural environment as opposed to individual interviews. Purposeful sampling was utilized to select focus group participants. This method allowed for selecting information-rich cases that provided for in-depth study and analyses (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling is a characteristic of qualitative inquiry (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and is based on “information not statistical considerations...its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). It is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

The purposeful sampling method used was the maximum variation approach coupled with the snowball or chain sampling approach to derive participants for the focus group interviews (Wright & Decker, 1997; Wright, Decker, Redfern, & Smith, 1992). The focus with the maximum variation sampling approach was on getting minority students from varying ethnic backgrounds, gender, and class/level. The coupling of the snowball sampling approach ensured that other potential participants who were good interview subjects were identified through their peers who had been earlier selected.

The researcher considered suggestions by Cassell (1982), on the following: relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee in research; the relative power of the researcher/principal investigator as perceived by the participants, control of the setting

where the research takes place; control over the context of the research; and, control over research interaction. These dimensions fit very well with one-on-one interviews, but were judged to be appropriate for the focus group interviews. The researcher was moderator, listener, observer and analyst using an inductive process (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Different time allocations were made available to focus group participants, so they could choose which best fit their schedule. Four focus group interviews were scheduled from April 19 to 30, 2010. Each focus group session was comprised of 5 to 7 participants (an average of 6 participants per session) to gather as much information as possible and to get to the level of saturation. The duration of each focus group session was approximately one hour and forty minutes giving ample time for participants to share their thoughts. Only one participant left before the end of the session because of another commitment.

An appropriate location was reserved for the interview sessions. The location for the focus groups was a conference room in the main administrative building at the college. This room provided ample space and a noise free environment. Participants were provided with the consent forms (APPENDIX IV), before the focus group sessions began, and given the opportunity to read and ask any questions prior to signing. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the session if at any time they felt uncomfortable to continue with the study. Audio tapes from the interviews have been stored in a secured location and are being used only for the purpose of the research. The audio tapes upon completion of the study will be kept for 2 to 3 years after which they will be carefully disposed of.

The confidentiality of participants was assured throughout the data collection process. Participants were given the option to either use their first names or pseudonyms.

All participants were protected in accordance with Institutional Research Board (IRB) specifications of both SUNY College at Oneonta and the North Dakota State University (NDSU). During the coding process, different identifiers were used for all participants.

An open-ended question format was used to assess students' experiences and perspectives. The open-ended questions were phrased and sequenced so they were easy to understand and logical to the participants, following the Krueger & Casey (2000) question or interview guide. More general questions were at the beginning of the interview to create an atmosphere of trust, while the follow-up questions, towards the end, were more specific and focused to provide opportunity to yield more information without pressure from the group. Attention was placed on understanding the feelings, comments, and thought process of the participants rather than on reaching a consensus about the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The open-ended questions helped to ensure that the researcher was able to trace themes among participants and ask for further expansion on the themes if necessary. Also, by recording the discussions, the researcher was able to capture more data which allowed for complete review of the information provided by the participants.

To ensure maximum involvement of participants, and dynamic focus group interactions, participants were matched by gender or ethnicity to promote group homogeneity (Kreuger, 1994). Focus group participants were specifically asked to share their perceptions of the campus climate at the college based on the following four focus group themes and additional probing questions:

1. Diversity and multiculturalism – meaning and importance

- Please define the terms diversity and multiculturalism and explain what they mean to you.

2. Campus climate perception/students experiences
 - Describe the campus climate at the college with respect to diversity and your experiences at the College as a student of color.
3. Students involvement and campus programs and services
 - Identify student organizations on campus that you belong to and how these organizations have helped you adjust to the college. Also identify other programs and services at the College and explain how these programs/services have helped you with your college experience.
4. Relationship with faculty/staff and peers
 - Describe your relationship with faculty/staff and students both Caucasians and AALANA and what in your opinion needs to be done to improve the campus climate at the College.

Other questions were used as follow up to the broad questions to help obtain detailed insight on participants' opinions on diversity-related variables and how they intersected with the campus climate. Students were prompted, as necessary, to search for the answers to the research questions, and emerging themes.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2002) outlined six steps for qualitative data analysis and interpretation. This framework consists of “preparing and organizing the data for analysis, exploring the data, describing and developing themes from the data, representing and reporting the findings, validating the accuracy and credibility of the findings” (p. 357). In this light, data for qualitative analysis were based on themes derived from the participant responses to the open-ended questions. Responses were coded and placed in categories (aspect of data

central to the broader themes) and sub-categories (based on the emergence of more specific and detailed examples of themes). Coding provided a progressive process to sort out recurrent themes from all the data collected and useful to the research (Glense, 1999). The long table approach suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000) was used to analyze the information. Words, phrases, and sentences of relevance to the study and the research questions were identified. Similarities and patterns that emerged from the study were sorted through and coded.

Furthermore, following the approach by Stake (1995), data were transcribed, analyzed, developed, refined, and the meanings of categories for emerging themes clarified on a continuous basis. Narratives were used to present findings, which comprised, where necessary, comparisons across ethnic background and gender. All the themes emerging from data sets – both corresponding and non-corresponding themes – were examined. Corresponding emerging themes were compared. This approach ensured that emerging themes relevant to the study were retained and analyzed.

Trustworthiness of Research Process

With respect to qualitative research, ample time was spent in building relationships and interviewing the participants so as to provide the basis for validity and credibility of the study. Trustworthiness in the qualitative research process entailed the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Credibility refers to the ability of the researcher to take into account the complexities that emerge in a study and be able to deal with those complexities that are not easily explained. To ensure transferability, the researcher acknowledged the fact that the research was context-bound rather than generalized. Dependability was ensured by collecting solid data, while

reflecting and deliberating over personal assumptions helped to ensure confirmability. This model has been echoed by several other qualitative researchers (Bitsch, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

In addition to verifying and validating data collection, analysis, and reporting, the transcribed focus group interviews were compared with notes from the interview sessions and clarification of researcher biases (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Stake, 1995). These ensured multiple perceptions that helped clarify meanings and themes. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) referred to getting the right amount of appropriate data as the criteria of adequacy and appropriateness. The notes provided information and additional insights, and enhanced accuracy and credibility of the results. Creswell (1994) notes the importance of peer review in qualitative research.

The following types of triangulation (Denzin, 1978) were used to ensure trustworthiness of the research process: (a) Data triangulation, which implies using different data sources – this was included in this study with the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, (b) Theory triangulation, by approaching empirical materials from various perspectives, theoretical framework and interpretations, and (c) Methodological triangulation – “Within” method triangulation, involves choosing one method and employing different strategies to examine data, while “Between” method triangulation involves the combination of dissimilar methods to investigate a set of data. The study endeavored to incorporate all of these approaches to effectively provide trustworthiness.

As a female professional staff from a minority background (Black or African American) at the PWI, the researcher shared some commonalities with the participants in the study. This means although the researcher examined unique and individually lived

experiences/ perceptions and perspectives of the participants, she could relate to them in a personal way. While the researcher's identity was useful in engendering frank discussions during the focus group interviews, it was important that she employ conscious efforts to minimize researcher bias and avoid conveying her sensitivities. In addition, the likelihood of researcher bias was minimized by the use of scientific procedures involving strict systematic and objective methods of qualitative research. Most of the findings in the qualitative section are presented in the form of participants' exact quotes to reflect their unique perspectives. All materials, including notes taken during the sessions, observation of participants, transcripts of audio tapes and journal entry of activities were carefully reviewed and coded.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the findings based on the methods developed in Chapter 3 to the four research questions that guide this study. The first research question – related to the observable changes in pattern, if any, in minority students’ attrition at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in Northeastern United States, following the campus climate study and progressive implementation of recommendations, and the second research question – related to the relationship between the observed attrition patterns of minority students at the PWI to the students’ demographic characteristics, especially with regard to ethnicity and gender, were addressed through the analysis of historic enrollment, graduation, and dropout data obtained from the PWI’s Office of Institutional Research.

The third research question is related to minority students’ perception of campus climate-related variables and potential barriers to educational attainment at the PWI following the campus climate study and active implementation of ensuing recommendations. The fourth question is related to minority students’ levels of use of, and satisfaction with, services on campus that are susceptible to enhance a favorable campus climate, and the relationship to demographic characteristics like ethnicity and gender. These two research questions were addressed through the analysis of data from an on-line survey administered to minority students as well as the analysis of the results of focus groups interviews. This mixed method helps to provide better insights for addressing the research questions. As noted by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), “many research questions and combination of questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research solution” (p. 18). Chapter IV is organized under the following headings:

- Campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) and attrition patterns
- description of background of survey and focus group participants
- results from quantitative analysis of on-line opinion survey
- results from qualitative analysis of focus group interviews

The quantitative and qualitative analyses notably examined students' perception with regard to institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, the campus climate and experiences, students' interactions with institutional structures to foster diversity and inclusion, and opinions on college persistence and campus climate.

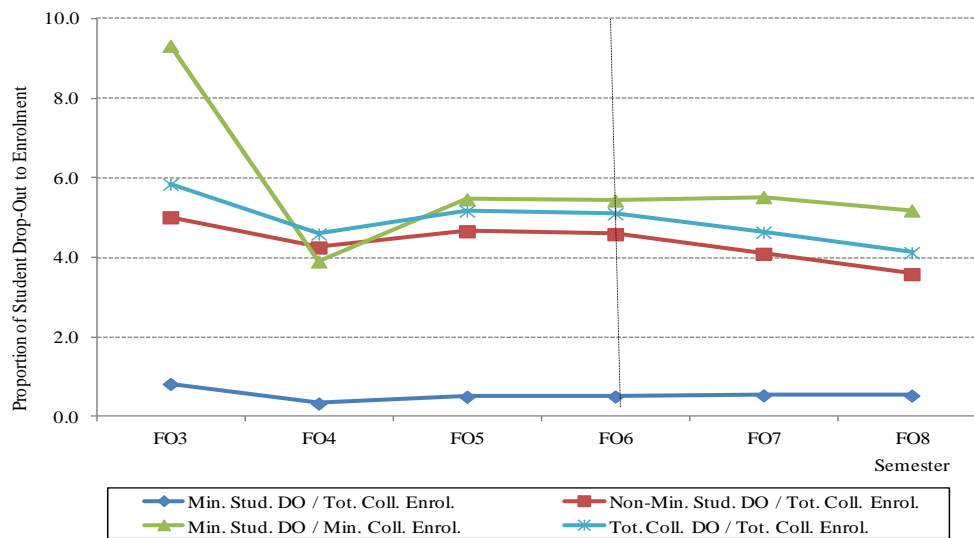
CCSRs and Attrition Patterns

Tinto's (1993) Theory of College Student Departure underpins the analysis in this section – if students' norms, values and ideas are not compatible with those of the institution very likely they will drop out of college. Shifts in the attrition of minority students were examined using institutional drop-out trend data for an equitable period before and after the start of implementation of CCSRs at the PWI. The basic assumption of the analysis is that implementation of CCSRs at the PWI (notably the institutional commitment to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a positive climate to all campus constituents) created an enabling environment to foster persistence and curb attrition rates for the students. This section is addressed under the following sub-headings: (a) impact on attrition patterns, and (b) sensitivity of attrition patterns to demographic characteristics.

Impact on Attrition Patterns

It is expected that a positive campus climate for minority students would lead to less attrition, thereby fostering retention and persistence towards graduation. Shifts in the attrition pattern of minority students at the college in the period following the

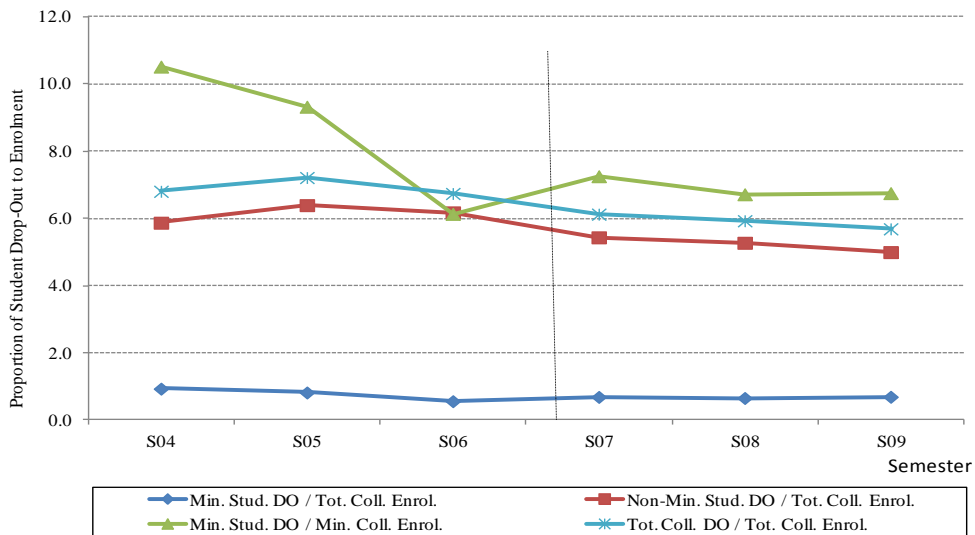
implementation of CCSRs can be examined using trend data of the proportion/ratio of students who attrite as a function of the College enrollments of minority and non-minority students. Specific effects due to the implementation of CCSRs, if any, would be observable in the pattern of the trend data from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009 – the years during which CCSRs were implemented, when compared with the pattern of the trend data from 2003-2004 to 2005-2006, as shown for fall semester in Figure 2.



(Coll. stands for ‘College’; DO stands for ‘Dropout’; Enrol. stands for ‘Enrollment’; Min. stands for ‘Minority’; Stud. stands for ‘Students’; Tot. stands for ‘Total’)

Figure 2. Fall semester student drop-outs as a proportion of college enrollments from 2003 - 2009

Figure 2 shows that when the dropout and enrollment statistics for all students (at the College level) are considered, there have been an overall steady decline in the ratio of students attriting to the number of students enrolled, and more conspicuously since the 2006-2007 academic year – with the implementation of the CCSRs. The same pattern for fall semester is observable for the spring semester (Figure 3).



(Coll. stands for ‘College’; DO stands for ‘Dropout’; Enrol. stands for ‘Enrollment’; Min. stands for ‘Minority’; Stud. stands for ‘Students’; Tot. stands for ‘Total’)

Figure 3. Spring semester student drop-outs as a proportion of college enrollments from 2003 – 2009

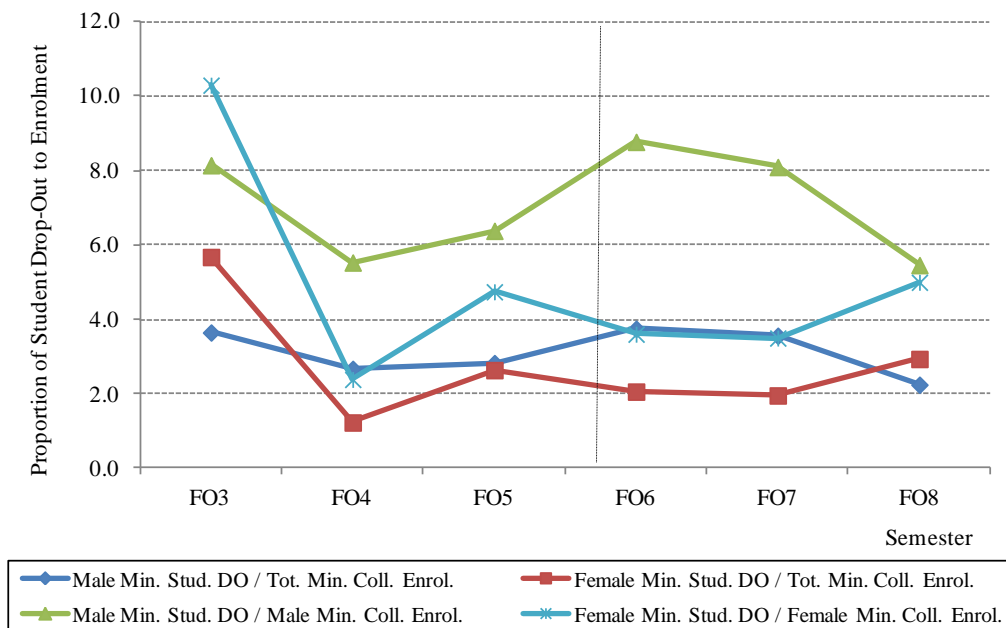
Figures 2 and 3 show that, when the 2005-2006 academic year is considered as the benchmark year, before the start of the implementation of CCSR, whereas the trend of the ratio of the overall college attrition to enrollment decreases consistently in subsequent years, the same trend with a focus on minority students’ attrition and enrollment is consistently higher than the point statistics in 2005-2006. A further analysis of the sensitivity of the attrition patterns can provide a better understanding of the nature of the observed trend within the minority students’ community.

Sensitivity of Attrition Patterns to Demographic Characteristics

A very likely effect of pooling data for minority students as a single unit is that the analysis could mask sensitivities related to the demographic characteristics of the students – an understanding of which could lead to more informed inferences and policy implications. The following sub-headings examine the sensitivity of minority students’

gender and ethnicity to drop-out patterns from the 2003-2004 to 2008-2009 academic years.

Sensitivity of drop-out patterns to gender. Figure 4 shows the observed pattern, for the fall semester, when the drop-out data for male and female minority students are weighted as ratio of (i) the total number of minority students enrolled in the college, and (ii) the total number of minority students enrolled by gender.



(Coll. stands for 'College'; DO stands for 'Dropout'; Enrol. stands for 'Enrollment'; Min. stands for 'Minority'; Stud. stands for 'Students'; Tot. stands for 'Total')

Figure 4. Fall semester minority student drop-outs as a proportion of enrollments by gender from 2003 – 2009

Figure 4 suggests no conclusive pattern can be discerned, irrespective of gender, when the ratio of the minority students' dropouts to the total number of enrolled minority students is considered, from fall 2003 to fall 2008. However, when the gender sensitivity is

restricted within the minority group, the observed pattern of drop-out statistic (the ratios – number of minority students attriting weighted on the number of minority students enrolled for each gender group) was different for male and female minority students – with a decline for male minority students as opposed to the trend for female minority students, from the period following the implementation of the CCSRs.

The same dynamics were analyzed for attrition pattern for minority students with respect to their ethnic background.

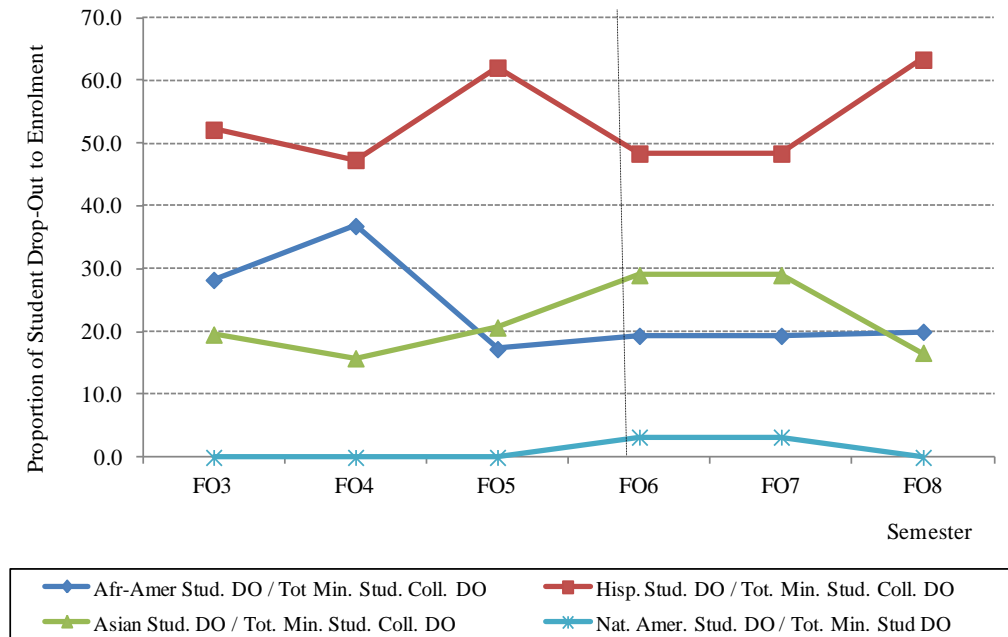
Sensitivity of drop-out patterns to ethnic background. Insights can also be gleaned from examining the sensitivities of the drop-out pattern, before and following the implementation of CCSRs, based on the ethnicities of the minority students. This can be done by using the ratio of minority students drop-out, based on ethnic background, to the total number of minority students who drop-out at the college as the variable of interest, where m_1 and m_2 represent the mean values before and following the implementation of CCSRs respectively. Table 1 shows, using the fall semester data, the results of *t-test* comparing m_1 and m_2 for each ethnic group at the PWI.

Table 1. Comparison of 2003 – 2006 and 2006 – 2009 Minority Students Drop-out Rate by Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	Mean Values		<i>t</i> value	Prob.
	m_1	m_2		
Africa American	27.45	19.57	1.39	0.29
Hispanic	53.87	53.37	0.09	0.93
Asian American	18.68	24.91	- 1.42	0.22
Native American	0.00	2.15	0.06	0.18

Table 1 shows for African American students, for instance, that m_2 (19.57) was markedly lower than m_1 (27.45), however, no significant difference was found between these two means at the 0.05 level. No significant difference was also found, at the 0.05 level, between m_1 and m_2 for Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American students.

Figure 5 further illustrates the observed pattern, for the fall semesters, of the ratio of minority students drop-out, based on ethnic background, to the total number of minority students who drop-out at the college.



(Afr-Amer stands for ‘African American; Coll. stands for ‘College’; DO stands for ‘Dropout’; Min. stands for ‘Minority’; Stud. stands for ‘Students’; Tot. stands for ‘Total’)

Figure 5. Fall semester minority student drop-outs as a proportion of enrollments by ethnicity from 2003 – 2009

Figure 5 shows that it is difficult to draw a definitive inference regarding changes in the minority students’ attrition patterns based on the different ethnic groups, especially in

the years following the implementation of CCSRs at the PWI. The proportion of Hispanic students attriting was consistently higher than that of the other ethnic groups in both the periods before and during the implementation of CCRSs. In addition, when the point data from fall 2007 to fall 2008 is considered, it is noticed that unlike with the other minority groups, the proportion of Hispanic students who attrite as a function of the total number of minority students attriting experienced an upward spike. A reversed trend to the Hispanic students is observed with the African American students

The following sections provide analysis of quantitative data from the on-line survey of minority students' perceptions at the PWI, as well as analysis of qualitative data from focus group interviews, starting with the description of the profile of the participants.

Description of Background of Survey and Focus Group Participants

This section examines the profile of the students who participated in the on-line survey and in the focus group interviews, especially with respect to ethnic background, gender, and their class or educational level. Table 2 shows the distribution of the on-line survey respondents by ethnic background and by gender.

Table 2. Distribution of On-line Survey Respondents by Ethnic Background and by Gender

	Female		Male		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
African American/ Black	67	42.68	24	47.06	91	43.75
Asian	20	12.74	4	7.84	24	11.54
Hispanic/Latino	54	34.39	17	33.33	71	34.13
Native American	0	0.00	2	3.92	2	0.96
Other	16	10.19	4	7.84	20	9.62
Total	157	100.00	51	100.00	208	100.00

Table 2 shows that out of the 208 online survey respondents, 43.75% were African Americans, 34.13% were Hispanics, 11.54% were Asians, and 0.96% were Native Americans. In all, 20 (9.62%) of the respondents did not identify their ethnic background. Table 3 shows that 157 (75.48%) of the respondents were female while 51 (24.52%) were male. The survey respondents were distributed with respect to class level as follows: 46 freshmen (22.1%), 68 sophomores (32.7%), 58 juniors (27.9%), and 36 seniors (17.3%).

Table 3. Distribution of On-line Survey Respondents by Class/Level and by Gender

	Female		Male		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Freshman	34	21.66	12	23.53	46	22.12
Sophomore	54	34.39	14	27.45	68	32.69
Junior	39	24.84	19	37.25	58	27.88
Senior	30	19.11	6	11.76	36	17.31
Total	157	100.00	51	100.00	208	100.00

The profile of participants of the focus group interviews is shown on Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of Focus Group Participants by Ethnic Background and by Class/Level

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Total	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%
African American/Black	2	4	1	1	8	33.33
Asian	0	1	1	0	2	8.33
Hispanic/Latino	1	5	4	2	12	50.00
Native American	1	1	0	0	2	8.33
Total	4	11	6	3	24	100.00
%	16.67	45.83	25.00	12.50		

Table 4 shows that out of all the focus group participants, 12 (50.00%) were Latino, 8 (33.33%) were African American, 2 (8.33%) were Asian, and 2 (8.33%) were Native American (8.33%). The distribution of the focus group participants by class was as follows: 4 freshmen (16.67%), 11 sophomore (45.83%), 6 juniors (25.00%), and 3 seniors (12.50%).

Participant's background can provide insight into the perspectives that they bring to any discussion and their perceptions and opinions. The following section deals with the analysis of the data from online survey administered to minority students at the PWI.

Results from Quantitative Analysis of On-line Opinion Survey

A key dimension to this study is the analysis of the perceptions of the minority students at the PWI concerning campus climate related issues and the sensitivity of their opinions to their ethnic background, gender, and to their class or educational level. This can have significant implications on some of the findings and recommendations in addressing campus climate-related concerns at a PWI. The analysis of the perceptions of the minority students at the PWI vis-à-vis campus climate-related issues were interpreted taking into consideration the results of the chi-square test of independence. This section of the study is organized under the following sub-headings:

- students' perception of institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion
- students' campus climate perception and experiences
- students' engagement in diversity activities and satisfaction with campus resources
- students' opinions on college persistence in relation to campus climate

The results of the chi-square test of independence are considered, in the following sections, in the presentation of the opinions of minority students at the PWI. For most of

the opinion variables, the pre-defined Likert scale options in the survey instrument were combined as follows: “strongly disagree” and “disagree”, and “agree” and “strongly agree” to reflect disagreement and agreement respectively. Participants’ opinions (y_n) represented the depended variable while the independent variables of interest were – ethnic background (x_1), gender (x_2), or class/level (x_3). The results of the sensitivity analysis with x_1 (students’ race or ethnic background) were not considered in the final analysis, since the p -values produced were inappropriate (DeCoster, 2004).

Students’ Perception of Institutional Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Structural diversity, including the diversity of students, faculty and staff on campus, is one of the dimensions highlighted in Hurtado et al. (1999) for examining the climate for racial and ethnic diversity. The framework for this study also includes examining issues regarding the mission and policies of the institution as elucidated in Hurtado et al. (1999). In this section, minority students’ perceptions vis-à-vis the College’s commitment to diversity and inclusion are analyzed. The students’ perceptions are analyzed for the following sub themes:

- opinion on diversity and inclusion and college policy statements
- satisfaction with level of campus diversity
- satisfaction with level of respect of diversity on campus

Opinion on diversity and inclusion and college policy statements. The policy statements of an institution can be a good start-off point to assess the institution’s commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion. The following opinion variables (y_n) from the survey instruments were assessed:

- level of agreement – the College mission statement strives to foster diversity

- level of agreement – the College mission statement strives to enhance an inclusive community

Table 5 shows the distribution of minority students’ knowledge of the College’s commitment to foster diversity in its policy statements, based on the race or ethnic background of the survey respondents. For this opinion variable, 10 of the 208 (4.8%) respondents in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know.”

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents’ Level of Awareness of Diversity Component of College Policy Statements by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	9	15	53	10	87	24	63
	%	10.3	17.2	60.9	11.5	100.0	27.6	72.4
Asian	<i>n</i>	0	6	14	4	24	6	18
	%	0.0	25.0	58.3	16.7	100.0	25.0	75.0
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	2	10	40	15	67	12	55
	%	3.0	14.9	59.7	22.4	100.0	17.9	82.1
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	0	2	12	4	18	2	16
	%	0.0	11.1	66.7	22.2	100.0	11.1	88.9
Total	<i>n</i>	11	33	121	33	198	44	154
	%	5.6	16.7	61.1	16.7	100.0	22.2	77.8

Out of the 198 respondents who gave stated opinions besides “don’t know”, when “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together, Table 5 shows that, the overwhelming majority of respondents (77.8%) are knowledgeable of the fact that the College’s policy statements emphasize a commitment to foster diversity. On the other hand, when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together; it is shown that only 22.2% of the respondents were not knowledgeable of the diversity component of the College’s policy

statements. Overall, it is shown on Table 5 that at least 72.4% of the respondents in any of the racial categories were knowledgeable of the diversity component of the College’s policy statements.

Table A.1 in the Appendix shows the results obtained when the opinions of minority students were analyzed with respect to their specific knowledge of the fact that the College’s policy statements emphasize a commitment to enhancing an inclusive campus community. In this case, 20 of the 208 (9.6%) respondents in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know,” and of those responding otherwise at least 75.9% in any of the racial categories were knowledgeable of this fact and had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree”.

Table 6 shows the results of sensitivity analyses of respondents’ opinions with respect to gender and class/level.

Table 6. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Opinion on Diversity and Inclusion and College Policy Statements

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
I am aware that the mission statement of the College seeks to foster diversity on campus	3.356	2	0.187			
I am aware the College mission statement seeks to enhance inclusive campus community	1.236	2	0.539	16.236	6	0.013*

* *p*-value less than or equal to 0.05

The results of the chi-square test suggest, in the case of the relationship between the respondents’ opinions and their gender, that the H_0 , the null hypotheses, should not be rejected (all *p*-values are greater than 0.05). This means the outcome of the respondents’

opinions with regard to the College’s policy statements on diversity and inclusion were statistically independent of their gender, and should be interpreted as such.

Table 7 shows the distribution of minority students’ knowledge of the College’s commitment to foster diversity in its policy statements, based on gender of the survey respondents. Table 7 and Table A.2 in the Appendix, respectively, present the breakdown, on gender lines, of survey respondents’ opinions with regard to: (a) awareness of diversity component of college policy statements, and (b) awareness of commitment to foster an inclusive community in college policy statements.

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents’ Level of Awareness of Diversity Component of College Policy Statements by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	5	25	91	30	151	30	121
	%	3.3	16.6	60.3	19.9	100.0	19.9	80.1
Male	<i>n</i>	6	8	30	3	47	14	33
	%	12.8	17.0	63.8	6.4	100.0	29.8	70.2
Total	<i>n</i>	11	33	121	33	198	44	154
	%	5.6	16.7	61.1	16.7	100.0	22.2	77.8

When “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together, the majority of minority students, of both sexes, (at least 70.2%) affirm that the College’s policy statements seek to foster diversity and inclusion. The stated opinions of respondents were statistically independent of their gender at the 0.05 significant level (Table 6) – meaning, despite the slight differences observed when the proportion of male and female minority students agreeing or disagreeing are compared, the stated opinions were not sensitive to / or dependent on the respondents’ gender. This was however not the case with the sensitivity

analysis with respect to respondents' class / level for the variable "I am aware the College mission statement seeks to enhance inclusive campus community."

Table 8 shows the distribution of minority students' knowledge of the College's commitment to foster an inclusive community in its policy statements, based on the class / level of survey respondents. The results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 6) suggest that H_o , the null hypotheses, should be rejected (p -value is less than 0.05). This means the outcome of the students' opinions (Table 8) with regard to the College's policy statements on inclusiveness was not statistically independent of their class/level, at alpha level of .05.

Table 8. Distribution of Respondents' Level of Awareness of Emphasis on Inclusive Community in College's Policy Statements by Class / Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	2	10	22	6	40	12	28
	%	5.0	25.0	55.0	15.0	100.0	30.0	70.0
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	2	10	34	12	58	12	46
	%	3.4	17.2	58.6	20.7	100.0	20.7	79.3
Junior	<i>n</i>	5	2	40	7	54	7	47
	%	9.3	3.7	74.1	13.0	100.0	13.0	87.0
Senior	<i>n</i>	0	2	28	6	36	2	34
	%	0.0	5.6	77.8	16.7	100.0	5.6	94.4
Total	<i>n</i>	9	24	124	31	188	33	155
	%	4.8	12.8	66.0	16.5	100.0	17.6	82.4

Specifically the results in Table 8, indicate that out of the 188 respondents who gave stated opinions besides "don't know", when "agree" and "strongly agree" are pooled together, the proportion of respondents who are seniors (94.4%), for instance, who affirm their awareness of the fact that the College's mission and vision statements have provisions

to enhance an inclusive campus, was substantially higher than that of freshmen (70.0%), and class is an important factor in respondents' opinion. The differences in respondents' opinions by class are further illustrated in Figure 6.

When the proportion of respondents with stated opinions of “agree and strongly agree” are considered, Figure 6 depicts a relative and distinctively higher proportion of seniors. The results also show that the proportion of respondents who have stated opinions of “agree and strongly agree” is lowest for freshmen (70.0%), and increased as students move to higher levels – sophomore (79.3%), juniors (87.0%), and seniors (94.4%).

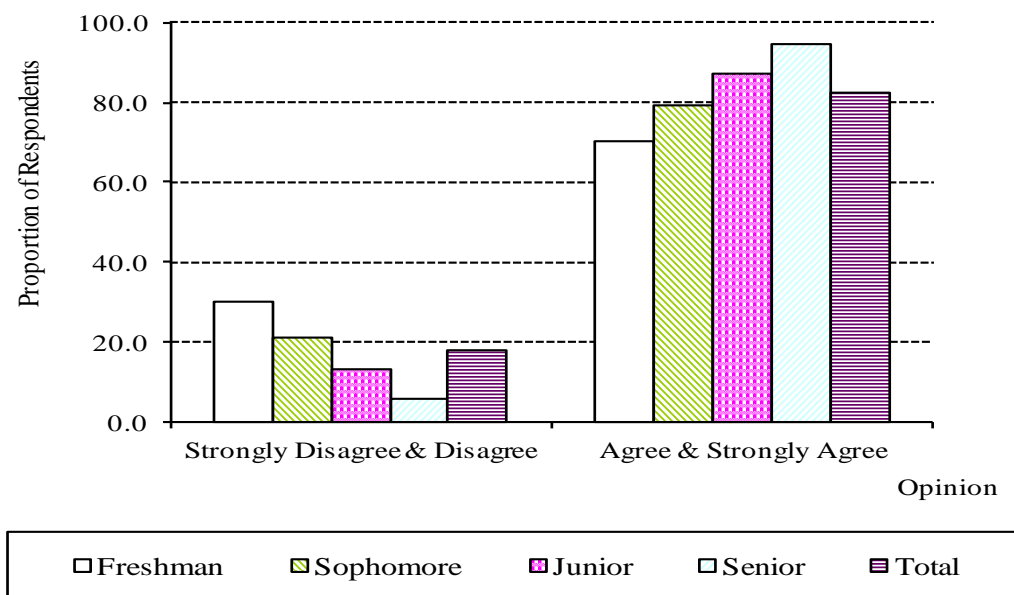


Figure 6. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding inclusiveness component of college policy statements

Figure 6 also shows that a relatively higher proportion of respondents who are freshmen and sophomores – 30.0% and 20.7% respectively, have stated opinions of “strongly disagree” or “disagree” compared to juniors (13.0%) and seniors (5.6%). Overall, 17.6% of survey respondents have stated opinions of “strongly disagree” or “disagree.”

Satisfaction with level of campus diversity at the PWI. Another critical indicator that is reflective of an institution’s commitment to foster diversity and inclusion is the level of diversity of faculty, staff, administrators, and students. This section presents the analysis and findings of the opinions of the online survey respondents as regards their level of satisfaction with the level of diversity of different campus constituents at the PWI. The following specific opinion variables, (y_n), were assessed:

- level of agreement – I am satisfied with the level of faculty diversity at the College
- level of agreement – I am satisfied with the level of staff diversity at the College
- level of agreement – I am satisfied with the level of diversity of the administrators

For the variable “I am satisfied with the level of faculty diversity at the College”, 6 out of the 208 respondents (2.9%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know.” Table 9 shows the distribution of the 202 respondents (97.1% of the survey pool) with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, as a function of their ethnic background, with respect to their level of satisfaction with faculty diversity at the PWI.

When “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together, Table 9 shows that, a majority of respondents (65.8%) were dissatisfied with the level of faculty diversity at the PWI as opposed to 34.2% who were satisfied. Fifty-eight respondents (28.7%) indicated “strongly disagree” as opposed to 10 respondents (5.0%) who “strongly agree.” Tables A.3 and A.4 in the appendix, show that the same trend was observed in participants’ stated opinions with respect to their appreciation of the level of diversity of the staff or

administrators of the college respectively. In both cases 65.3% and 70.2%, respectively, of survey respondents indicated their dissatisfaction when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together.

Table 9. Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Satisfaction with level of Faculty Diversity by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	42	35	10	2	89	77	12
	%	47.2	39.3	11.2	2.2	100.0	86.5	13.5
Asian	<i>n</i>	4	10	8	2	24	14	10
	%	16.7	41.7	33.3	8.3	100.0	58.3	41.7
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	8	22	31	6	67	30	37
	%	11.9	32.8	46.3	9.0	100.0	44.8	55.2
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	4	8	8	0	20	12	8
	%	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	100.0	60.0	40.0
Total	<i>n</i>	58	75	59	10	202	133	69
	%	28.7	37.1	29.2	5.0	100.0	65.8	34.2

The results of the sensitivity analysis were retained for respondents’ stated opinions with respect to their appreciation of the level of diversity of administrators at the College and the relationship with gender and class, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Opinion on Satisfaction with the Diversity of Administrators at the College

<i>X</i> * Opinion Variable	<i>X</i> = Gender			<i>X</i> = Class / Level		
	Pearson Chi-Square			Pearson Chi-Square		
	Value	df	<i>p</i> - value	Value	df	<i>p</i> - value
I am satisfied with the diversity of administrators at the College	4.113	2	0.128	10.282	6	0.113

The results of the chi-square test of independence suggest, in both cases – the relationship between the respondents’ opinions and their gender, and the relationship between the respondents’ opinions and their class – that the H_o , the null hypotheses, should not be rejected (all p -values are greater than 0.05). This means respondents’ opinions with regard to satisfaction with the level of diversity of the administrators at the College were statistically independent of the gender and class /level of the respondents, and should be interpreted as such.

Table 11 shows the distribution of the opinions of the respondents based on their satisfaction with level of diversity of administrators at the College, taking into consideration the gender of the respondents. In this case, for the variable “I am satisfied with the level of diversity of administrators at the College”, 20 out of the 208 respondents (9.6%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” and the distribution in Table 11 represents the 188 respondents (90.4% of the survey pool) with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Table 11. Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Satisfaction with Level of Administrator Diversity by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	40	61	32	6	139	101	38
	%	28.8	43.9	23.0	4.3	100.0	72.7	27.3
Male	<i>n</i>	20	11	18	0	49	31	18
	%	40.8	22.4	36.7	0.0	100.0	63.3	36.7
Total	<i>n</i>	60	72	50	6	188	132	56
	%	31.9	38.3	26.6	3.2	100.0	70.2	29.8

Table 11 shows that at least 63.3% of either male or female survey respondents were dissatisfied with the level of diversity at the level of the College’s administration. Based on the results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 10), respondents’ opinions did not depend on gender. Table 12 also shows the distribution of respondents’ opinions regarding satisfaction with level administrator diversity taking into consideration their class/level.

Table 12. Distribution of Respondents’ Opinions on Satisfaction with Level of Administrator Diversity by Class / Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	14	12	12	2	40	26	14
	%	35.0	30.0	30.0	5.0	100.0	65.0	35.0
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	20	24	12	2	58	44	14
	%	34.5	41.4	20.7	3.4	100.0	75.9	24.1
Junior	<i>n</i>	16	24	14	0	54	40	14
	%	29.6	44.4	25.9	0.0	100.0	74.1	25.9
Senior	<i>n</i>	10	12	12	2	36	22	14
	%	27.8	33.3	33.3	5.6	100.0	61.1	38.9
Total	<i>n</i>	60	72	50	6	188	132	56
	%	31.9	38.3	26.6	3.2	100.0	70.2	29.8

The results presented in Table 12 are also not sensitive to the class of the respondent, based on the results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 10). At least 61.1 % of students in any class, were dissatisfied with the level of diversity at the level of the College’s administration, and class was not a factor in their opinions.

The next section looks at participants’ satisfaction of the level of respect shown towards campus diversity – another good indicator of an institution’s commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion.

Satisfaction with level of respect of campus diversity. When an institution is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion, it follows that there will be concerted efforts in place to ensure there is understanding and mutual respect for the different components of diversity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious background, ability, and language. This section presents the findings of the opinions of the online survey respondents as regards their level of satisfaction with level of respect for diversity at the PWI. The following opinion variables, (y_n), were assessed:

- level of agreement – students are respected irrespective of their racial or ethnic background
- level of agreement – students are respected on campus irrespective of gender
- level of agreement – students are respected irrespective of sexual orientation
- level of agreement - students are respected irrespective of their religion

The first part of the analysis in this sub-section assesses survey respondents' opinions for the stated variable "students are respected irrespective of their racial or ethnic background." For this variable, 6 out of the 208 respondents (2.9%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of "don't know." Table 13 shows the distribution of the 202 respondents (97.1% of the survey pool) with stated opinions ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", as a function of their ethnic/racial background.

When "strongly disagree" and "disagree" are pooled together, Table 13 shows that, a majority of respondents (75.2%) were in agreement that the respect that students receive on campus was irrespective of their race or ethnic background. A non-negligible proportion, about a fourth of the total number of respondents (24.8% or 50 respondents)

indicated “strongly disagree” or “disagree” on this particular variable – “students are respected irrespective of their racial or ethnic background.”

Table 13. Respondents’ Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Race / Ethnic Background - Distribution by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	6	21	60	0	87	27	60
	%	6.9	24.1	69.0	0.0	100.0	31.0	69.0
Asian	<i>n</i>	0	4	16	4	24	4	20
	%	0.0	16.7	66.7	16.7	100.0	16.7	83.3
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	2	13	38	18	71	15	56
	%	2.8	18.3	53.5	25.4	100.0	21.1	78.9
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	0	4	12	2	18	4	14
	%	0.0	22.2	66.7	11.1	100.0	22.2	77.8
Total	<i>n</i>	8	42	128	24	202	50	152
	%	4.0	20.8	63.4	11.9	100.0	24.8	75.2

Tables A.5 and A.6, in the appendix, show the same overall results as in Table 13 when respondents’ gender and class were taken as the independent variables respectively.

The next part of the analysis in this sub-section assesses the notion that gender, sexual orientation, and religious background of students did not play a role in the respect received on campus. Table 14 presents the results of the chi-square test of independence with gender and class as the independent variables. It suggest that, in the case of the relationship between the respondents’ opinions and their gender (independent variable), H_0 , the null hypotheses, should not be rejected (all p -values are greater than 0.05) – stated opinions were statistically independent of respondents’ gender as regards the notion that respect received on campus was irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, or faith.

Table 14. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Opinion on Respect for Students on campus Irrespective of Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Religion

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
General respect for students on campus irrespective of gender	3.995	2	1.36			
General respect for students on campus irrespective of sexual orientation	4.721	2	0.094	13.958	6	0.030*
General respect for students on campus irrespective of faith or religious background	4.050	2	0.132			

* *p-value* less than or equal to 0.05

For the variable “students are respected on campus irrespective of gender”, 16 out of the 208 respondents (7.7%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 202 respondents (97.1% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Table 15, shows the distribution of the latter group of respondents as a function of their gender.

Table 15. Respondents’ Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Gender – Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	4	28	81	34	147	32	115
	%	2.7	19.0	55.1	23.1	100.0	21.8	78.2
Male	<i>n</i>	2	13	30	0	45	15	30
	%	4.4	28.9	66.7	0.0	100.0	33.3	66.7
Total	<i>n</i>	6	41	111	34	192	47	145
	%	3.1	21.4	57.8	17.7	100.0	24.5	75.5

When “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together, Table 15 shows that the majority of respondents, 75.5% (and at least 66.7% of each sex), agreed that, in general,

gender was not a factor in the respect that students receive on campus. In the same token, Table A.7 in the appendix shows that 87.4% (and at least 84.6% of each sex) agreed that, in general, the religious background of a student was irrelevant in the respect that he or she received. Table A.8 in the appendix also shows that 65.6% (and at least 54.8% of each sex) agreed that, in general, sexual orientation was not a consideration in the respect that a student received on campus.

The stated opinions of respondents in Table 15 and Tables A.7 and A.8 in the appendix are statistically independent of their gender at the 0.05 level of significance level (Table 14). This, however, was not the case when the sensitivity analysis was with respondents' class / level, as the independent variable, and respondents' opinion on "students are respected irrespective of sexual orientation" as the dependent variable. The results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 14) in this case suggest that, H_o , the null hypotheses that survey participants' stated opinions were not dependent on their class/level should be rejected (p -value is less than 0.05), thereby supporting the following research hypothesis – the opinion that a respondent gave in this particular case was dependent on his or her class/level. This means depending on the respondents class/level, they tend to agree or disagree differently on the role that a student's sexual orientation played in the respect he or she received on campus.

Table 16 and Figure 7 show the distribution of stated opinions regarding the role that sexual orientation played in the respect that a student received on campus, based on the respondents' class/level. For the variable "students are respected on campus irrespective of sexual orientation", 25 out of the 208 respondents (12.0%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of "don't know" while 93 respondents (88.0% of the survey pool) had stated

opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Specifically the results indicate that in Table 16, when “disagree” and “strongly disagree” are pooled together, the proportion of freshmen (45.0%) and juniors (42.0%), for instance, who were of the opinion that a student’s sexual orientation was a factor in the respect that he or she received on campus, was important when compared to that of seniors (21.4%) and sophomores (27.7%) who have a similar opinion.

Table 16. Respondents’ Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Sexual Orientation – Distribution by Class / Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	18	16	6	40	18	22
	%	0.0	45.0	40.0	15.0	100.0	45.0	55.0
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	8	10	32	15	65	18	47
	%	12.3	15.4	49.2	23.1	100.0	27.7	72.3
Junior	<i>n</i>	2	19	19	10	50	21	29
	%	4.0	38.0	38.0	20.0	100.0	42.0	58.0
Senior	<i>n</i>	2	4	16	6	28	6	22
	%	7.1	14.3	57.1	21.4	100.0	21.4	78.6
Total	<i>n</i>	12	51	83	37	183	63	120
	%	6.6	27.9	45.4	20.2	100.0	34.4	65.6

Fewer freshmen (55.0%) and juniors (58.0%) than sophomores (72.3%) and seniors (78.6%) were of the opinion that the respect that a student received on campus was irrespective of his or her sexual orientation. Respondents’ opinions were related to their class/level, and the differences are further illustrated in Figure 7. When the proportion of respondents with stated opinions of “strongly disagree” or “disagree” were considered, Figure 7 depicts a relative and distinctively higher proportion of respondents who were freshmen and seniors compared to the other respondents who were sophomores seniors.

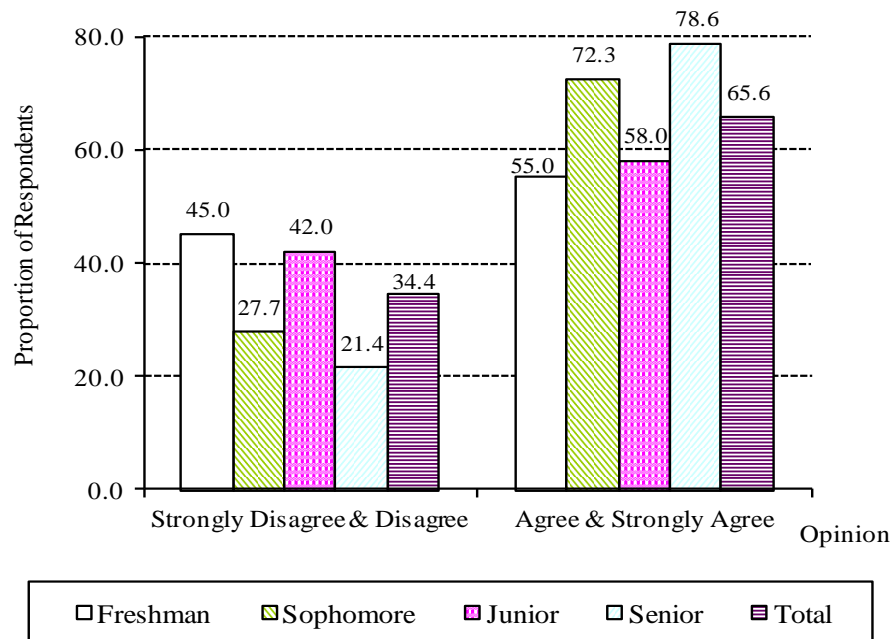


Figure 7. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding respect for students irrespective of sexual orientation

Overall, 65.6% of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that the respect that a student received on campus was irrespective of his or her sexual orientation – with the lowest proportion for freshmen (55.0%) and highest for seniors (78.6%), suggesting a wide swing in opinions regarding students’ sexual orientation and campus respect between the freshmen and senior years.

Students’ Campus Climate Perception and Experiences

Tinto (1993) and Hurtado et al. (1999), the theories that underpin this study, highlight the challenges that minority students can face at PWIs and the components from which campus climate can be examined. These include the psychological climate, for instance, issues of prejudice, and the behavioral dimension, for instance, social interactions and classroom diversity. The analysis in this section is divided into three sub-themes which

examine online survey respondents' perceptions of the campus climate at the PWI as well as their experiences. The students' perceptions are analyzed for the following sub themes:

- opinions on campus climate and inclusion
- opinions on relationships between different campus constituents
- opinions on classroom climate and related issues.

Opinion on campus climate and inclusion. Table 17 presents the summary of the chi-square test of independence for the following opinion variables (y_n) from the survey instrument with gender and or class/level as the independent variables:

- minority students' opinions are considered when important decision are made
- minority students do not have to give up their cultural beliefs to fit-in
- prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus, and
- minority students would encourage pre-freshmen and transfer students to enroll at the College

Table 17. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Perception of Campus Climate and Inclusion

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
Minority students' opinions are taken into consideration when important decisions are made on campus	6.466	2	0.039*	5.077	6	0.534
I do not have to give up my cultural beliefs in order to fit in on campus	6.617	2	0.037*			
Prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus	1.332	2	0.514	21.651	6	0.001*
I would recommend other minority students to register (transfer) for undergraduate studies at the college	1.788	2	0.409	15.634	6	0.016*

* p-value less than or equal to 0.05

The results of the chi-square test of independence suggest that H_o , the null hypotheses, should be rejected (p -values less than or equal to 0.05) in interpreting the relationship between y_n and x_n as follows:

- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not “minority students’ opinions are taken into consideration when important decisions are made,” were not statistically independent of the gender of the respondents, meaning the stated opinions were sensitive to the gender of the respondent.
- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not “minority students have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit in on campus,” were not statistically independent of the gender of the respondents, meaning the stated opinions were sensitive to the gender of the respondent.
- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not “prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus,” were not statistically independent of the class/level of the respondents, meaning the stated opinions were sensitive to the class/level of the respondent.
- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not minority students would encourage pre-freshmen and transfer students to enroll at the College were not statistically independent of the class/level of the respondents, meaning the stated opinions were sensitive to the class/level of the respondent.

Minority students’ opinions and decisions at the PWI. The distributions of survey respondents’ opinions, based on the gender, with regard to their perception of whether or not “minority students’ opinions are taken into consideration when important decisions are made”, are presented in Table 18. For this variable, 38 out of the 208 respondents (18.3%)

in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 170 respondents (81.7% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Table 18. Respondents’ Opinions on Consideration of Minority Students’ Opinions in Decision-making at the PWI – Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	16	50	47	10	123	66	57
	%	13.0	40.7	38.2	8.1	100.0	53.7	46.3
Male	<i>n</i>	14	16	17	0	47	30	17
	%	29.8	34.0	36.2	0.0	100.0	63.8	36.2
Total	<i>n</i>	30	66	64	10	170	96	74
	%	17.6	38.8	37.6	5.9	100.0	56.5	43.5

The chi-square test of independence suggests that respondents’ stated opinions in Table 18 were not statistically independent of their gender at alpha level of .05 (Table 17) – meaning the opinion of the each survey respondent was dependent on his or her gender. The outcome of the survey respondents’ opinions based on their gender is further illustrated in Figure 8, where “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “agree and “strongly agree” have been pooled together.

Figure 8 shows that a very small proportion of the survey respondents, irrespective of gender (43.5%) are of the opinion that “minority students’ opinions are considered in decision-making at the PWI.” Furthermore, Figure 8 depicts that, more male (63.8%) than female (53.7%) respondents had stated opinions of “strongly disagree” or “disagree” in their perception of the consideration of minority students’ opinions in the decision-making process at the PWI.

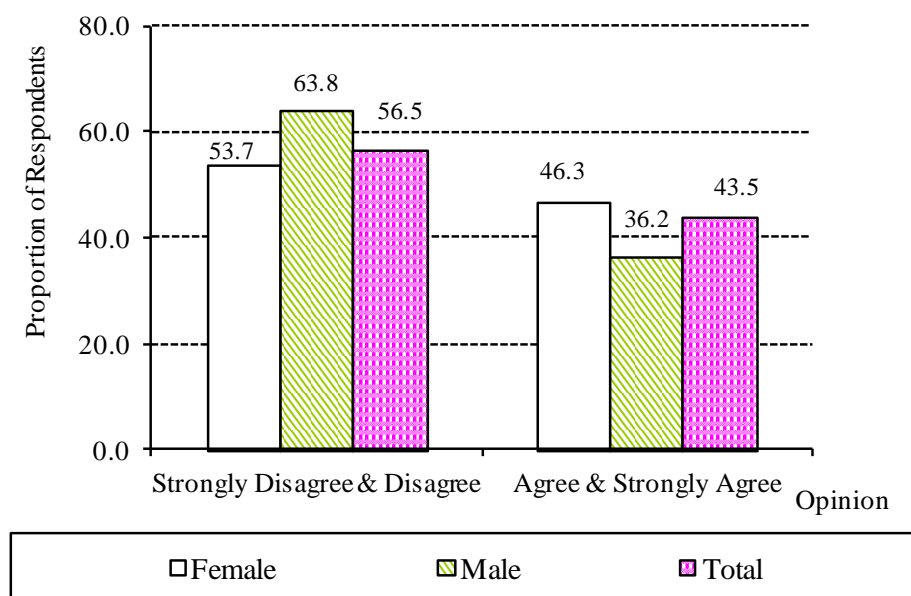


Figure 8. Opinion of respondents, by gender, regarding consideration of minority students’ opinions in decision-making

Given that a good number, 38 out of the 208 respondents (18.3%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know”, the breakdown of these respondents along gender lines was further analyzed. It is also shown that when the proportion of respondents with stated opinions of “don’t know” was considered; there were a relatively higher proportion of females (21.7% of females in total survey pool) than males (7.8% of males in total survey pool), suggesting that male respondents were more open and willing to share their opinion on whether or not minority students’ opinions were taken into consideration in the decision making process at the PWI.

The analysis of the respondents’ perceptions regarding whether or not minority students have to give up their cultural values, will shed more light on the gender bias in the appreciation of campus climate and inclusion at the PWI.

Minority students’ opinions on giving up cultural beliefs. The distributions of survey respondents’ opinions, based on the gender, with regard to their perception of whether or not minority students have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit-in at the PWI, are presented in Table A.9 in the appendix. For this variable, 9 out of the 208 respondents (4.3%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 199 respondents (95.7% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The distributions are further illustrated in Figure 9, where “strongly disagree” and “disagree” have been pooled together, and “agree and “strongly agree” have been pooled together.

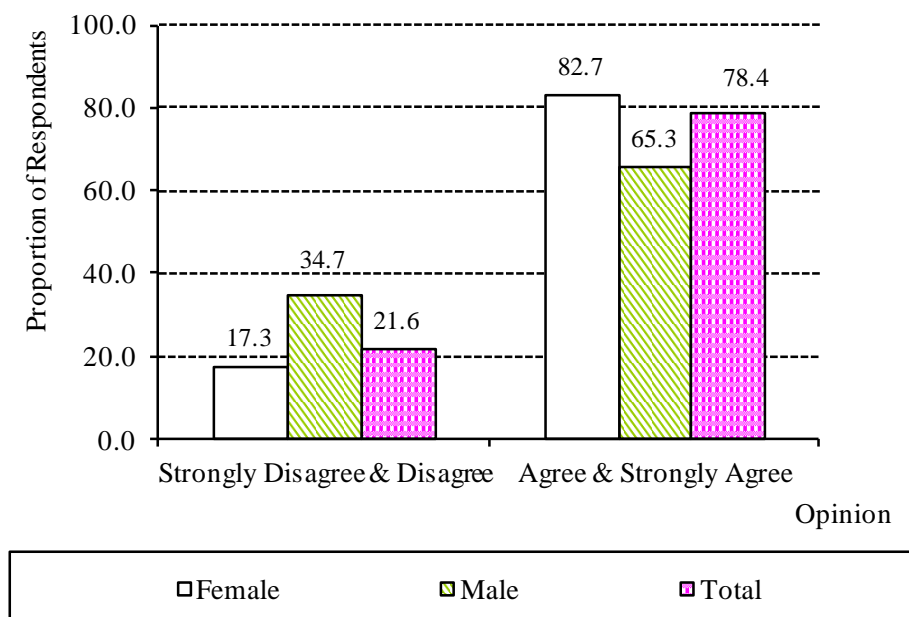


Figure 9. Opinion of respondents, by gender, regarding minority students not having to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit-in at the PWI

Respondents stated opinions in Table A.9 in the appendix and Figure 9 were not statistically independent of their gender at the 0.05 level of significance (Table 17) –

meaning the opinion of each survey respondent was dependent on his or her gender. Figure 9 depicts that a high proportion (78.4%) of respondents, overall, had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree” with respect to the notion that “minority Students do not have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit-in at the PWI.” When the gender of respondents was considered, fewer male (65.3%) than female (82.7%) respondents, had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree.” Conversely, more male (34.7%) than female (17.3%) respondents disagreed with this notion. This means a significantly higher margin of male to female respondents (a difference of 17.4%) were of the opinion that minority students had to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit in at the PWI.

While understanding the gender bias towards campus climate and inclusion can help to inform targeted policies at an institution, assessing how perceptions vary by the class / level of students can equally be very useful. The next section assesses perception of campus climate and inclusion using class/level as the independent variable and prejudice against minority students as the dependent variable.

Minority students’ perception of prejudice as a problem on campus. For the variable “prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus” 21 out of the 208 respondents (10.1%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 87 respondents (89.9% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Table 19 presents the distributions of survey respondents’ opinions, based on the class/level, when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together on the one hand, and when “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together on the other hand.

Table 19. Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Prejudice against Minority Students as a Problem on the PWI Campus – Distribution by Class/Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	4	24	8	8	44	28	16
	%	9.1	54.5	18.2	18.2	100.0	63.6	36.4
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	8	14	32	5	59	22	37
	%	13.6	23.7	54.2	8.5	86.8	37.3	62.7
Junior	<i>n</i>	10	28	12	2	52	38	14
	%	19.2	53.8	23.1	3.8	92.9	73.1	26.9
Senior	<i>n</i>	6	6	18	2	32	12	20
	%	18.8	18.8	56.3	6.3	94.1	37.5	62.5
Total	<i>n</i>	28	72	70	17	187	100	87
	%	15.0	38.5	37.4	9.1	92.6	53.5	46.5

Table 19 shows that when “prejudice against minority students” is considered as the independent variable, overall, about 50% of minority students were either agreeing or disagreeing that this variable was a problem at the PWI – while 53.5% had stated opinions of “strongly disagree or disagree”, 46.5% had stated opinions of “agree or strongly agree.” Respondents’ stated opinions in Table 19 were not statistically independent of their class/level at the 0.05 level of significance (Table 17) – meaning the opinion of each survey respondent was dependent on his or her class. Hence it is important to consider the difference in proportion of students with a given opinion, based on class.

The distribution of the stated opinions in Table 19, by class/level, are further illustrated in Figure 10, where “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “agree” and “strongly agree” have been pooled together. It is observed in Figure 10 that when the class/level of survey respondents is considered, seniors (62.5%) and sophomores (62.7%) were more inclined to think that prejudice against minority students was a problem on

campus, while Juniors (73.1%) and freshmen (63.6), on the other hand, were more inclined to think that prejudice against minority students was a not a problem on campus.

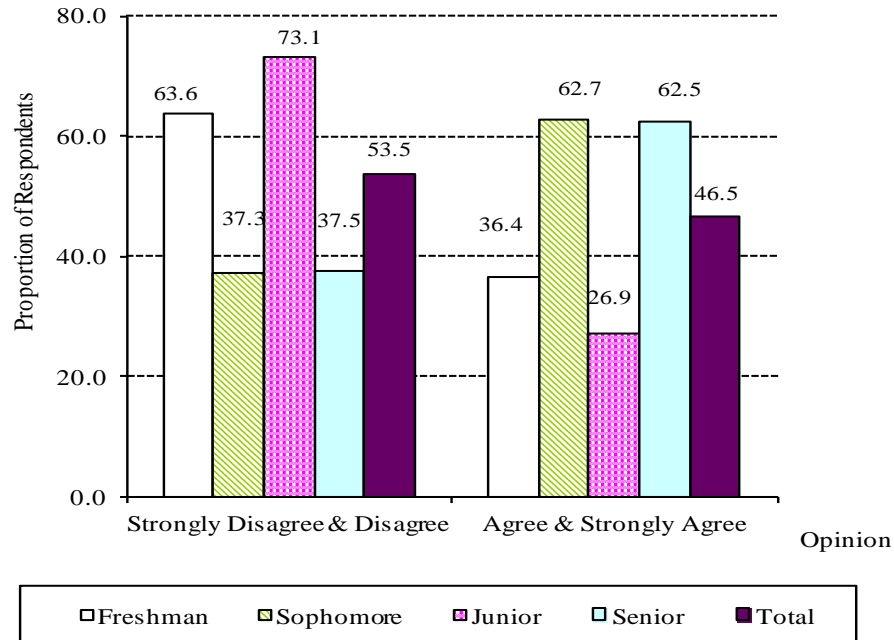


Figure 10. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding prejudice against minority students as a problem on the PWI campus

The analysis of the sensitivity to another dependent variable of interest like “minority students will encourage other students to enroll at the college,” can help to shed light on any patterns in the perceptions of survey respondents with respect to class/level.

Opinions on recommending other students to enroll at the PWI. The distributions of survey respondents’ opinions, based on class/level, with regard to their opinion on whether or not “minority students would recommend other pre-college or transfer minority students to enroll at the PWI”, are presented in Table A.10 in the appendix. For this variable 19 out of the 208 respondents (9.1%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 189 respondents (90.9% of the survey pool) had stated opinions

ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Figure 11 further illustrates the outcome of the opinions in Table 10 in the appendix where “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “agree and “strongly agree” have been pooled together.

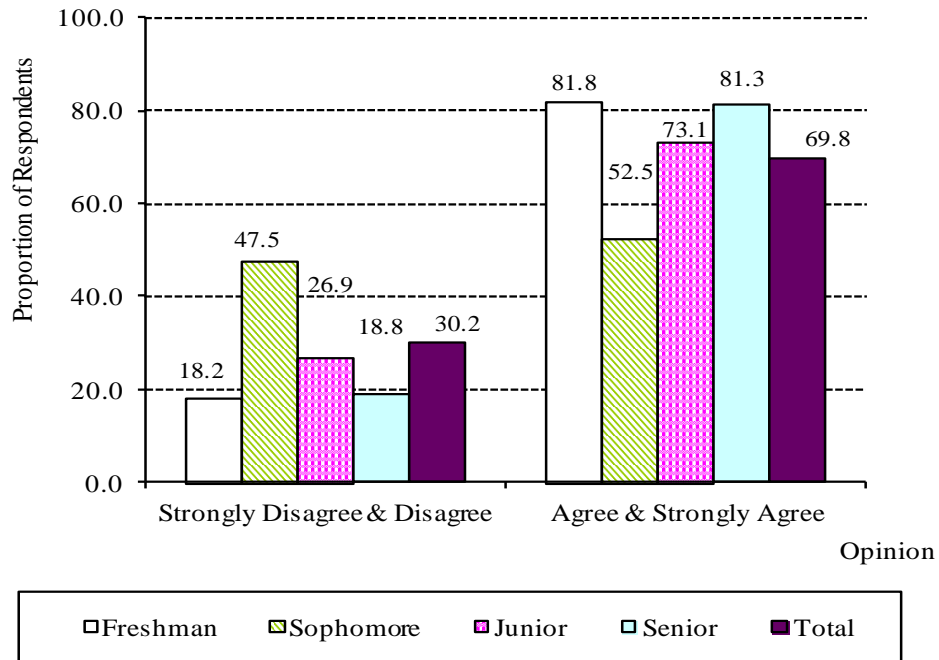


Figure 11. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding recommending other students to enroll at the PWI

The chi-square test of independence (Table 17) suggests that respondents stated opinions in Table A.10 and Figure 9 were not statistically independent of their class/level at alpha level of .05 – meaning the opinion of each survey respondent was dependent on his or her class/level. Figure 11 shows that 69.8% of respondents, overall, had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree” with respect to the notion that “minority students will encourage other students to enroll at the college.” In addition, when compared to the other classes /levels, a relatively higher proportion of respondents who were freshmen (81.8%)

and seniors (81.3%) had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree” with this notion. The proportion drops to 73.1% for juniors and is lowest for sophomores (52.5%).

Understanding the bias in respondents’ opinions towards campus climate and inclusion as a function of their different classes/levels and different gender is important. The campus climate at an institution can also be informed by the nature of the relationships between the different campus constituents. This is explored in the next section.

Opinion on relationships between different campus constituents. To assess minority students’ perception of the relationships between different campus constituents at the PWI, the following opinion variables (y_n) from the survey instrument were considered:

- white students are warm and open toward minority students
- white faculty are friendly toward minority students
- white staff are friendly toward minority students
- white administrators are friendly toward minority students
- minority students of different background more friendly than white students

Table 20 presents the summary of the chi-square test of independence for the variables under consideration. Table 20 suggests, in the case of the relationship between all the opinion variables and respondents’ gender, that H_o , the null hypotheses, should not be rejected (all p -values are greater than 0.05). This means the gender of the survey respondents played no role in the expression of their opinions as regards minority students’ interactions with different campus constituents. Table A.11 in the appendix shows the detailed distribution of survey respondents with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” based on their gender, as regards interactions with different campus constituents.

Table 20. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Opinion on Interaction with Different Campus Constituents

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
White students I come across on campus are warm and open to minority students	3.465	2	0.177			
White faculty I come across are friendly toward minority students	3.902	2	0.142			
White staff I come across are friendly toward minority students	0.669	2	0.716			
White College Administrators I come across are friendly towards minority students	0.180	2	0.914	21.199	6	0.002*
Minority students of a different ethnic background are more likely to be friendly to me than White students	4.118	2	0.128	6.885	6	0.332

* *p-value* less than or equal to 0.05

Table 21 summarizes the overall distribution of the opinions of the survey respondents for the variables under consideration, when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” as well as “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together.

Table 21. Summary of Respondents’ Opinions on Minority Students’ Interaction with Different Campus Constituents

	Strongly Disagree & Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)
White students are warm and open towards minority students	35.3	69.5
White faculty are friendly toward minority students	25.4	74.6
White staff are friendly toward minority students	29.7	70.3
White administrators are friendly toward minority students	32.8	67.2
Minority students of different background more friendly than White students	38.9	61.1

Table 21 is further illustrated in Figure 12. Irrespective of gender, or any other attributes, survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had warm and friendly interactions with different campus constituents in the following proportions: White faculty (74.6%), White students (69.5%), and White staff (70.3%), and White administrators (67.2%), and White administrators (67.2%).

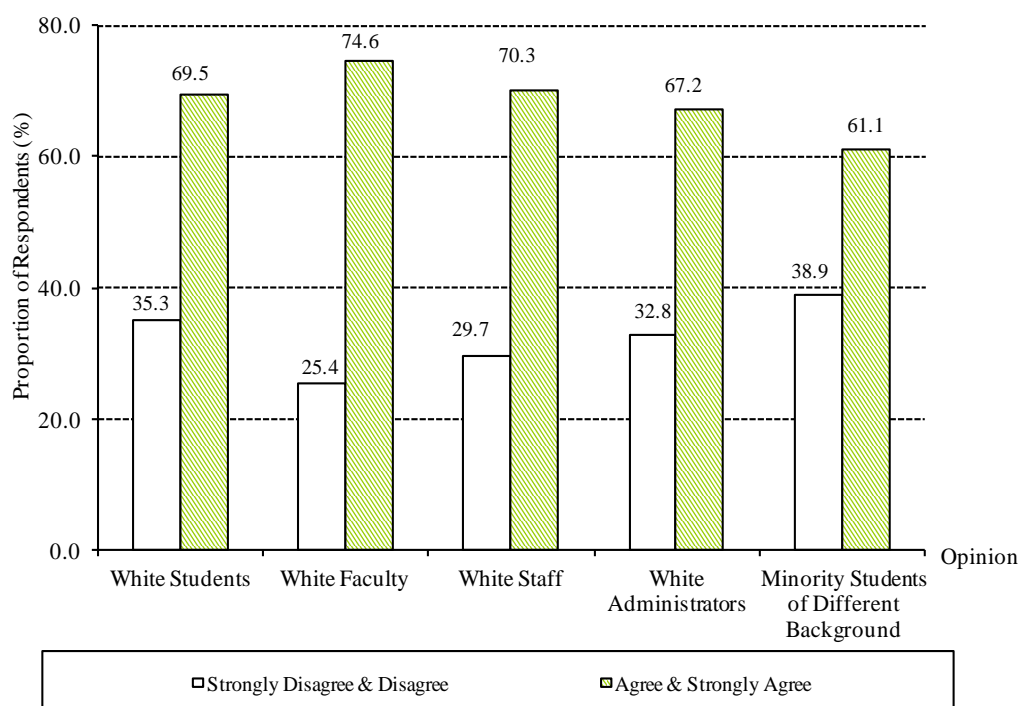


Figure 12. Opinion of respondents regarding the warm and friendly nature of minority students’ interaction with different campus constituents at the PWI

The results in Figure 12 suggest that the majority of minority students perceived good interaction between minority students and the White members of the different constituencies of the institution. Figure 12 also shows that 61.1% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that minority students of a different ethnic background are

friendlier to other minority students than fellow White students, as opposed to 38.9% who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed.”

The chi-square test of independence (Table 20) also suggests that respondents’ stated opinions for the variable “White college administrators I come across are friendly towards minority students,” were not statistically independent of their class. For this variable 19 out of the 208 respondents (9.1%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 189 respondents (90.9% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Table 22 presents the outcome of respondents’ opinions for this specific opinion variable, by class.

Table 22. Respondents’ Opinions on Minority Students’ Warm and Friendly Interaction with Administrators on the PWI Campus – Distribution by Class/Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	8	25	8	41	8	33
	%	0.0	19.5	61.0	19.5	100.0	19.5	80.5
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	2	18	30	6	56	20	36
	%	3.6	32.1	53.6	10.7	100.0	35.7	64.3
Junior	<i>n</i>	2	14	33	7	56	16	40
	%	3.6	25.0	58.9	12.5	100.0	28.6	71.4
Senior	<i>n</i>	4	14	14	4	36	18	18
	%	11.1	38.9	38.9	11.1	100.0	50.0	50.0
Total	<i>n</i>	8	54	102	25	189	62	127
	%	4.2	28.6	54.0	13.2	100.0	32.8	67.2

For the opinion variable, “White college administrators I come across are friendly towards minority students,” seniors and sophomores are shown in Table 22 to have a relatively low proportion of respondents agreeing to the statement. This is illustrated in Figure 13.

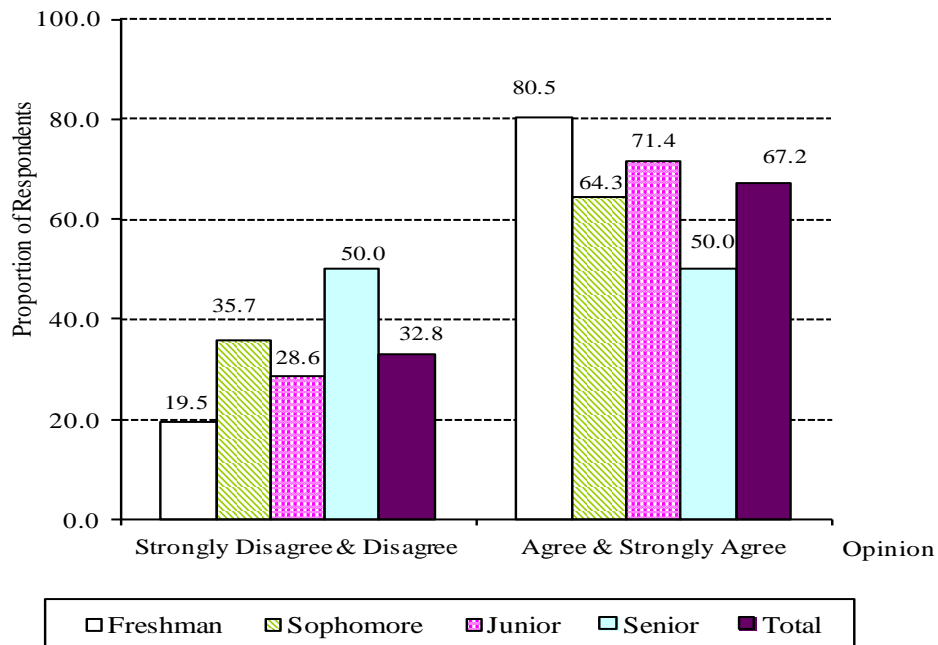


Figure 13. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding warm and friendly nature of minority students' interaction with administrators at the PWI

Figure 13 depicts that, when the sensitivity to the class/level of respondents was considered, a high proportion of respondents who were freshmen (80.5%) and juniors (71.4%) had stated opinions of “agree” or “strongly agree” with respect to the notion that “White college administrators I come across are friendly towards minority students.” The proportion dropped to 64.3% for sophomores and 50.0% for seniors. In addition, it is also shown that 50.0% of respondents who were seniors “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed.”

Opinion on classroom climate and related issues. To assess minority students' perception of classroom climate and related issues at the PWI, the following opinion variables (y_n) from the survey instrument were considered as good proxies to gauge the nature of the classroom climate:

- I feel comfortable to discuss with faculty on academic and other personal issues

- in my classes, I feel that faculty ignore my comments and questions
- as a minority student, I feel more obliged to prove myself to faculty

The chi-square test of independence yielded relevant p -values for all the opinion variables, with gender as the independent variable. Table 23 presents the summary of the chi-square test of independence for the variables under consideration.

Table 23. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Perception of Classroom Climate and Related Issues

X * Opinion Variable	$X = \text{Gender}$ Pearson Chi-Square		
	Value	df	p - value
I feel comfortable to discuss with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class	6.046	2	0.049*
In my classes, I feel that faculty ignore my comments and questions	2.872	2	0.238
As a minority student, I feel more obliged to prove myself to faculty	3.108	2	0.211

* p -value less than or equal to 0.05

The results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 23) suggest that H_o , the null hypotheses, should be rejected (p -values less than or equal to 0.05) in interpreting the relationship between y_n and gender, when y_n is “I feel comfortable to discuss with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class.” In other words, the respondents’ stated opinions with regard to whether or not they felt comfortable to discuss academic and personal issues with faculty outside of class time were sensitive, or not statistically independent, to their gender.

Table 23 also shows that the other two opinion variables – “in my class, I feel that faculty ignore my questions” and “ as a minority student I feel more obliged to prove

myself,” were statistically independent of the gender of the respondents (p -values greater than 0.05, and hence do not reject H_o).

Table A.12 in the appendix shows the detailed distribution of the survey respondents with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” based on their gender, with regard to the three opinion variables under consideration. Table 24 summarizes the overall distribution of the opinions of the survey respondents for these variables when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together, and when “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together.

Table 24. Summary of Respondents’ Opinions on Classroom Climate-related Variables

	Strongly Disagree & Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)
Comfortable to Discuss with Faculty on Academic and Personal Issues Outside of Classroom	28.3	71.7
Faculty Ignore Comments and Questions in My Classes	83.6	16.4
More Obligated to Prove Self to Faculty as a Minority Student	37.5	62.5

The overall outcomes of the opinions of the survey respondents, for all the opinion variables, are further illustrated in Figure 14. Irrespective of gender, 71.7 % (stated opinion of “agree or strongly agree”) of survey respondents felt they were fairly comfortable discussing with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class time. A vast majority, 83.6%, “strongly disagreed or disagreed” that faculty ignored their questions and comments in the classes that they took.

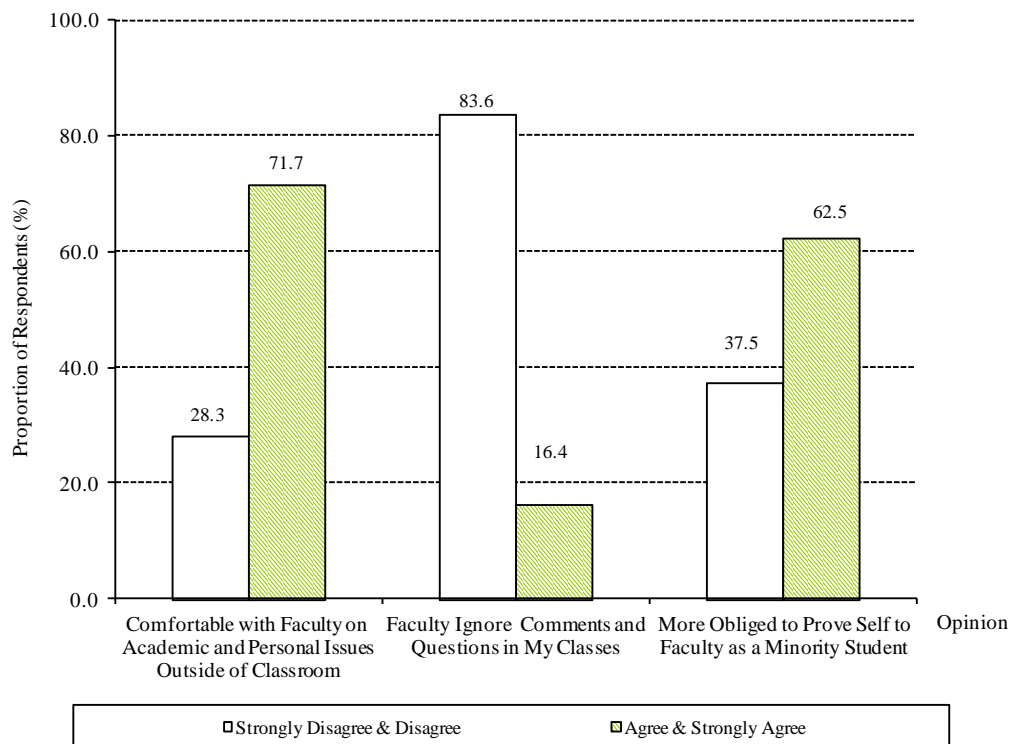


Figure 14. Opinion of respondents regarding classroom climate-related variables at the PWI

It is also shown on Figure 14 that an equally important proportion of the survey respondents, 62.5%, were of the opinion (“agreed” or “strongly agreed”) that, as minority students they were more obliged to prove themselves to faculty.

The results of the chi-square test of independence (Table 23) also suggests that a survey respondent’s stated opinion with regard to whether or not he or she felt comfortable to discuss academic and personal issues with faculty outside of class time was sensitive to his or her gender – meaning the opinion of each survey respondent, for this specific opinion variable, was dependent on his or her gender. Figure 26 shows the distribution of respondents’ opinions, by gender, for this specific opinion variable.

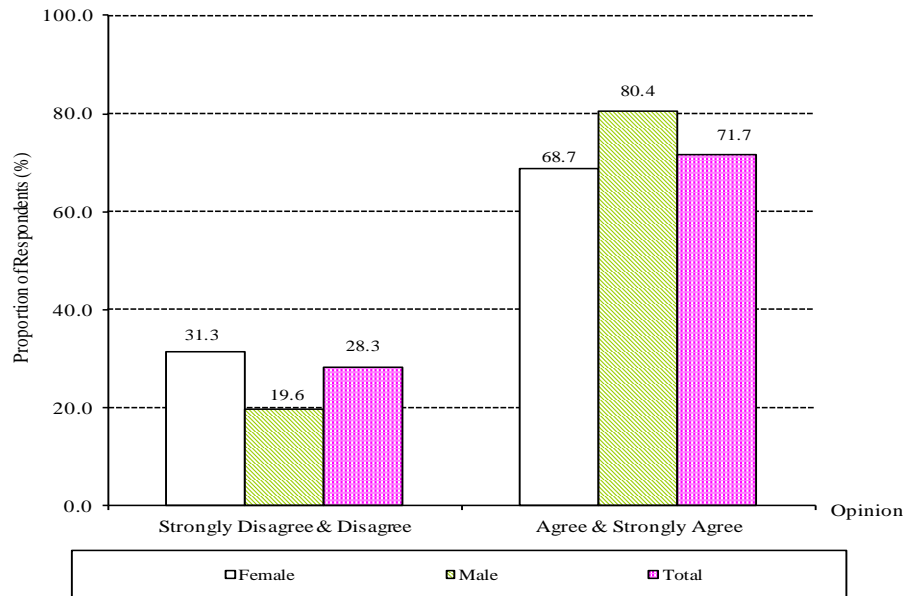


Figure 15. Opinion of respondents, by gender, regarding comfort of minority students with faculty on academic and other issues outside class

Figure 15 depicts that when the gender of respondents was considered with respect to the opinion variable, “I feel comfortable to discuss with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class,” a higher proportion of male respondents (80.4%) to female respondents (68.7%) had stated opinions of “agree or strongly agree”. The level of accessibility of students to faculty can be a very important factor in enhancing students’ academic success and overall college experience. Faculty and other campus constituents can help direct students to resources and encourage them to be more engaged on campus.

Students’ Engagement in Activities and Satisfaction with Campus Resources

Hurtado et al. (1999), which underpins the theoretical foundation of this study, highlights campus involvement and diversity as one of the behavioral dimensions and components from which the perception of campus climate can be examined. The level of engagement of minority students in diversity-related activities and the satisfaction with the

services received from campus resources are therefore important components of this study. Students' perceptions are analyzed in this section under the following sub themes:

- students' engagement in diversity activities on campus
- satisfaction with services offered by different programs on campus

Students' engagement in diversity activities on campus. Survey respondents were asked to select from a Likert-type scale, the number of diversity related activities they attended on average in the course of the academic year. Table 25 presents the summary of the *chi-square test* of independence for this opinion variable.

Table 25. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Frequency of Participation at Diversity-related Activities in an Academic Year

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
On average how many diversity activities have you attended on campus in the 2009/2010 academic year?	2.190	2	0.534	22.082	6	0.009*

* *p*-value less than or equal to 0.05

The chi-square test of independence suggest, in the case of the relationship between the respondents' opinions and their gender, that H_o , the null hypotheses, should not be rejected (all *p*-values are greater than 0.05), while H_o should be rejected when class/level is the independent variable. This means opinions with regard to number of diversity activities attended in the academic year were statistically independent of their gender, but dependent on their class/level, at the 5% level of significance. Tables A.13 in the appendix and Table 26 show the detailed distribution of the opinions of survey respondents, based on their gender, and class/level respectively.

Table 26. Respondents' Opinions on Average Number of Diversity Activities per Academic Year – Distribution by Class/Level

		None	1 - 3 Times	4 - 6 Times	7 Times and Above	Total
Freshman	<i>n</i>	6	6	20	14	46
	%	13.0	13.0	43.5	30.4	100.0
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	14	19	11	24	68
	%	20.6	27.9	16.2	35.3	100.0
Junior	<i>n</i>	12	12	20	14	58
	%	20.7	20.7	34.5	24.1	100.0
Senior	<i>n</i>	4	6	6	20	36
	%	11.1	16.7	16.7	55.6	100.0
Total	<i>n</i>	36	43	57	72	208
	%	17.3	20.7	27.4	34.6	100.0

Figure 16 illustrates the distribution of the stated opinions in Tables A.13 in the appendix and Table 26, when the overall opinions of survey respondents are considered, irrespective of gender or class/level.

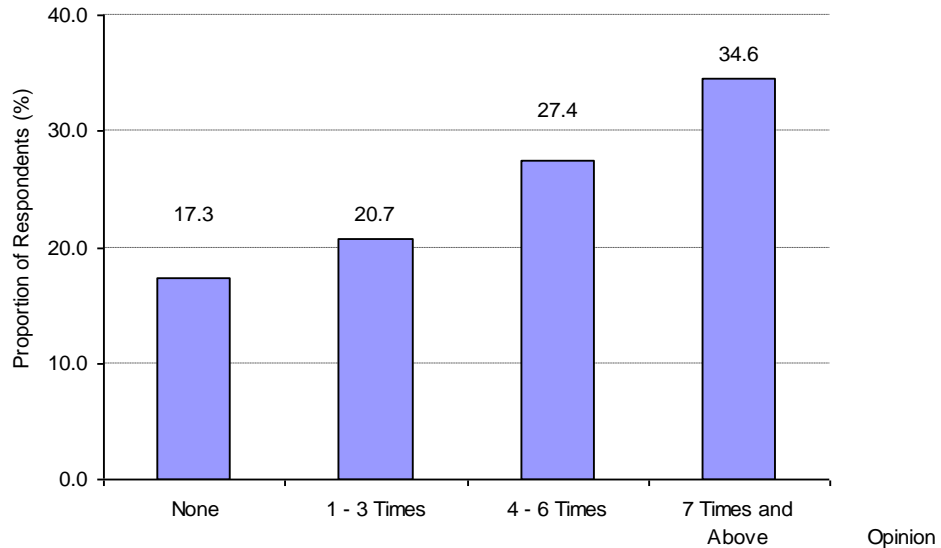


Figure 16. Opinion of respondents regarding average number of diversity activities per academic year at the PWI

The distribution of the stated opinions by class/level (Table 26), are further illustrated in Figure 17.

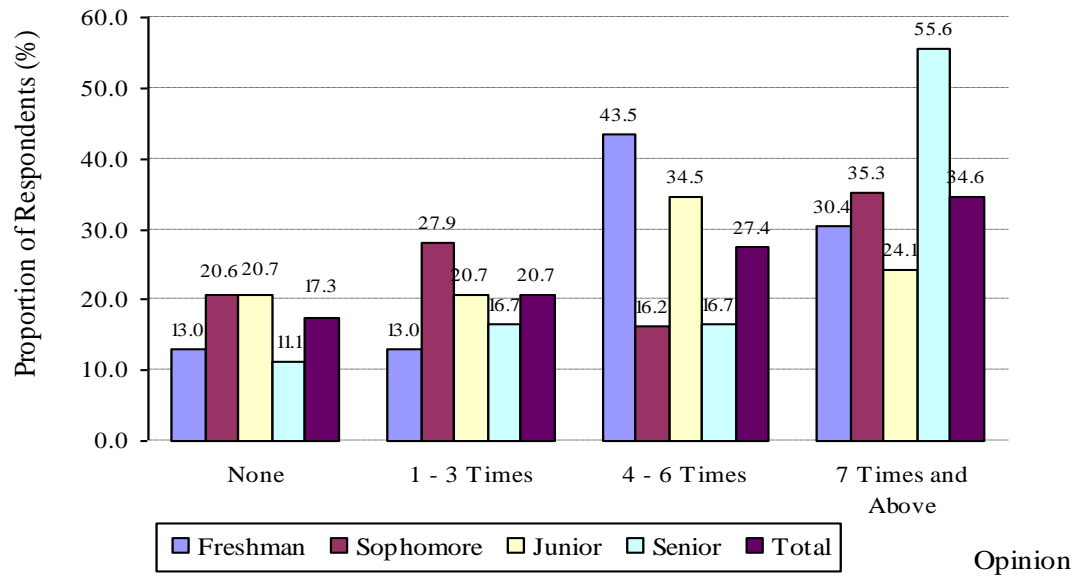


Figure 17. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding average number of diversity activities per academic year at the PWI

Figures 16 and 17 show that, overall, only 17.3% of the survey respondents did not attend any diversity activities in the course of the academic year while 82.7% indicated they attended at least one activity. Figures 16 and 17 also show that 34.6% of the survey respondents attended seven or more diversity activities in an academic year.

The chi-square test of independence rejects the null hypothesis that stated opinions were independent of class / level at alpha level of .05, suggesting that the pattern of the stated opinions in Figure 17 were dependent on the class/level of the respondents – a higher proportion of seniors (55.6%), compared to the other classes/levels, attended on average seven or more diversity-related activities in the course of the academic year. Freshmen had the second best performance with 43.5% of respondents stating that they attended on

average four to six diversity-related activities. Sophomores (20.6%) and juniors (20.7%) stated they did not attend any diversity activity at all as opposed to a relatively lower proportion of freshmen (13.0%) and seniors (11.1%). The results suggest a relatively more timid participation in diversity-related activities on campus by sophomores and juniors.

The next sub-section explores minority students' stated opinions with respect to their satisfaction with the services offered by some of the programs or offices on campus.

Satisfaction with services offered by different programs on campus. Table 27 shows the results of the chi-square test of independence for the opinion variables (y_n) considered in the analysis in this sub-section, and for which appropriate p -values were obtained.

Table 27. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Respondents' Perception of how Different Programs and Services Meet Minority Students' Needs

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender			X = Class / Level		
	Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	p - value	Pearson Chi-Square Value	df	p - value
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic Advisement	1.771	2	0.092			
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic Computer Services	2.580	2	0.275			
I am satisfied with the services offered by Career Development Center	1.471	2	0.479	7.698	6	0.261
I am satisfied with the services offered by Dining Services	6.952	2	0.031*	12.608	6	0.050*
I am satisfied with the services offered by Office of Multicultural Student Affairs	4.012	2	0.135			
I am satisfied with the services offered by Residence Life and Housing	8.390	2	0.015	21.275	6	0.002*
I am satisfied with the services offered by Students Accounts	14.750	2	0.056	13.251	6	0.039*

* p -value less than or equal to 0.05

The results of the chi-square test of independence suggest that H_o , the null hypotheses, should be rejected (p -values less than or equal to 0.05) in interpreting the relationship between y_n (the stated opinion variables) and x_n (gender, or class / level) as follows:

- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not respondents were satisfied with the services offered by the Dining Services were not statistically independent of the gender and the class/level of the respondents. The stated opinions varied depending on whether or not the respondent was male or female. The stated opinion was also sensitive to the respondent's class/level.
- the stated opinions with regard to whether or not respondents were satisfied with the services offered by the Residence Life and Housing and by Student Accounts were not statistically independent of the class/level of the respondents. The respondents stated opinions varied depending on whether or not they were freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors.

Tables A.14 and A.15 in the appendix show the detailed distribution of survey respondents with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” based on their gender and class/level respectively, with regard to whether or not they were satisfied with the services provided by the selected programs on campus. Table 28 summarizes the overall distribution of the opinions of the survey respondents for the variables under consideration, when “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are pooled together, and when “agree” and “strongly agree” are pooled together. The overall outcomes of the opinions of the survey respondents in Table 28, for all the opinion variables under consideration, are further illustrated in Figure 18.

Table 28. Summary of Respondents’ Opinions on Minority Students’ Satisfaction with Services Offered by Different Programs on Campus

	Strongly Disagree & Disagree (%)	Agree & Strongly Agree (%)
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic Advisement	6.0	94.0
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic & Computer Services	8.8	91.2
I am satisfied with the services offered by Career Development Center	14.0	86.0
I am satisfied with the services offered by Dining Services	28.4	71.6
I am satisfied with the services offered by Financial Aids Office	27.0	73.0
I am satisfied with the services offered by Office of Multicultural Student Affairs	6.1	93.9
I am satisfied with the services offered by Residence Life & Housing	22.0	78.0
I am satisfied with the services offered by Student Accounts	15.6	84.4

It is shown on Figure 18 that, irrespective of gender, class, or any other attributes, the selected programs can be grouped into 3 categories (when “agree and strongly agree” are considered) – programs for which more than 90% of respondents indicated satisfaction with services received, programs for which about 85% were satisfied, and programs for which less than 80% were satisfied, as follows:

- survey respondents were satisfied with the services received from Academic Advisement (94.0%), Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (93.9%) and from the Academic and Computer Services (91.2%)
- survey respondents were satisfied with the services received from Career Development Center (86.0%) and from Student Accounts (84.4%), and

- survey respondents were satisfied with the services received from Residence Life and Housing (78.0%), Financial Aids Office (73.0%) and from Dining Services (71.6%)

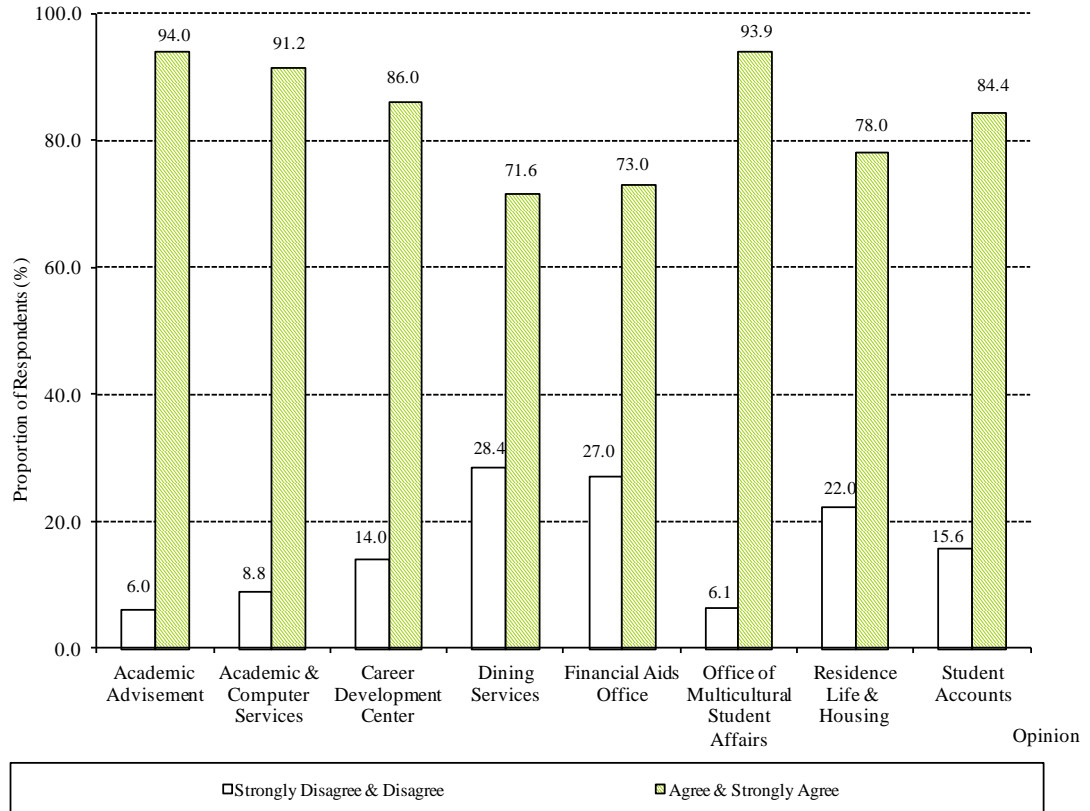


Figure 18. Opinion of respondents regarding minority students' satisfaction with services offered by different programs on campus

Dining Services and Residence Life and Housing are very important components in any campus community, and are usually the most used by students at any one time.

Minority students' stated opinions on whether or not they were satisfied with the services received from these departments can be very critical in defining the opinions they have of the campus climate at the PWI. The results of the chi-square test of independence (Table

27) suggests that survey respondents' stated opinion were statistically independent to their gender ($p \leq 0.05$) in the case of the Dining Services, and also statistically independent to class/level ($p \leq 0.05$) for both the Dining Services and Residence Life and Housing. Participants' opinions are further illustrated and explored in Figures 19, 20, and 21.

Figure 19, shows the distribution of respondents' opinions, by gender, with respect to the opinion variable, "I am satisfied with the services offered by the Dining Services." For this variable a significant number of the respondents, 53 out of the 208 (25.48%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of "don't know." Of the remainder 155 respondents (75.52% of the survey pool), Figure 19 shows that while 71.6% of the respondents, irrespective of gender, had as stated opinion "agree or strongly agree," more female (72.7%) than male (68.9%) respondents were inclined to have this stated opinion.

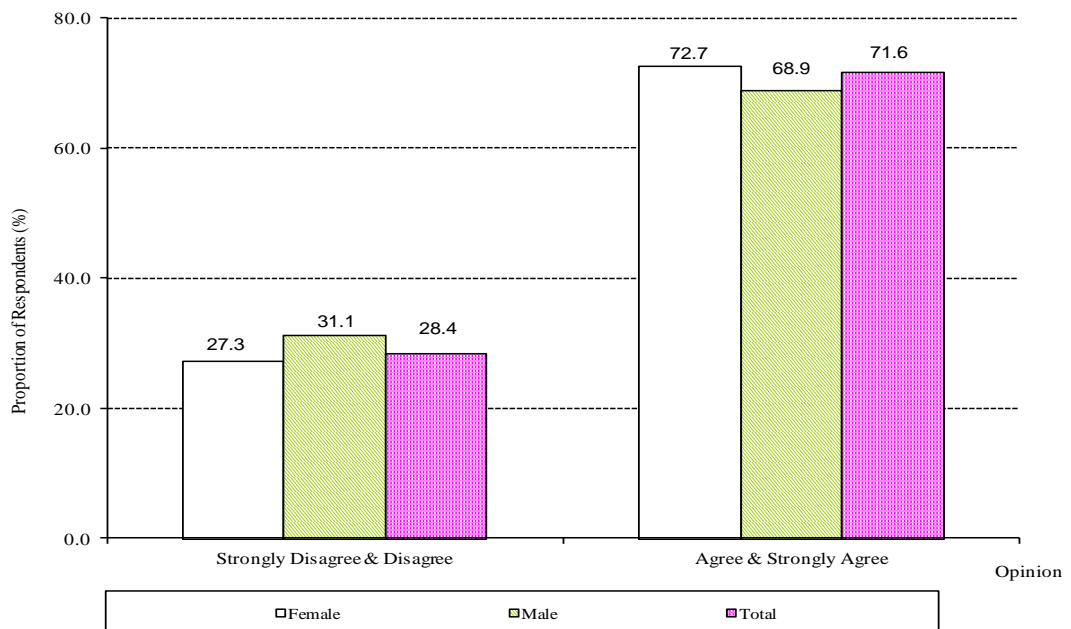


Figure 19. Opinion of respondents, by gender, regarding minority students' satisfaction with services offered by Dining Services at the PWI

Figure 19 also shows that more male respondents (31.1%) than female respondents (27.3%) had as stated opinion “strongly disagree or disagree,” with respect to the services received from the Dining Services. This gender bias in the opinions can be very useful in further exploring strategies to better serve minority students at the PWI.

Figure 20 further shows the distribution in Figure 19 with class as the independent variable. Figure 20 shows that for the opinion variable, “I am satisfied with the services offered by the Dining Services,” the proportion of seniors with stated opinion “agree or strongly agree,” was far lower than the proportion of students in the other classes – seniors (53.8%), juniors (72.7%), sophomores (82.2%), and freshmen (70.0%). Seniors (46.2%) were also the highest proportion of respondents who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed.”

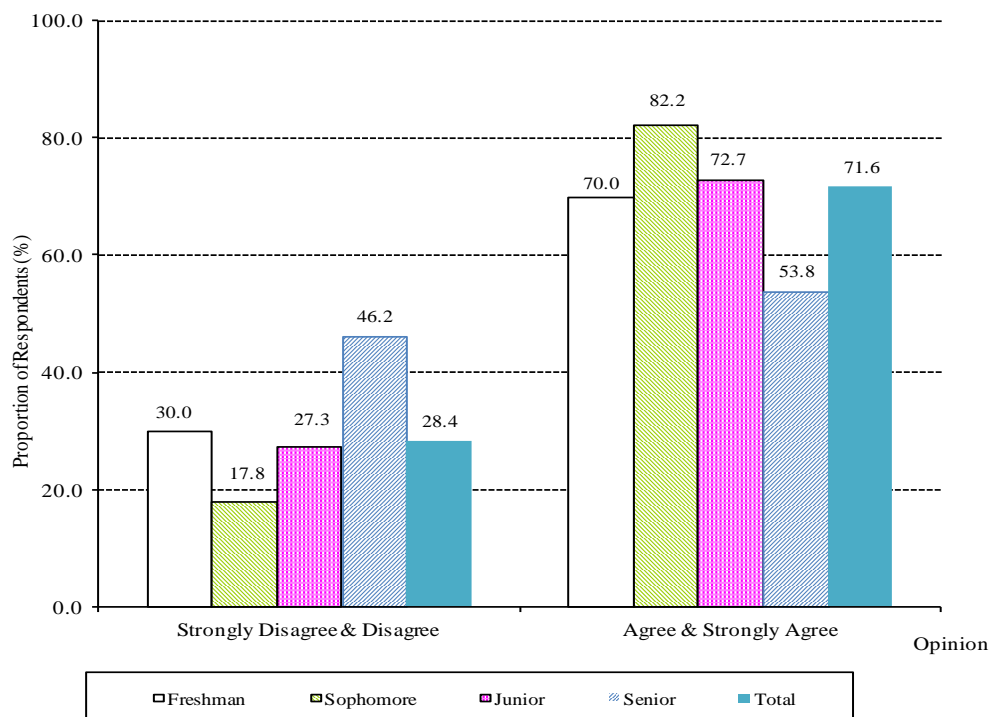


Figure 20. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding minority students’ satisfaction with services offered by Dining Services at the PWI

Figure 21 shows the distribution of respondents' opinions, by class, with respect to the opinion variable, "I am satisfied with the services offered by Residence Life and Housing." For this variable a significant number of the respondents, 90 out of the 208 (43.27%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of "don't know." Of the remainder 118 respondents (56.73% of the survey pool), Figure 21 shows that, proportion-wise, fewer seniors (62.5%) and sophomores (62.5%) had as stated opinion "agree or strongly agree," – as opposed to juniors (85.0%) and freshmen (93.3%).

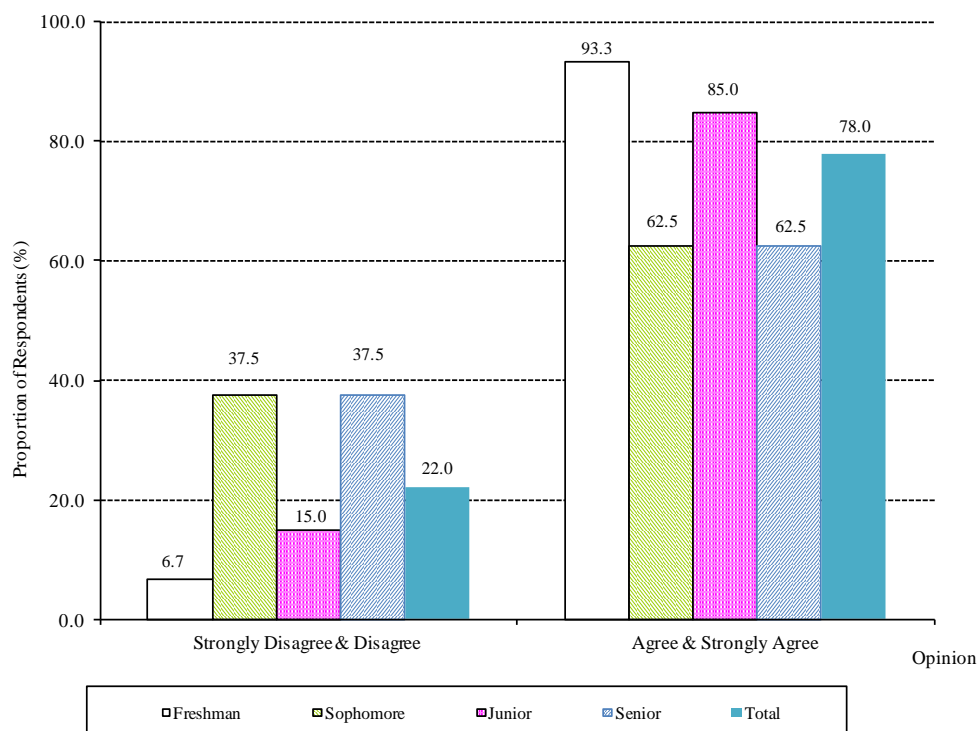


Figure 21. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding minority students' satisfaction with services offered by Residence Life and Housing at the PWI

The differences in opinions from survey respondents who are seniors or sophomore, on the one hand, and those who are juniors or freshmen, on the other hand, can be further

explored to inform policies on campus climate-related issues at the PWI such as minority students' college persistence.

Students' Opinions on College Persistence in Relation to Campus Climate

Another important component of this study is the analysis of minority students' opinions of campus climate-related variables that could have a bearing on their persistence towards graduation at the PWI. Table 29 shows the results of the chi-square test of independence for the opinion variable (y_n) from the survey instrument, considered in the analysis in this sub-section, and for which appropriate p -values were obtained.

Table 29. Summary of Chi-square Independence Test for Perception of Campus Climate and College Persistence

X * Opinion Variable	X = Gender Pearson Chi-Square			X = Class / Level Pearson Chi-Square		
	Value	df	p - value	Value	df	p - value
I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school	0.772	2	0.680	22.368	6	0.001*

The results of the chi-square test of independence suggest that H_o , the null hypotheses, should be rejected (p -values less than or equal to 0.05) in interpreting the relationship between y_n (the stated opinion variables) and x_n (gender, or class / level) as follows:

- for the opinion variable, “I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school,” respondents' stated opinions were not statistically independent of their class/level.

For this variable 22 out of the 208 respondents (10.6%) in the survey pool had stated opinions of “don’t know” while 186 respondents (89.4% of the survey pool) had stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Table 30 presents the outcome of respondents’ opinions for this specific opinion variable, by class. Tables A.16 in the appendix and Table 30 show the detailed distribution of the opinions of survey respondents with stated opinions ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” based on their gender, and class/level respectively.

Table 30. Summary of Respondents’ Opinions on Campus Climate and Persistence-related Variables – Distribution by Class/Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	8	16	16	6	46	24	22
	%	17.4	34.8	34.8	13.0	100.0	52.2	47.8
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	10	11	26	14	61	21	40
	%	16.4	18.0	42.6	23.0	100.0	34.4	65.6
Junior	<i>n</i>	16	18	9	6	49	34	15
	%	32.7	36.7	18.4	12.2	100.0	69.4	30.6
Senior	<i>n</i>	8	4	12	6	30	12	18
	%	26.7	13.3	40.0	20.0	100.0	40.0	60.0
Total	<i>n</i>	42	49	63	32	186	91	95
	%	22.6	26.3	33.9	17.2	100.0	48.9	51.1

The overall outcomes of the opinions of the survey respondents (Table 30) for the opinion variable under consideration are further illustrated in Figure 22. It is shown in Figure 22 that, irrespective of gender, class, or any other attributes, almost half the number of respondents have stated opinions of “agree or strongly agree” and “strongly disagree or disagree” for the opinion variable, “I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out

of College or transferring to a different school”: stated opinions of “agree or strongly agree” were expressed by 51.1% of respondents, while 48.9% have stated opinions of “strongly disagree or disagree.”

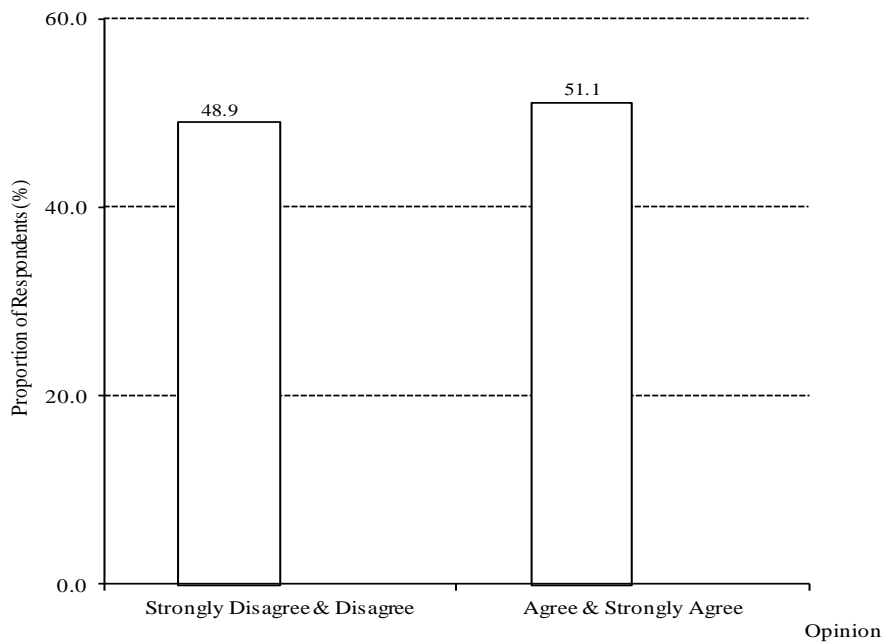


Figure 22. Opinion of respondents regarding campus climate and persistence-related variables

The distribution of the stated opinions by class (Table 30), are further illustrated in Figure 23. The chi-square test of independence (Table 29) rejects the null hypothesis that stated opinions were independent of class/level at the alpha level of .05, suggesting that the pattern of the stated opinions in Figure 23 were dependent on the class/level of the respondents. For the opinion variable, “I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school,” it is shown on Figure 23 that, the respondents’

opinions, based on their class/level, can be grouped into 3 categories when the stated opinions of “agree and strongly agree” are considered.

- proportion-wise, 65.6% of sophomores had as stated opinion “agree or strongly agree”
- proportion-wise, 60.0% of seniors had as stated opinion “agree or strongly agree,” and
- proportion-wise, 47.8% of freshmen and 30.6% of juniors had as stated opinion “agree or strongly agree”

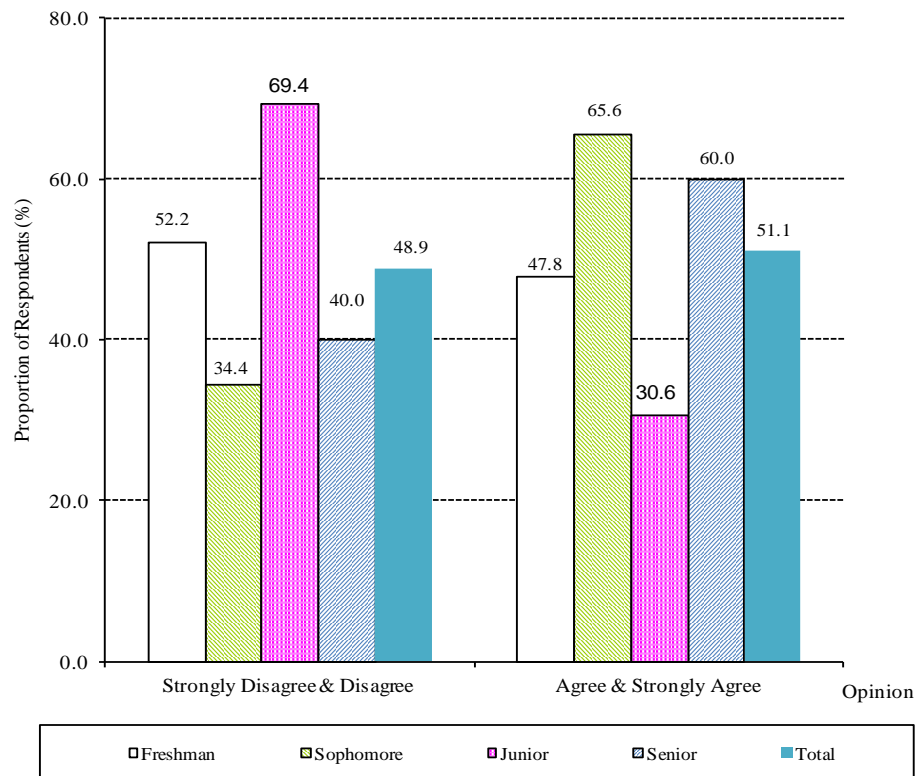


Figure 23. Opinion of respondents, by class, regarding awareness of complaints about unfair treatments from minority students and thoughts of DO&T

It is also shown in Figure 23 that higher proportions of juniors (69.4%), and freshmen (52.2%) had as stated opinion “strongly disagree or disagree”, when compared to seniors (40.0%) and sophomores (34.3%). The results from the analysis of focus group interviews can help to provide important insights into the findings of the quantitative analysis of the minority students’ perceptions of campus climate related issues.

Results from Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Interviews

Another dimension to this study was to use a qualitative research approach to analyze the perceptions of minority students vis-à-vis campus climate related issues at the PWI. Like the foregoing quantitative analysis of the on-line opinion survey, the analysis in this section is informed by the theoretical framework of this study underpinned by Tinto (1993) and Hurtado et al. (1999). This section of the study is organized under the following sub-headings:

- perception of campus diversity and inclusion
- faculty, staff, and student relationships
- level of use and satisfaction with campus resource
- suggestions for improvement of campus climate

Perception of Campus Diversity and Inclusion

The analysis under this sub-section was addressed under the following broad themes from the focus group interviews: (a) perception of campus diversity, and (b) perception of campus inclusion.

Perception of campus diversity. A recurrent theme from the focus group interviews in relation to minority students’ perception of the campus climate at the PWI was the fact that the campus was not diverse. The different variants of this expression

included: “the lack of faculty and staff of color”, “few students of color”, and “the campus is somewhat diverse but still struggling with issues of inclusion”. Most of the participants, in the different focus group sessions, for instance, expressed their frustration with the fact that the campus is not racially diverse. The phrase “the campus is not diverse” was very recurrent. One participant gave the following analogy in reference to the level of diversity at the College: “It is like; you take five pounds of salt and add a grain of pepper in it, that’s how much diversity we have ... it sometimes, gets kind of depressing.”

All participants identified with the fact that there were very few minority faculty and staff on campus. Some participants noted they take classes mostly from White faculty, who oftentimes overlook the fact that there are very few minority students in the class, and the learning environment at times was very challenging. One participant noted: “Most of my professors are White. Hardly have I taken a class from a professor of color who could serve as a role model to me and other students of color.” The participants stressed the need for the recruitment of more faculty and staff from minority backgrounds to provide a sense of identity and serve as role models to minority students. Participants also felt that many students will be attracted to the College if they had the sense, especially from the current students, that the campus was sufficiently diverse. One female participant noted for instance that she became interested in pursuing admission to the College because she saw a minority student on one of the brochures of the College information package. In addition to the sense of enrolling in a diversity-conscious institution, there were also recurrent themes related to participants’ perception of campus inclusion at the College.

Perception of campus inclusion. The focus group interviews also portrayed the participants’ perception of their sense of inclusion as an integral part of the campus. The

recurrent themes from the interview sessions portrayed the sense that minority students at the PWI felt they were compelled to deal with a campus climate that was not overtly inclusive. The recurrent themes gleaned from the interviews include: “feel like an outsider”; “dealing with stereotypical comments, discrimination, and racism”; “unintelligent”; and “lack of understanding of minority students’ issues”.

Participants expressed the difficulties they often face as a result of being the only minority student involved in a college-centered activity within and without the classroom setting, especially the feeling of “being an outsider”. One participant noted that: “My experience, especially in the classroom, has always been one of discomfort because in almost all my classes, I am the only minority in class or in my major.” This sentiment was expressed by the students in a variety of ways. The phrase “I feel like an outsider,” was very recurrent. Participants noted that circumstances around them always made them feel like outsiders. In the words of a participant: “It sometimes gets kind of depressing. I feel like an outsider. No matter how much I try, I am always going to look at the inside and feel like an outsider. No matter how hard I try I will always feel like the glass is always up against me and I can never be part of this campus.”

This “outsider feeling” posed several challenges to the students, and was further amplified in the classroom by participants’ perception of the “insensitivity” of some professors. Participants noted that although most of their professors were White, they generally had positive experiences interacting with them in and out of the classroom. Nonetheless, as noted, the participants also felt that some professors, advertently or inadvertently, required them to speak for the group to which they belong, usually to their discomfort. One participant commented: “I can’t be the one to speak for all my people. I

have been singled out to talk about issues of race in my class, representing my people but I would prefer to be represented as an individual. This is so predominant here.” This led more or less to very impersonal relationships between minority students and some of their professors – some participants likened their relationship with their professors to a “business relationship”. Participants noted the “lack of personal connection” they had with some of their professors, which they likened to a feeling of indifference from those professors.

Participants also talked about professors who make stereotypical remarks. One participant referred to a class in which the professor in the course of reading an article that had to do with poverty turned to her and asked, “does this look familiar to you?” Another participant was asked by a professor, “how is the drug business going?” when he learned where she came from. A participant, who missed a test on emergency grounds, was shocked when in response to his request for a make-up exam, a professor said, “the test would be harder for you but easier for White students.” Yet another participant noted her indignation with a gender-biased statement from a male White professor who inferred that, “females are a waste in college and if they had any problem with the way he feels, they should feel free to leave his class.”

A recurrent theme was perception of some form of discrimination/racism both in the classrooms and in the residence halls. While the typical attitude was to ignore these issues, the participants noted that the recurring nature of certain events made it harder to ignore. This likely explains the following comments from one of the participants: “I think racism and other forms of discrimination are predominant here at the College. I think I used to overlook it but persistent complaints from some of my friends have opened my eyes to it.” Another participant felt she was profiled based on stereotypical opinions of her ethnic

background. She said: “I used to think the Residence Halls were more diverse and open until I had a bad experience when I went to visit a friend in another Hall. I was followed in a suspicious manner by one of the Resident Hall Directors to see where I was going.”

Another recurrent phrase related to stereotype and bias, in the opinion of the focus group interview participants, is that of “unintelligence.” Participants expressed concern about the way some of their White classmates and professors made them feel both in and out of the classrooms. One participant said: “My classmates think I am stupid... do not know anything. They make me feel I am not supposed to be in the class. It is the same with my roommates who are all Whites.” Another participant said: “I remember one time I was taking notes in the class, and a White student said to me “Why are you taking notes when the class is so easy?””. And yet another participant said: “I have been victim of racial remarks in the labs and condescending comments, from White students, and the professor just brushes the remarks aside and at other times even the professor made degrading comments too ... that makes me feel as though I am stupid.”

Comments related to “unintelligence” were reiterated by the participants in different ways and their frustrations could be felt in the manner in which they presented the circumstance through which such comments came up. Some of the participants shared how their frustrations have led them to wonder if they would graduate from the institution or not. Others indicated they worked extra hard, especially in the science majors, just to prove to their professors and fellow White students that they are equally as deserving and smart enough to be part of a particular class.

One male participant recalled an experience with a professor who questioned his presence in the science class, and bluntly stated that he should not be a science major. One

focus group participant shared her experience, during her lab hours, involving other White student partners, whom she felt would talk “through” her and not “to” her. In the opinion of this participant, and that of the other participants at the focus group interview session, this was an indirect expression from her fellow White student lab partners that “we don’t want you here.” The students noted that such circumstances potentially led to frustrations and the feeling that most White students were oblivious or lacking in understanding of the issues of concern to minority students.

There was the sense, from participants, that the lack of understanding, exemplified oftentimes by derogatory statements, from some students from non-minority backgrounds, was a deep-seated disrespect of their persons and systems of values. One participant noted that in a discussion about celebrations to be organized by various student organizations, a fellow White Student said: “I think Black History Month is stupid”. These words, according to the participant, were said “without regards of my feelings...I was not only shocked but angry at the insensitivity of someone I considered a friend.”

A participant noted that on several occasions in the classroom when she tried to assert herself, her White classmates labeled her as “an angry person”. The participant said: “In one of my lab I tried to assert myself and two of my classmates - White males, labeled me the angry “black woman” and it pissed me off so much because I don’t see myself like that. They don’t listen to anything I say and make me feel as if I am not intelligent enough to be in the class.” Another participant reiterated the point with a similar comment: “ Here at the College it is not the same because when you say something people especially White students, categorize it into certain ways.... when people don’t understand you, it can make someone who comes from a different group like me feel depressed and out of place.” In

line with comments of this nature, another participant shared her experience when she tried to hang out with a group of White students and was shocked to hear one of the students say, “don’t worry about her, she may be Black, but she is not going to steal your wallet.”

Participants in the focus group sessions, however, were also aware of the efforts, policy-wise, of the PWI to foster diversity and inclusion. The recurrent theme in this regard was, “the campus has structures to create a welcoming environment for all students, but was still struggling to embrace diversity and inclusion.” Participants indicated they had some very, and not so very, bad experiences on campus, but still a good number indicated that their experiences on campus were positive, although they also wished things were better in terms of the recruitment of more minority students. One participant noted: “I have not really had any bad experiences but it would be more fun if there were a lot of difference here ... the college could be more diverse.” Another participant said: “I just felt right on this campus but sometimes in my classes I feel awkward ... I wish there were many students of color.”

Faculty, Staff, and Student Relationships

The analysis under this sub-section was addressed under the following broad themes from the focus group interviews: (a) relationship with White faculty, staff, and students; and (b) relationship with non-White faculty, staff, and students.

Relationship with White faculty, staff, and students. A number of focus group participants described very positive relationships with White faculty, staff and students. Some participants indicated they felt respected by their professors and supported by some White staff. One participant had this to say: “My relationships with White faculty, staff, and peers have been very helpful. I interact with my teachers frequently and feel respected

in my class.” A few of the participants indicated they met frequently with their professors to seek clarifications on academic-related issues. Some expressed their satisfaction with the concern shown by professors in their studies and the help they provided them. Another category of participants hardly sought assistance from their professors although they considered their relationships with them to be okay. Other participants indicated they had had no relationship whatsoever with their professors – they attended classes and that was all they did. The final category of participants, the greater majority, complained about poor relationships with White professors.

Phrases such as, “not very close”, “lack of trust/skeptical about things said and done”, “hardly ever seek assistance”, and “no relationship at all” both in and outside of classroom, were very recurrent among the participants. A participant stated: “I didn’t really have a good relationship with my (White) advisor because he didn’t show any interest in me or my studies. I kind of just adjusted on my own.” A category of the participants indicated they hardly visited more than once with their academic advisors, with whom they felt they failed to connect. Some expressed indignation to the fact that their advisors failed to follow up with them for an entire semester.

Other participants expressed concerns about “trust”. They felt that certain things said by some professors in the classrooms made it difficult for them to think that they had their best interest at heart. A participant stated: “My relationship with some White faculty, staff and students, I would say is okay, but I am sometimes skeptical because of the things they do and say, to trust them. For example, occasional references to a student of color as “a boy,” or phrases like “that’s a good boy” which to me is not appropriate. I take offense at that.” Another participant stated that “one of my professors once made a comment

relating to the fact that he doesn't really like black people while another professor was not friendly at all toward students of color."

Another recurrent phrase that was used was "had to work extra hard to prove myself." Participants, especially those in the sciences, indicated that they had to work extra hard to prove themselves to their professors and their White peers who often seem to question their intelligence. One participant said: "As a science student, and the only black female in the class, it has been very challenging. I have had to work extra just to prove myself that I am supposed to be in the class and I can do as well as the other students." The participant opined that the prejudice against Black and Hispanic students in the sciences was very hurtful for aspiring students from these ethnic backgrounds: "I guess the stereotype that Asians, Middle Easterners, Whites, Indians are very good in the sciences whereas Blacks and Hispanic are not is prevalent in my science classes. I see shock in the face of my class mates when I do well in a test or an exam."

Another recurrent theme from participants was related to "representing their race." Participants indicated that it is not uncommon for minority students to be called upon by professors in ways that were akin to "representing their ethnic background". They expressed their frustrations of being called to speak for their community when they hardly knew much about themselves. A participant described the stereotypical comments made by a professor to a foreign student from Columbia: "how is the drug business going?" Other participants described instances of racial/stereotypical comments that they heard professors make while others shared instances where students left the college as a result of feeling disconnected either in classrooms or in other campus settings.

Notwithstanding the misgivings that some participants had with regard to the relationship with some of their professors, they also indicated that, overall, their professors are very knowledgeable in their areas of concentration and only wished that faculty could be more aware of the sensitivities of minority students in the PWI. The same sentiments were shared with regard to the nature of the relationship participants had with their White peers. Relationships with most of their White peers were mostly distant, however, participants indicated having very good relationships too with White students, especially those who were open-minded and willing to listen and learn. Some participants indicated their willingness to make friends with White students who were open to seeking answers and sharing their thoughts on issues of differences rather than make assumptions about who they were. Participants also shared the nature of the support they received from their non-White peers.

Relationship with non-White faculty, staff, and students. Participants indicated that though there were very few minority faculty and staff, their relationship with them had been excellent – they felt they received a lot of support and help and their relationship with the faculty and staff of color seemed more genuine and easy. They felt very comfortable and close and felt understood when involved in discussions. The recurrent themes from the focus group participants in this regard included: “received a lot of support/assistance,” “get along easier,” “feel more comfortable,” “feel respected/not called up to represent one’s race,” “very close/great out-of-class relationship / relationship continued long after taking courses,” “feel like a part of everyone,” and “understand each other.”

A participant noted that, “I have had just two faculty of color and I think they both gave me enough support ... I feel more comfortable in classes where I have a minority

faculty; I do not feel singled-out.” Another participant indicated, “My relationship with minority faculty, staff and peers is much better. I get along with them easier. I can easily relate with them.” Focus group participants felt connected with faculty and staff of color irrespective of their racial or ethnic background. On the other hand, the opinions of participants as regards their relationships with fellow minority students, was mixed.

While some participants had very good relationships with other minority students, it was not the case with some. Some participants described feelings of awkwardness when they struggle to fit-in with some of their minority peers: “My relationships with students of color have been kind of awkward. I don’t seem to be the stereotypical black girl – I don’t party, don’t dress the same like the others, not hang out too much.” On the other hand several participants felt that most minority students stick together, which, in their opinion, might not be very healthy in a community seeking to promote inclusiveness.

Some participants emphasized the need for minority students to be more exposed and involved on campus, and not stay to themselves. One of the participants had this to say: “...students of color, I think they stick together a lot. They need to be more open, join other clubs and attend campus events in order to broaden their knowledge.” Participants also emphasized the need to take classes that focus on other cultures and perspectives to enable them learn about others. Also worthy of note were comments from several participants for minority students to feel encouraged attending a broad spectrum of campus events as much as- possible, irrespective of the ethnic or racial background of the organizers.

Level of Use and Satisfaction with Campus Resources

The focus group participants were prompted to discuss their level of use and satisfaction with different campus services – that were susceptible to foster campus

inclusion, and campus climate perceptions. Their answers are discussed in this section in relation to their attitudes vis-à-vis college persistence and in relation to their demographic characteristics like ethnicity and gender as follows: (a) the students discussed their membership and participation, or not, in organizations on campus and how the organizations and their involvement have helped with college adjustment; and (b) the students were asked to discuss their opinions about, and experiences with, some specific campus programs that provide services susceptible to shape students' perception of campus climate and inclusion.

Student involvement in campus organizations and college adjustment. Of the 24 participants at the focus group interviews, only 6 (25%) did not belong to or participated in clubs or organizations. Most of the participants – 12 participants (50%) belonged to one or two clubs or organizations. All African Americans students (8 students) and Asian students (2 students) participating in the focus group sessions were members of some club, while 8 out of the 12 Latinos (66.7%) were members of some club, and all 2 Native Americans students did not take part in any club or organization on campus. Further analysis of the participant's profiles showed that the majority, 11 students (45.83%) were juniors – 3 of these did not participate in any club, while 7 participated in 2 clubs. The recurrent themes from participants, regarding their involvement in clubs/organizations and the impact on college transition/adjustment were the following: (a) clubs create a community, (b) feelings of frustrations/awkwardness, and (c) not involved in club.

Clubs create a community. Most focus group participants touted the benefits of participating in club activities in relation to adjusting to college life and campus climate-related issues. At the PWI, with relatively few minority students, the participants indicated

that meeting other students in clubs helped build a community for mutual and other types of support. Participants also stressed the importance of making new friends, and meeting other students taking similar classes for instance, which enabled them to form study groups to help each other. One participant noted: “I have met more people and made new friends through these clubs. They’ve definitely help me with my adjustment in college because through these clubs I don’t only get to meet other students of color but other students who are taking similar classes.”

Some participants also indicated that joining certain clubs enabled them to build on their core values and faith. Staying busy with club activities also provided some of them with the opportunity to overlook some of the negative aspects of the campus climate. One participant said: “My club helped me stay with my faith and values that I learned from home...my involvement keeps me busy and enables me to get to interact with many students, both students of color and White students, and this has helped me a lot with my college life.” To most participants, therefore, club activities played an important role in their college adjustment. The students also considered their involvement in clubs as an avenue to socialize and learn from others, especially when they come from diverse backgrounds.

Focus group participants also emphasized the fact that club activities were avenues for creating long and lasting relationships. Some of the participants belonged to clubs with non minority students. These participants shared their experiences in interacting with White students in the clubs. They noted that several White students embrace diversity, and were open and willing to learn about the needs and concerns of minority students, as well as work towards enhancing a more positive campus climate. Nonetheless, the participants also

noted that their involvement in clubs and organizations have not been all smooth-sailing as these were avenues where they were exposed to various forms of intolerance and bias due to their profile as minority students.

Feelings of frustrations and awkwardness. “Frustrations” and “awkwardness” are two recurrent words that were used by some participants to describe their involvement in certain clubs. Although the participants were generally enthusiastic about participating in various clubs most of them were almost unanimous in expressing frustration about some of the club activities and members. The frustrations stemmed from several reasons, including: being the only minority student in a club, dealing with cliques within the clubs, frustrations from being seen as “the other”, and frustrations from some club executive members.

One of the key frustrations encountered by minority students was related to their underrepresentation in most of clubs on campus. One participant said: “I belong to the (.) club where I am the only student of color ... It is sometimes frustrating and uncomfortable [to deal with] with some of the comments that members make, some of which are racially insensitive. Though [I am] interested in the club, I often feel my opinion never counts.” Frustrations also stemmed from dealing with cliques within clubs. Most White students in some of these clubs already knew each other or found it easier to bond, and therefore formed cliques which led to poor group dynamics and difficulties for new members, especially minority students, to “fit in”. As one participant said, “... I wasn’t able to make any friends and I seem to be alone at meetings or events.” The participant indicated that she switched to another club where she felt she would be more comfortable.

Some participants highlighted the fact that they were seen in their clubs as “the other,” not fit enough for the club, especially for leadership positions, because they didn’t

act, dress, and/or speak in a particular way. Participants in this category expressed frustrations with other club members' attitudes and emphasized the need for acceptance and to avoid being judgmental. One participant reiterated the fact that, "we need to be educated within to allow others to see and accept us for who we are." The feeling of frustration and awkwardness was also expressed for cases where participants were involved in clubs involving only minority students but from different ethnic backgrounds.

A source of frustration was with some clubs with mainly minority students, but where the executive members, for instance, had the same ethnic background, notably the Asian students who could speak in a language that was not accessible to all club members. A participant said: "What frustrated me the most was that, I was a member of the E-Board and interestingly during meetings the students, mostly Asians students, will be speaking in their (foreign) language." The participant indicated the awkwardness of the situation, not understanding what the members were saying, and the nonchalant attitude of the rest of members. Experiences of the sort invariably impact perceptions of campus climate and inclusion, and could deter students from joining clubs which, otherwise, would serve as support systems for students from different backgrounds.

Non participation in club activities. Some participants indicated they had never participated in any club activities. One participant said: "I do not belong to any particular club and have not taken part in any club activities." It is not uncommon to find students who do not participate or belong to any clubs or organizations on campus. However, the participants who were more involved in club activities felt very strongly that it was useful for all students to be a part of some clubs or attend activities scheduled by various clubs. Participants noted the benefits of belonging to student clubs or attending activities,

especially as regards students' adjustment to college life. They also indicated the benefits associated with meeting and learning about others as a good way to foster understanding, mutual respect, and a positive campus climate.

Students' level of use and opinions of campus resources. Participants at the different sessions of the focus group interviews were asked to discuss their opinions about, and experiences with, some specific campus programs and/or services at the PWI. The following student-centered programs or offices were the most used by minority students at the PWI: AALANA Mentor Program; African and Latino Studies Department (ALS), College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP); Center for Academic Development and Enrichment (CADE); Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC); Counseling, Health and Wellness Center (CHWC); Educational Opportunity Program (EOP); Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA); and the Writing Center.

The recurrent response from those who had used the services of all, or most, of these programs or offices was: "Received a lot of assistance/help/support from them." The majority of participants indicated they had used these services over and over again, some as many as several times a week. For instance, a participant describing the services offered by the ALS stated that: "...I always have someone to talk to – it makes me feel at home and I feel respected." Participants who had been part of the AALANA Mentor Program indicated that the program was very helpful with their college transition/adjustments. A participant had this to say about the program: "I am currently a mentee in the AALANA Mentor Program. The program gave me big sisters and big brothers that I could call in times of need and for support and I look forward to serving as a mentor next year."

Most participants were pleased with the level of support they received from programs that offered academic support services like CADE and the Writing Center. A participant said, “I have used the Center for Academic Development and Enrichment for tutoring in classes that I was having difficulties with.” Several of the participants also indicated they had used the services of the Writing Center for completing class assignments, proof-reading papers, and for taking the College writing exams. Only two participants expressed dissatisfaction, related to poor treatment, at some point with the services they received from the Writing Center. In one occasion, a minority student was administered the wrong exam because an assumption was made regarding what level of exams she was going to take. However, on both occasions, when informed, staffs at the Center were able to resolve the misunderstandings. These isolated cases notwithstanding, overall the participants indicated they had very positive experiences with these programs.

The CSRC gave the students the chance to meet other students and members of the community. Several participants acknowledged receiving several volunteer hours through the CSRC and benefitting from the opportunities offered to meet and make new friends. They also acknowledged learning from the service learning opportunities offered. On the other hand, participants who had used the services of the CHWC said they did so not because they “wanted to” but because “they needed to.” However, participants who used these services acknowledged the guidance provided by the CHWC in addressing concerns which might have otherwise negatively affected their college experiences.

Some of the participants were enrolled as EOP or CAMP students. These programs, among other services, also provide counseling and tutoring to their students. EOP and/or CAMP participants stressed the significance of the support they received from the

programs and how helpful it was for their college transition. A participant noted, for instance, that, “These programs created a community for me... As an EOP student I also get a lot of support from the program. CAMP has been very helpful with tutoring, financial assistance and writing letters of recommendation.” Most of the participants also indicated they had made use of the services of the OMSA on various occasions. Some indicated they felt comfortable just visiting with someone who could understand their concerns. Others noted that the OMSA provides them with support that makes them feel at home: “I have used the OMSA. It helped me ... has someone to talk to ...makes me feel at home and I feel respected.”

Even though several of the participants indicated they had used the services of one or more of the aforementioned programs/services, this wasn't the case with a few of the participants. A number of participants indicated that they had not used any of the programs at the time of the focus group discussions, while others indicated they had used the services or a few of them sparingly. For instance, one participant noted that: “The AALANA Mentor program is the only program I have used on campus ... has helped me a lot with my transition to college, and provides opportunities for minority students to come together ...” Some indicated they did not know that some of the programs existed on campus, while others indicated they did not think they needed such services. As one participant said, “I came to college so matured already that I think I could handle everything by myself.”

Suggestions for Improvement of Campus Climate

Participants were asked to provide suggestions for improvement of the climate at the PWI. Participants' suggestions were categorized under the following sub-headings: (a) suggestions for college-wide improvements, (b) suggestions for faculty/staff, (c)

suggestions for White students, and (d) suggestions for minority students. All of the participants indicated that both minority and White students have a significant role to play in making the campus a welcoming and conducive environment for all.

Suggestions for college-wide improvements. The following recurrent themes were identified for suggestions that could be taken up at the college-wide level: (a) the need for the recruitment of more minority faculty/staff, (b) increase admission of minority students, (c) provide additional support systems for minority students to address their needs, and (d) bring back minority alumni to college.

All participants indicated the need for an “increase in faculty of color” to serve as role models to the students. One participant said: “I feel that if the number of faculty of color were to increase, the school would be a campus to look forward to.” Participants in the sciences see a dire need for the college to recruit faculty from minority backgrounds in the sciences. Participants also stressed the need for staff from minority backgrounds in some key offices such as the Counseling Center, Academic Advisement, and the Center for Academic Development and Enrichment.

The need to “increase the admission of minority students” was another theme that was prevalent among participants. Participants expressed frustration and the feelings of isolation that often crowd their daily class activities. “An increase in the recruitment of minority students will go a long way to make the classes more racially diverse, providing a renewed sense of comfort and self-esteem,” said one participant. Participants also emphasized the fact that, despite the excellent academic programs offered at the PWI; the fact that there are relatively very few minority students might be discouraging other minority students from attending the college. One participant had this to say: “If there is

increase in the admission rate of minority students I think this will be a great campus because there are a lot of good programs being offered here” while another participant added the following remark: “The low admission rate of minority students discourages other minority students to seek admissions to the college.”

Participants also suggested that the PWI should reinforce and provide additional support systems for minority students. They noted that programs like the AALANA Mentor Program, the Educational Opportunities Program, the College Migrant Program, and the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs should be reinforced, while other programs and services should be envisaged to cater for the needs of minority students. A participant noted: “...all the differences that people bring don’t seem to be well catered for on campus”, while yet another said, “there is need to bring more programs like the AALANA Mentor Program and the EOP.” Other participants emphasized the need for efforts towards student retention. As one student said, “The College, I think, has a long way to go because even if many more students of color are recruited, there need to be a support system ready for them,” and further reiterated by another participant: “...there is need to increase diversity, meet the needs of minority students and provide access for minority students.”

Participants also recognized that one way of encouraging the retention and success of minority students is to bring back successful alumni to campus. Several participants reiterated the need for the college to bring back alumni from minority backgrounds, on a frequent basis, to address some of the challenges that students face. They noted that such interactions could be motivating to, and help increase the resilience of, minority students. One participant said: “I think it would also be nice for past students of color to come to the

school and talk to us about their struggles and how they went through and succeeded. We can easily relate to other minority students and their stories will motivate us.”

Suggestions for improvements for faculty/staff. The suggestions for faculty were related to curriculum development and classroom management. The recurring themes from participants were the following: (a) the need for faculty to incorporate diversity into the classroom, and (b) “minority students in the classroom do not represent the groups they are identified with.”

Participants identified the need for faculty to continue to strive to incorporate diversity-related concepts into the curriculum. This was reiterated by one participant in the following words: “I think there is the need for faculty to incorporate diversity into the classroom and provide information sessions, related to the course materials, to educate students about different aspects of diversity and inclusion.”

Participants also made recommendations with regard to faculty-students in-class interaction. They felt they should not be singled-out by faculty to a group based on their identity – especially based on their racial background. One participant said: “Don’t single us out as the only minority students ... I can’t be the one to speak for all my people. I have been singled out to talk about issues of race in my class, representing my people, but I would prefer to be represented as an individual. This is so predominant here.” Some participants claimed they had no pain talking about issues they are knowledgeable about but would like to represent themselves rather than speak for an entire group.

Suggestions for improvements for White students. Recurrent themes, for White students, that could contribute in improving the campus climate at the PWI included: (a)

ask questions to learn about issues affecting minority students, (b) be open-minded and accepting, and (c) try to reach out to minority students.

Focus group participants emphasized the need for some White students to learn about the merits of asking questions on issues of difference, to be open-minded, and to reach out to minority students and other White students who are knowledgeable or more tolerant on issues related to difference. Participants noted that if these White students could go the further step to ask questions, they would definitely come away with more educated information and opinions on issues of difference, say for students with a different racial or ethnic background. Participants indicated that assumptions play a huge role in some of the attitudes that some White students have; but to change that, they must be willing to learn. A participant noted that these students needed to "...be more accepting, strive to be more understanding, and seek first to understand than to be understood." They should work hand in hand with minority students who also have an active role to play in enhancing campus diversity and inclusion.

Suggestions for improvements for minority students. The discussions of the participants at the different focus group sessions led to the following recurrent themes with regard to suggestions for minority students to help improve the campus climate at the PWI: (a) minority students need to reach out to other students, especially White students, (b) make clubs and club activities more inclusive, (c) unite with one another despite differences, (d) speak up and not accept poor treatment, and (e) be more involved.

"Reaching out to White students" was the most frequently used phrase from participants. Participants noted that sometimes minority students are so closed in their own groups that they hardly give opportunities for White students to get to know them better.

To these focus group participants, minority students need to open up and communicate more with their White counterparts, both in and out of classrooms.

Participants also stressed the need for clubs and club activities to be more inclusive. One participant noted: “sometimes the way the clubs involving minority students are structured does not make it welcoming for White students. For example, I attended an event once and throughout only Spanish was spoken.” Participants proposed more concerted efforts towards open-mindedness among minority students and to involve more White students in club activities: “I would like to see students be more open-minded, open with their program to include not just particular groups of students, but everyone. It would be nice to see an increase in diverse student participation in events.”

Some participants identified the phenomenon of “cliques” among minority students and groups, which, they thought, does not augur well for bridging differences and bringing students together on campus. One participant said: “Students of color should strive to enhance the cultural climate on campus, unite with one another despite differences, and be there for each other.” Participants also noted that, “there is strength in numbers,” and suggested consolidating minority student club activities on common, rather than competing, platforms. Some participants noted that, “working together shows strength and care for one another.”

Another recurrent theme in the suggestions of most participants, identified for minority students was, “the need for students of color to speak up.” Most participants agreed that most often minority students who are not treated fairly refuse to speak up because of fear of retributions. Some participants discussed about past incidents on campus, and the frustrations of some minority students. They felt that the frustrations might

have precipitated the attrition of several minority students – hence the need to strive to speak up, or seek adequate support from programs on campus, when the need arises.

The need for minority students to be more forthright, and learn to speak-up, was shared even by participants who felt that they had not been involved in any issues related to bias or discrimination. “I have been fortunate to not have any bad experiences but what I have seen are people trying to ignore or pretend that discrimination doesn’t exist and I have noticed a lot of dancing around issues.” Other participants said they felt disturbed because the indifference or denial might have contributed to the victimization of some of their friends: “I think racism and other forms of discrimination are prevalent here at the College. I think I used to overlook it but the impact it has had on my friends has helped to open my eyes.” Another participant suggested that minority students get more involved in campus activities as a way of working towards bridging differences and promoting tolerance: “I would like to say I know discrimination exist on campus but it would also be nice for students of color to get involved,” the participant said.

All the participants called for “personal commitments” on the part of all minority students to help foster a welcoming environment on campus. Notwithstanding the varying experiences of the different participants, they all agreed that the PWI, although not very diverse, was a very good institution offering a variety of good programs. Participants noted that the PWI had efforts in place to promote diversity: “The College is not the most diverse but is trying to embrace diversity,” hence individual commitment on the part of minority students will go a long way to encourage efforts in this direction. As one participant said, “I also try to keep myself in check, and try to see through other people’s lenses. By so doing we learn to promote a different way of thinking...”

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Campus climate-related themes like alienation, marginalization, stereotyping, and discriminatory treatment are predominant in the literature of minority students and other non traditional groups in higher education settings (Smith, 1989; Grieger & Toliver, 2001). This invariably affects the enrollment, retention, persistence, and overall college experience of minority students in colleges and universities nation-wide and even more so in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) where minority students generally encounter difficulties adjusting to the campus environment (Peterson et al., 1978; Bennett & Okinaka, 1989; Jay & D'Augelli, 1991). Studies (Antonio et al., 2004; Gurin, 1999; Smith et al., 1997; Astin, 1993) have shown that a favorable campus climate positively impacts students' college success, including recruitment, retention and graduation rates. Nonetheless, specific concerns related to attitudes, perceptions, and student interactions across differences are still prevalent in most colleges and universities, even where efforts are in place to conduct campus climate studies and implement ensuing recommendations (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998; Hurtado, 1992).

This study examined minority students' attrition patterns and potential decisions to drop-out, following campus climate studies and implementation of recommendations, at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Northeastern United States. It also explored minority students' use of, and satisfaction with, diversity enhancing programs and other services on campus, minority students' perceptions of campus climate-related issues and how drop-out decisions could potentially be affected. The relationship of the findings as a

function of minority students' demographic characteristics, especially ethnicity and gender, and their class levels were explored.

Tinto's (1993) Theory of College student Departure and the model proposed by Hurtado et al. (1999) for factors that influence climate for racial and ethnic diversity provided the basis of the theoretical framework for the study. Tinto (1993) and Hurtado et al. (1999) highlighted the challenges that minority students can face at PWIs and the components from which campus climate can be examined. These include examining dimensions such as (a) the historical legacy of the institution through its mission and policies, (b) structural diversity, including the diversity of students, faculty and staff on campus, (c) the psychological climate, for instance, perceptions of discrimination and issues of prejudice, and (d) the behavioral dimension, for instance, social interactions, classroom diversity, and campus involvement. According to Hurtado et al. (1999), in addition to race and ethnicity, all other diversity-related elements require equal attention in examining campus climate- and inclusion-related issues. This theoretical framework informed the development of the research questions for this study.

The following specific research questions guided this study: (a) what observable changes in pattern, if any, are there in minority student attrition at the PWI, following the campus climate study and progressive implementation of recommendations?, (b) how do observed attrition patterns of minority students at the PWI relate to their demographic characteristics, especially with regard to ethnicity and gender?, (c) what perceptions do minority students at a PWI, that has carried out a campus climate study and is actively implementing ensuing recommendations, have regarding campus climate and potential barriers to educational attainment?, and (d) what are the levels of use of, and satisfaction

with, services on campus that are susceptible to enhance a favorable campus climate, by minority students, and the relationship to demographic characteristics like ethnicity, gender, and class/level?

Both quantitative and qualitative inquiries served as the foundation for the methodology used in the study. Historic enrollment, graduation, and dropout data obtained from the College's Office of Institutional Research were used in addressing the first and second research questions, while the third and fourth research questions were addressed through analysis of information from focus group interviews, as well as from on-line survey data administered to a representative sample of minority students on campus.

The first part of quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to attempt to capture the impact (if any) of the implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) on the attrition patterns of minority students in the PWI. Data from fall 2003 to spring 2009, relative to minority students, were used and analyzed (a) to determine any shifts in the attrition patterns following the implementation of CCSRs (research question one), and (b) to get an insight into the sensitivity of attrition patterns when minority students were sub-categorized by ethnicity and gender (research question two).

Research questions three and four were answered in part through the analysis of the on-line survey data for descriptive and relational statistics. Descriptive analysis included the computing of frequency tables with percentages of data related to students' perception of campus climate. The chi-square test of independence was used to test the research hypothesis that there was a relationship between different opinion variables from the online survey instruments, on the one hand, and the participants' categorical independent

characteristic/variables – ethnic background, gender, and class/level, on the other hand. Research Questions 3 and 4 were further analyzed using a focus group approach to help provide a better understanding of minority students’ perceptions of campus climate-related issues. The findings of the study were summarized with respect to each research question.

Related Findings to Research Question 1

Analysis of historic institutional data revealed no distinctive pattern in minority students’ attrition, at the PWI, in the period during the implementation of CCSRs (P_2) and the period prior to the implementation of CCSRs (P_1) for both the fall and spring semesters. However, whereas minority students’ attrition stagnated in P_2 , the overall college, and non-minority students, attrition trends declined consistently over the same period.

Related Findings to Research Question 2

Analysis of the sensitivity of attrition patterns to the gender of minority students at the PWI revealed that the trend in P_2 of the number of minority students attriting, as a weighted proportion of the number of minority students enrolled for each gender group, declined consistently for male as opposed to female minority students. Analysis of the sensitivity of attrition patterns to the ethnic background revealed no significant difference, at the alpha level of .05, between the means of the attrition rates, in P_1 and P_2 , for each of the minority ethnic groups. The proportion of Hispanic students attriting was found to be consistently higher than that of the other ethnic groups in both P_1 and P_2 .

Related Findings to Research Question 3

The analysis of the perceptions of minority students regarding the campus climate at the PWI and the potential barriers to educational attainment were summarized under (a)

the students' perception of the institutional commitment to diversity, and (b) the students' campus climate perception and experiences.

Perception of institutional commitment to diversity. The findings were summarized for the on-line survey and focus group interviews and related to (a) diversity and inclusion in the College's policy statements, (b) campus diversity, and (c) level of respect for diversity on campus.

Opinion on diversity and inclusion and College policy statements. A majority of all survey respondents, 77.8%, "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the College's policy statements emphasized the fostering of diversity and inclusion. A similar majority, 82.4%, "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the College's policy statements emphasized commitment to enhance an inclusive campus community, and in this case the opinions were not statistically independent of respondents' class/level, with relatively more seniors (94.4%) as opposed to juniors (87.0%), sophomores (79.3%), and freshmen (70.0%). Participants in the focus group sessions were also aware of the efforts, policy-wise, of the PWI to foster diversity and inclusion.

Opinion on satisfaction with level of campus diversity. A majority of survey respondents "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" with the notion that the level of faculty, staff, and administrators diversity at the PWI was satisfactory, as follows: faculty (65.8%), staff (65.3%), and administrators (70.2%). This was in tandem with a recurrent theme from the focus group, which indicated that "the campus was not diverse." Focus group participants were unanimous that there were very few minority faculty and staff on campus.

Opinion on satisfaction with level of respect of diversity. A majority of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the notion that different diversity

dimensions were not factors in the respect students receive on campus, as follows: race or ethnic background (75.2%), gender (75.5%), and religious background (87.4%). With regard to the perception of sexual orientation as a factor in the respect that a student received on campus, 65.6% of respondents either had stated opinions of “agreed” or “strongly agreed” and the stated opinions were not statistically independent of respondents’ class – fewer freshmen (55.5%) and juniors (58.0) than sophomores (72.3%) seniors (78.6%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this notion.

Perception of campus climate and experiences. The findings were summarized for the on-line survey and focus group interviews and related to (a) campus climate and inclusion, (b) relationship with campus constituents, and (c) classroom climate related issues.

Opinion on campus climate and inclusion. A number of findings on campus climate and inclusion were sensitive to survey respondents’ gender as follows: only 43.5% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “minority students’ opinions are taken into consideration when important decisions are made,” with more male (63.8%) than female (53.7%) stating “strongly disagree” or “disagree.”; a high proportion (78.4%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “minority students do not have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit in on campus,” with fewer male (65.3%) than female (82.7%) stating “agreed” or “strongly agreed.”

A number of findings on campus climate and inclusion were also sensitive to survey respondents’ class as follows: overall, 53.5% “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed”, while 46.5% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the notion that “prejudice against minority students was a problem on campus,” with seniors (62.5%) and sophomores (62.7%) stating

that prejudice against minority students was a problem on campus, while juniors (73.1%) and freshmen (63.6%) thought the contrary was true; overall, 69.8% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “minority students would encourage other students to enroll at the college,” with a high proportion of freshmen (81.8%), seniors (81.3%) and juniors (73.1%) stating “agreed” or “strongly agreed” as opposed to sophomores (52.5%)

Focus group interview participants portrayed the sense that minority students at the PWI felt they were compelled to deal with a campus climate that was not overtly inclusive, with recurrent themes such as: “feel like an outsider”; “dealing with stereotypical comments, discrimination, and racism”; “unintelligent”; “lack of understanding of minority students’ issues,” and “disrespect for their person and values.”

Opinion on relationship with other campus constituents. Survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that minority students had warm interactions with different campus constituents as follows: White faculty (74.6%), White students (69.5%), White staff (70.3%), and White administrators (67.2%). Stated opinions for White administrators were not statistically independent of respondents’ class; with more freshmen (80.5%) and juniors (71.4%) than sophomores (64.3%) and seniors (50.0%) stating “agreed” or “strongly agreed.”

A number of focus group participants described very positive relationships with White faculty, staff and students. Some indicated they felt respected by their professors and supported by some White staff. The greater majority, complained about poor relationships with White professors. Relationships with most of White peers were mostly distant; however, participants indicated having very good relationships too with White students, especially those who were open-minded.

Opinion on classroom climate related issues. The following finding on classroom climate was sensitive to survey respondents' gender as follows: overall, 71.7% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they were fairly comfortable discussing with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class time, with a higher proportion of male respondents (80.4%) to female respondents (68.7%) stating "agree" or "strongly agree". Overall, a vast majority of respondents, 83.6%, "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" with the notion that faculty ignored their questions and comments in the classes that they took. However, 62.5% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that as minority students they were more obliged to prove themselves to faculty.

A recurrent theme in the qualitative analysis was related to the fact that participants, especially those in the sciences, indicated they had to work extra hard to prove themselves to their professors and their White peers. A few of the participants indicated they met frequently with their professors to seek clarifications on academic-related issues. Some expressed their satisfaction with the concern shown by professors in their studies and the help they provided them.

Related Findings to Research Question 4

The findings of the study related to minority students' levels of use of, and satisfaction with, services susceptible to enhance a favorable campus climate at the PWI were summarized under (a) opinions on level of student engagement in diversity activities on campus, (b) opinions on students' satisfaction with the services offered by different programs/offices on campus, and (c) opinions on college persistence in relation to campus climate.

Opinion on student engagement in diversity activities on campus. Only 17.3% of the survey respondents never attended any diversity activities in the course of the academic year. 82.7% indicated they attended at least one, while 34.6% indicated they attended seven or more diversity activities per academic year. Stated opinions were not statistically independent of respondents' class, with fewer freshmen (13.0%) and seniors (11.1%) than sophomores (20.6%) and juniors (20.7%) stating they did not attend any diversity activity; and a higher proportion of seniors (55.6%) attended on average seven or more diversity-related activities in the academic year. Freshmen had the second best performance with 43.5% of respondents stating that they attended on average four to six diversity-related activities.

The recurrent themes from focus groups regarding involvement in organizations or clubs were: “clubs create a community,” “feelings of frustrations/awkwardness,” and “not involved in club.” Twenty five percent of the participants did not belong to, or participated in, clubs or organizations. Those who were more involved in club activities indicated the benefits associated with meeting and learning about others as a good way to foster understanding, mutual respect, and positive campus climate.

Opinion on student satisfaction with services from campus programs. Survey respondents were satisfied (“agreed” or “strongly agreed”) with some campus resources as follows: Academic Advisement (94.0%), Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (93.9%), Academic and Computer Services (91.2%), Career Development Center (86.0%), Student Accounts (84.4%), Residence Life and Housing (78.0%), Financial Aids Office (73.0%), and Dining Services (71.6%).

Dining Services (71.6%), Financial Aids Office (73.0%), and Residence Life and Housing (78.0%), all very critical campus resources, had relatively the lowest proportion of respondents who were satisfied with the services received. Respondents' stated opinions for Residence Life and Housing were sensitive to their class, with fewer seniors (62.5%) and sophomores (62.5%) stating that they were satisfied as opposed to juniors (85.0%) and freshmen (93.3%). Stated opinions were also sensitive to respondents' gender and class with regard to the satisfaction received from Dining Services, with more males (31.1%) than females (27.3%) dissatisfied, while seniors (46.2%) were also the most least-satisfied.

Focus group participants felt that the following student-centered programs or offices were the most used by minority students at the PWI: AALANA Mentor Program; African and Latino Studies Department (ALS), College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP); Center for Academic Development and Enrichment (CADE); Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC); Counseling, Health and Wellness Center (CHWC); Educational Opportunity Program (EOP); Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA); and the Writing Center.

Opinion on college persistence in relation to campus climate. Respondents were evenly split in their opinions for the variable, "I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school" – 45.7% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" while 43.8% "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed." Respondents' stated opinions were sensitive to their class/level. A higher proportion of sophomores (58.6%) and seniors (50.06%) had stated opinions of "agreed" or "strongly agreed" when compared to juniors (25.9%) and freshmen (47.8%).

Some of the focus group participants shared how their frustrations have let them to wonder if they would like to graduate from the institution or not. Some participants discussed about past incidents on campus, and the frustrations of some minority students. They felt that the frustrations might have precipitated the attrition of several minority students

Conclusions and Discussions

Contrary to expectations, the implementation of recommendations from the campus climate studies did not have a significant impact on the attrition trend of minority students as a whole in the short term at the PWI. The attrition trend of the overall college student body, and non-minority students, have been declining consistently in the period following the campus climate studies and the implementation of recommendations, while the trend for minority students has not shown any consistent change. This suggests that the implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) at the PWI did not necessarily translate to an immediate threshold of positive campus climate susceptible to enhance the retention of minority students at the PWI. This could be understood in light of the assumption of the study that CCSRs were going to have an impact in the short term, but a longer time frame would be required to effectively measure the effect on campus climate change, at the PWI. Nonetheless, this could also be understood in the light of some of the results from the online survey and focus group interviews.

The results of the focus group interviews indicate that minority students are aware of the efforts, policy-wise, of the PWI to foster diversity and inclusion, but note for instance that “the campus has structures to create a welcoming environment for all students, but was still struggling to embrace diversity and inclusion.” Although a good

number feel that their experiences on campus are positive, they are given to having “some very, and not so very, bad experiences on campus.” Statements like, “I just felt right on this campus but sometimes in my classes I feel awkward ...” translate to a certain degree of ambivalence in minority students’ perceptions which does not augur well and leads to the almost zero impact that is observed in their attrition patterns.

None of the ethnic groups have had a significant change in the attrition rates following the period of CCSR implementation. However, based on gender, male minority students are more likely not to drop-out than their female peers in the period following the implementation of CCSRs at the PWI. This gender sensitivity in attrition pattern at the PWI, if persistent – with male minority students more likely not to drop-out than their female peers, will be inconsistent with recent evidence regarding gender-specific attrition trends. For instance, 2005 nation-wide statistics shows that for the 16-24 age group, 11% of the dropouts were males compared to 8% of females (NCES, 2007). Bae et al. (2000) also noted, for instance, that women are more likely today than men to persist in college, obtain degrees, and enroll in graduate school. It is possible that the reversed trend observed in this study for male and female attrition rates is specific to the context of minority students in a PWI actively involved with creating a positive campus climate for all students and the gender sensitivity of the minority students to the campus climate. The results from the online survey could provide further insight into understanding this phenomenon.

In general, depending on the campus climate-related variable, minority students’ perceptions at the PWI are grouped in three categories: (a) campus climate-related variables for which minority students’ perceptions are generally favorable, (b) campus climate-related variables for which minority students’ perceptions are not out rightly

favorable or unfavorable, and (c) campus climate-related variables for which minority students' perceptions are strongly unfavorable.

The minority students' perceptions are generally favorable for a number of campus climate-related variables at the PWI: the institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion as evidenced by the College's policy statements; opinion on relationship with other campus constituents, especially White faculty, staff, and students; satisfaction with the level of respect of diversity, as majority minority students believe that diversity factors like race, gender, and religious background are not important considerations in the respect students receive at the PWI; minority students do not have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit in on campus; minority students are fairly comfortable discussion with faculty on academic and other issues outside of the classroom; and minority students will encourage other students to enroll at the College. This is understandable in the context that when an institution is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion, it is expected that there will be concerted efforts in place to ensure there is understanding and mutual respect for the different components of diversity. There will also be concerted efforts to bolster different campus resources to further reflect institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion at the College.

Overall, minority students are satisfied with the services received from campus resources to help enhance retention rates and their college experience. These include services/programs such as Academic Advisement, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, Academic and Computer Services, Career Development Center, Student Accounts, Residence Life and Housing, Financial Aids Office, and Dining Services. Compared to other services, however, minority students are relatively less satisfied with the services

provided by Dining Services, Student Accounts, and Residence Life and Housing. The Dining Services and Residence Life and Housing are very important components in any campus community. At the PWI under consideration, with the exception of a few commuter students, all students have been part of the Residence Life and Housing community and have used the Dining Services. This means the students' perception of the services provided by these two campus resources can drive their overall perception of campus climate and inclusion at the PWI.

There are campus climate related issues at the PWI for which minority students' perceptions are fairly balanced – not outright favorable or unfavorable. For instance, about half of the minority student body believes that prejudice against minority students is not a problem on campus, while an almost similar proportion believes the contrary. They indicate they are compelled to deal with a campus climate that was not overtly inclusive, especially dealing with themes like, “feel like an outsider,” “...stereotypical comments, discrimination, and racism,” “unintelligent,” and “lack of understanding of minority students' issues.” Minority students are also evenly split in their perception of minority students' persistence in relation to campus climate, when the expression “I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school” is used as a proxy.

Minority students' perceptions are strongly unfavorable for three critical campus climate-related variables – level of diversity at the PWI, the inclusion of minority students' opinions in the decision-making process, and minority students' feeling of obligation to prove self in the classroom. There is a strong perception among minority students that the level of diversity of faculty, staff, and administrators at the PWI is very low. Minority

students perceive the campus as not diverse, and have expressions like, “the lack of faculty and staff of color,” “few students of color” and “the campus is somewhat diverse but still struggling with issues of inclusion”. The students express frustration with the fact that the campus is not racially diverse. With regard to campus climate and inclusion, the perception of most minority students is that their opinions are not taken into consideration when important decisions are made on campus. Furthermore, even though there is the acknowledgement that their questions and comments are not ignored in the classroom, the perception of most minority students is that they have to work extra hard to prove themselves to their professors and White peers.

Overall, minority students’ gender and class are critical diversity dimensions in their perception of campus climate-related issues at the PWI. The following campus climate-related variables are sensitive to minority students’ gender at the PWI: (a) more males than females, proportion-wise, believe their opinions are not taken into consideration in the decision making process at the PWI; (b) fewer males than females believe that “minority students do not have to give up their cultural beliefs in order to fit in on campus;” (c) Male minority students are more inclined to be comfortable discussing with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class time; (d) and, more male than female minority students are inclined to be dissatisfied with the services provided by the Dining Services at the PWI.

It appears that the “consideration given to minority students’ opinions in the decision-making process at the College”, and “minority students’ level of comfort in discussing with faculty on academic and other personal issues,” are two critical campus climate variables related to college persistence, and could explain the gender sensitivity to

the observed trend in minority students' attrition at the PWI – contrary to expectations (Bee et al., 2000; NCES, 2007), male minority students are more likely not to drop-out than their female peers in the period following the implementation of CCSRs at the PWI. Male minority students at the PWI are more inclined, than their female peers, to think that minority students' opinions are taken into consideration in the decision-making process at the PWI. They are also more inclined to be comfortable in discussions with faculty in and out of the classroom. It is possible that the profile/gender of faculty and staff at the PWI have a bearing on the gender sensitivity of the minority students stated opinions.

Statistics from the SUNY Oneonta Office of Institutional Research show that in fall 2010 53.64% (140 out of 261) of the full time equivalent faculty pool was male as opposed to 46.36% (121 out of 261) that was female. In fall 2011 the statistics was 58.1% males (147 out of 253 faculty members) and 41.9 % females (147 out of 253 faculty members). It can be assumed, given the relatively higher number of male faculty at the PWI, that the male minority students are more inclined to be comfortable in discussions with faculty in and out of the classroom more than their female counterparts, by virtue of their gender identification with the relatively bigger portion of the faculty pool. This could also explain, by extension, why male minority students are more likely, than their female peers, not to drop-out in the period following the implementation of CCSRs at the PWI. Davis (1991), for instance, notes that “Black students on white campuses who have relations with faculty have never seriously considered dropping out of school” (p. 154). In addition, as noted by Tinto (1975) informal and out-of-class interactions between students and faculty are particularly beneficial in promoting college persistence for students who are very likely to withdraw, as is the case with minority students in PWIs.

The following campus climate-related variables are sensitive to minority students' class/level at the PWI: (a) minority students are aware of the fact that policy statements at the PWI emphasize commitment to enhance an inclusive campus community, and the level of awareness increases from the freshman to the senior year; (b) seniors and sophomores than juniors and freshmen are more inclined to believe that a student's sexual orientation is not an important consideration in the respect students receives on campus; (c) seniors and sophomores are more inclined to think that prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus, as opposed to juniors and freshmen; (d) sophomores are very unlikely to encourage other minority students to enroll at the college as opposed to the other class levels. Freshmen and seniors are far more likely to do so; (e) more freshmen and juniors than sophomores and seniors are inclined to have warm and friendly interactions with White college administrators; (f) freshmen and juniors have a far more favorable opinion of the services provided by the Residence Life and Housing than sophomores and seniors; (g) seniors are more likely than all the other class/levels to be dissatisfied with the services received from the Dining Services; and (h) sophomores and seniors are more likely to opine that they are "aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school."

The sensitivity of the campus climate-related variables to minority students' class/level at the PWI shows four tendencies. For the first tendency, as expected, the higher the class level, the more knowledgeable and open-minded are minority students with respect to diversity and campus climate. This explains the perceptions for the following variable: "the awareness that policy statements at the PWI emphasize commitment to

enhance an inclusive campus community.” The second tendency is that the opinions of freshmen and juniors are aligned and less favorable than the aligned opinions of sophomores and seniors. This explains the perceptions for the variable, “a student’s sexual orientation is not an important consideration in the respect students receives on campus.” Contrary to expectations, the opinions for this particular variable swing widely between the freshman and senior years, suggesting the campus climate at the PWI with respect to sexual orientation is still very fluid, at least from the perspective of minority students in different class levels.

The third tendency is that the opinions of seniors and sophomores are aligned and less favorable than the aligned opinions of juniors and freshmen for the majority of the opinion variables. The peculiarity about the nature of this alignment is that, while seniors are at the verge of graduating from college, most college transfers occur at the end of the sophomore year. A possible speculation is that students who are more inclined to leaving the college are more open-minded with their opinions, while those who are inclined to stay are more conservative because they still have a stake in the college. This explains the perceptions for the following five variables: “prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus,” “warm and friendly interactions with White college administrators,” “opinion of the services provided by the Residence Life and Housing,” “opinion on awareness of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school” and “dissatisfaction with the services received from the Dining Services.”

The fourth tendency is what explains the perceptions for the following variable: “encourage other minority students to enroll at the college.” Seniors and freshmen are

aligned on this one, and more likely to encourage other students to enroll at the college. This can be explained by the fact that as potential alumni, seniors would like to express a positive image of the college they are graduating from. Freshmen still have the excitement of enrolling into college and are more inclined to let their peers in high school or other colleges to know that they made the right choice. The unlikelihood of sophomores to encourage other minority students to enroll at the college can be explained again by the propensity of students at this level to harbor thoughts of transferring.

Minority students who are seniors and freshmen are also aligned on the one hand while juniors and sophomores are aligned on the other hand with regard to the frequency of attending diversity and other activities on campus. Fewer seniors and freshmen are less engaged on campus than juniors and sophomores, and seniors and freshmen also take part in the highest number of diversity-related activities on campus. The level of engagement of freshmen can also be explained by the excitement of enrolling into college and the many programs that target students during the college enrollment process and at the start of their first semester on campus. Such programs include the First Year Orientation, AALANA Mentor Program, and targeted activities of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the College Migrant Program (CAMP). Seniors on the other hand are likely to be very involved in diversity-related activities as they build their leadership skills before graduation from participating in programs organized by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs (OMSA), the African and Latino Studies (ALS) department, EOP, CAMP, and multicultural clubs.

Understanding the foregoing can have important implication for recommendations for actions that can be carried out in the short, medium, and long term, by the PWI and

institutions with similar attributes. It will also have implications for recommendations for further studies.

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

Since the implementation of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs) did not have a significant impact on the attrition trend of minority students as a whole, at least in the short term, the implication here is that more still has to be done to effectively concretize any efforts that are deployed at the PWI to enhance diversity and inclusion and promote positive campus climate. More questions need to be asked and answers sought as to what the PWI needs to keep working or improve on.

One area where institutional efforts would yield perceptible changes is to address minority students' concerns regarding their strong perception that the level of diversity of faculty, staff, and administrators at the PWI is very low. For instance minority students stressed the need for staff from minority backgrounds in some key offices such as the Counseling Center, Academic Advisement, and the Center for Academic Development and Enrichment. The PWI should strive to get a critical mass with regard to recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, administrators, and students from minority backgrounds.

With regard to campus climate and inclusion, since the perception of most minority students is that their opinions are not taken into consideration when important decisions are made on campus, targeted efforts can be put in place to ensure that minority students have the opportunity to air their views, feel safe, and have a sense of belonging. This might entail making available additional resources (material, financial, and human) to reinforce the activities of existing programs of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, the Center for Multicultural Experience, the Educational Opportunity Program, and others.

Since minority students are mostly unsatisfied with the services provided by Residence Life and Housing and the Dining Services, it would be helpful to design and implement targeted actions for these critical campus resources. Students' perception of the services provided by Residence Life and Housing, for the most part, drives their overall perception of campus climate and inclusion at the PWI. This is because residence halls are probably the most important meeting points for the interaction of many students on campus on a daily-basis. In addition, for the PWI under consideration, with the exception of a few commuter students, majority students are part, or have been part, of the Residence Life and Housing community. Reinforced actions could include continuous and targeted staff trainings on diversity-, inclusion-, and equity-related issues, as well as students-based programming and activities to foster interactions and inclusion.

Faculty should continue to strive to incorporate diversity-related concepts into the curriculum while also fostering a positive classroom climate for minority students who in PWIs could easily feel a sense of isolation in the classroom. Deans and Heads of Department can institute quality assurance procedures which incorporate classroom climate for minority students.

Differences or similarities in the minority students' perceptions of campus climate, taking into consideration their gender, ethnic background, or class, would have significant implications in crafting training, outreach, and institutional programs at the PWI. For instance, since minority students' gender and class were critical variables in their perception of campus climate-related issues at the PWI, as opposed to race or ethnic background, the focus at the PWI should be in providing gender- and class-appropriate

targeted initiatives that emphasize institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion, and are open to the opinions and concerns of minority students.

This study touches on some areas on which further research could be carried out. For instance, one of the limitations of this study is that it involved only minority undergraduate students in one PWI in the State University of New York (SUNY) system in Northeastern United States. The study can be expanded to include other colleges of equal standing, at least in the SUNY system. In addition, since the implementation of Campus Climate Survey Recommendations is an ongoing process, further research should be planned within the same PWI, or expanded to similar colleges in the SUNY system, that expands the timeframe for the longitudinal data used beyond 2009 to further consolidate or appreciate perceptible changes in the findings of the study.

Examining in greater details the dynamics and sensitivities to gender and race of the interactions with constituents on campus, especially faculty-student interactions, may be an area to further explore to help understand minority students' perceptions and drop-out decisions. These insights will be of importance given the low proportion of faculty and staff from a minority background at PWIs who can serve as role models for the minority students. A critical question to be addressed could be: what is the critical mass of faculty, staff, and senior administrative personnel at PWIs that can engender positive campus climates, and enhance retention rates and overall college experience of minority students?

Some key findings in this study, especially with regard to the sensitivity of the perception of minority students to their class, point to dynamics for sophomores that are worth further exploring owing to the critical bearing this might have on the understanding of attrition patterns. For instance, how do the observed dynamics for sophomores compare

with those of their White peers at the same PWI or other institutions of similar standing? How do the observed patterns relate to the general body of literature on the attitudes of sophomores in a college setting?

The study can be further expanded to explore the specific dynamics of minority student's perceptions in the residence life community and in the dining services at PWIs and how they impact their overall college experience. Allen and Solórzano (2001), for instance, identified various verbal and non-verbal microaggressions that African American students encounter in their social and academic spaces of their PWIs. Could issues of microaggression – racial, sexist, or otherwise – be more pervasive in the residence life community and in the dining services, given that these are two important campus resources where students can interact in both large and small groups as well as in strictly student-to-student settings? Understanding and examining these dynamics may help to further explain some of the reasons and factors that drive minority students' opinions and attitudes at the PWI and similar institutions.

Another related research dimension from this study is the expansion to include other dimensions of diversity. Since the definition of “minority students” in the study was limited only to the context of race/ethnicity and gender, very little focus was given to the other dimensions of diversity for which minority status can be defined such as sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, and ability level. A similar study can be envisaged, variously incorporating these different dimensions of diversity. This could be further expanded to include international students. Another area for which this work can be further enhanced could be: correlation of minority attrition patterns at four-year PWIs in relation to the overall minority students' attrition patterns in other four-year institutions.

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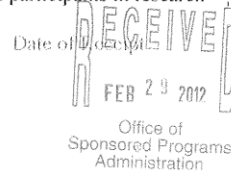
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APPENDIX I. IRB APPROVALS

Institutional Review Board ...for the protection of human participants in research

North Dakota State University
Sponsored Programs Administration
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
NDSU Dept #4000
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050 231-8995(phone) 231-8098(fax)



Continuing Review or Completion Report Form

Use this form to: 1) request a continuation of IRB approval if a project is currently active (recruiting subjects, collecting data, or analysis of identifiable data), or 2) report completion of a project.

Protocol Information

Protocol #: **Protocol # HE10220**

Original approval date*: **04/06/2010**

Title: **"Campus Climate Perception and Minority Students' Attrition at a Predominantly White Institution"**

Principal investigator: **Dr. Myron Eighmy** *ME*

Co-investigator: **Bernadette S. N. Tiapo** *4/18/09*

Department: **School of Education**

Department: **School of Education**

E-Mail/Campus Address: **FLC 210/701-231-5775
myron.eighmy@ndsu.edu**

E-Mail/Campus Address: **c/o FLC 210 / 701-231-7201
-bernadette.tiaponeba@ndsu.edu / tiapob@yahoo.com**

** Complete and submit an updated protocol form & relevant attachments every 5 years following approval. Protocol records must be updated every 5 years by completing a new protocol form and any relevant attachments, and including it with this report. Use the most recent version of the forms on the IRB website at: http://www.ndsu.edu/research/irb/rcatt_irb_forms.php.*

Project Status

Ongoing and currently active Expected end date of research: **June 2012**

Complete, abandoned or inactive

Source of current funding**: **N/A**

Pending funding proposals**: **N/A**

****Attach copy of final grant application(s), and/or recent report to funding agency**

Research team: *List all individuals involved in the research (project design/oversight, recruiting participants, obtaining informed consent, intervening or interacting with participants to obtain information/data, and/or handling identifiable information for research purposes). May provide as a separate attachment.*

Institutional Review Board ...for the protection of human participants in research

North Dakota State University
Sponsored Programs Administration
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
NDSU Dept #4000
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050 231-8995(ph) 231-8098(fax)



Continuing Review or Completion Report Form

Use this form to: 1) request a continuation of IRB approval if a project is currently active (recruiting subjects, collecting data, or analysis of identifiable data), or 2) report completion of a project.

Protocol Information

Protocol #: **Protocol # HE10220**

Original approval date*: **04/06/2010**

Title: **"Campus Climate Perception and Minority Students' Attrition at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)"**

Principal investigator: **Dr. Myron Eighmy** *2/20/09* Co-investigator: **Bernadette S. N. Tiapo** *4/8/2009*

Department: **School of Education**

Department: **School of Education**

E-Mail/Campus Address: **FLC 210/701-231-5775
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7201 -bernadette.tiaponeba@ndsu.edu /
tiapob@yahoo.com**

** Complete and submit an updated protocol form & relevant attachments every 5 years following approval. Protocol records must be updated every 5 years by completing a new protocol form and any relevant attachments, and including it with this report. Use the most recent version of the forms on the IRB website at: http://www.ndsu.edu/research/irb/rcatt_irb_forms.php.*

Project Status

Ongoing and currently active Expected end date of research: **July 2011**

Complete, abandoned or inactive

Source of current funding**: **N/A**

Pending funding proposals**: **N/A**

****Attach copy of final grant application(s), and/or recent report to funding agency**

Research team: List all individuals involved in the research (project design/oversight, recruiting participants, obtaining informed consent, intervening or interacting with participants to obtain information/data, and/or handling identifiable information for research purposes). May provide as a separate attachment.

Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer

NDSU Dept. 4000

1735 NDSU Research Park Drive

Research 1, P.O. Box 6050

Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439

Expires April 24, 2011

April 6, 2010

**Myron Eighmy
School of Education
FLC 210**

IRB Expedited Review of: **"Campus Climate Perception and Minority Students' Attrition at a Predominantly White Institution"**, Protocol #HE10220

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Bernadette S. N. Tiapo**

Research site(s): **SUNY at Oneonta**

Funding: **n/a**

The protocol referenced above was reviewed under the expedited review process (category # 7) on **4/6/2010**, and the IRB voted for: approval approval, contingent on minor modifications. This determination is based on the submission of protocol, consent and recruitment documents received 3/30/2010.

Approval expires: 4/5/2011

Continuing Review Report Due: 3/1/2011

Please note your responsibilities in this research:

- All changes to the protocol require approval from the IRB prior to implementation, unless the change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazard to participants. Submit proposed changes using the *Protocol Amendment Request Form*.
- All research-related injuries, adverse events, or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be reported in writing to the IRB Office within 72 hours of knowledge of the occurrence. All significant new findings that may affect risks to participation should be reported in writing to subjects and the IRB.
- If the project will continue beyond the approval period, a continuing review report must be submitted by the due date indicated above in order to allow time for IRB review and approval prior to the expiration date. The IRB Office will typically send a reminder letter approximately one month before the report due date; however, timely submission of the report is your responsibility. Should IRB approval for the project lapse, recruitment of subjects and data collection must stop.
- When the project is complete, a final project report is required so that IRB records can be inactivated. Federal regulations require that IRB records on a protocol be retained for three years following project completion. Both the continuing review report and the final report should be submitted according to instructions on the *Continuing Review/Completion Report Form*.
- Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB regulations.

Thank you for cooperating with NDSU IRB policies, and best wishes for a successful study.

Myron Eighmy
Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)
Co-Chairs: Craig Bielert, Professor of Psychology
Joanne Curran, Associate Dean of Education

Members:

Lisa Curch, Assistant Professor of Sociology
Steven Gilbert, Professor of Psychology
Sallie Han, Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Patricia Knuth, Assistant Executive Director, The ARC Otsego
Kim Muller, Director, Sponsored Programs Office (ex officio)

Date: 30 April 2009

To: Bernadette Tiapo

IRB Project Number: 2009-36

This communication is to acknowledge receipt of the IRB Review Form for your project entitled *Campus Climate Perception and Minority Students' Attrition at a Predominantly White Institution*. Please carefully note the following actions:

- Your IRB Review Form has been received and was submitted to the IRB on 16 April 2009. You will be updated on its status through the review process.
- The IRB completed review of your project on . Your project does not fall under human subjects' protection statutes and does not require IRB approval for you to proceed.
- The IRB reviewed your project on . Prior to the IRB determining approval, the following Principal Investigators on your project must complete the CITI (Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) program for protection of human subjects in research and submit certification to the IRB in order for them to complete their review (or must provide proof of current certification through another human subjects in research protection program). Please access the CITI web-based program at www.citiprogram.org. If you have questions, contact the Director of Sponsored Programs at mullerkk@oneonta.edu.
Principal Investigator:
Principal Investigator:
Principal Investigator:
Principal Investigator:
- The IRB reviewed your project on . Prior to the IRB determining approval, the following Faculty Supervisor(s) must complete the CITI (Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) program for protection of human subjects in research (or must provide proof of current certification through another human subjects in research protection program). Please access the CITI web-based program at www.citiprogram.org. If you have questions, contact the Director of Sponsored Programs at mullerkk@oneonta.edu.
Faculty Supervisor:
Faculty Supervisor:
- The IRB reviewed your project on . Your proposal requires revisions. Please note the attached comments.
- The IRB completed review of your proposal on 29 April 2009 and all Principal Investigators (and Faculty Supervisors if applicable) on your project have completed the CITI program. You are authorized by the IRB to proceed with your research project.

IRB notice – 4/8/2012

If you have any questions, please contact the Sponsored Programs Office (Kim Muller, x2479, mullerkk@oneonta.edu).

IRB notice – 4/8/2012

APPENDIX II. ELECTRONIC MAILS

Letter to potential focus group participants

To: [Email Group Address]

Subject: Campus Climate Perception Survey for SUNY Oneonta Minority Students

Dear SUNY Oneonta student

I am conducting a research project to complete the requirements for my doctoral dissertation. I am interested in examining college campus climate perceptions by minority students. The study will pool opinions of participants and use the aggregate statistics in assessing the perception of campus climate by minority students in a predominantly White institution like SUNY Oneonta.

Please I will greatly appreciate your voluntary participation in the research project, as well as your responding to every question. There is no right or wrong answer. You are therefore encouraged to be completely honest and candid in responding to the questions. I am interested in knowing what your impressions are, what you think, and how you feel.

All answers are completely anonymous; there is absolutely no way that responses can be connected to your identity. Additionally, IRB requirements have been complied; ensuring strict confidentiality in the information provided by study participants. Completing the survey is estimated to take less than 20 minutes.

Please contact me at xxxxx@oneonta.edu or at ext. xxxx, if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study that need further explanations. Thank you very much for your time and kind understanding.

Bernadette Tiapo
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
SUNY Oneonta
Tel:
E-mail:

Letter to potential focus group participants

To: [Email Address]

Subject: Request for participation in study

Dear ...

I am a staff at the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs at SUNY Oneonta, and also a doctoral student in the School of Education and Human Development at North Dakota State University (NDSU), Fargo, ND. I am conducting a research project to complete the requirements for my dissertation. I am interested in examining campus climate perceptions by minority students on a predominantly White institution of higher education, like SUNY Oneonta.

I am interested in conducting focus group interviews with minority students, and would greatly appreciate your voluntary participation in the research project. The focus group interviews will last for 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours. The interviews will be audio-taped and participants' confidentiality will be strictly ensured. Only aggregate information will be transcribed and analyzed.

Please contact me at xxxxx@oneonta.edu or at ext. xxxx if you are interested in participating in the focus group sessions, or need further explanations. Participants for the study will not be compensated. However the information they will provide will be very useful in the analysis and interpretation of the results of the study which might be useful in informing policy recommendations on diversity-related issues in higher education settings.

Thank you,

Bernadette Tiapo
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
SUNY Oneonta
Tel:
E-mail:

APPENDIX III. ONLINE SURVEY

Campus Climate Perception Survey

Please use the five point scale below to rate the next series of questions (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, and including “don’t know”) where:

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree 5 = Don’t Know

I am aware that the mission statement of SUNY Oneonta seeks to foster diversity on campus

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am aware that the mission statement of SUNY Oneonta seeks to enhance a more inclusive campus community

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am aware of programs at the College to enhance diversity and inclusion on campus

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

There is general respect for students on campus irrespective of racial or ethnic background

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

There is general respect for students on campus irrespective of gender

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

There is general respect for students on campus irrespective of sexual orientation

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

There is general respect for students on campus irrespective of faith or religious background

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am satisfied with the level of faculty diversity at the College

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am satisfied with the diversity of the staff at the College

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am satisfied with the diversity of the administrators at the College

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

Minority students’ opinions are taken into consideration when important decisions are made on campus

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I do not have to give up my cultural beliefs in order to “fit in” on campus

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I would recommend other minority students to register (transfer) for undergraduate studies at the college

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

Prejudice against minority students is a problem on campus

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

White students I come across on campus are warm and open to minority students

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

White faculty I come across are friendly towards minority students

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

White staff I come across are friendly towards minority students

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

White College Administrators I come across are friendly towards minority students

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

Minority students of a different ethnic background are more likely to be friendly to me than White students

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I feel comfortable to discuss with faculty on academic and other personal issues outside of class

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

In my classes, I feel that faculty ignore my comments and questions

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

As a minority student, I feel more obliged to prove myself by to faculty

1- Strongly Disagree () 2- Disagree () 3 Agree () 4- Strongly Agree () 5- Don’t know ()

I am aware of complaints about unfair treatments from other minority students that have caused them to think about dropping out of College or transferring to a different school

APPENDIX IV. FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Research Topic: *Campus Climate Perception and Minority Students' Attrition at a Predominantly White Institution*

IRB Protocol #:

Conducted By: *Bernadette S. N. Tiapo, Office of Multicultural Students Affairs, Netzer Administration, SUNY Oneonta, Oneonta, NY 13820, (xXXXX; xxxxx@oneonta.edu)*

Information about the study is provided in this form, and the researcher will also describe the study to you and respond to all your concerns. You are requested to read all the information about the study, provided herein, and ask questions you might have, in order to make an informed decision about your willingness to participate. Please, you are reminded that **your participation is entirely voluntary**, and **you can stop your participation at anytime** by simply informing the researcher. Your participation or non-participation in the study will also have no bearings, negative or positive, on any benefit to which you are otherwise entitled at SUNY Oneonta. The study will involve focus group interviews, each lasting between 45 to 90 minutes. The interviews will be audio taped and **participants' confidentiality will be assured** throughout the entire research process.

The purpose of this study is to explore minority students' lived experiences and perceptions of campus climate-related issues at SUNY Oneonta - a predominantly White institution (PWI), which is in the implementation phase of campus climate survey recommendations (CCSRs). It will also try to gain an understanding of minority students' attrition patterns and associated factors, and the potential impact of CCSRs on attrition rates.

You qualify to participate in this study because you have self-identified as a minority student during enrolment at SUNY Oneonta. 10 – 20 minority students from different ethnic backgrounds will be required to take part in the study.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview session with the researcher. You will be asked to share your perceptions on the college campus climate and environment, including minority student college involvement and success.

The total estimated time for your participation in the study will be 45 to 90 minutes. The interviews will be held in a neutral noise-free setting.

What are the risks and discomforts? It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to the participant, which in the case of this study might not be other than that associated with everyday occurrences. It is possible that discussions related to ethnicity and race relations might lead to emotional/psychological distress.

The benefits to participants and to society, from the outcome of this study can be linked to the potential of formulating recommendations to foster diversity and inclusiveness in our colleges and universities, and the attendant benefits in enhancing student success and graduating good citizens. However, you may not get any benefit personally from participating in this research study.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may also change your mind and stop participating at any time without any penalty.

With regard to alternatives to being in this research study, you can choose not to participate.

Confidentiality:

All research records that identify you will be kept private. All materials will be kept in a secured place (for any likely follow-up research) and discarded after 3 years. Every effort will be made to prevent anyone from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Your information will be pooled with information from other students taking part in the study. Any written report will use the pooled information that has been gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of the study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

You can stop your participation at anytime by simply informing the researcher. If you fail to show up for the interview session, you may be removed from the study.

Compensation: Participants for the study will not be compensated.

Questions?: Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the research study, please make sure you ask any questions that might come to mind. Later, if you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher, Bernadette S. N. Tiapo at xXXXX or xxxxxx@oneonta.edu

You have rights as a research participant. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the SUNY Oneonta Grants Development Office. The role of the IRB is to see that your rights are protected in this research. Please visit the SUNY IRB-related web link at: <http://www.oneonta.edu/advancement/grants/human.asp>

Documentation of Informed Consent:

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that

1. you have read and understood this consent form
2. you have had the consent form explained to you
3. you have had your questions answered, and
4. you have decided to be in the study.

I _____ hereby give permission to the researcher to interview and record my conversation (audio only) during the interview, and transcript the interview only for the purpose of the research I have been informed about.

Your signature

Date

Name and Signature of researcher explaining study

Date

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Please send the signed form to:

Bernadette Tiapo
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
SUNY College at Oneonta
Tel:
Email:

APPENDIX V. APPENDIX TABLES

Table A.1. Distribution of Respondents' Level of Awareness of Emphasis on Inclusive Community in College's Policy Statements by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	6	14	55	8	83	20	63
	%	7.2	16.9	66.3	9.6	100.0	24.1	75.9
Asian	<i>n</i>	0	2	14	8	24	2	22
	%	0.0	8.3	58.3	33.3	100.0	8.3	91.7
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	3	6	41	11	61	9	52
	%	4.9	9.8	67.2	18.0	100.0	14.8	85.2
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	0	2	12	4	18	2	16
	%	0.0	11.1	66.7	22.2	100.0	11.1	88.9
Total	<i>n</i>	9	24	124	31	188	33	155
	%	4.8	12.8	66.0	16.5	100.0	17.6	82.4

Table A.2. Distribution of Respondents' Level of Awareness of Emphasis on Inclusive Community in College's Policy Statements by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	3	20	92	28	143	23	120
	%	2.1	14.0	64.3	19.6	100.0	16.1	83.9
Male	<i>n</i>	6	4	32	3	45	10	35
	%	13.3	8.9	71.1	6.7	100.0	22.2	77.8
Total	<i>n</i>	9	24	124	31	188	33	155
	%	4.8	12.8	66.0	16.5	100.0	17.6	82.4

Table A.3. Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Satisfaction with level of Staff Diversity by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	34	45	10	0	89	79	10
	%	38.2	50.6	11.2	0.0	100.0	88.8	11.2
Asian	<i>n</i>	4	8	12	0	24	12	12
	%	16.7	33.3	50.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	12	19	30	6	67	31	36
	%	17.9	28.4	44.8	9.0	100.0	46.3	53.7
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	4	6	10	0	20	10	10
	%	20.0	30.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0
Total	<i>n</i>	54	78	64	6	202	132	70
	%	26.7	38.6	31.7	3.0	100.0	65.3	34.7

Table A.4. Distribution of Respondents' Opinions on Satisfaction with level of Diversity of Administrators by Race / Ethnic Background

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
African American/ Black	<i>n</i>	40	37	10	0	87	77	10
	%	46.0	42.5	11.5	0.0	100.0	88.5	11.5
Asian	<i>n</i>	4	6	10	0	20	10	10
	%	20.0	30.0	50.0	0.0	100.0	50.0	50.0
Hispanic/ Latino	<i>n</i>	12	21	24	6	63	33	30
	%	19.0	33.3	38.1	9.5	100.0	52.4	47.6
Native American	<i>n</i>	0	0	2	0	2	0	2
	%	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
Other	<i>n</i>	4	8	4	0	16	12	4
	%	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	100.0	75.0	25.0
Total	<i>n</i>	60	72	50	6	188	132	56
	%	31.9	38.3	26.6	3.2	100.0	70.2	29.8

Table A.5. Respondents' Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Race / Ethnic Background - Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	2	35	94	22	153	37	116
	%	1.3	22.9	61.4	14.4	100.0	24.2	75.8
Male	<i>n</i>	6	7	34	2	49	13	36
	%	12.2	14.3	69.4	4.1	100.0	26.5	73.5
Total	<i>n</i>	8	42	128	24	202	50	152
	%	4.0	20.8	63.4	11.9	100.0	24.8	75.2

Table A.6. Respondents' Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Race / Ethnic Background – Distribution by Class

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	6	32	6	44	6	38
	%	0.0	13.6	72.7	13.6	100.0	13.6	86.4
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	6	17	39	6	68	23	45
	%	8.8	25.0	57.4	8.8	100.0	33.8	66.2
Junior	<i>n</i>	2	5	39	10	56	7	49
	%	3.6	8.9	69.6	17.9	100.0	12.5	87.5
Senior	<i>n</i>	0	14	18	2	34	14	20
	%	0.0	41.2	52.9	5.9	100.0	41.2	58.8
Total	<i>n</i>	8	42	128	24	202	50	152
	%	4.0	20.8	63.4	11.9	100.0	24.8	75.2

Table A.7. Respondents' Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Religious Background - Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	6	16	83	38	143	22	121
	%	4.2	11.2	58.0	26.6	100.0	15.4	84.6
Male	<i>n</i>	0	2	43	2	47	2	45
	%	0.0	4.3	91.5	4.3	100.0	4.3	95.7
Total	<i>n</i>	6	18	126	40	190	24	166
	%	3.2	9.5	66.3	21.1	100.0	12.6	87.4

Table A.8. Respondents' Opinions on Respect for Students Irrespective of Sexual Orientation - Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	10	34	64	33	141	44	97
	%	7.1	24.1	45.4	23.4	100.0	31.2	68.8
Male	<i>n</i>	2	17	19	4	42	19	23
	%	4.8	40.5	45.2	9.5	100.0	45.2	54.8
Total	<i>n</i>	12	51	83	37	183	63	120
	%	6.6	27.9	45.4	20.2	100.0	34.4	65.6

Table A.9. Respondents' Opinions on Minority Students not having to give up their Cultural Beliefs in order to Fit-in at the PWI – Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	4	22	67	57	150	26	124
	%	2.7	14.7	44.7	38.0	100.0	17.3	82.7
Male	<i>n</i>	10	7	18	14	49	17	32
	%	20.4	14.3	36.7	28.6	100.0	34.7	65.3
Total	<i>n</i>	14	29	85	71	199	43	156
	%	7.0	14.6	42.7	35.7	100.0	21.6	78.4

Table A.10. Respondents' Opinions on Recommending other Students to Enroll at the PWI – Distribution by Class/Level

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Freshman	<i>n</i>	2	6	20	16	44	8	36
	%	4.5	13.6	45.5	36.4	95.7	18.2	81.8
Sophomore	<i>n</i>	12	17	23	9	61	29	32
	%	19.7	27.9	37.7	14.8	89.7	47.5	52.5
Junior	<i>n</i>	2	12	32	6	52	14	38
	%	3.8	23.1	61.5	11.5	89.7	26.9	73.1
Senior	<i>n</i>	6	0	16	10	32	6	26
	%	18.8	0.0	50.0	31.3	88.9	18.8	81.3
Total	<i>n</i>	22	35	91	41	189	57	132
	%	11.6	18.5	48.1	21.7	90.9	30.2	69.8

Table A.11. Respondents' Opinions on Minority Students' Interaction with Different Campus Constituents - Distribution by Gender

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
			A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Level of Agreement - White Students Warm and Open Towards Minority Students	Female	<i>n</i>	4	39	80	26	149	43	106
		%	2.7	26.2	53.7	17.4	100.0	28.9	71.1
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	14	33	0	51	18	33
		%	7.8	27.5	64.7	0.0	100.0	35.3	64.7
	Total	<i>n</i>	8	53	113	26	200	61	139
		%	4.0	26.5	56.5	13.0	100.0	30.5	69.5
Level of Agreement - White Faculty Friendly Toward Minority Students	Female	<i>n</i>	6	32	84	24	146	38	108
		%	4.1	21.9	57.5	16.4	100.0	26.0	74.0
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	8	29	10	51	12	39
		%	7.8	15.7	56.9	19.6	100.0	23.5	76.5
	Total	<i>n</i>	10	40	113	34	197	50	147
		%	5.1	20.3	57.4	17.3	100.0	25.4	74.6
Level of Agreement - White Staff Friendly Toward Minority Students	Female	<i>n</i>	4	40	76	26	146	44	102
		%	2.7	27.4	52.1	17.8	100.0	30.1	69.9
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	10	28	7	49	14	35
		%	8.2	20.4	57.1	14.3	100.0	28.6	71.4
	Total	<i>n</i>	8	50	104	33	195	58	137
		%	4.1	25.6	53.3	16.9	100.0	29.7	70.3
Level of Agreement - White Administrators Friendly Toward Minority Students	Female	<i>n</i>	4	42	78	18	142	46	96
		%	2.8	29.6	54.9	12.7	100.0	32.4	67.6
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	12	24	7	47	16	31
		%	8.5	25.5	51.1	14.9	100.0	34.0	66.0
	Total	<i>n</i>	8	54	102	25	189	62	127
		%	4.2	28.6	54.0	13.2	100.0	32.8	67.2
Level of Agreement - Minority Students of Different Background More Friendly than White Students	Female	<i>n</i>	12	44	65	19	140	56	84
		%	8.6	31.4	46.4	13.6	100.0	40.0	60.0
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	10	18	8	40	14	26
		%	10.0	25.0	45.0	20.0	100.0	35.0	65.0
	Total	<i>n</i>	16	54	83	27	180	70	110
		%	8.9	30.0	46.1	15.0	100.0	38.9	61.1

Table A.12. Respondents' Opinions on Classroom Climate-related Variables - Distribution by Gender

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
			A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Comfortable to Discuss with Faculty on Academic and Personal Issues Outside of Classroom	Female	<i>n</i>	12	34	79	22	147	46	101
		%	8.2	23.1	53.7	15.0	100.0	31.3	68.7
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	6	31	10	51	10	41
		%	7.8	11.8	60.8	19.6	100.0	19.6	80.4
	Total	<i>n</i>	16	40	110	32	198	56	142
		%	8.1	20.2	55.6	16.2	100.0	28.3	71.7
Faculty Ignores Comments and Questions in My Classes	Female	<i>n</i>	34	93	21	2	150	127	23
		%	22.7	62.0	14.0	1.3	100.0	84.7	15.3
	Male	<i>n</i>	14	27	8	2	51	41	10
		%	27.5	52.9	15.7	3.9	100.0	80.4	19.6
	Total	<i>n</i>	48	120	29	4	201	168	33
		%	23.9	59.7	14.4	2.0	100.0	83.6	16.4
More Obligated to Prove Self to Faculty as a Minority Student	Female	<i>n</i>	10	44	63	32	149	54	95
		%	6.7	29.5	42.3	21.5	100.0	36.2	63.8
	Male	<i>n</i>	3	18	15	15	51	21	30
		%	5.9	35.3	29.4	29.4	100.0	41.2	58.8
	Total	<i>n</i>	13	62	78	47	200	75	125
		%	6.5	31.0	39.0	23.5	100.0	37.5	62.5

Table A.13 Respondents' Opinions on Average Number of Diversity Activities per Academic Year – Distribution by Gender

		None	1 - 3 Times	4 - 6 Times	7 Times and Above	Total
Female	<i>n</i>	28	34	45	50	157
	%	17.8	21.7	28.7	31.8	100.0
Male	<i>n</i>	8	9	12	22	51
	%	15.7	17.6	23.5	43.1	100.0
Total	<i>n</i>	36	43	57	72	208
	%	17.3	20.7	27.4	34.6	100.0

Table A.14. Respondents' Opinions on Minority Students' Satisfaction with Services Offered by Different Programs on Campus - Distribution by Gender

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
			A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic Advisement	Female	<i>n</i>	2	5	84	43	134	7	127
		%	1.49	3.73	62.69	32.09	100.00	5.22	94.78
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	0	24	21	49	4	45
		%	8.16	0.00	48.98	42.86	100.00	8.16	91.84
	Total	<i>n</i>	6	5	108	64	183	11	172
		%	3.28	2.73	59.02	34.97	100.00	6.01	93.99
I am satisfied with the services offered by Academic & Computer Services	Female	<i>n</i>	2	8	78	20	108	10	98
		%	1.85	7.41	72.22	18.52	100.00	9.26	90.74
	Male	<i>n</i>	2	0	22	5	29	2	27
		%	6.90	0.00	75.86	17.24	100.00	6.90	93.10
	Total	<i>n</i>	4	8	100	25	137	12	125
		%	2.92	5.84	72.99	18.25	100.00	8.76	91.24
I am satisfied with the services offered by Career Development Center	Female	<i>n</i>	0	18	76	33	127	18	109
		%	0.00	14.17	59.84	25.98	100.00	14.17	85.83
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	2	29	10	45	6	39
		%	8.89	4.44	64.44	22.22	100.00	13.33	86.67
	Total	<i>n</i>	4	20	105	43	172	24	148
		%	2.33	11.63	61.05	25.00	100.00	13.95	86.05
I am satisfied with the services offered by Dining Services	Female	<i>n</i>	9	21	46	34	110	30	80
		%	8.18	19.09	41.82	30.91	100	27.27	72.73
	Male	<i>n</i>	10	4	23	8	45	14	31
		%	22.22	8.89	51.11	17.78	100	31.11	68.89
	Total	<i>n</i>	19	25	69	42	155	44	111
		%	12.26	16.13	44.52	27.10	100.00	28.39	71.61
I am satisfied with the services offered by Financial Aids Office	Female	<i>n</i>	11	24	62	32	129	35	94
		%	8.53	18.60	48.06	24.81	100	27.13	72.87
	Male	<i>n</i>	8	4	23	10	45	12	33
		%	17.78	8.89	51.11	22.22	100.00	26.67	73.33
	Total	<i>n</i>	19	28	85	42	174	47	127
		%	10.92	16.09	48.85	24.14	100.00	27.01	72.99
I am satisfied with the services offered by Office of Multicultural Student Affairs	Female	<i>n</i>	0	4	41	50	95	4	91
		%	0.00	4.21	43.16	52.63	100.00	4.21	95.79
	Male	<i>n</i>	2	2	16	16	36	4	32
		%	5.56	5.56	44.44	44.44	100.00	11.11	88.89
	Total	<i>n</i>	2	6	57	66	131	8	123
		%	1.53	4.58	43.51	50.38	100.00	6.11	93.89
I am satisfied with the services offered by Residence Life & Housing	Female	<i>n</i>	3	11	63	12	89	14	75
		%	3.37	12.36	70.79	13.48	100.00	15.73	84.27
	Male	<i>n</i>	4	8	10	7	29	12	17
		%	13.79	27.59	34.48	24.14	100.00	41.38	58.62
	Total	<i>n</i>	7	19	73	19	118	26	92
		%	5.93	16.10	61.86	16.10	100.00	22.03	77.97
I am satisfied with the services offered by Student Accounts	Female	<i>n</i>	5	16	66	21	108	21	87
		%	4.63	14.81	61.11	19.44	100.00	19.44	80.56
	Male	<i>n</i>	2	0	35	2	39	2	37
		%	5.13	0.00	89.74	5.13	100.00	5.13	94.87
	Total	<i>n</i>	7	16	101	23	147	23	124
		%	4.76	10.88	68.71	15.65	100.00	15.65	84.35

Table A.15. Respondents' Opinions on Minority Students' Satisfaction with Services Offered by Different Programs on Campus - Distribution by Class/Level

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
			A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
I am satisfied with the services offered by Career Development Center	Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	4	24	10	38	4	34
		%	0.00	10.53	63.16	26.32	100.00	10.53	89.47
	Sophomore	<i>n</i>	2	4	42	10	58	6	52
		%	3.45	6.90	72.41	17.24	100.00	10.34	89.66
	Junior	<i>n</i>	2	4	27	11	44	6	38
		%	4.55	9.09	61.36	25.00	100.00	13.64	86.36
	Senior	<i>n</i>	0	8	12	12	32	8	24
		%	0.00	25.00	37.50	37.50	100.00	25.00	75.00
	Total	<i>n</i>	4	20	105	43	172	24	148
		%	2.33	11.63	61.05	25.00	100.00	13.95	86.05
I am satisfied with the services offered by Dining Services	Freshman	<i>n</i>	6	6	14	14	40	12	28
		%	15.00	15.00	35.00	35.00	100.00	30.00	70.00
	Sophomore	<i>n</i>	3	5	24	13	45	8	37
		%	6.67	11.11	53.33	28.89	100.00	17.78	82.22
	Junior	<i>n</i>	6	6	21	11	44	12	32
		%	13.64	13.64	47.73	25.00	100.00	27.27	72.73
	Senior	<i>n</i>	4	8	10	4	26	12	14
		%	15.38	30.77	38.46	15.38	100.00	46.15	53.85
	Total	<i>n</i>	19	25	69	42	155	44	111
		%	12.26	16.13	44.52	27.10	100.00	28.39	71.61
I am satisfied with the services offered by Financial Aids Office	Freshman	<i>n</i>	4	6	20	12	42	10	32
		%	9.52	14.29	47.62	28.57	100.00	23.81	76.19
	Sophomore	<i>n</i>	4	12	28	10	54	16	38
		%	7.41	22.22	51.85	18.52	100.00	29.63	70.37
	Junior	<i>n</i>	7	2	25	14	48	9	39
		%	14.58	4.17	52.08	29.17	100.00	18.75	81.25
	Senior	<i>n</i>	4	8	12	6	30	12	18
		%	13.33	26.67	40.00	20.00	100.00	40.00	60.00
	Total	<i>n</i>	19	28	85	42	174	47	127
		%	10.92	16.09	48.85	24.14	100.00	27.01	72.99
I am satisfied with the services offered by Residence Life & Housing	Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	2	24	4	30	2	28
		%	0.00	6.67	80.00	13.33	100.00	6.67	93.33
	Sophomore	<i>n</i>	1	11	16	4	32	12	20
		%	3.13	34.38	50.00	12.50	100.00	37.50	62.50
	Junior	<i>n</i>	4	2	25	9	40	6	34
		%	10.00	5.00	62.50	22.50	100.00	15.00	85.00
	Senior	<i>n</i>	2	4	8	2	16	6	10
		%	12.50	25.00	50.00	12.50	100.00	37.50	62.50
	Total	<i>n</i>	7	19	73	19	118	26	92
		%	5.93	16.10	61.86	16.10	100.00	22.03	77.97
I am satisfied with the services offered by Student Accounts	Freshman	<i>n</i>	0	2	28	8	38	2	36
		%	0.00	5.26	73.68	21.05	100.00	5.26	94.74
	Sophomore	<i>n</i>	3	8	28	9	48	11	37
		%	6.25	16.67	58.33	18.75	100.00	22.92	77.08
	Junior	<i>n</i>	2	2	27	4	35	4	31
		%	5.71	5.71	77.14	11.43	100.00	11.43	88.57
	Senior	<i>n</i>	2	4	18	2	26	6	20
		%	7.69	15.38	69.23	7.69	100.00	23.08	76.92
	Total	<i>n</i>	7	16	101	23	147	23	124
		%	4.76	10.88	68.71	15.65	100.00	15.65	84.35

Table A.16. Respondents' Opinions on Campus Climate and Persistence-related Variables - Distribution by Gender

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Pooled Opinions	
		A	B	C	D		A+B	C+D
Female	<i>n</i>	34	37	53	16	140	71	69
	%	24.3	26.4	37.9	11.4	100.0	50.7	49.3
Male	<i>n</i>	8	12	10	16	46	20	26
	%	17.4	26.1	21.7	34.8	100.0	43.5	56.5
Total	<i>n</i>	42	49	63	32	186	91	95
	%	22.6	26.3	33.9	17.2	100.0	48.9	51.1