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Campus Climate Survey

by Lisa Cole

What is campus climate?

Climate represents the atmosphere in which learning takes place at Johnson County Community College. Climate represents how students feel included and respected on this campus. The ODEI office administered a campus climate survey to students who have completed 15 or more credit hours. The survey was conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA as part of a national survey. The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Survey was administered to examine the degree to which JCCC integrates diversity in their environments to achieve key student learning outcomes. Our ODEI's purpose was to establish a set of baseline measures to analyze the current cultural climate in which students learn at JCCC. Once we analyze the data provided by the students we can begin to develop conversations, presentations and programs around topics identified as concerns for students.

Why is campus climate important?

The campus atmosphere in which students learn is extremely important to their success. In extreme cold weather plants die very quickly or the ground is too hard for seeds to penetrate the soil. Established plants die and new seeds never grow. On cold uninviting college campuses where students are not able to penetrate and connect with faculty and staff, they tend to be unsuccessful and leave. In hot humid climates everything burns up. Plants can become sun scalded or sunburned, their vital water and nutrient levels necessary for proper plant growth evaporate. Protecting plants from exposure to too much sun is essential to maintain a healthy plant. Over exposure of students to only one cultural and one way of thinking can impede their success and drain them of their desire to achieve. When one culture receives all the attention, it devalues all other cultures. All students can be valued at JCCC and have a right to learn in an environment that respects all cultures and backgrounds. Students can be successful in a culturally diverse environment that enhances growth.

What is Cultural Diversity?

Cultural diversity is more than racial classification, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Cultural diversity encompasses the whole range of human experiences including, but not limited to age, gender, racial classification, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic class, physical disabilities, national origin, geographical location, political orientation, physical size and appearance. These factors influence the cultural experiences and backgrounds of individuals and groups. (University of California, Santa Barbara). These influences affect student success. When students don't connect and feel a sense of belonging, their desire and ability to succeed decreases.

What was included in the survey?

The survey included 58 base questions that included general information, diversity, inclusion, and engagement. Below are samples of some of the questions:

- To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?
- Please indicate how often you have experienced the following forms of bias/harassment/discrimination while at this institution.
- How often at this institution in the past year did you:
  - Ask questions in class?
  - Seek solutions to problems and explain them to others?

We included two additional modules of questions: Classroom and Community College Students' Transfer Pathway. The classroom module gathered information about the climate in diverse classrooms at JCCC. It examines issues of inclusive pedagogy, student– centered pedagogy, and learning outcomes. The community college module assesses community college students' transfer navigational behaviors, organizational transfer culture, and perceived barriers to transferring to a four-year institution.

The survey was submitted to more than 9,000 students with over 15 total credit hours. We look forward to analyzing the data we receive from the students' input and participation. We are confident that the data will help the ODEI design programming that meets students' needs.

Why did the ODEI administer a campus climate survey?

The survey helps gather data that will aid in providing the best possible learning environment for our students.