Introduction

Student-centric campus climate surveys on sexual harassment and sexual assault are well-validated. They are widely used by colleges and universities to measure and understand student victimization experiences, describe the related campus culture, and assess sexual assault prevention and response efforts. These climate surveys provide campuses with a more nuanced understanding of sexual victimization than may be gathered from other sources of data (e.g., official reports). Climate surveys can also help identify institutional and cultural factors that influence victimization rates and survivor willingness to report, or seek help and support. For more information on the most well-validated measures, see Planning and Implementing Your Campus Climate Survey within the OVW Campus Program Funding Cycle.

Universities choosing to survey only student populations may be missing out on what could be learned from faculty and staff at the university. Faculty and staff (i.e., employees) on university campuses experience uncivil behaviors and sexual harassment, have perceptions about the related climate and culture, interact with and respond to students who have been victimized, and can offer recommendations for how the university can improve its policies and practices. Using detailed information from a case study conducted with Michigan State University (KNOW MORE@MSU1), this factsheet aims to describe the potential benefits of including faculty and staff in campus climate survey efforts related to workplace incivility and sexual harassment.

Faculty and Staff Incivility and Harassment Experiences

Experiencing incivility² or sexual harassment in the workplace has been shown to lead to various deleterious effects including decreased job satisfaction³ and engagement, limited productivity, and physical and mental strain,⁴ yet, few who have these experiences are likely to report through formal complaint procedures.⁵

Extant research suggests that a sizeable portion of female academic faculty and staff have experienced some form of sexual harassment (58%⁶). Additionally, results from other recent faculty/staff campus climate surveys suggest that 21% of employees had witnessed or personally experienced some form of sexual harassment, and many did not know how to help another person if they came to them asking for help.⁷

Interestingly, the most potent predictor of sexual harassment is organizational climate⁸ (i.e., the degree to which faculty and staff perceive sexual harassment to be tolerated by the leadership within the organization). This suggests that surveying faculty and staff (i.e., employees) regarding their perceptions of organizational climate can offer important insights into the overall campus climate.
KnowMore@MSU Survey Case Study

This section outlines the implementation process, considerations, and results from a campus climate survey conducted with students and faculty/staff at Michigan State University (MSU) in the Spring of 2019 (i.e., the KnowMore@MSU Survey).

KnowMore@MSU Survey Implementation

- An MSU workgroup of administrators, faculty, and campus practitioners began by meeting with university-based groups on campus (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs, administrators, and specific groups—women support staff, faculty and staff of color, LGBTQIA+ employees) to discuss survey interests and implementation considerations. In collaboration with RTI International, MSU adapted the Campus Climate Survey Validation Study (CCSVS) student survey instrument for use with faculty and staff. Revisions involved changing existing items to be more appropriate and relevant, and adding items from other relevant survey instruments, including the Association of American Universities climate survey, Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, Gender Experiences Questionnaire, and the Workplace Incivility Scale. The MSU workgroup and RTI also revised some response options to account for off-site work contexts and impacts on staff members’ careers.

KnowMore@MSU Survey Results and Feedback from Faculty and Staff

- There was an overwhelmingly positive response from faculty and staff to being included in the KnowMore@MSU Survey. They also expressed gratitude for the transparency of the project, as they were kept abreast of what was being done on the project and why.

- Faculty and staff women reported experiencing more workplace incivility than faculty and staff men, and 47% of faculty women who experienced workplace incivility believed it was because of their gender identity. Nearly half (~48%) of faculty and staff of color (all genders) perceived workplace incivility they experienced to be based on their race or ethnicity.

- The prevalence of work-related sexual harassment during the current academic year was 18.7% for female faculty, 9.3% for male faculty, 17.6% for female staff, and 15.1% for male staff. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ employees and employees with documented disabilities reported the highest incidence of experiencing sexual harassment.

- The perpetrator was most commonly another faculty member or staff. Male faculty and staff who experienced harassment were less likely to disclose their victimization experiences to family, friends, colleagues, and university resources than female staff, yet, female staff of color were the least likely to disclose their victimization experiences due to fear of retaliation.

- For those faculty and staff who experienced some form of harassment, substantial proportions (particularly female faculty members) indicated that their experiences interfered with their ability to do their job or that the experience(s) created an intimidating, uncomfortable, or offensive work environment.

- Faculty and staff expressed other, indirect impacts, such as damaged relationships and negative impacts on emotional well-being.

- Findings indicated that faculty/staff experiences with sexual harassment or workplace incivility can affect their overall view of safety in the workplace or on campus, as well as how they communicate/interact with students.

A journal article about faculty and staff involvement in the Know More@MSU Survey was published in 2022.
Value Added and Future Considerations

Faculty and staff experiences and views on campus climate reflect a complementary perspective to that of students. Including faculty and staff in campus climate surveys can help colleges and universities develop a fuller understanding of the prevalence and nature of, and responses to, workplace incivility, sexual harassment, and interpersonal victimization on campus.

In addition to documenting faculty and staff experiences and perceptions, campuses have also engaged faculty and staff in post-survey discussion sessions about the climate survey findings. These sessions have increased transparency and provided a space to collectively interpret survey results, brainstorm solutions, and identify key next steps in their efforts to address workplace incivility, sexual harassment, and interpersonal victimization. Schools have combined data collected from students and faculty/staff to identify areas where improvements could be made to relevant policies and practices.

Additional findings from the KnowMore@MSU survey initiative suggest that faculty and staff can provide valuable recommendations for future iterations of climate surveys. For example, faculty and staff in the MSU post-survey discussion sessions suggested including survey questions on other forms of discrimination, such as discrimination based on race/ethnicity, as well as non-sexual hostility (e.g., bullying). Additionally, faculty and staff noted that the “past year” reference period used in the KnowMore@MSU faculty/staff survey might not constitute a sufficient reference period, especially for chronic, ongoing issues that faculty and staff are more likely to encounter. Some employees suggested multi-year reference periods or since employees started working at MSU. Further, faculty and staff pointed out that students employed by the school do not fit neatly into the student-target campus climate or the faculty/staff-targeted campus climate initiative. Future efforts should consider how to tailor the student survey instrument to capture student employees’ experiences and workplace contexts. Finally, faculty and staff requested more training and resources on attending to problems that did not constitute a threat to physical safety or policy violation, but still created a difficult workplace culture. This request for and the potential of training to improve matters is supported by findings from another recent campus climate survey administered at SUNY Potsdam, which suggests that Title IX training is effective at teaching faculty and staff the next steps for reporting their own or students’ incidents.16

Importantly, MSU used findings from the Know More @ MSU climate survey to inform the development of a strategic plan on relationship violence and sexual misconduct. Having robust data on faculty and staff experiences and perspectives ensured employee voices were reflected in the university’s plans to improve prevention and response efforts. Two out of seven initiatives in the strategic plan centered on employees, both linked to the climate survey and the subsequent discussions after the results were released.

An important takeaway from the Know More@MSU Survey was that efforts to collaboratively design and field the Know More@MSU climate survey built trust among faculty and staff. The KnowMore@MSU survey was being implemented at MSU at a time when many faculty and staff felt a deep sense of institutional mistrust. Leaving faculty and staff out of the planning and implementation of the campus climate survey initiative would have potentially further deepened this mistrust and could have sent the message that their perspectives weren’t of value to school administrators and leadership. Taking a collaborative, transparent approach to the development, implementation, and dissemination of the survey and results helped build trust and engagement with the survey, ultimately increasing the likelihood that these results can foster meaningful institutional change, and possibly inform future strategic plans.17
Workplace incivility entails behaviors that violate typical workplace norms, are rude and discourteous, and demonstrate a lack of regard for mutual respect or others.


https://news.emory.edu/stories/2016/10/er_climate_survey/campus.html


https://supportmore.msu.edu/do-more

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