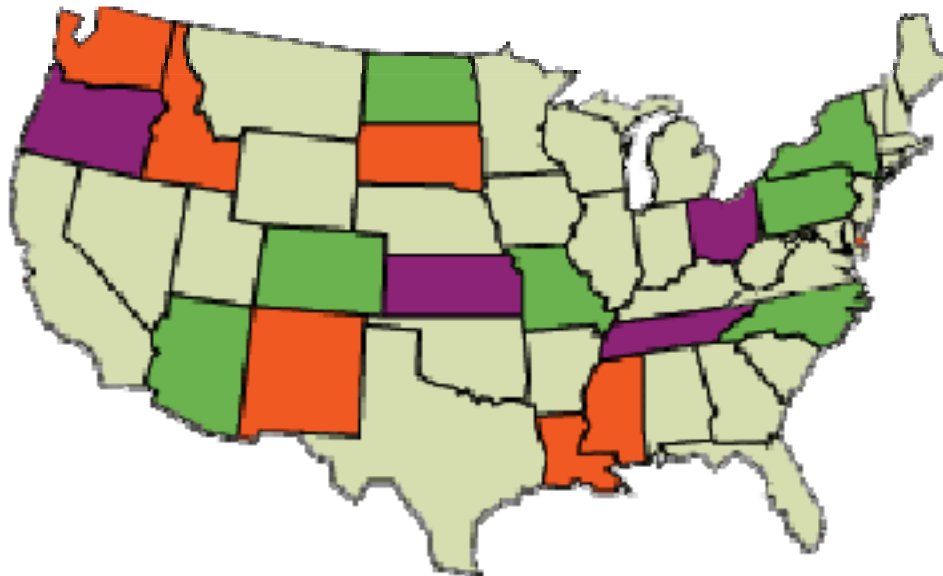


# *Tennessee Extension*

## *2008*

# *Workplace Diversity Climate Survey Executive Summary*



*Change Agent States - A consortium of land-grant universities in 18 states developing successful models and system-change strategies to support greater diversity & welcoming climates in higher education nationally.*

## Executive Summary

The Change Agent States project (originally known as the Change Agent States for Diversity – CAS – and hereafter referred to as CAS) represents a catalytic step in leading change within the Land Grant University System. In December 1998, the National Subcommittee on Extension Diversity (SED) developed this visionary project in which eight states were selected to participate in a pilot effort focusing on diversity. In October 1999, representatives from the eight states and selected members of the SED began working together to develop and implement a plan of action to address diversity in their organizations and institutions. The Assessment Subcommittee of the CAS was charged with developing plans, related tools, and an implementation strategy for the eight states individually, and the CAS as a whole, to use in determining the organizations' status and climate as they relate to diversity. The committee determined that the first step in this process was an internal assessment of the current climate at each location.

Beginning in the fall 2000 semester, CAS contracted with an outside consultant<sup>1</sup> to identify through an internal assessment challenges confronting the CAS community with respect to underrepresented groups. The assessment was a proactive initiative by CAS cooperating members to review the climate for underrepresented groups in their respective organizations. Seven of the original eight states (Tier I states) participated in this climate assessment effort: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania. In June 2004, six new states (Tier II states) were selected to participate in the CAS project, under the umbrella of the national Extension Diversity Task Force (formerly SED). The Tier II states included: Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Washington.

A third tier of four additional states was selected in June 2007 to participate in the CAS project. These states included Kansas, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee (Tier III states). In these states, five institutions (two in Tennessee: the University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University) participated in the climate assessment project. Together, the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Rankin & Associates Consulting* was contracted as the outside consultant for this project.

CAS states have worked to model effective strategies and sustainable efforts to make diversity and pluralism a reality in the Land Grant University and CSREES System.

The Tier III states used the original survey template and made several modifications reflecting the input of Tier I and II states' experiences. In addition, each state had the opportunity to add up to two additional state-related questions. The final survey contained 70 questions, including open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary regarding their experiences<sup>2</sup>.

This report contains the results from the climate assessment conducted in Tennessee at the University of Tennessee (UT) and Tennessee State University (TSU). The instrument was distributed to the community in December 2007/January 2008. All members of the UT and TSU Extension organizations were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was designed to gather information about participants' personal experiences with regard to climate issues, their perceptions of the climate for underrepresented members of the Extension community, their perceptions of organizational actions (including administrative policies and organizational initiatives) regarding climate issues, and concerns in the organization. A summary of the findings is presented in bullet form below. More in-depth information is provided in the body of the report.

---

<sup>2</sup> UT and TSU added one additional open-ended question. The final survey is provided in Appendix C.

## Sample Demographics

630 surveys were returned representing the following:

- 40 surveys from Tennessee State University, 570 surveys from University of Tennessee, and 20 respondents who did not identify their organization<sup>3</sup>
- 77 percent response rate
- 79 People of Color<sup>4</sup>, 539 White respondents
- 32 people who identified as having a disability
- 15 people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning
- 407 women; 212 men; 1 transgender<sup>5</sup>
- 82 people who identified their spiritual affiliation as other than Christian (including those with no affiliation)

## Quantitative Findings

### Personal Experiences with Organizational Climate<sup>6</sup>

- **Just over one-tenth of all respondents reported that within the past year they personally experienced offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn in their organizations (hereafter referred to as harassment)<sup>7</sup>. Age was most often cited as the reason given for the harassment. Harassment largely went unreported.**
  - 11 percent of respondents had personally experienced offensive, hostile, or intimidating conduct that interfered unreasonably with their ability to work in the organization.

---

<sup>3</sup> When discussing responses by position, 15 respondents identified as program assistants and were collapsed with the position of Paraprofessional/Technicians at the request of the organizational contact.

<sup>4</sup> While recognizing the vastly different experiences of people of various racial identities (e.g., Chicano(a) versus African-American or Latino(a) versus Asian-American), and those experiences within these identity categories (e.g., Hmong versus Chinese), Rankin and Associates found it necessary to collapse some of these categories to conduct the analyses due to the small numbers of respondents in the individual categories. If respondents marked any of their racial identity as other than White, they were assigned as a Person of Color.

<sup>5</sup> "Transgender" refers to identity that does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender, but combines or moves between these (Oxford English Dictionary 2003). OED Online. March 2004. Oxford University Press. Feb. 17, 2006 <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00319380>>.

<sup>6</sup> Listings in the narrative are those responses with the greatest percentages. For a complete listing of the results, the reader is directed to the tables in the narrative and Appendix B.

<sup>7</sup> Under the United States Code Title 18 Subsection 1514(c)1, harassment is defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such a person and serves no legitimate purpose" (<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html>). In higher education institutions, legal issues discussions define harassment as any conduct that has unreasonably interfered with one's ability to work or learn on campus. The questions used in this survey to uncover participants' personal and observed experiences with harassment were designed using these definitions.

- The conduct was most often based on the respondents' age (41%), gender (33%), family status (20%), physical characteristics (20%), race (20%), and ethnicity (15%).
- Compared with 10 percent of White people, 17 percent of People of Color personally experienced such conduct.
- Of Respondents of Color who reported experiencing this conduct, 39 percent stated it was because of their race.
- 10 percent of heterosexual respondents and 21 percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning respondents experienced harassment<sup>8</sup>.
- 10 percent of men and 11 percent of women experienced harassment within the organization.
- The harassment experienced most often occurred in the form of derogatory remarks, being deliberately ignored or feeling excluded.
- Thirty-five percent (n=24) of the respondents (35%) who experienced this harassment made a complaint to an appropriate official, and 50 percent (n=35) considered changing their jobs.

### Perceptions of Organizational Climate

- **When asked if they had heard various employees make insensitive or disparaging remarks about people based on assorted demographic characteristics, respondents were most likely to have heard field faculty/agents make disparaging or insensitive remarks about age, inability to speak English, and sexual orientation, and administrators to make remarks about age.**
  - Conversely, 13 percent had heard an employee *challenge* insensitive or disparaging remarks made regarding age.
  - Similar percentages of respondents witnessed colleagues challenge remarks based on ethnic background (12%), women (12%), inability to speak English (12%), racial background (11%), and sexual orientation (10%).
- **Most respondents indicated that they were “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the overall climate in their organizations (80%) and in their work units (85%). The figures in the narrative show disparities based on race.**
  - Compared with 82 percent of White people, 72 percent of People of Color were comfortable with the overall climate.
  - Compared with 86 percent of White people, 80 percent of People of Color were comfortable with the climate in their work units.

---

<sup>8</sup> Given the small number of sexual minorities responding, caution is warranted when interpreting the results throughout the report for this sub-population.

- **14 percent of respondents reported they were aware of harassment in the organization. The observed harassment was most often based on gender. White respondents and women were more aware of such harassment. Fewer administrators than other employee groups were aware of such harassment, and such incidents often were not officially reported.**
  - Most of the observers attributed this harassment to gender (27%), age (23%), race (17%), and family status (15%).
  - Compared with 13 percent of White people, 19 percent of People of Color had observed such conduct.
  - Compared with 14 percent of women, 13 percent of men had observed or been made aware of such conduct.
  - Compared with 14 percent of administrators, between 10 and 22 percent of other employees had observed such conduct.
  - The observed harassment most often occurred in the form of derogatory remarks or being deliberately ignored or excluded.
  - These incidents were reported to an appropriate official only 19 percent of the time.
  
- **Some respondents observed a variety of discriminatory employment practices and indicated that they were most often based on race and gender.**
  - 16 percent of respondents reported observing discriminatory hiring in the organization. 37 percent believed that the discrimination was based on race, 22 percent on gender, and 19 percent on age.
  - Of the 4 percent who observed discriminatory firing, 35 percent said the discrimination was based on race, 23 percent based on ethnicity, and 15 percent on age, employment category, or gender.
  - Of the 13 percent who witnessed discriminatory promotion, 33 percent reported the actions were based on gender, 20 percent based on race, and 15 percent based on age.
  
- **A notable percentage of respondents felt that the climate was welcoming to employees from underrepresented groups.**
  - 80 percent of respondents felt the workplace climate was welcoming for employees from historically underrepresented groups.
  - 70 percent of campus faculty and 67 percent of sexual minority respondents felt the climate was welcoming to employees from underrepresented groups.
  
- **Respondents felt that the workplace was welcoming to customers/learners from underrepresented groups.**
  - 87 percent of respondents felt the workplace climate was welcoming for customers/learners from underrepresented groups.
  - Administrators were less likely to agree with this statement than other employee groups, and sexual minority respondents were less likely to agree with this statement than all other respondents.

*Organizational Actions Related to Diversity Issues*

- More than half of the respondents believed that their Extension Service organization proactively addressed 8 of 12 issues related to aspects of difference; the exceptions are gender identity, mental disability, religion, and sexual orientation.
- 74 percent of responding employees believed their administration had visible leadership to foster diversity, and paraprofessionals/technicians (59%) and campus faculty (65%) were least apt to agree.
- Men respondents were more likely than other respondents to think that their administration visibly fostered diversity.
- 77 percent of all respondents believed their unit management demonstrated a commitment to diversity.
- 47 percent of all respondents believed their organization's commitment to diversity had increased over the last five years; however, only 38 percent of Respondents of Color believed that the organization had increased its efforts over the last five years.