

Finalized: March 15, 2019

Wheaton College is committed to creating a diverse, inclusive campus climate that ensures an equitable environment for teaching, learning, working and living for all members of the community. To meet this goal, the college convened a Diversity and Inclusion Task Force in 2016 to develop a comprehensive plan for fostering a diverse, equitable and welcoming community. The result of that work was the Wheaton Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, adopted in 2017.

The college conducted its first comprehensive Diversity and Inclusion Campus Climate Survey in 2018—one of many initiatives undertaken as part of the strategic plan—to gain empirical data that can shape diversity and inclusion efforts. The survey instrument was designed specifically for the Wheaton campus. It will be administered every 3 - 4 years, and with the results from its first year of use as a baseline, it will help the community measure its progress in achieving a fully diverse and inclusive environment.

The findings of the 2018 survey offer much cause for optimism on Wheaton's ability to realize significant progress in its goal of creating a truly diverse, inclusive and equitable campus environment. The majority of people participating in the survey agree that equity is possible at Wheaton and an overwhelming number feel that the college is effective at maintaining a safe campus environment.

The results also provide greater detail on issues of concern that have been observed by many members of the community in recent years. Perceptions and experiences of Wheaton's openness to diverse perspectives and identities varies significantly by an individual's identities—racial and ethnic, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, physical ability, religion and social class.

Key findings

Demographics. Participation in the survey was high—faculty (61 percent), staff (52 percent) and students (32 percent)—38 percent overall.

- The demographic makeup of survey respondents mirrored the overall demographics of Wheaton as it relates to race/ethnicity, gender and nationality.
- The results offer a better picture of other measures of diversity, such as political affiliation, religion, income levels and marital status.

- A significant percentage of respondents opted not to disclose aspects of their identity, including race, ethnicity and/or gender (30 percent), political affiliation (35 percent) and religion (36 percent).

Perceptions of Wheaton values. Faculty, staff and students share a common belief in Wheaton's commitment to maintaining equity for all members of the community. However, survey results did reveal differing perceptions among respondents with different identities.

- Men rated Wheaton's commitment to diversity and inclusion more highly than women.
- White respondents rate the college's commitment to diversity and inclusion more highly than respondents of other racial/ethnic identities.

Feelings of belonging on campus. Respondents overall reported a high degree of belonging in the Wheaton community. However, survey results did reveal differing perceptions among respondents with different identities.

- White respondents rated their feeling of belonging higher than people in other racial/ethnic identities.
- Faculty rated the importance of campus diversity more highly than students.
- Staff rated the sense of welcome from the community more highly than students.

Campus climate. A large majority of respondents (81 percent) agreed that Wheaton is effective at maintaining a safe environment—on the campus overall, in classrooms, in the department and in social settings.

Differing perceptions of the college's openness to difference can be seen when results are viewed by racial/ethnic, gender, gender identities, physical ability and campus role (faculty, staff or students).

Incidents of bias. A significant percentage of respondents (44 percent) reported witnessing or experiencing incidents of unfair treatment based upon a person's identity.

- The most frequently reported unfair treatment involved gender/gender identity (14 percent), race (11 percent), political ideology (10 percent) and among students, class year (10 percent).
- Only a small percentage (11 percent) of incidents of unfair treatment were reported to an official of the college.
- The majority of incidents go unreported either because the individual said they didn't know how to report it (30 percent) or did not feel comfortable reporting it (50 percent).
- Unfair treatment may impact students' ability to persist and graduate from Wheaton. An experience of unfair treatment led 23 percent of students to consider leaving the college.

- Students respondents were most likely (25 percent) to express dissatisfaction with the speed and sufficiency of the college's handling of incidents of unfair treatment.

Conclusions

The survey results present an opportunity for the entire Wheaton community to engage with each other on issues of diversity, inclusion and equity. The varied perceptions of students, faculty and staff and among different identity groups makes clear that much work remains to be done to promote the understanding, awareness and knowledge of the members of our campus community to engage in an open and productive manner with others who are different from themselves. The college's Diversity, Access and Equity Leadership (DEAL) will be planning forums for sharing the survey results in greater detail and to discuss next steps. The leadership group also will be opening an online forum to facilitate community response to the data outside of planned meetings.

The findings also underscore the importance of implementing systemic changes that can influence campus culture and climate. that Wheaton has introduced over the past year to support a diverse, inclusive and equitable campus environment.

Leadership. The establishment of the new position of Associate Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development will help to ensure sustained and coordinated efforts in this area, as will the formation of the Diversity, Access and Equity Leadership (DEAL) committee, which includes leaders from across campus.

Policies and practice. The establishment of staff and faculty recruitment policies and guidelines that increase the diversity of job applicants, as well as training that has been offered for hiring managers and committees, shows promise. Wheaton's faculty and staff diversity levels are at the highest levels in at least 10 years.

Programs and resources. The launch of the Collaborative Center for Teaching and Learning, supported by a \$400,000 gift, and the Wheaton Inclusive STEM Excellence initiative, funded by a \$1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, will serve to making teaching and learning more inclusive and responsive to all students and faculty.

Education and training. The college introduced new annual mandatory implicit bias awareness training programs for all staff, including an online program required for all managers.

Responding to bias. The establishment and implementation of a new Bias Response Protocol that is modeled on the college's policies for responding to sexual misconduct and that is informed by "best practices" from other institutions.

Additional initiatives were identified in the college's strategic plan on diversity and inclusion. It will be important for the college to continue to work on implementing those recommendations while engaging the community in helping to shape those efforts.

Concrete action by the college and broad campus engagement are equally important in strengthening the sense of trust among members of the community. The large percentage of people who chose not to disclose demographic information about themselves, and who do not report incidents of unfair or biased treatment, suggests a lack of trust in the college that will hinder progress toward our shared objectives.