



Miami University Assessment

Perceptions of the Climate for Learning at Miami

This report presents a synthesized summary of results from key data sets, each providing insight into how the Miami community views the climate for learning with a emphasis on the perceptions of women, GLBT students and students of color. The four data sets used are: the 2002 *Miami University Climate Survey*, the 2004 *Dashboard Indicator Survey*, the 2004 *Women's Advocacy Group Report*, and the 2003/2004 *Multicultural Student Enrichment Resource Report*.

Major highlights consistent among the data sets:

1. There is widespread consensus (85-95% of the students, faculty, and staff) that diversity is good for the university and that administrators should promote respect and understanding of group differences.
2. Students are the most likely source of insensitive or disparaging comments about racial/ethnic groups, women, and gays and lesbians.
3. The most popular options for enhancing the campus climate are those that bring people with different backgrounds together in academic and social settings.
4. Generally students indicated in overwhelming numbers that they study or socialize with someone with their same background (67-81%) while they socialize with others from another background to a moderate extent (38-49%).
5. Students of color connect, for the most part, with "multicultural resources," women students still feel they must conform to an "image," and GLBT students remain invisible.

Implications for Faculty

It is important to recognize both our influence and our responsibility to foster a learning environment based on mutual respect, shared responsibility for learning, effective communication and feedback, and a sense of security for all students in our classrooms.

1. Intervene when students show disrespect for other students through overt comments, negative body language or by interrupting each other.
2. Examine your teaching behavior to see which students get the most and best responses from you. Develop a plan to increase participation of those who need to participate more.
3. Listen attentively to all students when they speak. Listening while shuffling papers or avoiding eye contact can be common forms of differential treatment reported by female and minority students.
4. Audit your syllabus and classroom materials including examples you use in class for tone and underlying assumptions. Consider whether the examples you use represent all students and are inclusive of a range of beliefs, attitudes, values, learning styles, and life situations.
5. Diversify your instructional strategies, methods of assessing and evaluating student learning to address the range of learning, cognitive, and communication styles represented in your classes. CELT generally offers a range of seminars that address these issues every academic year.
6. Diversify the make-up of in- and out-of-class groups. Allowing students to self-select in-class groups can disenfranchise some students. Use a variety of random selection methods.