

BSU Campus Climate Report
Summer 2013
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As part of Bemidji State University's strategic planning process, a committee was charged with developing, disseminating, and analyzing a campus climate survey of faculty, staff, and administrators. During spring 2013 a survey instrument was developed and shared with the University Planning Committee. The campus community was then informed that a survey would be forthcoming. This report contains general information on the survey instrument, a quantitative analysis of survey responses, and a synopsis of open-ended comments. Overall survey results indicate that BSU faculty, staff, and administrators find that the climate is positive. Challenges and concerns continue to exist, however, and are reflected in particular details of the quantitative report and in written comments from faculty, staff and administrators.

Bemidji State University faculty, staff, and administrators responded to a 50-item on-line survey during spring semester 2013 intended to assess the general climate, or working conditions on the campus. Climate indicators addressed on the survey included general perceptions; perceptions of decision making processes and procedures; responsiveness; courteousness and civility; resources and alignment; organizational materials and structures; and, support for diversity. Overall, 160 employees completed the questionnaire, of which 76 were faculty, 67 were support staff, and 16 were administrators. (One person did not identify employment group.)

The quantitative section of the report is divided into two sections. In the first section we examine responses for each of the 47 substantive questions. For this purpose, questions have been grouped into broader subject categories. The second part of the analysis depicts significant findings after comparing question responses by type of appointment at BSU (faculty, support staff, or administrator) and according to whether the employee was part- or full-time. Finally, a qualitative section contains an analysis of the open-ended responses.

Part I: Percentages by Response Category for the Substantive Questions

The data in Table 1 show responses to three general questions. Responses indicate that almost 90 percent of respondents would recommend BSU to a friend, family member, or person from the community and almost 100 percent feel they contribute to the university and its students. Almost two-thirds of those responding feel positive about the university and the direction it is heading.

Table 1. General Perceptions				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would recommend BSU to a friend, family member, or person from my community	2.7%	10.1%	50.3%	36.9%
I feel I contribute to the university and its students	0.0%	0.6%	42.0%	57.3%
I feel positive about the university and the direction in which we are headed	6.9%	29.0%	49.7%	14.5%

Table 2 shows responses to questions concerning campus decision making processes and procedures.

Table 2. Perceptions of Campus Decision Making Processes and Procedures				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
University administrators incorporate faculty/ staff input into college policies and procedures	11.9%	17.8%	54.1%	16.3%
Faculty participate in the development of college policies and procedures	1.7%	15.0%	66.7%	16.7%
The decision-making processes on campus ensure timely decisions	16.2%	47.7%	31.5%	4.6%
There are appropriate mechanisms in place for faculty and staff to raise and resolve issues	5.9%	35.6%	53.3%	5.2%
The university climate is conducive to free and open discussion	8.7%	32.2%	49.0%	10.1%
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication processes among all university faculty/staff/administrators?	22.1%	38.9%	32.9%	6.0%
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication processes between university staff and administration?	18.5%	35.5%	36.3%	9.7%
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication processes across university committees?	20.2%	47.1%	27.7%	5.0%

Just over 70 percent of respondents agree that administrators incorporate input from faculty and support staff when developing policies and procedures, and over 80 percent agree that faculty are active participants in this process. Almost 60 percent of the respondents agree that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for employees to raise and resolve issues, and that the university climate is conducive to free and open discussion. Less than 40 percent of the respondents think that the processes in place will ensure timely decisions. In addition, fewer than half of those responding would provide ratings of “excellent” or “good” to the communication processes on the BSU campus.

Table 3 provides the extent of agreement/disagreement for 6 items concerning the responsiveness of various groups to others' needs. No matter the group, there is widespread agreement that all groups are responsive to needs and expressed concerns.

Table 3. Perceptions of Campus Responsiveness				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The faculty exhibit willingness to be flexible to meet individual student's needs	3.8%	15.4%	53.8%	26.9%
Faculty are responsive to student requests/concerns	2.2%	12.6%	60.7%	24.5%
Faculty are responsive to administrator/staff requests/concerns	2.3%	23.3%	57.9%	16.5%
University administrators are available to faculty/staff	3.6%	18.6%	57.1%	20.7%
University administrators are responsive to student requests/concerns	2.5%	16.7%	61.7%	19.2%
University administrators are responsive to faculty/staff requests/concerns	7.8%	24.1%	52.5%	15.6%

Table 4 contains participants' responses to 9 questions regarding courteousness and civility. Perceptions of civility and courteousness are quite positive as over 80 percent of the respondent either agreed or strongly agreed on each item.

Table 4. Perceptions of Campus Courteousness and Civility				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Faculty are courteous and helpful	1.4%	14.7%	60.8%	23.1%
University administrators are courteous and helpful	4.2%	15.5%	52.8%	27.5%
Support staff are courteous and helpful	0.0%	4.7%	56.0%	39.3%
BSU employees are respectful of others	1.9%	11.0%	63.9%	23.2%
I personally feel free from harassment (i.e., cultural, sexual, gender) on campus	3.2%	12.1%	45.2%	39.5%
When I am on campus, I feel secure from physical harm	0.0%	6.3%	43.0%	50.6%
There are many unwritten rules concerning how one is to act	4.3%	24.5%	43.9%	27.3%
My colleagues treat me with respect	1.3%	10.2%	51.0%	37.6%
My colleagues value my contributions	1.9%	7.8%	55.2%	35.1%

Table 5 shows responses to questions regarding campus resources and resource alignment. Almost 84% of respondents perceive that faculty are provided with the technological resources necessary to enhance student learning. Around 77 percent perceive that the university’s mission and goals are directly related to the educational and learning experiences it provides. Almost 63 percent would say faculty have time and university support to develop curriculum and just under half would rate the effectiveness of the college budgeting process as either good or excellent. Perceptions for the remaining three items are more negative. Almost 60 percent believe the university does not have sufficient support staff to meet the needs of the institution and just over 50 percent do not think that allocation of human and financial resources supports the university’s mission. Finally, about 55 percent of respondents would rate the effectiveness of the assistance to develop curriculum as either poor or fair.

Table 5. Perceptions of Campus Resources and Alignment				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The faculty have time and university support to develop curriculum	9.1%	28.2%	49.1%	13.6%
The university provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning	3.8%	12.2%	61.8%	22.1%
The university provides sufficient support staff to meet the needs of the institution	15.3%	42.4%	37.5%	4.9%
The university’s current mission/goals are directly related to the educational and learning experiences the university provides	6.3%	16.4%	64.1%	13.3%
The allocation of human and financial resources supports the university’s mission	15.8%	36.1%	38.3%	9.8%
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How would you rate the effectiveness of the college budgeting process?	18.2%	32.2%	36.4%	13.2%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the assistance to develop curriculum?	18.4%	36.7%	40.8%	4.1%

In Table 6 are perceptions of organizational materials and structures. Respondents tended to agree or strongly agree that university policies are easily accessed, that university in-service workshops are helpful, and that adequate procedures are in place to meet the needs of victims of bullying/ mobbing. In addition, at least half of the respondents rated the effectiveness of various university publications as either good or excellent (policies and procedures, student handbook, university catalog, admissions publications, academic integrity policy, and staff evaluation procedures). Ratings for the structure of the university committees (52 percent) and the academic program planning and review process (46 percent) were the lowest of those on the list.

Table 6. Perceptions of Organizational Materials and Structures				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The university policies and important documents are easily accessed	5.5%	19.9%	56.2%	18.5%
University in-service workshops are helpful to me	7.3%	24.2%	56.5%	12.1%
The university has adequate procedures in place to meet the needs of victims of bullying/ mobbing	7.1%	33.3%	51.2%	8.3%
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How would you rate the effectiveness of university policies and procedures?	6.3%	35.0%	55.2%	3.5%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the university catalog?	6.7%	22.2%	55.6%	15.6%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the student handbook?	4.3%	17.4%	66.1%	12.2%
How would you rate the effectiveness of other admission publications?	5.9%	17.8%	62.4%	13.9%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the academic integrity policies?	2.5%	25.4%	61.0%	11.0%
How would you rate the effectiveness of staff evaluation procedures?	11.5%	32.3%	50.0%	6.2%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the structure of university committees (e.g., BSUFA)?	13.7%	34.2%	46.2%	6.0%
How would you rate the effectiveness of the academic program planning and review process?	13.6%	40.0%	38.2%	8.2%

Respondents were also asked their perceptions regarding university diversity efforts. This information is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Perceptions of Support for Diversity				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The university structure supports its diversity goals	9.4%	19.5%	56.3%	14.8%
The university is committed to recruiting and retaining diverse administrators, faculty and staff	9.8%	20.3%	51.1%	18.8%

Just over 70 percent of participants agree or strongly agree that the university structure supports its diversity efforts, and just under 70 percent agree or strongly agree that the university is committed to recruiting and retaining diverse administrators, faculty and staff.

Part II: Significant Findings by Group

The questionnaire contained three questions that provide opportunities for examining responses by group—position held at the university (faculty, support service, administration), whether the employment was full or part time, and sex. The chi square statistical procedure was used to compare groups on each of the 47 substantive questions. Of the 141 separate analyses examined, only 9 were significant at the .10 level or less. Comparisons among employee position yielded seven significant findings and comparisons between part- and full-time employees produced two significant outcomes. There were no significant findings by sex of employee. Table 8 depicts the significant findings by position held.

Table 8. Significant Chi Square Analyses by Position Held at the University							
		Position Held					
	D/SD A/SA*	Faculty %	Support Service %	Admin. %	N	X²	p
Faculty exhibit willingness to be flexible to meet individual student’s needs	D or SD A or SA	11.3 88.7	34.9 65.1	13.3 86.7	25 104	9.96	.007
Faculty are courteous and helpful	D or SD A or SA	5.4 94.6	32.1 67.9	13.3 86.7	23 119	16.28	.000
Faculty are responsive to student requests/concerns	D or SD A or SA	5.6 94.4	29.8 70.2	13.3 86.7	20 114	13.19	.001
University administrators are responsive to faculty/staff requests/concerns	D or SD A or SA	42.5 57.5	24.5 75.5	7.1 92.9	45 95	8.99	.011
I would recommend BSU to a friend, family member, or person from my community	D or SD A or SA	19.7 80.3	4.9 95.1	12.5 87.5	19 129	6.43	.040
The university structure supports its diversity goals	D or SD A or SA	29.5 70.5	18.0 82.0	56.3 43.8	36 91	8.81	.012
I feel positive about the university and the direction in which we are headed	D or SD A or SA	44.3 55.7	33.9 66.1	6.7 93.3	52 92	7.79	.020

D/SD = Disagree or Strongly Disagree and A/SA = Agree or Strongly Agree

Findings presented in Table 8 indicate that support and service employees are less likely than faculty or administrators to agree or strongly agree that faculty exhibit willingness to be flexible to meet individual student needs, that faculty are courteous and helpful, and that faculty are responsive to student

requests and concerns. In addition, faculty are less likely than support staff and administrators to agree or strongly agree that university administrators are responsive to faculty/staff requests/concerns. While there is strong agreement among all groups for recommending BSU to others, support staff and administrators are more likely than faculty to agree or strongly agree on this matter. University administrators are less likely than other respondents to agree that the university structure is supportive of diversity goals and more likely than the other respondents to feel positive about the direction of the university.

Table 9 reports differences by full- or part-time employment. Part-time employees are more likely than full-time employees to rate the effectiveness of communication processes between university staff and administration as either poor or fair. In addition, full-time employees are more likely than part-time employees to agree or strongly agree that the university provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning.

Table 9. Significant Chi Square Analyses by Full- or Part-time Appointment						
	Answer	Type of Appointment		N	χ^2	p
		Full Time %	Part Time %			
How would you rate the effectiveness of communication processes between university staff and administration?	P or F G or E	50.5 49.5	78.6 21.4	66 57	3.94	.047
The university provides appropriate technological resources for faculty to enhance student learning	D or SD A or SA	11.8 88.2	35.0 65.0	20 110	5.32	.008

The results suggest that overall the university community experiences the campus climate as positive. Particular challenges continue to exist in communication, committee structure, and the number of support staff (with the exception of technology) and financing. To some extent there is a sense that employees in different sectors of the university are less dedicated to meeting the needs of students and the organization. However, these perceptions suggest that there are communication gaps and a lack of awareness about the types and extensiveness of tasks associated with various positions and departments. Finally, one other area that stands out is the distinction between how full-time and part-time employees perceive university communication processes. Part-time employees experience poorer communication, suggesting a gap in information delivery and interpretation.

Written responses by participants paralleled some of the quantitative findings, while others provided a broader picture of the respondent understandings. Of the total number of respondents, fifty one provided additional commentary. Communication, university mission and vision, and diversity and discrimination were central themes in the open-ended comments. Each of these central themes has been outlined below with associated quotes. Additional comments, not associated with one of the central themes, noted concerns with campus security, particular changes that could be made to the survey instrument, duration of employment as it relates to their hesitancy to respond to the

questionnaire, or an identified level of disengagement from university actions. However, the majority of written comments fit within the central themes identified above and which follow.

Communication –

Fewer than 50% of overall respondents found communication at BSU to be excellent or good, and part-time employees are more likely to rate communication poor or fair. Respondent written comments expand on those statistics. Comments reflected interpersonal interaction in departments, interaction between and among units, and between bargaining units and administration. Employees state that:

Communication is sadly lacking campus wide.

Communication is abysmal at BSU. There's not a central place to get instruction or guidance. It is always a matter of guessing in trying to figure out where to find information and the website is difficult to maneuver.

Navigating web site for forms, information, is difficult at best.

There are no avenues at BSU to meet and greet colleagues. New faculty/staff are hired and introduced at the President's breakfast. That's it! There are no social events on campus to get faculty/staff together to get to know each other. Everyone works in their "silo." Employees need to get to know each other, what roles they play in the institution and how to value each others' jobs/positions.

As support staff a better understanding of 'what department does what' would be extremely helpful.

I have heard many people say "just put your head down and do your job and Don't express concerns as higher administration has no desire to hear it."

One concern I have about the institution is the degree to which necessary information is communicated to people who need to know.

The adjunct tends to suffer from a lack of climate, poor pay, and virtually no say in what's going on.

Administration needs to be more visible and make it a point to stop in employee departments.

University mission and vision –

Fifty percent of those responding to the survey do not think that the human and financial resources at BSU are allocated to meet the university's mission. There were numerous written comments by respondents that speak to this issue, and to the general identity and direction of the university.

Examples follow:

Bemidji State University has spent way too much resources (more than 55%) on non-instructive/administrative area and too little (less than 45%) resources in instruction. This is totally out of balance in terms of higher educational missions.

Morale is low; hockey and even football are more important than academics; educating students from China seems more important than educating students from northern Minnesota; despite multiple mission and vision statements, we seem to be flailing about seeking an identity; we seem more concerned with producing workers for industry than thinking people; we keep adding administrators as we cut faculty. . .

BSU has a commitment to Native American and some commitment to International students, but very little commitment in resources and support for other diverse students, faculty, and staff.

To[o] much hockey, football, not enough education!

I feel that the limitation of courses and majors available has seriously inhibited the attractiveness of this campus to a wide and diverse populations of students.

Workloads are greater than can be handled in regular working hours. Leadership needs to learn how to say no to the things that are unethical or that bring no value to campus.

The university does not supply sufficient resources and support for faculty to deliver more than an adequate level of instruction and assessment of student capabilities. This ensures that exceptional work by both instructors and students largely will not occur. Faculty effort and attention is devoted to teaching a large number of classes filled with as many students as possible, absent any significant assistance with mechanics. This is a good way to ensure instructor burnout and minimal use of innovative methods. It's also a disservice to students who experience unremarkable teaching and are not encouraged to go beyond the ordinary.

Most support offices appear to be strained due to the higher workloads, unsearched positions, interim position locks, and higher demand and expectation[s] from administration and students.

I think that administration, faculty, and staff are being hired to move Bemidji State University forward to accomplishing the goals and mission of the university. Getting the 'right people on the bus' is critical for our survival in higher education.

Diversity and Discrimination –

Commentary by respondents on diversity at BSU were fewer in number than those for communication and mission and vision, but they reflect concern about how peoples from various minority statuses (e.g., people of color, LGBT, disabled) are treated on campus. Respondents stated:

The university employs many caring and sensitive employees who respect and support people of diverse backgrounds – regardless of their status as student or employee. However, there are several at middle management and [higher] levels of authority who are judgmental, rude and inconsiderate of anyone who is different. Students report being shunned because of one reason or another by many different employees on campus – and some of those are the very individuals the student must reach out to for help and support to be successful if they are students entering the university in a risk status. . . .There is no open acceptance of students or anyone else if they present differently to the university at large. There are many controlled pockets of prejudice where students are not welcomed for who they are but rather shunned and ignored for 'what they are perceived to be.'

I would like to strongly, strongly disagree with the comment that BSU fac/staff are respectful of others. I've witnessed a lot of discrimination based on sexual Orientation, gender, disability and religion (in the form of if you are not a Christian, you are less of a person). The heteronormativity of this campus is horrible. I have worked at other campuses that are more open-minded than BSU.

I am personally embarrassed that we removed the Women's Center several years ago, and that we provide support for our LGBTQ students through a 'student club.' In my opinion through my interactions on campus, we are not showing visible support for diversity.

If [Is] there is a designated 'Safe Zone' for LGBTQ students? If not, I think there should be.

An alternative interpretation of minority status was also discussed by a respondent who noted that, "All people on campus seem to be encouraged, welcomed, protected and supported – if they are members of a liberal or 'progressive' group. . .Conservative students tell me that they feel bullied and will get lower grades if they present conservative arguments in many classes. . .my form of 'minority status' has been costly for me on several occasions.

A few additional statements on bullying and negative interactions between faculty and staff were also noted in the written comments. One respondent stated that. . .BSU Administration needs to recognize bullies (faculty/staff) on campus and deal with them appropriately. No one should have to endure their antics while employees suffer depression and a lack of self esteem." Another person noted that, "There are just a few individuals who contribute all of the unpleasantness that is suggested by my responses. But one bully is enough to give on pause when considering free and open discussion. One bully changes the tenor of discussion and the behavior of just about everyone. Administrators are poorly equipped to deal with bullies at this level." Negativity on campus is noted by respondents, but most comments identified the few individuals who contributed to the negative climate.

While overall the campus is perceived as a safe environment, respondents stated that their perception of safety depended on degree of "difference" as noted above, as well as time of day. There were expressions of concern about how the safety office is staffed and the campus is patrolled. Examples follow:

I do not feel safe walking to my car or in some buildings in the evenings. I understand that most of our Security Staff works during the day in the office. We need them out on campus doing their job at the University, not for the County. Should not be relying on student workers for security.

When I teach evening classes I do not feel the safest walking through campus. I have talked to the student security workforce and they say that there is no full time staff on most nights Why is this? . . .Monday I stopped by to talk to the person in charge and was told they were at their other job. . .really!

Conclusion

The BSU Campus Climate Survey results evidence perceptions by respondents that the campus climate is in general positive. Respondents suggest that they feel positive about the direction the university is heading and they also note that they see the administration getting input from faculty and staff for policy development. In addition, the current mission and goals of the university are seen as related to the educational and learning environment.

Written comments do not parallel the general perception of easy access of policies when respondents assert that there is a communication gap and departments don't know what other departments do. In addition, 70% suggested that the university structure supports diversity goals, yet written comments show that negative actions and bullying occurs and procedures do not adequately address it. Some of the distinctions between the quantitative results and the open-ended responses may reflect the demographics of our university. In an attempt to help people feel free to respond anonymously, we did not ask many demographic questions. The overall composition of BSU as identified in our affirmative action plan and in our own demographic statistics note, for example, low percentages of people of color on our campus, so the numerical percentages are not surprising. Some challenges remain, and we need to consider how to adjust our policies and practices to address concerns related to communication gaps, support for academics, and diversity. Overall the BSU campus climate survey demonstrates the dedication of the respondents and the commitment of the university community to creating a strong and vibrant learning environment.