Analysis of the SERU Survey
Campus Climate for Diversity
Office of Assessment
2014
Executive Summary

This report presents and summarizes selected findings gathered from the 2013 and the 2014 Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey administered at the University of Iowa. This report summarizes the aggregate responses for the student body as a whole, and does not necessarily reflect the perceptions of specific individuals or demographic groups. SERU respondents did reflect the overall demographics of the undergraduate student body.

The report is organized in according to survey question topic. Below are selected highlights:

- **Campus climate**: Findings from the 2013 distribution of SERU at The University of Iowa indicate that respondents feel positive about the campus climate. The majority of students find the campus to be caring (80%), and friendly (94%). Additionally, they also feel that the campus is safe (90%) and tolerant of diversity (91%).

- **Level of perceived respect on campus**: The majority of Iowa students agree (strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree) that students are respected regardless of social class (89%), gender (92%), race (85%), religious beliefs (90%), political beliefs (84%), sexual orientation (91%) or disability (93%).

- **Perceived value of diversity**: Students at Iowa agree that diversity is important to the University (86%) While a slightly larger amount agree that diversity is important to them (87%).

- **Student Experiences on Campus**: Students report experiencing very few negative or stereotypical views from faculty, instructors, staff, or administrators. Students are more likely to encounter negative or stereotypical views from their fellow students.

- **Impact on Perspective by Interaction with Peers**: The place where student report they are most likely to gain a deeper understanding of students who are different from themselves is in their academic classes. (followed slightly by living in the residence halls and participating in student organizations).

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SERU 2013 Distribution Comparison of Total Undergraduates Surveyed and Respondents by Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Undergraduates Surveyed</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.2% 0.3%</td>
<td>0.7% 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>3.1% 3.0%</td>
<td>3.5% 3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino(a)</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign (Student Visa)</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Surveyed 19,853
Total Respondents 5,929
Response Percent 29.8%
September 29, 2014

Dear UI Colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to consider the SERU survey questions focusing on the campus climate for diversity. While the data show that the majority of Iowa students believe the climate is positive and that diversity is important, we know that much more work remains to be done. If any one student expresses discomfort, we must continue striving to create a more welcoming climate.

It is never surprising to me—and in fact, expected—that under-represented minority students (URM) respond less favorably to the survey prompts. The biases and micro-aggressions experienced by these students make their campus experiences fraught with tensions, particularly when interacting with peers who may have had limited interactions with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

The motto for the Chief Diversity Office, and the entire campus by extension, is “Building Community.” I look forward to working with you towards this worthwhile goal of making the University of Iowa a community that welcomes all.

Sincerely,

Georgina Dodge, Ph.D.
Chief Diversity Office and Associate Vice President
Title IX Coordinator
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OVERVIEW
In the spring of 2013 and 2014 the University of Iowa participated in a campus-wide undergraduate survey designed to gather information about the overall student experience on campus.

Students were asked questions over a range of topics such as academic and community engagement, experiences in the major, overall satisfaction, and perceived campus climate for diversity in a concerted effort to provide insight about factors affecting student learning and development during their time at UI.

The response rate was strong in both 2014 (24.2%) and 2013 (29.8%), and the profile of respondents was broadly representative of the undergraduate population in both years. The data gathered have continued to produce tremendous insight about UI students and their college experience.

THE SERU PROJECT
Based at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley, the SERU Consortium includes a peer group of top ranked and progressive U.S. and international major research universities.

The SERU Survey offers a systematic environmental scan of the undergraduate experience and an in-depth analysis of the varied types and levels of undergraduate engagement in research universities.

The SERU Survey employs a modular design in order to include a greater number of items, and to decrease individual response times. It has a set of core questions administered to every respondent—for example, questions on time use, evaluation of a student’s major, and satisfaction—as well as five unique modules of additional questions that are randomly assigned.

The SERU Project currently includes 16 major U.S. research universities:

- University of California – Berkeley
- University of Florida
- Indiana University – Bloomington
- University of Iowa
- University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
- University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
- University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
- University of Oregon
- University of Pittsburgh
- Purdue University
- Rutgers University
- University of Southern California
- Texas A&M University
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington

METHODOLOGY
The SERU survey was administered online in both the spring of 2013 and 2014. During this period the student was made aware of the survey through campus advertisements and a series of electronic notices authored by campus leaders. All participating students completed the core module and then were randomly assigned one of four additional modules including a wildcard module that included topics of specific interest to Iowa.

The sampling method was based upon a census of all degree seeking undergraduate students enrolled that spring. In 2013 there were 19,849 students with 5,914 responding and 2014 there were 19,853 total students sampled with 4,814 responding.

Due to a technical issue with the surveying software in 2013 approximately half of those assigned to one of the four non-core modules did not receive the module. This resulted in approximately 11-13% of respondents receiving each non-core module rather than the expected 25%. While this did result in less responses overall the responses that were collected resembled the overall collection.
Campus Climate

“Based on your experience and observation, rate the general climate for students at the University of Iowa...”

A CLIMATE OF CARING AND FRIENDLINESS

A majority of students at Iowa believe that campus is a friendly (94%) and caring (80%) place to attend college.

A SAFE AND TOLERANT PLACE

Most students feel that campus is safe (90%) and tolerant of diversity (91%).

URM = Underrepresented minority student. For the purposes of this report includes: African Americans, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans (American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians), Pacific Islanders, and mainland Puerto Ricans.
Level of Perceived Respect on Campus

Survey respondents agree that the majority of students are respected regardless of a variety of variables. Some of the highest groups in agreement are “Gender”, “Religious Beliefs” and “Disability”. When students are asked if they personally feel respected the results have mirrored their feelings about overall respect on campus with “sexual orientation”, “gender”, and “race/ethnicity” having the highest rates of agreement.

“Students at Iowa are respected regardless of their...”

Figure 5: Rating of student perception of respect for specified groups. (n=5466)

“Students of my... are respected on this campus.”

Figure 6: Student perception of race. (N=5469)

Figure 7: Student perception of gender. (N=5465)

NOTE: Underrepresented students are less likely to agree at the same rate but their results are partially masked by total responses.
Students of my sexual orientation are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 47.2%
- Agree: 42.2%
- Somewhat agree: 8.2%
- Disagree: 1.4%
- Strongly disagree: 0.5%

Students of my religious beliefs are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 48.2%
- Agree: 15.6%
- Somewhat agree: 4.7%
- Disagree: 2.2%
- Strongly disagree: 1.1%

Students of my political beliefs are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 27.1%
- Agree: 46.5%
- Somewhat agree: 15.6%
- Disagree: 5.6%
- Strongly disagree: 3.0%

Students of my socio-economic status are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 34.6%
- Agree: 40.5%
- Somewhat agree: 14.8%
- Disagree: 5.1%
- Strongly disagree: 2.4%

Students of my immigration status are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 34.6%
- Agree: 40.5%
- Somewhat agree: 14.8%
- Disagree: 5.1%
- Strongly disagree: 2.4%

Students of my disability are respected on this campus

- Strongly agree: 30.0%
- Agree: 17.4%
- Somewhat agree: 4.7%
- Disagree: 1.5%
- Strongly disagree: 2.5%
Perceived Value of Diversity

“What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements...”

Diversity is important at this institution

Diversity is important to me

FIGURE 14: HOW MUCH THE INSTITUTION VALUES DIVERSITY. (N=629)

FIGURE 15: HOW THE INDIVIDUAL VALUES DIVERSITY. (N=631)
Change in Awareness of Diversity Over Time

Students reported some gain in ability to appreciate, and awareness of, diverse groups after starting at the university. The greatest gains were reported in ability to work with people from other cultures and awareness of sexual orientation.

“Please rate your abilities\awareness currently and when you started at the university along the following dimensions”

Ability to appreciate, tolerate and understand racial and ethnic diversity

- Current: 4.50
- When started: 5.00

Ability to appreciate cultural and global diversity

- Current: 4.30
- When started: 4.81

Ability to work with people from other cultures

- Current: 4.05
- When started: 4.70

“Please rate your awareness and understanding of the following issues currently and when you started at this institution”

Learning, psychological, or other disabilities that are not readily apparent

- Current: 4.73
- When started: 4.34

Physical or other observable disabilities

- Current: 4.76
- When started: 4.40

Sexual orientation differences or issues

- Current: 4.93
- When started: 4.37

Gender differences or issues

- Current: 4.96
- When started: 4.50

Racial and ethnic differences/issues

- Current: 4.92
- When started: 4.47

Social class and economic differences or issues

- Current: 4.96
- When started: 4.50

My own racial and ethnic identity

- Current: 5.10
- When started: 4.84
Students reported higher levels of negative or stereotypical viewpoints being expressed by students with low levels being expressed by faculty, instructors, nonteaching staff, and administrators. Students report that faculty or instructors are slightly more likely to express negative or stereotypical views about political affiliation, opinions, or beliefs. Students are also more likely to report that other students have expressed negative or stereotypical views on race and gender.

“In this academic year I have heard teaching faculty or instructor’s express negative or stereotypical views about...”

“In this academic year I have heard non-teaching staff or administrator’s express negative or stereotypical views about...”

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“In this academic year I have heard students express negative or stereotypical views about...”
Student Experiences on Campus

Students reported, on average, that they occasionally gained deeper perspectives when conversing with students who were different from themselves. Where they did report gaining a deeper understanding of another person’s perspective was in classrooms (67%), participating in student organizations (55%), and living in the residence halls (54%). Additionally 41% of students reported “I don’t have this kind of experience” when referencing working on or off campus.

“How often have you gained a deeper understanding of other people’s perspectives through the following types of experiences?”

![Diagram showing survey results]

FIGURE 21: STUDENT GAIN THROUGH PERSPECTIVE TAKING. (AVERAGE N=2051)*

* This question is from the 2014 SERU survey
“How often have you gained a deeper understanding of other perspectives through conversations with fellow students because they differed from you in the following ways?”

![Graph showing student gain through conversation](image)

**FIGURE 22: STUDENT GAIN THROUGH CONVERSATION. (AVERAGE N= 632)**

**A NOTE ABOUT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT**

All questions used in this report can be manipulated using various demographics as well as responses from other questions contained within the SERU survey for the purposes of reviewing the information from another perspective. Please contact the Office of Assessment if you have any questions or would like to review these or any other SERU question in more depth.

Find more information about our services and our contact information online at


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