Executive Summary

Introduction

Swarthmore College believes that diversity and inclusion are crucial to the intellectual vitality of the campus community. It is through the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints in supportive environments that individuals develop the critical thinking and citizenship skills that will benefit them throughout their lives. Diversity and inclusion engender academic engagement where teaching, working, learning, and living take place in pluralistic communities of mutual respect.

Swarthmore College is dedicated to fostering a caring community that provides leadership for constructive participation in a diverse, multicultural world. As noted in Swarthmore's website, "The diversity of perspectives represented by Swarthmore students, faculty, and staff - including different viewpoints, identities, and histories - contributes to the community's strong sense of open dialogue and engagement with ideas and issues."[1] Swarthmore supports initiatives that foster an inclusive living, learning, and working environment.[2] These commitments to diversity were reaffirmed in the introductory letter to *Strategic Directions for Swarthmore College*[3] which states: the College "aims to be an exemplar of how a residential community supports the work of developing individuals; manifesting a diverse, inclusive, and engaged community; and building new models of democratic communities in the world." (p. 4). Additionally, Swarthmore's strategic planning document states that a "liberal arts education, by definition, prepares young men and women for building robust democratic communities by requiring them to live in residential communities and experiment with leadership in the arts, athletics, cultural activities, and student government—all practices that develop community-building skills"(pg. 4). In 2011 the College made the recommendation to "Develop a comprehensive diversity, inclusivity, and engagement plan that will transform the College into a model workplace and residential learning community in an increasingly global world" (p. 19).

[1]http://www.swarthmore.edu/about
[2]For example: http://www.swarthmore.edu/intercultural-center
[3]December, 2011. Strategic Directions for Swarthmore College. http://sp.swarthmore.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/StratPlan_Booklet_12e3.pdf

In order to better understand the campus climate, the senior administration at Swarthmore College recognized the need for a comprehensive tool that would provide campus climate data for students, faculty, and staff across Swarthmore.

To that end, Swarthmore's Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) formed in 2014. The CSWG was comprised of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Ultimately, Swarthmore College contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to conduct a campus-wide study entitled, "Learning, Working, and Living: A Self-Study of Swarthmore College." Data gathering focused on the experiences and perceptions of various constituent groups.

Project Design and Campus Involvement

The CSWG collaborated with R&A to develop the survey instrument. In the first phase, R&A conducted 18 focus groups[4] comprised of 161 participants (73 students, 88 faculty or staff). Data from the focus groups informed the CSWG and R&A in constructing questions for the campus-wide survey.

Swarthmore College's survey contained 100 items (18 qualitative and 82 quantitative) and was available via a secure online portal from March 11 through April 15 2015. Confidential paper surveys were distributed to those individuals who did not have access to an Internet-connected computer or who preferred a paper survey.

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[4]Swarthmore initially requested 19 focus groups; however, no Faculty/Staff/Students who self-identify as having a Disability were available to participate in the focus group on November 17, or December 5, 2014.

Swarthmore College Participants

Swarthmore College community members completed 980 surveys for an overall response rate of 38%. Only surveys that were at least 50% completed were included in the final data set for analyses.[5] Response rates by constituent group varied: 34% ($n = 510$) for Students, 47% ($n = 108$) for Faculty, and 43% ($n = 362$) for Staff. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of survey respondents. The percentages offered in Table 1 are based on the numbers of respondents in the sample (n) for the specific demographic characteristic.[6]

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[5]Fourteen respondents were removed because they did not complete at least 50% of the survey.
[6]The total n for each demographic characteristic will differ as a result of missing data.

Table 1. **Swarthmore College Sample Demographics**

Characteristic	Subgroup	*n*	% of Sample
Position status	Student	510	52.0
	Faculty	108	11.0
	Staff	362	36.9
Gender identity	Woman	603	61.5
	Man	334	34.1
	Trans*[7]	23	2.4
Racial identity	White	625	63.8
	Person of Color	213	21.7
	Multiracial	102	10.4
Sexual identity	LGBQ	175	17.9
	Heterosexual	720	73.5
	Asexual/Other	53	5.4
Citizenship status	U.S. citizen	919	93.8
	Non-U.S. citizen	47	4.8
	Undocumented	< 5	---
	Multiple citizenships	< 5	---
Disability status	Disability	196	20.0
	No disability	661	67.5
	Multiple disability	53	5.4
Military status	Military service	14	1.4
	No military service	953	97.2
Faith-based affiliation	Christian affiliation	333	34.0
	Other faith-based affiliation	97	9.9
	No affiliation	398	40.6
	Multiple affiliations	120	12.2
	Other	5	0.5

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[7]Trans* includes all gender non-binary categories (e.g., Cross dresser; Genderqueer; Gender non-conforming; Part-time as one gender, part time as another; Trans man/Trans male; Trans woman/Trans female).

1. **High levels of comfort with the climate at Swarthmore College**

   Climate is defined as "the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential."[8] The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

   - 64% ($n = 626$) of the survey respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at Swarthmore College.
   - 64% ($n = 301$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their departments/work units.
   - 80% ($n = 408$) of Student respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.
   - 90% ($n = 97$) of Faculty respondents were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

2. **Faculty and Staff – Positive attitudes about work-life issues**

   Campus climate[9] is constituted in part by perceptions of work, sense of balance between work and home life, and opportunities for personal and professional development throughout the span of one's career. Work-life balance is one indicator of campus climate.

   - 71% ($n = 242$) of Staff respondents found Swarthmore College supportive of flexible work schedules.
   - 70% ($n = 250$) of Staff respondents indicated that they had supervisors at Swarthmore College who gave them career advice or guidance when they needed it.
   - 77% ($n = 78$) of Faculty respondents indicated that faculty opinions are valued within College committees.

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[8]Rankin & Reason, 2008, p. 264
[9]Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart, 2006

3. **Students – Positive attitudes about academic experiences**

The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.[10] Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.[11] Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

- 15% ($n = 76$) of Student respondents believed that few of their courses this year have been intellectually stimulating.

- 82% ($n = 417$) of Student respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development since enrolling at Swarthmore College.

- 76% ($n = 385$) of Student respondents indicated that their interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to Swarthmore College.

4. **Students – Perceived Academic Success and Intent to Persist**

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on two scales; "Perceived Academic Success"[12] and "Intent to Persist."[13] The scales were derived from Question 11 on the survey. Analyses using these scales revealed:

- There was no significant difference in the means for students by gender identity on *Perceived Academic Success*. Statistical significance was not established for the *Intent to Persist* factor.

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[10]Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

[11]Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004

[12] Academic success, academic development, or learning is "often viewed as the unifying goal of teaching, research, and service for higher education. The term[s are] widely used and difficult to define precisely" (Watson & Stage, 2003, p. 445). We view learning as socially constructed (Baxter Magolda, 2003; Bruffee, 1999; Cross, 2003; King & Hurtado, 2003; Phillips & Soltis, 2009; Salomon & Perkins, 1998) and suggest that the campus environment influences students, their learning and their overall development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Phillips & Soltis, 2009). Furthermore, college students who perceive and experience positive campus climates have positive learning outcomes (Milem, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Reason, et al., 2006). *Perceived Academic Success*, for the purposes of this assessment, is defined as how students perceive their academic success.

[13]Intent to persist, for the purposes of this assessment, is defined as student's intent to complete their education at Swarthmore.

- There was a significant difference in the overall test for means for students by racial identity on *Perceived Academic Success*. Statistical significance was not established for the *Intent to Persist* factor.

- There was a significant difference in the overall test for means for students by sexual identity on *Perceived Academic Success*. Statistical significance for *Intent to Persist* was not established owing to the skewed nature of the responses for this factor.

- There was a significant difference in the means for students by disability status on *Perceived Academic Success*. Statistical significance for *Intent to Persist* was not established owing to the skewed nature of the responses for this factor.

- There was a significant difference in the means for students by First-Generation/Low Income status on *Perceived Academic Success*. Students who were not First-Generation/Low Income had greater perceived academic success than students who were First-Generation/Low-Income. Statistical significance was not established for the *Intent to Persist* factor.

Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement

1. **Members of several constituent groups were differentially affected by exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.**
   Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.[14] Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.[15] The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

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[14]Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001
[15]Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley, 2008; Waldo, 1999

- 24% ($n = 232$) of respondents believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.[16]

- 29% ($n = 68$) of respondents who reported having experienced the conduct said that it was based on their gender/gender identity. Others said that they experienced such conduct based on their position status (23%, $n = 53$), their ethnicity (19%, $n = 45$), or their political affiliation (19%, $n = 44$).

- Differences emerged based on various demographic characteristics, including gender identity, ethnic identity, racial identity, and sexual identity. For example:

  o A higher percentage of Trans* respondents (61%, $n = 14$) than Men respondents (21%, $n = 69$) and Women respondents (23%, $n =140$) believed that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

  o In terms of racial identity, 21% ($n = 129$) of White respondents, 27% ($n = 27$) of Multiple Race respondents, and 31% ($n = 65$) of People of Color respondents believed that they had experienced this conduct.

  o By sexual identity, higher percentages of LGBQ respondents (39%, $n = 68$), Asexual respondents (31%, $n = 9$), and Other respondents (29%, $n = 7$) than Heterosexual respondents (20%, $n = 140$) indicated that they had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

  o In terms of mental health/psychological condition, 42% ($n = 62$) of respondents with a mental health/psychological condition and 21% ($n = 170$) of respondents with no mental health/psychological condition believed that they had experienced this conduct.

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[16]The literature on microaggressions is clear that this type of conduct has a negative influence on people who experience the conduct, even if they feel at the time that it had no impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

2. Several constituent groups indicated that they were less comfortable with the overall campus climate, workplace climate, and classroom climate.

Prior research on campus climate has focused on the experiences of faculty, staff, and students associated with historically underserved social/community/affinity groups (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, veterans).[17] Both in these studies and at Swarthmore, several groups indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

- Differences by Gender Identity:
    - A significantly greater percentage of Men (83%) and Women (83%) Faculty and Student respondents than Trans* Faculty and Student respondents (50%) felt "comfortable" or "very comfortable" in their courses.
- Differences by Racial Identity:
    - A significantly lower percentage of Person of Color respondents (9%) and Multiple Race respondents (9%) than White respondents (20%) were "very comfortable" with the overall climate at Swarthmore College.
    - Person of Color Faculty and Student respondents (70%, $n = 111$) were significantly less comfortable with the climate in their classes than were White Faculty and Student respondents (88%, $n = 307$) and Multiple Race respondents (81%, $n = 75$).
- Differences by Sexual Identity:
    - Heterosexual Faculty and Student respondents (84%, $n = 360$) were more comfortable with the climate in their courses than were LGBQ respondents (74%, $n = 102$), Asexual respondents (76%, $n = 16$).

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[17]Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hart & Fellabaum, 2008; Norris, 1992; Rankin, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008.

- Differences by Ability
  - o Faculty and Student respondents with Multiple Disabilities (62%, *n* = 26) were less comfortable with the climate in their classes than were Faculty and Student respondents with Single Disabilities (79%, *n* = 117), or No Disabilities (85%, *n* = 323).

3. **Seventy respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted physical sexual contact.**

   In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* indicated that sexual assault is a significant issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted while in college. One section of the Swarthmore College survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

   - 7% (*n* = 70) of respondents believed that they had experienced unwanted physical sexual contact while at Swarthmore College.
   - 91% of unwanted physical sexual contact incidents occurred on-campus.

Conclusion

Swarthmore College's campus climate findings[18] are consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country based on the work of R&A Consulting.[19] For example, 70% to 80% of all respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "comfortable" or "very comfortable." A slightly lower percentage of all Swarthmore College respondents reported that they were "comfortable" or "very comfortable" with the climate at Swarthmore College. Likewise, 20% to 25% in similar reports believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At Swarthmore College, 24% of respondents believed that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile

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[18]Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.
[19]Rankin & Associates Consulting, 2014 http://www.rankin-consulting.com

conduct. The results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.[20]

The Swarthmore College climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, addressing Swarthmore's strong sense of open dialogue and engagement with ideas and issues. While the findings in and of themselves may guide decision-making in regard to policies and practices at Swarthmore College, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of an institution and unique aspects of each campus's environment must be taken into consideration when considering additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings do provide the Swarthmore College community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths but also develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. Swarthmore College, with the support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitment to an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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[20]Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward, 2008; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sears, 2002; Settles et al., 2006; Silverschanz et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009.

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