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USM Campus Climate Survey: Findings and Conclusions

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Research Initiative on Social Justice and Equity (RISE)

In conjunction with and commissioned by:

The University of Southern Mississippi

Dr. Joe Paul, Vice President of Student Affairs

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The USM Campus Climate Survey

The present investigation of USM Campus Climate was commissioned by the University of Southern Mississippi in 2014, and has been conducted by the Research Initiative on Social Justice and Equity (RISE). RISE is a multi-institutional research consortium with its origins at USM in 2013, and contributions to this report have come from multiple directors, research fellows, research associates, and student fellows of RISE. The data for this project were collected, managed, and have remained under the control and supervision of RISE personnel.

We aim in this report to detail the reasons this inquiry was conducted, what we have learned from it, and what we believe are some reasonable recommendations based on the results. Throughout the process of completing this report, we have been in communication with multiple faculty, staff, and student groups to attempt to create a product that is representative of multiple viewpoints, incorporates information about ongoing and upcoming efforts, and that is fair in representing USM as an evolving, unfolding institution working to improve the experience for all students in an environment that is, at times, difficult due to political and financial realities.

Background and History

The USM Campus Climate Survey came about in the Fall of 2014 through conversations between various campus constituencies. Those conversations, significantly, included the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Joseph Paul. Many of the conversations were among faculty and staff, and revolved around better serving the needs of marginalized students. Dr. Paul expressed a desire to first gather additional data on which needs students identified as being underserved, if there were particular populations that were experiencing USM as less welcoming and affirming than others, and to use those data as a means to move policy forward.

By way of history, the USM campus has not undergone a systematic or purposeful campus climate assessment in the past. Smaller, more targeted surveys and qualitative inquiries have occurred, however. For example, campus crime statistics include data on assault, sexual assault, and bias incidents, though they are limited to those who report to the police (an extremely meaningful limitation). Faculty opinions have, in recent years, been gathered through an online survey tool via the Faculty Senate, but it is mostly targeted at evaluating administrator performance, and the data have yet to be released in any meaningful way.

It is, perhaps, notable that USM is positioned geographically in a system that places it in direct contradistinction to “Ole Miss” (the University of Mississippi), a system with some

notorious historical bias and campus climate issues. However, USM is certainly not without its own history of bias incidents and hostile climate. Take for example the struggle to integrate USM, which included the USM police framing Clyde Kennard for theft – an action which preserved segregation, but also resulted in Kennard’s imprisonment for seven years from which he was released only five months prior to his death from terminal cancer due to national attention (Crespino, 2007). High profile bias incidents are not relegated to the past at USM, either. These include, among others, several sorority members wearing ‘blackface’ as part of their costume for a theme party on campus in 2011, which gained unwanted national attention for the university (Kemp, 2011). In 2012, the university received national attention for a racist and anti-immigrant chant by members of the USM band during a televised basketball game (Valdes, 2012, March). Just this year, the university has received attention for getting a “red light” on free speech issues from a national advocacy group (Kampis, 2015, March). The university, it seems, continues to receive potentially harmful periodic attention for issues related to the present Campus Climate research.

Perhaps fortunately for the university, it is located nearby the University of Mississippi, where “Ole Miss” falls under more constant and intense scrutiny for bias and climate issues. They also have no shortage of bias incidents, including the recent defacing of their James Meredith statue, which commemorates their integration in spite of then-governor Barnett’s strong and virulent opposition. However, the University of Mississippi has also renamed buildings that carry historical connections to slavery and confederacy, and placed historical markers to convey the meaning of other spaces. They have made efforts toward more inclusive spaces for people of color, LGBTQ students, and people of varied religious backgrounds, including the naming of a Chief Diversity Officer. They also house the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, which facilitates dialogue and real work on racial equity on-campus and regionally, plus the Center for Inclusion and Cross-Cultural Engagement. These efforts in many ways outpace and overshadow those of USM. For example, it is noteworthy that USM has no Chief Diversity Officer, no LGBTQ resource center, no dedicated space for diversity issues (such as the Winter Institute), no dedicated home for issues of inclusion or cultural awareness, nor many of the other pieces that the University of Mississippi has implemented to move forward in this area. However, because of historical realities, the University of Mississippi still receives

greater scrutiny and attention. Some of this attention is also likely due to their prominence in college athletics when compared with USM, and their status as the state flagship.

Given that USM wants to serve its students better, to be an open and affirming environment for all students, to educate an informed citizenry, and to preserve their educational mission by avoiding national controversies that cost money, reputation, and donors, the obligation is clear. USM must understand the challenges it faces in terms of its campus climate for students, particularly marginalized students. Given this understanding, USM must create policy and practices that create an affirming campus climate for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, ability, religious identity, first language, veteran status, or any other element of identity. In so doing, USM will live up to its obligation as a public education facility, and to its own nondiscrimination statements.

Aims and Scope

The purpose of the present study is to describe the current climate of The University of Southern Mississippi, with particular attention to traditionally marginalized student populations. In particular, this study focused on experiences on campus including experiences with faculty, staff, administrators, and other students. These include experiences in class, in public areas on campus, in dining halls, at campus events, in campus housing, in off-campus housing, and at other university-related functions. The scope of questions includes general perception of climate for different student groups, comfort, safety, feelings of fitting in, factors that led to choosing USM, as well as negative experiences such as negative comments, threatening comments, threatening behavior, assault, harassment, and other negative experiences.

The present study also included a qualitative follow-up study with selected groups, in which participants were freer to discuss their experiences with campus, their classes, with faculty, with staff, and with administrators. They also discussed the needs they perceived, times they have felt unwelcome or unsafe, and negative experiences they have had on campus. The purpose of the qualitative follow-up study was to give context and participants' voices in understanding the survey results.

Methodology

Participants. A total of 1,197 students participated in the USM Campus Climate Survey, meaning that approximately 9.97% of the population of Hattiesburg and Gulf Park students

participated in the survey. A total of 1,005 participants indicated they primarily attend the Hattiesburg campus, while 184 indicated they primary attend the Gulf Park campus. In terms of gender, there were 821 women, 357 men, 4 transgendered, 1 intersex, 3 genderqueer, and 2 ‘other’ individuals in the sample. This reporting scheme is different from that used by the university to accommodate reporting of the full spectrum of gender identities, but it appears that women are likely overrepresented in the sample. In terms of sexual orientation, 1059 participants identified as heterosexual/straight, while 19 identified as lesbian, 23 as gay, 33 as bisexual, 14 as pansexual, 8 as asexual, 4 as questioning, and 27 responded ‘prefer not to answer’. There were 834 white/Caucasian participants, 203 Black/African American participants, 47 Asian or Pacific Islander participants, 38 multiracial participants, 28 Hispanic/Latino participants, 10 American Indian or Alaskan Native participants, and 26 who identified as ‘other/not listed’. In terms of college classification, 166 identified as first-year students, 120 as sophomores, 253 as juniors, 309 as seniors, 198 as Master’s students, 3 as specialist students, and 136 as doctoral students (71.6% undergraduate vs. 28.4% graduate). When compared with the student population, the college classification distribution was significantly different ($\chi^2_6 = 98.70, p < .001$), with an underrepresentation of first-year students ($SR = -2.26$), sophomores ($SR = -4.15$), and seniors ($SR = -3.61$), and overrepresentation of Master’s ($SR = 5.64$) and doctoral ($SR = 5.67$) students. The mean age for participants was 26.34 ($SD = 9.55$), which is very slightly ($d = .09$) though significantly ($t_{1174} = 3.25, p = .001$) different from the mean age for the student population. Taken together, the sample of a little under a tenth of the student body is slightly older than the student population at USM, with proportionally more graduate students.

Participants reported working an average of 14.43 ($SD = 16.34$) hours outside of school, while spending an average of 4.91 ($SD = 7.39$) hours per week involved in campus activities. In terms of campus involvement, 55.9% of the sample reported that they were a member of a student group, club, or other campus organization, while 18.0% reported that they were a member of a fraternity, sorority, or other Greek organization. College major was also collected, and is here reported by which College students were affiliated with: There were 274 affiliated with the College of Arts and Letters, 167 with the College of Business, 221 with the College of Education and Psychology, 117 affiliated with the College of Health, 92 affiliated with the College of Nursing, and 263 affiliated with the College of Science and Technology.

Participants also provided their religious identity, which for the purposes of describing the sample has been somewhat simplified due to the large number of options that might be regarded similarly. There were 655 who identified as protestant, 206 as Catholic or Christian Orthodox, 47 as agnostic, 45 as atheist, 21 as Hindu, 11 as Buddhist, 10 as Islamic, 10 as Mormon, 6 as Jewish, 5 as earth and/or humanist traditions, and 159 who claimed no religious affiliation.

Finally, participants also responded as to whether they had been diagnosed with any disability, with 123 (10.3%) saying they had been, 1041 (87.2%) saying they had not, and 23 (1.9%) declining to respond. Of those saying they had been diagnosed, there were 37 who reported they were diagnosed with ADHD, 15 with a psychological disability, 9 with a learning disability, 7 with blindness or low vision, 5 as deaf or hard of hearing, 3 with a brain injury, 1 with autism spectrum disorder, 26 with 'other' disabilities, and 12 selected 'prefer not to say'.

Materials. The USM Campus Climate Survey was constructed based on a review of existing campus climate surveys, and based on the needs expressed for this individual survey. That is, items were adapted from prior climate surveys at other institutions, and new items were created for use in the survey based on conversations with USM administrators about the information they hoped to gain. The survey contained a total of 46 items, including two open-ended questions, plus 13 demographic items. In addition, depending on how participants answered, they may have been presented with additional questions about assault/harassment and disability status.

Procedure. The USM Campus Climate Survey was distributed to all students enrolled at the Hattiesburg or Gulf Park campus by the Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Joseph Paul. Dr. Paul sent an email explaining the purpose of the research, that it was being conducted by the primary investigator Dr. Kamden Strunk, and that the results would be beneficial to the university. Dr. Paul also offered entry into a drawing for one of two \$100 gift cards at the campus bookstore as incentive for participation. Participants may also have been prompted to attend to this email by announcements through campus groups and clubs, announcements posted on the USM Mailout email that goes out to all students, and by word-of-mouth. However, the link to the survey was only accessible in the email that came directly from Dr. Paul. At no time were any data accessible to Dr. Paul, and data were only available to the researchers and graduate research assistants.

On accessing the email, participants were directed to an informational letter which contained all of the elements of informed consent except for the signature (which was to further protect their anonymity). This also contained contact information for the primary researcher, Kamden Strunk, and the Institutional Review Board. Following the informational letter, participants were presented with the survey instrument. After completion, they were redirected to a separate survey instrument with a separate database (to ensure no association of information) to enter the incentive drawing.

As a follow up to the quantitative survey, focus-group and individual qualitative interviews were also conducted. These were largely organized after regularly scheduled student meetings and other student gatherings to as to have student constituencies of interest gathered for a focus group interview. Students were presented with an informational letter that contained all elements of informed consent except for the signature, and given the opportunity to select a pseudonym. Pseudonyms have been selected by the researchers for those who did not select their own. Participants then took part in a semi-structured, informal interview about their experiences on campus, and were invited to participate in follow-up individual interviews, and to give the researcher's information to others who might be interested. Quotes and anecdotes from these interviews are used throughout this report to enhance the understanding of the data and provide further student voice and perspective to the findings. All procedures were approved by the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board, and all participants were treated in accordance with American Psychological Association ethical standards.

Analytic Approach

Our approach to analyzing the data is best understood as an attempt to privilege the voices of traditionally marginalized students. This is motivated by the belief that, if one wants to understand whether a group of students experiences bias on campus, that group of students is best equipped to answer. Because of this belief, we adopted a comparative analytic approach, wherein we used between-groups analyses comparing the traditionally marginalized student group to the traditionally privileged group within each chapter of this report. For example, we compared the responses of men versus women, LGBTQ students versus straight/cisgendered students, etc. Through these comparisons, we can note instances where traditionally marginalized students perceive their environment differently, and thus more readily understand areas where

they may be experiencing bias, discrimination, hostile learning and/or living conditions, and so on.

To accomplish this, within each chapter of this report, we used both independent samples *t*-tests with the modified Sidak correction for Type I error, as well as Mann-Whitney *U* tests. The reason for using both parametric and nonparametric tests is the nature of the sample. Because the samples under consideration are comprised of a ‘minority’ versus a ‘majority’ group, there are necessarily highly unbalanced samples. Thus, the use of parametric tests like the *t*-test would normally be problematic not only because of the imbalanced sample, but also because of issues with assumptions about homogeneity of variance. In fact, the usual tolerance for imbalanced samples is traditionally set so that the largest sample is no more than two times the size of the smallest sample (Keppel & Wickens, 2004). This would have been violated in all cases in this sample. As a result, for the independent-samples *t*-tests, we compared the ‘minority’ group to a random sample from the majority group equal to two times the number in the ‘minority’ group. However, to assure that this was not a result of some unusual feature of the random sample, we also wished to compare the full sample. Nonparametric tests, like *U* do not carry the same restrictions for homogeneity of variance or balanced sample sizes (Conover, 1999). So, the Mann-Whitney *U* test was conducted on the entire sample as that test can tolerate the unbalanced samples. Throughout the report, in between-groups comparisons, we report only results significant in both the *t*-test and *U*. A number of variables were also categorical in nature, for which we used the chi-square test of independence to determine statistical independence or dependence of group membership.

It is also worth noting that in a number of cases, for ease of reading and interpretation, we report percentages ‘agreeing’ or reporting on a particular end of a Likert-type scale. In those cases, we disregard those reporting “neither agree nor disagree”, and include those, for example, rating “somewhat agree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree” to come up with a total percentage of people who rate on the ‘agree’ end of the scale. This is, again, done to make it easier to think about the number of people who may identify with particular experience or opinion, and to give additional ways to make meaning of the data.

Finally, qualitative data are used primarily to illuminate or give context to quantitative findings. In other words, we are typically reporting quotes in an attempt to give some additional

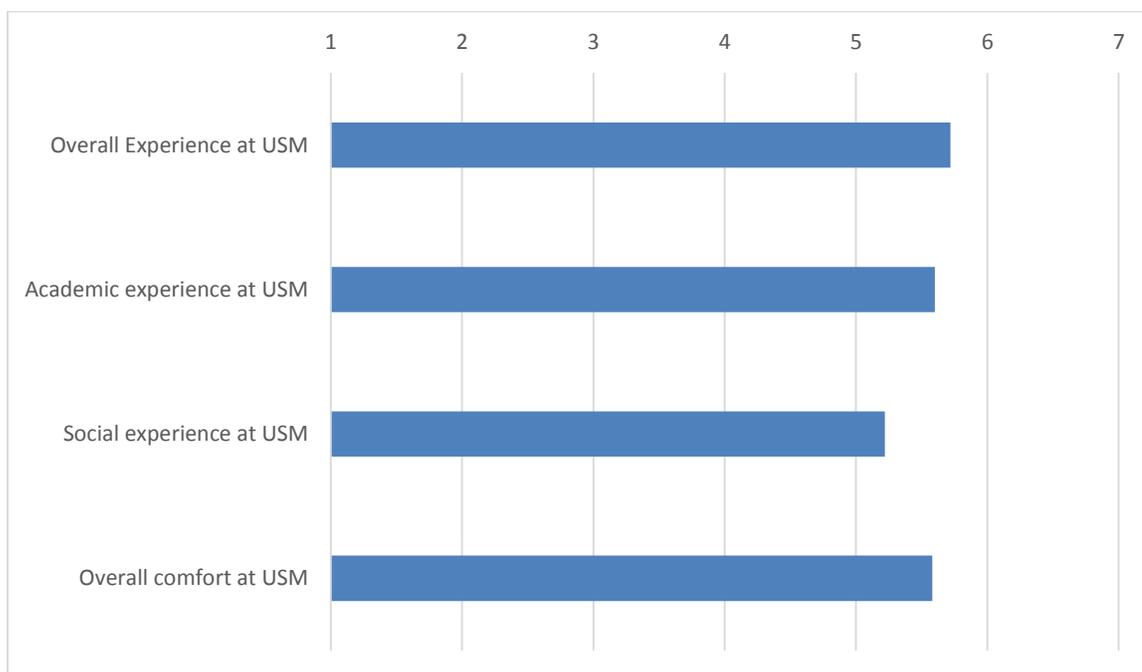
context or support in understanding quantitative findings. However, the analytic approach was inductive, iterative analysis with two researchers interpreting the data collaboratively.

General Campus Climate at USM

In order to understand how traditionally marginalized student populations experience the USM campus, it may be helpful to first briefly describe the generalized experience and perception of students on the USM campus. That is, the remaining chapters of this report focus on specific populations of students, especially those who are traditionally marginalized in U.S. education. Those results stand out in starker contrast when one first considers the generalized results. Although USM generally does a good job of making students feel valued, safe, and welcome, those marginalized students may be (and as is discussed in future chapters, are) underserved.

We begin here with a presentation of the ‘overall’ climate markers included in the survey: 92.8% of students rated on the ‘good’ end of the Likert-type scale for their overall experience at USM, 90.4% on the ‘good’ end of the scale for their academic experience, 73.6% for their social experience, and 88.3% rated on the ‘comfortable’ end of the scale for their overall comfort at USM. The mean statistics are presented below in visual form.

Means on Overall Campus Experience



On other general markers of campus climate, the overall student population scores were positive as well. 96.1% rated the campus as friendly rather than hostile, 87.1% rated the campus as concerned rather than indifferent, 91.7% rated the campus as improving rather than getting worse, 82.0% felt proud to be a part of the USM community, and 72.6% felt valued as an

individual at USM. In terms of physical safety, 80.5% felt physically safe at USM and 83.3% felt emotionally/psychologically safe at USM. There was slightly less comfort with campus life. Only 47.1% felt comfortable in residence halls, while 79.0% felt comfortable attending events on campus. 68.1% felt comfortable participating in campus social life, and 70.2% felt comfortable participating in student organizations.

In terms of academics, 86.1% of participants felt comfortable meeting with their academic advisor, and 87.6% felt comfortable meeting with faculty during office hours. However, 72.5% felt comfortable participating in research with faculty and 76.6% felt comfortable interacting with administrators. There was more comfort with office support staff and department staff, with 83.5% of participants comfortable interacting with them.

Students generally felt like they received positive messages about diversity and inclusion from USM, with 73.5% saying that USM clearly articulates the values of diversity and inclusion, and 77.9% reported that expectations of respect and value for others are clearly articulated at USM. Additionally, 38.8% of participants indicated that a diverse and inclusive campus environment played a role in their decision of which university to attend, with 73% of participants reporting that USM is a good place to gain understanding of multicultural and diversity issues.

Even among the generalized data, there are certainly problematic points, however. Regarding inappropriate, stereotypical, and derogatory remarks made by other students, 18.6% of participants hard heard them made often about country of origin, 23.1% about English language proficiency, 30.4% about race and ethnicity, 19.0% about gender, 29.7% about gender identity and expression, 16.0% about immigration status, 13.0% about learning ability/disability, 14.0% about psychological ability/disability, 12.2% about physical ability/disability, 24.3% about religious identity, 30.4% about sexual orientation, and 17.5% about socioeconomic status and income level. Participants reported such remarks much less frequently from faculty, staff, and administrators. However, overall, 19.4% students reported hearing disparaging and derogatory remarks often in class, 21.7% in campus dining facilities, 4.7% in campus offices, 4.1% in faculty offices, 33.0% in public spaces on campus, 12.4% in athletic facilities, 19.5% in campus housing, 8.7% while working in a campus job, 25.2% while walking on campus, and 39.6% on social networking. Regarding such remarks, 22.5% report they do not know how to respond when hearing them.

Among the generalized campus climate data, which take all participants at once, the campus climate seems relatively healthy. However, even in this most generous read of the data, there are troubling indications. Students regularly hear disparaging and derogatory remarks about a number of identity categories across various campus contexts, and many do not feel confident in handling such situations. Although a sizeable portion of USM's student population seems to have considered the diversity and inclusiveness of the campus when choosing to attend, even this charitable read of the data indicates problems. Although 80%+ feeling safe, valued, comfortable, etc., is meaningful, there are a large number of students being left behind who find themselves feeling unsafe, unvalued, uncomfortable, and otherwise in a potentially hostile campus environment. Further, it is worth investigation by USM to determine why comfort in student life seems to be lagging far behind comfort in academics and general campus comfort.

In the remaining chapters of this report, we highlight how students from traditionally marginalized groups may also experience the campus differently from other students – the ways in which they may experience bias, unsafety, discomfort, and other aspects of a negative campus climate, and make recommendations on how USM and its administration may move to improve. Specifically, we address LGBTQ students (a specific emphasis of the USM administration in commissioning this study), students of color, women, students of religious identities other than Christian, and students with disabilities. Their experiences differ from those of other students and give indications of ways in which the campus climate can be improved to truly embrace the needs of all students and serve those students in an equitable and inclusive manner.

Experiences of LGBTQ Students on the USM Campus

With Contributing Author: William C. Takewell, M.Ed.

LGBTQ Students on College Campuses: Bias, Discrimination, and Educational Outcomes

Bias against LGBT individuals occurs in schools and colleges, and has been documented in the research literature as well as annual surveys. Students report biased language and acts on the part of other students and faculty at the college level (Rankin, et al., 2010). Even in graduate education, students report experiences with stigmatization and bias (Hylton, 2006). In the college admissions process, LGBT students may be more closely scrutinized and even discriminated against due to difference (Strunk & Bailey, 2014). Furthermore, in these settings, a sense of institutionalized bias exists (Ferfolja, 2007), and even faculty who espouse nondiscrimination as a value tend not to speak up or even actively participate in discrimination and bias (Norris, 1992).

In Mississippi, these issues may be particularly pronounced. Mississippi has approximately 78,000 self-identified LGBTQ citizens, yet they face continued bias, discrimination, and harassment, based on available data. In the state, 54% of those living in rural settings and 37% of those living in more urban settings report having experienced workplace harassment (HRC, 2014). About 42% report experiencing bullying in high school related to being LGBT-identified, with about one in three reporting experiencing harassment on at least a weekly basis. About 25% have experienced harassment from a public servant such as a police officer. For LGBT Mississippians, bias and discrimination appear to be real and pervasive components of their experience in the state.

These, experiences of discrimination and bias are associated with lowered psychological well-being (Doyle & Molix, 2014). In schools, bullying is associated with lower educational outcomes (Aragon, Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2014) and lower self-esteem (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Gretak, 2013). Not only is experiencing bias and discrimination at school associated with poor educational outcomes, it influences later life outcome as well. Those who report having been the subject of anti-LGBT harassment in school are more likely to experience depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse problems (Russell, et al., 2011). These experiences are also associated with economic harms – particularly lower income (Klawitter, 2011). LGBT individuals are more likely to contemplate suicide than others (Irwin & Austin, 2013), and their experiences with discrimination and bias are a possible explanation for this

difference. Although nationally LGBT individuals are more likely to contemplate or attempt suicide, this is particularly true in the South, where 40% had seriously considered suicide and 15% had attempted suicide in a recent study (Irwin & Austin, 2013). Feelings of social isolation and other effects of discrimination appear to be particularly strong in Southern and rural areas (Swank, Frost, & Fahs, 2012). Some negative outcomes associated with experiencing discrimination and bias may be mitigated by self-disclosure (Morman, Schrodt, & Tornes, 2013) and positive institutional support (Kosciw, et al., 2013).

In the present report, we outline the ways in which data from the USM Campus Climate Survey show areas in which USM provides this kind of positive institutional support, and ways in which the institution can find room to improve services to LGBTQ students so as to improve psychological, educational, and economic outcomes for those students who are LGBTQ students, and for all who live in the state.

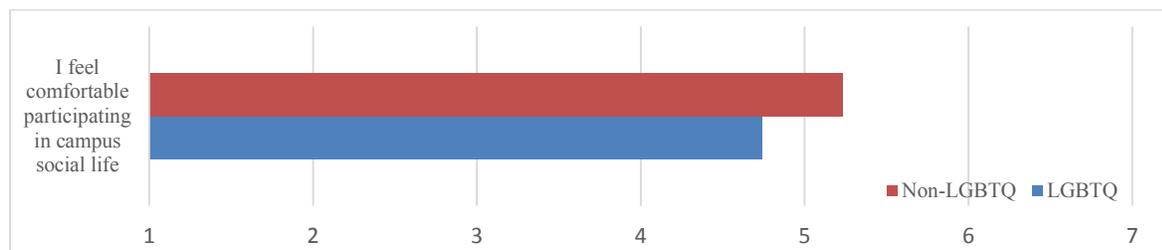
Victimization of LGBTQ Students on the USM Campus

Of those who responded to the USM Campus Climate Survey, 9% ($n = 105$) identified as LGBTQ. We began by analyzing victimization data. All participants responded as to whether they had ever personally experienced harassment or assault while at USM. Among the entire sample, 10.4% ($n = 132$) indicated they had experienced harassment or assault. However, among LGBTQ students, this number was 15.8%, compared with 9.6% in those who did not identify as LGBTQ. Using a chi-square analysis, we found that there was a statistically significant dependency between LGBTQ status and victimization ($\chi^2 = 6.47, p = .011$), with LGBTQ students overrepresented in the victimized category ($SR = 2.3$). It is worth noting that the type of harassment and assault was not significantly different between LGBTQ students and other students, only the frequency of victimization. This indicates that the disparity in rates of victimization is statistically significant, and that on the USM campus, LGBTQ students are more likely to find themselves subject to harassment and assault than others.

Campus Experiences for LGBTQ Students

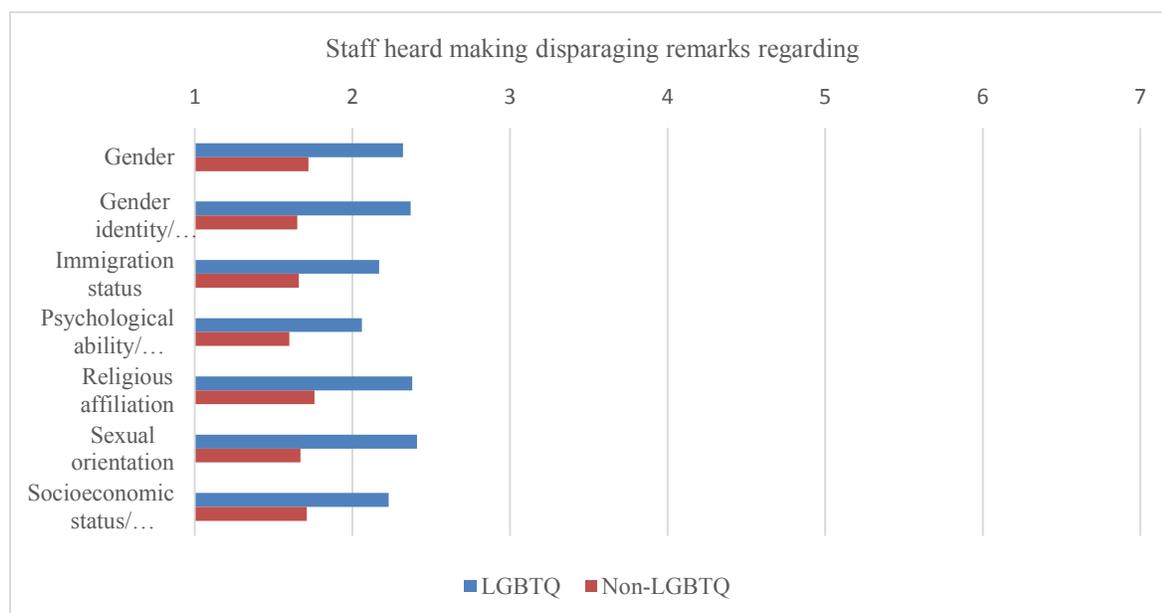
We found significant differences between LGBTQ students and other students on a number of items related to the campus experience. For example, LGBT students were less comfortable, on average, participating in campus life than their counterparts ($t_{315} = -3.09, p = .002, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.39, p < .001$). 42.5% of LGBTQ students rated on the “disagree” side of the scale for this item, compared with only 29.2% of others.

Mean Scores for Comfort in Campus Social Life by LGBTQ Grouping



Regarding negative experiences on campus, LGBTQ students report having a wide range of such experiences more often. They report negative experiences from USM staff more often than their counterparts. These include hearing negative, inappropriate, or disparaging comments regarding gender ($t_{314} = 3.54, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.27, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{314} = 4.34, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.63, p < .001$), immigration status ($t_{314} = 3.22, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.68, p < .001$), psychological ability/disability ($t_{314} = 3.11, p = .002, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.47, p = .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{313} = 3.56, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.23, p < .001$), sexual orientation ($t_{314} = 4.39, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -4.67, p < .001$), and socioeconomic status/income level ($t_{314} = 3.23, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.33, p < .001$). These differences are graphically depicted below.

Mean Scores for Disparaging Comments by Staff by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



To understand how often students reported hearing disparaging remarks, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those

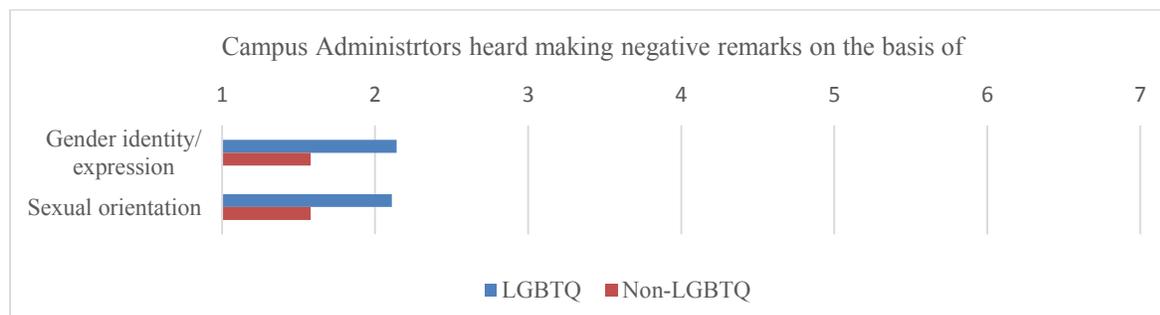
who were on the “not often” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

Percent Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Staff per Identity Category

	LGBTQ	Non-LGBTQ
Staff remarks about gender	14.2%	4.7%
Staff remarks about gender identity/expression	13.3%	3.8%
Staff remarks about gender	7.5%	3.2%
Staff remarks about psychological ability/disability	7.5%	3.0%
Staff remarks about religious affiliation	11.7%	6.6%
Staff remarks about sexual orientation	13.3%	4.7%
Staff remarks about socioeconomic status/income level	10.0%	4.3%

This was mirrored in their experiences with campus administrators. LGBTQ students were more likely than their counterparts to report hearing campus administrators make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging comments regarding gender identity/expression ($t_{315} = 3.59, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.11, p < .001$), and sexual orientation ($t_{316} = 3.36, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.06, p < .001$). These differences are depicted graphically below.

Mean Scores for Disparaging Comments by Administrators by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



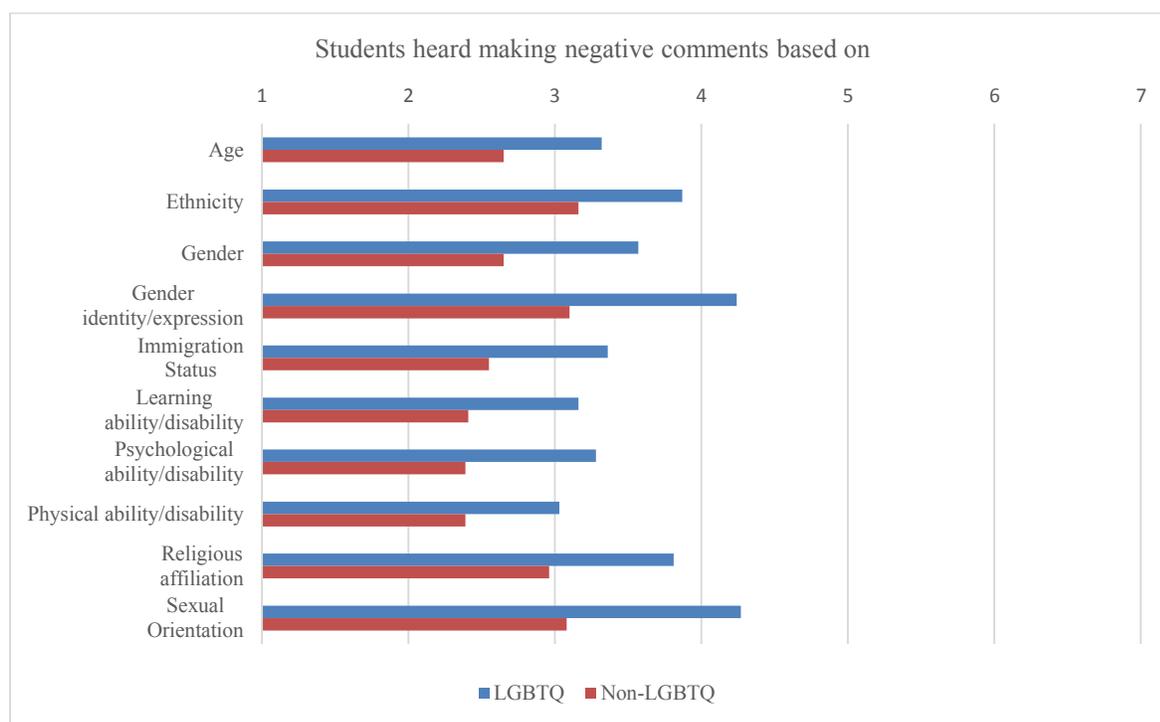
Again, to understand how often students reported hearing disparaging remarks, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “not often” side of the scale. These percentages are lower, which is perhaps not surprising given that students often interact less with administrators than with staff, and the question is about frequency (not a simple yes/no question). These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

Percent Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Administrators per Identity Category

	LGBTQ	Non-LGTBQ
Administrator remarks about gender identity/expression	2.3%	1.0%
Administrator remarks about sexual orientation	6.7%	2.3%

In terms of experiences with students, a similar pattern emerged. LGBTQ students were more likely to report hearing other students make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging comments regarding age ($t_{317} = 3.22, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.83, p < .001$), ethnicity/race ($t_{317} = 3.14, p = .002, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.30, p = .001$), gender ($t_{317} = 4.23, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.68, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{317} = 5.09, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -5.46, p < .001$), immigration status ($t_{317} = 4.05, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.22, p < .001$), learning ability/disability ($t_{316} = 3.77, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.79, p < .001$), psychological ability/disability ($t_{317} = 4.47, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -5.06, p < .001$), physical ability/disability ($t_{316} = 3.237, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.22, p < .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{316} = 3.73, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.54, p < .001$), and sexual orientation ($t_{317} = 5.12, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -5.44, p < .001$). These differences are graphically depicted below.

Mean Scores on Disparaging Comments by Students by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



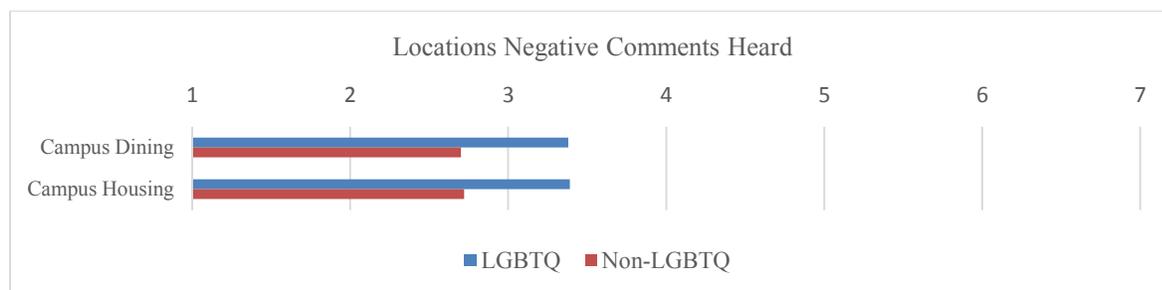
To understand how often students reported hearing disparaging remarks, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “not often” side of the scale. In this case, it should not be surprising that the relative percentages are much higher than for staff or administration, given that students come into contact with students at a much higher rate than they do with staff or administration. Thus, it is not surprising that given a question of frequency, they are likely to report more frequent comments from other students than they will from staff of administration. This comment is not meant to excuse these high numbers, simply to offer a potential explanation for the extreme differences between these percentages and those observed in the data about staff and administration. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

Percent Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Students per Identity Category

	LGBTQ	Non-LGTTBQ
Student remarks about age	31.7%	18.1%
Student remarks about ethnicity/race	42.5%	29.3%
Student remarks about gender	37.5%	16.7%
Student remarks about gender identity/expression	48.3%	16.7%
Student remarks about immigration status	27.5%	14.4%
Student remarks about learning ability/disability	22.5%	11.7%
Student remarks about psychological ability/disability	25.8%	12.5%
Student remarks about physical ability/disability	20.0%	11.2%
Student remarks about religious affiliation	41.7%	22.4%
Student remarks about sexual orientation	50.8%	28.4%

Finally, LGBTQ students were more likely than their counterparts to hear such comments in campus housing ($t_{314} = 3.19, p = .002, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.16, p = .002$) and campus dining facilities ($t_{314} = 3.26, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.06, p = .002$). These differences are graphically depicted below.

Mean Scores on Frequency Negative Comments Heard by Location by LGBTQ Grouping

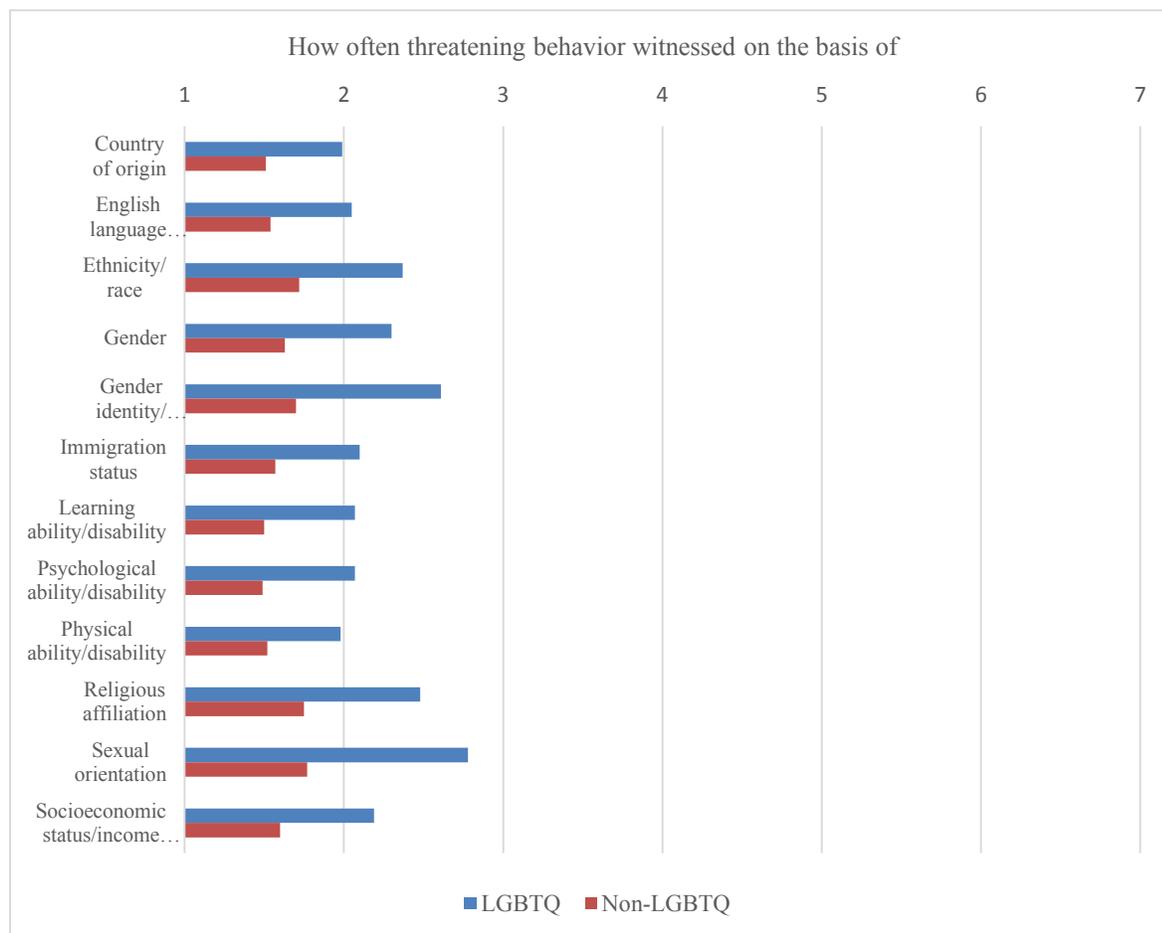


Among the qualitative data, students clearly experienced stereotyping and disparaging comments from other students as well as faculty. In general, students reported that disparaging and negative comments from faculty were more harmful. For example, one student suggested that faculty “create an environment where people think it’s something that it’s okay to do,” with another student referring to faculty behavior as “modeling” for students, such that their disparaging remarks about LGBTQ students carry over to student-student interactions. In other words, participants in the focus groups seemed to feel that faculty comments were more harmful both directly and through their impact to create hostile interactions with other students. One student suggested that, “It’s not that student or faculty interactions are worse, it’s that faculty interactions ought to be preventable... If you’re someone who should be teaching all of these students, you should know not to do that, and you don’t.”

In terms of threatening behaviors on campus, LGBTQ students were more likely than their counterparts to report witnessing threatening behavior on the basis of country of origin ($t_{317} = 3.50, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.67, p < .001$), English language proficiency ($t_{317} = 3.59, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.21, p < .001$), ethnicity/race ($t_{317} = 3.85, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -3.64, p < .001$), gender ($t_{317} = 4.27, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.47, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{316} = 5.11, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -4.80, p < .001$), immigration status ($t_{317} = 3.60, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.17, p < .001$), learning ability/disability ($t_{317} = 4.08, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.61, p < .001$), psychological ability/disability ($t_{317} = 4.14, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.67, p < .001$), physical ability/disability ($t_{317} = 3.40, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.25, p < .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{317} = 4.07, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.56, p < .001$), sexual orientation ($t_{317} = 5.36, p < .001, \omega^2 = .08; Z = -5.20, p < .001$), and socioeconomic status/income level ($t_{317} = 3.87, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.23, p < .001$). The differences are graphically depicted below. The results on these items may be particularly troubling because 21.5% ($n = 249$) of those responding (all students combined) report witnessing threatening behavior on the basis of sexual orientation at

least somewhat often on campus. Further, 19.4% ($n = 229$) of the total sample report witnessing threatening behavior on the basis of gender identity/expression at least somewhat often on campus.

Mean Scores on Threatening Behavior by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



As with the earlier data, to understand how often students reported witnessing threatening behavior, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “not often” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

Percent Witnessing Threatening Behavior Often per Identity Category

	LGBTQ	Non-LGTBQ
Threatening behavior on the basis of country of origin	4.2%	2.4%
Threatening behavior on the basis of English language proficiency	4.2%	2.7%
Threatening behavior on the basis of ethnicity/race	12.5%	7.1%
Threatening behavior on the basis of gender	10.8%	4.8%
Threatening behavior on the basis of gender identity/expression	17.5%	6.1%
Threatening behavior on the basis of immigration status	4.2%	2.4%
Threatening behavior on the basis of learning ability/disability	5.8%	1.9%
Threatening behavior on the basis of psychological ability/disability	5.0%	2.1%
Threatening behavior on the basis of physical ability/disability	2.5%	2.0%
Threatening behavior on the basis of religious affiliation	12.5%	6.8%
Threatening behavior on the basis of sexual orientation	22.5%	7.8%
Threatening behavior on the basis of socioeconomic status/income	6.7%	4.0%

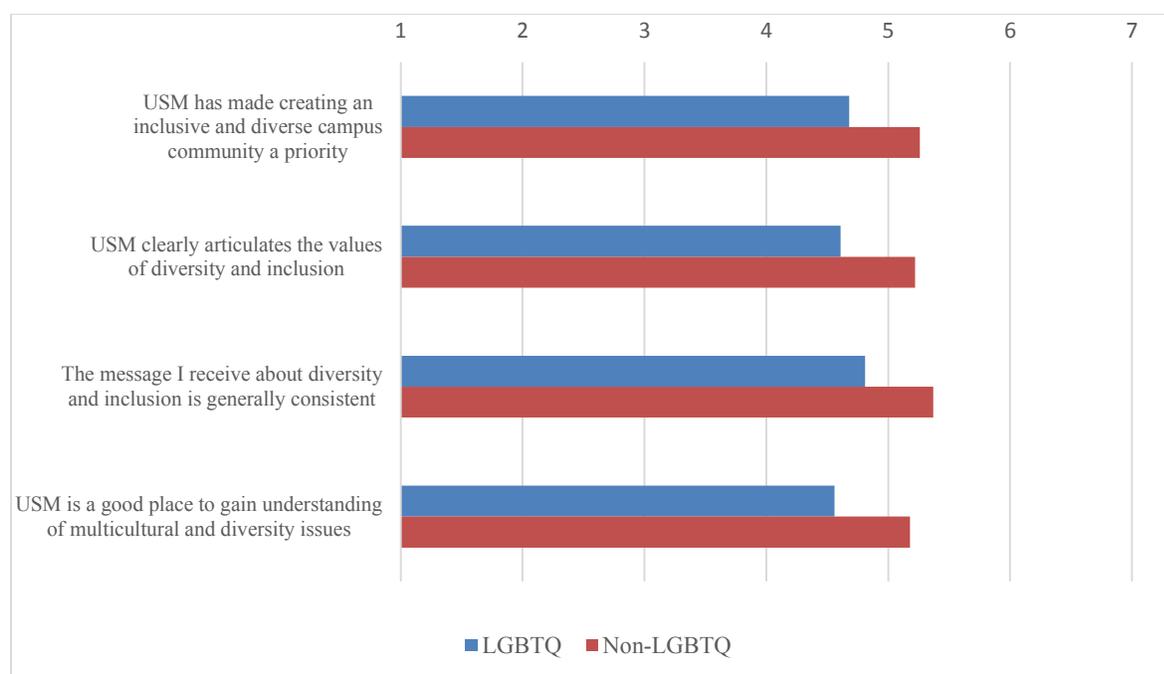
In focus group interviews, the students interviewed did not widely report threatening behavior. Rather, they described a sense of unsafety that gradually arises from an adverse campus climate. One student described it as “a general sense... It’s not just one thing. It’s a lot of microaggressions, and the few times you say something, you’re dismissed, and told it’s not a big deal.” Students describe witnessing small acts of aggression, being pushed, or verbal aggression, and say a feeling of threat arises from the sense that “nothing will be done about it.” It is worth noting that these experiences are not universal among LGBTQ students, with one student suggesting, “my experience is totally the opposite,” involving almost exclusively positive interactions and feelings of safety on campus.

LGBTQ Students’ Views about Campus

LGBTQ students were less likely to agree that USM had made an inclusive campus community a priority, with 39.2% of LGBTQ students on the disagree side of the rating scale, versus 23.2% of their counterparts ($t_{317} = -3.66, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.06, p < .001$). This item mirrored that of whether USM articulates values of diversity and inclusion, on which

LGBTQ students were less likely to agree (40% disagreed) than their counterparts (24.3% disagree; $t_{317} = -3.64, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.34, p < .001$). LGBTQ students also responded more negatively to whether they received a consistent message from USM about inclusion and diversity ($t_{319} = -3.48, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.83, p < .001$). On that item, 40% of LGBTQ students disagreed, compared with 21.7% of their counterparts. This is again mirrored in whether USM is a good place to gain an understanding of multicultural and diversity issues, with LGBTQ students more apt to disagree ($t_{318} = -3.60, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.25, p < .001$). Among LGBTQ students, 43.3% disagreed, versus 24.4% of their counterparts. Means for these items are graphically displayed below.

Mean Scores for Perception of Campus by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



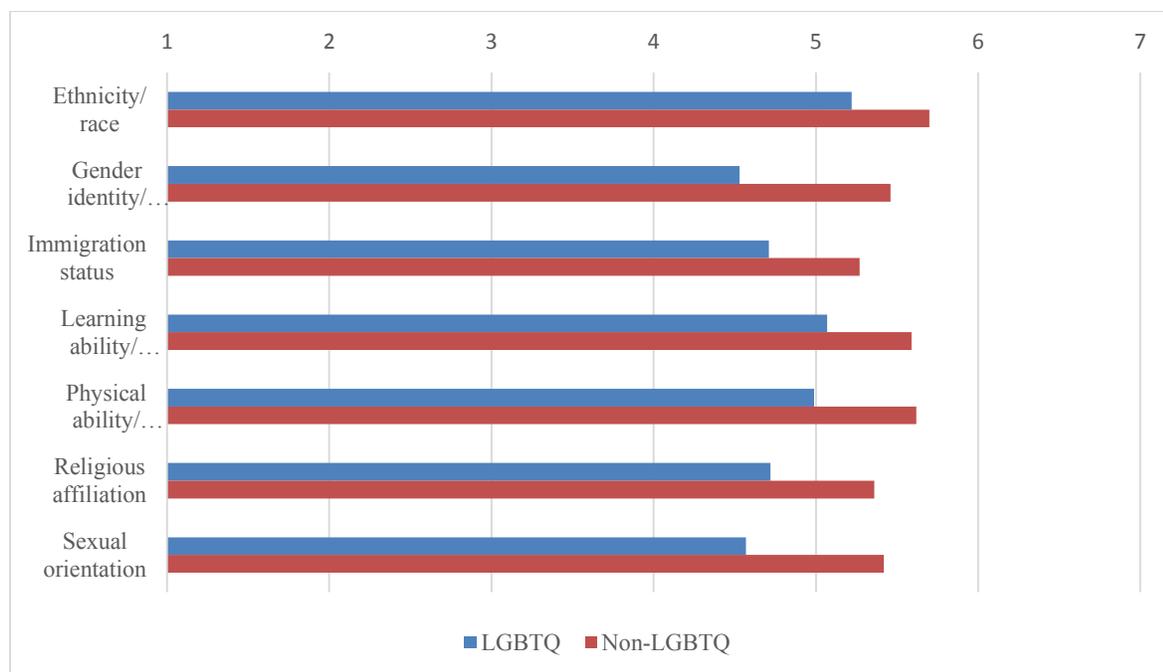
These results are perhaps best contextualized within the results of another item. Overall, 39.4% of students rated on the “agree” end of the scale on whether a diverse and inclusive campus environment played a role in their decision of which university to attend ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.92$). In other words, almost 4 out of 10 students considered the diversity and inclusiveness of a campus environment prior to attending USM, making the gap on these items a recruitment and retention issue.

In focus group interviews, LGBTQ students seemed to value diversity in classes and in student activities. They describe their decision to attend USM as related to diversity and inclusiveness, with some explaining that they looked for nondiscrimination statements or

LGBTQ-inclusive advertising prior to attending. One student explained that when there is an instance of bias or discrimination, it is talked about and the incident passed on verbally for some time by word-of-mouth. This serves as both a warning about a particular instructor, physical space on campus, or student group/club, as well as a way of commiserating about shared experiences. Participants explained that some of the talk from other students was simply ignorant, but hurtful, language, like encouraging someone to “stop acting so gay.”

In general, LGBTQ students seemed to view the USM campus as a less supportive environment for a range of students, including themselves. They rated USM as significantly less supportive than their counterparts for students on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{319} = -3.29, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.62, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{316} = -5.22, p < .001, \omega^2 = .08; Z = -5.06, p < .001$), immigration status ($t_{317} = -3.49, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.34, p = .001$), learning ability/disability ($t_{317} = -3.47, p = .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.14, p < .001$), physical ability/disability ($t_{316} = -4.20, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.81, p < .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{316} = -3.61, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.43, p < .001$), and sexual orientation ($t_{317} = -4.76, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -4.71, p < .001$). A graphical depiction of these differences is below.

Mean Scores of USM as Supportive by Item by LGBTQ Grouping



As with the data on on-campus experiences, to understand how often students reported hearing disparaging remarks, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “disagree” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “agree” side of the scale. These are

reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who rated “somewhat disagree” or lower on the item.

Percent Disagreeing Whether USM is Supportive per Identity Category

	LGBTQ	Non-LGTBQ
Supportive on the basis of ethnicity/race	25.8%	17.0%
Supportive on the basis of gender identity/expression	48.3%	26.1%
Supportive on the basis of immigration status	50.0%	35.7%
Supportive on the basis of learning ability/disability	33.3%	21.8%
Supportive on the basis of physical ability/disability	39.2%	21.1%
Supportive on the basis of religious affiliation	41.7%	24.7%
Supportive on the basis of sexual orientation	44.2%	26.1%

LGBTQ students explained in interviews that feeling as though there was a lack of “supportive structures and institutions” lead to increased levels of unsafety and unease on campus, and ultimately lead to lowered self-esteem and identification with the university. As one student explained, “I don’t think the university is inherently anti-anything... I just don’t think it has the institutions in place to promote the kind of thinking on campus that would prohibit [a discriminatory] atmosphere.” In other words, the students did not experience USM as an anti-LGBTQ institution, per se, but rather as an institution that lacked appropriate resources, policies, and structural components to create an atmosphere that is affirming for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans*, and queer students. That lack, then, created the space for bias and discrimination to occur in the absence of affirming and supportive spaces, policies, and practices.

Discussion of LGBTQ Results

The results indicate a wide array of ways in which LGBTQ students find the USM campus unsupportive and, in some cases, might experience it as hostile (i.e., they are more likely to experience assault and harassment on campus than are others). We elected to pursue a comparative strategy in this analysis out of the feeling that allowing the predominant group to assess whether a potentially marginalized group was being supported was ineffective. Those subject to bias, discrimination, and negative on-campus experiences are most likely to be able to report them. So, we chose to center the experiences of LGBTQ students in this analysis by highlighting how their perceptions and reported experiences are different from their counterparts. What emerges is a clear picture: On average, LGBTQ students view the campus as less

supportive, employees and students as more likely to make negative comments or enact threatening behavior, and the administration as less interested in diversity and inclusiveness. Given that close to 40% of the USM students sampled agreed that diversity and inclusion are part of the decision in which college to attend, these findings present a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is obvious – USM must become a more supportive environment for LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty. This is a challenge because it must be accomplished in a political and cultural atmosphere that is not always amenable to such inclusiveness, and because creating services may involve expense. But it is an opportunity because of the ways in which a diverse, inclusive environment benefits all students, and the potential link to retention and recruitment demonstrated by these data.

USM does some things currently, and is working to improve on those assets. For example, an Allies/safe space training already exists, and is currently in the process of being improved, revised, and expanded. However, no LGBTQ resource center exists on campus. Student groups that do exist (i.e. the Gay Straight Alliance, and the Alliance for Equality) could be more effective with more support and visibility. This is based on several students mentioning in the open-ended data that they wished USM had a GSA, and that they would attend if one existed. Although residence life staff mention there is a way of working with trans* students, no written trans* inclusive housing policy can be found on the USM website. Creating such a policy, and housing it in a website that is easily found and used by current and prospective LGBTQ students would be a positive step. LGBTQ scholarships have been created on the Coast campus, but not yet in Hattiesburg. Gender-inclusive bathrooms are rare on either campus. Students are not, at present, required to undergo any education regarding issues of sexual orientation or gender diversity. Neither are faculty or staff. However, training is in the process of being rolled out for coming academic years, which might make a difference. The experiences of this research team would suggest more training, and broader exposure to diverse student groups, would be helpful for campus police as well. There are a number of simple, straightforward steps that might greatly benefit the campus climate for LGBTQ students, and ultimately help position the university more competitively to recruit and retain these students, who make up 9% of the student body, at least in the present sample.

Women's Experiences on the USM Campus

With Contributing Author: Ann E. Blankenship, Ph.D.

Women's Experiences in Higher Education: Historical Context

Women have long struggled for an equal place in education in the United States, particularly in colleges and universities. During colonial times, higher education was limited to those entering elite "male" professions, such as law, teaching, or ministry. (Roby, 1972). While women had some access to elementary literacy and basic arithmetic, they were generally excluded from formal education. The education that they did receive was largely focused on training women for their role as wives, mothers, and household managers (McClelland, 1992). Private academies for girls began to emerge at the end of the 18th century; in the 1830s and 1840s, common elementary schools brought girls to school in larger numbers (McClelland, 1992). During this same time period, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, women were able to break into a few professions, including teaching, nursing, social work, librarianship, and "other professions which became associated with 'women's work'" (McClelland, 1992, p. 41; Roby, 1972). By 1850, nearly 90 percent of the 200,000 teachers in the United States were women (Roby, 1972).

Once women entered the workforce in greater numbers, albeit only in specific, "appropriate" professions and only prior to marriage, women required some additional education. Some two-year women's seminaries were opened to train women for marriage and household management primarily, and to train teachers secondarily. When these seminaries did not produce enough teachers, states (primarily in the Northeast) opened their own normal training schools exclusively for women (Roby, 1972).

Prior to 1861, women could obtain a full four-year degree at ten institutions in the United States. Other institutions refused to open their doors to women for four-year degrees until the financial pressured generated by the Civil War and declining male enrollment forced them to do so (Roby, 1972). For example, the University of Wisconsin began admitting women to its normal school in 1860 and by 1863 female enrollment surpassed male enrollment. As a result, the University reorganized so that all departments could admit men and women equally (Roby, 1972).

Economic demands pushed the cause for women in higher education forward. Particularly in the west, institutions could no longer afford to educate men and women separately

(Roby, 1972; Woody, 1966). In areas of the northeast, where there was greater financial support for the women's education movement, coeducational opportunities often were secured by benefactors. The number of coeducational and higher quality all-women educational opportunities expanded through the end of the nineteenth century.

Between 1910 and 1930, World War One and increased industrial production brought more women into the white-collar workforce (mostly clerical) and into colleges and universities. The number of bachelor's degrees awarded to women rose from 22.7 percent in 1910 to 34.2 percent in 1920 (Roby, 1972). During the next fifty years, women continued to grow in the workforce; however, the percentage of women awarded bachelors and graduate degrees rose only sporadically, with some spikes (largely attributed to the Great Depression and Second World War) but also some declines. For example, after the war ended, fearing a flooded workforce, women were encouraged to return to the home, to a romanticized picture of domesticity. While women became an increasing presence in institutions of higher learning, unfortunately it did not lead to an equalization in pay for women. Instead, the opposite actually occurred; between 1950 and 1970 the wage disparity between men and women's wages increased (Roby, 1972).

Modern Issues with Gender in Higher Education

Over the next decades, cost-of-living increases and economic pressures on institutions of higher learning yielded higher numbers of women in colleges and universities. As of 2009, 59 percent of all college degrees were awarded to women (United States Census Bureau, 2012), with women outnumbering men in the number of Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees (England, 2010; Sandberg, 2013). The number of women earning doctorate degrees increased from 14 percent in 1971 to nearly 50 percent in 2012.

However, while women now outnumber men in many colleges and universities, women still face a variety of challenges, from campus safety issues to post-graduation salaries that still lag behind those of men. For example, it is estimated that between 18 to 25 percent of women in higher educational institutions experience an attempted or completed sexual assault over the course of their college career (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000; Krebs, et al., 2007). Of those women, freshmen and sophomores are at greater risk, as are women incapacitated by drugs and/or alcohol. And a great majority of these attacks go unreported to the police or university authorities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

Furthermore, women entering the workforce, with all levels of education are faced with the reality that they will likely make less than a man doing the same job. In 2013, women working full time in the U.S. made just 78% of what their male counterparts were paid (Glynn, 2014). With nearly two-thirds of mothers bring home at least a quarter of the families earning and 40 percent of mothers with children under 18 being the primary breadwinner, a 22 percent pay gap does not just impact women, it impacts families (American Association of University Women, 2015).

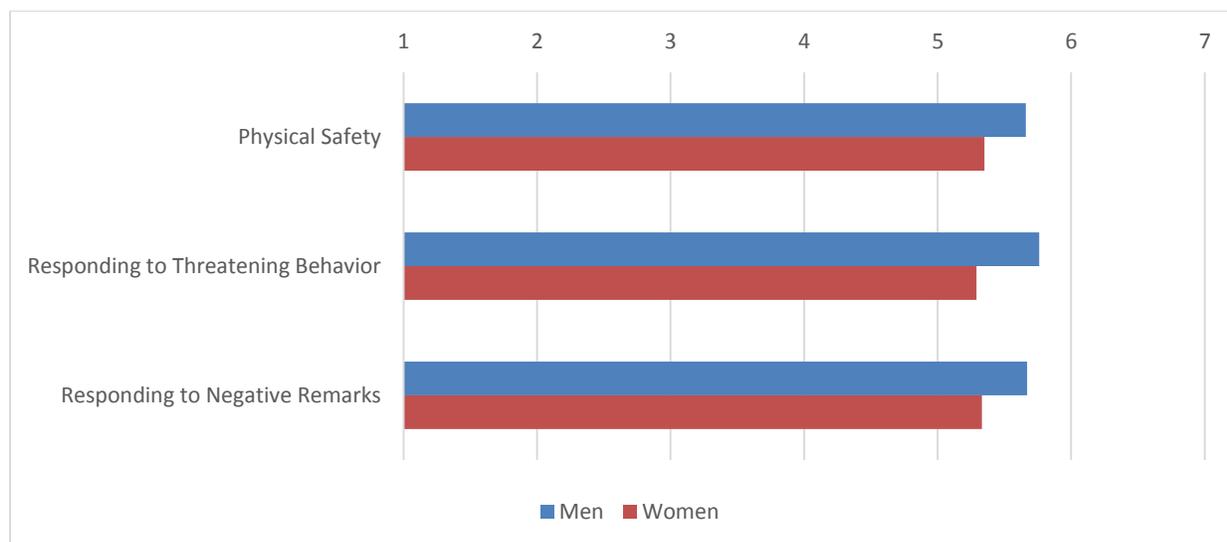
Gender Representation on the USM Campus

Issues of inequality in higher education, both for students and faculty, can be found at USM as well. The USM student body follows a national trend in higher education where women outnumber men, with 63.2% women and 36.8% men (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014a). It is worth noting that USM uses a two-gender reporting system. By contrast, 52.0% of faculty are men, while 48% are women (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014b). However, gender disparity among faculty goes deeper than number hired. Women faculty make, on average, \$4,432 less than men, resulting in 60.2% of the instructional budget being devoted to men. Although women comprise 49.1% of assistant professors, they make up only 40.9% of associate professors, and 28.4% of full professors (Committee for Services and Resources for Women, 2013). Notably, although four of seven Deans are women, all five Vice Presidents, the Provost, and the President are all men.

Results from the USM Campus Climate Survey

In total, there were 823 women and 358 men who participated in the USM climate survey. Women, on average, reported that they felt less physically safe on campus than men ($t_{1135} = 3.85, p < .001, \omega^2 = .01; Z = -4.43, p < .001$). In addition, women, on average, were less confident in knowing what to do if they witness threatening behavior or remarks than were men ($t_{797.21} = 5.09, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -5.46, p < .001$). Finally, women, on average, reported they were less confident in knowing what to do when they hear negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks than were men ($t_{1128} = 3.60, p < .001, \omega^2 = .01; Z = -4.80, p < .001$).

Mean Scores by Gender



The data were split into those who scored reported “agree” or above, versus those who reported “disagree” or below on these items. 20.6% of women fell on the “disagree” end of the scale in terms of feeling physically safe on campus, compared with 15.8% of men. 24.7% of women were on the “disagree” end of the scale for whether they knew what to do if they witnessed threatening behavior or remarks, compared with 14.9% of men. Finally, 24.8% of women rated “disagree” or below as to whether they knew what to do if they heard inappropriate or disparaging remarks, as compared with 18.1% of men. Overall, then, it seems women were likely to feel less safe on the USM campus, and to be less likely to feel confident in their knowledge of how to handle witnessing threatening behavior or disparaging remarks.

In qualitative focus groups, women reported a generalized sense of unsafety on campus that they suggested was not traceable to any one individual event or act. Instead, it seemed to be related to a general culture of objectification and sexualization. For example, several women described being cat-called and verbally harassed while walking on campus, with offensive and sexual comments yelled at them by passersby and drivers on campus roads. Others suggested that there were issues that arise due to misogynistic comments and ‘jokes’ made by professors in the classroom, often used as icebreakers. Other students felt they had lost opportunities or been treated differently by faculty or staff due to their gender, with preferential treatment going to men. The effect of these events, in sum, according to women in the focus groups was to make

them feel uneasy in their position on campus and unsafe even while walking in public campus spaces.

These experiences were not universal, though. Several women reported positive campus experiences and interactions with faculty and staff. Even for those students, though, the lack of female faculty in some subject areas was notable. Students clearly described how visible it was for them when they took courses from different subject areas that there were no women faculty or role models in some fields. In some cases, this lack of women in the department shaped later decisions about course or degree choice.

Reporting and Responding to Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment

One finding from the quantitative data that resonates particularly strongly with the qualitative data is that of women's lack of comfort or assuredness in responding to and reporting gender-based discrimination and harassment. Multiple women across several separate focus groups described having difficulty finding resolution to in-class experiences of misogyny, stereotyping remarks, or inappropriate comments. These included sexist jokes from faculty, faculty members making sexualizing remarks about female students, and making other inappropriate comments about women in class. Students variously reported talking with department chairs, department staff, and college personnel and feeling dismissed, with several being told it "wasn't a big deal" and they were "being irrational" by seeking out a remedy. In six instances reported during focus groups for this study, women described attempting to make complaints to the USM Title IX officer, and being turned away. They were variously told that the faculty member in question was improving and a complaint might be discouraging to the faculty, or that the faculty member was nearing retirement age so a complaint was unnecessary, among other reasons. For the women in this study, the effect of this was universally devaluing. As one student reported, "I got the message that I was less important, less valuable than he was." The women also reported feeling silenced by this experience, and suggested they would be unlikely to report an instance of harassment or discrimination in the future based on the reception they encountered previously.

While there may be legitimate lack of awareness about how and where to report for students on this campus, the problem is surely compounded when those who do know appropriate avenues for reporting (such as the Title IX coordinator) are turned away, devalued, and silenced. Providing students with a safe environment where they know what to do when they

encounter harassment and discrimination has to mean that those charged with enforcing antidiscrimination policies take complaints seriously and follow up on all adverse student experiences.

Discussion of Results

The results based on gender are generally more positive than for other groupings. However, there are troubling results. One striking result is the idea that women are more likely to experience bias than their male counterparts, feel less safe, but also feel less confident in what to do when they experience a negative event on campus. That is – while women are more likely to need to report an event, they are also less likely to know how to do so. This seems like a challenge that USM can readily address – and that addressing provides tangible benefits to students and the institution. However, a step in addressing this challenge must certainly be correcting problems in the Title IX office. The finding that students across multiple focus groups reported being discouraged from filing and/or turned away from filing Title IX complaints is the most troubling finding in this chapter, and the one that must be addressed most quickly for student safety and legal compliance. We recommend a full and independent investigation or audit of the Title IX office.

Other steps are currently underway at USM that may be beneficial, however, in mitigating issues raised in this chapter. Training is also becoming available (and may become mandatory) for faculty and staff. The institution may consider similar training for students, ensuring they know how to report incidents they experience. Doing so would provide a safer environment for students, and direct protection to the institution by ensuring the highest reporting rate possible, and no appearance of making it difficult for victims to report adverse campus experiences. This is particularly important in the case of sexual harassment or assault.

It is worth noting that while women felt less safe on campus, were less confident in their knowledge of how to report incidents, and how to respond to negative remarks, the majority of women and men alike reported a positive impression of campus and a general feeling of safety. This may indicate that initiatives underway on campus are useful, and that, while there is still a gap that needs to be addressed, most seem to have a positive experience. However, the remaining 20.6% of women who feel unsafe on campus clearly indicate that there is much room for improvement as the campus moves forward and makes additional changes in their reporting, training, and other initiatives.

Experiences of Students of Color on the USM Campus

With Contributing Author: Leslie Ann Locke, Ph.D.

Campus Climate, Race and Ethnicity, and Mississippi Higher Education

In Mississippi, education, exclusion, race, and racism have a long history. Desegregating and integrating public schools, at the K-12 level and well as in higher education, in Mississippi were often dangerous endeavors. Black students attempting to integrate White schools were often threatened, assaulted, and sometimes killed (Williams, 2005). Clyde Kennard, who tried to enroll several times at USM in the 1950s, is one such example. Bolton (2005) suggested "... the racial considerations that affected the development of public education over the years continues to cast a long shadow over [Mississippi's] ability to educate its citizens in the twenty-first century" (p. xix).

According to Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (2002), there are several interrelated elements of the college/university institutional context that are important to understanding the climate. These elements include an institution's history of inclusion or exclusion of particular groups; an institution's diversity in terms of representation of various groups; the perceptions and attitudes between and among groups; and the intergroup relations on campus (Hurtado et al., 2002).

An institution's stance on increasing the number of students of diverse racial/ethnic groups sends a message that obtaining a multicultural environment is an institutional objective (Hurtado et al., 2002). However, simply increasing the numbers of racially/ethnically diverse students on a campus is not devoid of problems. Without proactive structuring of aligned multicultural programming, such as ethnic studies programs, diverse student clubs, and perhaps targeted academic support, large numbers of students may not feel as though they are part of the institution. Feeling as though they are an appendage of the institution rather than part of the body, may increase tension and conflict experienced by students, and they may feel less satisfied with the institution.

Anderson (2002) noted that it may be difficult for individuals in institutions to understand how beliefs about race are coupled with the execution of policies and routine behaviors. The dynamic between race, meritocracy, and institutionalized discrimination on campuses is often difficult to identify, particularly as this dynamic can be camouflaged in traditional practices

(Anderson, 2002). Moreover, many faculty may not be aware of their own biases and how these biases may be blatant and/or translated tacitly through their classroom edicts, as well as how they impact their students. While many psychological aspects of the climate of a campus go unreported, “when students feel they are valued and that faculty and administrators are devoted to their development, they are less likely to report racial/ethnic tension on campus” (Hurtado et al., 2002, p. 676).

Racial and Ethnic Diversity at USM

The University of Southern Mississippi is fortunate to be located in a relative diverse area. Mississippi’s population is 59.8% white, 37.4% Black or African American, 0.6% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.0% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 2.9% Hispanic or Latino, and 1.1% two or more races, according to the latest Census estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The USM student body, too, is relatively diverse, with 62.9% white, 27.3% Black or African American, 3.1% Hispanic or Latino, 0.3% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1.2% Asian, and the remaining percent split between other and multiracial (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014a). Other markers are not as promising, however. For example, of the University’s academic departments with full-time instructional faculty, 20.8% have entirely white full-time faculty. Despite the high representation of Black and African American individuals in the state and as students at USM, 37.5% of departments with full-time instructional faculty have no Black or African American faculty. In fact, Black or African American individuals make up only 3.9% of the faculty. People of color, more broadly, make up only 17.3% of the faculty (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014b). That means that, in a state with only 59.8% white population representation, the university has an 83.7% white faculty. Put another way, in a state where 37.4% of the population are Black or African American, 96.1% of the university faculty are not. In other words – there is a lack of diversity among faculty, which may be particularly troubling at an institution that once advertised itself as “Mississippi’s Most Diverse University” – a statement that surely applies only to the student body.

Experiences on the USM Campus

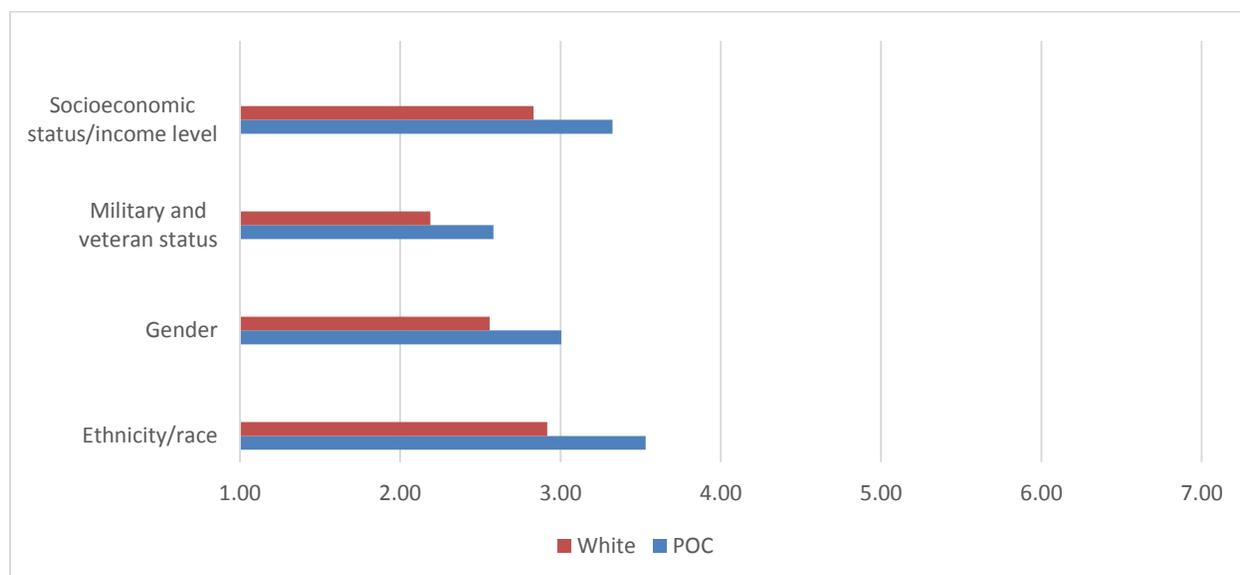
In focus group interviews, participants variously described the experience of attending USM as a student of color as “a struggle,” “a journey,” and “work.” One student explained that, “coming to a predominantly white university, they expect you to know that you are the minority, and it’s not going to be catered to you. But in actuality, you are people.” Students described a

number of experiences of feeling the need to “change” or “conform” parts of themselves to achieve academically or become part of campus social life.

One example that was a frequent theme was that of changing speech patterns. Several students described instances of having more success getting help from instructors while “talking white.” A student describes this experience, saying, “You can see that it affects certain professors because even if you don’t know the professor, just based on how you talk, you get this atmosphere that they think negatively about this person. They think that this person is going to turn in this kind of work, and this is what they’ll amount up to. It’s this kind of atmosphere, and you can see the other person get beat up about that.” Beyond simple speech patterns, students of color described developing “façades” for dealing with different groups of people, and having to rapidly switch styles of speech and behavior. As one student put it, “you shouldn’t have to change so much of who you are just to get what you need out of college.”

Students of color, on average, reported that someone is more likely to experience bias on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{661} = 5.22, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.77, p < .001$), gender ($t_{685} = 4.09, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.83, p < .001$), military and veteran status ($t_{661} = 4.02, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.64, p < .001$), and socioeconomic status/income level ($t_{665} = 4.40, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.059, p < .001$) than their counterparts, as depicted in the following graph.

Mean Scores for Likelihood to Experience Bias, Discrimination, and/or Prejudice on Various Identities



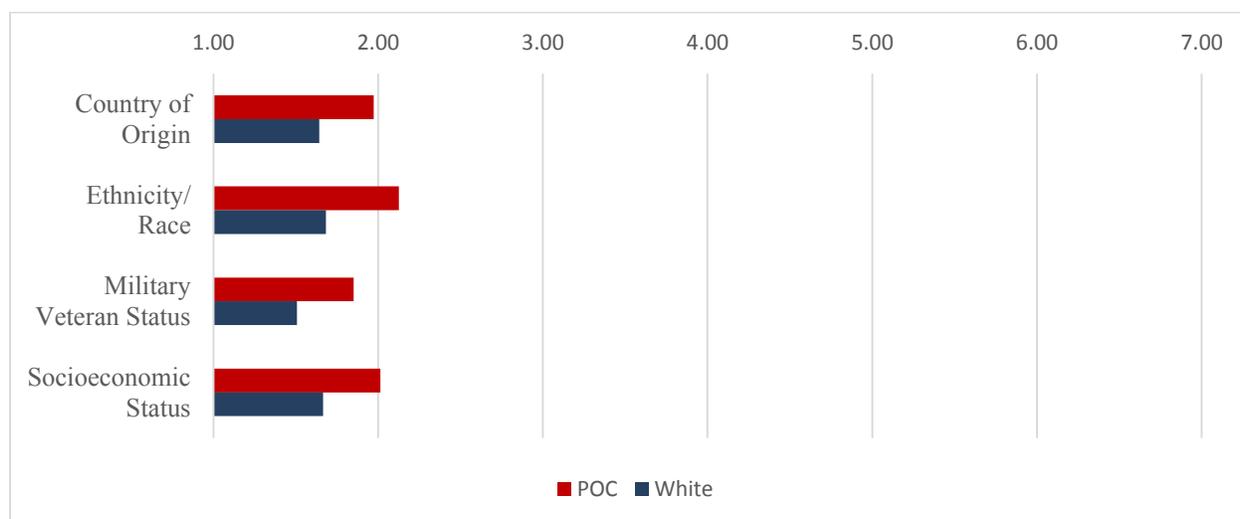
To understand how likely students feel certain groups on campus are to experience bias, discrimination, and/or prejudice, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “likely” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “unlikely” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported somewhat likely or more.

Percent Likely to Experience Bias, Discrimination, and/or Prejudice per Race Categories

	White Students	Students of Color
On the basis of socioeconomic status/income level	17.2%	28.5%
On the basis of military and veteran status	7.4%	12.8%
On the basis of gender	16.1%	22.7%
On the basis of ethnicity/race	22.3%	35.5%

Students of color, on average, reported were more likely than their counterparts to report hearing staff make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks on the basis of country of origin ($t_{622} = 3.76, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.72, p < .001$), on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{615} = 4.72, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.69, p < .001$), on the basis of military and veteran status ($t_{595} = 4.19, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.94, p < .001$), and on the basis of socioeconomic status/income level ($t_{625} = 3.82, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.48, p < .001$).

Mean Scores on Hearing Staff Make Disparaging Comments



Again, to understand how often students reported hearing disparaging remarks, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on

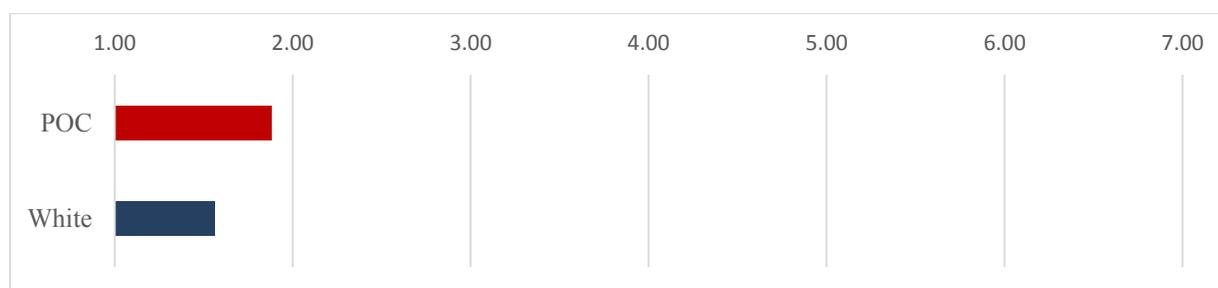
the “not often” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

Percent Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Staff per Race Category

	White Students	Students of Color
Staff remarks about country of origin	3.2%	7.0%
Staff remarks about ethnicity/race	4.9%	9.9%
Staff remarks about military and veteran status	1.4%	4.8%
Staff remarks about socioeconomic status/income	3.9%	8.3%

When asked similar questions related to campus administration, students of color, on average, reported more often than did their counterparts hearing campus administrators make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{602} = 3.73, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.89, p < .001$) as depicted in the following graph.

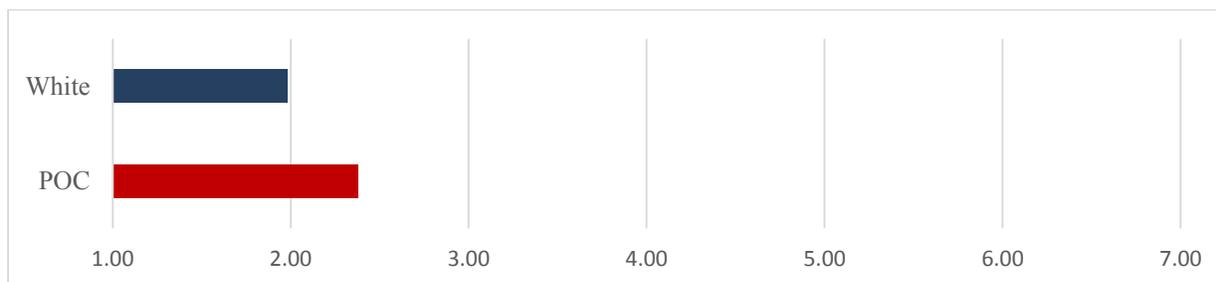
Mean Scores on Hearing Campus Administrators Make Disparaging Comments on the Basis of Ethnicity/Race



When reporting hearing campus administrators make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks on the basis of ethnicity/race, 5.6% of students of color rated on the “often” end of the scale, compared to 1.9% of white students,

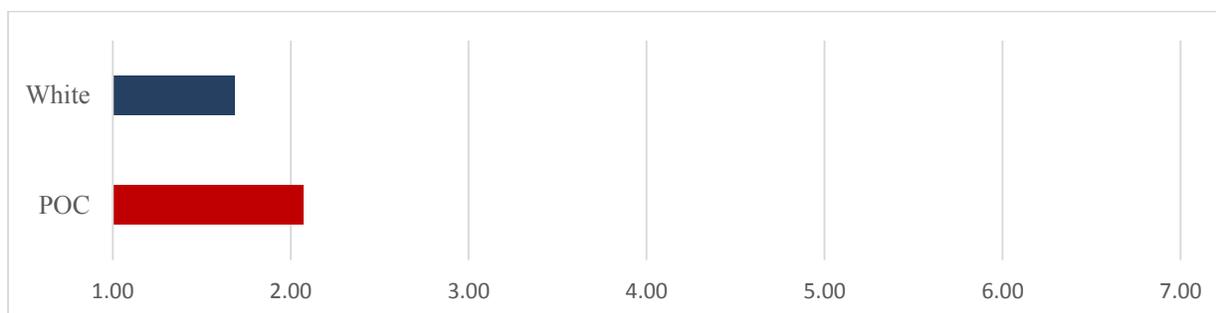
When asked about hearing other students make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks, the only statistically significant difference between students of color and white students was hearing other students make negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks on the basis of military and veteran status ($t_{634} = 3.99, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.62, p < .001$) as shown graphically below. For this item, 11.1% of students of color rated on the “often” end of the scale, compared to 5.5% of white students.

Mean Scores on Hearing Other Students Make Disparaging Comments on the Basis of Military or Veteran Status



Regarding location, students of color, on average, reported hearing negative, inappropriate, stereotypical or disparaging remarks in faculty offices more often than did white students ($t_{605} = 4.23, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.84, p < .001$). Overall, 7.2% of students of color rated on the “often” end of the scale, compared to 2.9% of white students.

Mean Scores on Hearing Disparaging Comments in Faculty Offices



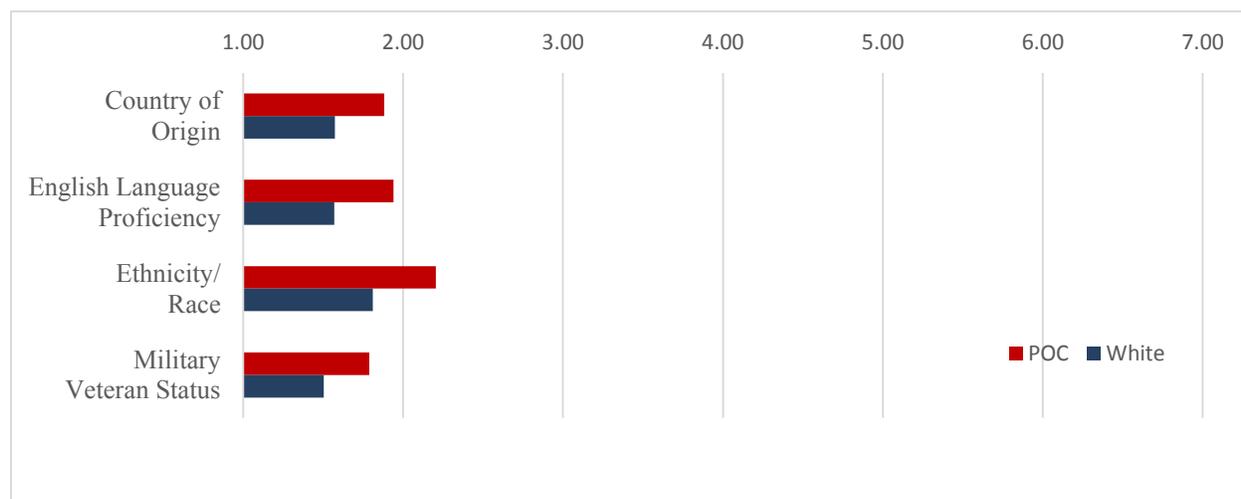
In terms of threatening behavior, students of color were more likely than white students to report witnessing threatening behavior on the basis of country of origin ($t_{626} = 3.64, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.26, p < .001$), on the basis of English language proficiency ($t_{594} = 4.25, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.49, p < .001$), on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{631} = 3.91, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.17, p < .001$), and on the basis of military and veteran status more often than did their counterparts ($t_{615} = 3.56, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.01, p < .001$).

In focus group interviews, students of color reported that although they heard inappropriate, racist, or otherwise biased remarks, they were hesitant to say anything or speak up. On the one hand, there is a feeling that “we look crazy because when we go and complaint about it we look like the angry Black person.” Among interview participants, the experience of being dismissed or treated as “angry” or “irrational” on raising concerns about biased remarks or behavior was commonplace. On the other hand, student also seemed to feel that individuals in

administration were unlikely to recognize racial bias themselves. In the words of one participant, “when you have someone who has white privilege, they might be totally blind to what is really going on.” Still, students in interviews largely believed that “open dialogue” and “honest conversation” were keys to creating common ground and undoing bias.

In one striking incident of how white privilege might blind and instructor to his/her own actions and the potential harm they inflict on students of color in the course, an instructor used a racial slur as an example of unprofessional communication. Although it is clearly true that professional communication should not include racial slurs, the utterance of the racial slur by a white instructor was taken by students as a sign of bias, and led to other white students jokingly using the slur after the class, resulting in further injury to students of color. In other words – although the instructor likely had no racist intent behind the use of the slur, the end result of the use was to create an atmosphere where at least some students of color felt unsafe, and were subjected to further use of the racial slur by students for an extended period. The instructor was likely unaware of this possible consequence when constructing the class example, but should reasonable be aware through coming to understand his/her own privilege and how teaching can impact student sense of safety and climate.

Mean Scores on Witnessing Threatening Behavior



Again, to understand how often students reported witnessing threatening behavior, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “not often” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments somewhat often or more.

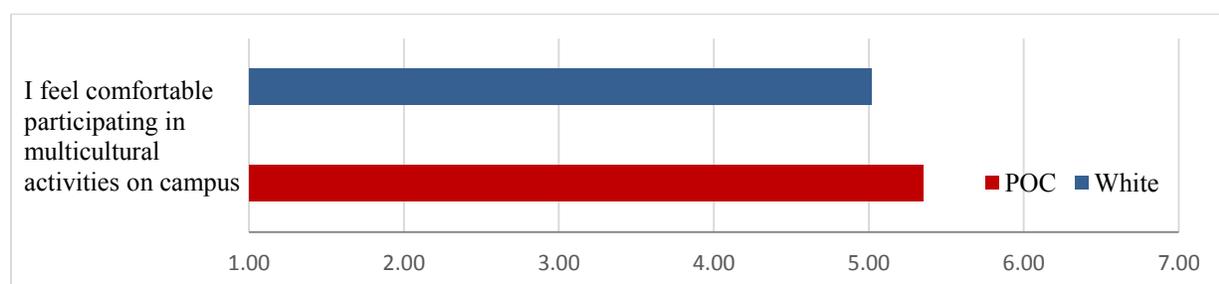
Percent Witnessing Threatening Behavior per Race Category

	White Students	Students of Color
On basis of country of origin	2.3%	4.1%
On basis of English language proficiency	1.9%	5.4%
On basis of ethnicity/race	6.9%	10.5%
On basis of military and veteran status	1.0%	2.7%

When asked about where students have witnessed threatening behavior or comments, results were significantly different for campus offices and faculty offices. Students of color, on average, reported having witnessed threatening behavior or comments in campus offices ($t_{610} = 3.61, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.90, p < .001$) and in faculty offices ($t_{616} = 3.54, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.01, p < .001$) more often than white students. For both campus and faculty offices, 2.4% of students of color rated on the “often” end of the scale, compared to 1.1% of white students.

Regarding participation in multicultural activities on campus, students of color were more comfortable, on average, than their counterparts ($t_{851} = 4.22, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.77, p < .001$) as depicted in the following graphic. Data were dichotomized by those who scored on the “agree” end of the Likert scale and those who scored on the “disagree” end of the Likert scale to understand how many students were comfortable participating in multicultural activities as USM. Whereas only 29.2% of students of color rated on the “disagree” side of the scale for this item, 40.9% of respondents who did not identify themselves as a student of color rated on the “disagree” side of the scale for this item.

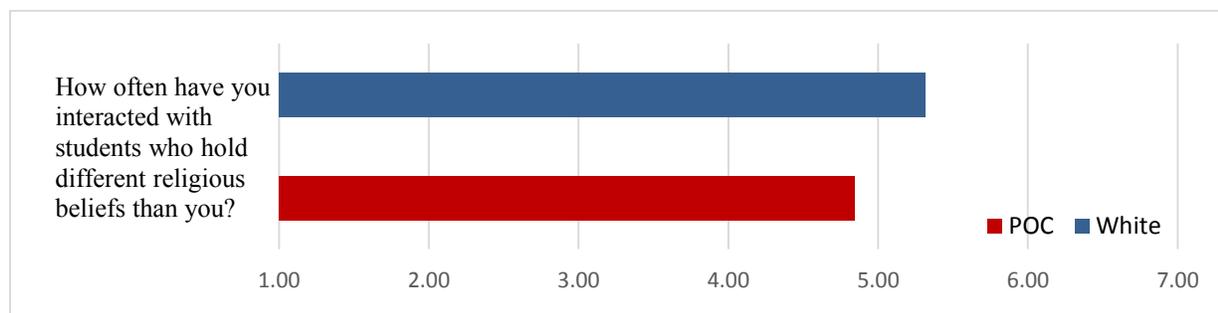
Mean Scores on Comfort Participating in Multicultural Campus Activities



We found significant differences between students of color and other students on items related to interacting with other students. On average, students of color reported interacting with

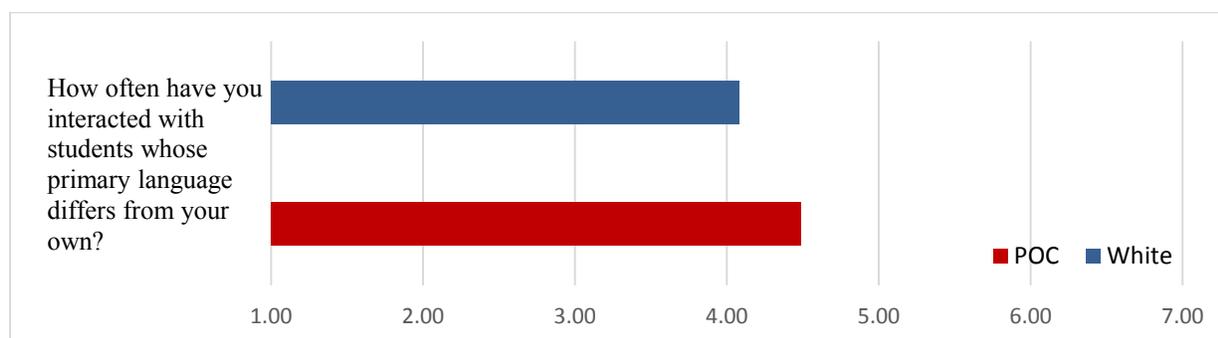
students holding different religious beliefs than them less often than their counterparts ($t_{1124} = -5.03, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.89, p < .001$). Differences in responses are depicted graphically below. Data for this item were dichotomized by those who scored on the “rarely” end and of those who scored on the “often” end of the Likert-type scale. The findings indicate 37.4% of students of color rated on the “rarely” end of the scale, compared to 28.8% of white students.

Mean Scores on Interaction with Students of Different Religious Beliefs



When interacting with students whose primary language differed from their own, however, students of color, on average, reported interacting more often than their counterparts ($t_{1124} = 3.78, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -7.493, p < .001$). Dichotomized data indicate a minority of students of color, 44.7%, rated on the “rarely” end of the scale, whereas a majority, 54.5%, of white students rated on the “rarely” end of the scale.

Mean Scores on Interaction with Students of Different Primary Language

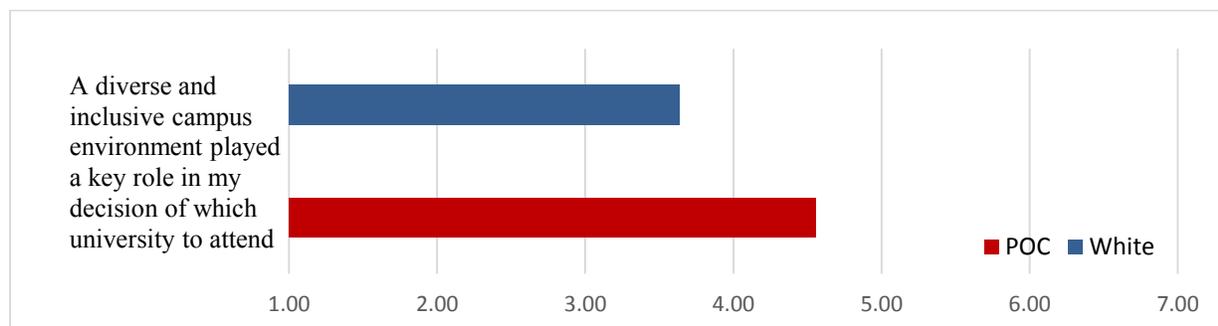


Views Regarding Campus Climate

For students of color, a diverse and inclusive campus environment played a role in their decision as to which university to attend more often than for their counterparts ($t_{1125} = 7.823, p < .001, \omega^2 = .01; Z = -3.89, p < .001$). More than half of students of color, 54.2%, rated on the

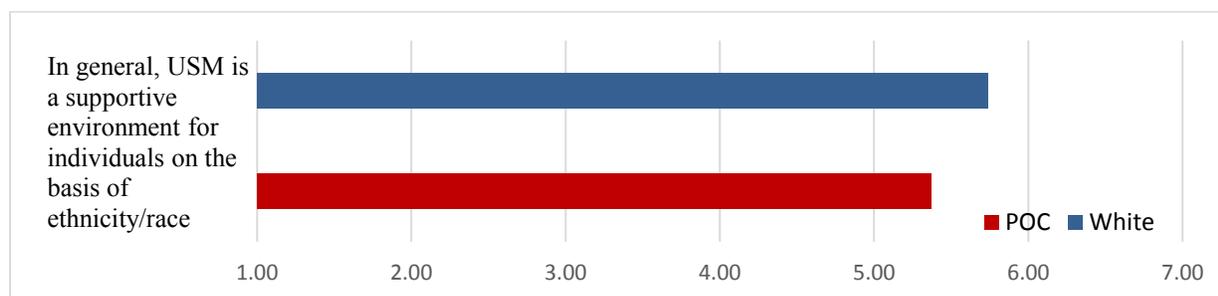
“agree” end of the scale, but less than one-third, 32.4%, of white students rated on the “agree” end of the scale.

Mean Scores on Importance of Diversity/Inclusiveness in Choice of University



Students of color, on average, view USM as a less supportive environment on the basis of race/ethnicity than do their counterparts. ($t_{677} = -4.33, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.75, p < .001$). Among students of color, 25.2% rated on the “disagree” end of the scale, compared to 15.6% of white students.

Mean Scores on USM as Supportive on the Basis of Race/Ethnicity



Discussion of Results for Students of Color

These results make clear that the campus climate at USM is generally more negative for students of color than it is for their white counterparts. Qualitative data clarify the numerous ways in which students of color experience USM as a place where they are expected to conform. They hear racial slurs in classrooms, are asked to change their style of speech, and feel that it is a challenging place to study. However, the challenges described in the data are not insurmountable. Instructional faculty should be trained in the privilege and oppression, and how their own instructional actions can further marginalize students. Training instructors not to use certain terms is one thing, but helping them understand the impact of their teaching on students’ lives, sense of identity and agency, and future is all the more relevant.

In picking up on a theme from an earlier chapter, when students experience bias, discrimination, racist remarks from faculty, or other related issues, they need a clear course of action to take in order to seek remedy within the university. They also need to have an easy way of accessing that course of action that is not intimidating and that will take them seriously, making them feel valued and protected, rather than dismissed and invisible.

The idea that students of color feel they must change themselves in order to be accepted as valued individuals at USM is unfortunate and unacceptable. Diversity of background, culture, speech style, clothing style, income level, academic background, and any number of other factors enhance the classroom experience, rather than harm it. Students in focus groups clearly had the idea that in their careers they will encounter a wide variety of people and need to work with them harmoniously, and think of USM as a preparation for that experience. For USM to truly be such a preparation, it must embrace diversity instead of attempting to whitewash the various cultures, subcultures, ethnic groups, dialects, speech patterns, styles, and other forms of expression that are embodied in the students who enroll.

Students with Disabilities' Experience on Campus

With Contributing Author: Yen To, Ph.D.

Disability Services in Higher Education and at USM

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) increased protections for students with disabilities in the secondary educational system. These protections were designed to provide free and appropriate public school education for students with disabilities in the same environment as their non-disabled peers. The mandates included the use and support of multidisciplinary teams to plan special education programs, interventions, and services related to students' specific disabilities (Hadley, 2011). However, as students transition away from high school into postsecondary education, their protections become less specific. In the college environment, the only protections (i.e., services, accommodations, accessibility) students with disabilities have are covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the American with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 and the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act (Hadley, 2011; Raue & Lewis, 2011). While federal efforts to ensure equitable access and quality of education to students with disabilities continue, the extension of the protections (i.e., services) currently in place must be sought out on an individual and voluntary basis by students themselves. This requires students notifying their institutions by self-identifying as having a disability, providing documentation of their disability, and requesting the specific services that they may need.

For the purposes of this chapter, students with disabilities include students with a physical and or mental condition that limits functionality in everyday activities such as mobility, communication, navigation, and learning (Raue & Lewis, 2011). The information provided in this chapter only relates to students who have identified themselves in the study as having a disability. On the Hattiesburg campus, the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) serves as the designated institutional unit that verifies students' eligibility for accommodations and works with students to develop and coordinate appropriate disability specific accommodations. One of the goals of the ODA is to communicate with various units and departments across campus to ensure that students that identify as having a disability will have access to university activities (i.e., graduation) and therefore can fully participate in them (ODA, 2015). While the efforts of institutional units like USM's ODA strive, "to create a positive campus environment where students with disabilities are encouraged to pursue careers on the basis of personal interest

and ability,” students with disabilities encounter major challenges adjusting to college, take longer to complete their college degrees, and have lower retention rates (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012; Wessel, Jones, Markle, & Westfall, 2009).

An extensive study on students with disabilities at degree-granting postsecondary institutions showed that 88% of all Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions reported enrolling students with disabilities during the 2008-09 academic year (Raue & Lewis, 2011). The same study found that enrollment patterns varied by disability, such that 86% of institutions enrolled students with specific learning disabilities, 79% with Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD, AD/HD), 76% with orthopedic or mobility impairments, and 76% with psychological/psychiatric conditions. In fact, recent estimates indicate as many as 1 in 10 students attending college have some type of reported or unreported disability (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012; Snyder & Dillow, 2012).

Students with disabilities are entering college with the added responsibility of having to self-advocate and be more active in their educational progression as compared to their non-disabled peers. For students with disabilities, the college experience also involves more academic, physical, and attitudinal obstacles (O’Neill, Markward, & French, 2012). Barriers to their college success may include not wanting to self-identify because they believe that they can succeed without accommodations, fear of the social stigma they perceive to be associated with having a disability, not knowing how their disability will affect them in college under new classroom and testing situations (Hadley, 2011), or lack of knowledge about the services available to them (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, & Trice, 2012). These barriers coupled with known additional risk factors such as being a first generation college student (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2012) highlight the need for institutions to enhance accessibility efforts and develop well planned services and accommodations to improve the educational experience for these students.

Across Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions, the most utilized services for students with disabilities include extended exam time (93%), classroom notetakers (77%), faculty provided written notes (72%), study skills (72%), alternative exam formats (71%), and adaptive technology (70%) (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Research has already demonstrated that students with disabilities who seek services perform academically better than their peers who postponed services (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, & Trice, 2012). In addition, services such as

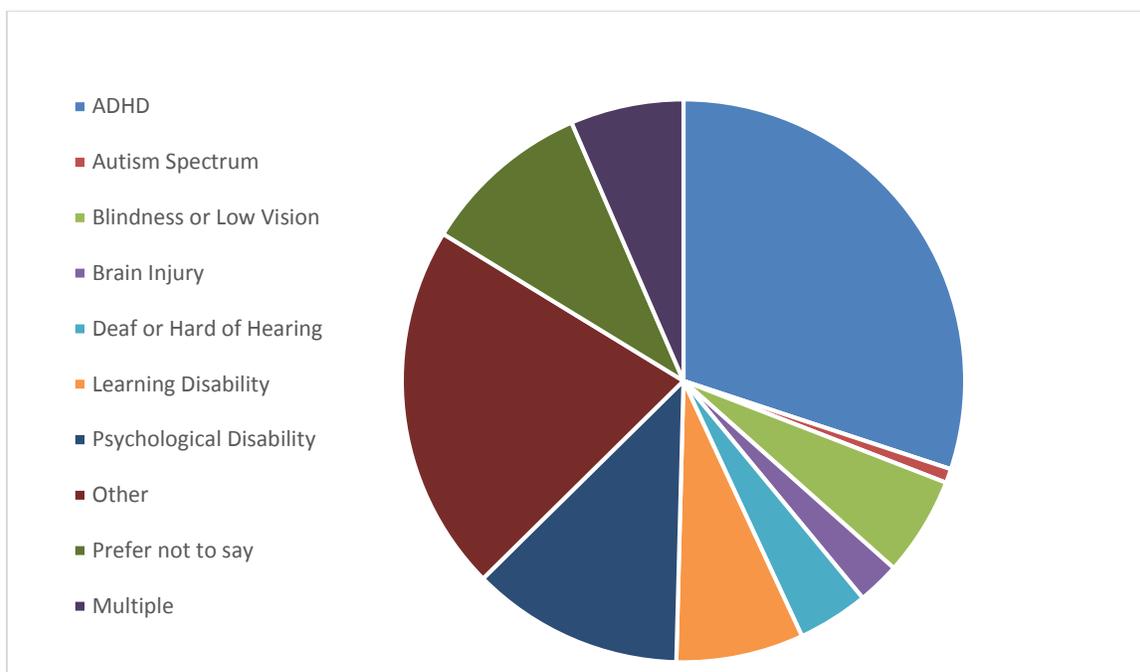
alternative exam formats, study skills, and flexibility in assignment dates have shown to be significant predictors of graduation for students with disabilities (O’Neill, Markward, & French, 2012). In regards to the college experience, students with disabilities who experienced the institution as socially inclusive (i.e., positive faculty relationships), academically inclusive (i.e., intellectual growth and interest), physically accessible, and disability supportive were more likely to persist to graduation (Fichten et al., 2006; Fichten et al., 2014).

Students with disabilities pursue postsecondary education for a variety of reasons and with greater numbers enrolling in college nationwide, institutions are federally charged with meeting these students’ various needs. While legislation has specified campus accessibility as one of those needs, institutions should note that increasing physical access does not equate to enhancing students’ with disabilities college experience. Students’ with disabilities will thrive in supportive campus climates that facilitate academic success through autonomy in services and supports, independence, and social participation (Wilson, Getzel, & Brown, 2000). While the results from the current study provide a descriptive snapshot of students’ with disabilities experience at USM, it is important for administrators to continue efforts that create “a positive campus environment where students with disabilities are encouraged to pursue careers on the basis of personal interest and ability” (ODA, 2015). Some recommendations compiled from recent research on students with disabilities indicate that postsecondary institutions can enhance these students’ college experience and positive outcomes by: 1) Establishing an accepting campus climate, 2) Increasing the awareness and support of faculty and staff, 3) Improving the coordination of academic accommodations, and 4) Providing flexibility in course load and graduation time.

Campus Experiences for Students with Disabilities

Of the students responding to the campus climate questionnaire, 1264 respondents submitted an answer to the question “have you been diagnosed with any disability?”. There were 138 (10.1%) students who answered yes, 1094 (86.6%) who answered no, and 32 (2.5%) who preferred not to answer. Analyses focused on the 1232 (97.5%) students who responded either yes or no to having ever been diagnosed with any disability.

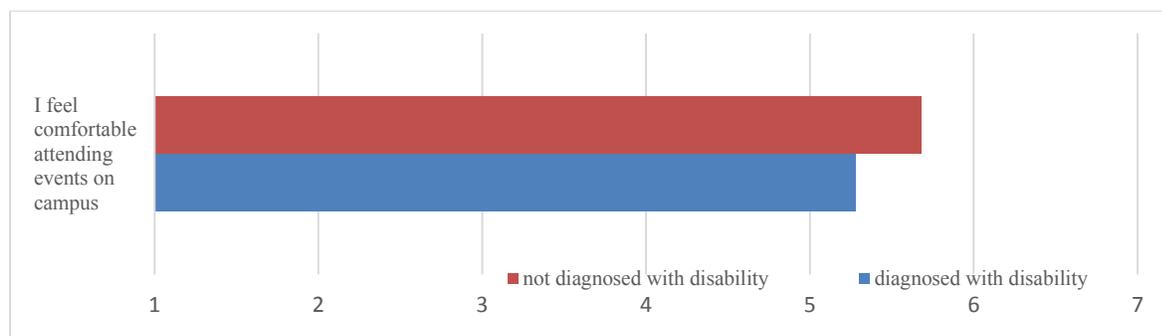
Disability Types Reported



We began by analyzing victimization data. All participants responded as to whether they had ever personally experienced harassment or assault while at USM. Among students diagnosed with any disability, this number was 16.8%, compared with 9.1% in those not diagnosed with any disability. Using a chi-square analysis, we found that there was a statistically significant dependency between diagnosed disability status and victimization ($\chi^2 = 19.29, p < .001$), with students diagnosed with disability overrepresented in the victimized category ($SR = 2.5$).

Independent samples *t*-tests were performed comparing participants who identified as having been diagnosed with any disability and a random sample of 260 respondents that identified as not having been diagnosed with any disability. We also used Mann-Whitney *U* tests to compare those diagnosed with disabilities to the entire sample of those who were not. Between the two groups, there was a significant difference on comfort in attending events on campus ($t_{393} = -3.13, p = .002, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.25, p = .001$). Given the statement “I feel comfortable attending events on campus,” 24.6% of respondents diagnosed with any disability disagreed, while 19.9% of respondents not diagnosed with any disability disagreed with this same statement.

Mean Score for Comfort Attending On-Campus Events by Disability Group



Other items did not show significant differences, but we examined selected items to determine general climate for those with disabilities. Of the respondents diagnosed with any disability, 8% rated their overall experience at USM as poor, and 92% rated it as favorable. When asked specifically about their academic experience at USM, 16.7% of respondents diagnosed with any disability rated their academic experience as poor, and 83.3% rated it as favorable. When asked to rate social experience at USM, 31.2% of respondents diagnosed with any disability rated their social experience as poor, and 68.8% rated it as favorable. Regarding their comfort level at USM, 14.5% of respondents diagnosed with any disability answered uncomfortable when asked “overall, how comfortable are you at USM,” and 68.8% answered comfortable. Comfort levels were similar when asked “overall, how comfortable are you in your department or academic unit.” Of respondents diagnosed with any disability, 13% answered uncomfortable, and 87% answered comfortable. Comfort level in classes was very similar. When asked “overall, how comfortable are you in your classes,” 10.9% of respondents diagnosed with any disability answered uncomfortable, and 89.1% answered comfortable.

Students diagnosed with a disability also found the USM campus generally accessible. Of the students diagnosed with any disability, 91.3% rated the campus as accessible for those with disabilities and 8.7% rated the campus as inaccessible for those with disabilities. These results are encouraging, with most students self-reporting disabilities showing favorable overall attitudes to the USM campus, and reporting it to be accessible, with the only significant difference in comfort attending campus events.

Discussion of Results for Students with Disabilities

Given the relatively low number of significant results discussed in this chapter, it would appear that, in general, USM students with disabilities who responded to the survey experience few differences in their experience of campus climate. Few rated the campus as inaccessible for

those with disabilities, and the only significant difference was that more students with disabilities feel uncomfortable at campus events. This is challenge that needs to be addressed by those planning events on campus, including SMAC, the Division of Student Affairs, as well as student groups, faculty groups, and colleges that organize on campus activities. Ensuring accessibility that is low-burden on the student and reliable may help with this difference.

However, these results must be taken with some caution. Because of the relatively low number of students responding to the survey who self-reported disabilities, physical, psychological, and learning disabilities were analyzed as one group. It may well be that USM does a better job of responding to some disability types than others. For example, not all online courses at USM are accessible for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and transcription of video content for classes is currently left to individual instructors, who may be unable to provide transcription in a timely manner during a course. Not all spaces on campus are accessible, at times because of the age of a building or particular space, and at other times due to maintenance issues. However, even short-term maintenance issues can create very real problems with attending class, engaging in student life, or working with faculty for students with disabilities.

Our recommendation is to proceed cautiously in interpreting the results for students with disabilities too widely or generously, as there are likely some student groups who find campus more difficult to navigate than others. Those differences may have been obscured in the present analysis. Additionally, when considering a welcoming and affirming campus climate, it is necessary to go beyond simply compliance with the law on disability accommodation and accessibility and consider how individuals experience campus as a place where they fit, are welcomed, and can fully participate, or where they are merely ‘accommodated’ to the extent required by federal law.

Experiences for Students of Non-Christian Religious Identities

With Contributing Author: Georgianna L. Martin, Ph.D.

Christian Privilege and Religious Pluralism in Higher Education

College is a time of learning, growth, and development for students along a number of important dimensions. During this time, students are struggling to make meaning of the various aspects of their identity, relationships with others, and quest for purpose (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). One of these dimensions of self is how a student identifies in terms of their religion and/or spiritual faith, or the lack thereof. In the last 20 years, educators have seen a dramatic increase in research on the role of religion and spirituality in higher education and among college students (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2010; Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2005; Love & Talbot, 1999; Mayhew, 2004).

Parks (2000) discussed the college years as a transitional period of constructing an emerging faith for many traditional college aged students. She described faith as “the desire of human beings to live at more than a mundane level, and to make meaning of the whole of life” (p. 20). This process may occur as students begin to ask and seek answers to what Parks termed “big questions” such as: Who and what is trustworthy?, What meaning does my life have?, Is my work meaningful?, What do I care about?, Do I matter in the grand scheme of things?. It is through engagement in questions such as these that those in young adulthood come to discover and struggle with meaning and purpose in life. Processing these larger life questions comes in the form of a religious and/or spiritual quest for some students and it is during this time of uneasiness and questioning that students may seek stability and support (Love & Talbot, 1999).

Students also vary greatly in their religio-spiritual traditions and experiences and the ways in which they tell their stories and make meaning of their experiences comes with them as the move through their own process of faith development (Nash, 2001). Recognizing the diversity of religious narratives students bring with them to college is an important component of ensuring student success for all. Seifert (2007) in particular, highlighted the important role that colleges and universities ought to play in creating a safe and inclusive space for students from non-Christian faith traditions. Using the concept of “Christian privilege”, Seifert noted the ways in which are educational communities are designed and implemented may unintentionally marginalize students from non-Christian religions and students with no religious affiliation. Fostering an environment that encourages difficult dialogue across religio-spiritual traditions and

that promotes no singular faith perspective in public higher education is an important consideration for creating a campus climate that respects and values religious pluralism. How students are met regarding religious and spiritual issues on the college campus is important for their overall growth and success.

Religious Identity at USM

Although respondents were given 39 options for reporting religious affiliation, these 39 options were condensed to two options for analyses: Christian and non-Christian religious identity. Of the 1249 respondents, 912 (73.02%) identified in a Christian category and 337 (26.98%) identified in a Non-Christian category.

Religious Identities Reported in the Sample

Religious Identity	Number	Percent of Sample
Animist	1	0.09%
Agnostic	47	4.00%
Atheist	45	3.83%
Baptist	386	32.85%
Buddhist	11	0.94%
Christian Orthodox	79	6.72%
Evangelical	69	5.87%
Episcopalian	18	1.53%
Hindu	21	1.79%
Islamic	10	0.85%
Jewish	6	0.51%
Latter Day Saints	10	0.85%
Lutheran	10	0.85%
Methodist	67	5.70%
Pagan	2	0.17%
Pentecostal	28	2.38%
Presbyterian	16	1.36%
Roman Catholic	127	10.81%
Seventh Day Adventist	2	0.17%
Shamanist	1	0.09%
Unitarian Universalist	3	0.26%
United Church of Christ	3	0.26%
Wiccan	1	0.09%
Spiritual, no affiliation	52	4.43%
No affiliation	75	6.38%
Other Christian tradition	53	4.51%

Not listed

32

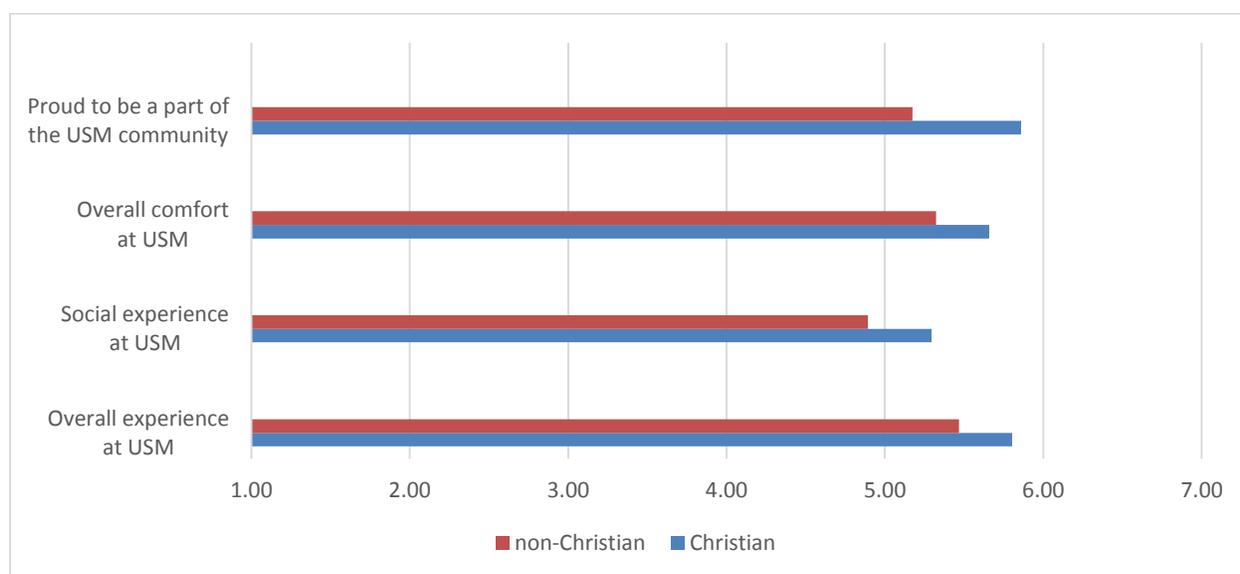
2.72%

Experiences on Campus for non-Christian Students

We began by analyzing victimization data. All participants responded as to whether they had ever personally experienced harassment or assault while at USM. Among the entire sample, 10.34% ($n = 129$) indicated they had experienced harassment or assault. However, among students who identify as Christian, this number was 8.9%, compared with 14.2% in those who identify as non-Christian. Using a chi-square analysis, we found that there was a statistically significant dependency between religious identity and victimization ($\chi^2 = 17.91, p < .001$), with non-Christian students overrepresented in the victimized category ($SR = 2.2$).

Independent samples t-tests were performed comparing a random sample of 670 participants who identified as Christian and the 337 respondents that identified as non-Christian. There was a significant difference on rating of overall experience at USM ($t_{593.78} = 4.93, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.78, p < .001$), on rating of social experience at USM ($t_{1005} = 4.69, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.77, p < .001$), overall comfort at USM ($t_{1004} = 4.71, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.08, p < .001$), and on whether or not students feel proud to be part of the USM community ($t_{548.1} = 7.23, p < .001, \omega^2 = .09; Z = -7.36, p < .001$). Christian students, on average, rated these items higher than did non-Christians.

Mean Score on Campus Experiences at USM by Religious Identity Category



To understand the how often students rated each of the above items on the positive end of the spectrum, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “good,” “comfortable,” or “agree” end of the Likert-type scale, and those who were on the “poor,” “uncomfortable,” or “disagree” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported hearing the comments “good,” “comfortable,” or “somewhat agree” or more.

Percent Campus Experience per Religious Identity Category

	Non-Christian	Christian
Proud to be a part of USM community	71.2%	86.2%
Overall comfort at USM	83.4%	90.0%
Social experience at USM	64.7%	76.6%
Overall experience at USM	89.9%	93.8%

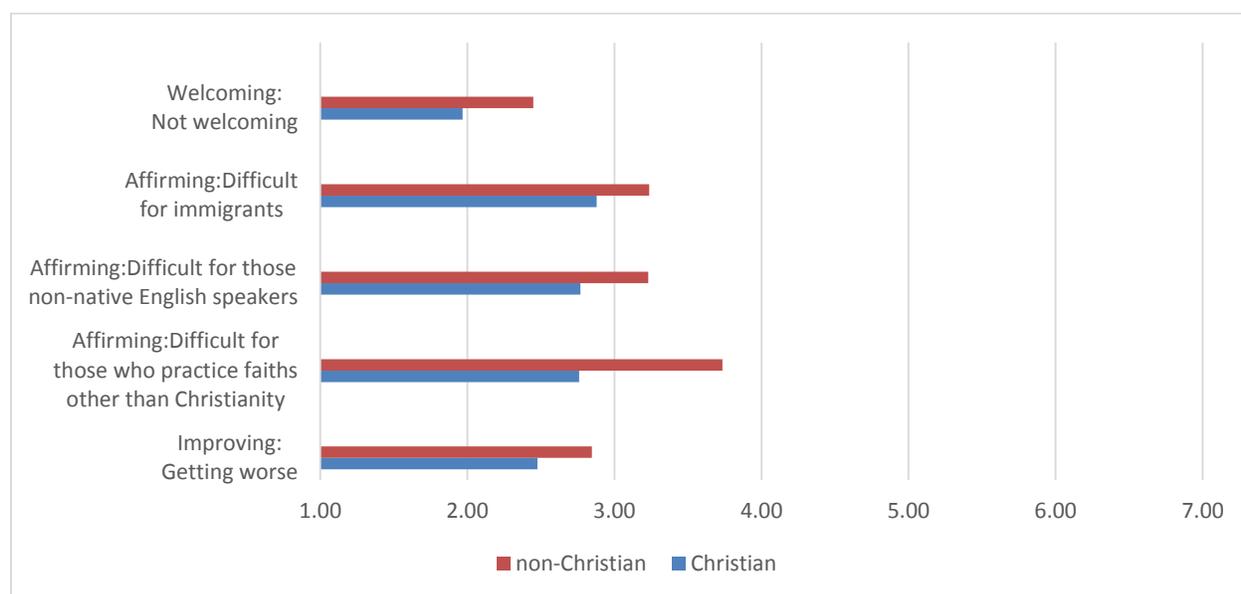
Among focus-group interview participants, students of non-Christian religious identities reported that they felt faculty and staff likely did not consider they existed at all, and presumed Christianity as the norm on campus. One student gave an example of a class where a professor told anti-Semitic jokes with the qualification that the professor “assumed no one would be offended.” In other words, the professor actually verbalized that he/she assumed no Jewish individuals were present, and thus the use of anti-Semitic jokes was acceptable. Other similar instances included classroom references equating Islamic people with terrorists. But beyond these individual instances of blatant bias against individuals of faiths other than Christianity was a more general sense on the part of the students that they were “different” and “didn’t fit”. This included the abundance of student organizations for Christian students, and relative dearth for non-Christian faiths. Students also reported a number of classes felt Christian-centered, to the exclusion of the contributions of individuals from other cultures and faiths. Students of non-Christian faiths often walked away from coursework and student activities feeling their backgrounds and identities were not valued or welcomed as a valid part of educational space or campus life.

Perception of Campus Climate by Religious Identity

Christian respondents were more likely to rate the campus more positively on several dimensions. There was a significant difference on this rating on several dimensions: improving

or getting worse ($t_{1001} = -4.13, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.14, p < .001$, affirming or difficult for those who practice faiths other than Christianity ($t_{539.6} = -8.41, p < .001, \omega^2 = .11; Z = -8.18, p < .001$), affirming or difficult for those non-native English speakers ($t_{611.4} = -4.62, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.77, p < .001$), affirming or difficult for immigrants ($t_{991} = -3.70, p < .001, \omega^2 = .01; Z = -3.59, p < .001$), overall campus environment is welcoming or not welcoming ($t_{571.3} = -5.52, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -5.34, p < .001$). These results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Score for Campus Dimensions by Religious Identity Category



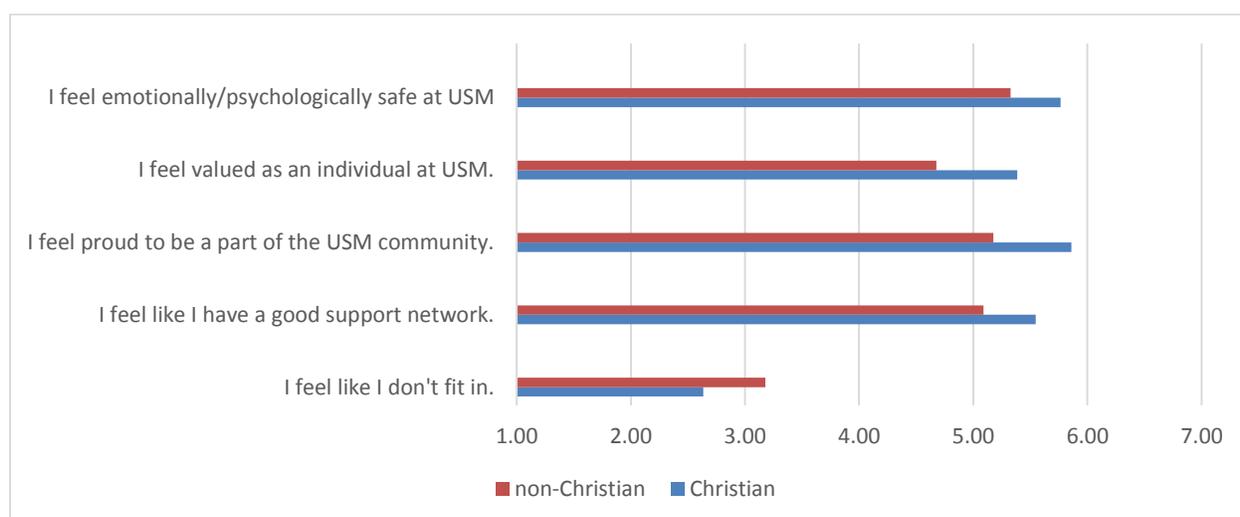
To better understand the how often students rated each of the above items on the positive end of the spectrum, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the positive end of the scale, and those who were on the negative side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported on the positive end of the scale.

Percent for Campus Dimensions by Religious Identity Category

	Non-Christian	Christian
Welcoming	90.5%	96.6%
Affirming immigrants	85.0%	93.5%
Affirming non-native English speakers	83.9%	93.0%
Affirming for those who practice faiths other than Christianity	70.1%	91.2%
Improving	89.9%	92.7%

Similarly, there was a significant difference on whether or not respondents feel like they do not fit in. Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “disagree” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents ($t_{1003} = -5.20, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -5.65, p < .001$). Christian respondents, however, were more likely to rate on the “agree” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents ($t_{1004} = 5.25, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -5.88, p < .001$) when considering whether they have a good support network, whether or not respondents feel valued as an individual at USM ($t_{573.7} = 6.87, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -6.64, p < .001$), and whether or not respondents feel emotionally/ psychologically safe at USM ($t_{547.79} = 4.90, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.27, p < .001$).

Mean Scores on Climate at USM by Religious Identity Category



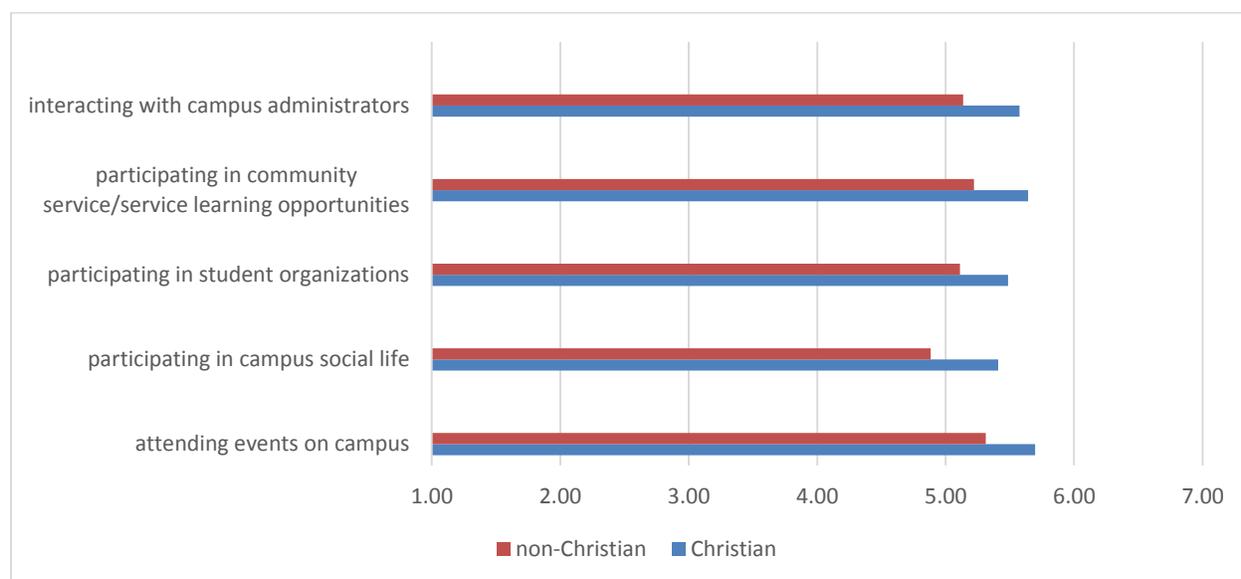
To better understand the how often students agreed with each of the above items, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “agree” end of the scale, and those who were on the “disagree” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported on “somewhat agree” or more.

Percent for Climate at USM by Religious Identity Category

	Non-Christian	Christian
I feel emotionally/psychologically safe	76.0%	86.3%
I feel valued as an individual	61.2%	76.9%
I feel proud to be a part of the USM community	83.9%	93.0%
I feel like I have a good support network	72.1%	82.3%
I feel like I don't fit in	22.0%	18.5%

Christian respondents, on average, were significantly more likely to rate on the “agree” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents when asked to consider whether or not they feel comfortable attending events on campus ($t_{620.93} = 4.51, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.80, p < .001$), whether respondents feel comfortable participating in campus social life ($t_{996} = 5.66, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -5.77, p < .001$), level of comfort participating in student organizations ($t_{996} = 4.27, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.05, p < .001$), whether respondents feel comfortable participating in community service/service learning opportunities ($t_{630.83} = 5.14, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -5.08, p < .001$), and whether respondents feel comfortable interacting with campus administrators ($t_{1001} = 4.95, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.73, p < .001$). These results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Score on Feeling Comfortable by Religious Identity Category



Again, to better understand the how often students agreed with each of the above items, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “agree” end of the scale, and those who were on the “disagree” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported on “somewhat agree” or more.

Percent for Feeling Comfortable by Religious Identity Category

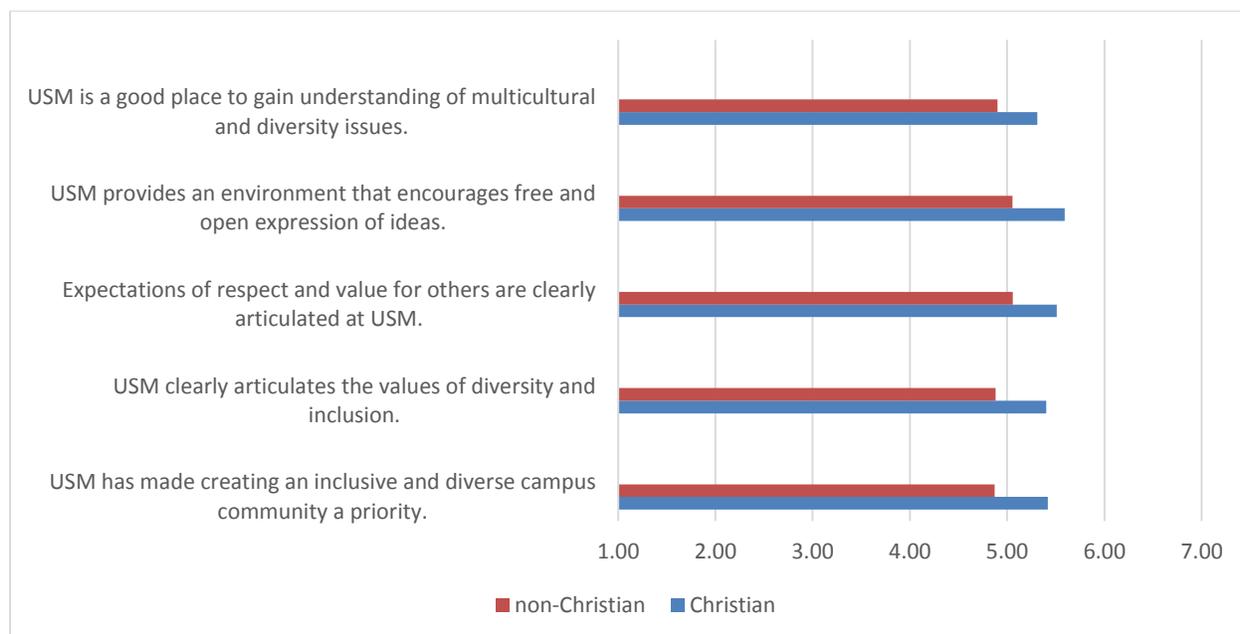
	Non-Christian	Christian
Interacting with campus administrators	69.7%	79.7%
Participating in community service/service learning	65.4%	78.2%

Participating in student organizations	64.1%	73.7%
Participating in campus social life	59.3%	72.4%
Attending events on campus	73.5%	81.9%

When considering interactions with students holding different religious beliefs, the differences were reversed. Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “rarely” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents ($t_{1003} = -5.09, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -6.09, p < .001$). Whereas 34.7% of Christian respondents rated on the “rarely” end of the scale, 23.1% of non-Christian respondents rated on the “rarely” end of the scale.

There was a significant difference between Christian and non-Christian respondents on whether or not USM has made creating an inclusive and diverse campus community a priority ($t_{550.37} = 6.05, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -5.53, p < .001$), whether or not USM clearly articulates the values of diversity and inclusion ($t_{552.85} = 5.45, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.87, p < .001$), whether expectations of respect and value for others are clearly articulated at USM ($t_{569.06} = 4.65, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.22, p < .001$), whether or not USM is a good place to gain an understanding of multicultural and diversity issues ($t_{559.42} = 4.10, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.63, p < .001$), and whether or not USM provides an environment that encourages free and open expression of ideas ($t_{544.39} = 5.56, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.93, p < .001$). Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “agree” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents, and these results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Score on Perception of USM Diversity by Religious Identity Category



Again, to better understand the how often students agreed with each of the above items, we dichotomized the data by those who scored on the “agree” end of the scale, and those who were on the “disagree” side of the scale. These are reported in the table below, with all percentages reflecting those who reported on “somewhat agree” or more.

Percent for Perception of USM Diversity by Religious Identity Category

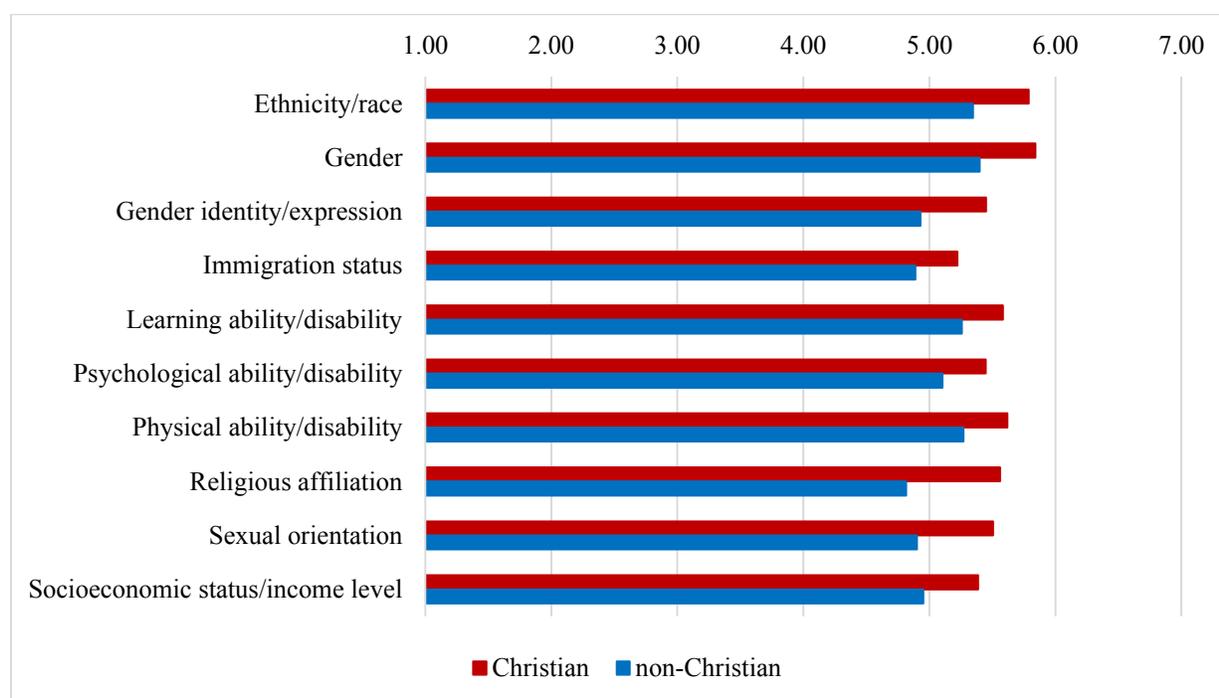
	Non-Christian	Christian
Gain understanding of multicultural and diversity issues	67%	75.9%
Environment that encourages free and open expression of ideas	69.5%	83.5%
Expectations of respect and value for others are clearly articulated	69.5%	81.6%
Values of diversity and inclusion are clearly articulated	65.6%	76.8%
Creating an inclusive and diverse campus community is a priority	65.1%	78.6%

When considering whether USM is a supportive environment for individuals on the basis of specific demographics, there were a number of significant differences between Christian and non-Christian respondents. There was a significant difference on whether USM is a supportive environment for individuals on the basis of socioeconomic status/income level ($t_{997} = 4.26, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -5.22, p < .001$), on the basis of sexual orientation ($t_{568} = 5.87, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -5.62, p < .001$), on the basis of religious affiliation ($t_{548.63} = 7.16, p < .001, \omega^2 = .09; Z =$

-6.99, $p < .001$), on the basis of physical ability/disability ($t_{998} = 3.93$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .01$; $Z = -4.41$, $p < .001$), on the basis of psychological ability/disability ($t_{999} = 3.69$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .01$; $Z = -4.07$, $p < .001$), on the basis of learning ability/disability ($t_{998} = 3.63$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .01$; $Z = -4.07$, $p < .001$), on the basis of immigration status ($t_{996} = 3.56$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .01$; $Z = -3.64$, $p < .001$), on the basis of gender identity/expression ($t_{570.30} = 5.01$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .04$; $Z = -4.78$, $p < .001$), on the basis of gender ($t_{598.79} = 4.93$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .04$; $Z = -4.98$, $p < .001$), and on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{593.85} = 4.87$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .04$; $Z = -4.73$, $p < .001$). In all cases, Christian respondents, on average, were more likely than non-Christians to rate on the “agree” end of the scale and, for both groups, the majority of respondents were more likely to rate on the “agree” end of the scale. These results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Score on Perception that USM is a Supportive Environment for Various Identity

Categories by Religious Identity



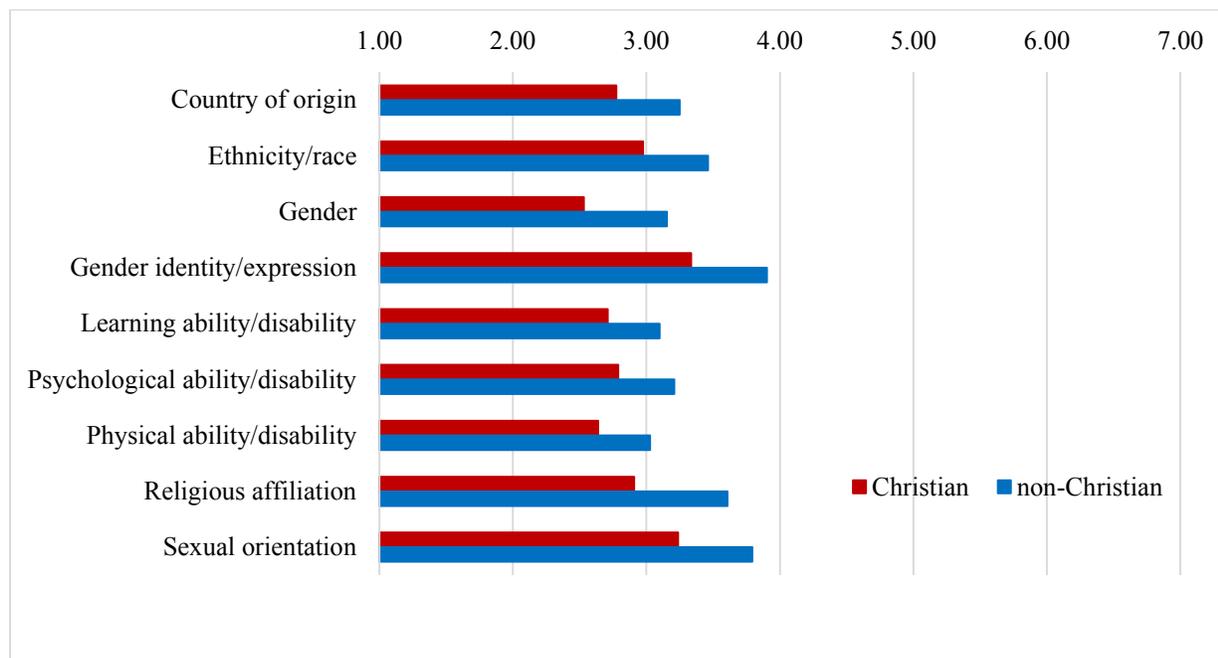
Percent Agreement that USM is a Supportive Environment for Various Identity Categories by Religious Identity

	Non-Christian	Christian
Ethnicity/race	73.2%	85%

Gender	73.2%	85.2%
Gender identity/expression	60.9%	75%
Immigration status	60.9%	65.1%
Learning ability/disability	68.2%	79.5%
Psychological ability/disability	63.4%	73.8%
Physical ability/disability	68.5%	79.6%
Religious affiliation	58.2%	78.2%
Sexual orientation	60.7%	75.2%
Socioeconomic status/income level	62.8%	75.2%

When asked about the likelihood of experiencing bias, discrimination, and/or prejudice at USM, there were significant differences on opinions about a number of groups, including on the basis of sexual orientation ($t_{613.98} = -4.26, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.20, p < .001$), on the basis of religious affiliation ($t_{577.43} = -5.44, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -5.19, p < .001$), on the basis of physical ability/disability ($t_{616.81} = -3.57, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.56, p < .001$), on the basis of psychological ability/disability ($t_{632.41} = -3.82, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.86, p < .001$), on the basis of learning ability/disability ($t_{995} = -3.70, p < .001, \omega^2 = .01; Z = -3.86, p < .001$), on the basis of gender identity/expression ($t_{610.41} = -4.42, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.61, p < .001$), on the basis of gender ($t_{599.95} = -5.28, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -5.40, p < .001$), on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{638.31} = -4.01, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.08, p < .001$), and on the basis of country of origin ($t_{629.86} = -4.31, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.35, p < .001$). In all cases, Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “unlikely” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents. These results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Scores on Perception that Individuals are Likely to Experience Bias, Discrimination, and/or Prejudice on the Basis of Various Identities by Religious Identity



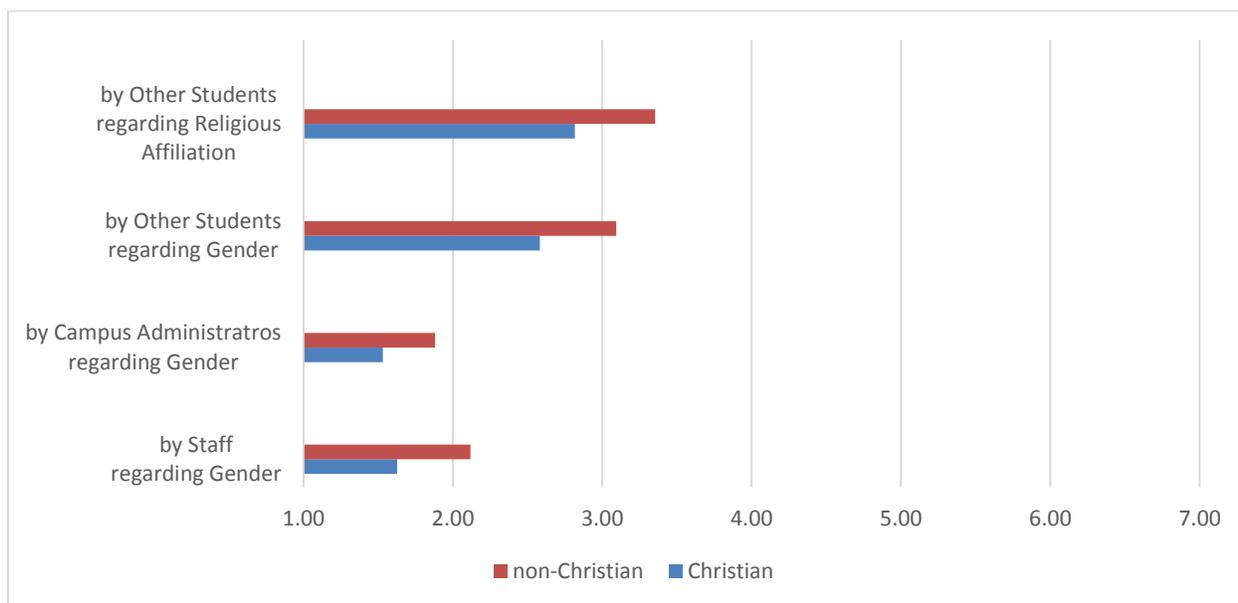
Percent Individuals are Unlikely to Experience Bias, Discrimination, and/or Prejudice on the Basis of Various Identities by Religious Identity

	Non-Christian	Christian
Country of origin	74.2%	83.4%
Ethnicity/race	66.6%	76.1%
Gender	72.8%	85.3%
Gender identity/expression	57.7%	70.8%
Learning ability/disability	78.1%	85.2%
Psychological ability/disability	78%	84.1%
Physical ability/disability	77.9%	85.7%
Religious affiliation	64.1%	80.2%
Sexual orientation	59.7%	71.8%

When asked about negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks by administrators, staff, and other students towards certain groups, there were a number of significant differences. There was a significant difference on how often other students have been

heard making negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks on the basis of religious affiliation ($t_{603.37} = -4.03, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.80, p < .001$) and on the basis of gender ($t_{605.15} = -3.96, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.70, p < .001$). Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “rarely” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents, in each case. There was a significant difference on opinion of how often staff ($t_{509.33} = -4.79, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -3.81, p < .001$) and of how often administrators ($t_{555.06} = -3.86, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.76, p < .001$) have been heard making negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks on the basis of gender. Again, in each case, Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “rarely” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents.

Mean Score on Frequency of Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Religious Identity Category

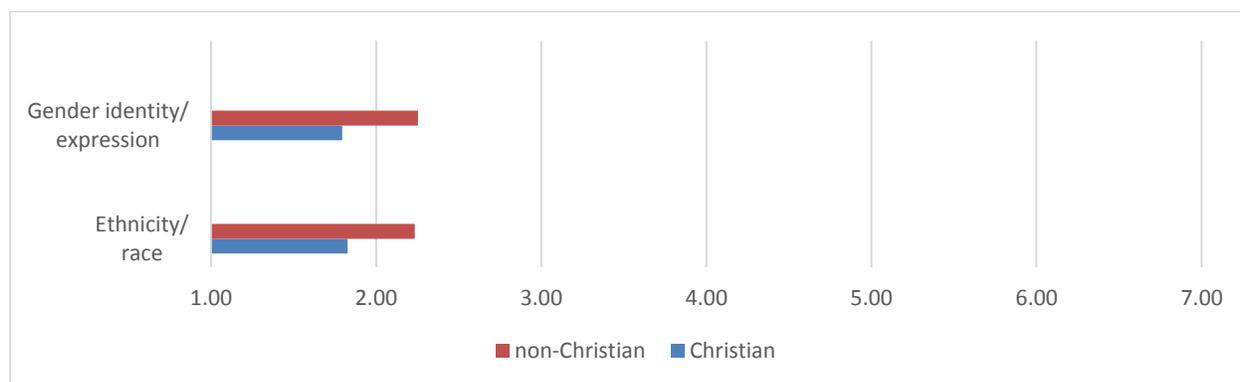


Percent Reporting Rarely Hearing Disparaging Remarks by Religious Identity Category

	Non-Christian	Christian
Remarks by other students regarding religious affiliation	66.8%	78.4%
Remarks by other students regarding gender	73.4%	83.6%
Remarks by campus administrators regarding gender	88%	96.6%
Remarks by staff regarding gender	94.6%	98.3%

There was a significant difference how often respondents witnessed threatening behavior or comments at USM on the basis of gender identity/expression ($t_{551.37} = -4.10, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.78, p < .001$) and on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{574.44} = -3.72, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -3.64, p < .001$). Christian respondents, on average, were more likely to rate on the “rarely” end of the scale than were non-Christian respondents, in each case.

Mean Scores on Frequency of Witnessing Threatening Behavior on the Basis of Various Identity Categories by Religious Identity



Percent Reporting Rarely Witnessing Threatening Behavior by Religious Identity Category

	Non-Christian	Christian
On basis of gender identity/expression	87.1%	94.5%
On basis of ethnicity/race	87.4%	93.8%

Discussion of Results for non-Christian Students

Although, based on students’ reported experience in focus group interviews, faculty may not always be aware of it, USM is a diverse environment for religious beliefs. The campus is host to students from numerous religious traditions, some who are irreligious, and others along a wide spectrum of spiritualities. This pluralism, like other diversities on the college campus, is a strength when it is embraced. It provides learning and growth opportunities for students who interact with those who are different from themselves, experience and understand traditions unlike their own, and become better prepared for a global marketplace.

However, when Christocentric views creep in, and faculty, staff, and/or administrators forget that students are not like themselves, may not attend ‘church’, be Christian or value

Christianity in the same ways as them, the benefits that would come from such diversity are lost, and instead students can feel marginalized and experience hostile learning environments. Some issues are simple: There is not an appropriate time to tell jokes at the expense of a religious or ethnic group, and sweeping generalizations about adherents of a faith as likely terrorists are clearly marginalizing and damaging to members of that faith. Others require more thought. How can curricula reflect a less Christocentric view of the world? How can student activities be inclusive of other religions and cultures without appropriating and tokenizing them? Easier access for religious student groups (even those that are not Christian, and even those that are humanist or atheist in nature) to form and function would be a good starting place for USM. Making room for students to explore and understand faiths through authentic dialogue, and meaningful learning opportunities may create more movement on this issue. But faculty, staff, and administrators also need to grow and learn about religions other than their own, and recognize that they are always in ‘mixed company’ before making a joke or off-handed comment that might marginalize the students they are employed to build up, prepare, and educate.

Experiences of Gulf Park Students

The Gulf Park campus is fraught with particular complications that make it quite different from the Hattiesburg campus in many ways. Although many Hattiesburg students are commuters, the Gulf Park campus is entirely comprised of commuter students, with no housing options available. The difference is visible even in available facilities: There is no equivalent to a student union on the Gulf Park campus, clearly signaling the intention that students drive in for class, and leave afterward. In some ways, this may be protective from some of the more damaging climate issues that emerge on many college campuses. As one Gulf Park student stated in a focus group, “I really don’t have much interaction outside of class, so I’m not sure when I would hear harassing comments.” At the same time, Gulf Park students and staff might feel disconnected from campus resources that are centralized in Hattiesburg. One student stated that she would not feel comfortable using a resource that is in place to help with instances of bias because of its placement in Hattiesburg, making it “intimidating” and “cold”.

Power is also centralized in Hattiesburg, as the USM organizational chart clearly shows. Although the Vice President for the Gulf Park Campus has authority over things like Campus Police, Parking, and Physical Plant, students universally suggest that the vast majority of their interactions are with faculty, department staff, financial aid, and other similarly situated individuals. Based on the organizational chart, all of these individuals actually report to administrators in Hattiesburg (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014c), many of whom the Gulf Park students report never having heard of or met. This physical and psychological distance may create additional issues with campus climate on the Gulf Park campus.

On the other hand, Gulf Park students report a sense of “community” with faculty, many of whom they share close relationships with. That is, while they may feel disconnected from staff and administration at times due to organizational structure, the nature of the Gulf Park campus seems to lend itself to closer faculty-student working relationships based on multiple comments across focus groups on the Gulf Park campus. Because of the different student life, academic, and administrative conditions that may affect the Gulf Park campus climate and Gulf Park students, we analyzed for potential differences in the perception of campus climate between Gulf Park and Hattiesburg students, who self-identified as belonging primarily to one campus or the other.

Demographic Factors for Gulf Park versus Hattiesburg

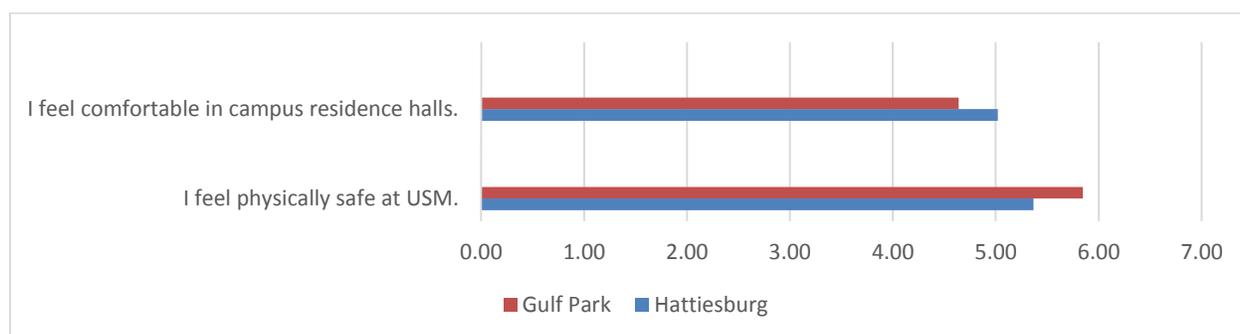
It is initially worth noting that the University either does not collect or does not make available data on how many students attend Gulf Park versus Hattiesburg campuses, though students clearly identify themselves as being one or the other. This is perhaps attributable to the “one university” idea at the administrative level, whereas students clearly, based on qualitative data, experience a more fragmented system. This lack of data collection makes certain comparisons impossible, but the University does report student credit hours per campus. For Hattiesburg, there were 164,229 student credit hours in Fall 2014, compared to 24,339 for the Gulf Park campus (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014a). That means that 87.1% of credit hour enrollment was in Hattiesburg, with 12.9% in Gulf Park. There were 492 tenured or tenure-track faculty on the Hattiesburg campus as of Fall 2014, versus 65 on the Gulf Park campus (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014b). That means 88.3% of tenured or tenure-track faculty are in Hattiesburg, and 11.7% are in Gulf Park.

We were able to make demographic comparisons among the Gulf Park versus Hattiesburg-identified students in the Campus Climate Survey sample. The two campuses were significantly different in terms of college classification distribution ($\chi^2_5 = 547.78, p < .001$). There was a large overrepresentation in the number of doctoral students on the Gulf Park campus ($SR = 21.61$), while all other student groups were underrepresented ($SR = -2.59$ to -5.89). Because the doctoral student group was so heavily overrepresented, it was thought that it may have obscured other differences. As a result, this analysis was redone comparing only undergraduate college classification distributions. There was still a significant difference between the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park distribution ($\chi^2_4 = 21.57, p < .001$), where first-year students are underrepresented ($SR = -3.29$). When compared with those attending the Hattiesburg campus ($M = 24.97, SD = 8.58$), students attending the Gulf Park campus ($M = 33.66, SD = 11.28$) are significantly older ($t_{216.51} = -9.82, p < .001, \omega^2 = .08, Z = -11.25, p < .001$). This demographic difference may make sense with the emphasis on transfer and graduate students at the Gulf Park campus. The two campuses did not significantly differ in terms of gender representation ($\chi^2_1 = .55, p = .459$), number of students with disabilities ($\chi^2_1 = 2.57, p = .108$), number of LGBTQ students ($\chi^2_1 = .36, p = .548$), or students of color ($\chi^2_1 = .82, p = .365$).

Differences in Gulf Park versus Hattiesburg Students on the USM Campus Climate Survey

There was a significant difference between Hattiesburg and Gulf Park students on whether respondents felt physically safe at USM ($t_{472.42} = -5.13, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.94, p < .001$) and whether or not respondents feel comfortable in residence halls ($t_{464.80} = 3.39, p = .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.19, p < .001$). Hattiesburg students, on average, feel less safe than do Gulf Park students but feel more comfortable in residence halls.

Mean Scores on Comfort/Safety Items by Primary Campus Affiliation

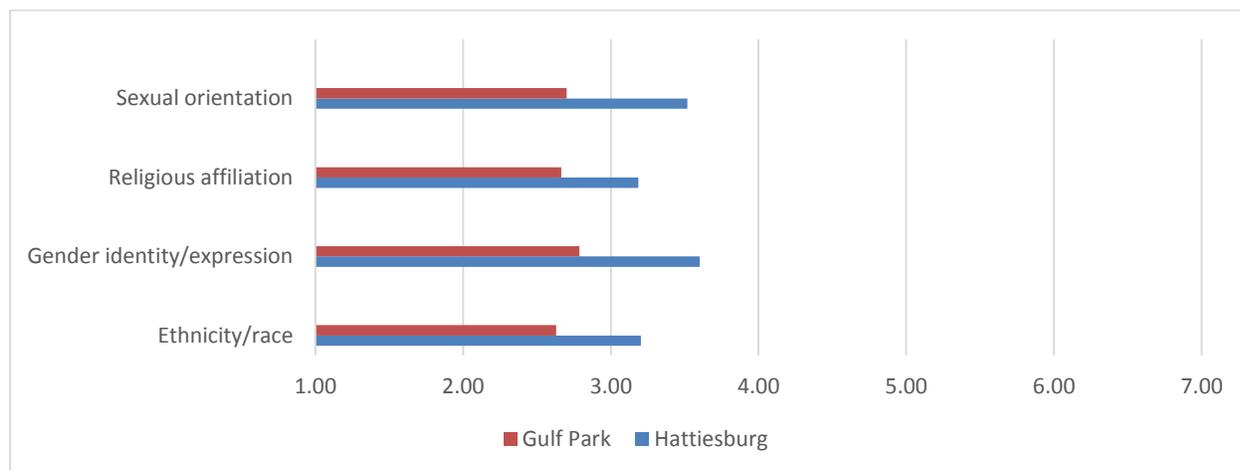


Percent Agree with Comfort/Safety Items by Primary Campus Affiliation

	Gulf Park	Hattiesburg
I feel comfortable in campus residence halls	88.6%	79.4%
I feel physically safe at USM	87.4%	93.8%

There was a significant difference on opinion of how likely someone is to experience bias, discrimination, and/or prejudice at USM on the basis of ethnicity/race ($t_{415.40} = 4.34, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.40, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{417.78} = 5.58, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -5.87, p < .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{420.18} = 3.83, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -3.99, p < .001$), and sexual orientation ($t_{429.34} = 5.43, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -5.80, p < .001$). In each case, Hattiesburg students, on average, were more likely to rate on the “likely” end of the scale than were Gulf Park students. The results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Scores on Likelihood of Bias by Primary Campus Affiliation

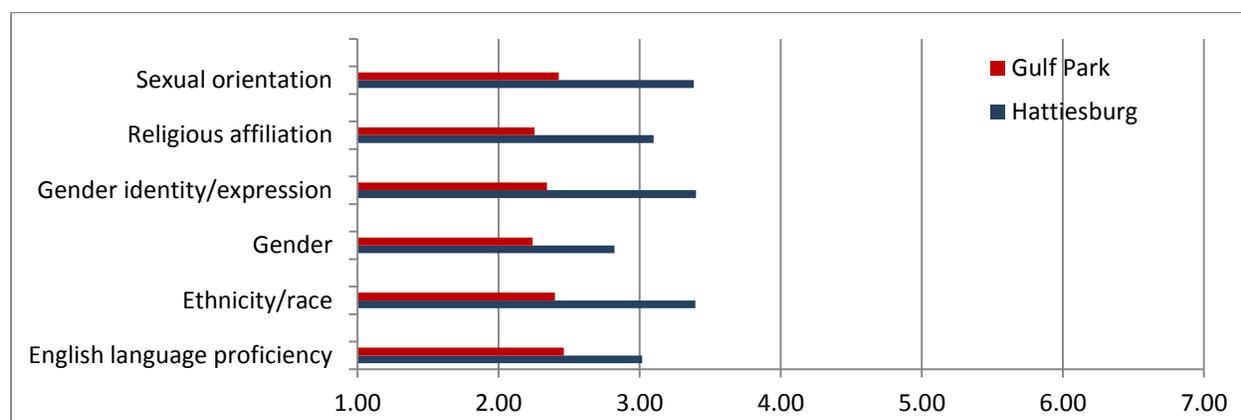


Percent Likely to Experience Bias Based on Various Categories by Primary Campus Affiliation

	Gulf Park	Hattiesburg
Sexual orientation	14.7%	34.3%
Religious affiliation	14.7%	25.6%
Gender identity/expression	16.8%	35.4%
Ethnicity/race	14.7%	28.3%

There was a significant difference how often other students have been heard making negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks on the basis of English language proficiency ($t_{588} = 3.65, p < .001, \omega^2 = .02; Z = -4.47, p < .001$), ethnicity/race ($t_{434.22} = 6.34, p < .001, \omega^2 = .08; Z = -6.84, p < .001$), gender ($t_{422.40} = 4.38, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z = -4.67, p < .001$), gender identity/expression ($t_{436.28} = 7.17, p < .001, \omega^2 = .10; Z = -7.31, p < .001$), religious affiliation ($t_{441.55} = 6.06, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -6.05, p < .001$), and sexual orientation ($t_{425.37} = 5.88, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -6.53, p < .001$). In each case, Hattiesburg students, on average, were more likely to rate on the “often” end of the scale than were Gulf Park students. These results are displayed graphically below.

Mean Scores for How Often Other Students Heard Making Remarks Regarding Various Categories by Primary Campus Affiliation



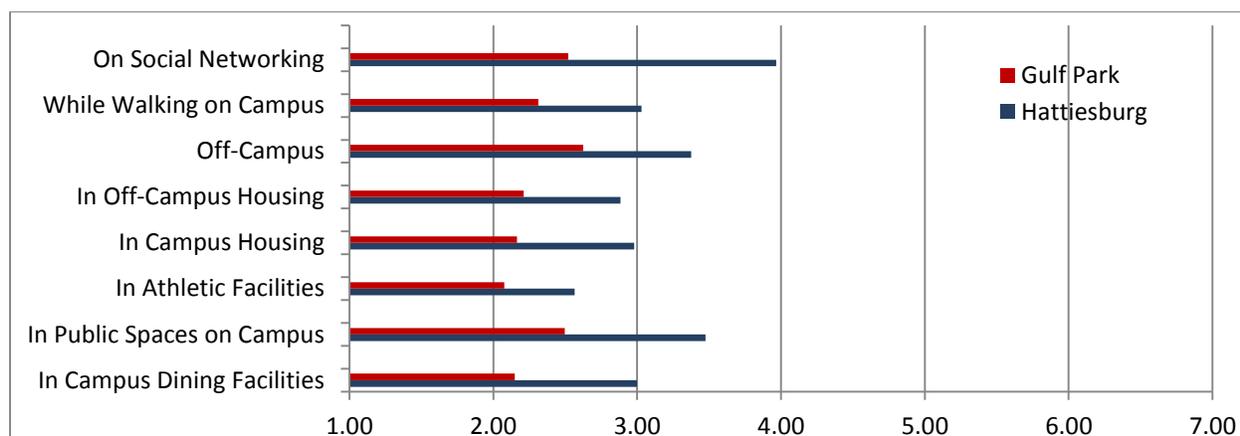
Percent Reporting Often Hearing Other Students Making Disparaging Remarks by Primary Campus Affiliation

	Gulf Park	Hattiesburg
Sexual orientation	14.4%	33.8%
Religious affiliation	10.8%	27.2%
Gender identity/expression	11.8%	33.4%
Gender	10.8%	20.7%
Ethnicity/race	13.3%	34%
English language proficiency	16%	24.7%

There was a significant difference how often negative, inappropriate, stereotypical, or disparaging remarks have been heard in campus dining facilities ($t_{471.33} = 5.92, p < .001, \omega^2 = .07; Z = -5.98, p < .001$), in public spaces on campus ($t_{436.78} = 6.66, p < .001, \omega^2 = .09; Z = -6.54, p < .001$), in athletic facilities ($t_{453.84} = 3.79, p < .001, \omega^2 = .03; Z = -4.13, p < .001$), in campus housing ($t_{486.31} = 5.75, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -5.96, p < .001$), in off-campus housing ($t_{469.92} = 4.88, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -4.87, p < .001$), off-campus ($t_{434.63} = 5.25, p < .001, \omega^2 = .06; Z = -4.98, p < .001$), while walking on campus ($t_{449.71} = 4.75, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05; Z = -5.02, p < .001$), and on social networking ($t_{474.68} = 8.90, p < .001, \omega^2 = .14; Z = -8.54, p < .001$). In each case,

Hattiesburg students, on average, were more likely to rate on the “often” end of the scale than were Gulf Park students.

Mean Scores on How Often Disparaging Remarks Heard in Various Locations by Primary Campus Affiliation



Percent Reporting Hearing Disparaging Remarks Often in Various Locations by Primary Campus Affiliation

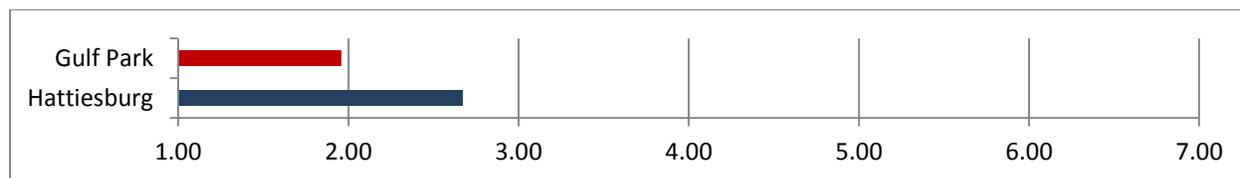
Campus Affiliation

	Gulf Park	Hattiesburg
On social networking	14.8%	44.9%
While walking on campus	11.3%	28.2%
Off-campus	17.4%	33.3%
In off-campus housing	5.1%	19.6%
In campus housing	3.1%	23%
In athletic facilities	3.6%	14.3%
In public spaces on campus	15.4%	36.8%
In campus dining facilities	7.2%	24.9%

There was a significant difference how often threatening behavior or comments have been witnessed on social networking. Hattiesburg students, on average, were more likely to rate on the “often” end of the scale than were Gulf Park students ($t_{481.36} = 4.66, p < .001, \omega^2 = .04; Z =$

-4.72, $p < .001$). 20.6% of Hattiesburg students rated on the “often” end of the scale compared to 7.3% of Gulf Park students.

Mean Scores on How Often Threatening Behavior/Comments Witnessed on Social Networking by Primary Campus Affiliation



Discussion of Results for the Gulf Park Campus

It is particularly interesting to note that, in general, campus climate indicators skew somewhat more positive for Gulf Park students in the present sample than for Hattiesburg students. There are several possible explanations for this. One is that, as suggested by a quote from qualitative data earlier in this chapter, there are simply less opportunities for negative interactions on a commuter-based campus. For example, hearing negative remarks in campus housing is quite difficult for a Gulf Park student simply because campus housing does not exist on that campus. We note that there are no differences on indicators such as feelings of safety, feeling valued as an individual, feeling proud of being a USM student, or other broader indicators. The differences that exist are on more behavioral indicators such as negative experiences. In other words, these differences might be largely attributable to the differences in the type of campus present in Hattiesburg and Gulf Park.

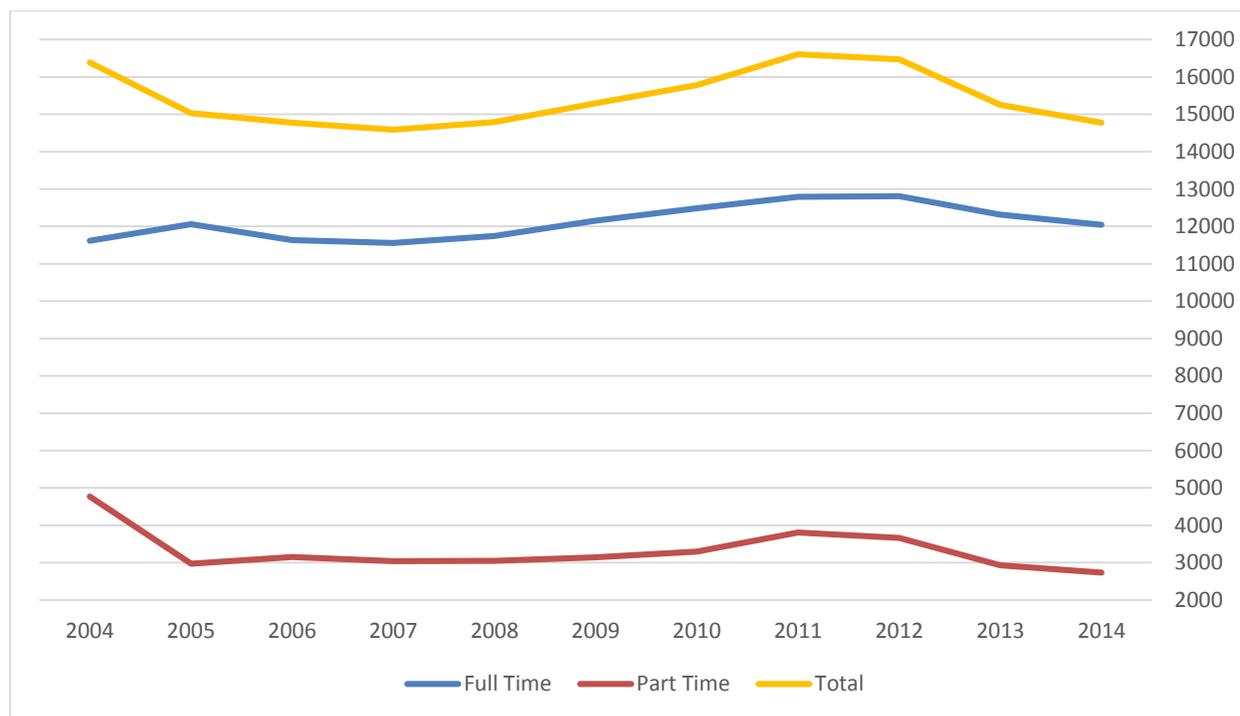
Nevertheless, Hattiesburg is not a fully residential campus, nor is Gulf Park absent any kind of student events or campus life. That is, the two campuses are not completely different in these regards. As such, it is worth further investigation as to whether there might be other aspects of the operation or culture of the Gulf Park campus that lead to lower numbers (in some cases, much lower numbers) in terms of negative experiences on campus.

Recruitment and Retention

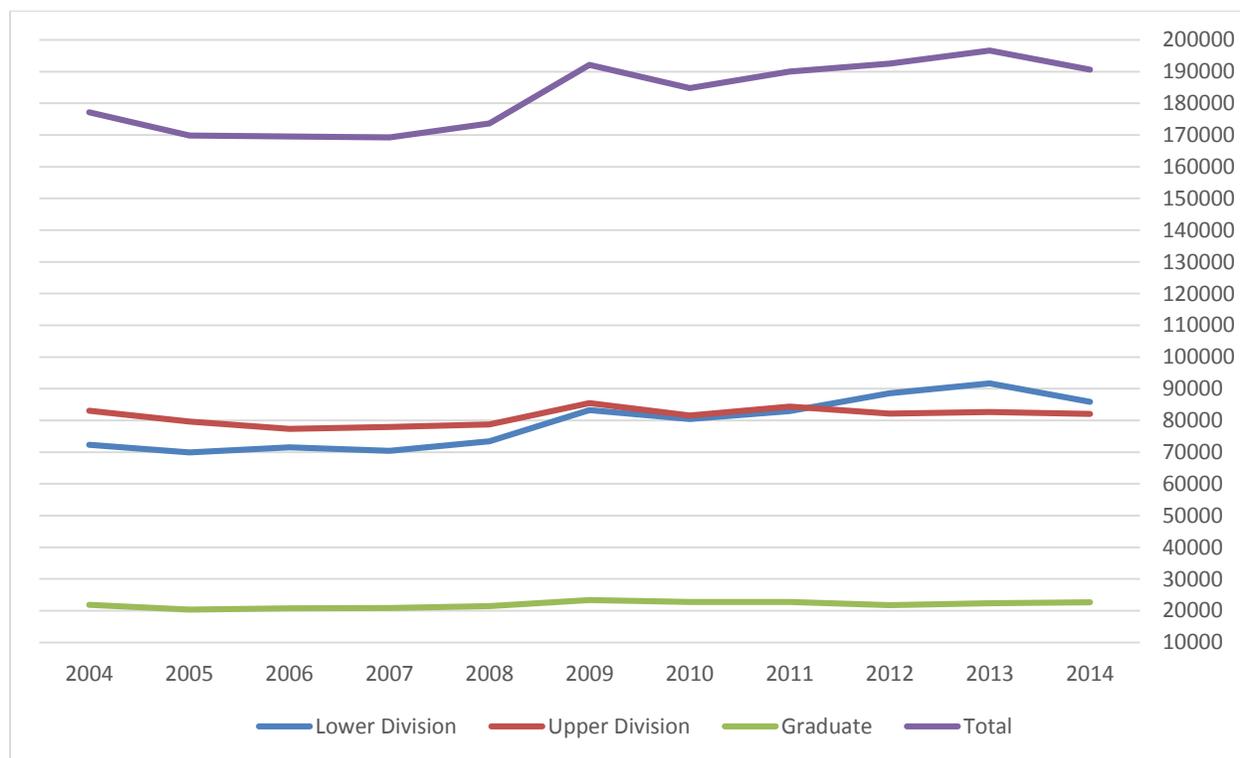
Because of the current emphasis on recruitment and retention at The University of Southern Mississippi, at times reaching the tone of an emergency, we devoted some attention in the climate report to how climate and recruitment/retention might be intermingled. In particular, items on the Campus Climate Survey and student responses in focus groups give some glimpses into reasons why students valued coming to USM and reasons why some considered leaving that are related to campus climate issues.

For context, we begin by describing the issues around recruitment and retention at USM. The university currently has a retention rate at 74.0% (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014d). It appears from internal university communications that messages about reductions in student credit hours and enrollment are likely based on year-by-year comparisons, as longer-term data seem to provide a somewhat rosier picture. For example, taking the ten-year average, USM is down in enrollment by 659 students for Fall 2014 (14,772 versus a ten-year average of 15,431). By contrast, for student credit hour production USM is up by 8,193 (190,593 versus a ten-year average of 182,400). The ten-year Fall semester data (as obtained from USM's Institutional Research website) are visually depicted below.

Ten Year Enrollment Data



Ten Year Student Credit Hour Production Data



Within this context of increasing student recruitment as well as retaining enrolled students as an institutional goal, the data relevant to recruitment and retention are highlighted here.

Students Prefer Diverse and Inclusive Learning Environments

A particular highlight from the quantitative data related to recruitment and retention is that 39.4% of students fall on the ‘agree’ end of the rating scale for the item, “A diverse and inclusive learning environment played a role in my decision of which university to attend.” As one student stated, “we look for [statements] to make a decision about enrolling, that we welcome diversity, and include that, so no matter who you are, you’re welcome.” A number of students mentioned the importance of inclusiveness and diversity in their choice to attend USM, including the racial diversity, level of international student representation, availability of multicultural student groups, and ability to interact with students from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds. In fact, a number of students described seeking out diverse learning environments for college. For example, one student described visiting several colleges and deciding on USM after observing the diverse student body. “It’s a good place to be open,

because it is so diverse... the world is so diverse, so you have to be able to deal with different people. I enjoy that aspect of it.”

At the same time, a number of students describe contemplating leaving the university due to negative campus experiences. For many of these students, the decision not to leave was catalyzed by interaction with a faculty or staff member who showed care and concern for the student as an individual. These encounters sometimes involve a faculty member providing an opportunity, help, or explanation that had previously seemed unavailable to the student. In other cases, it simply involved a staff member or administrator helping a student navigate difficult university processes. But in each case that a student described contemplating leaving the university and ultimately staying, positive interactions with faculty and/or staff who improved climate for the student were the deciding factor.

Conclusions and Recommendations

With Contributing Author: Sherry C. Wang, Ph.D.

Overarching Conclusions

This report highlights numerous student identities on the USM campus who appear to have more negative experiences, encounter more bias, and have more negative impressions of the campus climate. Our research team has analyzed data from the Campus Climate Survey, as well as spoken with dozens of students in focus group interviews. Our conclusion is that supportive and inclusive spaces, faculty, and departments certainly exist. We also find little evidence for a sustained effort to marginalize and oppress particular student groups on campus. Instead, what appears to be the case at USM, as in many educational spaces, is that white privilege, misogyny, heterosexism, cisgenderism, ableism, Christocentrism, and other marginalizing attitudes prevail in some campus spaces due to the lack of sufficient and sustained countervailing force. USM, though it has some systems and structures in place, has few resources, systems, and ongoing efforts in place to create an inclusive, open learning environment. The lack of intentional work on these issues, which we further detail in this chapter, creates the ability for bias, discrimination, adverse campus experiences, and negative campus climate to develop and replicate over time.

We noted in the introduction that USM exists in a particular historical and contemporary context. USM is placed in a state with some of the starkest historical resistance to integration, including resistance by USM as an institution. It is located in a state with one of the highest rates of disapproval of same-sex relationships. It is located a state with high *de facto* segregation in schooling. In other words, USM's place geographically and culturally places it with a particular burden to actively create open and inclusive spaces for all students, particularly if it will claim the title of 'most diverse university.' This burden comes from the reality of historic tensions that carry over into contemporary realities. It comes from the fact that, for many students, USM may be their first time sharing a classroom with a student of a different race. It comes from the fact that USM may be the first time they are confronted with belief structures other than what they were raised with. These tensions are real, and must be actively confronted and openly discussed to have any real diversity or a truly inclusive campus environment.

For many students we interviewed they felt that much of the tension, bias, and hostility they experienced was, in some sense, under the surface. They experienced that open

conversations, even when they brought out hurtful or contentious issues, were better than leaving the tensions unspoken. The suggestion, then, is that leaving a potential problem alone, hiding it, or ignoring it seems to make students more uneasy than even the most uncomfortable of open conversations. Openness, honest conversation, and authentic dialogue were common themes in interviews with students when asked what they thought USM could do better. Having the conversation is important, and leaving issues of diversity and inclusiveness unspoken tends to leave room for bias and discrimination to grow.

One important point we clearly understood from conducting interviews on the Gulf Park and Hattiesburg campuses, and then analyzing data from both campuses was that the two are clearly not one integrated system. Those on the Gulf Park campus feel completely isolated from Hattiesburg and its systems (whether it is reporting systems for harassment, or simply department chairs), and Gulf Park does not seem to enter the mind of Hattiesburg students. In other words, however the organizational chart might be drawn, they are culturally and experientially two different entities.

Another clear finding that cuts across all identity categories and all focus group interviews, that seems to speak to quantitative findings, is that faculty seem to be unaware of the power of their words. They, in the experience of students, casually speak on topics that are deeply personal, deeply hurtful, and sometimes outright offensive to students. In many cases related by students, the hurt by the professor seems to come from ignorance or lack of awareness, rather than any real bias or intent. Other cases seemed to show a more pointed intent to show bias against an identity category, however. In any case, faculty should be more mindful of their words, the power they have to affect students, and the influence those words have even outside of the classroom to normalize or trivialize racial slurs, sexist language, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and other forms of bias.

We also find that students do not feel that they are taken seriously when they do have problems in class, with faculty, or with other students. In some cases, these problems appear to be more serious, as with students turned away from filing Title IX complaints. In other cases, it appears to be insensitive or inappropriate behavior on the part of a faculty member who was dismissive of a student complaining about in-class behavior or comments. Regardless, students have a right to expect a safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment. When they feel that expectation has been violated, they should be treated with respect and courtesy. When

students are dismissed, they receive a clear message that they are not valued by the institution, causing some of the students we spoke with to consider leaving the institution.

Specific Recommendations

Based on the results outlined in the prior chapters and our broad statement of conclusions here, we offer some specific recommendations:

- Faculty, staff, and students should increase their awareness of the tendency for those with privileged identities (Christian, white, male, abled, heterosexual, cisgendered, citizen, etc.) to perceive the environment as friendlier, more accessible, more accommodating, and safer.
- Administration should acknowledge and correct the discrepancy between recruitment messages and on-campus realities. In other words, to recruit more diverse students, use statements about diversity and inclusion in marketing materials, but also make USM open and inclusive for diversity in real ways.
- Train campus leaders and officials to be culturally sensitive to the experiences of student populations. This should go beyond a simple point-and-click computer training.
 - We recommend required training for all faculty, staff, and administrators.
 - We recommend that content include microaggressions, bystander intervention during bias incidents, and marginalization.
 - We recommend training on how to talk about marginalization and/or diversity.
 - We recommend training on privilege and oppression.
 - To reiterate, we recommend this training go beyond point-and-click computer based training, which tends to be only marginally effective.
- There is a need on campus for safe spaces for marginalized students.
 - We strongly recommend the university adopt trans*-inclusive policies and spaces. Trans* students need a clear, written, and easily accessible housing policy, and a written policy on using bathrooms consistent with gender identity, and more gender neutral bathrooms on campus.
 - We recommend physical spaces for LGBTQ students (e.g., LGBTQ resource center), and other groups that are underserved by current physical space arrangements.

- Structures and resources for students with physical disabilities need to be consistent and reliable across campus. We recommend that every building have constant access to every classroom and faculty office for individuals with physical disabilities.
- We recommend that online resources, such as Blackboard and online/hybrid classes be reviewed for compliance with disability accessibility. This may include making transcription services available for video content for online-only and hybrid courses.
- We recommend rewarding administrators and faculty who make efforts to support marginalized students, so that this work is not viewed as a burden against research and teaching.
- We recommend recruiting larger numbers of faculty and administrators who are people of color, LGBTQ individuals, women, of religious faiths other than Christianity, and otherwise more adequately represent the student population. We also recommend targeted retention efforts for these same faculty.
- We recommend a thorough investigation of the Title IX office to determine to what extent students have been turned away from filing complaints about sexual harassment by faculty. Specifically, we recommend an external audit of this office, and urge the USM administration to take steps to attempt to reach out to individuals who may have been dissuaded from filing complaints to follow up appropriately on the reports they attempted to make.
- We recommend that an education plan be put in place by which students are made aware of appropriate reporting procedures for incidents of bias, harassment, and assault. This should include who to report to, and how to follow up if the student feels their complaint is mishandled.
- We recommend an ongoing series of open dialogues on issues of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious identity, national origin, culture, history, ability, and other issues of diversity on campus. Open dialogue among individuals is often a key for creating a safe and inclusive environment.
- We recommend that USM incorporate the values of inclusiveness and diversity into new student orientation, new faculty orientation, and orientation for new employees. We

further recommend that this be a meaningful dialogue and training on how to create a welcoming environment, rather than a short presentation. Diversity and inclusiveness may be important to future recruitment and retention, and should be a focus of employee and student orientation to create an atmosphere that draws students in and keeps them at USM.

- We encourage USM administration and faculty to explore ways to make their campus more open and inclusive through means not directly mentioned here. These include those mentioned in the Campus PRIDE index, the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation's Guide for an Inviting Campus, and others. There are resources available within and outside the state for guiding an effort to incorporate meaningful dialogue, education, and policy toward equity and inclusiveness on campus.
- We recommend ongoing, annual campus climate evaluation to determine if changes made in policy, procedure, personnel, training, etc. are effective in alleviating issues identified in this report. As USM moves toward becoming a more welcoming and affirming environment, continued evaluation will enable progress tracking and justify the programs put in place with continued data. We further recommend that future evaluation be done either a) by RISE in collaboration with USM faculty and administration, or b) by a group of USM faculty working with USM administration, with those faculty receiving appropriate compensation/release time for their efforts.

Final Recommendations

We are aware that USM has, since RISE first released an interim report on LGBTQ issues in November of 2014, formed an Institutional Diversity Committee comprised of several faculty members, and has undertaken a few other diversity initiatives. Our closing recommendation is to recognize that, to move for an inclusive and welcoming campus climate for all students, change may be required on multiple fronts. For example, we have recommended changes to housing policy, updates to information technology, brought up facilities issues, recommended faculty training, and many other items. What we suggest here in closing is that creating an open and inclusive environment will have to be a team effort with support and active work on the part of the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, individuals in Student Life, from individual faculty, the faculty senate, and others. However, USM is not, as we have highlighted in this report, an institution intentionally creating a hostile environment. The faculty, staff, and

administration, then, have the opportunity to improve on an environment that many students already experience as quite positive, so that every student experiences an affirming university campus.

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About RISE: The Research Initiative on Social Justice and Equity

RISE is an independent multi-institutional research consortium of scholar-activists, scholar-practitioners, and student researchers who are devoted to critical inquiry regarding systemic inequality. RISE scholar-activists are affiliated with institutions nationwide as faculty, researchers, professional staff, and community leaders. Our work began in 2013 with three faculty at The University of Southern Mississippi, growing from a perceived need to provide faculty and students with a space to discuss social justice issues and make efforts toward equity through research and advocacy. Since that time, RISE has grown to include 16 affiliated individuals, hosting events, lectures, conducting outreach and advocacy, conducting targeted policy research, and publishing peer-reviewed research on social justice issues. Since our founding, RISE-affiliated individuals have been responsible for 33 publications on social justice topics, and have hosted 18 outreach and advocacy events with an average attendance of 103, while working with 17 community and campus organizations.

The current report is an expression of our commitment to targeted policy research that moves educational systems toward equity. We know from the work of other scholars and our own research that the education system is all too often experienced as a space of oppression, marginalization, and unsafety. Through working with the administration of The University of Southern Mississippi, and providing this report commissioned by the USM Vice President of Student Affairs that uses various sources of data (quantitative, qualitative, policy, and prior research), we hope to help USM move forward with more equitable policymaking and to create a safer, more inclusive, more diverse, and more equitable educational space.

Learn more about RISE at <http://www.RISEinSolidarity.org/>