Campus Climate: Real Stories. Real Talk. Real Impact.

This is a summary document for the staff conversation that took place on Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 11:00-1:30pm, in the Beacon Room on the 2nd floor of the Recreation and Wellness Center. One hundred staff from a variety of units and job classifications participated in the event hosted by members of the Campus Climate Planning Team and sponsored by the Campus Climate Work Group.

“A presidential priority and formation of a small working group is only a beginning step to addressing the complex issues regarding campus climate. In order to achieve ultimate success, we have to hear the voices, stories, and experiences of those who are on the front line, providing quality service that ultimately makes this a place to be proud of. We must be comfortable being uncomfortable as we dissect the unique and, sometimes negative, experiences we encounter.”

Lamar Hylton, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Life and Campus Climate Planning Team member

“Thank you so much to each of you here today for taking the time for this critically important conversation. This university has great ambitions - but we cannot succeed if we don’t have a climate where everyone feels welcome. I am very interested in what these conversations surface. Your suggestions will be thoughtfully reviewed and considered.”

Eric Kaler, University of Minnesota President

“Today’s program is designed to create an environment where we can share stories, concerns, ideas, and hopes. What is talked about today will become the foundation for us to build a campus community where everyone who works, learns, teaches, and visits here feels respected and honored.”

Kathryn Brown, Vice President for Human Resources and Campus Climate Work Group member

The shortest distance between two people is a story.
The purpose of these conversations is to help create a welcoming and inclusive campus climate by sharing our individual and collective experiences so we can create and foster a campus climate where all persons are treated with respect, allowing everyone the opportunity to succeed.
**Schedule-at-a-Glance**

11:00 Welcome Reception/Lunch
11:20 Kick-Off
11:35 Introduction of the World Cafe Process
11:40 Round One Conversation
12:10 Round Two Conversation
12:35 Round Three Conversation
12:55 Sharing
1:15 Personal Commitments
1:20 Gratitudes and Next Steps
1:30 Farewell

**Round One Conversation**

Tell a story about how you are experiencing or seeing the university. **REAL STORIES**
Communication (messaging, flow of information)

- Lack of communication between the levels of the University in some units which makes the work environment challenging.
- For better communication and recognition of staff, we need better trained managers/supervisors.
- Bureaucracy – Not clear communication from the top-down.
- Encouraging participation but then inconsistently allow it to happen. The trickle down is not working, so nothing can trickle up.
- How do we hear about, respond to and create change where there are climate issues?
- Unsanctioned messaging like #drunkgoldy, “I hate Iowa” at sporting events is not mission-aligned. Are we monitoring this?
- On-boarding – creating a welcoming experience at local and institutional level.
- Communication needs improvement at all levels.

Missing Voices

- Having these sessions open to certain areas was limiting in being able to “see” the U of M experience from multiple levels.
- Are we being responsive to the surrounding community needs, i.e. K-12 teachers advanced training?
- How do we get people to understand the relevancy of discussions on campus culture and diversity/inclusion?
- Knowing who to connect individuals with – putting a face to a name – who can people go to for help or support?
- So many white people – not hearing all voices.
- For those in the majority (i.e. white, male, middle class, heterosexual, able bodies, etc.), how do we see and understand the experiences on campus of those who are not in the majority so we don’t just assume that everything is fine because it’s fine for some?

U Resources (ideas, visibility, stretched)

- Developing mentorship/professional development program
- Mental health resources for students are overloaded and therefore staff end up having to deal with more student issues.
- All levels of staff (faculty/BU/CS/PA) need appropriate training in working for the U to succeed.
- University resources are not reaching all staff.
- There is so much a person can learn about world culture at the U if you choose to.
- We have access to rich resources, but often do not have the time or knowledge to access.

Participatory decision-making and action

- Does the input and feedback offered actually matter?
- What does consensus mean? How do you reach decisions?
- Consensus is hard to achieve. Is consensus needed?
- Prioritizing is difficult.

Participatory Leadership in Action

Participatory leadership principles and practices were used to leverage the collective experience and wisdom of all who attended. We had the opportunity to engage in multiple rounds of 20-30 minute conversations in groups of four around powerful questions. The guidelines for conversation were to contribute our thinking, listen attentively to others, focus on what matters, link and connect ideas, listen together for deeper insights, play, doodle, draw, and have fun. Between rounds of conversation, we moved to other tables which provided an opportunity to forge new connections and cross-pollinate ideas across the room. Some volunteered to be table hosts after each round, welcoming others to the table and providing a summary of the previous conversation.
From all of the experiences you have heard and shared, what is standing out for you?

Round Two Conversation continued…

**Silos**
- What about our campus?
- Silos limit communication, access, collaboration
- Desire to deconstruct silos. There has been work toward this, but further work is needed.
- Competition across colleges, sectors with each other.
- Student-consumer (they are paying for it … get what they want.)
- Competition on: tuition, fees, grants, sponsored funds. It’s hard to work and mobilize across sectors. Strong dept. – identify vs. sharing of expertise between silos.

**Purpose**
- How we represent ourselves – must be in line with our values.
- By closing PSTL, are we limiting opportunities for access to higher ed for our community members?
- The “Why?” of our work… Connecting with others with shared professional passions … how?

Sharing our thoughts, communications, and learning from one another about why we are working at U of M

**Hierarchy**
- “Rankism”. We are a lot about our rank; P&A vs faculty, CS vs faculty, CS vs P&A
- The university is a caste system (classist) with faculty at the top and staff and students being constrained and treated disrespectfully!
- Aristocratic institution; Entitlement among the “top”; Division between administration, faculty, and staff
- Challenges the faculty system creates with climate issues.
- Many times we are limited by our defined roles or titles and being able to contribute to the discourse.
- We feel the hierarchical structure is repressive – things are too separated – we all help things happen.
- Hierarchy of faculty > P & A staff > civil service > union. Non-faculty ideas are not as well supported
- Archaic systems (hierarchy, classism)
- Strong resistance to change (we’ve always done it this way; we’ll do it when so and so retires; hierarchy instead of efficiency)

**-isms**
- Glass ceiling for women employees
- Sexism

**Moral**
- Staffing levels being cut and not valuing staff’s abilities keep staff from excelling in work.
- Civility does not equal complacency.
- Engaged employees who are feeling overworked/understaffed in order to do good work.

**Questions**
- Personal responsibility - How do you take action to reach out and understand? What opportunities are we provided with to move forward?
- Punished for going above and beyond? Will anything come of this? Who is capable of management? No clarity in who does what.
- On a scale of 1 to 5, how jaded are we? To compare students to staff to faculty, how do those responses differ?
- How do we ask/know what is truly meaningful to all students?
- How is civility tied to success? Isn’t it what we should have learned in kindergarten? What is the incentive for staff success within their silo? Current job?

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**REAL TALK**

**Graffiti Wall Statements**

Even though change is constant… we need to keep track of the moving pieces, don’t make assumptions, we’re not broken - don’t throw out everything, keep messaging, keep transparency! Political, social, and/or religious conservatives feel the administration wants us to be silent or just go away. They want to educate us at “educational event” not be “on the wrong side of history”. They are so tolerant that they won’t tolerate those of us who oppose the things they think need to be tolerated. *President Kaler, especially, is very outspoken this way.* There is a lot of talk about these issues but not a lot of action, at least not that is apparent. The U Admin. needs to be more open about the specific actions they’re taking and how they’re meeting these goals. How can some departments not allow participation in sessions like this or OED certification program? Isn’t that complacency in itself? Why aren’t we all invited like management is? Meaningful salary increases - many staff are struggling Staff who couldn’t attend asked that this be mentioned: parenting & nursing staff (those with babies and young kids) don’t feel supported - some policies exist, but they’re inconsistently applied. I feel welcome in my dept - we are diverse and respectful - outside the dept it starts to vary
What exactly needs to change to make the campus a more welcoming and inclusive place for all?

Round Three Conversation

**Miscellaneous**
- How can some departments not allow participation?
- Support all persons to attend all sessions.
- Stop blaming things on the lack of money - pay equity.
- A unified, universal focus on the mission points us all in the same directions and towards the same goal. Our paths may differ, but we will all end up in the same place.
- Acknowledge our current state (know where we are starting from).
- Empower employees to do their job with fewer barriers. Provide them the authority to make decisions without everything going back to supervisor to approve.
- Being valued and honored for the job you do, no matter what class you are in.

**Cross-barrier communication**
- Allowing staff time for activities that breaks down silos while setting parameters.
- Break down barriers between faculty and non-faculty; Get past the hostility – Listen. Everyone must be mission-aligned. Have work session with mandatory mixed groups.
- Change – it’s everybody’s responsibility – change from the top and all levels.
- Include more voices at the table when decisions need to be made (but consensus doesn’t need to be reached).
- Be intentional about building relationships and developing a sense of community with colleagues AND within/across departmental “lines.”
- Cross sharing all info – faculty, staff, students, - avoid communication silos (include management on down)
- Improve internal communication
- Listen in departments that are open and willing to change

**Student Focus**
- Open opportunity for disadvantaged students (e.g. General college); Setting up for academic success, Recruitment strategies
- Prepare more diverse leaders by influencing them young – in K-12
- Get anonymous feedback from graduate students about their thesis advisers. Wait until there are enough respondents to make the anonymity really work. Collect feedback after the M.S./Ph.D. degree.

**Inclusion**
- Identifying barriers to inclusion.
- Personal responsibility – get outside your comfort zone, learn about new people, cultures, etc.
- More funding to OED for more programming
- Greater accessibility: More lighting St. Paul campus, More pumping stations, More gender neutral bathrooms
- How can we say yes more often? Make our staff feel more appreciated and more engaged.
- Awareness that not everyone at the University fits into the same mold.
- We want to have more opportunities for our stories to be told (us and students)
- Benefits equal and same for all categories – offer choices to which group you want
- The University needs to abstain from taking a political position (whether left, right, etc.) on any issues whatsoever. Political conservatives are taxpayers too and it is evident that the University climate is one of financing for liberal causes (e.g. Pres. Kaler’s endorsement of the Redskins protest rallies and UMN-sponsored “educational” events pertaining there to) to the detriment of conservatives’ sense of inclusion on campus.
- Define what “welcoming and inclusive” means! Add to policies and job descriptions.

**Professional Development**
- Mandatory professional development in job descriptions (diversity, social justice)
- Faculty and staff training around creating civil and inclusive classrooms, offices, and departments
- Be empowered to solve problems where they happen, i.e. improved conflict resolution
- Create mandatory training for leaders that improves their leadership skills: Communication, Diversity, OED certificate, How to provide feedback
- Providing space/time in workday for conversation and learning.
- Better training for managers. Can we also provide opportunities to receive training to advance?
- Increase engagement by promoting professional development (including equity and diversity)
- Education on communication: feedback for all employees and supervisors, students, faculty, and staff. Learning to give and receive feedback. Create a culture that expects and acts on feedback.

**No Bullying**
- The issues of incivility and unwelcoming atmosphere needs to be acknowledged and then addressed.
- Zero tolerance policy for swearing, bullying, belittling towards regardless of their position. Raise the level of professionalism.
- Need “code of conduct” for employees and a university policy against bullying.
World Cafe for faculty (Nov. 20). An Open Space Technology meeting for all members of the campus community will be held in Feb. 2015. All feedback gathered during these events will be shared with senior leaders on the Campus Climate Work Group to inform their decisions on action steps to improve campus climate.

The student voice was represented in the room on the Graffiti Wall and this visual that contained statements of personal commitments regarding campus climate from undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.