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

This is a summary document for the student conversation that took place on Thursday, October 2, 2014, 5:00-7:30pm, in the Mississippi Room on the 3rd floor of Coffman Memorial Union. More than fifty undergraduate, graduate, and professional students participated in the event hosted by members of the Campus Climate Planning Team and sponsored by the Campus Climate Work Group.

“The only way we can break through the barriers that exist amongst gender lines, amongst class lines, amongst racial lines, amongst superiority lines is to have the dialogue to bridge an understanding on one another’s experiences to create allies out of one another because what you find easy another student might struggle with.”

Ken Gonzales

“Despite the efforts and progress that so many people have made across the span of many years, there is still significant work to be done. We want this process to create a new kind of space to share stories, concerns, ideas and hopes for change, so that we can recommit to co-creating a campus community that honors all who learn, teach, work, and visit here.”

Danita Brown Young

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 foster a campus climate where all persons are treated with civility and respect, allowing everyone the opportunity to succeed.
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.
Tell a story about how you are experiencing or seeing the university.

From all of the experiences you have heard and shared, what is standing out for you?

- Reducing stigma through conversations and events (speakers, etc)
- Having more opportunities to mingle.
- Having more multi-cultural events.
- Student groups
- Finding a safer education
- Professors
- Racism
- Exclusion of international students
- Academics - global studies, computer science, psychology, political science, public health
- Saturation of messages, but little action
- Criminal record applicant question
- Racial harassment in Dinkytown
- Feeling tokenized in class
- SCCS murals were destroyed, they were irreplaceable. The sense of ownership that students felt about the cultural centers has been taken away. Still feels like it is not our space.
- Tuition is too high to make campus inclusive.
- Mental health discrimination is real. People get threatened eviction from the dorms for having depression, for example. It’s rough out here.
- Safety. Don’t walk alone at 3am. Black Male. Age: 6-100yrs old. Height: 3-10 feet tall.
- Alienation: racial minorities, gender minorities, international students
- Lack of cultural curiosity

For more information about Campus Climate, visit campusclimate.umn.edu
What exactly needs to change to make the campus a more welcoming and inclusive place for all?

• More professors from underrepresented backgrounds. Create a transparent system for departments to learn by publishing all departments enrollment demographics and recruitment strategies,

• More funding to cultural centers and cultural student groups to create the climate

• Stop treating people with mental health challenges like criminal, contagions, and abominations. It only makes it worse.

• Providing levels of accountability of departments that have bad track records of recruiting/retaining diverse students.

• Ally training. Teaching incoming freshman about issues of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, etc

• Removing the stigma of Mental Health and creating awareness on the issue

• Commuter/Housing situation

• Train staff on cultural diversity! Require it! “Don’t Be an Idiot” trainings.

• More gender neutral bathrooms

• Yelling permits [i.e. in the mall]

• Accepting a diversity problem as an institution.

• More places to make friends. Real friends.

• Crime reports

• Culture sexual assault and harassment. Greek Life?

• Creating Awareness. Creating awareness about/on sexual assault/harassment on campus - especially during/before/after Viking games.

• Town hall with senior administrators hosted by the students

• Empower students and student leaders to set the pulse on issues of diversity.

• The question of prior criminal records on application is racist and wrong.

GRAFFITI WALL STATEMENTS

I think the University as an institution has to admit to its problems surrounding diversity and inclusion instead of circumventing conversations that dance around it. MSA as an undergraduate student group needs to reshape its leadership so that they are actually representative of the student body. If the greek community is working towards diversity so should MSA. Students don’t trust administration, no matter how good their intentions. Students are the PULSE, and they need more spaces to set the agenda of the U’s course of action. I’ll never recover from the discrimination I have faced here. As a transfer student it’s difficult to feel integrated - maybe create a better transfer union that actually works and makes me feel welcome. University staff - food workers, grounds, etc more representative of the T.C. community than teaching staff. Decision makers at the University don’t care what I think. U of M community should have more info on culture & race, we are all equal!! Where is the dialogue for international students? Ask yourself, just whose diversity do you advocate for? Need more students and professors of under-represented backgrounds. UMN Admin needs a targeted means to recruit [made transparent on department web sites and “failing” departments held accountable]. Why is racial diversity so important? Because it’s visible? I don’t feel comfortable or welcome on my own campus due to the hateful protesters on the mall. The “free speech” excuse is bullshit. We are a campus that can ban smoking on our public grounds.. why can’t we ban institutionalized hate? [I feel welcomed at the] quad.
NEXT STEPS

World Cafes for students (Oct. 8), staff (Nov. 11), and 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.