

Strategies for Using Institutional Climate Data to Promote Institutional Transformation

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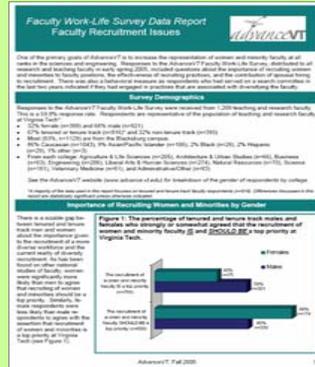
AdvanceVT Climate Survey

Summaries & Reports

The *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey*, distributed to all teaching and research faculty in January 2005, and focus groups conducted in April 2005, provided a great deal of information about how Virginia Tech faculty members experience the climate at Virginia Tech. Four reports were generated and shared in a one page, brightly colored summary with all faculty. The reports were on the following topics:

- LEADERSHIP
- WORK-LIFE
- RECRUITING

The reports are available at www.advance.vt.edu.



Using Data to Support Climate Change

- College of Engineering -

The Center for Survey Research at Virginia Tech conducted a college and department-level analysis of the data garnered from the 2005 *AdvanceVT* survey. Each college dean received a spreadsheet showing college and departmental average responses on each question on the survey. Department names were known by the dean but concealed on the spreadsheet. In addition, each department head received a summary indicating where faculty members in their department responded significantly more positively (shown in green) or significantly more negatively (in red) than the college average. An example spreadsheet is shown below:

The data were used in some departments to launch discussions about climate or culture. One faculty member in on of these departments said:

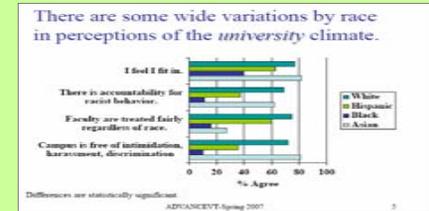
"We had to do some soul searching, collectively late in the fall using data from ADVANCE. People were expressing "lack of trust" in the administration and the department head. We are going through a process of looking for ways to improve the climate and what needs to be done. A committee is collecting information. We are hopefully going to openly address these issues now." - Male, engineering faculty member

Another faculty member in engineering noted:

"There is a bigger issue here. That is the way that women are treated in this department. I don't see a lot of that directly, but it is clear that all the women recognize it. It also shows up in the numbers of graduate students we recruit. That has not been named as the key problem. They are calling it a problem in departmental culture problem, but that is too nebulous." - Male, engineering faculty member

Generating Dialogue with the Minority Community

Under-represented minority faculty at Virginia Tech wanted direct input into writing questions on the Work-Life Survey. They appreciated data displays that separated out responses to key items on the questionnaire by minority group (Asian-American, Hispanic, African-American and other). They were interested in additional, richer qualitative data. Small numbers made maintaining confidentiality an on-going challenge.



Challenges to Effective Dissemination

- Suspicion about social science data
- Keeping it simple without being simplistic
- Getting people to read the reports
- Creating a comprehensive data marketing strategy
- Maintaining confidentiality

Recommendations

- Use a wide variety of formats and venues.
- Tailor data displays to specific constituencies.
- Provide access to data to avoid possible implications of concealment.

Dissemination

- Presentations to department heads and university leaders
- Presentations during annual mid-year retreats
- Summary flyers and detailed reports available on website and mailed to deans, department heads and other university leaders
- Dedicated webpage to data on www.advance.vt.edu
- "Data Bytes" column regularly featured in *AdvanceVT's* monthly newsletter
- Provost and *AdvanceVT* PI's incorporate data into speeches and presentations

Acknowledgments

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