Becoming the Best That We Can Be: Cultivating a Climate of Inclusion at St. Lawrence University
Executive Summary of 2018 Campus Climate Survey for Diversity and Inclusion

St. Lawrence University recognizes that diversity and inclusion are values that are fundamental to our educational mission. We also recognize that the structures of privilege are largely invisible, embedded deeply in the culture of the institution, and difficult to unravel. These structures impact community members in different ways depending on their roles within the institution, backgrounds, and social identities. As we strive to cultivate a community inclusive and welcoming of all our members, it is imperative that we understand how various groups on campus experience our culture and work to build the community that truly represents our values, as affirmed in the *University Statement on Diversity.*

St. Lawrence, like many institutions, is evolving into a more inclusive community. We are not yet the institution we hope to become. We recognize that, despite the good work done in the past, there are still many obstacles that we need to overcome, move, or navigate around. This is the reason that it was imperative that we conduct the diversity and inclusion climate survey in Spring 2018. Notwithstanding our challenges, there is potential for SLU to excel in the area of diversity and inclusion. But before this potential can be realized, we need to determine where we are, what challenges we still face, and begin mapping the path forward. One of our first steps to do so was our participation in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey for Diversity and Inclusion in February to March 2018.

Survey Response Rate

A total of 1,140 completed surveys were submitted (out of 3,177 invitations), for an overall response rate of 36%. Participation rates by role were as follows:

- undergraduate students – 29% (N=665)
- graduate students – 46% (N=17)
- faculty – 61% (N=159)
- staff – 48% (N=276)

Responses were overall representative of the St. Lawrence community. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the survey. There were 2641 responses to open-ended questions by 1044 individual respondents.

Results

The climate survey instrument was divided into four broad sections, which we follow in our analysis:

1. General feelings of inclusion
2. Institutional support for diversity
3. Interactions with people from identity groups different from one's own
4. Experienced discrimination or harassment

Survey results indicate that, although there is acknowledgment that SLU, particularly in recent years, has made a commitment to pursuing diversity and inclusion as institutional values, the community feels we are not as effective as we need to be in cultivating inclusion across all roles and all demographics. Key take-aways from each section include:

Section 1: General Feelings of Inclusion

- Majority of respondents feel positive about overall climate and feel included themselves
- Majority of respondents feel that the climate for diversity is challenged and that others who are not like themselves are not included to the same degree
- Undergraduates feel more included once they find their niche
- US Persons of Color (POC) have lower satisfaction levels
    - This is especially true for faculty
    - International students also have lower satisfaction
- Far right/conservative are more satisfied than middle of the road or far left/liberal, but for faculty the reverse is true.
- By role, administrative and hourly staff are most satisfied, and faculty are least satisfied

Section 2: Institutional Support for Diversity

- Most respondents feel significant tension around issues of individual or group difference.
- There is stronger agreement among administrative staff and faculty that recruitment efforts are an institutional priority but less agreement among students.
- US POC are among the least satisfied in the levels of support for diversity.
- Women, those who identify as other than heterosexual, and far left/liberal are also less satisfied.
- While many recognize that senior leadership is supportive of diversity and inclusion, those who identify as US POC, especially faculty, are less satisfied than other respondents.
- Hourly staff report the least tension around inclusion issues while administrative staff and faculty report the greatest tension.

Section 3: Interactions with People from Identity Groups Different from One's Own

- The majority of respondents reported high levels of interaction with groups different from their own and high comfort levels with those interactions.
- The majority also believe diversity improves experiences and interactions on campus.
- Fewer respondents are comfortable sharing their views on diversity and equity
- There is some divergence, particularly by role within the university, in level of engagement in activities designed to raise cultural awareness and their reported impact.
    - Hourly staff indicate 15-20% lower involvement across most categories
    - In general, undergraduates and administrative staff report highest impacts for activities, while faculty and hourly staff report the lowest.

- Across all groups, women consistently rate impacts at 0.3 points higher than men.

Section 4: Experiences of Discrimination or Harassment

- The incidence of hearing derogatory remarks about different identity groups is highest for political affiliation, with 44% of all respondents reported hearing such comments often or very often.
  - For all respondents, both far left/liberal *and* far right/conservative reported this at virtually the same frequency.
  - By role, undergraduate students generally reported the highest levels of hearing derogatory comments. Hourly staff as well as faculty generally reported lowest levels.
- The highest incidence of hearing derogatory remarks was reported by US POC and international members of the community and those who identify as other than heterosexual. Undergraduate students who are seniors reported relatively high incidence of hearing derogatory remarks about people whose race is different, people who identify as LGBTQ, people who are immigrants, etc.
  - Undergraduate students and faculty of color indicated that students are a frequent source for derogatory comments
  - Faculty, especially US POC faculty, indicated that faculty are a frequent source
  - Faculty and staff of color indicated that staff are a frequent source
  - Faculty of color indicated that administration is a relatively frequent source
  - Faculty, especially US POC faculty, and administrators indicated that the local community is a frequent source
- More than half of those who responded indicated that they know how to report an incident of bias, but based on the narrative comments, those who experience bias are not using the process.
- Administrative and hourly staff reported the highest levels of knowing about the reporting and investigative process for discrimination or harassment
  - Undergraduate students reported the lowest levels.
- Most respondents had not experienced discrimination or harassment. Those who had experienced discrimination amount to 26%, or close to one-quarter, of the respondents.
  - 40% of all the US POC experienced discriminatory behavior
  - 40% of all those who indicated "other than heterosexual" experienced discriminatory behavior
  - 29% all women respondents experienced discriminatory behavior.
  - Both far right/conservative and far left/liberal experienced discriminatory behaviors. For far right/conservative, however, most of the discriminatory behaviors are based on their political views, while for far left/liberal, the discrimination results from a number of other identities as well.
    - 25% of all those identifying as "far right/conservative" experienced discriminatory behavior
      - 61% of this number (nearly 2/3) indicated it was based on their political views
    - 29% of all those identifying as "far left/liberal" experienced discriminatory behavior

- 5% of this number indicated it was based on their political views

The survey illustrates that we have quite a bit of work to do. There are some **positive signs**, however.

I. The *response rate* is relatively high. A response rate of 61% of faculty, 48% of staff, and 29% of undergraduate students (for an overall response rate of 36%) and the number of narrative comments indicate that the community is willing and perhaps even eager to share their perspectives on diversity and inclusion. The participants want to be part of a positive change.

II. Most respondents (75-90%) reported that they interact daily or weekly with people who are different and over 90% indicated a high degree of comfort when interacting with people different from themselves – this is true for virtually all groups. There is also widespread agreement that diversity on campus improves experience and interaction, with 90% of all groups agreeing or strongly agreeing.

III. Most groups feel *very or somewhat comfortable sharing their views on diversity* on the SLU campus, including 67% of all respondents indicating they are comfortable or very comfortable.

IV. One particularly positive take-away is the *number of comments from respondents who self-identify as white cis-gender heterosexual,* and who recognize the challenges that those who are from underrepresented groups face. This is also reflected in the responses to the sense of community felt by everyone.

But there are also quite a few **areas of concern**. There are significant differences between the ways that those who come from underrepresented identity groups feel relative to majority culture groups on campus. This is especially true for US POC and International, and for those who identify as other than heterosexual, but is also true for sex/gender and political affiliation.

I. When we examined the data, the largest and most persistent disparities were revealed in sorting by *race/ethnicity*. Virtually every question of the survey revealed significant differences by race/ethnicity – in other words, it was a virtually universal phenomenon. It is clear that those who identify as US POC and US White perceive the climate very differently, with US POC experiencing the campus in more negative ways.

II. Although disparities were revealed when sorting by *sex/gender,* of all the identity groups examined, sex/gender showed the lowest number of disparities in the quantitative data. Where there are disparities, men generally express greater satisfaction rates than women. But the qualitative data tells a different story. A large percentage of the narrative responses referred to sexual misconduct and gender-based bias or discrimination. 41% of those reporting that they'd experienced harassment in the previous year indicated that the nature of the harassment was sexual, and 9% referred to gender-based discrimination.

III. Sorting the data by *sexual orientation* revealed significant disparities. In about two-thirds of the questions – close to 70% of the responses – those identifying as *heterosexual* are more satisfied with the climate than *other than heterosexual*. This makes sexual orientation the second highest group in frequency of disparities among the quantitative data.

IV. In terms of *political affiliation*, there is a high degree of tension felt around political issues campus-wide for both far right conservative and far left/liberal. Those who identify as politically conservative generally report that they feel as included, or moreso, than those who identify as liberal or middle of the road for most of the survey questions, except when asked specifically about the climate for political affiliation. 19% of those who experienced harassment in the previous year cited that the harassment was based on their political views.

Conclusion

Most of the issues raised in the Diversity and Inclusion Campus Climate Survey are not new to us. Concerns regarding the climate for racial/ethnic diversity, sexual orientation, and sex/gender have been surfacing on the SLU campus for a long time and have appeared in other surveys, such as the HERI Faculty Survey, the College Senior Survey, and the HEDS Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey.

We will continue to press forward, one step at a time, and build upon our successes while addressing the challenges. The next step for the community will be sharing ideas to begin mapping the path forward. We are committed to remaining open and optimistic as community members share their experiences and present ideas for solutions.