



To All Members of the Northeastern Community:

I write to share the results of the 2021 Diversity and Equity Campus Climate survey. The purpose of the survey was to understand the state of the university climate, to surface gaps in belonging within and across communities, and to advance our commitment to create a more inclusive university. It was administered in response to President Aoun's June 2020 [Action Plan](#) to improve university-wide accountability and "advance our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."

The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) administered the Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey, used by over 160 colleges and universities, asks students, faculty, staff, and administrators about their perceptions of their institution's DEI climate, how well their college or university supports diversity and equity, and about their experiences with discrimination and harassment at their institution.

Northeastern administered the survey between March 22 and April 30, 2021 to all faculty, staff, administrators, and students. University Decision Support (UDS) and a university-wide advisory group, co-chaired by Rana Glasgal and me, analyzed the results. The survey instrument consisted of twenty questions that were included in the HEDS core instrument in four categories:

- Satisfaction with the Campus Climate for Diversity and Equity
- Institutional Support for Diversity and Equity
- Experiences with Insensitive or Disparaging Remarks at the institution
- Experiences with Discrimination or Harassment at the institution

Overall, approximately 15 [percent](#) of the university community completed the survey (6,154 responses) though the response rates varied by role. Forty-six (46) percent of staff and administrators participated, and undergraduate students comprised the largest number of responses, at 35 percent of the total.

For this analysis, we used a comparison group of sixty-eight four-year private universities and colleges who similarly administered the survey within the last four years. As this was our first year using the HEDS survey, we reference the comparison data simply as a data point. However,

we are determined to improve the climate and culture for all members of our community, and not to match other institutions.

We share these results in full transparency, to encourage a broad examination of the findings, foster a stronger sense of belonging within groups and across the university, and proactively build a learning culture to mitigate the obstacles that stem our progress toward these goals.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS**

### **CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY**

#### ***Satisfaction with Campus Climate and Sense of Belonging***

Most respondents are satisfied with the overall campus climate at Northeastern (75%). Sixty-three (63) percent of respondents experience a sense of belonging or community. On the other hand, only about half of respondents, 49 percent, felt that all community members experience a sense of belonging or community.

#### ***Views on Diversity and Equity***

Northeastern respondents were satisfied with the campus environment regarding diversity, at 62 percent. A vast majority of respondents (92%) agree that diversity improves experiences and interactions within the classroom, the workplace, and the overall community, and are more comfortable (71%) sharing their views on diversity and equity. Of the three groups, staff and undergraduate students are least comfortable sharing their views on diversity and equity.

#### ***Dignity and Respect***

Overall, respondents reported that that they are treated with dignity and respect, however, supervisors (68%) and co-workers (74%) received the lowest scores regarding treating people with dignity and respect.

#### ***Fear of Identity Disclosure***

Most respondents, 52.5 percent, expressed no fear of disclosing aspects of their identity, while respondents who avoided disclosure for fear of negative consequences were least comfortable sharing their political perspectives (22%), socioeconomic status (14%), religious background (10%), and sexual orientation (10%).

#### ***Leaving Northeastern***

Most respondents had not considered leaving Northeastern, 69 percent. For those who did consider leaving, lack of a sense of belonging was the most cited reason (12%). After those who declined to answer the question (7.7%), the next highest number of respondents (6.2%) cited responses in “Another reason” for wanting to leave including: dissatisfaction with administration; supervisors and professors; COVID-related stress; mental health; burnout; feeling undervalued; and lack of opportunities.

### **HEARING OR BEING A TARGET OF DISPARAGING OR INSENSITIVE REMARKS**

#### ***Negative Experiences by Identities at Northeastern***

The respondents more likely to report hearing insensitive or disparaging remarks about their identity or to experience incidents of discrimination or harassment were people of color, female, non-binary and/or transgender, and LGBTQ+-identified respondents. Respondents with long-term and temporary disabilities were also more likely to hear insensitive or disparaging remarks or experience incidents of discrimination or harassment about their disability.

Politically conservative respondents are more likely to experience incidents of discrimination or harassment (10%) than those who identify as liberal (3%) or middle-of-the-road (3%), while politically liberal-identified respondents more frequently (57%) hear insensitive or disparaging remarks about their views than their middle of the road (36%) or conservative (47%) counterparts.

### ***Frequency of Insensitive/Disparaging Remarks by Race and Ethnicity***

Black/African American respondents were most likely (reported as sometimes, often, or very often) to hear insensitive/disparaging remarks (48%) followed by Hispanic/Latinx respondents (33%). However, the majority in all racial categories reported never or rarely hearing any remarks.

### ***Sources of Disparaging/Insensitive Remarks***

Northeastern respondents who reported hearing disparaging/insensitive remarks were asked to disclose what groups were the sources of the remarks. The remarks most commonly came from students (44%) followed by the local community (28%).

## **EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION AND/OR HARASSMENT**

A majority (72%) of Northeastern respondents have not experienced discrimination or harassment at Northeastern (equal to other institutions), but 52% of those who have experienced incidents of harassment reported that they happened in the year prior to the survey. When compared across different Northeastern groups, undergraduate respondents (23%) revealed that they experienced discrimination or harassment at higher rates, especially compared to graduate students (11%) who reported fewer incidences than faculty and staff as well.

## **NEXT STEPS**

University leaders are preparing a variety of localized forums to foster engagement and capture feedback about ways to improve the culture of belonging and develop action plans to respond to the findings and the 2020 Call to Action.

With these efforts already underway, we encourage members of our community to undertake the following steps to build a greater sense of belonging:

- Hold community conversations within colleges, administrative units, and campuses to share the survey findings throughout the university and open feedback channels.
- Host listening sessions among groups identified as having the least sense of belonging at the university.
- Train supervisors to increase their ability to treat their employees more consistently with dignity and respect.

- Build in accountability for diversity, equity and inclusion commitments into employee evaluations and promotion considerations.
- Provide more learning opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to address inclusivity and empathy.
- Leverage use of existing university assets (e.g., cultural centers, affinity groups, curriculum, experiential learning opportunities) and build on these resources.
- Publish the [feedback mechanism](#) that will inform ongoing diversity, equity and inclusion action planning and future survey administration.
- Create a perpetual cycle of data collection, sharing with the community, and gathering feedback.

The 2021 Diversity and Equity Climate Survey provided the university with a critical snapshot about the institutional climate among the respondents. More broadly, it provides a baseline against which to measure our progress and periodically take the pulse of the Northeastern community. Building upon what we learned in this survey will take time and effort from all members of our community as we work collectively to make Northeastern a welcoming and inclusive place for all.

Sincerely,

Karl W. Reid  
Chief Inclusion Officer  
Northeastern University

## 2021 CLIMATE SURVEY REPORT AND SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Read the [2021 Diversity and Equity Survey main report](#). Links to the following appendices are below:

- A. [Response Rates](#): By race, role (i.e., faculty, staff, or student) sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, and college/school/unit.
- B. [Overall Findings: Supplemental Tables and Figures](#): The frequency of interactions with people of various identities; sense of belonging by race/ethnicity/domestic or international status and gender identity; agreement with institutional support by role or various identities; experience with discrimination and harassment according to identity and political views.
- C. [Undergraduate Students](#): Beliefs about campus climate for diversity and equity and institutional support for diversity and equity; experiences with insensitive or disparaging remarks and discrimination or harassment; respondents' demographics.
- D. [Graduate Students](#): Beliefs about campus climate for diversity and equity and institutional support for diversity and equity; experiences with insensitive or disparaging remarks and discrimination or harassment; respondents' demographics.
- E. [Faculty](#): Beliefs about campus climate for diversity and equity and institutional support for diversity and equity; experiences with insensitive or disparaging remarks and discrimination or harassment; respondents' demographics.
- F. [Staff/Administrators](#): Beliefs about campus climate for diversity and equity and institutional support for diversity and equity; experiences with insensitive or disparaging remarks and discrimination or harassment; respondents' demographics.
- G. [Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences with diversity, equity, and inclusion at Northeastern](#): The effects of the pandemic on campus climate satisfaction level; agreement on institutional support; comfort level sharing views; discrimination or harassment.
- H. [Results by Location](#): Location in the Northeastern global system and responses to sense of belonging campus climate for DEI; institutional support for DEI; comfort level sharing DEI views.
- I. [Results by Race/Ethnicity and Citizenship](#): Data includes location in the Northeastern global system and responses to sense of belonging campus climate for DEI; institutional support for DEI; comfort level sharing DEI views.