

Appendix A

Thematic Review of Comments

Out of the 654 surveys received, approximately 11% percent of the respondents contributed responses to four open-ended questions about the state of diversity at and actions taken by Minot State University (MSU), suggestions for improvement, their experiences at MSU, and about the survey itself. Respondents included undergraduate and graduate students, as well as professional staff/administrators, faculty, and staff. Generally, slightly more respondents were in favor of the school's attention to diversity and climate issues than those who were not. A few respondents praised MSU's efforts to create a supportive, welcoming atmosphere. Some respondents indicated that diversity efforts are over-emphasized and that this has led to patterns of reverse discrimination.

Question 35 offered respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their perceptions of how accessible specific areas of campus were for people with disabilities. Sixty-one individuals provided comments, and suggested that several buildings (e.g., Lura Hall/Manor, McCullough, Dakota Hall, Administrative building, fourth floor of Old Main) were inaccessible for physically impaired individuals, that there is a dearth of accessible handicapped parking, and that the grounds ought to be better maintained during the winter months. Some comments included:

- *Although the buildings are all in compliance with ADA, the campus does not allow for full inclusion of persons with disabilities as people who have physical impairments have to go out of their way to get around the campus for classes and activities.*
- *I think the campus does the best they can for students with disabilities. It is difficult with all the snow and ice we have for those with disabilities, but the campus does a decent job at keeping the campus accessible.*
- *The snow is not cleared when classes resume and the sprinklers that are spraying over the sidewalks couldn't be good for motorized wheel chairs.*
- *Sidewalks are sloped uphill, handicapped doors are left locked and student health is worst of all to access.*
- *Our campus is not entirely wheelchair accessible. In order for a student to get onto the sidewalk coming from the residence halls, there is only one ramp they can take, and at the moment, it is blocked off by construction. Also, two of the residence halls do not have elevators for those people who cannot climb the stairs. In the humanities building, there is only one way for a person in a wheelchair to get onto certain floors. If those ways are blocked off, that person cannot get to class. Also, the doorways going into that building have a bump for the person to go over, making it difficult to enter. Swain hall, the athletic building, does not have any hand rails and the incline is so steep that the person in the wheelchair could only get about half way up the incline before they would start to roll backwards.*

- *Very few instructors/teachers are willing to work with students who have a disability of any kinds. They will tell you to go to such and such place to get help. The campus is not set up well people who use disability services on campus. They have to walk clear across campus. The service needs to be more centralized. The buildings are not set up in a matter for someone who has a hard time seeing or is blind. Getting around in a wheelchair in many places is nearly impossible.*

The other three open-ended questions elicited responses which were similar in theme, so are presented together, according to themes, in this report. Question 9 asked respondents to elaborate on their personal experiences with harassment (hostile, intimidating, or offensive conduct that interfered with their ability to work or learn on the MSU campus). Thirty-eight respondents provided comments. In addition, 78 people provided commentary regarding Question 28, which asked respondents to elaborate on the ways in which MSU does or does not address an array of campus climate issues. Finally, Question 62 asked respondents to provide additional thoughts or further describe their experiences at MSU. Of the 79 people that provided comments, some respondents remarked on the overall campus climate, on issues of race and sexual orientation, on requiring workshops or classes on issues of difference, on ways in which to improve the climate, and on the survey.

With respect to the overall campus climate, some individuals said the campus was welcoming and a wonderful place to work. Others indicated MSU needs to direct attention to specific issues of difference and diversity. Some shared specific instances of harassment and discrimination.

- *It is very difficult to have a diverse campus because we are a small university, and we are away from a lot of cities. Minot State does the best they can to diversify the campus, but it is difficult. Dr. Fuller has made a conscience effort with his trip to China to really make a difference.*
- *I am fairly new to the campus so my responses on this survey are based on limited experience. So far the campus seems to provide an open & friendly climate.*
- *Minot State has been an awesome experience for me thus far. I've felt extremely welcomed and appreciated here. I've been to three schools and this is by far the best.*
- *For the most part, my experiences here at MSU as a staff person have been positive and enjoyable. I had some experience with what I feel is a small amount of harassment, but nothing serious at this point. Continuous communication is important in dealing with any issues and MSU is trying. Thanks for asking!*

- *Personally my experience at MSU has been mostly positive, but I am white christian which blends in Conservative North Dakota. I cannot say for sure what the experiences of non-white and non-christians have been like. I think that the attitudes of most faculty have been pleasant and approachable, but I cannot say the same for the staff. I have encountered unfriendly attitudes at both the records and business office, sometimes feeling like I am inconveniencing them. I have noticed a slight improvement this past year though.*
- *I feel that MSU is going in the right direction with everything that is getting done.*
- *While I wouldn't describe this environment as one of extreme intolerance, I do believe it is still dominated by an ideology that can best be expressed as white, patriarchal, heterosexual, and Christian. The assumption is still that this concept reflects what is "normal" or "typical" and deviations from this, while not overtly denigrated, are still "other." I think it's really difficult to challenge this inherent ideology in a place where there is primarily one cultural group and not a lot of influx of competing backgrounds and experiences. I'm not confident that Social Justice classes would take care of a bias that many people from this area have taken for granted as "the way God made things." Again, I want to stress that I don't believe there is any malice here, just provincial ignorance.*
- *An instructor this semester seemingly went out of her way to create an environment which was hostile and uncaring.*
- *When my director finds out I talked with another university representative, I am reprimanded numerous times. I fear on-going retaliation if I were to discuss her behavior with others above her.*
- *A supervisor felt comfortable making remarks about my choice of clothing, my hair style, my background and my vocabulary (it is not profane).*
- *Bullying happens in my office regularly from one person.*

Those individuals who commented on issues of race seemed to agree that racism exists at MSU, and some described experienced or observed racism and discrimination. Others lamented that attention diversity has resulted in “reverse discrimination.”

- *I personally feel that specific groups tend to make their circumstances an issue more than other people do. I have never seen or experienced an instructor or facility member show any negativity towards a person for any reason, color, gender, sexual orientation, etc. I just don't see this as an issue in our area.*
- *I don't think all of the attention on different categories is going to help, the only thing that will help improve is if we start looking at people as people and not as labels.*
- *This campus is not welcoming to older students or native Americans. Unless you are white and lutheran, you may want to go to college somewhere else.*
- *Don't you understand you're doing more to create racism, sexism, etc. than to resolve it? I think the only reason your doing this is that the politically correct (the thought police) have already determined that a class on the subject will be required for employees. Like all surveys, this thing is set up to promote your decision, not to get information. Heck, the answers you'd get from most people weren't an option.*

- *I have had my attempt to use a check to pay for purchases compared to the bad check list (as opposed to others in line), I have been questioned as to how I got a job on campus, I have been "pre-qualified" by salespeople (they told me later), I have stood while my aluminum cans were recycled to make sure that I hadn't loaded the bag with non-aluminum debris when others before me just had their bags weighed (not inspected), I have had others taken in front of me while waiting for a table at restaurants. How much more do you want?*
- *The people that are "different" are favored because of the fear of a law suit.*
- *Believe out of all races whites are involved the most, and may be some discomfort with allowing other races to hold some of the highest positions. If an issue arises, it is all whites with the highest position who have the final say on an issue, and when a non white is involved in the issue seem to have a good chance. Dances and most functions address what the majority of the campus is, white, so the music mostly played is country or rock n' roll/alternative, when there are a lot of people on campus who don't listen to it, so they do not go to the events. Where as if it was a variety of music to touch all classes, more people would want to show up.*
- *Canadians are a big factor here at Minot State. However, they are privileged over Americans, I believe. It seems like everything is set for them and not us.*
- *The indians are discriminated against because they drink to much.*

Throughout the survey, comments emerged regarding sexual orientation. While some comments suggested that there is a dearth of programs for and awareness of issues of sexual orientation and sexual identity, some of the other comments expressed respondents' negative opinions of homosexuality.

- *In ND it is illegal to marry unless it is a man and a woman so I don't think we need to promote illegal behavior.*
- *Offer a gay/bisexual/lesbian student group that is non-judgmental and does not force them to do things they do not want to do (ie. parades or something). It should be a group where students can just be themselves and talk about issues that they feel are important to discuss.*
- *It would NOT improve the campus climate to promote gay, lesbian, bisexual, or anything else related to that.*
- *After coming out of the closet..., I was harassed by those with whom I lived with in the dorms, my roommate at the time forced me to move out immediately. I was left lewd phone messages and signs on my door.*
- *Classmate was inappropriate towards gays; after standing up to him, my sex was attacked.*
- *Unlike my last university, there does not seem to be any resources or activities directed toward GLBTQ students.*
- *Our institution is so homophobic that it is considered okay to announce to faculty senate that gay people shouldn't be here, and no one denounces the speaker.*

A few respondents commented about the lack of funding and certain accommodations for low income, nontraditionally aged, and parenting students. They suggested greater flexibility in course scheduling and assignments, increased funding and access to on-line courses, and building a daycare center on campus.

- *Classes offered only online at MSU discriminate against low income students.*
- *Some professors can be difficult to deal with about students that must work for tuition.*
- *More regard should be given to older-than-average students as they struggle to balance school and life, i.e.: attendance policy.*
- *For veterans are include in classroom activities and supported by efforts of class assignments they can complete with a schedule not conflicting with military schedule. Provide housing for parents.*

Some respondents described their experiences or observations of gender discrimination and sexual assault or harassment on the MSU campus.

- *I have had experiences in classes where I felt that a woman's point of view was not as valued as a man's.*
- *Too many sexual comments and three males that take advantage of their female staff on the campus of MSU*
- *Sexual assault is covered up on campus. It is better to deal with it openly.*
- *I think that sexual violence against women (particularly rape) is not regarded as a 'real crime'.*
- *A comment was made about a salary offer being enough for someone in my situation (implied single and female at the time) to live off of. On later occasions, mandatory evening activities including teaching night classes and attending meetings and fund raisers were considered nonissues by the rest of the department (all married with or without children) while it mean hiring a sitter and repeated evenings away from the children.*
- *A bunch of boys who live in my dorm always comment on how they want to have sex with me.*
- *They could do a better job of protecting students *especially the female student from sexual assault. I was an R.A. on campus and we were never informed that there was a rape on campus last spring. This should be mandatory so then we can inform residents.*

A number of respondents commented on religion. Most of the remarks suggested there is a strong, and sometimes overwhelming, Christian influence on campus. Several respondents were annoyed and harassed by the Campus Crusade for Christ's on-campus activities. A few other

respondents would like to see more religious dialogue, regarding both Christianity and other religions/spiritual affiliations.

- *There is too much of a religious push on campus. I feel attacked by all of the religious groups on campus. I feel that they are pushing their views and beliefs on me. If your going to let people of any religious group come on campus and hand out bibles (which I think is wrong to start with) you should let all religions on campus to hand out religious material.*
- *Everything on campus relates to the fact that they assume everyone believes in a christian religion which we all know isn't the case.*
- *The only thing about the campus that I have a big problem is that it is extremely orientated towards Christians. Recently, there were some people on the grounds handing out flyers and I had to find alternate routes to my classes to avoid being bombarded by them.*
- *I would like to see more religious groups. Preaching the word of God because I just like talking about religion.*
- *Campus Crusade for Christ is an organization that indiscreetly persecutes non-Christians for their beliefs (ie. Do You Agree With Jens? talk). Please discuss with them ways to be more open and friendly towards other religions and to not publicly ridicule others for not being Christians. Also, there should be a Multi-Faith Group on Campus for people of all religions to attend without judgment.*
- *For three days straight, a large group of people were preaching the stories of the bible and I was approached several times about attending their meeting. I felt uncomfortable and annoyed. I don't appreciate when someone pushes their own beliefs on my, I have my own religion and I don't force people on it.*
- *I am a Christian and I have heard many people make comments that are derogatory towards Christians.*
- *Christian religions formally recognized, and other religions are not. It is even difficult to get teachers to honor or respect other holidays important to non christian religions*
- *Some people may find it inappropriate or offensive, etc. to have individuals surrounding every entry and exit on campus trying to give you a bible 10 times a day. Especially when they stand in the courtyard and yell things like "you are going to hell." That is not what I want to hear to start my day off in the morning. Although I am a Christian, I believe in God, I still don't appreciate people questioning where I stand in my faith at school. I shouldn't feel bad because I try to avoid these people when they are here because it feels almost like a form of harassment. And I feel that other individuals of different faiths on campus become extremely offended. I'm sure it wouldn't fly if Muslim or Mormon individuals stood around trying to hand out copies of the Koran or something, so technically it would be discrimination of religious beliefs. But those should be separate from a school environment anyway, that is what Church is for.*
- *I am disappointed that they allow christans' to have events on campus but they don't have other religions involved if you want to involve religion in school then it should be non-denominational!*

A few respondents commented on the prospect of workshops/classes aimed at helping to raise awareness around communities and people of difference. Of the few people sharing their opinions, all suggested that the University ought to offer programs/workshops, rather than

require them. Several respondents suggested that MSU institute an on-campus daycare facility. A few respondents offered their opinions about the ways in which MSU might begin to improve the climate for all constituents.

- *Requiring people to take a course on an issue relating to accessibility or acceptance can actually have a negative effect. People have to want to take the course and value its contents before it becomes meaningful enough to impact behavior or beliefs.*
- *I think that this school needs a daycare of some sort.*
- *Make it easier for parents to attend classes...start a daycare!*
- *Since a majority of the students who attend MSU are nontraditional students they may start thinking about a daycare on base to provide hourly care while some students attend classes.*
- *I think that there could be more offered for students who are non-traditional. Sometimes I do not think the professors realize that this group of students has different needs than the average college aged student.*
- *Still believe majority rules and that the campus is geared towards whites, with some involvement of other races, since they are present. It would be nice to see an event based on a demographic not white or native american, and with as much promotion as if it were an all white event. hat might not happen though until a lot more diversity comes to the campus. As a black male, out of the 3000+ students, it is known to most people I talk too that the major reason blacks or other races are at this school is because of the recruitment for sports, or the military base.*
- *There are not enough cultural events to open people's minds to new ideas.*
- *There needs to be more support for "older" students. Many do not have the support and assistance from family members and university programs as younger students do. Just because someone is older, doesn't mean they don't need help. I understand the need for programs to help younger students, they're just starting out and need nurturing. Older students can need help too.*
- *I would like to have dorm activities that include all of the dorms.*
- *Offer diversity in foods for people of different race, e.g.: soul food for black students.*
- *If there's any way to attract a more (a lot more) diverse community here on campus, do it!*

Lastly, some respondents commented about the survey itself.

- *The most difficult thing I feel about surveys like this, is that no matter where you go there are always going to be hardships, but if everyone would keep an open mind about all of these issues, it would unite campuses all over.*
- *This is the first time that anyone has asked my opinion. It's kind of nice.*
- *Worst survey ever!*
- *Thanks for the opportunity.*
- *It was long.*
- *It was very important topic to discuss!*
- *Minot State University has a long way to go, but just the idea that there IS a problem and that these surveys are out here is a step forward.*