

**Faculty Perceptions of Climate and Job Satisfaction by Race/Ethnicity:
Findings from 2005 *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey***

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August 2007

There has been increased attention given to the status of ethnic minority faculty members in American higher education over the past few decades. While minority faculty continue to increase their presence in the professoriate, they represent approximately 15% of full time faculty members in American colleges and universities. Of this figure, 6.6% are Asian American, 3.2% are Hispanic, and 5.3% represent Black faculty members (Cook & Cordova, 2006; Chronicle of Higher Education, 2006).

Because ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the academy, work life issues, including quality of life, impacting this population have become a national issue (Holcomb-McCoy & Addison-Bradley, 2005; Tack & Patitu, 1992). Perceptions about the work environment have been linked to overall satisfaction with work. For example, factors such as non-supportive colleagues, unwelcoming institutional and departmental climates, and departments lacking diversity contribute to an individual's perception of the work place being collegial (Cooper, Ortiz, Benham, & Scher, 2002; Tack & Patitu, 1992). Such factors (among others) have been found to be directly related to predicting satisfaction with work environments for faculty members regardless of ethnicity (Saddler & Creamer, 2006).

This report examines factors associated with the satisfaction of ethnic minority faculty members at Virginia Tech. Data from the 2005 *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* provide insight about ethnic minority faculty members' perceptions about university and departmental climate at the institution. Most of these data were shared in presentations during spring 2007 to the Task Force on Race and the Institution and the Black Caucus. The report is intended to generate dialogue about items to add to the *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* when it is re-administered in fall 2008.

Key Findings

- Overall, faculty members at Virginia Tech are satisfied with their jobs, but less so with salary.
- There are more significant differences by race in perceptions of the university climate than of departmental climate.
- Black faculty members perceive the university climate less hospitable than do majority and Asian faculty members.
- Regardless of race, views about departmental climate are relatively positive, but Hispanics have a pattern of somewhat less positive views.

Methodology

Data for the study were collected via a web-based questionnaire administered in February 2005 to all research and instructional faculty at Virginia Tech. Virginia Tech was the recipient of

a 3.5 million ADVANCE institutional transformation grant sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 2003. NSF ADVANCE grants are designed to promote the recruitment and success of women in academic engineering and science by transforming institutional culture.

Population. From a population of 1278 tenured and tenure-track faculty members, 816 responded to the 2005 *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* for a response rate of 64%. A survey link was included in an invitation to participate in the study distributed in an e-mail from the Provost, Mark McNamee. Non-respondents were contacted through follow-up emails until there was almost no yield of additional respondents. Table 1 provides an overview of the faculty respondents by race and gender. Table 2 displays a breakdown by race of the faculty respondents.

Table 1. Response Rate of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty (n=816)

	Work-Life Survey Respondents	Response Rate By Group*	
	n	N	Percentage
Male	599	985	61%
Female	217	293	75%
White	703	1060	69%
Non-White	99	218	45%

*Based on faculty population data from fall 2004.

White (n=703) and male faculty members (n=599) represented over half of the respondents. Data below represent the response rate to the *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* by race. About 45% percent of the ethnic minority faculty members in February 2005 completed the survey.

Table 2. Response Rate by Race

	Work-Life Survey Respondents	Response Rate By Group*	
	n	N	Percentage
Asian	59	116	51%
Black	22	44	50%
Hispanic	16	24	67%
Other	2	73	2.7%
White	730	1069	69%

*Based on faculty population data from fall 2004.

Data presented above reflect responses from 99 non-White full time faculty members at Virginia Tech: Black (n=22), Asian (n=59), Hispanic (n=16), and other (n=2). Small sample sizes limit the generalizability of the findings.

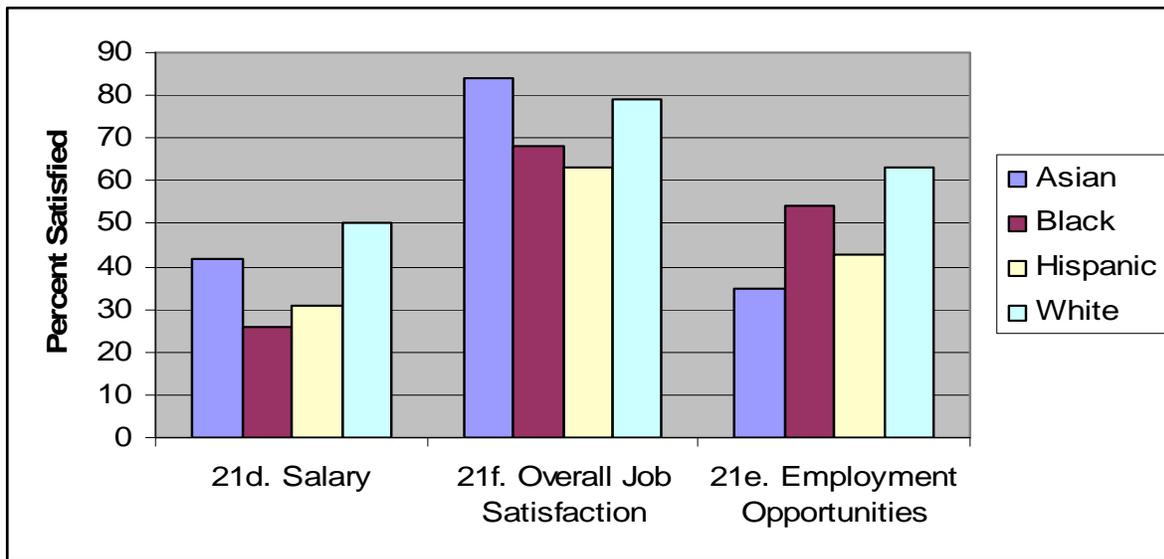
Instrumentation. The 2005 *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* was a web-based instrument consisting of 130 items that covered a range of job and family related factors. Survey responses were rated on a four-point scale that allowed respondents to choose whether they strongly agreed (1), somewhat agreed (2), somewhat disagreed (3), or strongly disagreed (4) with items on the

survey. Respondents could also select ‘do not know’, which was recoded to missing. The Survey Research Center at the university oversaw the distribution of the questionnaire.

Satisfaction

The majority of faculty members in all ethnic groups reported being satisfied with their job overall. White and Asian faculty members were more satisfied overall than members of other ethnic groups. Levels of satisfaction about salary were lower for all ethnic groups. Compared to other ethnic groups, married Asian faculty members were least satisfied with their partner’s employment opportunities.

Figure 1. Satisfaction with Aspects of Job



Note: % satisfaction includes “somewhat satisfied” and “very satisfied.”

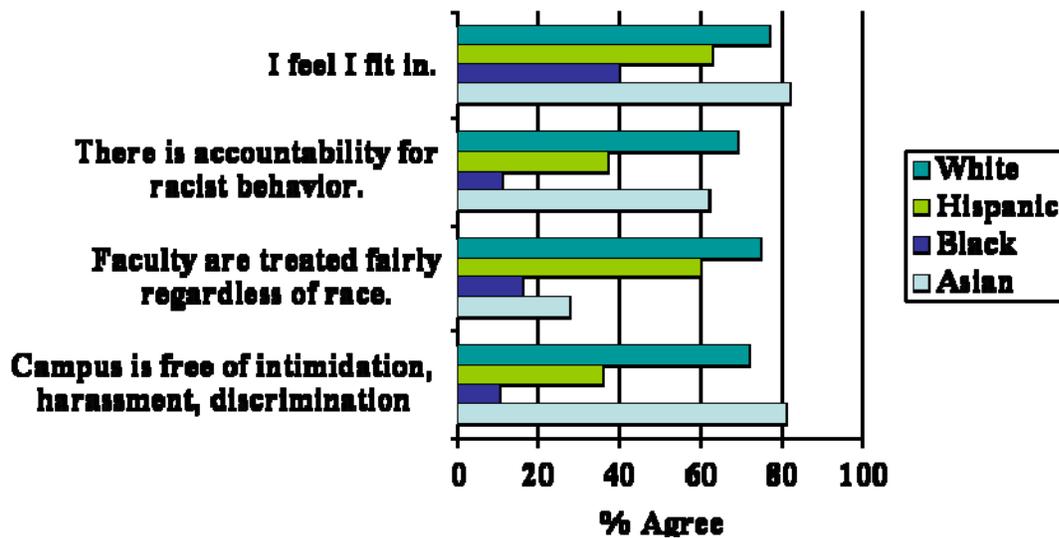
Findings from this study are consistent with the literature that job satisfaction for ethnic minorities is highest for Asian faculty members and lowest for Hispanic and Black faculty members (Tack & Patitu, 1992). Asian faculty members have not been found to experience salary or promotion penalties, factors that contribute to work satisfaction (Lee, 2002). Satisfaction levels for Black and Hispanic faculty members suggest that these groups are satisfied, but not by a large margin.

University Climate

Differences in the perceptions of faculty members in different ethnic groups are more pronounced when it comes to views about university climate (Figure 2). Among the over 50 items on the survey dealing with university climate, respondents were asked to assess agreement with such statements as: (a) the campus was free from intimidation, harassment, and discrimination, (b) university policies were applied in an equitable manner, (c) respondents had read, heard, or seen insensitive or disparaging comments or materials in the workplace that were offensive, (d) faculty members were treated fairly regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or disability, (e) there was accountability for racist and sexist behavior, and (f) graduate students were treated fairly regardless of gender.

There are some wide variations among ethnic groups in perceptions of university climate. For example, less than 50% of Black full-time faculty members agree that they “fit in” with the university climate. Even more startling, less than 20% of Black faculty members feel that there is accountability for racist behavior, that they are treated fairly regardless of race, and that the campus is free from intimidation, harassment, or discrimination. This finding is consistent with the literature that states that racial and ethnic bias continues to be the most predominant barrier in the success and satisfaction of minority faculty members (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Such biases contribute to the perception of an unwelcoming and unsupportive environment.

Figure 2. Perceptions of University Climate by Ethnicity



Note: % agree includes “somewhat” and “strongly agree”.

There are significant differences among ethnic groups in responses to the question: “Faculty are treated fairly regardless of race.” Fewer than 20% of Black faculty members believe faculty members are treated fairly regardless of race. Nearly 80% of White faculty respondents agree with this item. Hispanic faculty members follow closely behind their White faculty colleagues with a 60% rate of agreement. Asian faculty respondents, however, reported a low rate of agreement (less than 30%) on this item.

A similar pattern holds true for the statement the “campus is free of intimidation, harassment, and discrimination.” Fewer than 40% of Black (10%) and Hispanic (30+ %) faculty respondents agree that the campus is free of intimidation, harassment, and discrimination. Both Asian (80+ %) and White (70+ %) faculty respondents tended to agree, perceiving the campus as free of intimidation, harassment, and discrimination.

Table 3 represents views of university climate related to the application of institutional policies, the recruitment of minority faculty, the receipt of insensitive or offensive materials, and how faculty view they are respected at the institution. When compared to other faculty members, Black faculty members have less positive views about the university climate. For example, 65%

of Black faculty respondents feel they are treated with respect at Virginia Tech. Sixty seven percent (67%) agree that they have read, heard, and/or seen insensitive comments or material that they perceived as being offensive. Twenty-nine percent (29%) feel that Virginia Tech policies are applied in a uniform manner. Lastly, only 10% of Black faculty members feel that the recruitment of minority faculty members is a top priority at the university.

Table 3. Perceptions of University Climate

Questionnaire Items & Percent Agree*	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
1b. I am treated with respect at Virginia Tech.	90%	65%	81%	82%
1w. I have read, heard, and/or seen insensitive or disparaging comments or materials in the workplace that are offensive to me.	32%	67%	50%	33%
1e. Policies at VT are generally applied in a uniform manner.	75%	29%	33%	65%
1jj. The recruitment of women and minority faculty members is a top priority at Virginia Tech.	40%	10%	40%	57%

*Note: Percent agree includes “somewhat” and “strongly agree.”

Findings concerning university climate suggest that Hispanic and Black faculty members in particular have very different and more negative perceptions and that they are fairly critical about the university’s commitment to addressing these issues. Data shown in Table 3 should raise awareness about the importance of taking visible steps to improve perceptions about the university climate, particularly through activities that promote the recruitment of women and minorities.

Departmental Climate

Survey items pertaining to departmental climate included questions about departmental policies, department leadership, supportive colleagues, and performance expectations and contributions. Overall, over 50% of minority faculty respondents feel that tenure and promotion requirements are clearly articulated in their departments. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of Hispanic faculty members agree that faculty know about policies or opportunities that they are unaware of. All faculty respondents, despite race, tend to agree that their departments are supportive of faculty members of all races.

Regardless of race, views about departmental climate are relatively positive. For example, in items 2w through 2g, all faculty respondents tended to agree that performance expectations were clearly communicated, their departments valued their contributions, departmental leadership could be trusted, and that they are treated with respect within their department. These are encouraging findings.

Table 4. Perception of Department Climate

Questionnaire Items & Percent Agree*	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
2t. The requirements for T & P are clearly articulated in my department.	66%	71%	56%	73%
2m. Other faculty in my department seem to know about policies or opportunities for which I am unaware.	45%	35%	57%	29%
2dd. My department is supportive of the success of faculty members.	78%	80%	60%	90%
2w. Performance expectations for faculty are communicated clearly in the department.	72%	68%	67%	72%
2ii. My department's administration values my contribution in the department.	87%	77%	73%	83%
2n. The leadership in my department can be trusted.	87%	90%	81%	79%
2g. I am treated with respect by other faculty members in my department.	84%	76%	87%	85%

*Note: Percent agree includes "somewhat" and "strongly agree."

One critique from underrepresented faculty members is that their scholarly work sometimes goes unnoticed or that their work is devalued in their departments (Turner, 2003). Faculty members also report that policies, especially promotion and tenure, are often unclear (Turner & Myers, 2002). Findings from this survey do not support the literature with regard to unsupportive departmental climates. Faculty members appear to feel valued and respected, which is essential for satisfaction. Findings indicate that departmental climates are relatively encouraging and positive for all faculty members, regardless of race.

Comparison to 1998 Climate Study

It is possible to get some sense of shifts in campus climate by comparing similar questions on the 2005 *AdvanceVT Faculty Work-Life Survey* and the 1998 *Faculty Assessment of Campus Climate Survey*. The comparisons are only approximations, however, as in most cases the questions are not identical and there is no way to determine what overlap there is among the respondents to the 1998 and 2005 questionnaires.

Differences in findings from the two questionnaires seem to be that, first, improvements have been made in the articulation and dissemination of promotion and tenure policies, and secondly, perceptions of overall university climate have improved slightly.

Findings also indicate that ethnic minorities still experience their work differently than other groups, but that views about racism are slightly more positive. Key findings are highlighted below in addition to a more detailed description of selected survey items.

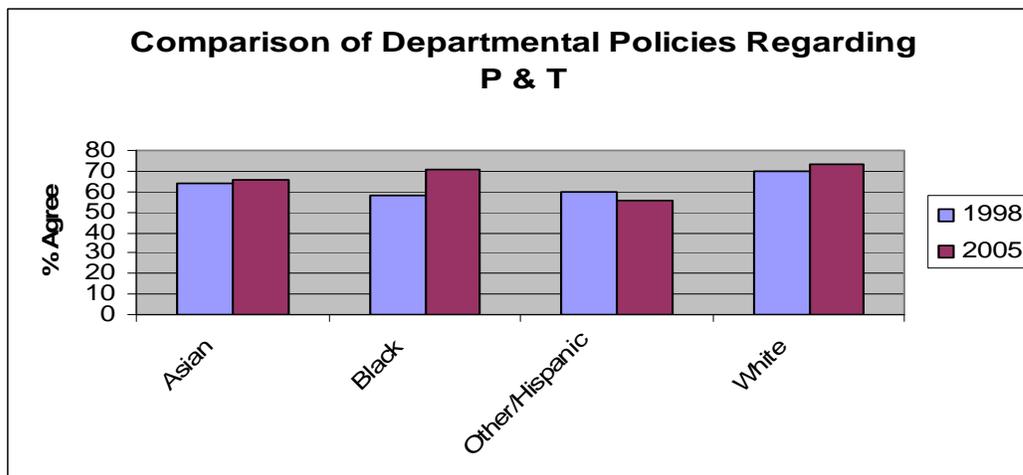
Key Findings:

- Overall, a majority of faculty members are satisfied with the communication of expectations about promotion and tenure policies. The level of satisfaction was higher in 2005 than in 1998.
- With the exception of Black faculty members, faculty members perceive that they “fit in.” Views were more positive about this in 2005 than 1998.
- Perceptions of university climate on racism appear to have improved for all faculty members with the exception of ethnic faculty members not considered White, Asian, or Black. Black faculty members, however, did not respond with agreement in overwhelming numbers to this survey item.

Virginia Tech administered a *Faculty Assessment of Campus Climate* survey in 1998 to full time faculty members working both on and off campus. Of the 2,648 faculty members representing regular or restricted full time faculty, half of the surveys were completed, yielding a response rate of 50%.

Agreement about similar questions related to the clarity of communication of expectations for tenure and promotion increased somewhat among Blacks, Whites, and Asians between 1998 and 2005 (Figure 4). In 1998, 59% of Black faculty respondents agreed that expectations regarding promotion and career advancement were clear. In 2005, 71% of Black faculty respondents reported agreement with a similar survey item on promotion and tenure. This is a 12% increase from 1998 findings.

Figure 4. Comparison of Perception of Departmental Policies by Ethnicity



Notes: 1998 P&T item: “In my department or unit, expectations concerning promotions and career advancement are made clear.” 2005 item: “The requirements for T & P are clearly articulated in my department.”
 “Other” represents other minorities. This category was used in the 1998 survey only.
 Percent agree includes “somewhat” and “strongly agree.”

The surveys elicited information on departmental climate, university climate and attitudes, and personal experiences with discrimination. Several survey items asked respondents to rate their perception of experiences with discrimination. Items from the 1998 survey asked questions about university and departmental climate with regards to racism. The 2005 survey elicited information about accountability for racist behavior, faculty being treated fairly regardless of race, the campus being free from intimidation, and perceptions of individual fit.

Figure 6 shows that, with the exception of Blacks, members of other ethnic groups responded more positively in 2005 than in 1998 to similar questions about “fitting in.” Only 40% of Black faculty respondents reported agreement with perceptions of fitting in. This is a decline from 1998 survey findings.

There also appear to be improvements in climate between 1998 and 2005 in perceptions about racism in all ethnic groups but Hispanics (Figure 7). In 2005, seventy-five percent (75%) of White faculty members, 51% of Asians, but only 18% of Black faculty members perceived the university campus climate as non-racist or free from intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.

Figure 6. Comparison of Perceptions of Fitting In

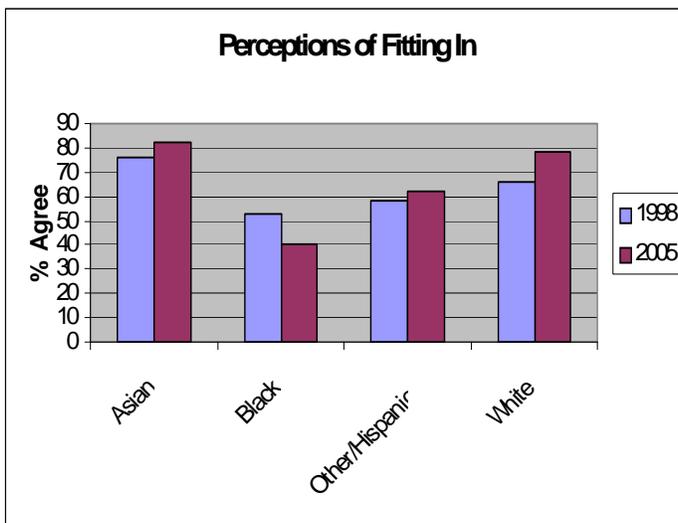
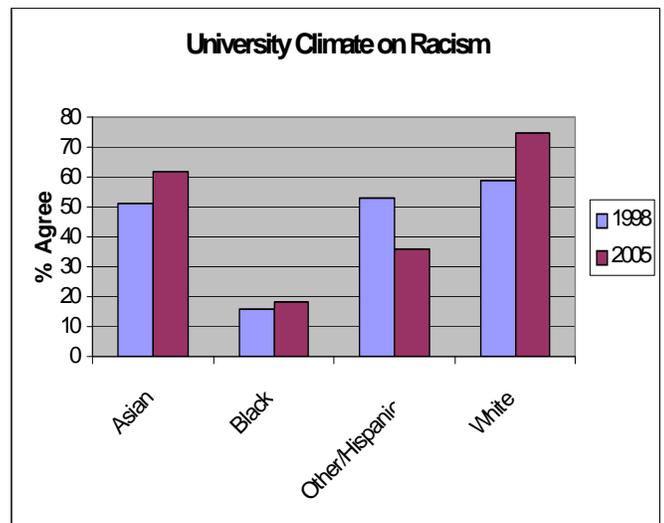


Figure 7. Comparison of Perceptions of Racism



Note: (Figure 6) 1998 item: “I often feel that I don’t “fit in” very well socially with other faculty members in my department or unit.” 2005 item: “I feel I “fit in” at Virginia Tech.” “Other” represents other minorities. This category was used in the 1998 survey only. Percent agree includes “somewhat” and “strongly agree.”

Note: (Figure 7) The 1998 survey item asked respondents to rate the climate at Virginia Tech in general on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being non-racist and 5 being racist. Results were reported as negative, neutral, or positive. A negative response meant that the respondent felt that the climate was racist, a neutral response meant that the respondent felt that the climate was neither positive nor negative, and a positive response meant that the respondent felt that the climate was non-racist. The 2005 survey asked respondents to rate percentage of agreement with various statements dealing with racism. See Figure 2.

When separating perceptions of university and departmental climate by ethnic groups, findings from both surveys are consistent. Ethnic minority faculty members perceive the university climate less hospitable than they do climates in their departments. There also appears to be a

problem with Black faculty members feeling that they fit in with the overall university climate currently. Possible explanations for these findings could be that faculty members experience collegiality, effective communication, and opportunities for professional development within their departments more than they experience collegiality overall within the university. Perhaps these factors contribute to the feeling of being in a community that may or may not be perceived as being a part of the university culture. Findings also suggest that ethnic minorities still experience their work differently than other groups.

Summary

Results from the 2005 *AdvanceVT Work-Life Survey* are consistent, in many cases, with national trends on faculty satisfaction and perceptions of university climate issues. A comparison with findings from the *Faculty Assessment of Campus Climate Survey* administered in 1998 suggests that there has been progress in communicating expectations for promotion and tenure and in improving the racial climate on campus. With the exception of Asians, ethnic minority faculty, particularly Blacks, have more negative views, particularly about the university climate.

More attention to the concerns of ethnic minority faculty members is needed to enhance perceptions of university climate. A qualitative investigation might add context to understanding the types of incidents that led only about one-third of Black and Hispanic faculty members to report feeling that policies at Virginia Tech are applied in a uniform matter. It might also provide insight about the types of remarks and materials that led two-thirds of Black faculty members to report experiencing insensitive or disparaging comments or materials in the workplace. A qualitative component would give a more holistic story of the experiences of faculty members, particularly ethnic minority faculty members.

Recruitment is a key component of *AdvanceVT* initiatives. In 2005, there was not a widespread perception that the recruitment of women and minorities was a top priority at Virginia Tech. A re-administration of the *Work-Life Survey* in fall 2008 will help determine if activities sponsored by *AdvanceVT* have made any in-roads on this perception.

Findings from this report present a snapshot of faculty views in February 2005, during the second year of the implementation of the *AdvanceVT* project. There have been some significant changes in policy and context since then that will be reflected in revisions to the follow-up questionnaire, to be administered in fall 2008. Discussion generated by this report is expected to lead to the addition of items to further assess the climate for diversity at Virginia Tech.

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