

2016 Graduate Student Climate Survey: Preliminary Findings

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Visit: <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/about/diversity/climate.html>

BACKGROUND

The Graduate School, Office of Inclusion and Diversity, and the Division of Student Affairs collaborated to design and administer the 2013 and 2016 Climate Surveys for graduate students. The purpose of these surveys is to gather information about the experiences of graduate students, to identify trends and phenomenon by college and department, and to inform administrators about the needs, concerns, and challenges of graduate students.

The 2013 Survey

- Only Blacksburg campus students
- Nearly 800 completed the survey

Major Themes

- Students needed more options for affordable childcare
- Students with disabilities are misunderstood and often not accommodated
- Students who are nontraditionally aged (over 30 years old) seek community outside of their academic departments

Our Response

- A part-time childcare coordinator position was created in the Graduate School
- Formed an over-30 group
- Several studies and initiatives were conducted to serve students with disabilities

The 2016 Survey

- Collaboration between three divisions
- Improved the design and delivery of the survey for 2016.
- Offered to all enrolled students at all campuses.
- Added a section that focused on traditionally marginalized communities

The results of the survey are published to the Graduate School website and shared with college deans and department heads.

METHODOLOGY

The Graduate Student Climate Survey is an internal Virginia Tech assessment of student experiences, which covers: **Virginia Tech Community, Department Community, Advising and Mentoring, and Diversity and Inclusion.** All data is to remain internal to university offices. The Director for the Office of Graduate Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives, the Assoc. Director for Diversity Strategic Planning, and the Director for Assessment and Professional Development in Student Affairs, and an Associate Professor in the School of Public and International Affairs partnered with **CampusLabs** to design, administer, and store the data. The data are used to gain a better understanding of student climate issues. The data will not be shared external to the university.

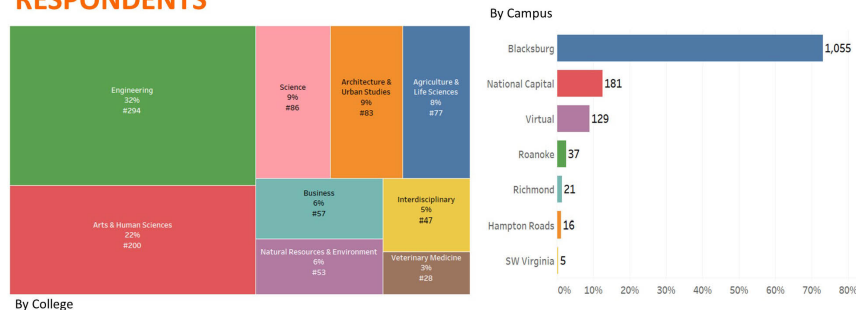
Population: Enrolled graduate students at Virginia Tech, all campuses.

Subject Recruitment: Students were invited to participate in the survey through an email invitation sent in March 2016. The email contained a link to the online survey but the link was not associated with the email. Student email addresses were obtained by the Graduate School. Participation was voluntary and students could skip questions they did not wish to answer. No contact was made with the student beyond email invitations unless the student contacted the authors of the survey. The survey link was also shared on social media and through listserv postings.

Invitations and Response

- 1st invitation was sent to 6,167 students on March 4, 2016
- Survey closed at midnight on April 15, 2016
- 1,449 respondents started the survey and 1083 completed, response rate = 18%, completion rate = 74%
- Over half (50.89%) of the respondents were doctoral students, 45% Masters, 2% Certificate, 1% education specialist, and 1% were in non-degree seeking programs

RESPONDENTS



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Most of my stress stems from the lack of diversity and inclusion that I see within my department, college, and at Virginia Tech as an institution. I often feel like an outsider in the VT community.

I worry about loss of funding & healthcare for my wife and daughter. Work life balance between being a productive PhD student and also a present, good father and husband.

Graduate school: Relentless pressure to do more. Criticism no matter what I do. Constantly having too much on my plate. Vaguely defined and inconsistent expectations. Highly subjective measure for success and for "enough" work to graduate.

Cook Counselling has been amazing and has helped me overcome quite a few of my academic, social, and family struggles. That resource alone has made a huge positive impact on my graduate career. Without it I would likely be graduating a year later than I am.

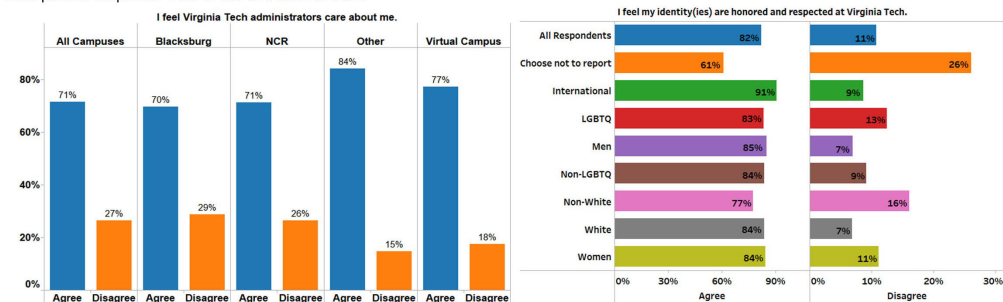
Each department is so different and it's amazing to see that some students have good relationships with their faculty and admin while others are treated as slaves. We talk about this a lot but there seems to be no way to level the field. WHY CAN'T FACULTY be given trainings on how to support and not damage the students?

This survey should be done on an annual basis, strategies should be put in place to address the issues that surface from this survey, and departments should receive a clear message from the leadership that encourages improvement in faculty diversity.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Virginia Tech Community

Most respondents (90%) say that there are sufficient resources to ensure their academic success. Only 78% of respondents say they knew where to find needed academic support. Approximately 67% of the students agree that they knew where to find social and personal support and 22% of virtual students chose "not applicable" to this question. Only (71%) of the respondents say that VT administrators cared about them with the most positive responses from virtual and satellite sites.



Department Community

- Majority of the respondents (88%) say that their department is inclusive.
- 88% of the respondents say that their department works to provide a discrimination-free environment.
- 68% of respondents say that they were socially and professionally integrated into their department at their desired level.

Advising and Mentoring

- About 1 out of 5 graduate students report they are dissatisfied with faculty and department advising.
- 36% of graduate students say they have a mentor who has been influential during their graduate experience.
- Part-time students are less likely to say their advisor is helpful with course selection and preparing for general exams, and are less likely report they have a mentor.

Diversity and Inclusion

- 65% report they are comfortable reporting an instance of discrimination or harassment.
- More than 4 in 10 responded "I don't know" to questions about campus climate for persons who identified as a racial or ethnic minority, sexual or gender minority, veteran status, disabled, or low income.
- 82% of respondents say they say their identity is respected at VT.

If you could start over again, would you enroll at Virginia Tech? (N=1,083)

