

The De Anza College Results of the Student Diversity Climate Survey

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In the spring of 2003, the departments of Human Resources and Institutional Research and Planning conducted a district wide diversity climate survey, with consultation by the District Diversity Advisory Committee. After extensive pre-testing and revision, the offices of Human Resources and Institutional Research and Planning selected a random sample of 146 De Anza College course sections and invited the instructors of those sections to aid in distributing the survey to students. Human Resources and Institutional Research Planning reported, in their executive summary, a 49.6% response rate and a sample of over 2000 De Anza students whose racial/ethnic makeup approximates the distribution of the entire student population at De Anza College. The executive summary of the findings for the district as a whole was published on April 5, 2004. This Board of Trustees presentation can be found at the following links:

<http://fhdafiles.fhda.edu/downloads/aboutfhda/DiversitySurveyPresentation.ppt>
<http://fhdafiles.fhda.edu/downloads/aboutfhda/DiversityClimateSurveyExecSu.pdf>

The information outlined below is a selective summary of the major findings from the De Anza College student diversity survey. The purpose of this report is to provide the campus information useful in planning future student equity initiatives. This report is based on the statistical work compiled by Dr. Lourdes Del-Rio Parent in the FHDA Institutional Research Office; a draft of her tables and report can be found at:

<http://dilbert.fhda.edu/daresearch/diversityreport.pdf>

Major Observations

While students overall gave De Anza College high marks in terms of supporting a positive, diverse environment, at least two areas rose to statistical significance.

- ❖ **White students generally had a more positive view of the classroom environment when compared to other ethnic groups.** Students of color responded with lower marks than White students when asked such questions as their perceptions of teacher approachability outside the classroom and whether teachers showed care and concern. On a wide range of questions, statistically significant differences were found between ethnic groups.
- ❖ **Students whose primary language was not English generally rated the classroom environment, including their perceptions of teacher understanding, less favorably than English speakers.** Given the diversity of languages spoken at De Anza, this finding is important in terms of the work that may need to be done to make students with varying English language abilities feel comfortable in the classroom. The fact that nearly 33% of respondents indicated that English was not their primary language speaks to the importance of this finding for this sample of students. There are indications that this percentage may not be representative of the overall population, but this does not negate it as an issue for the respondents to the survey.

The Good News

The survey results suggest that, on the balance, students find our campus to be a positive environment. Nearly half of all the survey respondents reported that a friend's referral influenced their decision to attend college at De Anza.

Very Few Students Report Negative Incidents

The incidence of highly negative encounters, in the form of harassment or discrimination, is relatively rare at De Anza, as reported by survey respondents. An overwhelming majority of De Anza College student survey participants indicated that they have *never* been harassed (over 90%) or discriminated against (over 85%) by teachers, staff, or other students. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of the respondents have *never* witnessed negative comments or actions by *teachers or staff* about women (over 87%), racial/ethnic minorities (over 86%), LGBT people (over 91%), or people with disabilities (over 94%).

The De Anza climate is marked not only by an absence of negative interactions but by the presence of a sense of caring and welcome. Most survey participants indicated that *most or all* of their teachers have shown care/concern for their students regardless of race/ethnicity (76%), gender (78%), sexual orientation (78%), disability (79%), religion (78%), age (79%), and accent/language (78%). Likewise, a majority of respondents perceived most or all of their teachers at De Anza to be approachable outside of the classroom (62%) and sensitive to students' needs (61%).

Faculty and Staff Provide a Supporting Environment

On average, respondents believed that they have the support from FHDA (note, the questions referred to "Foothill De Anza" but it is assumed that De Anza students were referring to De Anza teachers) teachers and counselors to meet their educational goals. De Anza respondents averaged 2.3 in response to the item "I have the support from De Anza teachers (counselors) to meet my educational goals" (1 = not true, 2 = somewhat true, 3 = true). On average, participants perceived De Anza as an environment for free and open expressions of ideas and beliefs (mean = 2.3). On average, respondents felt as though they "fit in" the campus community (mean = 2.2).

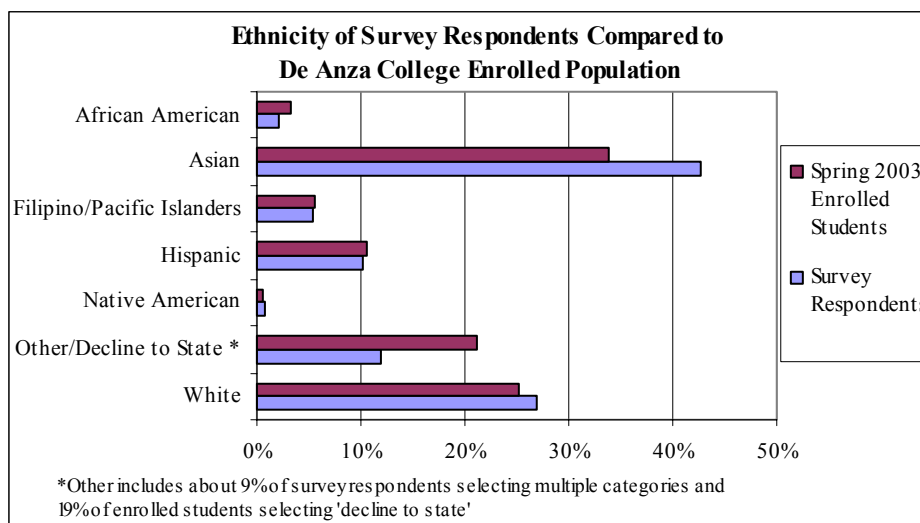
Survey respondents on average believed that students and employees at De Anza should actively promote acceptance of diversity (mean = 2.6) and, indeed, indicated that the *classroom* climate with respect to diversity is fairly positive. An overwhelming majority of respondents perceived *most or all* of their teachers at De Anza to be fair to students regardless of race/ethnicity (83%), gender (84%), sexual orientation (85%), disability (84%), religion (84%), age (84%), and accent/language (81%). Survey participants reported on average (mean = 2.2) that they notice student of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participating equally in classroom activities.

A large majority of survey participants reported that they have *never* been exposed at De Anza to classroom material that may be *offensive* to whites (76%), other racial groups (69%), women (71%), persons with disabilities (82%), LGBT people (76%), and any religion (74%). On average, respondents report that their experiences at De Anza have led them to become more understanding of people's differences (mean = 2.2).

Students Feel Comfortable in De Anza's Diverse Environment

De Anza students seem to take advantage of the diversity of the college, reporting on average that their friends include students from different racial/ethnic groups (mean = 2.6) and that they would like to interact with students with similar (mean = 2.0) *and* different (mean = 2.1) backgrounds to their own. Similarly, survey respondents indicated on average feeling comfortable with people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds (mean = 2.3). Survey participants on average felt comfortable speaking with others about their racial/ethnic background (mean = 2.3) and saying what they really think about racial/ethnic issues (mean = 2.0). Respondents also on average indicated that they feel comfortable going to see a teacher who is of a different race/ethnicity (mean = 2.3), gender (mean = 2.3), religion (mean = 2.3) or sexual orientation (mean = 2.2). Figure 1 outlines the ethnic diversity of respondents and the college population.

Figure 1



The findings summarized above are a testament to the work and energy De Anza College faculty, staff and administrators put into making our campus a place where *all* students are affirmed and encouraged and supported in their higher education. They also demonstrate the effectiveness and continuing importance of campus wide efforts to promote cross-cultural understanding, to value the differences that make this college a vibrant learning environment, and to reduce achievement gaps across various student groups. While the above findings suggest that the majority of survey respondents feel De Anza College is doing well in its diversity efforts, the students who fall outside of that majority can help us identify the areas and issues we need to target for improvement. The remainder of this report will highlight survey findings that illustrate where we continue to fall short in our goal of student equity.

Where Work Needs to Be Done

The current De Anza College mission statement recognizes the need to prepare our students for the diverse world in which they live.

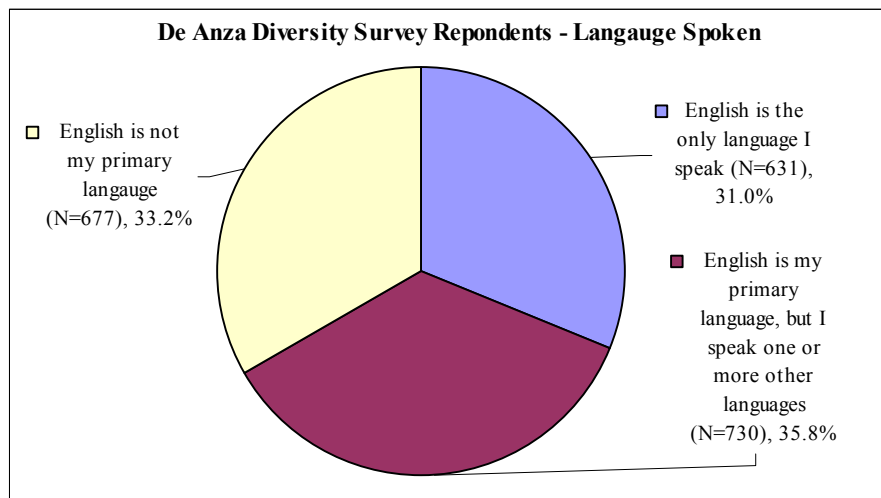
Building on its tradition of excellence, De Anza College challenges students of every background: to develop their intellect, character, and abilities, to achieve their educational goals, and to serve their community in a diverse and changing world.

The 1999 Master Plan indicates that De Anza College fulfills its mission when students become “vital participants in the diverse cultures of our community.” This outcome statement is incorporated in Divisional Equity Plans and is an accepted learning outcome by the curriculum committee. The diversity survey is one measure of this outcome for our students.

Differences Exist Between Groups on Perceived Faculty Support

The results of the diversity climate survey indicate that there are differences among groups in student perceptions of De Anza College as an encouraging and supportive environment in which to study. White students and students who speak English as their primary language appear to experience our campus as one that welcomes them and assume that their instructors view them positively. Figure 2 shows that 33% of respondents did not speak English as a primary language – previous estimates from campus application responses were in the 10% range. Whatever the percentage, it does not negate the perceptions these students have of campus climate.

Figure 2

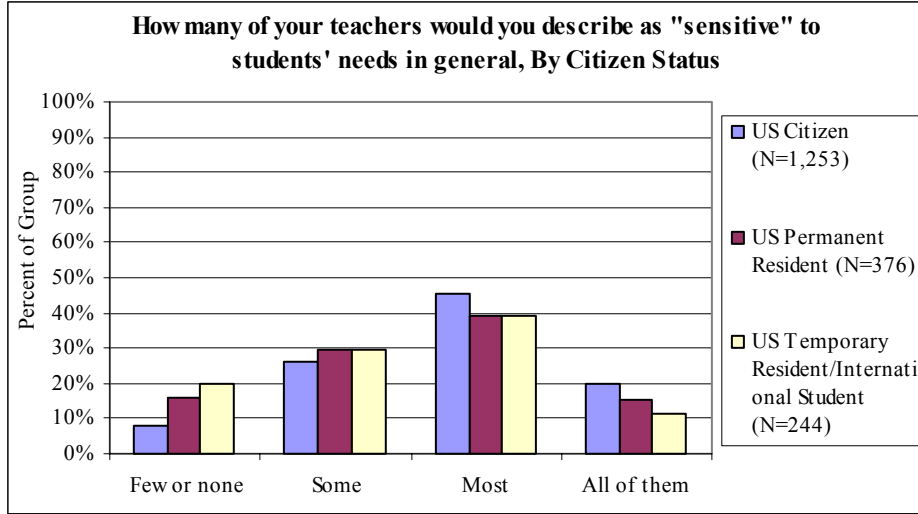


Differences were statistically significant and held across several measures:

- *Teacher Approachability and Sensitivity.* Students who are white, who speak English as their primary language, who are U.S. citizens, who have lived in the U.S. for more than

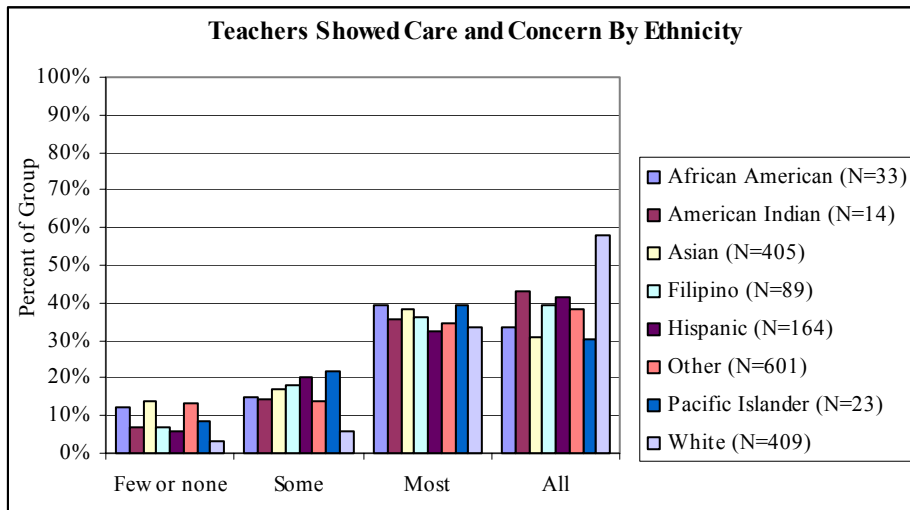
ten years or who are over the age of 50 believe that De Anza teachers are more approachable and sensitive to students' needs than their comparison groups (see, for example, Figure 3 below).

Figure 3



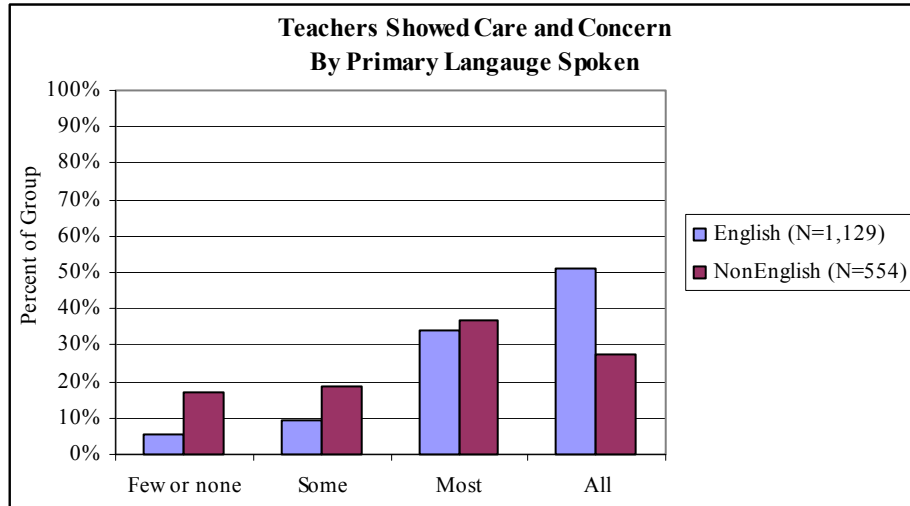
- *Teacher Caring and Concern.*
 - Statistical significant differences were found between the means scores for White students and the means scores of at least one other ethnic group on the question of whether students felt that teachers showed care and concern. As shown in Figure 4, while 58% of White students responded that 'All' of their teachers showed care and concern, only 36% of the combination of all other ethnic groups responded in this way.

Figure 4



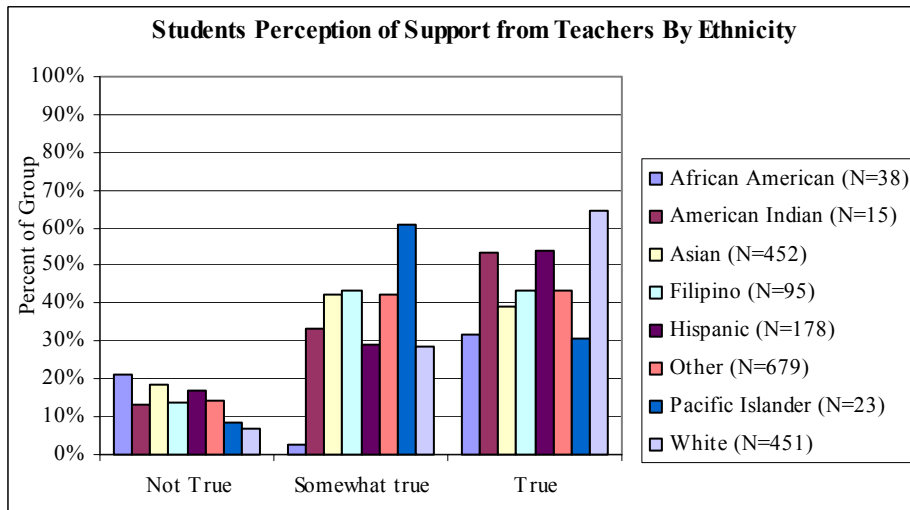
- Statistical significant differences were found between the mean scores for students who speak English as their primary language compared with students who speak other languages as their primary language, with English speakers reporting a higher number of teachers showing care and concern. The result by language is depicted in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5



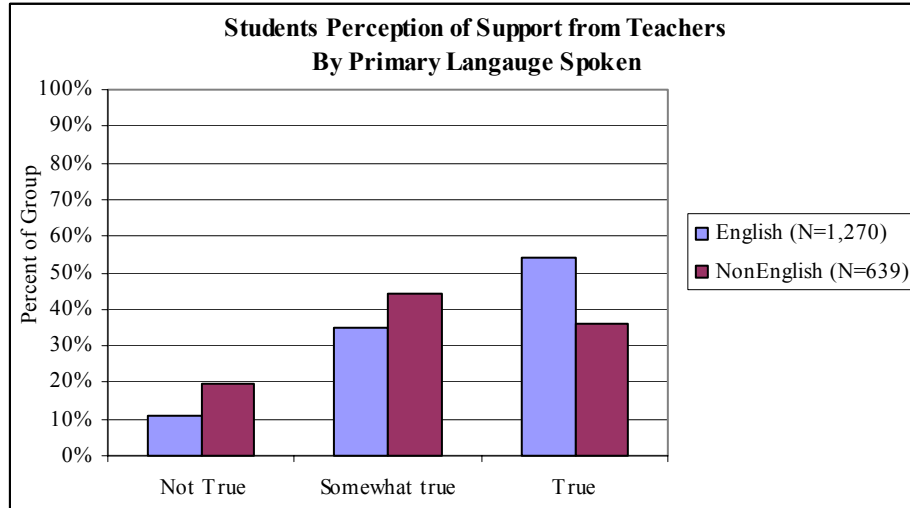
- *Perceived Support from Faculty.* White students perceive significantly more support from teachers than students of color (depicted in Figure 6).

Figure 6



Students over the age of thirty perceive significantly more support than younger students, and students who speak English as their primary language perceive significantly more support than students who do not (see Figure 7).

Figure 7



The results were similar with regards to counselors: white students at De Anza perceive significantly more support from counselors than students of color, except for Filipino students, and students who speak English as the primary language perceive significantly more support than students who do not.

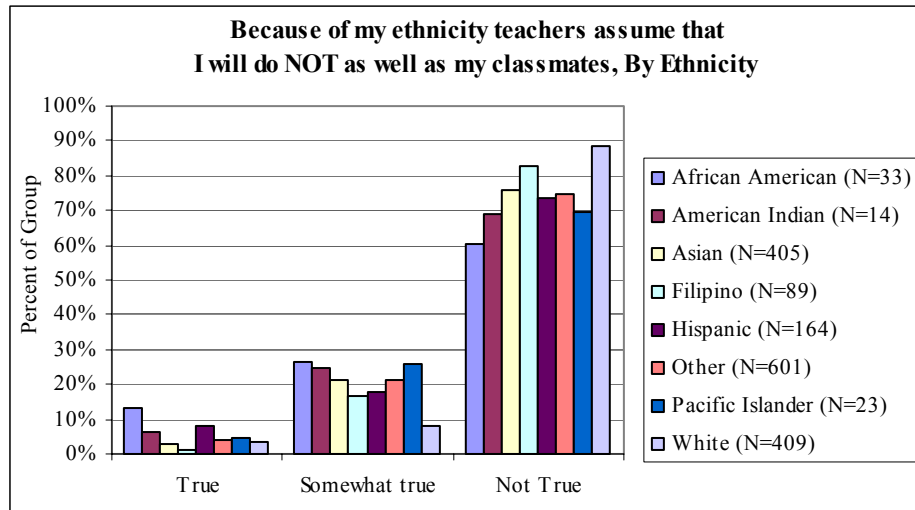
- *Classroom Climate.* An index of several measures of classroom climate indicated statistically significant differences in perceptions of classroom climate. White students were significantly more likely than students from at least one other ethnic group to respond favorably when the following questions were grouped together:
 - whether they feel they “fit in,”
 - that their teachers assume they will do well,
 - that their teachers will not ignore them, and
 - that there aren’t interracial tensions in the classroom.

It should be noted though, that overall the differences were small – none of the differences on individual questions were statistically significant. On average, De Anza College students had a positive view of the classroom climate with less than 5% of respondents indicating the most negative score on a 3 point scale.

Similarly, the mean score on this index of questions for students who speak English as their primary language was significantly different (more positive) than for students who do not speak English as their primary language.

While the test for statistical significance was done on an index of questions, the pattern can be seen even when reviewing the results of a single question, as depicted in Figure 8:

Figure 8



Students Level of Comfort in De Anza’s Diverse Environment Differ Between Groups

- Dealing with Diversity.* On a combined index, White respondents and respondents who chose the ethnic category of “Other” were significantly more likely than Asian students (but not students from other ethnic groups) to report feeling comfortable speaking about their racial/ethnic background, in situations as the racial/ethnic minority, saying what they really think about racial/ethnic issues, when with people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and going to see a teacher of a different racial/ethnic background, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

The pattern of findings outlined above in the last two sections suggests that students at De Anza College whom identified themselves as White and primarily English speaking, perceive the environment in a more positive way than other students. Although the correlation was not statistically tested, this unequal distribution of comfort and support may contribute to the differences in course success rates found across racial/ethnic groups. Given that White students now comprise less than 30% of De Anza College student population and that about 66% of the teaching faculty are White, White students’ more positive experiences and perceptions suggest work still needs to be done at De Anza to ensure that all students perceive that they are being given a similarly high level of educational support.

Students Reported Limited Exposure to a Multicultural Curriculum

The Equity Collaboration Team, the Diversity Advisory Council and the Curriculum Committee have made multicultural infusion across the curriculum an important priority over the last five years. The 2003 De Anza College Curriculum Development Guide includes a section on “Considering Multicultural Content in your Course Outlines.” In addition, the position description for the Curriculum Development Facilitator includes a strong multicultural focus with the number one job responsibility stated as “attending and working with the curriculum and general education committees to insure multicultural infusion in courses.”

Multicultural infusion refers to both the delivery and content of classroom materials. Such a curriculum will be taught with a pedagogy that supports interactions that address the needs of diverse students in the classroom – diverse in terms of learning styles, culture, ethnicity, language, and sexual orientation. Classroom content will include diverse peoples that have contributed to the knowledge and theory of the discipline. In addition, content examples and assessment of student learning will include topics and people from a broad array of backgrounds. De Anza College faculty have made such a curriculum a priority as the best means for fostering student learning.

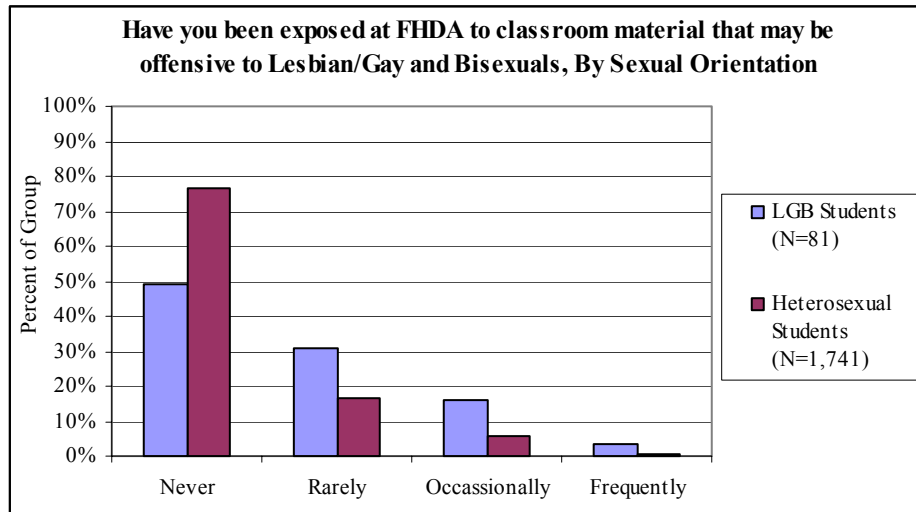
The findings of the diversity climate survey suggest that we need to re-double our efforts in pursuit of this priority. The statistically significant findings below relate to classroom materials, including classroom materials relating to Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) students.

While most De Anza survey participants have never been exposed to *offensive* classroom material, a substantial proportion of respondents also have never been exposed to classroom material that *helped them understand* the issues relevant to various groups. Nearly a third have never been exposed to classroom material that helped them understand issues relevant to racial/ethnic groups and women, 39% have never been exposed to classroom material that helped them understand issues relevant to religious groups, and 43% have never been exposed to classroom material that helped them understand issues relevant to LGBT students or to people with disabilities. A substantial minority have rarely or never been exposed to information specifically about racial/cultural groups other than whites at De Anza:

- 38% have rarely or never been exposed to such material in course readings, lectures or discussions,
- 50% have rarely or never been exposed to such material through college programs or activities,
- 41% have rarely or never been exposed to such material in conversations with classmates, and
- 40% have rarely or never been exposed to such material in conversations with friends.

The survey suggests that we have not built a curriculum inclusive of LGBT students. Approximately 5% (N=91) of De Anza College students responding to the survey reported that they were Lesbian/Gay or Bisexual. These students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to report exposure to classroom materials offensive to LGBT people, as depicted on Figure 9 below.

Figure 9



The respondents to the diversity survey included part time and new students, with 29.6% of students reporting completion of less than 20 units and 42.6% of respondents enrolled in less than 12 units during the quarter in which they were surveyed. Even so, the goal outlined by the Equity plan is that every student will be exposed to a multicultural curriculum in every class.

Unsurprisingly, students who had taken at least one multicultural, intercultural or women’s studies course were significantly more likely than students who hadn’t to report exposure to classroom material that increases understanding of diversity. About 30% of African American Students reported never having taken such a course, and more than 50% of Whites and Asians reported not having taken at least one such course.

In summary, De Anza College has a substantial number of students who lack any exposure to multicultural curriculum and are likely to encounter such material only in classes with a specifically multicultural focus. This suggests there may need to be increased efforts to support multicultural infusion.

Certain Groups Report More Negative Incidents than Others

The small minority of participants who indicated that they have been harassed or discriminated against at De Anza had been most commonly harassed or discriminated against due to their race/ethnicity, with accent/language, gender, and age the next most frequent perceived targets. Of respondents who were discriminated against, African-American students were significantly more likely than other groups to report being discriminated against by staff ($p < .001$). There were no other statistically significant differences across racial/ethnic groups or gender categories in the incidence of rudeness, harassment or discrimination.

Although there were no other statistically significant across-group differences, the prevalence of harassment and discrimination followed the expected pattern: traditionally disadvantaged groups were more likely to be on the receiving end than traditionally privileged groups. Nearly 9% of LGB students report occasional or frequent harassment or discrimination due to sexual orientation, as compared to 0.3% of heterosexual students.

While, overall, students perceive a low incidence of harassment or discrimination due to religion, it was most prevalent among Islamic respondents, 11.5% of whom report occasional or frequent religious harassment or discrimination. Of different age groups, those respondents less than 18 years old reported the most frequent age harassment or discrimination, with 8% of them perceiving it occasionally or frequently. Similarly, students for whom English is not their primary language perceive more common harassment or discrimination due to language, with 8% of them perceiving it occasionally or frequently. Twenty percent of Laotian and 12.5% of Cambodian respondents reported being harassed or discriminated against occasionally or frequently due to race/ethnicity, while over 5% of African, African-American, American Indian, Mexican-American/Chicano, and “Other Non-white” students reported occasional or frequent harassment or discrimination due to race/ethnicity. Approximately 12% of respondents with visual or hearing impairments and psychological or learning disabilities report occasional or frequent harassment or discrimination due to disability. Thus, while harassment and discrimination are fairly rare, when they do occur they affect disadvantaged groups more commonly. Furthermore, even rare incidents can have harmful effects on students.

The survey also reveals that student-to-student negative interactions are more common than teacher/staff-to-student negative interactions. Respondents who have witnessed negative comments or actions about women, racial/ethnic groups, LGBT people or people with disabilities are more likely to have seen or heard fellow *students* making such comments or actions than teachers or staff:

- Nearly 15% of respondents have witnessed negative comments/actions by De Anza *students* targeted at people with disabilities,
- 29% have witnessed such incidents targeted at LGBT people,
- 30% have witnessed such incidents targeted at racial/ethnic minorities, and
- 25% have witnessed such incidents targeted at women.

Finally, while relatively few students reported being harassed or discriminated against, approximately one-third of respondents reported being treated rudely by teachers, staff or students. Taken together these findings suggest that we can work harder to promote civility and mutual acceptance at De Anza. In particular, faculty, administrators and staff need to be more sensitized to how *students* treat each other and not let discriminatory interactions go unaddressed.

Conclusion

We have much to be proud of at De Anza College and the results of the diversity climate survey point to the ways we have succeeded in making De Anza a vital and warm learning environment. However, the survey also shines a light on areas where we need to re-double our efforts. Our campus climate is a more positive one for white students and primary English speakers than it is for students of color and English as second language speakers. We hope that this report will open a conversation about *how* to guarantee educational equity for *all* students.