

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Nebraska System Climate Study

Understanding Perceptions of Students,
Faculty, Staff and Alumni

SEPTEMBER 2018

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UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska

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Introduction

In the winter of 2017, the University of Nebraska system partnered with Gallup to learn more about perceptions of a broad range of issues related to campus climate from students, faculty, staff members and alumni. The goals of this partnership were to:

- ▶ gather multiple perspectives on issues related to campus climate
- ▶ learn community members' views about these complex topics
- ▶ encourage rich and meaningful dialogue
- ▶ inform the cultivation of a diverse, inclusive and welcoming environment

This executive summary includes a snapshot of findings from Web surveys conducted in spring 2018. Results are from surveys of more than 4,400 students, 1,800 faculty, 3,600 staff members and 2,800 recent alumni (within the last five years) across each of the four University of Nebraska campuses. For more information, see the full report: University of Nebraska System Climate Study: Understanding Perceptions of Students, Faculty, Staff and Alumni.

Results of these surveys highlight important issues facing the University of Nebraska and U.S. higher education institutions. It is the University of Nebraska's intent that the study supports new and ongoing efforts to help make the University of Nebraska an even better, more respectful place to live, learn, work, serve and play.

Snapshot of Findings

UNIVERSITY CLIMATE

Campus climate is created through the many ways that people interact with and treat one another and is a reflection of the standards, core values and principles of the campus. Climate is shaped by the tenor of voices that promote and protect those standards, values and principles. Respectful, generous treatment of others reflected through civil dialogue alongside sincere debate may be considered a hallmark of a healthy campus climate. This study explores several factors that could contribute to campus climate, including racial climate, trust and fairness, and safety.

RACIAL CLIMATE

Majorities of students, faculty, staff and alumni say the racial climate among students, faculty and staff on their campus is good or excellent.

Results show that the majority of respondents rate the racial climate among students on their campus as “good” or “excellent.” In particular, the distribution of student responses shows that they are about nine times more likely to rate the racial climate among their peers as “excellent” (28%) than “poor” (3%). Fifteen percent of students rate the racial climate as “only fair” or “poor.”

- ▶ **Racial Climate Among Students:** Nearly eight in 10 currently enrolled students (78%) and seven in 10 faculty (70%) and staff members (74%) say the racial climate among students on their campus is “good” or “excellent;” 83% of recent alumni say the racial climate among students on their campus was “good” or “excellent” during the time they attended. Overall, 14% of faculty and staff members say they don’t know how they rate the racial climate among students. Seven in 10 currently enrolled non-white students say the racial climate among students is “good” or “excellent,” which includes 53% of black students and 73% of both Asian and Hispanic students. These results are similar to those from a recent study of U.S. college students in which about seven in 10 rate their college’s racial climate as “good” or “excellent,” although black students nationally are less positive — about six in 10 evaluate their campus’ racial climate positively.¹

¹ Jones, Jeffrey M., “College Presidents Still Report Positive Race Relations on Campus,” March 2016. Results from the Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 Survey of College Students This study was a telephone survey of undergraduate students. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/190535/college-presidents-report-positive-race-relations-campus.aspx>

- ▶ **Racial Climate Among Faculty and Staff Members:** Eight in 10 faculty and 75% of staff members say the overall racial climate among faculty is “good” or “excellent,” and seven in 10 faculty and eight in 10 staff members (84%) say the racial climate among staff members is “good” or “excellent.” Overall, 11% of faculty and staff members say the racial climate among each of their respective peer groups is “only fair” or “poor;” though, 16% of staff members don’t know how they rate racial climate among faculty, and similarly, 18% of faculty don’t know how they rate the overall racial climate among staff members.
 - Black faculty and staff members overall are about as likely to say the racial climate among faculty is “good” or “excellent” (45%) as they are to say it is “only fair” or “poor” (43%). They are slightly more likely to say it’s “good” or “excellent” (50%) than they are to say it’s “only fair” or “poor” (42%) among staff members; 75% of Asian faculty and staff members and 68% of Hispanic faculty and staff members rate the racial climate among faculty as “good” or “excellent.” Similarly, 70% and 69% of Asian and Hispanic faculty and staff members, respectively, rate the racial climate among staff members as “good” or “excellent.”²

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIL DISCOURSE

- ▶ More faculty and staff members agree or strongly agree that their campus actively works to promote civic engagement and civil discourse among students than agree or strongly agree their campus is successful in ensuring these elements. Many faculty and staff members say they don’t know whether their campus actively works to promote and ensure civic engagement and civil discourse. For example, 40% don’t know whether they are successful in ensuring civil discourse among most students.
- ▶ Two-thirds of faculty (68%) agree or strongly agree efforts to promote civic engagement and civil discourse are complicated by the national political environment.

² Results from a study of U.S. college and university presidents shows about eight in 10 rate their state of race relations on their own campus as “good” or “excellent,” while only about four in 10 rate the state of U.S. colleges generally the same. Jones, Jeffrey M., “College Presidents Still Report Positive Race Relations on Campus,” March 2016. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/190535/college-presidents-report-positive-race-relations-campus.aspx>

SAFETY

- ▶ Most students and alumni who live/lived in residence halls say they feel/felt safe or very safe at night and on weekends in those halls. While just 1% of students say they feel unsafe or very unsafe, more than half responded “don’t know/does not apply” to these questions on safety in residence halls. Most students and alumni also say they feel/felt safe or very safe in academic buildings at night. Fewer students say they feel safe walking alone on campus at night.
- ▶ Three in four faculty and two-thirds of staff members say they feel safe or very safe walking alone on campus at night; more than eight in 10 faculty and 74% of staff say they feel safe or very safe in academic buildings at night. About one in 10 of faculty and two in 10 staff members responded “don’t know/does not apply” to these questions on safety.

CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE TO CRITICAL ISSUES

- ▶ More than half of each group surveyed agree or strongly agree their institution would do the right thing if they raised an issue about sexual assault or harassment; though 10% and 14% of students and alumni, respectively, don’t know. Two-thirds of males (66%) and 55% of females agree or strongly agree their institution would do the right thing if they raised an issue about sexual assault or harassment. Similarly, a study of U.S. college students nationally shows females are less likely than males to express confidence.³
- ▶ Again, similar to findings from a national study of U.S. college students, somewhat fewer students (47%), faculty (47%) and alumni (45%) and half of staff members (50%) agree or strongly agree they are confident their campus would do the right thing if they raised an issue about discrimination; 12% of students and 16% of alumni don’t know.⁴ Among student racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic students are least likely to express institutional confidence. Additionally, lesbian, gay or bisexual students are somewhat less likely than their peers who are not sexual-orientation or gender-identity minorities to agree or strongly agree (40% vs. 49%, respectively) they are confident their campus would do the right thing.⁵

³ Strada-Gallup Survey of U.S. College Students, 2017.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For many survey items, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a five-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression and, relatedly, academic freedom have historically been core values of American higher education institutions and are central to a vibrant campus climate. Given the current political and social climate in the U.S., a lot of attention has focused on issues concerning free speech on college and university campuses nationally. Items were included in the surveys to explore some issues regarding free speech.

Majorities of students, faculty, staff and alumni agree or strongly agree their campus is committed to promoting freedom of expression.

Results of the climate study show that majorities of respondents think their institution is committed to promoting freedom of expression, though some faculty think their campus prevents them from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive.

Additionally, students may need increased opportunities to meaningfully engage in dialogue with those who hold different views. Namely, while the majority of students feel comfortable having meaningful conversations with their peers who hold different views, few students say they have had a discussion with someone with whom they disagreed on an issue who changed their opinion on that issue. Furthermore, few students say they have actively sought out relationships with those who might challenge their own worldview.

RESPECT FOR FREE SPEECH

- ▶ Nearly two-thirds of students (65%) and three-fourths of alumni (74%) say students generally respect free speech rights; about six in 10 faculty (59%) say students respect free speech rights. About two in 10 of staff members (23%) and 16% of faculty say they don't know whether students respect free speech rights. Two-thirds of students (67%) and 74% of alumni agree or strongly agree that faculty generally respect free speech rights.
- ▶ Majorities of faculty (67%) and staff members (59%) agree or strongly agree their peers generally respect free speech rights. Less than one in 10 of these groups disagree or strongly disagree, and 9% of faculty and staff members overall don't know.

SHARING VIEWS

- ▶ Students are somewhat more likely to agree or strongly agree (35%) than they are to disagree or strongly disagree (29%) that their institution's climate prevents some people from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive; 14% don't know.
- ▶ Faculty are as likely to disagree or strongly disagree (35%) as they are to agree or strongly agree (36%) that the campus climate prevents faculty from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive. More staff members agree or strongly agree (39%) than disagree or strongly disagree (26%) that the climate on their campus prevents staff from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive; though 12% of staff members say they don't know.
- ▶ Nearly half of students (48%) say most expression and discussion of political or social ideas among students happens online through social media; one-third say it happens face-to-face on campus; 19% of students say they don't know.⁶
- ▶ Generally, students are far more likely than not to say they feel comfortable having meaningful conversations with other students who hold different views on issues relating to sexual orientation, religion, immigration, race and ethnicity or political ideology. The majority of faculty feel comfortable or very comfortable having meaningful conversations with students who hold different views on issues relating to sexual orientation, religion, immigration or race or ethnicity. Somewhat fewer (47%) faculty feel comfortable having such conversations on issues relating to political ideology.
- ▶ Majorities of respondents from each group surveyed say that members of 15 identified subgroups are able to freely and openly express their views on their campus. Aligning with a national study of college students, respondents are most likely to think that males, females and whites are able to freely and openly express their views.⁷ Again, similar to results from another study of U.S. college students, University of Nebraska students are somewhat more likely to say that political liberals than political conservatives are able to freely and openly express their views.⁸ However, NU students are somewhat more likely than the students nationally to say political conservatives are able to express their views.
- ▶ Four in 10 (42%) faculty and 27% of staff members agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable expressing political views with faculty, though 15% of staff members say they don't know. Three in 10 faculty and staff members agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable expressing political views with staff members; 10% of faculty say they don't know.
- ▶ About half of students (53%) agree or strongly agree they are comfortable expressing their political views with other students; 20% disagree or strongly disagree. Fewer, about four in 10 students (44%), agree or strongly agree they are comfortable expressing their political views with professors; 28% disagree or strongly disagree.

6 These findings are similar to results from a study of U.S. college students. Jones, Jeffrey M., "More U.S. College Students Say Campus Climate Deters Speech," March 2018. From the Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 College Student Survey. https://news.gallup.com/poll/229085/college-students-say-campus-climate-deters-speech.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=More%2520U.S.%2520College%2520Students%2520Say%2520Campus%2520Climate%2520Deters%2520Speech

7 Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 College Student Survey. https://news.gallup.com/poll/229085/college-students-say-campus-climate-deters-speech.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=More%2520U.S.%2520College%2520Students%2520Say%2520Campus%2520Climate%2520Deters%2520Speech

8 Ibid.

- ▶ Many students (76%) and alumni (74%), as well as faculty (68%) and staff members (69%) agree or strongly agree they have or had many opportunities to learn from others with different perspectives or backgrounds.
- ▶ More than half of students (57%) and nearly two-thirds of alumni (65%) agree or strongly agree they have or had many opportunities to share their opinions with others in a meaningful way. About half of faculty (49%) and four in 10 staff members (38%) say they have such opportunities.
- ▶ Students are somewhat more likely to agree or strongly agree (41%) than disagree or strongly disagree (31%) that they feel comfortable sharing ideas in class that are probably only held by a small number of students.
- ▶ About half of students (54%) say they have never or rarely had a discussion with someone with whom they disagreed on an issue who changed their position on that issue; just 7% say they have had such discussions often or very often. Most students (71%) say they have never or rarely had interactions that were tense or hostile with students.
- ▶ While one in four students (24%) say they have often or very often sought out relationships with others who might challenge their understanding of the world, 36% say they have never or rarely sought out such relationships.
- ▶ More faculty agree or strongly agree (41%) than disagree or strongly disagree (25%) they are comfortable encouraging discussions of ideas that are probably only held by a small number of students.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- ▶ About two-thirds of faculty (68%) and eight in 10 (82%) staff members say academic freedom at their campus is as secure or more secure now than it was a year ago.⁹ About one-third of faculty (32%) say it is less secure now.
- ▶ About four in 10 faculty say their campus has done enough to protect academic freedom among faculty; about three in 10 say their campus has done too little.
- ▶ Additionally, about half of faculty (51%) feel comfortable or very comfortable expressing their views on matters of faculty governance.
- ▶ About seven in 10 respondents from each group surveyed believe their institution's leadership values free speech, and about one in 10 says it does not, including 13% of faculty. Roughly two in 10 from each group say they don't know whether their institution's leadership values free speech.
- ▶ Four in 10 faculty (41%) agree or strongly agree they feel very comfortable using material that may be unpopular with some students; 20% disagree or strongly disagree they feel very comfortable using potentially unpopular material, and 15% say they don't know.
- ▶ A majority of faculty (58%) have not changed how or what they teach because of concerns they have about offending or upsetting students.

⁹ These results from faculty match those of a study of U.S. college chief academic officers, in which seven in 10 of these leaders say academic freedom is "as secure" or "more secure" than it was a year ago. 2017 Inside Higher Ed Survey of Chief Academic Officers. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/2017-inside-higher-ed-survey-chief-academic-officers>

LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

Leaders play a critical role in creating an environment that engages all people and helps them feel valued and part of the future they are collectively building. Several items invited opinions about leadership and practices. While there is reservation among faculty and staff members that there is open communication throughout all levels of the institution, majorities of each group agree leadership is creating a future they want to be part of.

Faculty and staff members generally agree their leadership is creating a future they want to be a part of, but they need more clarity about that future direction.

- ▶ More than half of faculty (52%) and staff members (56%) agree or strongly agree their leadership is creating a future they want to be a part of. Additionally, majorities of faculty (64%) and staff members (64%) agree or strongly agree they would recommend their campus as a great place to work.
- ▶ Nearly seven in 10 faculty and staff members say their colleagues demonstrate behavior of high integrity and ethics.
- ▶ About four in 10 faculty (38%) and staff members (44%) agree or strongly agree they always trust their campus to be fair to all within their respective peer group.¹⁰ Similarly, 39% and 37% of faculty and staff members, respectively, agree or strongly agree their peer group at work is direct and honest in all communications.
- ▶ Faculty and staff members are somewhat more likely to disagree than agree that there is open communication throughout all levels of their institution. However, they are more likely to agree than disagree that leadership creates an environment that is trusting and open.
- ▶ Slightly more than one-third of faculty (35%) and staff members (37%) agree or strongly agree they have a clear understanding about the future direction. About four in 10 faculty (44%) and nearly half of staff members (48%) agree or strongly agree that senior leadership is leading in the right direction; 25% of faculty and 20% of staff members disagree or strongly disagree.
- ▶ Nearly four in 10 faculty (38%) and staff members (38%) agree or strongly agree that at their institution people are held accountable for their actions; 13% of faculty and 9% of staff members say they don't know.

¹⁰ Faculty rated faculty members and staff members rated staff members.

DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

A healthy university climate is predicated on actively promoting equity and fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where all community members are invited to contribute to critical conversations and are treated with generosity where they live, learn and work. Results of the University of Nebraska climate study suggest that while majorities of community members think their campus environment is inclusive, there is a need to do more to create a climate that ensures all people feel welcomed.

Majorities of students, faculty, staff and alumni agree or strongly agree their institution is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment for all.

More than six in 10 of all groups surveyed agree or strongly agree that their institution is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment for all; just one in 10 disagrees or strongly disagrees. However, about one-third of students say they have felt uncomfortable at some time on campus because of something someone said in reference to race, ethnicity, gender or religion.¹¹ Further, while strong majorities of NU students say they rarely or never hear someone at their university making disparaging comments about someone's race or ethnicity (71%), sexual orientation (69%), gender identity (67%), disability (85%) or religion (71%), about one in four say they have frequently or occasionally heard such comments.

- ▶ Most respondents — at least seven in 10 among each group surveyed — believe their institution's leadership values racial and ethnic diversity.¹² Overall, eight in 10 faculty and staff members (78% and 83%, respectively) say leadership values racial and ethnic diversity; about one in 10 of both groups says they don't know.
- ▶ Majorities of respondents say their campus is at least somewhat diverse in terms of students', faculty's and staff members' race and ethnicity, family income, political viewpoint and religious identification.
- ▶ More than half of faculty (52%) and staff members (56%) agree or strongly agree that their campus values diverse opinions and ideas. About one in four of each group is neutral and fewer than two in 10 disagree or strongly disagree.

11 One in four college students nationally say they have felt uncomfortable on campus because of something someone said in reference to race, ethnicity or religion. Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 Survey of College Students. https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/pdfs/000/000/248/original/Knight_Foundation_Free_Expression_on_Campus_2017.pdf

12 A national phone study of college students shows most college students think their president or chancellor values racial and ethnic diversity. Knight Foundation/Newseum Institute/Gallup Survey of College Students, 2016. https://kf-site-production.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/pdfs/000/000/184/original/FreeSpeech_campus.pdf

DISPARAGING COMMENTS

- ▶ About seven in 10 students and alumni say they never or rarely hear/heard someone making disparaging comments about someone's race or ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or religion; about one in four says they frequently or occasionally hear/heard disparaging comments about each of these groups. About one in 10 says they frequently or occasionally hear offensive comments about someone's disability.
- ▶ At least seven in 10 faculty and staff members say they rarely or never hear students making disparaging comments about someone's race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion; though, more than one in 10 says they frequently or occasionally hear such comments from students. Fewer have heard disparaging comments from students about someone's disability. More staff members than faculty say they don't know how often they hear disparaging comments from students, perhaps because some staff members interact less often with students. Fewer faculty and staff members (6% overall) say they hear disparaging comments about someone's disability.
- ▶ About eight in 10 faculty and staff members say they rarely or never hear faculty or staff members make disparaging comments about someone's race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or religion. About one in 10 or less says they frequently or occasionally hear such comments from either faculty or staff members. About two-thirds (65%) of faculty never or rarely hear disparaging comments from faculty about someone's area of scholarship. A little more than one in 10 of faculty don't know how often they hear such comments from staff members about these groups, and similarly, at least 15% of staff members don't know how often they hear such comments from faculty.
- ▶ Six in 10 students (64%) and seven in 10 (73%) alumni say they have never felt uncomfortable on campus because of something someone said in reference to race, ethnicity, gender or religion, whether or not it was directed at them; 36% of students say they have felt uncomfortable in such instances.

WELCOMING PLACE

- ▶ Students, faculty, staff and alumni are more likely than not to say their campus is/was a good place for nine minority student groups identified. Seven in 10 students (70%) and staff members (72%) say their campus is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities; about six in 10 faculty (64%) and alumni (65%) say it is/was a good place for these students. No more than 12% of each respondent group say their campus is not a good place for each of nine student subgroups identified.¹³ Notably, high proportions of each respondent group say they don't know whether their campus is a good place for many of the groups studied. For example, at least two in 10 of each group surveyed say they don't know if their campus is a good place or not for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities.
 - About six in 10 (59%) black students and 71% of white students say their campus is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities; 23% of black students say it is not a good place compared with 6% of white students who say this. A little more than seven in 10 Asian and Hispanic students, respectively, say their campus is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities.¹⁴
 - About six in 10 of each group surveyed say their institution is a good place for lesbian, gay or bisexual students. About three in 10 or more of students (29%), faculty (35%), staff members (31%) and alumni (36%) say they don't know whether their institution is a good place for these students. While 70% of lesbian, gay or bisexual students say their campus is a good place for lesbian, gay or bisexual students, 18% say it is not a good place; 13% of lesbian, gay or bisexual college students nationally say their school is not a good place for this group.¹⁵
 - Faculty and staff members are much more likely to say their campus is a good place than they are to say it is not a good place for seven minority groups studied.¹⁶ Two-thirds of faculty and 76% of staff members say their campus is a good place for colleagues of racial or ethnic minorities; 12% of faculty and 6% of staff members say it is not a good place for colleagues who are members of racial or ethnic minorities. Again, about two in 10 faculty and staff members say they don't know.

PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

- ▶ Majorities of students, faculty, staff members and alumni say their campus is somewhat or highly diverse in terms of students' political viewpoint, race or ethnicity, religious identification, and family income or social class.
- ▶ Majorities of faculty and staff members say their campus is somewhat or highly diverse in terms of faculty and staff members' political viewpoint, race or ethnicity, religious identification, and family income or social class.

¹³ Students and alumni indicated whether their institution is a good place or not for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities; lesbian, gay or bisexual students; transgender students; students who are members of religious minorities; military service members and veterans; students with disabilities; undocumented students who came to the U.S. as youth and have been covered under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program; international students; and female students.

¹⁴ A study of U.S. college students shows black students are more inclined to say their campus is not a good place for racial and ethnic minorities compared with white students. Strada-Gallup College Student Survey, 2017.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Faculty and staff indicated whether their institution is a good place or not for faculty and staff members who are members of racial and ethnic minorities; lesbian, gay or bisexual faculty and staff members; transgender faculty and staff members; faculty and staff members who are members of religious minorities; military service members and veterans; faculty and staff members with disabilities; and female faculty and staff members.

FREE SPEECH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

There has been a good deal of attention focused on issues concerning free speech at colleges and universities nationally. An array of items were included in the study that assessed opinions on issues concerning free speech in higher education, generally.

Most students, faculty, staff, and alumni think that using violence to stop a speech is never acceptable and majorities think denying news media coverage of a protest or rally on campus is never acceptable. However, there is less consensus about other aspects of free speech on campus.

Results largely align across the survey groups, and student results are similar in many aspects with those of national studies of U.S. college students.¹⁷ For some issues presented, there are clear majority opinions; however, some scenarios elicit divergent perspectives, suggesting that further investigation and conversation regarding these complex topics is warranted.

- ▶ A little more than half of all respondents — students, faculty, staff members and alumni — say that colleges and universities should allow all types of speech, including speech that is offensive or biased against certain groups of people. Four in 10 or fewer among all respondent groups say that institutions should prohibit offensive or biased speech or expression of viewpoints.
- ▶ Students, faculty and alumni are about as likely to oppose as they are to favor canceling planned speeches because of concerns about the possibility of violent protests. Staff members are somewhat more likely to favor canceling them for this reason. At least 15% among each group surveyed say they don't know. A majority of all respondents favor establishing free speech zones on campus, in which distribution of literature is permitted; about two in 10 oppose such designated areas. Most respondents oppose disinviting speakers because some students oppose the invitation; likewise, most respondents favor providing safe spaces — areas on campus that students can go for support if they feel upset or threatened by things they see, hear or experience.
- ▶ Half or more of respondents say it is never acceptable to shout down speakers or prevent them from speaking. Nearly all respondents oppose violence as a means to stop a speech, protest or rally. Most faculty, staff members and alumni (82%, 73% and 70%, respectively) think it's never acceptable for college students to deny news media access to cover a protest or rally on campus, though fewer students (62%) say it's never acceptable to deny media access.
- ▶ Most respondents say it is always acceptable to engage in peaceful counter-protests. However, respondents are split on whether it is acceptable to engage in sit-ins or other attempts to disrupt operations in campus buildings.

¹⁷ Results are similar to those of a survey of U.S. college students in which most students oppose using violence to stop a speech and oppose denying media access to cover protests or rallies. Gallup/Knight Foundation 2017 Survey of College Students https://news.gallup.com/poll/229085/college-students-say-campus-climate-deters-speech.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=More%2520U.S.%2520College%2520Students%2520Say%2520Campus%2520Climate%2520Deters%2520Speech

Looking Ahead

The University of Nebraska climate study can support conversations about ongoing efforts to build a healthy, vibrant institutional climate. The study's results inform many of the critical issues that higher education institutions across the U.S. are carefully considering. And while results of the study reflect that the University of Nebraska is a good place for diverse people and ideas to flourish, they also reveal there is work to be done to ensure a welcoming and respectful environment for all. Results suggest opportunity for the University of Nebraska to boost transparent communication, capitalize on willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue, foster relationship-building with those with different perspectives and champion free expression while honoring others.

Issues surrounding free speech and climate in higher education are broad and complex, and navigating them requires a host of contributing voices and patient — but urgent — planning. To make progress in optimizing the experiences of all students, staff, faculty and alumni at the University of Nebraska, it is necessary to broach the issues with humility, courage and intentionality. This study serves as one step in the quest to support a culture of asking and listening.

Methodology

This report includes results from a quantitative research study that Gallup conducted on behalf of the University of Nebraska. The objective of the study was to learn about the opinions and perceptions of students, faculty, staff and alumni about a broad range of issues related to free speech and climate. Gallup developed the surveys with input from a system-wide project team of faculty and staff members.

Data are from web-based surveys conducted with students, faculty and staff members from April 12-29, 2018, and alumni from May 14-29, 2018. To attempt a census of each population, Gallup sent email invitations to 47,951 currently enrolled students, 15,233 faculty and staff members and 42,631 recent alumni (within the last five years) provided by the University of Nebraska. Gallup also sent a series of email reminders throughout the data collection period to increase participation.

PARTICIPATION RATES BY RESPONDENT GROUP

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
SAMPLE SIZE	4,403	1,801	3,616	2,815
PARTICIPATION RATE	9%	32%	38%	7%

Gallup analyzed the student, faculty and staff samples for nonresponse, comparing the final sample distribution to statistics provided by the University of Nebraska for each of the key populations. The sample approximated students’ race and ethnicity. Women and graduate-level students participated at a slightly higher rate, which is consistent with survey trends nationally. Gallup weighted the student sample to account for differential response rates among subgroups of the population and to ensure the final sample more closely approximated the currently enrolled student population. The faculty and staff sample approximated the university system gender distribution. Gallup did not weight the alumni and faculty samples. Similarly, alumni survey data were not weighted, as Gallup’s review suggested weighting was not required.

In some cases, reported frequencies may not add up to 100% due to rounding. “Don’t know” and “Choose not to answer” responses are included in the results.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

	Race			
	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
WHITE	82%	86%	91%	87%
BLACK	3%	3%	3%	3%
ASIAN	8%	7%	3%	4%
HISPANIC	7%	3%	3%	5%
OTHER	0%	1%	1%	1%

Which of the following do you currently describe yourself as?

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
MALE	46%	49%	37%	45%
FEMALE	51%	46%	58%	53%
TRANSGENDER	0%	0%	0%	0%
NON-BINARY OR GENDER QUEER	1%	0%	0%	1%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	2%	5%	5%	2%

Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? You can select more than one.

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
STRAIGHT OR HETEROSEXUAL	87%	89%	89%	89%
LESBIAN	1%	2%	1%	1%
GAY	3%	2%	1%	3%
BISEXUAL	7%	2%	2%	5%
QUEER	2%	1%	1%	2%
SAME-GENDER LOVING	1%	1%	0%	1%
PREFER NOT TO ANSWER	3%	7%	7%	3%

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