

The University of Nebraska System Climate Study

Understanding Perceptions of Students,
Faculty, Staff and Alumni

SEPTEMBER 2018

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About University of Nebraska

The University of Nebraska — through its four campuses — strives to be the best public university in the country as measured by the impact we have on our people and our state, and — through them — the world.

For more information, visit <https://nebraska.edu/>.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

For more information, visit www.gallup.com
or www.gallup.com/services/170939/higher-education.aspx.

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 report includes findings from web surveys conducted in the spring of 2018. Results are from surveys of more than 4,400 students, 1,800 faculty, 3,600 staff members and 2,800 recent alumni across each of the four University of Nebraska campuses. For a snapshot of the findings, see the executive summary report.

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.

Detailed Findings

UNIVERSITY CLIMATE

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

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

RACIAL CLIMATE

This study shows that the majority of students, faculty, staff members and alumni are generally positive about the racial climate among students. Overall, students are about nine times more likely to rate the racial climate among their peers as "excellent" as they are to rate it as "poor." Fifteen percent rate the racial climate as "only fair" or "poor," which includes 42% of black students.

Nearly eight in 10 currently enrolled students (78%) and seven in 10 faculty (70%) and staff members

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CIVIL DISCOURSE

Some colleges and universities are paying more attention to promoting civic engagement and civil discourse among students. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education encouraged higher education institutions to prioritize civic engagement through service learning projects or other means. Results of the University of Nebraska climate study show more faculty and staff members agree or strongly agree that their campus actively promotes civic engagement and civil discourse among students than agree or strongly agree their campus is successful in ensuring them. This pattern is similar to findings in a study of U.S. college and university chief academic officers in which many of these leaders say their institution

SAFETY

Results of the climate study show that most members of each group surveyed feel safe on campus. Among students and alumni who currently live or at one time lived in residence halls, most say they feel safe or very safe at night and on weekends in those halls; just 1% in these groups say they feel very unsafe or unsafe in their residence hall at night or on weekends. Most students and alumni also say they feel safe or very safe in academic buildings at night. Although, as might be expected, fewer students feel safe walking alone on campus at night — 20% of students and 14% of alumni say they feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone on campus at night versus 69% and 78% of these groups, respectively, who say they feel safe or very safe.⁴

CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE TO CRITICAL ISSUES

Recent tragic accounts of abuse on college campuses have led U.S. higher education institutions to examine processes to prevent abuse and respond to reports. The University of Nebraska climate study asked respondents how they think the institution would respond if they raised an issue about sexual assault, harassment or discrimination on campus.

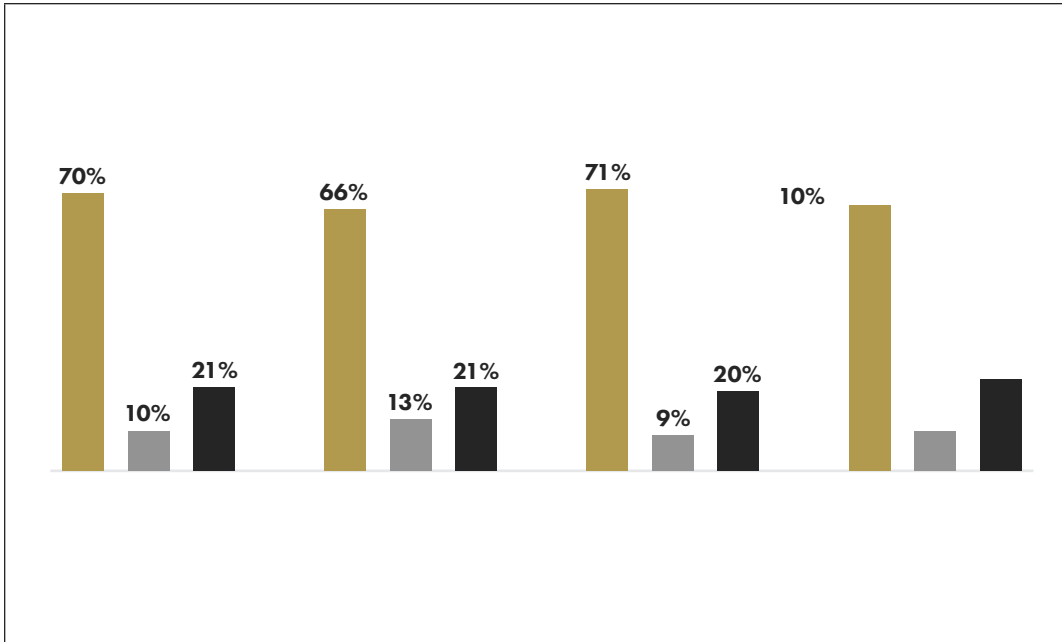
Six in 10 students agree or strongly agree their campus would do the right thing if they raised an issue

Similar to results of a study of college students nationally, respondents from all groups surveyed in the NU climate study are somewhat less confident their campus would do the right thing if they raised an issue about discrimination on campus than if they raised an issue about sexual assault or harassment.⁶ Nearly half of NU 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, and about two in 10 disagree or strongly disagree.

Among student racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic students are least likely to express confidence, and Asian students are most likely to agree or strongly agree their campus would do the right thing if they raised an issue about discrimination. Additionally, fewer LGBTQ students than students who are not sexual orientation or gender identity minorities express confidence their campus would do the right thing if they raised an issue about discrimination (40% vs. 49%, respectively, agree or strongly agree). Among faculty and staff members, black faculty and staff are least likely to express confidence in their campus' response to discrimination issues.

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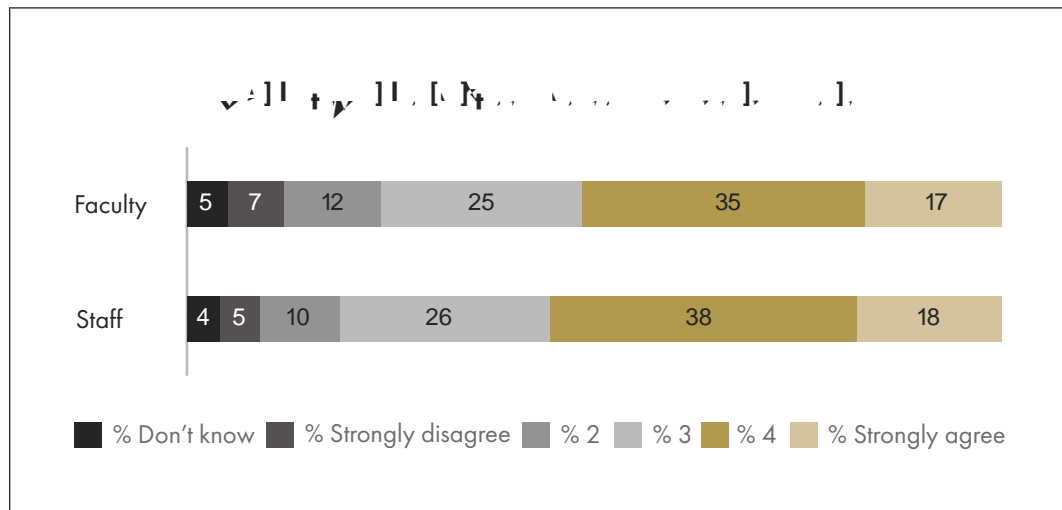


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	Students	Faculty	Sta	Alumni
STUDENTS AT [CAMPUS NAME] GENERALLY RESPECT FREE SPEECH RIGHTS.	65	59	51	74
FACULTY AT [CAMPUS NAME] GENERALLY RESPECT FREE SPEECH RIGHTS.	67	*	*	74
STAFF MEMBERS AT [CAMPUS NAME] GENERALLY RESPECT FREE SPEECH RIGHTS.	64	*	*	69
FACULTY AND STAFF MEMBERS AT [CAMPUS NAME] GENERALLY RESPECT FREE SPEECH RIGHTS.	*	67	59	*

Note: Calculations include "don't know" responses

Additionally, more than half of faculty (52%) and staff members (56%) agree or strongly agree that their campus values diverse opinions and ideas; fewer than two in 10 disagree or strongly disagree.



SHARING VIEWS

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.

Four in 10 faculty (42%) and 27% of staff members agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable expressing political views with *faculty*. Three in 10 faculty and staff members agree or strongly agree they feel comfortable expressing political views with *staff members*.

More students 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. More faculty agree or strongly agree (41%) than disagree or strongly disagree (25%) they are comfortable encouraging discussion of ideas that are probably only held by a small number of students.

Students are somewhat more likely to agree or strongly agree (35%) than they are to disagree or strongly disagree (29%) that their campus climate prevents some people from saying things they believe because others might find them offensive.

Faculty are about as likely to disagree or strongly disagree (35%) as they are to agree or strongly agree (36%) that the climate on their campus 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. One in four faculty (26%) don't know whether the climate prevents staff members from saying things they believe, and similarly, 25% of staff members don't know whether the climate prevents faculty from saying things they believe might offend others.

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On your university's campus, do you think members of each of the following groups are, or are not, able to freely and openly express their views? (% Yes, are able to; % No, are not able to; % Does not apply/Too few on campus)*

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
FEMALE STUDENTS	92	88	90	91
POLITICAL LIBERALS	90	85	88	90
MALE STUDENTS	88	90	90	90
WHITES	88	90	88	90
ASIANS*	88	83	88	83
STUDENTS BORN OUTSIDE THE U.S.	86	78	84	82
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS*	86	82	87	82
HISPANICS OR LATINOS*	85	78	83	80
BLACKS	84	74	82	

% of respondents who agree or strongly agree

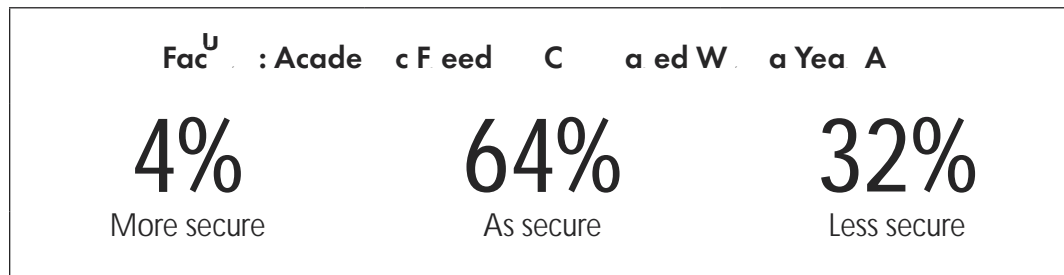
How comfortable do you feel having meaningful conversations with [other] students who hold different views on issues relating to:

	Students	Faculty	Staff	Alumni
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	56	52	38	53
RELIGION	68	56	41	62
IMMIGRATION	59	58	40	55
RACE OR ETHNICITY	63	59	42	57
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY	53	47	34	53

Many students (76%), faculty (68%), staff members (69%) and alumni (74%) agree or strongly agree they have many opportunities to learn from others with different perspectives or backgrounds. More

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The climate study included questions aimed at understanding how faculty perceive the current state of academic freedom at their institution. Results suggest that while many think academic freedom is as or more secure than it was a year ago, many think more should be done. About two-thirds of faculty (68%) and eight in 10 staff members (82%) say academic freedom at their campus is “as secure” or “more secure” now than it was a year ago. About one-third of faculty say it is less secure now. These data are similar to results from a study of U.S. college chief academic officers, in which 70% of these leaders say academic freedom is “as secure” or “more secure” now than it was a year ago, and 30% say it is less secure.¹⁴



Additionally, while the plurality of faculty (41%) say their university has done too much to protect academic freedom, 36% say it has done too little, 15% say it has done about the right amount, and 8% say they don't know. Among staff members, 49% say their university has done too much to protect academic freedom, 31% say it has done too little, 15% say it has done about the right amount, and 5% say they don't know.

LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

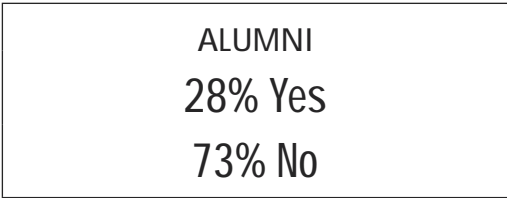
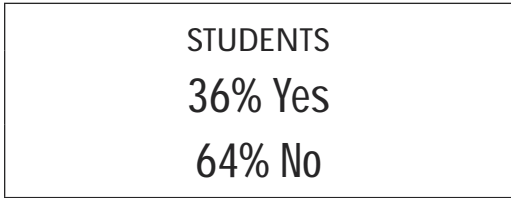
Faculty and staff members generally agree their leadership is creating a future they want to be a part of, but they need more clarity about that future direction.

The climate study assessed several elements that can contribute to a strong culture at work and optimize the ways people work together, such as communication, future direction and fairness. Campus leaders play a critical role in creating an environment that engages all community members and helps them feel valued and part of the future they are collectively building. Majorities of faculty and staff members agree that leadership is creating a future they want to be part of, but they lack clarity about that direction.

About two-thirds of faculty (69%) and staff members (66%) agree or strongly agree their colleagues demonstrate high integrity and ethics; just one in 10 of each group disagrees or strongly disagrees. 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, and more than six in 10 faculty (64%) and staff members (64%) agree or strongly agree they would recommend their campus as a great place to work. About



... of the campus climate study, ...



WELCOMING PLACE

Students, faculty, staff and alumni are more likely than not to say their campus is a good place for nine student groups studied. Seven in 10 NU students (70%) and staff members (72%) say their campus is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities, as do about six in 10 faculty (64%) and alumni (65%). About six in 10 black students (59%) say it is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities, and 27% say it is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities, and 17% say it is a good place for students who are members of racial and ethnic minorities.

Is [Campus Name] a good place or not a good place for:

	Students		Faculty		Sta		Alumni	
	% Good place	% Not a good place	% Good place	% Not a good place	% Good place	% Not a good place	% Good place	% Not a good place
FEMALE STUDENTS	87	3	80	5	79	3	84	4
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	80	4	77	6	78	3	74	4
MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS	83	1	83	2	82	1	82	1
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	74	5	72	5	71	4	68	5
RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES	70		64	12	72	7	65	8
LESBIAN, GAY OR BISEXUAL STUDENTS	65	7	67	9	63	6	59	7
RELIGIOUS STUDENTS	54	2	51	4	50	3	51	4

FREE SPEECH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Most students, faculty, staff and alumni think that using violence to stop a speech is never acceptable, and majorities think that 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.

There has been a good deal of attention on free speech on college campuses nationwide. Several questions in the study addressed free speech, generally, in higher education in the United States.

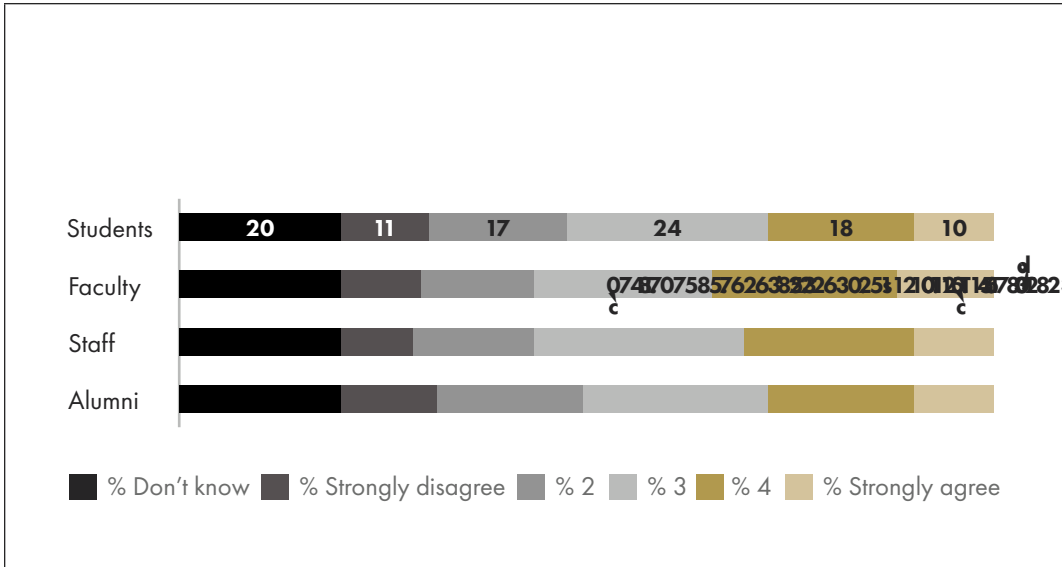
Results are consistent across the survey groups for many issues, and some student survey results align with results from national studies of college students.²³ For some questions, there is a majority consensus. However, other questions elicited divergent perspectives, suggesting the need for more conversation about these complex topics facing higher education today.

IMPACT OF PROTESTS

Results of the climate study suggest the national context may be complicating free speech issues in higher education. For example, when asked if attention to recent protests on campus has led many prospective students and families to think their institutions are less welcoming of diverse populations than is really the case, respondents' opinions diverge. Almost three in 10 students (28%) and alumni (28%) and slightly more faculty (35%) and staff members (31%) agree or strongly agree that attention to protests on campus has led many prospective students and families to think colleges and universities are less welcoming of diverse populations than is really the case. These percentages are somewhat less than the nearly half of U.S. college and university presidents who agree or strongly agree the attention is yielding such perceptions.²⁴

23 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

24 2017 Inside Higher Ed Survey of U.S. College and University Presidents
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/political-turmoil-public-misunderstanding-survey-presidents>



More than seven in 10 respondents think colleges and universities should be able to restrict intentionally offensive language, while more than two in 10 say they should not. Somewhat fewer, about six in 10 in each group surveyed, think colleges should be able to restrict wearing costumes that stereotype certain racial or ethnic groups. These results are similar to the majorities of college students nationally who favor these restrictions.²⁷

Fewer NU students, about one in four, think colleges should be able to restrict the expression of political views that are offensive to certain groups. These findings are similar to results from a 2016 survey of U.S. college students in which a little more than one in four said colleges should be able to restrict the expression of political views that may be upsetting or offensive to certain groups.²⁸

% ...

Again, in your opinion, do you think colleges and universities should or should not be able to establish policies restricting each of the following types of speech or expression on campus?

	Students	Faculty	Sta	Alumni
Using slurs and other language on campus that are intentionally offensive to certain groups	71	71	72	74
Wearing costumes that stereotype certain racial or ethnic groups	59	56	59	60
Expressing political views that are upsetting or offensive to certain groups	27	23	27	26

27 Jones, J. M. (April 2016). College students oppose restrictions on political speech. https://news.gallup.com/poll/190451/college-students-oppose-restrictions-political-speech.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=title_2&g_campaign=item_229085&g_content=College%2520Students%2520Oppose%2520Restrictions%2520on%2520Political%2520Speech

28 Ibid.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS BY STUDENTS

Nearly all respondents oppose violence as a means to stop a speech, protest or rally, and most think it is sometimes or always acceptable to distribute literature on controversial topics. Most faculty, staff

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 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

