

**2023 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in
Higher Education**

Boston University

University-wide Belonging & Culture Survey

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Evaluation: Measuring the Prevalence of Sexual Harassment
2. Evaluation: Publicly sharing the results/data from evaluation work

Description of Work:

Purpose and goals

Boston University seeks to create an environment characterized by openness, fairness, and equal access for all students, staff, and faculty. A welcoming and inclusive campus culture and climate is foundational to our educational goals and grounded in mutual respect, nurtured by dialogue, and validated by civil interaction. Creating and maintaining a community environment in which all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their potential and goals is critically important.

During the fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters, the University undertook a comprehensive culture/climate assessment, the Belonging & Culture Survey. Tied closely to two of the [2030 Strategic Plan](#) pillars—“Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” and “Community, Big Yet Small”—the campus-wide survey will allow BU to assess the sense of belonging and culture at the University for students, staff, and faculty and to identify successes and opportunities for improvement. Survey data will better enable us to develop programs and policies that will increase a sense of belonging for all at BU.

What we did and how it was done

The survey was administered to the entire BU community. Climate exists in microclimates, so creating opportunities to maximize participation, as well as maximizing opportunities to reach minority populations, is important. Along these lines, the consultant (Rankin Climate) recommended not using random sampling, as we might miss populations where numbers are very small (e.g., Native American students). Since one goal of the project is inclusiveness and allowing traditionally silenced/minimized/excluded voices to be heard, we did not use this sampling technique. In addition, we did not use randomized stratified sampling because we do not have population data on many identities. For example, BU collects population data on gender identity and racial identity but not on disability status or sexual identity. A sample approach could miss many groups.

About the instrument: The survey comprised 123 questions and incorporates logic to ensure respondents receive question sets that correspond to their role as a faculty member, student, or staff member. The survey included question sets about: experiences with harassment or bias; experiences with sexual harassment or assault; respondent demographics; intent to leave the University; availability of and familiarity with campus resources; promotion and tenure; academic experiences, and more. The survey was completely anonymous.

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Survey Timeline

Spring 2022

- *May:* The University president and University provost charge working group co-chairs to lead planning, development, and implementation of the Belonging & Culture Survey.

Summer 2022

- *July:* The University contracts with Rankin Climate to facilitate the Belonging & Culture Survey.
- *July:* The working group co-chairs identify students, staff, and faculty to join the working group.
- *August:* The Belonging & Culture Survey working group convenes to begin planning the survey.

Fall 2022

- *September:* The University president and University provost announce the launch of the Belonging & Culture Survey initiative through an all-University email letter.
- *October:* Rankin Climate conducts multiple focus groups comprised of students, staff, and faculty from key BU communities; their honest feedback will guide the creation of the Belonging & Culture Survey.
- *November:* Survey development begins.
- *December:* The survey is finalized.

Spring 2023

- *February 21:* The Belonging & Culture Survey launches University-wide to all students, staff, and faculty.
- *February 22:* [Launch Party!](#) GSU Metcalf Hall, 9 am-5 pm.
- *April 7:* The survey closes.
- *April:* Survey response data coding by Rankin Climate begins.
- *May:* Data analysis and interpretation by Rankin Climate begins.

How the work is new

Boston University has surveyed students, staff, and faculty in a number of different ways over the years. Each of those surveys has provided the institution with meaningful, actionable feedback that we continue to apply. However, no previous surveys have attempted to reach the entire BU community through a single survey administration. The Belonging & Culture Survey is BU's first University-wide survey and the start of an ongoing process to be repeated every three years; it is an opportunity for all constituencies on campus to have input, share their experiences, and ultimately determine areas of improvement.

The University conducted climate surveys in 2015 (for students only and focused on sexual misconduct) and in 2019 (AAU climate survey of students). BU will administer a misconduct climate survey in 2024 as well.

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Current status of the work

The survey closed on April 7, 2023, with an overall participation rate of 23.4%. Broken down by population, the participation rates were: undergraduate students 19.1%, graduate students 16.3%, faculty 32.6%, and staff 41.8%. Rankin Climate, the external vendor with whom BU partnered to develop and implement the survey, will take the next few months to clean and analyze survey data.

Plans for evaluating the success, effectiveness, and/or impact of the work

The survey administration itself was only the initial step in a larger process of assessment, reflection, and action to improve the campus climate at BU. Success will be determined by the effectiveness of the action plans developed as a result of the survey results, which will likely span the entire University and impact myriad constituencies. Programs, services, and initiatives developed as a result of the Belonging & Culture Survey will be documented and tracked by BU Diversity & Inclusion. BU Diversity & Inclusion will also provide advice, guidance, and limited oversight in the implementation of said programs, services, and initiatives.

Formative assessment of these programs, services, and initiatives will be ongoing and conducted by individuals and units across the University, with BU Diversity & Inclusion serving as a resource and touchpoint for the assessment processes. Perhaps the strongest indicator of success for the Belonging & Culture Survey will be parity in response rates when the survey is conducted in 2026, because faculty, staff, and students will have seen and felt the impact of programs, services, and initiatives that were implemented as a result of the first survey administration.

Next steps for the work

Short term: Rankin Climate will produce a results report at the end of summer 2023 that includes institution-level results and present the report to BU leadership and the Belonging & Culture Survey Working Group. Shortly thereafter, the report will be posted publicly on the Belonging & Culture Survey website ([bu.edu/belong](https://www.bu.edu/belong)). In fall 2023, consultants from Rankin Climate will visit BU to conduct town hall meetings for the BU community about the final report and recommendations. Meanwhile, BU will have received the raw survey data from Rankin Climate and will embark on a process of analysis, dissemination, and the development of action plans in response to the survey results.

Long term: BU Diversity & Inclusion will partner with Analytical Services & Institutional Research to develop a plan for data dissemination, dashboard creation, and management of data requests. This will likely include presentations of data to multiple units across campus and consultation on how the data can be used to create or improve existing programs, services, and initiatives to improve campus climate in various areas of the University. BU Diversity & Inclusion will maintain records and track progress of the initiatives that arise as a result of the Survey data and publish them on the Survey website.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://www.bu.edu/belonging-culture-survey/>

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