BUILDING A CULTURE OF

BELONGING

IN ACADEMIC NURSING

ASSESSING CULTURE, CLIMATE, AND BELONGING USING LAMP℠

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

The Voice of Academic Nursing

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

All students, faculty, and staff bring a wealth of perspectives, experiences, traditions, and understanding when they enter the learning environment. This wealth can and should be leveraged as contributions to the learning process. Though increasing representational diversity in nursing schools is a priority, this work alone will not change nursing if we do nothing to retain diverse students in learning environments where they are included, belong, and are expected to succeed.

Student retention and completion rates continue to reflect differences among racial and ethnic groups. Data published by the U.S. Department of Education (2013) show differences in college completion rates by student race and ethnicity. Among students seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year, degree-granting institution in fall 2010, the 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students was:

- 74% Asian students
- 64% White students
- 60% Two or more races
- 54% Hispanic students
- 51% Pacific Islander students
- 40% Black students
- 39% American Indian/Alaska Native

In comparison, the 4-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students was 50 percent or less for each racial/ethnic group. This low success rate among college students overall, and for students of color in particular, negatively impacts individual students and society. Higher education is challenged to identify strategies to promote the retention and success of all its students (Institute of Education Sciences, 2023), which includes creating a culture where all students are supported and are encouraged to thrive.

Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) offer a historical perspective of previous research on culture and climate. Culture became a topic of interest to organizational researchers in the late 1970s and early 1980s; however, scholarly advances have stagnated in more recent years, although the importance of culture and climate has been widely recognized. Chatman and O'Reilly recommend that future research should focus on the norms that characterize a group or organization. Furthermore, they recommend that culture should be viewed along three dimensions: (1) content, what is deemed important, (2) consensus, how widely shared are norms across groups, and (3) intensity of feelings about the norms.

Organizational Culture and Climate

Organizational culture refers to an organization's shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors. Culture represents the collective identity of an organization and influences interactions within the organization, how decisions are made, and how members approach their work. Organizational culture plays a crucial role in shaping the overall environment, morale, and the organization's ability to achieve its goals (Nunn, 2021).

Key Elements of Organizational Culture:

1. **Values and Beliefs:** An organization's core values and beliefs form its culture's foundation. Values guide behavior and decision-making processes, shaping the organization's identity and purpose. For example, an organization that values innovation and collaboration may have a culture that encourages risk-taking and teamwork.

2. **Norms and Behaviors:** Norms are the unwritten rules and expectations that govern behavior within an organization. Norms define acceptable behavior and shape how members interact with each other and external stakeholders. Behaviors that align with the organization's culture are reinforced, while those that contradict it may be discouraged or corrected.

3. **Communication and Language:** Communication patterns and language used within an organization are essential aspects of its culture. The style of communication, whether formal or informal, the use of specific jargon or terminology, and the openness to feedback and dialogue all contribute to the organization's cultural dynamics.

4. **Leadership and Management Style:** Leaders and managers play a significant role in shaping and maintaining organizational culture. Their actions, decisions, and behaviors set the tone for the entire organization. Leaders who embody the values and beliefs of the organization can inspire and motivate employees to align with the desired culture.

5. **Symbols and Artifacts:** Symbols and artifacts, such as logos, office layouts, dress codes, and rituals, visually represent the organization's culture. These tangible elements help to reinforce and communicate cultural values and identity, both internally and externally.

The historical significance of organizational culture and climate lies in its impact on understanding and managing organizations effectively. Today, organizational culture and climate are recognized as critical aspects of organizational success, employee well-being, and ethical conduct within the workplace. Research has shown that successfully implementing organizational change in institutions of higher education is related to utilizing change strategies that consider organizational culture (Kezar & Eckel, 2002)

Cultural perspectives suggest that many historically underrepresented students encounter challenges when they get to college, making it difficult to take advantage of their school's resources for learning and personal development. Students' perceptions of the institutional environment and dominant norms and values influence how they think and spend their time.

These properties influence student satisfaction, creating a sense of belongingness and the extent to which students participate in educationally purposeful activities (Kuh et al., 2006). Used across disciplines, culture and climate assessment survey instruments can assist academic administrators in better understanding the student experience and what supports are needed to facilitate student success.

LEADING ACROSS MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVES (LAMP[SM])

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) developed the Leading Across Multidimensional Perspectives (LAMP[SM]) Culture and Climate Survey to critically assess nursing learning environments. Climate and culture assessments, in general, assist schools in increasing knowledge regarding how their environments influence student learning experiences and outcomes. AACN drew inspiration from over 25 sources, including national surveys in higher education (National Survey of Student Engagement, Higher Education Research Institute Climate Survey), AAMC Standpoint Surveys, institution-based surveys (University of Arizona Climate Survey, Bemidji Campus & Climate Survey), and numerous journal articles and reports focused on higher education and the health professions. With assessment data collected from students, faculty, and staff, LAMP findings equip academic administrators with valuable information needed to initiate change, target areas of growth, and most importantly, improve student outcomes.

LAMP was specifically designed to focus on nursing education and the experiences of students in the classroom and in clinical practice environments. The survey was piloted in 2019 with 32 nursing programs that received funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to increase nursing workforce diversity. The second administration of the survey in 2021 included the 32 HRSA grantee institutions plus an additional 10 invited nursing schools. In total, 9,871 respondents completed the survey as part of the first two iterations of this research effort that was IRB-approved by the American Institutes of Research.

With funding provided by Johnson & Johnson, AACN was able to initiate a third administration of the LAMP survey with 51 pilot schools in Spring 2023. In its current iteration, the LAMP survey is divided into six thematic areas:

- Perceptions of Culture and Climate
- Fair Treatment and Observations of Discrimination
- Belongingness
- Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Campus Services
- Clinical Training

The AACN-led design team was intentional about balancing national priorities and local sensibilities when considering each thematic area and specific questions. Questions were generated using Likert scales with two short answer questions asking the respondent what their program could do "more of" and "less of" in the future. The first screening question required a response to meet the IRB requirement for voluntary participation. The survey is designed to collect perceptions from students, faculty, and staff at each participating nursing school.

Table 1: Spring 2023 Survey Participants by Campus Groups

Counts by Campus Group	Number
Students	5,936
Faculty	2,283
Administrators or Staff	830
Total	**9,049**

Discussion and Analysis

The survey design for this third pilot test included the six thematic areas similar to the second pilot test and as described below. Each thematic area had specific questions with multiple items for each campus group. Using the survey software to optimize the respondent experience, the specific pathways included:

- The **student pathway** consists of 6 thematic sections, 2 short answer questions, and 12 demographic questions.

- The **faculty and admin/staff pathways** consist of 4 thematic sections, 2 short answer questions, and 6 demographic questions.

Perceptions of Culture and Climate

There were 29 items for this theme for students and 17 for faculty and staff. Questions asked respondents how they felt about the culture and climate at their program site, including perceptions of cohesion, caring, program values, a sense of responsiveness, and preparation for a nursing career.

Fair Treatment and Observations of Discrimination

There were 28 items for this theme for students, faculty, and staff. Questions asked about perceptions of how individuals from underrepresented groups (males, racial/ethnic groups, LGBTQ, ability, and low income) were treated or observed discrimination for specific groups.

Belongingness

There were 13 items for students and 9 items for faculty and staff. Questions asked about perceptions of connection or bonds to others and feelings of isolation or stranger-ness to the campus and program overall. The Belongingness survey items were introduced during the 2019 survey.

Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

There were 12 items for students, faculty, and staff. Questions asked about the overall sense of diversity, equity, and inclusion at the program site as well as perceptions about the knowledge, appreciation, and benefits of the enrollment of individuals from underrepresented groups, including race/ethnicity, LGBTQ, ability, and low income. Questions also were asked about tolerance and respect for different beliefs and social determinants of health.

Campus Services and Clinical Training

Only students were asked questions in these thematic areas. Campus Services had 8 items and asked about academic and career advising, support for licensure exams, and overall support to

meet the student's professional goals. Clinical Training had 6 items that asked about perceptions on how the training site demonstrated respect and tolerance for patients and upheld standards of care.

Once data collection was completed, a standard questionnaire reliability analysis was applied, and selected items were analyzed for each thematic scale by ethnoracial groups. Table 1 describes the reliability analysis results for the major thematic areas.

Reliability and Correlations

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients for Each Thematic Scale

Survey Theme	N	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Fair Treatment and Discrimination			
Students	5825	28	0.973
Faculty	2226	28	0.964
Staff	814	28	0.977
Value of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion			
Students	5825	12	0.937
Faculty	2226	12	0.893
Staff	814	12	0.923
Perceptions of Culture and Climate			
Students	5936	23	0.918
Faculty	2283	11	0.798
Staff	830	11	0.788
Belongingness			
Students	5936	13	0.938
Faculty	2283	9	0.935
Staff	830	9	0.942

Note: There were 6 additional items on the perceptions of culture and climate scale for students, faculty, and staff that were not included in the reliability analysis as these were measured using a different scale.

To examine the relationships between major themes of the survey and understand if these variables are related, we measured the correlation coefficients of the major survey variables (themes) for each campus group, students, faculty, and staff. Tables 3-5 are the results of this analysis. For all groups, the correlations were positive and statistically significant.

Students

1. **Diversity**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Diversity is .26, indicating *when the General Climate in the school is more positive, there tends to be a somewhat higher level of diversity.*

2. **Belonging**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Belonging is .45, indicating *when General Climate is more positive, there is a stronger tendency for students to feel a sense of belonging within the school.*

3. **Fair Treatment**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Fair Treatment is .46, indicating *when General Climate is more positive, there is a strong tendency for students to perceive that they are being treated fairly within the organization.*

Table 3: Correlations for Students

N=5936	General Climate	Diversity	Belonging	Fair Treatment
1. General Climate				
2. Diversity	.26**			
3. Belonging	.45**	.34**		
4. Fair Treatment	.46**	.23**	.46**	

**p<.001

Faculty

1. **Diversity**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Diversity is .17, indicating that increased diversity among the faculty is associated with a more positive General Climate.

2. **Belonging**: The correlation coefficient between Belonging and General Climate is .51, indicating that *when General Climate in the faculty is more positive, there tends to be a higher level of perceived belonging among the faculty members.*

3. **Fair Treatment**: The correlation coefficient between Fair Treatment and General Climate is .59, indicating that *when the General Climate is more positive in the faculty, there is a strong tendency for faculty members to perceive that they are being treated fairly within the nursing school.*

Table 4: Correlations for Faculty

N=2283	General Climate	Diversity	Belonging	Fair Treatment
1. General Climate				
2. Diversity	.17**			
3. Belonging	.51**	.18**		
4. Fair Treatment	.59**	.05*	.43**	

**p<.001, *p<.05

Staff

The correlations for staff were all statistically significant. There was a strong positive correlation with both Belonging and Fair Treatment, a weaker positive correlation with Diversity, and Belonging was moderately positively correlated with Fair Treatment. Diversity, while positively correlated with Belonging and Fair Treatment, has weaker associations with these variables compared to General Climate

- **General Climate and Diversity**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Diversity is .22, indicating that *when the general climate among staff is more positive, there tends to be a positive but relatively weak increase in diversity among staff members.*

- **General Climate and Belonging**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Belonging is .44, indicating that *when the general climate among staff is more positive, there tends to be a moderate increase in the sense of belonging among staff members.*

- **General Climate and Fair Treatment**: The correlation coefficient between General Climate and Fair Treatment is .67, indicating that *when the general climate among staff is more positive, there is a strong tendency for staff members to perceive that they are being treated fairly within the organization.*

- **Diversity and Belonging** The correlation coefficient between Diversity and Belonging is .30, indicating that *there is some association between diversity among staff and a sense of belonging, but it is not as strong as the correlation with General Climate.*

- **Diversity and Fair Treatment** (Row 2, Column 4 and Row 4, Column 2): The correlation coefficient between Diversity and Fair Treatment is .15, indicating that a *more diverse*

staff is somewhat associated with a perception of fair treatment, but this relationship is not as strong as the correlation with General Climate.

- **Belonging and Fair Treatment**: The correlation coefficient between Belonging and Fair Treatment is .39, indicating that *when staff members have a stronger sense of belonging, there is a moderate tendency for them to perceive fair treatment within the organization.*

Table 5: Correlations for Staff

N=830	1	2	3	4
1. General Climate				
2. Diversity	.22**			
3. Belonging	.44**	.30**		
4. Fair Treatment	.67**	.15*	.39**	

**p<.001; *p<.05

Analysis by Types of Programs

Participating schools were geographically diverse and represented a range of institutional types (public and private institutions, small and large schools, rural and urban-serving programs, etc.) Having a broad range of participating schools was important to securing results that can be generalizable across all types of nursing schools. The following tables illustrate the mean composite scores based on a 4-point Likert-type scale for each survey theme and by type of program and respondent group. The mean composite scores for all themes were closely aligned with the exception of lower scores for students in the Belongingness theme. This was the finding for all programs and will be discussed in the Belongingness section. Items were scored on a Likert scale of 1(strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Comparison of Composite Mean Scores by School Type and Campus Groups

Table 6a. Students Mean Scores

School Type	Overall Perception	Fair Treatment	Value of Diversity	Belongingness
Public	3.20 (N=962)	3.40 (N=942)	3.48 (N=943)	2.92 (N=942)
Private	3.24 (N=2148)	3.42 (N=2038)	3.41 (N=2026)	2.94 (N=2059)
Small	3.21 (N=266)	3.49 (N=262)	3.46 (N=246)	2.97 (N=262)
AHC	3.24 (N=2,554)	3.45 (N=2,512)	3.46 (N=2,504)	2.94 (N=2,517)
Total	N=5,930	N=5,754	N=5,753	N=5,780

Note: The N's differ across groups because of missing data.

Table 6b: Faculty Mean Scores

School Type	Overall Perception	Fair Treatment	Value of Diversity	Belongingness
Public	3.22 (N=377)	3.47 (N=365)	3.57 (N=377)	3.08 (N=377)
Private	3.26 (N=624)	3.57 (N=621)	3.47 (N=620)	3.16 (N=615)
Small	3.13 (N=95)	3.51 (N=95)	3.54 (N=95)	3.19 (N=94)
AHC	3.15 (N=1,187)	3.39 (N=1,180)	3.57 (N=1,185)	3.04 (N=1,180)
Total	N=2,283	N=2,271	N=2,277	N=2,266

Note: The N's differ across groups because of missing data.

Table 6c: Staff Mean Scores

School Type	Overall Perception	Fair Treatment	Value of Diversity	Belongingness
Public	3.19 (N=125)	3.41 (N=123)	3.57 (N=124)	3.14 (N=125)
Private	3.20 (N=131)	3.45 (127)	3.52 (N=130)	3.19 (N=128)
Small	3.04 (N=42)	3.28 (N=41)	3.56 (N=42)	3.13 (N=43)
AHC	3.21 (N=527)	3.31 (N=504)	3.54 (N=521)	3.10 (N=522)
Total	N=825	N=825	N=817	N=818

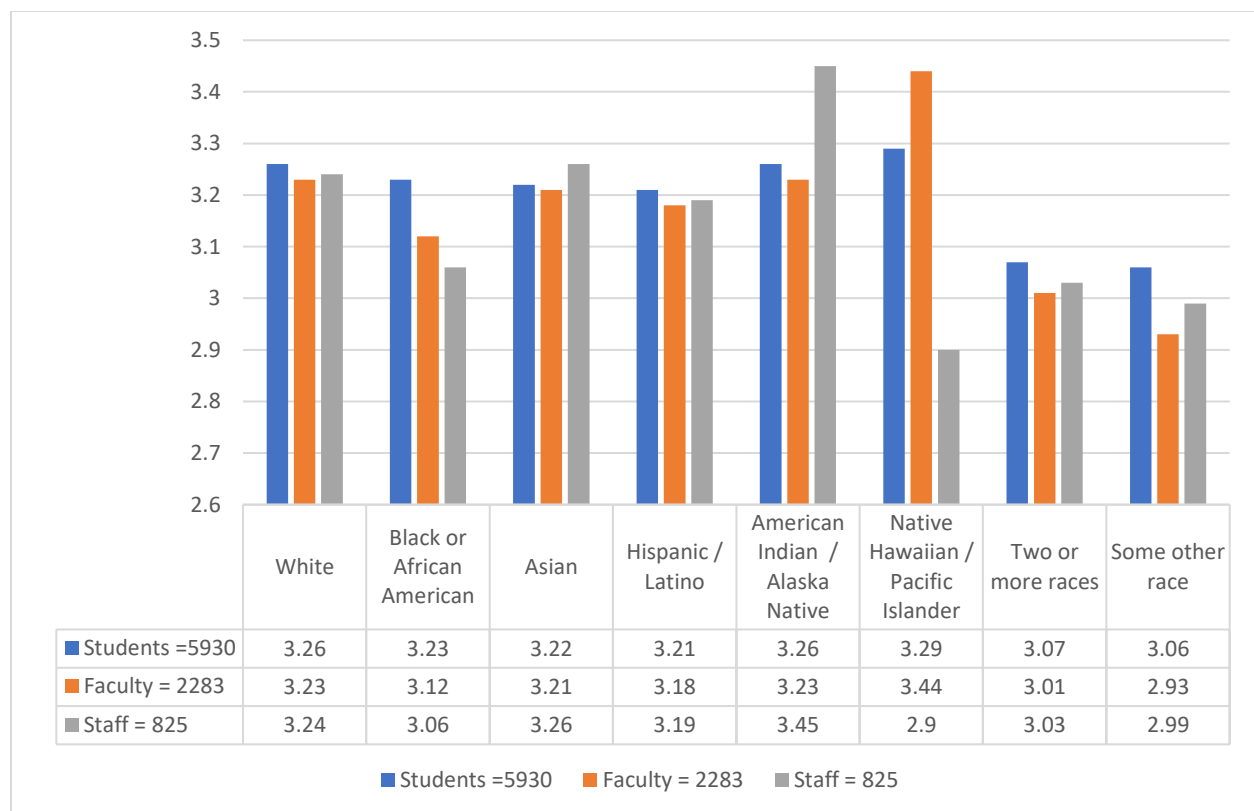Note: The N's differ across groups because of missing data.

Selected Item Analysis

A select number of items were analyzed from each thematic area and examined to determine differences among race/ethnic groups.

Perceptions of Culture and Climate

- 85.8% of students strongly agreed/agreed that their nursing school had a strong sense of cohesion. There was agreement among 74% of White faculty, 69% of African American, and 69% of Asian faculty.
- 76% of students strongly agreed/agreed that their nursing school values student opinions.
- 32% of white students and 46% of African American and Asian students strongly agreed/agreed that subtle discrimination and microaggressions may exist in the structure of their programs. Among faculty, 55% of white faculty, 69% of African American faculty, and 61% of Asian faculty agreed.
- 81% of white students and 69% of African American students agreed that the curriculum appropriately addresses racial and ethnic diversity. Among faculty, 55% of white faculty, 68% of African American faculty, and 61% of Asian faculty agreed.

Figure 1. Perceptions of Culture and Climate Mean Scores by Campus Groups

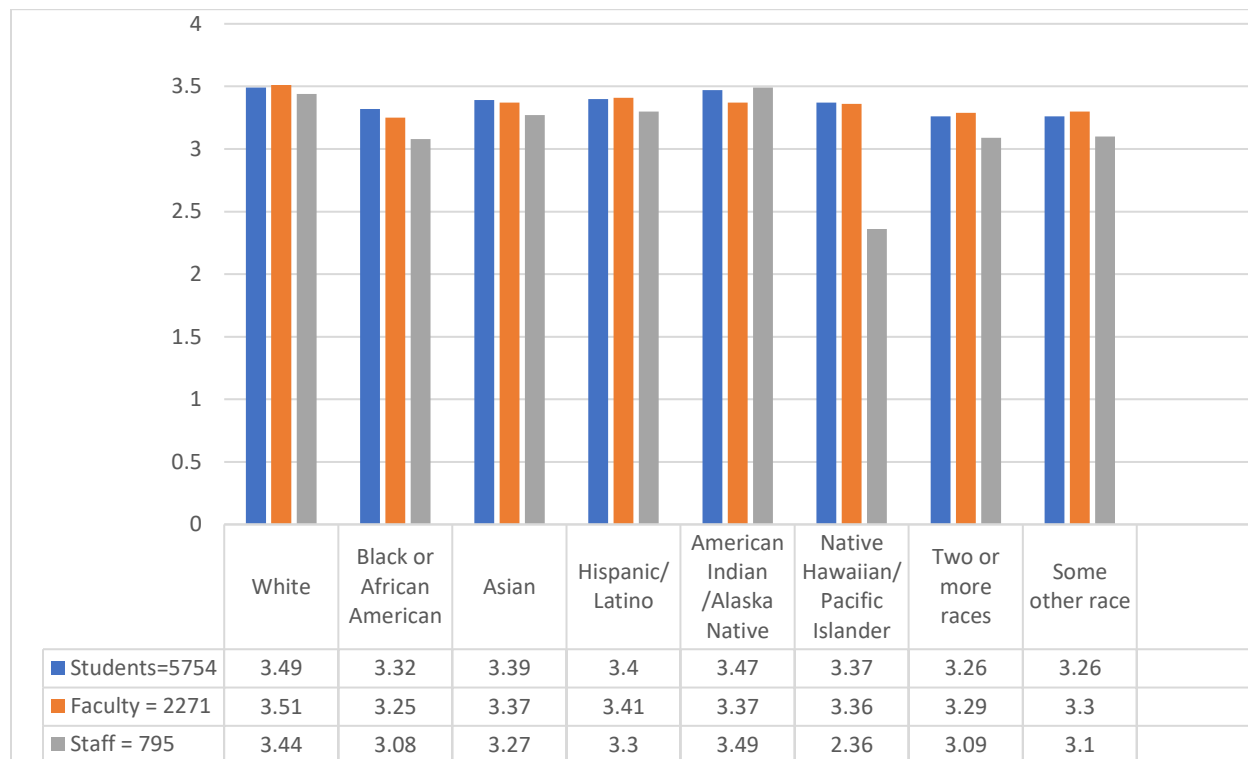|	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic / Latino	American Indian / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Some other race
Students =5930	3.26	3.23	3.22	3.21	3.26	3.29	3.07	3.06
Faculty = 2283	3.23	3.12	3.21	3.18	3.23	3.44	3.01	2.93
Staff = 825	3.24	3.06	3.26	3.19	3.45	2.9	3.03	2.99

Fair Treatment and Discrimination

Responses to items in this theme reported similar findings for all racial/ethnic groups. In response to questions regarding ability, many indicated they could not comment.

- 76.7% of students strongly agreed/agreed that students of color are treated fairly at their nursing schools and 59.2% strongly agreed/agreed that students with disabilities are treated fairly; however, 36% indicated they did not know or could not comment.

- 83% of white students, 77% of African American students, 87% of Asian students, and 73% of students from two or more races agreed that academic performance expectations are the same for students of color and white students.
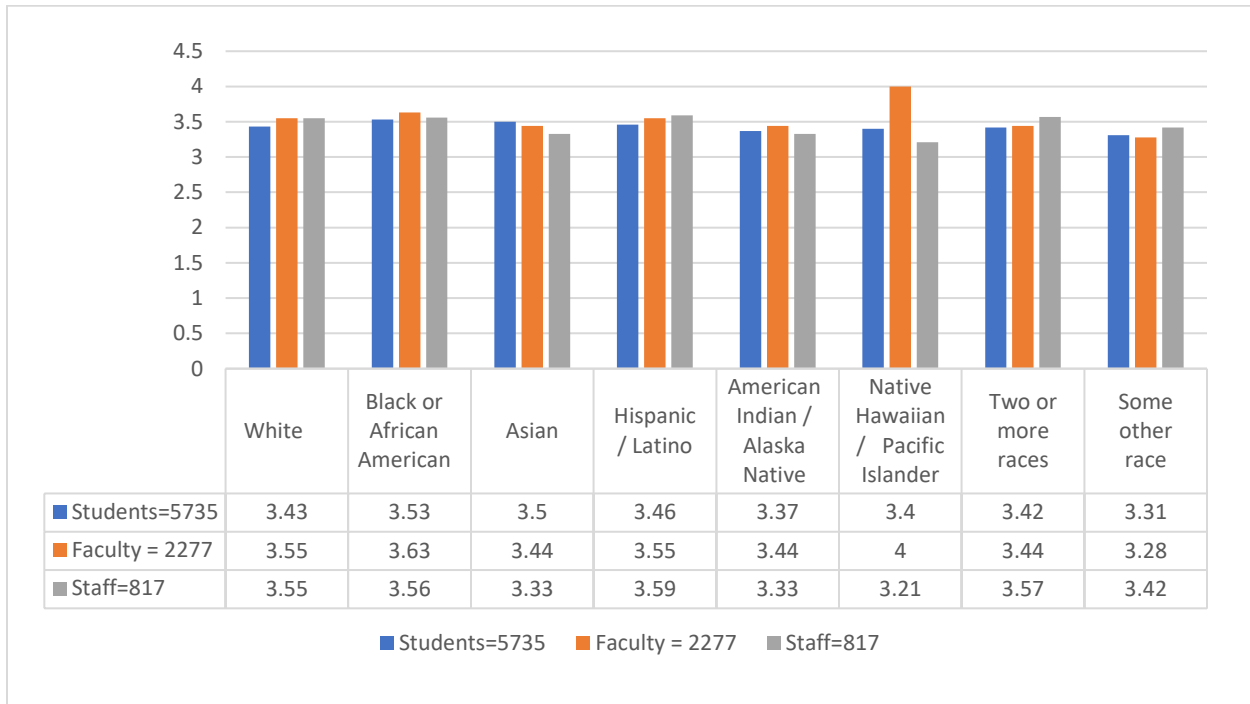
Figure 2. Fair Treatment and Discrimination Mean Scores by Campus Groups

	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	American Indian /Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Some other race	
Students=5754	3.49	3.32	3.39	3.4	3.47	3.37	3.26	3.26	
Faculty = 2271	3.51	3.25	3.37	3.41	3.37	3.36	3.29	3.3	
Staff = 795	3.44	3.08	3.27	3.3	3.49	2.36	3.09	3.1	

Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Overall, responses to items related to valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion were rated as important by all campus groups and race/ethnicity groups and having a racially/ethnically diverse student body enhances the educational experiences for all students. Figure 3 summarizes the Diversity mean scores of campus groups based on race/ethnicity.

Figure 3. Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mean Scores by Campus Groups

	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic / Latino	American Indian / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Some other race
Students=5735	3.43	3.53	3.5	3.46	3.37	3.4	3.42	3.31
Faculty = 2277	3.55	3.63	3.44	3.55	3.44	4	3.44	3.28
Staff=817	3.55	3.56	3.33	3.59	3.33	3.21	3.57	3.42

■ Students=5735   ■ Faculty = 2277   ■ Staff=817

While mean scores were closely aligned, there were differences by race/ethnic groups in response to the item related to hiring more faculty of color. Table 7 summarizes the responses.

Table 7: My School Should Hire More Faculty of Color

Race/Ethnic Group	Strongly Agree/Agree		
	Students (N)	Faculty (N)	Staff (N)
White	**46%** (1758)	**60%** (1042)	**60%** (355)
Black or African American	**72%** (592)	**78%** (178)	**75%** (93)
Asian	**64%** (337)	**71%** (60)	**71%** (17)
Hispanic	59% (494)	62% (67)	66% (61)
American Indian or Alaska Native	**45%** (34)	**57%** (8)	**50%** (4)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	**54%** (14)	**33%** (1)	**100%** (2)
Two or More Races	54% (222)	52% (82)	74% (46)
Some Other Race	52% (119)	34% (20)	52% (12)

Note: Due to missing data, total N's for each group will differ

Belongingness

Levett-Jones & Lathlean (2008) identified belongingness as a prerequisite for a nursing student's clinical learning. In their research, they identified that clinical leaders/managers who were welcoming, accepting, and supportive and nursing staff who were inclusive and encouraging facilitated student perceptions of being valued and respected as members of the nursing team. The experience of belongingness, in turn, enhances student potential for learning and influences their future career decisions. Creating more inclusive learning environments and preparing a more diverse nursing workforce to provide high-quality care is critical to addressing healthcare disparities and health inequities nationwide.

Early research studies on student persistence and success, as postulated by Tinto's theory of student integration (which emphasizes the process of separation, transition, and integration into academic and social aspects of campus life), was a dominant framework for understanding student success in higher education (Draper, 2008). However, scholars have critiqued the theory for its limitations in explaining persistence among students of color. They argue that the theory's assumption of adopting dominant values and norms disproportionately disadvantages students of color who must assimilate into predominantly White campus cultures. Another concept that has gained attention is the sense of *belonging*, which refers to students' psychological connection to their campus community. Carter, Sumpter, and Thruston (2024) recognize belonging as "a fundamental human need, critical for mental well-being, academic success, and personal growth."
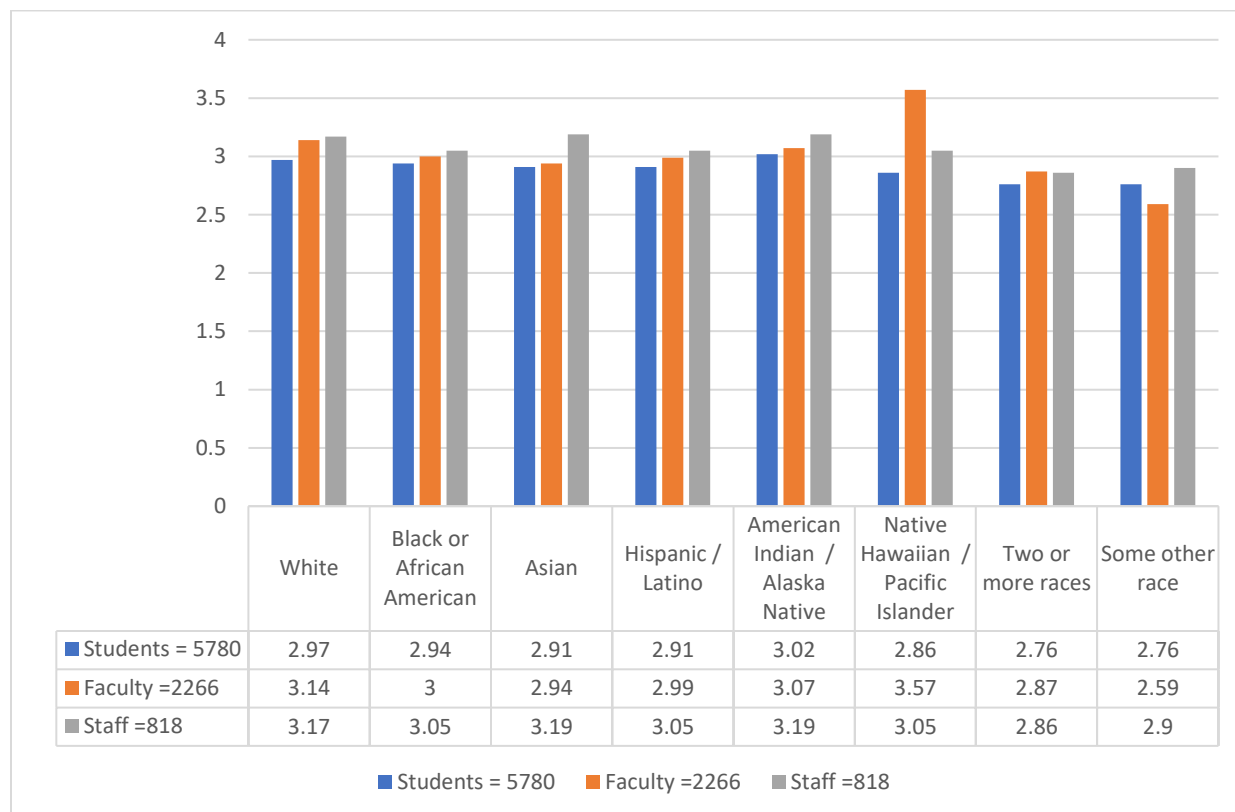
The Culturally Engaging Campus Environment model was proposed to examine the low degree attainment rate among college students, particularly students of color. More recently, researchers in higher education have advocated for assessment instruments that better reflect the experiences of racially diverse student populations or begun developing such tools and using them to pursue new lines of inquiry into college success (Mesus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017).

Moreover, researchers have highlighted the overemphasis on measuring student behaviors as integration indicators while neglecting the environmental context and psychological elements of students' connections to campus cultures (Kuh et al., 2006). They argue that understanding the campus environment and students' psychological experiences are crucial for understanding student success.

In response to these critiques, scholars have proposed alternative concepts that promote culturally conscious frameworks. These include cultural validation, which emphasizes the importance of validating students' backgrounds and identities, and cultural integrity, which focuses on engaging students' cultural backgrounds in college programs and practices.

In this iteration of the LAMP survey, the mean Belonging composite scores were lower for students when compared to faculty and staff for all racial and ethnic groups. Mean scores of all campus groups are reported in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Belonging Mean Scores by Campus Groups

	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic / Latino	American Indian / Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Some other race
■ Students = 5780	2.97	2.94	2.91	2.91	3.02	2.86	2.76	2.76
■ Faculty =2266	3.14	3	2.94	2.99	3.07	3.57	2.87	2.59
■ Staff =818	3.17	3.05	3.19	3.05	3.19	3.05	2.86	2.9

■ Students = 5780   ■ Faculty =2266   ■ Staff =818

Studies have shown that a sense of belonging is a significant predictor of success, and scholars emphasize the need to cultivate a sense of belonging to enhance student outcomes. Strayhorn (2019) states, "a sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers" (page 4). He further states that belonging is "relational" meaning that it has a reciprocal relationship quality. On the other hand, Nunn (2021) identified belonging as a positive and providing "a sense of security, which engenders emotional well-being. She indicates a preference for allowing students to define what belonging means to them and describe their experiences that determine if they feel they belong. Nunn concludes that students define belonging as being accepted for who they are and valued by the larger community.

Belonging is defined as a "feeling that you matter to the group and that you are valued for who you are and what you bring" (Nunn, 2021, p. 15). Her longitudinal study of first-generation and continuing-generation students "revealed that there are three distinct realms of belonging for students, academic belonging, social belonging, and campus-community belonging" (p. 12). Nunn points out that experiencing belonging in one realm may not translate into belonging in another. Throughout her study, she illustrates the differences between first-generation and continuing-generation students and how this status impacts access to belongingness. Campus environments and organizational structures influence how students develop an experience of belongingness. Social belonging may include participating in student organizations, sports

teams, clubs, religious groups, etc. Academic belonging means feeling that you are an accepted member of the academic community of your campus. When students feel academically competent, they experience academic belonging. This increases their confidence and willingness to participate in class discussions, etc. Campus community belonging is related and connected by the organizational structure, including policies and programs that shape the climate. According to Nunn, these three realms of belonging are all interrelated.

A select number of items from the Belonging theme were analyzed to determine if differences exist between different racial/ethnic groups. Table 8 reports these findings. The percentages of those who strongly agree or agree were fairly consistent across all race categories.

Table 8: Selected Belongingness Items Responses by Race/Ethnicity

Survey Items	Strongly Agree/Agree							
	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Other Race
	N=3848	N=821	N=525	N= 833	N=76	N=26	N=410	N= 230
I feel that my campus does not care about me.	20%	23%	26%	25%	24%	23%	30%	33%
I feel isolated from everyone else who is a part of my campus.	21%	22%	28%	27%	26%	31%	29%	35%
I have a sense of belonging with my campus community.	66%	66%	70%	66%	64%	73%	57%	58%
I have close bonds with my faculty.	59%	56%	60%	55%	61%	65%	49%	55%
I have close bonds with my campus staff.	42%	44%	46%	41%	46%	27%	32%	38%
My peers do not involve me in their study sessions and get-togethers.	18%	24%	21%	19%	22%	15%	20%	25%

Research consistently highlights the importance of belongingness for student success and well-being. Institutions and educators play a critical role in creating an inclusive and supportive environment that nurtures a student's sense of belonging and helps them thrive academically and personally.

Key Findings from Studies on Belongingness:

1. **Positive Impact on Well-being:** A sense of belonging is associated with higher levels of psychological well-being, self-esteem, and overall life satisfaction among college students. It contributes to a positive social identity and a sense of purpose (Nunn, 2021).

2. **Academic Engagement and Persistence:** Students who feel a sense of belonging are more likely to be engaged in their academic pursuits, actively participate in class, and persist in facing challenges. They are motivated to succeed and are more likely to seek help when needed (Strayhorn, 2019).

3. **Reduces Social Isolation and Loneliness:** Belongingness helps combat feelings of social isolation and loneliness among students. It fosters the formation of meaningful relationships, connections with peers, and a support system within the college community (Nunn, 2021).

4. **Improved Mental Health:** Students who feel a sense of belonging are less likely to experience mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Belongingness acts as a protective factor and promotes overall psychological well-being.

5. **Better Academic Performance:** Research suggests that students with a strong sense of belonging tend to perform better academically. They are more likely to be motivated, actively participate in class, and seek out opportunities for academic growth (Kuh, 2006).

6. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** A sense of belonging is crucial for students from underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. Creating an inclusive environment that values diversity and supports all students' sense of belonging can contribute to their success and retention (Carter, Sumpter, & Thruston, 2024).

7. **Role of Faculty and Campus Environment:** Faculty support, positive interactions with peers, and a welcoming campus climate are essential to fostering belongingness. Institutions prioritizing inclusivity provide support services and promote diversity to improve students' sense of belonging.

8. **Intersectionality and Multiple Identities:** Belongingness can be influenced by multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. Understanding the intersectionality of these identities is essential for creating an inclusive environment (Nunn, 2021).

9. **Interventions to Enhance Belongingness:** Various interventions have been implemented to enhance belongingness, such as mentoring programs, inclusive classroom practices, peer support networks, and orientation activities. These initiatives aim to build connections, provide support, and foster a sense of community.

10. **Improved Mental Health:** Students who feel a sense of belonging are less likely to experience mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Belongingness acts as a protective factor and promotes overall psychological well-being.

11. **Better Academic Performance:** Research suggests that students with a strong sense of belonging tend to perform better academically. They are more likely to be motivated, actively participate in class, and seek out opportunities for academic growth.

12. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** A sense of belonging is crucial for students from underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds. Creating an inclusive environment that values diversity and supports all students' sense of belonging can contribute to their success and retention.

13. **Role of Faculty and Campus Environment:** Faculty support, positive interactions with peers, and a welcoming campus climate are essential to fostering belongingness. Institutions that prioritize inclusivity provide support services and promote diversity to contribute to students' sense of belonging.

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15. **Interventions to Enhance Belongingness:** Various interventions have been implemented to enhance belongingness, such as mentoring programs, inclusive classroom practices, peer support networks, and orientation activities. These initiatives aim to build connections, provide support, and foster a sense of community.

Developing diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible environments with a collective sense of belonging where all individuals thrive and do their best work is critical to achieving academic nursing's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. When students feel valued, respected, and welcomed by their classmates and peers, they report experiencing a stronger bond with the greater campus community. In this environment, students feel safe enough to share experiences, engage in thoughtful discussions, and offer support to others. Peers also can help buffer the effects of a negative classroom relationship with a faculty member (Sidelinger, Bolen, Frisby, & McMullen, 2011).

STRATEGIES

Charania and Patel (2022) described the multi-level institutional strategies and processes at the University of Michigan School of Nursing to support faculty efforts in integrating DEI-focused inclusive teaching into the curriculum. These strategies involve university-level strategic planning, school of nursing-level strategic planning, and faculty-level strategic planning, fostering an environment of equity and inclusion in the nursing school and health care. The involvement of faculty in creating these strategies ensures their active engagement and support in implementing the DEI curriculum and pedagogy at the individual course level.

The authors also discuss the importance of inclusive teaching in nursing education and its benefits for all students, regardless of their identity or background. Inclusive teaching practices aim to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that fosters students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy. A study with undergraduate nursing students supported the idea that inclusive teaching enhances students' sense of belonging and confidence.

In nursing education, inclusive teaching practices create welcoming environments for learners and empower future nurses. These practices also help nursing faculty become more sensitive and aware of the unique challenges faced by historically underrepresented nursing students, making it a way to respond to and transform historical biases in curriculum and pedagogy.

From a workforce diversity perspective, inclusive teaching is crucial to increase the recruitment and retention of historically excluded and underrepresented groups in the nursing profession. With a diverse patient and community base, the nursing workforce needs to reflect that diversity and inclusive teaching plays a role in preparing nurses to meet the needs of a diverse patient population.

Inclusive educators cultivate awareness of the dynamics that shape the climate of classrooms to foster productive learning environments for diverse students (Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, 2020). Frazer, Reilly, and Squellati (2021) identified the need for faculty training and diffusing tense classroom moments. Additionally, this article's authors share many instructional strategies that educators can use to promote and enhance all student learning. Institutions of nursing education and nursing faculty play a significant role in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) values. As key influencers in nursing education, faculty members are essential in promoting inclusivity and ensuring that nursing curricula and pedagogies are responsive to DEI imperatives. Faculty preparation in inclusive teaching is crucial to incorporate DEI-specific teaching strategies effectively, improving learning outcomes and the overall nursing student experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY

Faculty can play a crucial role in increasing belongingness among college students. Here are some strategies that can be introduced:

1. **Establish a Welcoming Classroom Environment:** Create a positive and inclusive classroom climate by setting clear expectations for respectful behavior, fostering open communication, and valuing diverse perspectives. Start the semester by introducing yourself and learning about your students' backgrounds and interests (Osakwe, Obioha, Minuti, Atairu, & Osborne, 2022).

2. **Learn and Use Student Names:** Taking the time to learn and use students' names demonstrates care and personalization. It helps create a sense of individual recognition and belonging in the classroom.

3. **Be Approachable and Available:** Encourage students to reach out for assistance or guidance by being approachable and available. Schedule office hours and let students know you are willing to discuss academic matters, provide feedback, and address any concerns they may have.

4. **Incorporate Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** Adopt teaching practices that reflect and respect the cultural backgrounds and experiences of your diverse student population. Incorporate diverse perspectives, examples, and resources in your curriculum to make it more inclusive and relevant (Osakwe, Obioha, Minuti, Atairu, & Osborne, 2022; Murray, 2016).

5. **Encourage Active Participation:** Create opportunities for all students to actively participate in class discussions, group activities, and projects. Foster an inclusive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, asking questions, and engaging in academic discourse (Docherty, Warkentin, Borgen, Garthe, Fischer, & Najjar, 2018).

6. **Provide Constructive Feedback:** Offer timely and constructive feedback that helps students improve their understanding and performance. Emphasize strengths and provide suggestions for growth, fostering a supportive and growth-oriented learning environment.

7. **Connect Learning to Real-World Contexts:** Help students see the relevance of course material by connecting it to real-world contexts and their own experiences. This can enhance engagement, motivation, and a sense of belonging by demonstrating the practical value of what they are learning.

8. **Facilitate Collaborative Learning:** Encourage collaboration and teamwork among students. Group projects, discussions, and peer-to-peer learning activities can foster a sense of belonging and create opportunities for students to build connections and support one another.

9. **Provide Resources and Support:** Direct students to campus resources, support services, and academic assistance programs that can help them succeed. By showing students that you care about their holistic well-being and providing them with the tools they need to thrive, you contribute to their sense of belonging (Docherty, Warkentin, Borgen, Garthe, Fischer, & Najjar, 2018).

10. **Reflect on Implicit Bias and Stereotypes:** Continuously reflect on your own biases and assumptions to ensure that you are creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Challenge stereotypes, avoid favoritism, and treat all students fairly and respectfully.

By implementing these strategies, faculty members can foster a sense of belonging, support student success, and contribute to an inclusive and engaging learning environment for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE BELONGINGNESS FROM LAMP^{SM} SURVEY FINDINGS

1. Build a sense of community and cohesion within the nursing program.

2. Organize fun events and social activities for students and faculty.

3. Promote meet-and-greets between students and faculty to foster connections.

4. Encourage group activities and volunteer opportunities outside of the classroom.

5. Improve communication and collaboration among faculty members.

6. Address unspoken expectations and promote open dialogue between administration, faculty, and students.

7. Enhance integration and collaboration between staff and faculty.

8. Create a more inclusive campus environment and promoting diversity.

9. Establish a team-oriented culture with clear role definitions for staff.

10. Hold bonding exercises and team-building events for faculty and staff.

11. Facilitate interactions between students from different cohorts.

12. Promote social events and campus-wide gatherings for students from various programs.

13. Foster unity and mutual respect between faculty, staff, and students.

14. Encourage extracurricular activities to help students connect and support each other.

15. Increase engagement and interaction between faculty and students in a variety of settings.

16. Improve communication and campus-wide outreach for events and activities.

17. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through campus-wide initiatives.

18. Support initiatives that bring students together and create a sense of belonging.

19. Organize events and gatherings that foster interaction and bonding among different academic disciplines.

20. Strengthen communication and relationships between administration and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEADERS

Creating and sustaining a strong organizational culture is an ongoing process requiring deliberate actions and commitment. Here is a description of the key steps involved in creating and sustaining organizational culture (Brown et al., 2023; Dandar, Fair, Steinecke, Sweeney, & Mallery 2022).

1. **Define Core Values:** The first step in creating a strong organizational culture is clearly defining the core values that reflect the organization's identity and purpose. These values should align with the organization's mission and guide employees' behavior and decision-making processes (Carter, Sumpter, & Thruston, 2024; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

2. **Communicate and Reinforce Values:** Once the core values are established, it is crucial to effectively communicate them throughout the organization. This can be done through various channels such as employee onboarding, internal communications, and regular reminders. Leaders should consistently reinforce these values through their words, actions, and recognition of employees who exemplify them.

3. **Lead by Example:** Leaders play a critical role in shaping and sustaining the organizational culture. They need to model the desired behaviors and embody the core values themselves. When leaders consistently demonstrate their values, it sends a powerful message to employees and encourages them to follow suit.

4. **Involve Employees:** Creating an inclusive culture involves actively involving employees in the process. Seek their input and feedback on matters related to the culture. Encourage open dialogue and create platforms for employees to share their ideas, suggestions, and concerns. This not only helps in shaping the culture but also enhances employee engagement and ownership (Center for Creative Leadership, 2023).

5. **Align Policies and Practices:** To sustain the desired culture, it is essential to align policies, procedures, and practices with the core values. For example, if collaboration is a core value, policies should promote teamwork and provide opportunities for cross-functional collaboration. Regularly review and update policies to ensure they reflect the desired culture.

6. **Hire for Cultural Fit:** During the recruitment and selection process, consider the cultural fit of potential candidates. Look for individuals whose values align with the organization's values and who can contribute positively to the culture. Cultural fit should be assessed alongside skills and qualifications to ensure long-term success and cohesion within the organization (Muñoz, Basile, Gonzalez, Birmingham, Aragon, Jennings, & Gloeckner, 2017; Freeman, 2019).

7. **Provide Ongoing Training and Development:** Invest in training and development programs that promote the desired culture. Offer opportunities for employees to enhance their skills, develop leadership abilities, and reinforce the core values. Training should focus not only on technical competencies but also on fostering a positive work environment and promoting the desired behaviors (Carter, Sumpter, & Thruston, 2024).

8. **Encourage Collaboration and Teamwork:** Foster a collaborative and supportive work environment that encourages teamwork. Create opportunities for employees to work together on projects, share ideas, and solve problems collectively. Recognize and reward collaborative efforts to reinforce the importance of teamwork within the culture.

9. **Celebrate Success and Recognize Contributions:** Regularly celebrate achievements and recognize employees who exemplify the organization's values. Publicly acknowledge and reward individuals and teams that embody the desired culture. This reinforces the importance of the culture and encourages others to follow suit.

10. **Continuously Assess and Adapt:** Organizational culture is not static and should be continuously assessed and adapted as needed. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the culture by gathering feedback from employees, conducting surveys, and monitoring key cultural indicators. Be open to adjusting and improvements based on feedback and changing needs.

Creating and sustaining a strong organizational culture requires consistent effort, active involvement from leaders and employees, and a commitment to aligning values with actions. When done effectively, a positive culture can contribute to employee engagement, productivity, and the organization's long-term success.

Additional Resources

Hanover Research Academy Administration Practice. (2014). [Faculty Mentoring Models and Effective Practices,](#) Washington, DC

This report synthesizes effective faculty mentorship models and presents successful approaches to their implementation and support. The report comprises two sections. The first section reviews several innovative mentoring models and best practices for mentorship programs. The second section profiles notable faculty mentoring programs at two postsecondary institutions and presents activities for mentoring relationships. Approaches to specific mentoring strategies by race, gender, ethnicity, and class are notably absent.

Guenter-Schlesinger, S. & K. Ojikutu. (2009). [Best Practices: Recruiting & Retaining Faculty and Staff of Color](#). Western Washington University.

Retrieved from Best Practices: Recruiting & Retaining Faculty and Staff of Color. This paper provides an excellent summary and overview of "best practices" and strategies from a spectrum of higher education institutions that have effectively recruited and retained faculty and staff of color. The authors list recruitment and retention strategies together due to their intertwining nature. Some strategies serve recruitment and retention efforts; others are aimed at either recruitment or retention. Although strategies are not intended to be exhaustive, this "working document" can help guide a university's efforts to identify widely used, effective strategies. This report was used to adapt the practices for the university that would work best and allow maximum flexibility to define best how the university could successfully reach its goals. Further, these initiatives that are ongoing at Western Washington are being examined for possible enhancements to make their ongoing search processes more effective in the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff of color.

Turner, C. S. V., & González, J. C. (2011). [Faculty women of color: The critical nexus of race and gender](#). *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 4(4), 199.

This article examines the experiences of faculty women of color at predominately White public research extensive universities. In the wake of legal challenges to affirmative action, the study questions were, "What are the lived experiences of faculty women of color in predominately White institutions?" and "What are the implications of legal challenges to affirmative action, such as Gratz and Grutter, for faculty women of color and their institutions?" Focus groups were conducted with 51 faculty women of color from a wide range of disciplines, geographic regions and ranks to further understand their experiences, feelings, and reactions in light of the affirmative action cases. One major finding is that faculty women of color across three disciplinary areas STEM, Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences [SBE], and Humanities/Arts) experience a knowledge gap regarding the impact of public policies on their everyday lives. Faculty women of color experiencing the typically documented conditions of tokenism also report that communication about diversity initiatives and resources on their own campuses was extremely uneven.

[The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning seeks to create transformational learning experiences for faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

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APPENDIX

Following a competitive application process, AACN selected 51 schools of nursing to participate in the 2023 pilot administration of the Learning Across Multidimensional Perspectives (LAMP^SM) Culture and Climate Survey. Special thanks go to Johnson & Johnson for providing support for this AACN-led initiative.

- Arizona College of Nursing
- Baylor University
- Binghamton University
- Case Western Reserve University
- Chamberlain University
- Emory University
- Florida Atlantic University
- Frontier Nursing University
- Georgetown University
- Loyola University of New Orleans
- LSU Health New Orleans
- New York University
- North Dakota State University
- Oregon Health & Science University
- Pace University
- Prairie View A&M University
- Purdue University Northwest
- Randolph-Macon College
- Rush University
- Rutgers University
- Shenandoah University
- Stockton University
- Stony Brook University
- SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University
- Texas Tech University Health Science Center
- The University of Alabama

- The University of Alabama at Birmingham
- The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
- Thomas Jefferson University
- Trinity University
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Colorado
- University of Detroit Mercy
- University of Iowa
- University of Maryland
- University of Memphis
- University of Michigan - Flint
- University of New Mexico
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro
- University of North Carolina Pembroke
- University of Portland
- University of South Florida
- University of Southern Maine
- University of Texas at Arlington
- University of Texas Medical Branch
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- UTHealth Houston
- Washington State University
- Western Governors University
- Widener University
- Wilmington University