

**MSU Denver**  
**2021 Campus Climate Survey Findings: Faculty**

**Presented by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

Prepared by Jovan Hernandez, PhD, and K Scherrer, PhD,  
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Faculty Fellows

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the campus community about MSU Denver faculty experiences with the campus climate for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This report expands on initial analyses of the 2021 MSU Denver Campus Climate Survey that were presented in the Campus Climate Survey Executive Summary released in Spring 2022. The current report summarizes key quantitative findings, as well as results from the qualitative data regarding faculty experience, with a focus on the implications of these data for informing policy and practice interventions.

In this report, focuses on quantitative and qualitative data that pertains to EDI climate experiences of faculty, rather than more general workplace satisfaction comments that pertain to issues such as compensation, supervision or workload. To this end, this report contains specialized analysis of three faculty populations: Faculty who identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other related identities (LGBTQ+), and having one or more disabilities. Limitations with the survey limit comparisons [e.g., White (or heterosexual or able bodied) faculty were not provided with similar questions to enable comparisons between groups of faculty based on race, sexual orientation, or ability status]. It is also worth noting that this report utilizes data from a relatively small group of faculty (26% overall response rate). (Additional information about numbers of respondents are included in each section of this report.) These data are not intended to be interpreted as representative of the majority of faculty experiences, but rather these data provide context to generate understanding about *how* we can improve the campus climate regarding EDI.

In addition to the focused, deductive analysis of these three identity groups, we also examine five other prominent themes that emerged inductively across all faculty that have implications for improving the climate for faculty. Data presented in this report are drawn from open-ended comments from across the survey (e.g., “please provide any other comments on the topics in this section”) and provide potential implications for interventions in improving the campus climate for faculty. The impact of the COVID pandemic also emerged frequently in these data, as faculty indicated that the stresses of navigating a global pandemic and teaching virtually were widespread. Since the impact of COVID on faculty experiences is not the primary focus of these analyses and this topic has more limited relevance for implications for improving campus climate, they are included in the data presentation only when the faculty comment also pertains to their experiences with campus climate or strategies to improve campus climate.

The subsequent sections of this report represent focused analyses of three faculty populations: Faculty who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other related identities (LGBTQ+), and having one or more disabilities, as well as more general inductively developed themes of University leadership, Departmental leadership and culture, Critiques about EDI, Differences across faculty, and Additional salient identities. Implications are discussed in depth within each section as well as briefly summarized at the beginning of this document.

## **Key Implications**

As the full report illustrates, there are a number of implications stemming from this data.

The following pages briefly summarize key implications that emerge from qualitative faculty data from the 2021 Campus Climate Survey.

### **Recommendations from BIPOC Faculty**

- Methodologically, it would be helpful to provide clear definitions of terminology, and ensure that these definitions are available throughout the survey; include a disclaimer about the different ways that people use relevant terms
- Need for nuance in “climate” as culture may be different in different University settings
- Recognize differences amongst faculty of color (e.g., South Asian, Black, Hispanic) in interventions
- Continue to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of racism as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students
- Continue to provide trainings for University members in regard to racism
- Ensure clear mechanisms of accountability for racism or racial discrimination

### **Recommendations from LGBTQ+ Faculty**

- Methodologically, it would be helpful to provide clear definitions of terminology, and ensure that these definitions are available throughout the survey; include a disclaimer about the different ways that people use relevant terms
- Methodologically, it would be helpful to separate out gender identity/expression and sexual orientation as well as only include those who identify as members of LGBTQ+ communities in subsequent surveys
- Continue to work to dismantle stigmas associated with sexual orientation and gender identity to ensure that faculty (and students and staff) can disclose their identities on campus, should they wish
- Address potential SRI biases (relevant for other identities as well)
- Provide additional resources for LGBTQ+ faculty
- “Dead” names appearing in university systems after name change process completed
- Continue to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of heterosexism and transphobia, as well as hetero- and cis-normativity as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students
- Continue to provide trainings for University members in regard to heterosexism and transphobia, as well as hetero- and cis-normativity
- Ensure clear mechanisms of accountability for heterosexism and transphobia

### **Recommendations from Faculty with Disabilities**

- Continue to work to dismantle stigmas associated with disabilities to ensure that faculty (and students and staff) can disclose their identities on campus, should they wish
- Ensure that meetings and other university engagements are accessible (e.g., accessibility of meeting location, use of microphones, visibility with virtual document sharing)

- Ensure clear expectations and confidentiality for accommodations with HR and other campus leaders (e.g., Chairs)
- Address potential SRI biases (relevant for other identities as well)
- Continue to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of ableism as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students
- Continue to provide trainings and accountability for University members in regard to ableism

## **Additional Recommendations from Faculty**

### University Leadership

- Make University EDI activities more visible
- Learn more about what faculty would like to see from leadership re: EDI activities
- Diversify faculty, both in terms of representation and competency
- Make faculty salaries more nationally competitive

### Department Leadership and Culture

- Increase training and support for Chairs, particularly regarding creating cultures of inclusion and belonging
- Greater involvement from leadership outside of Departments to address concerns
- Transparency about process for addressing concerns
- Faculty not feeling heard about their concerns
- Make sure data can be made available at Department levels (when anonymity can be guaranteed)
- Departmental specific trainings, with support from University

### Critiques about EDI

- Provide transparency about hiring processes (when possible)
- Provide more opportunities to share data about *why* EDI efforts are critical to University successes
- Ensure that faculty are committed to our University mission and goals, and that systems of accountability exist to ensure this alignment

### Differences across faculty

- Learn more about how University members can be more intentionally inclusive of affiliate and Cat II faculty
- Transparency about process for addressing concerns with “senior” or “tenured” faculty
- Greater accountability in addressing concerns with “senior” or “tenured” faculty
- Address inequalities in student evaluations (e.g., SRIs)
- Explore possible sources of bias in PTR/RTP processes; Initiate process to address sources of bias in RTP/PTR processes

### Additional salient identities

- Include additional identities in next iteration of survey, including age and gender
- Examine how service loads are allocated by Department (with focus on equity of workload)

## **BIPOC Faculty**

### **Summary of Quantitative Analysis**

Faculty were directly asked if they identified as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC). The term BIPOC was defined on the survey as (Black, indigenous, or a person of color [someone who is not white or of European parentage]). Out of 381 faculty who responded to the question, 55 (14%) identified as BIPOC. Approximately 60% of BIPOC faculty agreed they *felt welcome on campus*.

### **Summary of Qualitative Analysis**

After utilizing quantitative measures to understand the experiences of BIPOC faculty, faculty respondents were then provided with an open-ended text box with the prompt “please provide any other comments on the topics in this section.” Responses indicate areas for additional growth in supporting BIPOC faculty. In this section, only those who identified as BIPOC, were provided an opportunity for an open-ended response. Only nine faculty wrote in additional information in this section to help us understand their experiences. Due to the limited comments included in this section, four additional participants of color, who shared comments pertinent to their experiences in other open-ended questions on this survey are also included in this section.

Two faculty members shared suggestions pertinent to the language used in this survey, for instance by sharing *feedback on the language used* in this section. One faculty member shared that, “‘Person of color’ and ‘colored person’ are equally offensive and racist ways to deny someone's humanity and reduce them to their skin color.” Another faculty member commented that, “As a part of what you term ‘BIPOC,’ I wish that I could be considered as an individual rather than a numerical tool by which Marxist neoliberals can realize their agenda. It's

insulting to ask these questions which are solely based on skin color.” Taken together these comments demonstrate that there are differences in which language faculty would like to use in discussions about race and ethnicity, as well as differences regarding the need to examine these identities at all.

Several other comments pertained to *broader experiences of inclusion*. One faculty member shared that, “In instances where I [responded to this survey as] neutral, it is because both agree and disagree about the statements because I am welcome and respected in some instances, but not in others.” This observation illustrates how varied these experiences can be across settings, indicating the need for nuanced research tools for understanding these experiences. Faculty shared several other examples of their experiences of campus culture.

- “My department is a toxic environment.”
- “I’ve been targeted by both racism and sexism in the department, college, and university.”
- “I was (inadvertently I’m sure) mistaken for another faculty of color from a different department.”
- “Justice is not served at MSU. I’m just trying to retire and get the hell out of here with my pension. Women of color are not respected here.”

These comments indicate the need to continue to examine *how race and ethnicity shape faculty experiences* across campus, as well as the importance of examining culture in many different settings (e.g., Departments, Committees), as well as more globally across the institution.

In addition to more general investigations about how race and ethnicity shape faculty experiences, two other participants shared that it is also important to examine *differences amongst BIPOC faculty*.

- “While I do not think that South Asians (my community) are well-represented it is important to contextualize that little of the student body is South Asian, and it is Black and Native American faculty, staff and administrators who are poorly represented.”
- “Currently the diversity training ignores the special circumstances of Hispanic faculty, especially those who do not appear BIPOC. This is an HSI by the numbers, but there is little knowledge of Hispanic issues at senior levels and much institutional discrimination. These things will not be solved by pushing critical race theory. We need Hispanic leaders who understand the systematic discrimination against Hispanics in this country.”

These comments also illuminate the need to examine the experiences of BIPOC faculty, both as a group as well as differences that may exist within this group (e.g., Hispanic/Latina/o/x faculty).

## **Implications**

Qualitative responses from BIPOC identified faculty indicate several potential implications for policy and practice. Methodologically, faculty shared a number of fruitful insights including the need to define terms used in this survey in multiple places in the survey. Observations about the differences amongst BIPOC faculty experiences also highlight the need for *more nuanced data about differences amongst BIPOC faculty experiences* (e.g., South Asian, Black). Similarly, BIPOC faculty observations that culture may feel different in different areas of the University (e.g., faculty senate culture, departmental culture), indicate a need to better understand how different spaces across campus are able to create experiences of inclusion and belonging. There are differences amongst faculty about the salience of race in shaping faculty experiences, although the vast majority of comments described the important role that race played in BIPOC faculty experiences. Data illustrate that some BIPOC faculty perceive racial microaggressions persisting in individual interactions (e.g., being mistaken for another faculty

member of color) as well as structurally (e.g., diversity trainings). These data also indicate a continued need to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of racism as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students, as well as to continue to refine trainings and accountability for University members in regard to race and ethnicity. As described in the introductory statement to this analysis, these implications are based on a very small number of respondents, indicating a need for cautious engagement with these implications as well as a need to incorporate additional methods to solicit BIPOC faculty voices in future iterations of climate surveys.

## **LGBTQ+ Faculty**

### **Summary of Quantitative Analysis**

Three hundred and seventy-nine faculty members responded to the question “Do you identify within the LGBTQIA+ community?”. Of these respondents, 56 (15%) selected “yes”, six (1%) “not sure”, 29 (8%) “prefer not to say, and 288 (76%) did not identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Faculty who selected any response other than “no” were asked follow-up questions regarding their experiences on campus. Approximately 60% agreed they could openly express their *gender identity/expression* on campus, while 40% agreed they could openly express their *sexual identity* on campus.

### **Summary of Qualitative Analysis**

After utilizing quantitative measures to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ faculty, faculty respondents were then provided with an open-ended text box with the prompt “please provide any other comments on the topics in this section.” Responses indicate areas for additional growth in supporting LGBTQ+ faculty. In this section, individuals who identified as members of the LGBTQAI+ community, or those who indicated that they were “not sure” if they did, were provided an open-ended question about their experiences. Twenty faculty wrote in additional information in this section to help us understand their experiences. Due to the limited comments included in this section, one additional participant who shared comments pertinent to their experiences in other open-ended questions on this survey is also included in this section.

Several comments indicated that faculty were *not particularly “out”* about their sexual orientation or gender identity with colleagues or students.

- “I don't disclose my sexual orientation at work, which is why I have answered N/A. People do often assume my orientation (incorrectly) based on my partner.”



- “I do not share my gender identity/sexual orientation with a larger audience.”
- “While I am bisexual, and will eventual[ly] transition to a transwoman, I do not discuss sexuality in or out of class.”
- “I don’t generally share my status as a queer person so it is hard to gauge folks respect or reaction to that identity.”
- “I have not come out to students out of fear of retaliation in course evaluations and because of general fears of a lack of acceptance. These fears could be unfounded, but they are real and have real implications in terms of my willingness to be vulnerable with students in this way.”

The lack of comfort in sharing about these identities with colleagues is potentially indicative of a workplace culture that could be more intentionally affirming of LGBTQ+ identities.

Comments also indicated some *confusion or feedback about the topic*. For instance, one faculty member commented that, “I choose neutral for the last two questions as I am not well-informed about them and there is not a “not sure” option.” Another respondent shared that, “gender identity/expression is not always understood by the wider faculty” perhaps indicating a larger need for additional information about LGBTQ+ identities and experiences. Taken together this feedback indicates that additional opportunities for education and visibility around LGBTQ+ identities.

Faculty also shared suggestions pertinent to the *methodology of this survey*, for instance by sharing that the survey, “need[s] a don't know category for this and previous list of questions.” Similarly, another faculty member commented: “Why is gender identity/expression combined with sexual orientation? These should be two separate sections as the current questions seem to imply that anyone who is LGBTQ+ needs to specify their gender identity, which should

not be the case.” This feedback has been noted in relationship to revisions to the next iteration of this survey.

Faculty also offered feedback based on their experiences, that have *implications for policy and practice*. The following quotes provide additional direction for potential interventions.

- “There are great LGBTQIA resources on campus for students. Once again, it's just not something talked about within faculty.”
- “Related to these concepts, I changed my name recently, but still find lingering times when someone calls me my old name (from finding my old name on the website somewhere, OR from colleagues who someone can't remember the name change after several years. My name change isn't related to my gender identity, but I think this system needs to be fixed to better support folks whose name change is tied to their gendered sense of self. (and perhaps additional trainings with faculty/staff on why it's important to call people by their preferred names)”
- “The university has a serious problem with women who do not express their gender in traditional and heteronormative ways.”
- ““Do you ever wear dresses?” (asked by a dean.)”

Comments such as these indicate that there is still a *need to address microaggressions* as they emerge in interpersonal interactions as well as structural considerations for systems such as community building opportunities for LGBTQ+ faculty and streamlining name changes systems and processes.

## Implications

Qualitative responses from LGBTQ+ identified faculty indicate several potential implications for policy and practice. *Methodologically*, faculty shared a number of fruitful insights including the need to define terms used in this survey in multiple places in the survey. For this identity group, including those who described their gender/sexual orientation as “don’t know” probably should be analyzed separately from subsequent analyses for LGBTQ+ faculty, as their comments were quite different from those who claimed an LGBTQ+ identity. They also commented that combining gender identity/expression and sexual orientation was problematic.

It is notable that many faculty described *fears about disclosing their gender identity/sexual orientation* to colleagues or students, due to a concern about how others would respond to this disclosure. This indicates that continued work is needed to ensure that faculty (and students and staff) are able to share about their identities and experiences without fear of repercussions. Continuing to provide trainings and accountability on LGBTQ+ identities will help to create a culture of inclusion and belonging for LGBTQ+ faculty.

LGBTQ+ faculty also made several concrete suggestions, such as examining how student reviews of instruction (SRI) data may be biased against LGBTQ+ faculty (which may also be relevant to other faculty with marginalized identities). Another faculty shared a desire for additional resources for LGBTQ+ faculty members, such as those LGBTQ+ students benefit from. Another faculty member shared concerns about the name change process, and the ways that one’s old name (or dead name) may continue to appear on University materials, problematically outing faculty to other University community members. Data illustrate that some LGBTQ+ faculty perceive microaggressions persisting in individual interactions (e.g., being asked if they ever wear a dress) as well as structurally (e.g., SRIs). These data also indicate a

continued need to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of heterosexism and transphobia as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students, as well as to continue to refine trainings and accountability for University members in regard to gender identity/expression and sexual orientation. As described in the introductory statement to this analysis, these implications are based on a very small number of respondents, indicating a need for cautious engagement with these implications, as well as a need to incorporate additional methods to solicit BIPOC faculty voices in future iterations of climate surveys.

## **Faculty with Disabilities**

### **Summary of Quantitative Analysis**

Faculty members were also asked if they identified as having a disability. Disability was defined as “a diagnosed or known medical condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities; inability to fully access the campus experience due to academic or campus accessibility barriers.” Out of 399 faculty members who responded to the question, 47 (12%) identified as having a disability. Of these faculty members, 48% of them agreed they *felt welcome on campus*.

### **Summary of Qualitative Analysis**

After utilizing quantitative measures to understand the experiences of faculty with disabilities, faculty respondents were then provided with an open-ended text box with the prompt “please provide any other comments on the topics in this section.” Responses indicate areas for additional growth in supporting faculty with disabilities. In this section, only those who identified as having a disability, were provided an opportunity for an open-ended response. Twenty-three faculty wrote in additional information in this section to help us understand their experiences. Due to the limited comments included in this section, one additional participant who shared comments pertinent to their experiences in other open-ended questions on this survey is also included in this section.

The most common type of response in this section was that many faculty shared that they *have not disclosed their disabilities* to colleagues or students, due to fear of how they would respond. For example, as one person shared:

“I do not always share my disability status with others. I do not believe that people with disabilities are well-represented here at MSU, and I am worried about the stigma associated with my disabilities affecting how much I valued here at MSU.”

Similarly, another faculty member shared:

“I am not "out" about some of my psychological conditions, so this section is difficult to answer. I am afraid to disclose my status, and work extremely hard to avoid letting it get in my way or become a problem that is evident to others.”

In addition to concerns about disclosing disabilities to others, others offered *suggestions about how to create more accommodating spaces* for persons with disabilities. The following quotes are examples of suggestions faculty shared about how to improve their experiences.

- “While I have not been treated with overt disrespect, my limitations are often ignored.  
Exs: 1. Holding meetings on the 2nd floor of an inaccessible building on 9th St. Park., 2. When walking to a meeting or other shared destination, people will walk at a brisk pace and talk to me when I am a half-block or more behind them, struggling to keep up.”
- “We need microphones in department meetings; people need “communication appropriate” behaviors for the hearing impaired.”
- “Especially in this era of Teams & Zoom meetings, people regularly screen-share documents and materials that are impossible for low-vision individuals to read. During in-person meetings, Powerpoints are often constructed in ways that are impossible for low-vision individuals to read.”
- “A disabled employee at MSU Denver is given no assistance in navigating the path necessary to gain disability assistance. ALL emails, resources, and web postings are about how to get those resources to students students students. I had to jump through so

many hoops to get disability accommodations from HR, and then my chairs and my deans summarily ignored the disability agreement with no consequences, and I was left unsupported. I have never worked in a community anywhere at any time that was less friendly and accessible to disabled employees than MSU Denver. It's awful here.”

- “Faculty colleagues have openly complained about accommodations to the mailroom/lounge and other public areas. A former chair told me she wouldn't make any more accommodations because I could always leave the building or not come to campus. They also have complained to me personally about accommodations HR has made for me in terms of office equipment.”
- “We have had issues where a faculty member's disability was not accommodated in the classroom.”
- “Due to an exacerbation of my disability, I was slower to get work graded than I would usually be able to do. Some students wrote hateful comments on SRIs about this, attributing this delay to character flaws and a lack of professionalism, despite my clear and open communication about the role of my disability, and this could impact my professional evaluation.”

These remarks indicate some fruitful directions that Departments, Human Resources and other units and individuals across campus can make to better support faculty with disabilities.

## **Implications**

Qualitative data from faculty indicate opportunities for potential practice and policy implications to inform support and inclusion for faculty with disabilities. It is notable that many faculty described *fears about disclosing their disabilities* to colleagues or students, due to a concern about how others would respond to this disclosure. This indicates that continued work is

needed to ensure that faculty (and students and staff) are able to share about their identities and experiences without fear of repercussions. Continuing to provide trainings and accountability on disabilities will help to create a culture of inclusion and belonging for faculty with disabilities.

Faculty also made several concrete suggestions, such as examining how SRI data may be biased against faculty with disabilities (which may also be relevant to other faculty with marginalized identities). Several faculty described ways that meetings or other activities could be improved by using technology more effectively (e.g., using microphones, sharing documents) or by attending to organizational issues with meetings (e.g., accessibility of meeting location, expectations of walking together to a meeting). Faculty also shared that procuring their own accommodations, and having these accommodations honored and respected in teaching or departmental activities were uneven. Additional communications between Human Resources and Departmental/School leadership may help to support faculty with disabilities.

Data illustrate that some faculty with disabilities *perceive microaggressions persisting* in individual interactions (e.g., hearing complaints about accommodations) as well as structurally (e.g., lack of visibly accessible materials in meetings). These data also indicate a continued need to provide opportunities for faculty to address issues of ableism as they emerge in interactions with faculty, staff, or students, as well as to continue to refine trainings and accountability for University members in regard to disability statuses.



### **Additional Prominent Themes**

In addition to focusing on the experiences of particular groups of faculty (e.g., BIPOC or LGBTQ+ faculty), five additional themes emerged across all open-ended responses from faculty that contribute to our understandings of faculty experiences of the climate at MSU Denver. This analysis focused on those themes that provide potential implications for intervention: University leadership, Departmental leadership and culture, Critiques about EDI, Differences across faculty, and Additional salient identities.

#### **University Leadership**

A number of faculty shared *concerns that University leadership was only nominally invested in EDI issues*, but expressed concern about the how these commitments are operationalized. This theme is illustrated by these exemplary quotes:

- “Campus leadership SAYS that diversity and inclusion is important, but they don't DO a lot about it.”
- “Campus leadership says the right buzzwords to show a marginal dedication to diversity and inclusion. Their actions demonstrate a lower rate of dedication to diversity and inclusion.”
- “MSU Denver has a long way to go. Broad statements from the administration are not adequate if MSU Denver employees like me have encountered issues related to gender, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.”
- “I see no meaningful commitments to diversifying the T[enure]T[rack] faculty or trying to require TT faculty to be better at diversity issues. Most of what I see is lip service to diversity.”

While it is not entirely clear what participants meant by “leadership” or “administration” in these narratives, comments such as these indicate that faculty perceived a lack of commitment to EDI issues amongst University leadership. There could be multiple reasons for this, for instance as faculty do not know about the full scope of leadership’s EDI activities, or that faculty do not see the connections between EDI actions and University values and goals. These comments offer fruitful direction for future inquiry, in wanting to understand what faculty would like to see in terms of action steps from campus administration, and in how to best publicize existing efforts.

Several faculty members also described what they saw as some of the *barriers to hiring a more diverse faculty*, most frequently described as faculty of color.

- “The fundamental issue with increasing and retaining faculty of color is salary. Other institutions simply pay more than MSU Denver and we see our offers declined to black and brown candidates who report far greater offers elsewhere. While Sr. Administration publicly states a focus on diversity, in truth Sr. Admin is more committed to making Sr. Leadership more diverse with a keen focus on having visible leaders be persons of color and giving the appearance the issue is addressed. The low faculty salary issue and lack of competitive annual raises leaves a system in which we can’t hire more persons of color and we lose faculty of color who go elsewhere to receive better compensation.”
- “We are criticized because our faculty body is not diverse or representative of the student body, and that is true, and fair. However, it is not due to a lack of interest or commitment to the value of diversity. It is due to a lack of resources. For example, our department has made first offers to people of color in each of the last several faculty searches, and those candidates have turned us down because the salary we offered was laughably low compared to other offers they received. We simply aren't able to compete. We recently

lost a tenured faculty member of color because they were able to move to another tenured faculty position where they're making twice as much. We simply can't compete.”

- “Knowing that the terrible salaries paid to professors is an obstacle to diverse hires, the administration has done nothing to address that issue. Likewise, they have done very little to try to hire more diverse faculty members.”

The issues of salary as it pertains to recruitment and retention of diverse faculty was a common theme in faculty responses. This represents a strategy that (some) faculty identified as necessary for improving recruitment and retention efforts. This represents an additional opportunity to augment complimentary strategies to create compelling job offers with robust support mechanisms (e.g., mentorship plans, course releases, start-up funds) as well as structural changes (e.g., clarifying RTP/PTR criteria, holistic faculty evaluations).

### **Departmental Leadership and Culture**

While broad comments about administration and leadership were prominent in these data, specific comments about departmental culture or the leadership of Chairs were also very common in faculty responses. The following comments are illustrative of this theme.

- “My department chair appears to be more concerned about upsetting conservative faculty members than creating a culture of equity and inclusion.”
- “Nepotism is alive and well in my department, as they want to hire their friends. I have been bullied by several members of the department and have the evidence to prove it... Because of the bad treatment, I am seriously considering leaving the teaching profession altogether.”
- “Certain faculty in my Department tend to exclude, ignore, and silently bully other members of the Department.”

- “Garden variety microaggressions in my department.”
- “It [discrimination] is pervasive in my department - there is an "in-group" that reminds me of a high school clique.”
- “For hires in department it is dictated by chair and his inner circle. Zero diversity, and zero hires with skills perceived to be better than the current leadership.”
- “For years (over a decade), a large number of faculty have been reaching out to administrators regarding issues in our department. They ignored us for the most part... We take surveys all the time, then we never see the results. We are told, top down, what will happen. We feel silenced, ignored, and excluded from decision making/shared governance.”
- “The former department chair was extremely discriminatory against women who challenged him.”
- “It is customary for my department chair and chosen faculty members to discriminate against me and my other colleagues of color and different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds and perspectives.”
- “I am an immigrant and sometimes felt excluded or undervalued because of my accent by our former chair.”
- “Some departments exclude individuals. I was full-time tenure track at MSU Denver and decided to move to another institution based upon cliques and exclusion within my department here.”

Taken together these comments indicate how important Departmental culture and leadership are in shaping faculty experience. These examples also highlight frequently articulated concerns that

feedback on surveys such as this one would not be taken seriously, and a desire for more inclusive, Departmental leadership.

This sentiment about the importance of Departmental (or unit) culture was supported by several faculty members commented that they would like to see more trainings and supports available at more “local” levels, such as within Departments.

- “I think that the responsibility of diversity, equity, and inclusion needs to be equally distributed throughout the systems of the MSU. I'm also not sure if centralizing these efforts is a good idea. While some departments that are less inclined to care about diversity, equity, and inclusion may benefit from the centralized setting, other departments have ethics and standards of conduct dictated by our profession and therefore we know how to proceed. Financial support from MSUD would be imperative.”
- “I think being vigilant on diversity is an ongoing everyday work of community committed to this (my department). Having whole campus diversity trainings is redundant to me.”
- “We need resources for DEI efforts to be provided by the Administration, but it should be left to departments to implement specific plans that are discipline specific.”
- “I feel a lot of pushback in my department to ideas related to equity and inclusion - I think there is a desire to be more equitable in our practices, but that faculty feel threatened by what that might actually look like.”

Comments from faculty participants indicate that there remains some disconnect between MSU Denver’s EDI commitments and what faculty see as relevant activities. Faculty shared concerns about leadership and administration broadly, but also shared many specific examples about

Departmental cultures and leadership as significant contributors to their experiences of EDI at MSU Denver.

### **Critiques about EDI**

While some faculty expressed concern that MSU Denver leadership should do more to focus on EDI goals, many faculty also expressed concern about the focus on EDI activities.

- “Diversity is not critical if we don't have enough funding or students to keep the doors open.”
- “Here's a novel idea.....Perhaps we should treat people as individuals rather than as members of groups.”
- “Given that MSUD is already highly diverse, it's not clear that further goals and accountability are needed.”
- “I believe more emphasis should be placed on a candidate's qualifications and experience than diversity.”
- “In my opinion, all these efforts for diversity and inclusion seem unnecessary or at times counterproductive.”

These comments indicate that faculty are not monolithic in how they see the importance of EDI goals (e.g., hiring diverse faculty) or the prioritization of these goals. While ubiquitous agreement about University priorities is an unrealistic goal, these responses indicate that EDI goals and strategies may benefit from additional faculty engagement. Departmental specific trainings or engagements may be fruitful settings for additional conversation about our collective EDI goals.

### **Differences across faculty**

The differences between different categories of faculty (e.g., affiliate, tenure-track, tenured), also emerged as a prominent theme as faculty discussed some of the ways that *EDI efforts could be integrated into recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion practices*. The status of affiliate faculty members was a particularly prominent theme in these data.

- “Affiliate faculty are treated as second-class citizens.”
- “Affiliate faculty pay is abysmal, and getting paid once a month (with no paycheck in August and January) causes extreme financial strife. We work hard and deserve to be paid a living wage.”
- “Affiliate faculty are not fully integrated into campus so therefore am unsure [how to respond to this question.]”
- “Affiliate faculty are not valued.”
- “Affiliate faculty are treated as disposable members of the gig economy. There is a feeling each semester that we are "lucky" to get a class. Not a valued professional but someone who is not quite good enough to have a "real" job at the university.”

Affiliate faculty were an engaged proportion of those completing this survey, with 24% of faculty who responded identifying as affiliate faculty members. This indicates the investment that affiliate faculty have in MSU Denver, despite often feeling undervalued by the institution more broadly. While affiliate faculty were most frequently described as under-valued, participants also commented more generally on the *hierarchies that exist between faculty members*.

- “I think faculty are more class conscious than the characters on Downton Abbey and treat our "working classes," CAT II faculty, part-time faculty, and staff like menials.”

- “Frankly, I am happy that I don't have to interact with toxic colleagues because of the COVID situation. Many TT faculty have no respect for non-TT faculty or colleagues outside of their scope of disciplines. I self silence as much as possible to avoid getting on anyone's bad side. My opinions do not matter to many of my colleagues. This is due to age, gender, job status, and field. There is no one event, it is just the culture of where I work.”
- “I don't always feel valued or heard by University administration as a Category II faculty member.”
- “In my department, there is clear classism regarding rank and socioeconomic differences. As Cat 2, I am excluded from many opportunities. Cat 1 faculty openly discuss my job status and my place in the department as less than and othered.”
- “Senior faculty who are rude toward junior faculty, or senior faculty who regularly enact microaggressions toward colleagues, are dismissed as "that's just so-and-so," you'll get used to that. Meanwhile, junior faculty who attempt to work with department chairs, deans, or other members of the campus community to address that discrimination are essentially told they are in the wrong. This has happened several times with two senior male colleagues in my department. Apparently their abrasive workplace behavior is accepted, and questioning it is not.”

The differences regarding faculty roles, and the differences in power of these roles, may be an important and under-addressed issue that is central to shaping how faculty experience the campus climate.

In addition to the problematic power dynamics amongst faculty that participants described, faculty also commented on *inequities that they saw as present across these roles*. For



instance, several faculty offered suggestions about hiring, retention and promotion processes. For instance, one faculty member asked, “Does MSU Denver track faculty retention based on gender / race / other marginalized identities? Because it seems that's an important component of creating and preserving a diverse faculty.” While this issue may be well-tracked by human resources or other relevant units, this comment indicates that this may be helpful information to communicate to faculty. Another faculty member shared that,

“There is racism and sexism in the RTP and PTR processes and when there are clear issues with racism in academic departments the administration takes months to take action and frames things as issues of individual desire to change instead of structural issues or anything even approaching the antiracist practices the president claims we value.”

As this faculty indicates, they are concerns about sources of bias in the RTP/PTR process, and would wish for more expedient responses to issues as they emerge, as well as more proactive, structural revisions to the RTP/PTR process.

In addition to internal review process, faculty also acknowledge that *other job requirements or assessment processes may be important to review*. As one faculty member shared, “There are systemic disadvantages, especially in service expectations and student evaluations, that MSU Denver could do more to address.” Similarly another faculty member shared that, “Students will treat faculty differently based on gender.” As these two comments indicate,

- “As a female faculty member, I am frequently addressed by first name during in-person or online interactions by students despite introducing myself and always signing off with

my preferred title. My male colleagues are almost never referred to without the title of Dr. or Prof., even male affiliates without PhDs.”

- “As a middle aged female professor, I sometimes get SRI evaluation comments from students that I do not think would be given to a male professor. I think students are harsher with me regarding things like organization, "absent-minded professor" type slip-ups, knowing answers to all manner of questions during lecture, etc. Also, students seem to want me to be motherly and nice, and I have been criticized for not being kind enough in the tone of my emails to students. I really do not think this kind of comment would be as likely given to a male professor!”

As these comments illustrate, there may be desire from faculty to critically examine RTP/PTR processes through an EDI lens.

### **Additional Salient Identities**

A final theme that emerged in these data pertain to *other identities* that faculty identified that shaped their experience of campus culture. Due to space and time constraints, this iteration of the campus climate survey was not able to ask detailed questions about all possible salient identities. Yet the following comments offer fruitful direction for future survey iterations.

*Age emerged as an important identity* as faculty shared about their interactions with colleagues or students. The following quotes exemplify these sentiments.

- “I have experienced discrimination due to my age while working here. Fellow faculty members have expressed that they want to get rid of me to put someone younger that is more like them in my place.”

- “Age discrimination is subtle but I feel in student comments it is an issue. Respect for age is no longer part of the younger culture, and there is definite bias against older faculty. I have seen this in some of my colleagues as well.”
- “While I know "Age" refers to those over 40, I find being a younger colleague in an older department has equally poor treatment and consequences.”
- “Eyes roll when I have to ask questions about technology- because of my age.”
- “Because of my age (younger) and job status (tenure level), bringing up new initiatives to administration are often put to the side or minimized and ignored.”

Age most frequently emerged in these data as a source of potential discrimination for older faculty members, although as this last comment indicates, younger faculty may also experience marginalization based on age/role.

In addition to age, *gender also emerged as a salient characteristic*. Although participants were asked about gendered experiences in this survey, gender was not specifically focused on in the same way that race, sexual orientation, and disability status were. Despite this, gender emerged frequently in faculty comments.

- “In my department, as a woman, as all the women in the department, I am given the bulk of the job tasks within committees. Men offer excuses or are not given tasks.”
- “My department has a strong pattern of microaggression based on gender. I have been ignored and dismissed by my department chair many times. There have been many times in faculty meeting that I have tried to suggest something only to have my chair ignore it and when the same idea is suggest by a man he embraces it. The climate of gender discrimination (though subconscious) is pervasive beyond the chair and there are several

other male faculty members who have extended microaggressions to me and other female faculty members.”

- “White men students need more education on why/how asking a faculty member to go alone with them to have drinks on Friday night is sexual harassment.”

The salience of gender emerged not only in these comments, but in comments from other sections that indicate that gender is an important intersectional identity for faculty that shape their experiences of inclusion and equity in the workplace.

### **Implications:**

The themes presented in this section provide fruitful direction, both for the next iteration of the Campus Climate Survey, and for improving the climate of inclusion and belonging for faculty. In regard to a next Campus Climate Survey, these data indicate that greater precision in regard to the term “leadership” for faculty, as sometimes comments were directed toward Chairs or Deans, and sometimes more senior members of the leadership team, would enable more targeted potential interventions. The additional salient identities that emerged here also indicate that attending to age and gender in a next iteration of this survey, may provide more nuanced understandings of faculty experience.

The discussion of University leadership indicates that faculty either, 1) need more information about ongoing EDI efforts, of 2) would like different types of activities included in our EDI efforts. Faculty also shared their desire for a more diverse faculty body, as well as some of the challenges they have seen with recruiting and retaining diverse faculty (e.g., salaries that are not nationally or regionally competitive). Departmental leadership and culture also emerged as a strong theme, as faculty shared concerns that Chairs were not well equipped for creating cultures of inclusion and belonging. Departmental leaders may require additional support and

accountability (potentially from Dean's Offices) to address concerns. More generally, faculty requested greater transparency about the processes for addressing concerns. Faculty also suggested that Departmental specific trainings or other unit-specific investments may have a significant impact on Departmental culture.

Some faculty also shared concerns about the focus on EDI activities, indicating that more opportunities to share data about why EDI efforts are critical to broader University successes may help faculty understand these goals. These questions also indicate a potential gap in ensuring that faculty are committed to our University mission, and that systems of accountability exist to ensure this alignment. Faculty also shared concerns about differences across different "categories" of faculty, with attention to inequalities that may lead to issues being more difficult to address between faculty with different titles. These inequalities may also persist across RTP/PTR processes, indicating an opportunity to examine these processes for potential sources of bias. Service allocation may be another fruitful domain for examination, as a potential source for inequality of workload.

For additional questions about the results from the analyses of faculty data from the 2021 Campus Climate Survey, or feedback about the next iteration of this survey please reach out to: Jeremy VanHooser, Associate Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at [jvanhoo1@msudenver.edu](mailto:jvanhoo1@msudenver.edu).