



## **Campus Workplace Survey**

### **Results for Communication and Work Life**

This is the second of three reports on the results of the workplace climate survey conducted in the spring of 2013 at the request of the Provost's office. The first report covered information on satisfaction with the workplace climate, organizational commitment, and demographics of the respondents compared to the university as a whole. The first report can be found by clicking on an icon labeled "Read the Campus Climate Survey Report" from the myBoiseState landing page after sign-in or by going directly to the Provost's website at <http://academics.boisestate.edu/provost/2013-workplace-climate-report/>. This report will focus on a set of questions related to communication and work life. A final report will cover the items related to equality and respect.

The work was overseen by the Workplace Climate Committee. A listing of committee members can be found in Appendix A.

### **Perceptions of Communication on Campus**

#### **Results by Item:**

In the area of communication, respondents were asked about open communication, ability to make suggestions for improvements, and delivery of information on policies and standards. Respondents were asked to respond to each item at the university, college or division, and department levels, thereby comprising a total of nine items. In each case, respondents were more positive about communication at their department or unit level compared to the college/division and university levels. Details of the results can be found in Table 1.

Open communication is an essential component of a healthy work environment. About 70% agreed that open communication was encouraged at the departmental level. The percentage dropped to about 57% at the college/division level and at the university level.

Employees are empowered when they can make suggestions about things that impact their work. About two-thirds agreed that there were effective ways for them to make suggestions for improvement at the department level. The percentage agreeing, however, declined to 43% at the college/division level and to 27% at the university level.

When respondents were asked about clear communication of important policies and procedures, approximately two-thirds felt that relevant information was clearly communicated at the department level. The percentage agreeing dropped to 55% at the college/division level and to 53% at the university level.

While each reader may have a different standard of what is considered a good result for these communication items, everyone could probably conclude that when agreement falls below 50% there is definite room for improvement. Using this standard, it appears that respondents felt unable to make suggestions for improvement at both the college/division and university levels.

## Differences by Group:

Were perceptions of communication the same across campus or did they differ based on group membership? In order to answer this question, responses to the three department-level questions were averaged to obtain an overall department communication rating. The same approach was used for the three college/division level questions and the three university level questions. The following group comparisons were then made:

- Role at the university (faculty, professional staff, classified staff)
- Gender
- Ethnic/racial minority status
- College (for faculty members)
- Division (for professional and classified staff)

For each group, differences were considered significant if the probability of obtaining such a result by chance was less than 1 in 100.

Perceptions of communication at the department, college/division, and university levels were similar no matter the role of respondents (faculty, professional staff, and classified staff), their gender, or their racial/ethnicity status. Differences were found based on college (for faculty) and division (for staff).

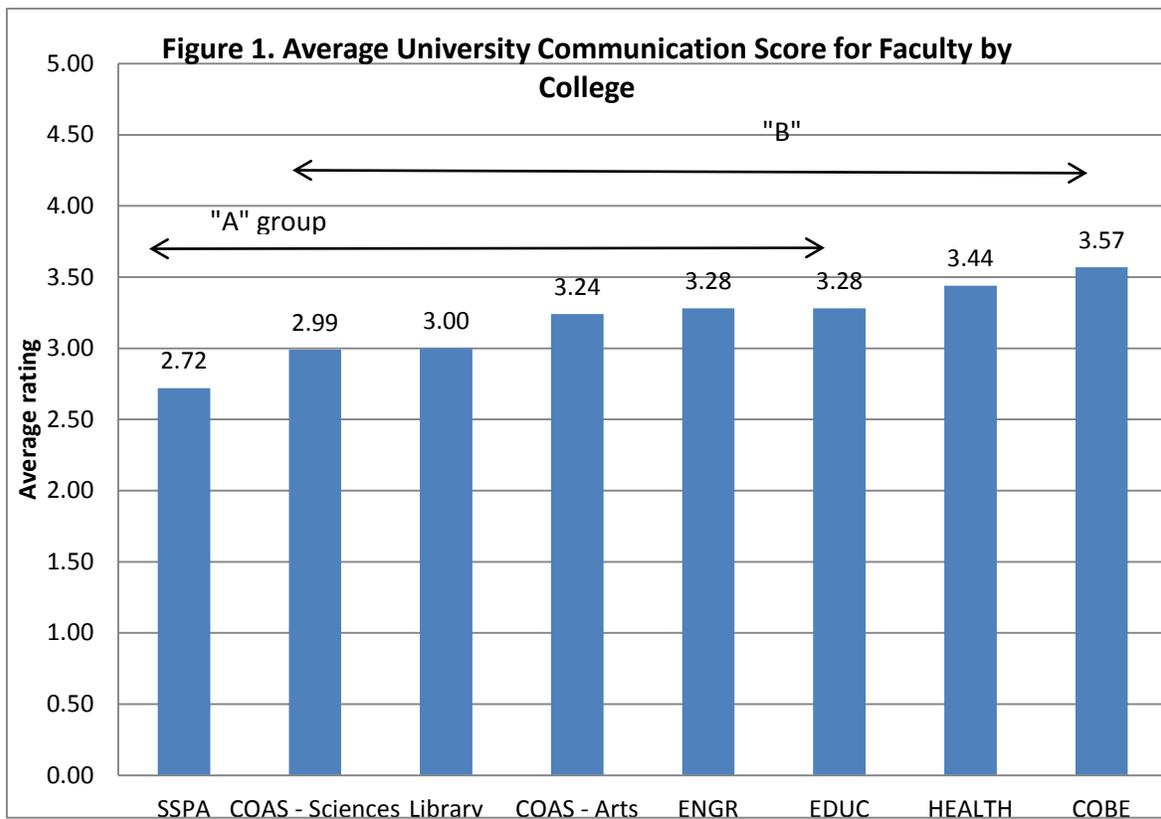
Table 1. Communication perceptions at the university, college/division and department levels

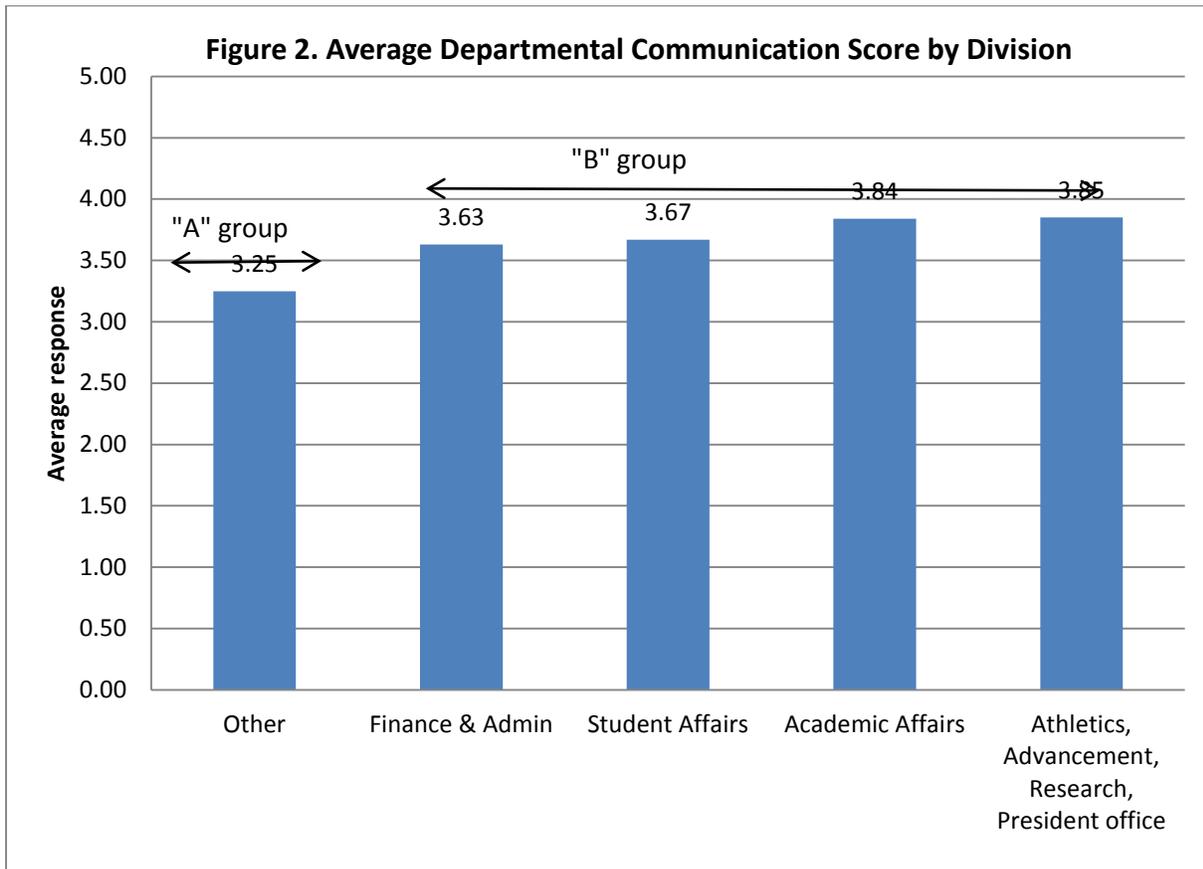
		N/A	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Open communication is encouraged:							
At the university level	Count	43	89	205	380	511	161
	%	3.1%	6.4%	14.8%	27.4%	36.8%	11.6%
At the college/division level	Count	90	62	168	268	553	235
	%	6.5%	4.5%	12.2%	19.5%	40.2%	17.1%
At the department/unit level	Count	6	101	163	135	470	517
	%	0.4%	7.3%	11.7%	9.7%	33.8%	37.1%
There are effective ways for me to make suggestions for improvement:							
At the university level	Count	48	144	319	495	289	90
	%	3.5%	10.4%	23.0%	35.7%	20.9%	6.5%
At the college/division level	Count	89	101	202	383	427	170
	%	6.5%	7.4%	14.7%	27.9%	31.1%	12.4%
At the department/unit level	Count	13	122	162	162	499	429
	%	0.9%	8.8%	11.7%	11.7%	36.0%	30.9%
Relevant information such as policies and standards are communicated clearly to me:							
At the university level	Count	17	106	226	308	578	156
	%	1.2%	7.6%	16.2%	22.1%	41.6%	11.2%
At the college/division level	Count	70	69	188	285	577	185
	%	5.1%	5.0%	13.7%	20.7%	42.0%	13.5%

At the department/unit level	Count	12	95	165	185	606	330
	%	0.9%	6.8%	11.8%	13.3%	43.5%	23.7%

Differences by college were found for university-level communication only. Results showed that the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs (SSPA) had the lowest university-level communication scores compared to the College of Health Sciences (COHS) and College of Business and Economics (COBE), the two colleges with the highest scores. All other college means fell between these two extremes and differed from neither extreme. For details, see Figure 1.

Few significant differences were found based on the division where professional and classified staff members were employed. The only difference found was for departmental communication where the mean for respondents who reported that they worked in the “Other” division was lower than all other divisions. All of the remaining divisions had similar mean scores. See Figure 2 for details.





### Perceptions of Work Life

#### Results by Item:

The survey also included nine items related to perceptions of respondents' work lives. The items covered everything from work load to balance between personal and professional life, to support and supervision. See Table 2 for the results of the first seven items.

Although the university has been "doing more with less" for some time, almost 60% of the respondents still believed that their workload was reasonable and that they had adequate resources to carry out their assignments. Slightly fewer (54%) agreed that they were satisfied with the balance between their personal and professional lives. The most positive responses came from the item that asked about support for attending to family and personal responsibilities with 67% agreeing that they had support.

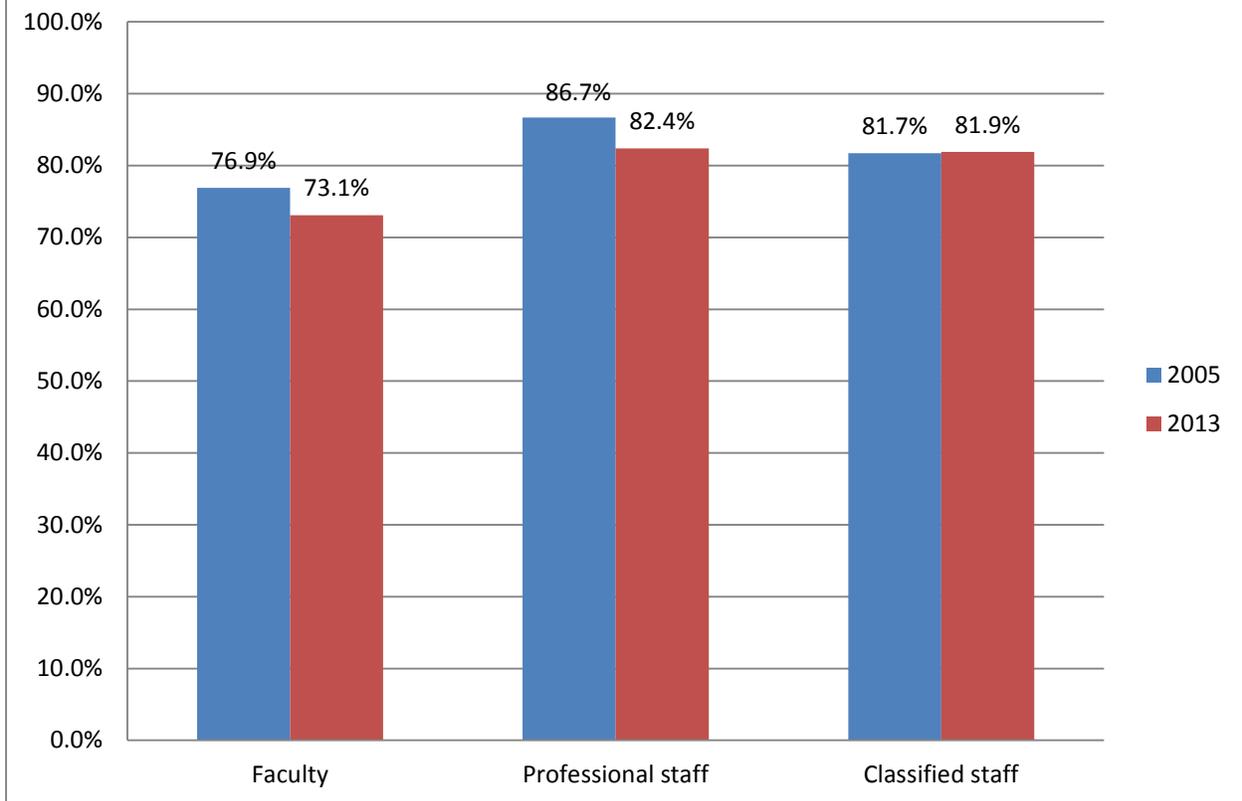
An additional three items asked about supervisors and supervision. About two-thirds agreed that their performance evaluation process was fair. Slightly fewer (63%) agreed that their supervisors established clear directions for their work. A similar percentage felt that when an administrator/ supervisor made a decision, it was usually based on a reasonable assessment of the issue or problem

Table 2. Work life perception item results

Work life items:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My work load is reasonable	Count	109	279	176	634	192
	%	7.8%	20.1%	12.7%	45.6%	13.8%
I have adequate resources and materials to execute my assignments	Count	82	313	182	596	215
	%	5.9%	22.6%	13.1%	42.9%	15.5%
I am satisfied with the balance between my personal and professional life	Count	117	274	244	531	224
	%	8.4%	19.7%	17.6%	38.2%	16.1%
There is support for attending to my personal and family responsibilities	Count	73	151	234	583	350
	%	5.2%	10.9%	16.8%	41.9%	25.2%
My performance evaluation process is fair	Count	56	104	290	643	270
	%	4.1%	7.6%	21.3%	47.2%	19.8%
My supervisor establishes clear direction for my work	Count	55	159	261	572	300
	%	4.1%	11.8%	19.4%	42.5%	22.3%
When an administrator/supervisor makes a decision, it is usually based on a reasonable assessment of the issue or problem	Count	73	161	280	578	253
	%	5.4%	12.0%	20.8%	43.0%	18.8%

Although the 2013 climate survey differed greatly from an assessment of campus climate that was conducted in 2005, several items were carried forward to the current survey. One item asked whether or not respondents felt that their work was valued by Boise State. Overall, a slightly lower percentage agreed on the current survey: 81.8% in 2005 and 79.6% in 2013. Figure 3 displays the results by role. Note that both faculty members' and professional staff members' responses dropped by about four percentage points, but responses from classified staff remained stable. Faculty members were least likely to agree that their work was valued on both administrations of the survey.

**Figure 3. Percent agreeing their work was valued by role  
Comparison of results in 2005 and 2013**



The final work life item asked if respondents felt that they were adequately recognized for their accomplishments. Overall, 27% felt that they were “often” recognized for their accomplishments, and almost 60% were “often” or “sometimes” recognized. Faculty members appear to feel that they are not recognized as often as classified and professional staff. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3. Recognition for accomplishments by role

			I am adequately recognized for my accomplishments				
			Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often
Role	Faculty or dean	Count	23	61	75	128	82
		%	6.2%	16.5%	20.3%	34.7%	22.2%
	Professional staff	Count	13	76	101	166	151
		%	2.6%	15.0%	19.9%	32.7%	29.8%
	Classified staff	Count	15	69	102	130	118
		%	3.5%	15.9%	23.5%	30.0%	27.2%
Total		Count	51	206	278	424	351
		%	3.9%	15.7%	21.2%	32.4%	26.8%

**Group differences:**

Do different groups have different perceptions of their work life? In order to answer the question, a factor analysis was conducted of the nine (9) items included in this section. Factor analysis provides a way to group similar items together. The “factor loadings” of the items on each factor can be interpreted as the correlation

between the item and the factor. The larger the factor loading, the more the item contributes to the factor. For this analysis, two factors were needed to best summarize the nine items (see Table 4).

The first factor had the highest loadings for items related to the supervisor and was named “Supervisor Performance.” Items with the highest loadings on this factor included: “When an administrator/supervisor makes a decision, it is usually based on a reasonable assessment of the issue or problem,” “My supervisor/administrator establishes clear direction for my work” and “My performance evaluation process is fair.” Two other items also had their strongest loadings on this factor.

The second factor was named “Work Balance” because the top two items on this factor were “I am satisfied with the balance between my personal and professional life” and “My work load is reasonable.” Two other items also had their strongest loadings on this factor. See Table 4 for details.

**Table 4. Rotated Factor Matrix<sup>a</sup> for work life items**

	Factor	
	Supervisor Performance	Work life Balance
When an administrator/supervisor makes a decision, it is usually based on a reasonable assessment of the issue or problem	.767	
My supervisor/administrator establishes clear direction for my work	.758	
My performance evaluation process is fair	.660	
I am adequately recognized for my accomplishments	.604	
My work is valued at Boise State University.	.459	
I am satisfied with the balance between my personal and professional life		.799
My work load is reasonable		.756
I have adequate resources and materials to execute my assignments		.646
There is support for attending to my personal and family responsibilities	.436	.614

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

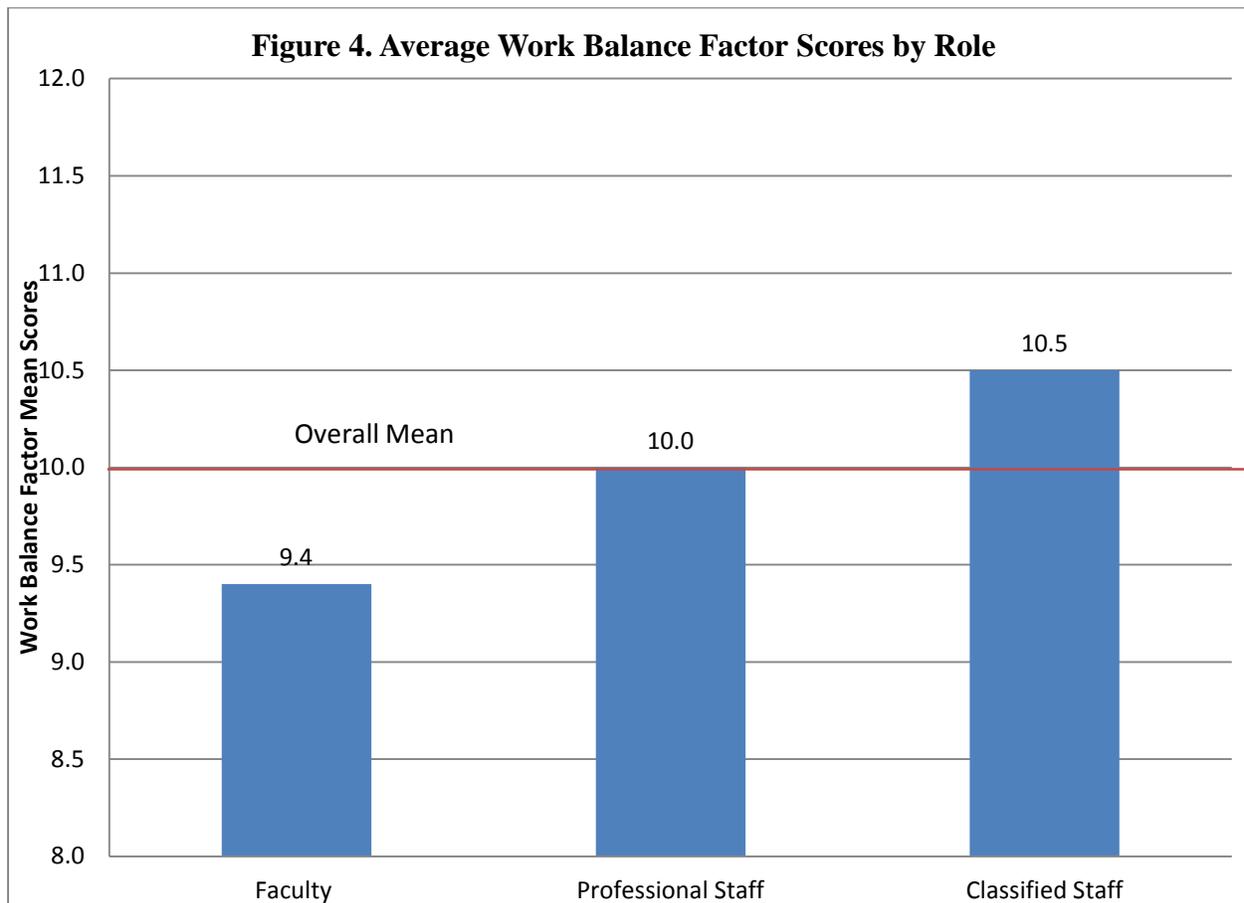
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Only loadings  $\geq .40$  are displayed.

For comparison purposes, the two factors were standardized with a mean of 10 and a standard deviation of 2. Differences were considered significant if the probability of obtaining a difference of that size only occurred once in a hundred times ( $p \leq .01$ ). The following group comparisons were made on the two factors.

- Role at the university (faculty, professional staff, classified staff)
- Gender
- Ethnic/racial minority status
- College (for faculty members)
- Division (for professional and classified staff)

Based on role, differences were found for the Work Balance factor. Faculty members had the lowest scores, followed by professional staff, with classified staff members having the highest scores; all three groups differed significantly from one another. See Figure 4 below.



Based on gender, differences were found for the Supervisor Performance factor but not for the Work Balance factor. Males had significantly lower Supervisor Performance factor scores compared to females (9.9 vs. 10.2).

No significant differences were found on either factor based on racial/ethnic minority group status.

For faculty members, differences by college were found for Supervisor Performance but not for Work Balance (see below). Faculty members from the Sciences division of the Colleges of Arts and Sciences had significantly lower Supervisor Performance scores compared to faculty in the College of Health Sciences, where the highest average scores were found. However, when the Sciences and the Arts and Humanities divisions were combined into one college, no differences were found on either factor.

For professional and classified staff, differences were also found for Supervisor Performance scores but not for Work Balance. Staff members who were employed in the “Other” division (self-identified) had significantly lower Supervisor Performance scores compared to staff in Academic Affairs. The remaining divisions fell between these two extremes and didn’t differ significantly from either.

### Qualitative Analysis

Following the quantitative items that covered communication and workload, respondents were invited to provide comments on issues of workload and communication; 325 respondents chose to do so. These comments were given to a member of the Campus Climate Committee to conduct a qualitative analysis. The categories that were developed and the number of comments in each category are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Categories for the comments related to workload and communication

Category:	Number of Comments
Communication and Information	51 (16%)
Perceptions of Professional and Classified Staff	43 (13%)
Staffing Levels Workload	41 (13%)
Relationship between Manager and Employee	41 (13%)
Administration General Comments	40 (12%)
Adjunct-Lecturer Workload	23 (7%)
Service Workload	20 (6%)
Research Faculty Workload	15 (5%)
Minorities and LGBT	8 (2%)
Maternity and Paternity Leave	8 (2%)
Bullying	2 (1%)
Miscellaneous	33 (10%)

## Summary and Conclusions

This report covered the items related to communication and work life from the omnibus Workplace Climate Survey. In general, respondents felt more positively about their communications at the department level compared to the college/division and university levels. While about 70% agreed that open communication was encouraged at the department level, the figure dropped to less than 60% at the other levels. This finding is probably due at least in part to the distance between the communicator and the one receiving the communications. It is simply easier to communicate within a local area where face-to-face communications are easier.

A process that allows employees to make suggestions for improvements appears to be either absent or not well-known. At the university level in particular, only 27% agreed that there were effective ways for the respondents to make suggestions for improvement.

Perceptions of communication at the department, college or division, and university level were similar despite the role at the university, respondent's gender, or ethnicity/race. Faculty in the college of Social Sciences and Public Affairs gave lower university communication ratings compared to faculty in the Health Sciences or Business and Economics.

Although a majority of employees felt that their workload was reasonable and that they had the resources needed to conduct their work, the figure was still less than 60%. When asked if their work was valued, a comparison to the same item on the 2005 Campus Climate survey showed a drop of four percentage points for faculty and professional staff. Faculty members were less likely to feel that their work was valued or that they were adequately recognized for their accomplishments compared to classified and professional staff. Only 54% were satisfied with the balance between their personal and professional life.

To better assess group differences, two factor scores were developed based on the nine items related to work life. One factor was called "Supervisor Performance," and the other was called "Work life Balance." The main finding was that faculty had significantly lower scores compared to both professional staff and classified staff on Work Life Balance. The first Workplace Climate survey report provides a clue that faculty may have difficulty with a balanced work life. Prior results indicated that only 9% of faculty reported working 40 hours or less, compared to 20% of professional staff and 69% of classified staff. In fact, 35% of faculty reported working 51 to 60 hours per week, and 16% worked over 60 hours. In addition, faculty members were more likely to report spending over 20 hours per week on family care compared to professional or classified staff.

The qualitative analysis of the responses where respondents were invited to comment on issues of communication or workload contained several themes. Many of the comments dealt with issues of miscommunication, of the lack of valuing of classified staff, excessive and unequal workloads, and difficulties between managers and their employees.

## **Appendix A: Committee Members**

### **Co-Chairs:**

Marcia Belcheir, Associate Director, Office of Institutional Research

Alicia Garza, Associate Professor, Department of World Languages

### **Committee members:**

Robin Allen, Associate Professor, School of Social Work

Shelly Doty, Association of Classified Employees

Marty Downey, Associate Professor, School of Nursing

Teri Gormley, Technical Records Specialist 2, Accounts Payable

Tyler Harris, Manager, Student Union

Bob McCarl, Professor Emeritus, Sociology

Cheryl Oestreicher, Assistant Professor, Library

Shikar Sarin, Professor, Marketing and Finance

Jennifer Smith, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering

Katelyn Smith, Professional Staff Association

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**Prepared by: Marcia Belcheir, Ph.D.**

**Office of Institutional Research**