



2010 EQUITY AND DIVERSITY SURVEY



OFFICE OF EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

A Unit of the Office of Human Resources

Toya Camacho, M.ED - Equity and Diversity Officer

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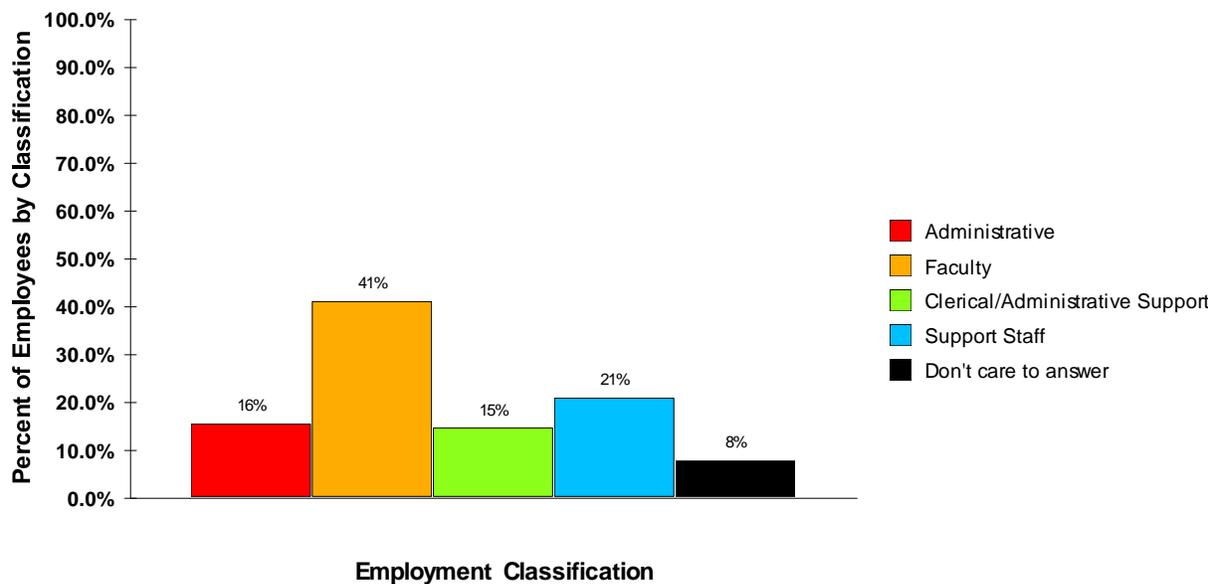
2010 Diversity Survey

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a sample of 131 university employees, 41% of whom are faculty, 21% support staff, 16% administrators, 15% clerical staff, and 8% did not indicate job classification (Fig .1).

Figure 1.

Survey Respondents by Job Classification

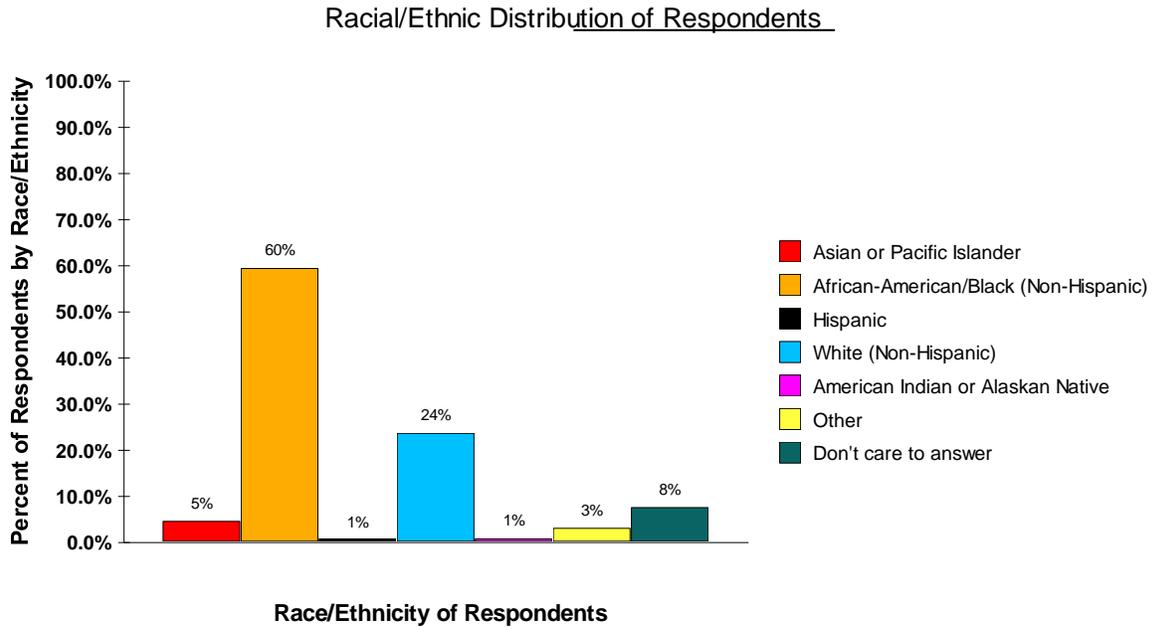


(Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest percent and might exceed 100)

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

The ethnic distribution of respondents comprised 60% African American, 24% Caucasian, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, approximately 1% each for Hispanic and American Indian, and close to 11% were not indicated (Fig. 2).

Figure 2.

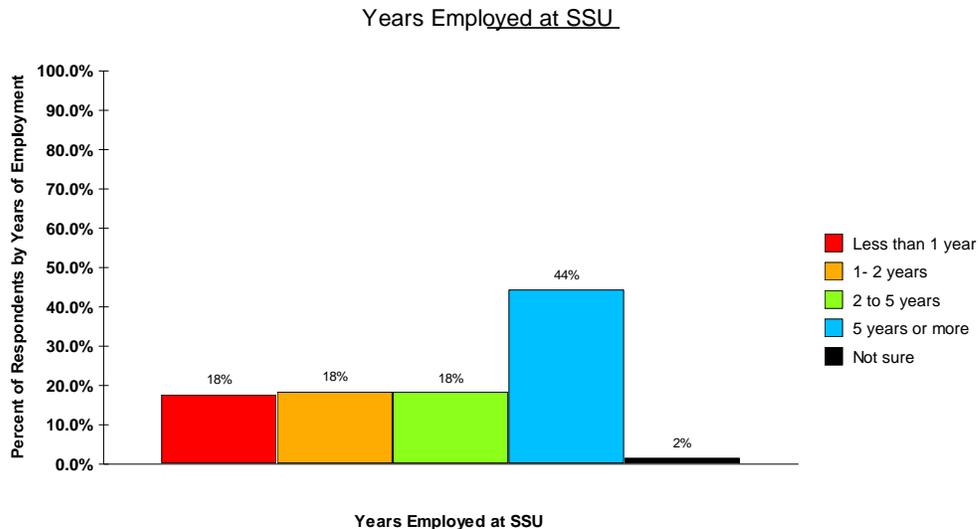


(Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest percent and might exceed 100)

DISABILITY STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

Less than 4% of respondents had some form of disability; 1.5% learning disability and 2.3% physical disability. A majority of the survey respondents (59%) were female compared to 34% male, and about 7% did not care to indicate their gender. Employees of 5 or more years of service at SSU constituted the largest share of respondents (44%) followed by all others (18%) and 2% who were not sure about their length of service to SSU (Fig. 3).

Figure 3.



EMPLOYEE ACCOMMODATION OF DIFFERENCES AMONG COLLEAGUES

There appears to be high levels of acceptance for culture and diversity at Savannah State University (SSU). Particularly, survey respondents (83%) agree that employees at SSU are comfortable associating with others of different racial or cultural identities. However, about 12% of the respondents believed to the contrary, and 5% are not sure. The data also show strong agreement among respondents (90%) that employees at SSU are comfortable with gender differences in the workplace. Similarly, there seems to be pervasive support for employees with disabilities, as 85% of the respondents affirmed that SSU employees are comfortable working among colleagues with disabilities (Table 1).

Table 1: Employee Accommodation of Differences among Colleagues

| <u>Employee Accommodation of Differences among Colleagues</u> | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| SSU employees are comfortable associating with: | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Not Sure (%) |
| Colleagues of different racial/ethnic/cultural identities | 83 | 12 | 5 |
| Colleagues of different gender | 90 | 5 | 5 |
| Colleagues with disabilities | 85 | 3 | 12 |

EMPLOYEE ACCOMMODATION OF DIFFERENCES AMONG STUDENTS

We asked survey respondents about general employee demeanor toward SSU students. More than 82% of the respondents agreed that employees are comfortable associating with students of different racial/cultural identities, 7.6% disagreed, and more than 9% did not provide an opinion. Respondents indicated strong affirmation about students' gender differences, with 89% agreeing that employees were comfortable working among students of different genders. While disagreement about employee tolerance for student gender differences was negligible (less than 1%), 8% were not sure or did not provide an opinion. As for student disability, there is consensus among 82% of the respondents that employees work comfortably among students with disabilities, just over 3% disagreed, and more than 13% did not provide an opinion in this regard (Table 2).

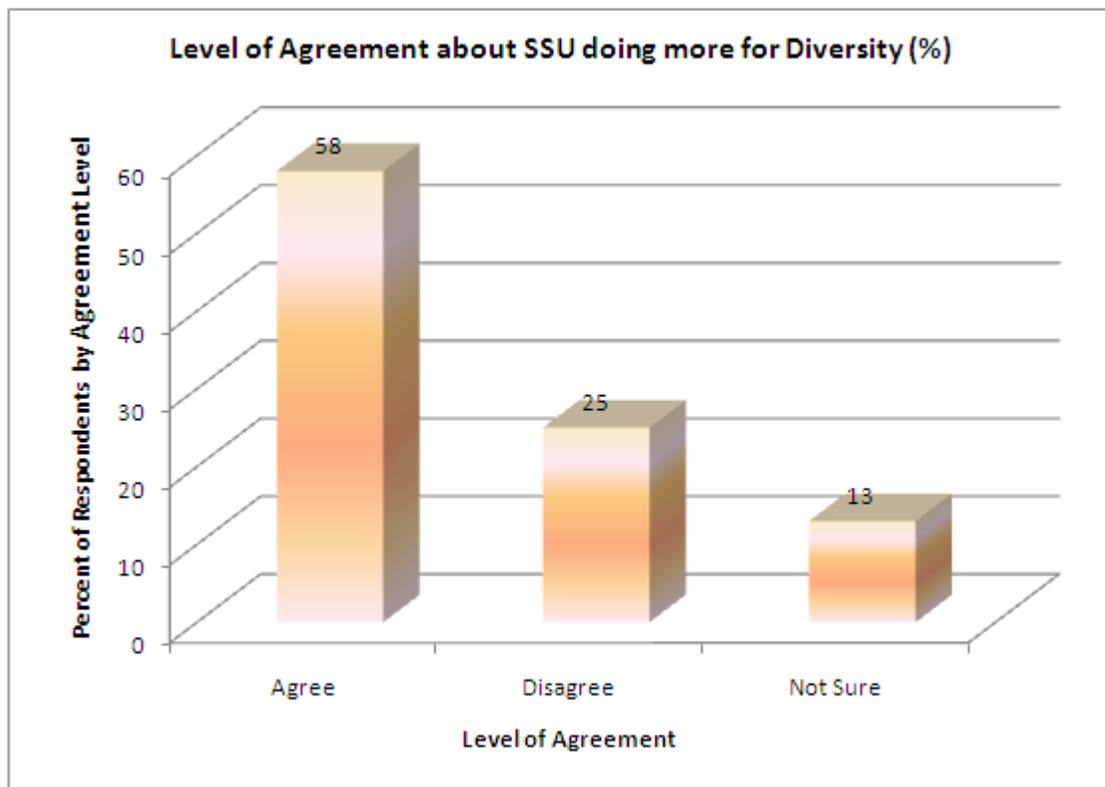
Table 2: Employee Accommodation of Differences among Students

| SSU employees are comfortable associating with: | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Not Sure (%) |
|---|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Students of different racial/ethnic/cultural identities | 82.5 | 7.6 | 9.1 |
| Students of different gender | 88.5 | 0.8 | 9.2 |
| Students with disabilities | 81.7 | 3.1 | 13.7 |

IS THERE A NEED FOR SSU TO DO MORE ABOUT DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS?

Survey participants were asked whether or not SSU needs to do more to help faculty and staff understand, and respect differences among students and employees. The data show that just over half the survey respondents (58%) agreed that SSU needs to do more about understanding and respecting employees and students of different racial/cultural identities, gender/sexual orientation, and those with disabilities. On the other hand, a quarter of the respondents (25%) disagreed that SSU needs to do more about diversity, and 13% did not offer opinions. These results imply that SSU is making progress to fully address diversity issues, but there exists room for improvement as indicated by a near two-to-one ratio (2:1) of survey respondents (Fig.3).

Figure 3.



Further, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of SSU taking steps to increase diversity of the student population. More than 77% of the respondents indicated that it was important for SSU to improve campus diversity by increasing the mix of racial/cultural identity in the student population, 6% believed to the contrary, and more than 8% were neutral or

did not share an opinion. In regard to disability, about 75% of the respondents thought it was important for the student population to account for more students with disabilities. Close to 4% thought this was not an important issue in terms of diversity in the student population, and about 12% was neutral or did not share an opinion.

OTHER ISSUE(S) OR COMMENTS ABOUT DIVERSITY AT SSU

Survey respondents have provided feedback on diversity through three main dimensions; positive feedback about SSU's diversity efforts, adverse effects of diversity, and perceptions of "us against them" on diversity issues. First, some believe the institution is doing a good job of building diversity within its community. In this regard, respondents have commented about SSU having different ethnic groups among its employees and student body. A few comments about SSU's progress toward a more diverse community are:

"I've noticed different ethnic groups around campus. This campus seems very friendly and accepting of differences."

"I believe SSU is doing a good job increasing diversity, but there is always room for improvement."

"The Savannah State University family seems to be heading in the right direction, generally speaking, when it comes to diversity as I see it. There have been times when I was annoyed by the rudeness and disrespectful tones used by some "elevated" colleagues toward some different racial groups."

"I am glad to see SSU addressing this issue, SSU is still behind from other Agencies I have worked. There is still "uneasiness" about being white at meetings with certain blacks who view SSU as an HBCU only. Only, meaning only black should be in management and staff positions."

"Savannah State has never had its doors shut to welcoming any other people than African Americans. Because this institution was established for opening opportunities for a people who was shun from the entering the mainstream of society at large, she has fostered and nourished the minds of people who for so long has been denied. However, African Americans have never reciprocated that to any other people. This has always been a place of choice, so why make the big deal now like we have not been permissible in presenting equality to all?"

"I'm glad to see more diversity in the staff and student body."

"The University has accomplished diversity on the campus for students and especially faculty. For the university to be an HBCU, there are very few African Americans as faculty on the campus. The majority of faculty members are white or foreign."

"As a white male my friends in the community often remark about "how hard it must be to work in the SSU environment " I tell them that it is no problem at all. Dr Yarbrough sets a color-blind standard from the top and the only time I feel the slightest bit of unease is from some of the long-tenured members of the faculty and staff. I have multi-ethnic relatives so perhaps my attitude comes into play. The students to date have been wonderful."

"...At the employee level, I find that that fellow colleagues treat me much the same as other workplaces I have experiences."

“...Speaking informally with both African American and non-black students, many of them prefer a more diverse student body, as a reflection of the world in which they will work once they’ve graduated. The faculty seems adequately diverse. It is a joy to meet and interact with faculty members from such a broad range of nationalities, ethnicities and cultures. As a minority at the University, I generally do not feel discriminated against.”

Second, some respondents’ comments have implied that the institution’s effort to improve diversity can have adverse effects on its operations. Particularly, there are concerns that SSU might lose its cultural identity by intensifying diversity efforts, that foreign faculty can have adverse effects on student learning, and diversity efforts can have divisive effects among employees. Some comments in this regard are:

“I think the university is very diverse already, however, the more diverse we become the more changed we become (i.e. trying to be what the other cultures are instead of being who we are).”

“The University has accomplished diversity on the campus for students and especially faculty. For the university to be an HBCU, there are very few African Americans as faculty on the campus. The majority of faculty members are white or foreign.”

“Some faculty members from other countries seem to have poor understanding of disability attitudes and laws in US. Some seem openly skeptical of invisible disabilities. Some seem to be uncomfortable taking any direction from a woman who is not a faculty member.”

“I often hear students complaining about not being able to understand the language/accent of their professors...”

“I have heard students discuss the diversity of the faculty at SSU. Some have been very negative about the interactions they have had with foreign faculty, which may stem from a lack of cultural differences from both perspectives.”

“Everything is fine, except why so many White Police for a HBCU? The Blacks are just security guard.”

“I first would like to see more improvement with African American people. They still lack an appreciation and understanding of themselves. I would welcome mandatory requirements for students, faculty and staff to attend assemblies and seminars promoting education about self that is African American History. I would love to see this dogma expelled. There seem to be a stigma about black history only began for us since our inception here in America. We need to appreciate our greatness from whence we came and understand the people for whom we are. Then would I begin to concentrate on the diversity of others more.”

“The diversity of the student population IS NOT accurately reflected in the data in the BANNER system. I have known a number of minority students (white in particular) who are logged in the system as black. This affects how we view our students and how others outside view and treat us as a university - not only due to our numbers but our lack of accuracy controls towards data...”

The third and final dimension concerns the existence of an “us against them” perception toward diversity issues. The data implies that there are sub-groups of employees who believe they are treated inequitably in terms of social inclusion. Belief of inequitable treatment for one subgroup of employees seems to be rooted in the anecdotal notion that since SSU is a HBCU, it

should be populated accordingly; and toward this end they tend to feeling less accepted. Some have shared their views about belonging to the SSU community in the following comments:

"There is still some antagonism on the part of some African American faculty members against white faculty and especially white administrators."

"I recognize that SSU is an HBCU, however, I have noticed some of the staff, especially in admissions and financial aid on the average tends to treat non-African-Americans less than equitably. I have never witnessed any faculty members behaving this way."

"I don't see any celebration for non African American causes on a community wide basis."

"... There are a few exceptions among staff and administrators who seem hostile to me while treating my African American colleagues with warmth and respect. I do not need to be "liked" to do my job, but it certainly makes for a more hostile work environment. I often want to say "Oh, grow up!"

"When I interviewed at SSU, I was asked why I wanted to work at an HBCU. I presume this question would not have been asked in this way if I had been black. As recently as this week, someone advised me not to escalate a work issue because of the perception that might be given because I am white. Although I don't think many decisions are made based on my skin color, I do think that this is considered part of my identity at SSU. From a strategic perspective, it is unclear to me what SSU's diversity goal is for student recruitment. Is there a specific percentage of diversity that is desirable? What does it mean to be an HBCU in 2010 to administrators/faculty/students? How will this change our recruitment processes? At some point, will it no longer feel like an HBCU to our African-American students, or to our faculty, staff, and alumni?"

"...The only exception I have found is in the critique of my work and interaction with students compared to my coworkers; there I feel that I am judged more harshly than my black coworkers."

There are also subgroups of employees who feel SSU need to address issues of sexuality and religion. Three comments in this regard are:

"I have seen a large amount of intolerance towards gay students among the student body. I would like to see more done to educate the students on tolerance. We also have a large population of Christians, and I would like to see more taught on tolerance for other religions as well."

"I would like to see more taught on tolerance for other religions as well."

"Same gender sexual harassment! I've noticed this type of harassment harder to prove and is not as obvious as it can be between opposite genders."

"To convince the public that SSU has a climate welcoming to non-African American students, the administration will need to stop letting politics scare away white football and baseball coaches and athletic directors. White students on campus go through the same inner struggles on campus that black students have gone through on majority campuses for the past 50 years. I'm not sure what measures were/are taken on majority campuses to make the climate welcoming to all, but the same methods should work at SSU for non-African American students."

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SSU'S DIVERSITY

Several suggestions have been provided by survey respondents as how SSU can improve the existing diversity climate. Some of the suggestions are:

1. Provide more activities that incorporate diverse panels.
2. Offer professional development to faculty and staff on different types of disabilities
3. Offer "tolerance workshops" on sexuality and other diversity issues.
4. Require English language fluency for all faculty hired to teach our students
5. Promote multi-cultural week and each day could spotlight a different culture
6. Rethink our recruitment locations.

SUMMARY

There is an overall sense that SSU has made significant strides towards diversity. Efforts in this regard are so obvious that some feel the institution might be losing its identity. There are others who welcome SSU's diversity efforts, but still see room for improvement. A few subgroups have raised issues about sexuality, religion and the impact of foreign faculty on student learning. There are suggestions that SSU should offer workshops geared toward tolerance of culture, race, sexuality, disability, and other diversity issues. Finally, some employees are happy that SSU has made an effort to investigate diversity perceptions on campus.