

Summary of 2020 Diversity and Inclusion Climate Survey

John Shaw

April 7, 2021

As required by the University of Arkansas Diversity and Inclusion Plan, we surveyed the department about its climate with respect to diversity and inclusion. This was the first survey in what is planned to become an annual event. The survey was initially written by Dr. Davidson and Dr. Fernandes, and then altered by Dr. Shaw. Dr. Shaw was in charge of canvassing and survey recruitment.

The survey was performed early in the fall semester, between August 20 and 31, 2020. Here, we summarize results of the survey and recommendations for next year's survey. Below we summarize the results. While the anonymous survey responses are archived with the chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, it is possible to infer identities from the responses, so they are kept private.

Executive Summary

The climate survey was a helpful exercise to gauge the culture of the department. It found that there is a generally positive environment for all members of the department. It uncovered several unexpected things, particularly that a large fraction of the department does not drink alcohol, counter to stereotypes about geologists. This finding has already led to specific actions regarding post-colloquium (non-pandemic) social hour. Issues with a negative or unsupportive climate ranged from 0 to 27% of the group. Perceptions that the Department was homogenous (27%) and sexist (14%) were the biggest issues.

Any fraction larger than 0 is undesirable, but the results herein can be used to empirically track the Department's relative strengths and weaknesses, and direct attention to mitigation. Next year's survey, to be administered in August 2021 will begin to reveal trends in Department Climate, which will also be valuable.

Responses

The survey gathered 85 responses. The 26 Faculty/Staff/Post-doc responses was a large fraction of 29 Faculty, 3 staff, and 3 postdocs. Next, 38 of the 61 graduate students responded. Finally, just 15 of the 108 enrolled Geoscience undergraduates (all degrees) responded. *Undergraduate response is quite weak, and should be focused upon next year.* Time within the department was consistent with these numbers, and the general timelines of students and faculty in the department.

1. What is your status in the Department of Geosciences?

[More Details](#)

● Faculty/Staff/Post-doc	26
● Graduate Student	38
● Undergraduate Student	15



2. How long have you been in the Department of Geosciences?

[More Details](#)

● New to the Department (pleas...	10
● 1-5 years	49
● 5-10 years	13
● Longer than 10 years	8
● Other	4



Identities

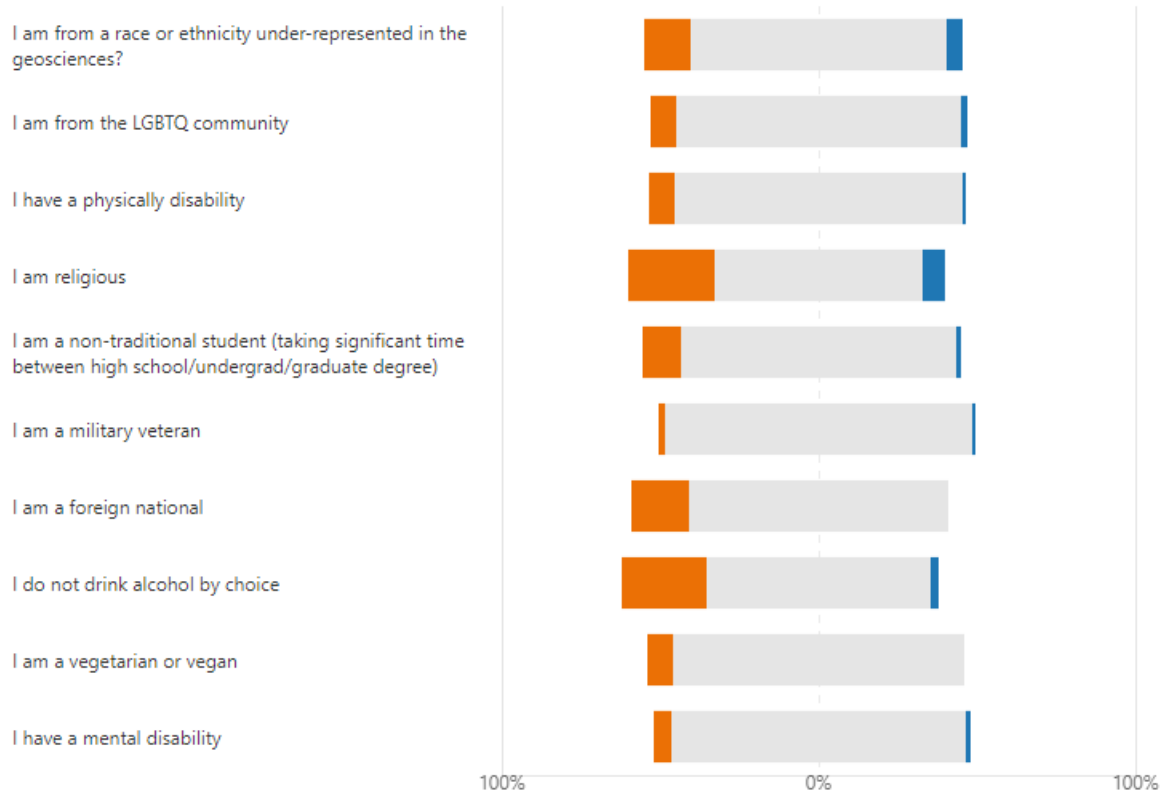
We sought to determine the distribution of identities within the department. Each of the questioned identities received positive responses from 2% to 27% of the group, with a small fraction also choosing not to respond. Particularly well represented groups included those that are religious (27%) and those that do not drink alcohol by choice (27%). Relatively underrepresented groups included LGBTQ community (8%), those with physical (8%) or mental (5%) disability, and military veterans (2%).

*We also questioned about identities that were not mentioned. This included gender (an **egregious** oversight by Dr. Shaw), first generation status, and single/married/kids/no kids (maybe a “do you have dependents” category). These could be systematically questioned next year.*

3. Tell us about your background or identity

[More Details](#)

Yes No Rather not say



Department Climate

We asked a wide range of questions about the climate of the department. These questions a large majority of responses pointed at an inclusive and welcoming climate. For example, just 6 of 85 responses suggested that the department had been partially or not welcoming, and only 10 of 85 responses suggested that the department had a dissatisfying climate for diversity (0 very dissatisfied responses).

5. Has your experience of the Department of Geosciences been welcoming?

[More Details](#)

● Yes	79
● No	2
● Maybe	4



6. How satisfied are you with the Department climate for diversity?

[More Details](#)

● Very satisfied	25
● Somewhat satisfied	32
● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	18
● Somewhat dissatisfied	10
● Very dissatisfied	0

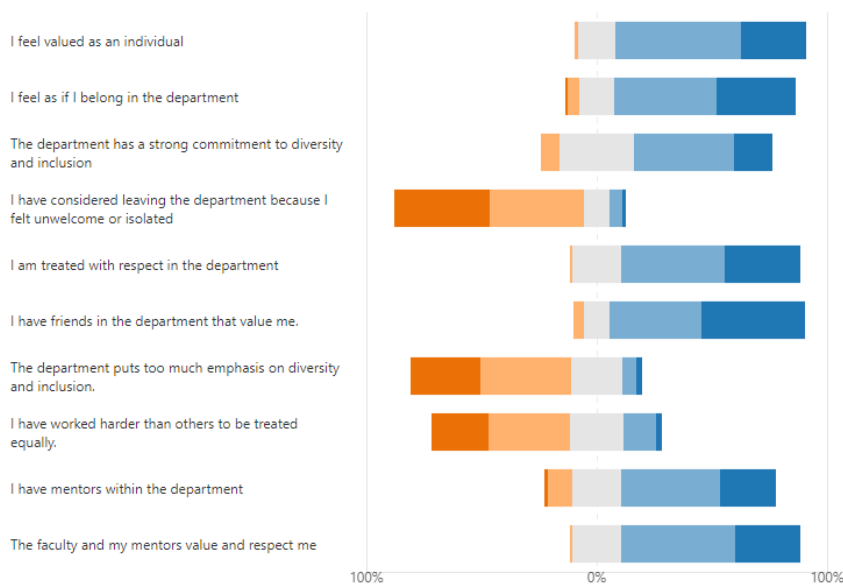


The same trend was true for specific questions about a positive climate. The largest causes for concern came from those who felt they had to work harder to be treated equally (17%), and those that had a lack of mentors in the department (both somewhat a strongly disagree: 13%).

7. Considering your time in the Department of Geosciences, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

[More Details](#)

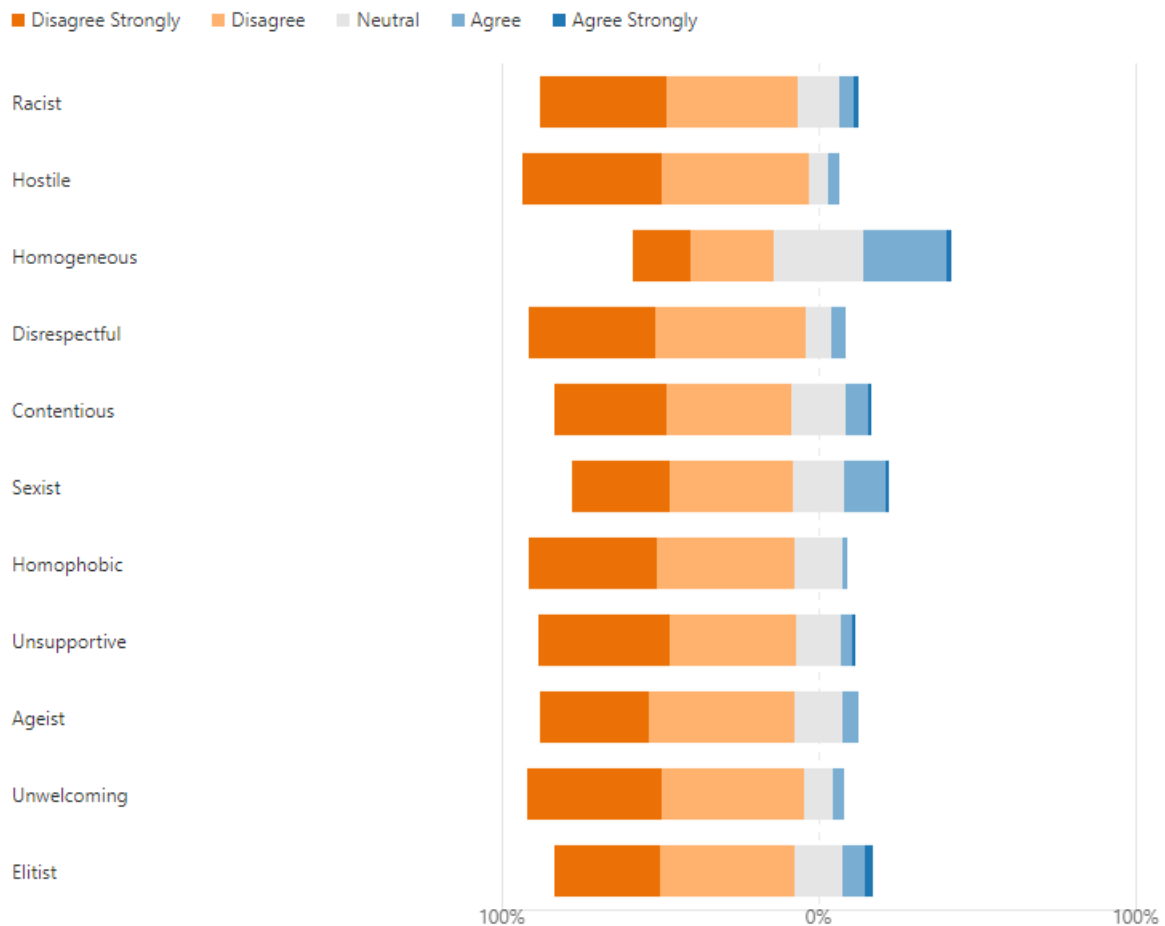
■ Disagree Strongly
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Agree
 ■ Agree Strongly



Perceptions of the department were also quite positive. The worst negative perceptions were that the department was homogenous (27%), sexist (14%), elitist (9%) and contentious (8%). Remarkably, only one respondent who identified from a racially underrepresented group or “rather not say” (n=17) agreed the department is racist, and zero of those identifying as LGBTQ or “rather not say” (n=10) labelled the department homophobic. These response rates are similar to the department wide ratios for racist (6%) and homophobic (1%) responses. However, these deeper analyses are not exhaustive, the neutral responses (not included in negative totals) are difficult to interpret, and care should be given to the small sample sizes.

8. Do the following terms apply to the culture of the Department of Geosciences?

[More Details](#)






Discriminatory events

Nineteen of 85 responses indicated that discriminatory events had been witnessed in the last year. This fraction (22%) is the largest fraction of suboptimal responses to any question. Dr. Liner led a colloquium discussion covering all specific instances recorded in the survey, that are transcribed below.

9. In the past 12 months how often have you experienced discriminatory events because of your status?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

 Never	66
 1-2 times	15
 More than 2 times	4




Colloquium Focus

Only 10% of the respondents disagreed with the focus on Equity and Inclusion at colloquium.

11. The Department's Colloquium Series this semester includes speakers who will address topics of Equity and Inclusion in Sciences and Academics. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The opportunity to discuss issues of Equity and Inclusion will help promote inclusiveness and empowerment of marginalized groups in our community.

[More Details](#)

 Strongly Disagree	3
 Disagree	6
 Neutral	12
 Agree	32
 Strongly Agree	32



Recommendations for Next Year

The biggest improvements for next year should be in the identity questionnaire. We must include gender, first-generation students, and dependents at home to our list. In order to further the analysis of whether specific groups feel discriminated against (i.e. do under-represented races feel the department is racist?), it is recommended that Question 8 be more tightly aligned with Question 3.

This annual survey is also a great opportunity to include questions about safety and perceptions of safety. Do respondents feel safe in the department? Around and near campus? In laboratories? On course field trips? Doing independent lab work? Doing independent field work? Responses will help our department effectively respond to danger in these situations, and providing a more inclusive climate.

Appendix: Examples of discrimination

My prior institution had an issue with fostering an environment where neo-liberal and ultra-progressive behavior manifesting as misandry was a major problem. Certainly DEI is extremely important, and dismantling systemic racism and sexism is tremendously important. Care must be taken to ensure that dialogues surrounding these sensitive issues do not turn into man-bashing conversations and that the focus is on the systemic issues rather than any individual or group.

Homogeneous- There is a definite split between geology, geography, and geoinformatics within the department, especially on a social level. Contentious- Some people in the department seem to want to argue just for the sake of arguing. Nothing is ever to their standards and "giving it the best effort" is never good enough. Homophobic- Our department seems very inclusive of people of all sexual orientations. Ageist- There seems to be a lot of contention and disrespect for many emeritus faculty that helped to build the department. Elitist- Many professors in the department give the impression that they are "better than you" because they are people with Ph.D.'s or went to a more prestigious university for their graduate school (The Berkeley Mentality) Comment on Question 7.10: I would re-ask this question as "My mentors respect me" and another question "The faculty respect me". These are not always the same people or will they always have the same answer.

I'm giving away my identity (grad student with a physical disability): Being told that another grad student is spreading rumors that I "use my handicap to get whatever I want," another student telling me my physical disability is equivalent to his acne so he understands my struggles and therefore I shouldn't get a desk that allows me to sit down (when I have to use my walker due to space—Dr Liner/Jackie dealt with this) Drinking: I'm 3 years sober and though it hasn't been held against me academically, the lack of social connections I get to make because I don't go to Happy Hour is detrimental to me within the department On the items I'm neutral about, it's because I don't have much experience with the items, not because I don't believe they aren't issues in our department.

One even that comes to mind was during social hour discussions last fall. Some department members took the initiative to suggest activities that would be more inclusive of people with families, or individuals who don't drink alcohol. Those suggestions were quickly put down and one

student even stated "If someone doesn't drink, then they just shouldn't be invited to the social hour." I understand that people's personal choices may affect the activities in which they can participate, but I wish that the only consistently reoccurring, department-sponsored event would be more inclusive of all members in the department - both students and faculty. Social hours are often the best way to interact with faculty members and get to know them on a level needed to identify future advisors and mentors. It would be very helpful to hold these events in an environment where everyone could feel included in these potentially research-and-career-beneficial, networking events.

Issues involving undergrads vs grad vs staff vs faculty students often exclude faculty and staff from decision-making opportunities when such decisions could be more equitable or simply not student/driven.

One colleague has a habit of disrespecting female colleagues, especially those that have any decision making role in the department. He often acts in ways that are hostile to individual women.

Not from a member of the department, but while on university business with students. An interaction with the public when like this: While talking to a land owner, the owner assumed my male students were in charge and addressed them first. Not until the students said "you have to talk to the boss," being me, was I acknowledged. It was honestly a bit amusing.

I have received some unwanted pressure and comments on my lack of alcohol consumption at conferences and field trips.

I am not discriminated against, or if I am I have not noticed or been noticeably impacted.

My word about problems with a device (UAV) has been openly contradicted and not believed, though I went through all the checks and workflows with equipment, only to be affirmed later in private by the same individual. I believe this is because I am a female using technology in a male dominated field, as similar behavior has been demonstrated to other females in the same working relationship. It is embarrassing and condescending.

Since English is my first language, I had some awkward moment but not many

When I first arrived, I asked to join a specific club that was open to all Geoscientists but i was told by another student because I was in a soft science degree that I couldn't handle the real science people and didn't fit in with that club. I decided not to join any clubs.

being ignored or singled out for similar things other people do

I haven't - or I wouldn't call them discriminatory nor directed at me but I have noticed that foreign students seem to have a harder time fitting into the class groupings - they are both reticent and without prodding other students do not reach out to the students to have them join in grouping for group projects or think-pair-share exercises for example.

This is not my experience, however, I am aware that there are many microaggressions that occur daily in the department. There is a need to recognize, understand, ameliorate microaggressions across campus and within the department. I would recommend broad discussion and training to identify microaggressions. Knowing them is the first step to stopping them.

No discriminatory events in the past 12 months.

Comments about the way I dress. When professionally dressing to teach my large lecture multiple other male graduate students have mentioned the way I look.

Social gatherings tend to be homogenous and makes one feel left out purely on the basis of where one comes from.

Changing the name of Happy Hour to Social Hour did not help in solving those that do not drink alcohol (due to age/religion/personal preference) feel more welcome as all events are still held at bars. As this is the main department activity, not feeling comfortable attending such events also inhibits these students from getting to know others in the department. The GeoHogs conference is an excellent event but dietary restrictions were not considered for the provided snacks or lunch at Tiny Tim's. For those that are vegan/gluten-free, no options other than some fruit at breakfast and beverages at Tim's were available. Overall being in the department has been a great experience, but too much emphasis is put on the beer/alcohol culture of geoscience.

Sometimes I feel like I'm not seen.

I have been told by a fellow grad student that I only got my position as a Graduate Assistant because I am a woman and the professor I work under only ever picks female TAs, insinuating inappropriate sexual interest. This made me feel extremely uncomfortable around this colleague and my mentor.