Consultation Report on Campus Climate at Rollins College

Prepared by:

Anita A. Davis, Ph.D., Rhodes College
Carla Shirley, Ph.D., Shelby County Schools
Chris Wetzel, Ph.D., Rhodes College

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Contact Information for Anita Davis:
Rhodes College
2000 N. Parkway
Memphis, TN 38112
901-843-3989
adavis@rhodes.edu
Executive Summary

This report primarily summarizes information obtained from a campus climate survey administered to Rollins’ students in April 2014 that included traditional closed-ended/multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions assessing students’ perceptions of the campus climate (approximately 44% of the student body responded to the survey). It is also important to note that prior to the development and implementation of the survey, focus groups were conducted with students, faculty, and staff at Rollins College on February 24, 2014 by Dr. Anita Davis and Dr. Carla Shirley. The information gleaned from those focus groups guided the development of the campus climate survey. The following three questions were posed to the focus group members and will provide the structure for how results are organized in the report:

1) What are the successes that Rollins has had in fostering a campus environment that is welcoming of all groups?

2) What are the challenges that Rollins is facing as it works to foster a campus environment that is welcoming of all groups?

3) What are the next steps that need to be taken by Rollins to accomplish the goal of a more inclusive campus?

In this Executive Summary, we provide a brief summary of the themes/patterns that emerged from the student campus climate survey data. We also provide an abbreviated list of recommendations that Rollins might want to consider prioritizing based on the nature of the most prevalent patterns/themes identified in the survey data. This version has been redacted so that individual respondents cannot be identified.

The full consultation report that follows this Executive Summary contains more detailed information about the themes that emerged in the student campus climate survey data and a more exhaustive list of recommendations for consideration.

On global indicators of belonging and comfort with the academic and social campus climate, the students at Rollins endorse strong positive sentiments. For example, most students agree or strongly agree that they feel that they belong (64%) and that they are comfortable with the social and academic climate (73%), and most indicate that they have never or rarely considered transferring (66%). Few differences exist among different demographic groups on
these global items, suggesting that, for the most part, students from diverse backgrounds feel similarly about these areas. Students describe several factors that foster their sense of belonging at Rollins, including their intellectual and academic experiences, their race/ethnic peer groups, and their organizational affiliations (e.g., athletics and being in a fraternity or sorority).

Looking a little deeper below the surface, however, we find a somewhat different story for certain subgroups of students at Rollins. Specifically, about a quarter of Rollins students indicated that they have experienced harassment/insensitive treatment based on some aspect of their identity. The percentage of students reporting harassment/insensitive treatment with respect to race/ethnicity is higher among African American/Black (38%), Bi/Multiracial (32%), Asian/Asian American (22%), and Latino(a)/Hispanic/Chicano(a) (19%) students than among White/Caucasian/European American (5%) students. Additionally, 46% of gay and lesbian students and 14% of bisexual students report being harassed/treated insensitively due to their sexual orientation as compared to 2% of heterosexual students.

Within the different academic programs of study, reports of harassment/insensitive treatment ranged from 20% - 30%, with students identifying different aspects of their identities as leading to harassment/insensitive treatment within the different programs. The targeted identities included age (Hamilton Holt Undergraduate Program, Hamilton Holt Graduate Program, and Crummer Graduate School of Business), gender identity (Arts and Sciences, College of Professional Studies), race/ethnicity (Arts and Sciences, Crummer Graduate School of Business, Hamilton Holt Graduate Program), and socioeconomic status (Arts and Sciences, College of Professional Studies). Although the exact subgroup within the programs is described in more detail in the report, the most critical point is that each program has at least one area where a sizeable percentage of students from certain backgrounds feels that it is harassed/treated insensitively within students’ academic programs.

When students are asked specifically about their feelings of non-belonging, they speak to persistent micro-aggressions that they experience or witness as a result of gender identity, race/ethnicity/nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), religious/spiritual beliefs, or lack of affiliation with a Greek organization. What is striking in these examples is that, although many of these experiences are shared by students from underrepresented groups on campus (e.g., racial/ethnic minority students), students in majority groups are also represented in
these narratives of not belonging (e.g., Christian students). Also prevalent in these not-belonging narratives is the incivility that exists in the student body (e.g., posts on Rollins Confessions, verbal insults yelled out of cars) as evidenced by the fact that students were mentioned as the actors in 78.7% of these narratives.

Two final findings that stand out in the data are that many students at Rollins do not feel that the word diversity applies to them (especially White/Caucasian/European American students and heterosexual students), and these same students see less of a need to have more faculty from underrepresented groups or the need for the general education program to include at least one course focused on issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to social justice.

Given our review of the student campus climate survey, our collective experiences working on campus climate issues at Rhodes and other institutions, and considering our focus groups conversations, we understand the challenges that Rollins is facing as it takes on this important work and we commend the work that has taken place thus far. As Rollins goes forward with its goal of creating a more inclusive campus, it will be important to prioritize goals and to consider which goals might be accomplished in the short-term and which goals require a more long-term approach. We also feel it is important to note that identifying smaller, more easily accomplishable goals is important as these types of goals can help provide tangible outcomes that demonstrate to the Rollins community that small steps are being taken and these small successes can help to achieve more buy-in for larger, more long-term goals. Large goals, however, should not be shied away from, but rather approached with deliberate steps identified as a means of accomplishing those goals.

It is in this spirit that we offer the following recommendations as starting places. These recommendations are included in the full report along with many others, but we felt that these recommendations offered ways to begin addressing some of the most pressing issues that were identified in our discussions and in our review of the student campus climate data. We offer these for your consideration and suggest that for each recommendation a responsible party or parties be identified. We recognize that some recommendations will not be feasible for the Rollins community at this time for various reasons, including budget constraints, and we leave the adoption of recommendations and the timelines for accomplishing those recommendations to the collective judgment of the diverse Rollins constituencies. It will also be clear that several
parties may play a role in accomplishing most of the recommendations. Approaching the goals with a team-oriented approach can help foster the important goal of increasing communication and understanding across different campus constituencies which in and of itself can begin to bring about the kind of inclusive community desired by the Rollins community.

Recommendations that we urge Rollins to strongly consider at this time include:

1) Better clarify the diversity goals for Rollins and develop a strategic plan that prioritizes goals and identifies strategies and responsible parties for accomplishing each goal. As this assessment focused on the climate for students, this should include broad constituencies of students in creating a shared vision about the expectations for civil discourse and respect for all members of the Rollins community. Avenues for addressing violations of these expectations should be included.

2) Consider using the results of the campus climate survey as a launching pad to begin these important discussions. Although many students are not sure if diversity applies to them, the high participation rates of diverse groups of students (especially the large number of narrative responses) indicate that a wide range of students want to share on this topic. Capitalize on this momentum by strategically sharing some of the information with diverse groups of students in non-threatening ways. In the hands of skilled facilitators, these data (both quantitative and qualitative) can provide a powerful opportunity to educate students about the experiences of other students on campus and to motivate them to want to change the climate to one that is welcoming and more respectful.

3) Consider ways to strengthen the processes for recruiting and retaining diverse students, faculty, staff, and administrators (e.g., follow-up with peer institutions with strong(er) records in this regard to identify best practices).

4) Consider researching established programs that could be implemented in an ongoing fashion at Rollins that would provide more opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to learn about diversity issues, mainly surrounding race, nationality/culture, SES, sexual orientation, and religion. One example is the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI; [www.ncbi.org](http://www.ncbi.org)) that focuses on reducing various types of prejudice. Alternatively, consider utilizing the expertise of those on campus to provide training/support for faculty, staff, and students ensuring that diverse groups participate in this programming.

5) Consider how Student Orientation programming is structured. Is equal time/representation allotted for all student groups/activities during the orientation sessions? This is an opportunity to show that Rollins embraces diversity and values all student groups.

6) Consider including a panel/discussion time during orientation to focus on the culture and values at Rollins as well as tensions on campus. Consider recruiting students from a
variety of different backgrounds (especially different social class backgrounds) who have successfully navigated these tensions to speak with incoming students.

7) Consider implementing more campus-wide activities/events geared toward bringing students from all backgrounds together for both social and academic events to help build unity around common interests.