Report on the Review of the 1995 Climate Study

Presented in December, 1996
Report on the Review of the 1995 Campus Climate Survey

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 14, 1997
FROM: Pauline Lambert
RE: Corrections to the *Report on the Review of the 1995 Climate Study*

I ask that you note the following corrections that should be made to the recently issued *Report on the Review of the 1995 Climate Study*: These errors were made during the numerous revisions of the document when the task force was working off of several different documents. However, the task force did use the official survey data as prepared by the Office of Institutional Research when doing its study. As a result, these errors did not affect the work of the group or its final recommendations.

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- Page 20, section 2., b.
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"Fifty percent of the respondents..."
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Report on the Review of the 1995 Campus Climate Survey

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A. The Charge to the Task Force

The Task Force, selected by the Provost, began its work in late December, 1995. It is composed of staff, faculty and students.

The group was asked to review the results of the Campus Climate Survey which was done in Spring, 1995 and make recommendations based on the results of this review. The survey was intended to gather information about the institutional climate with regard to diversity, gender and the general workplace environment.

During the summer and fall of 1995 the survey data were tabulated and analyzed by the staff of the Office of Institutional Research. This data was on reserve in the O'Shaughnessy Library throughout the 1995-96 academic year and is still available there for those who wish to refer to it. In addition, several sections of their analysis were reproduced in the Bulletin during the year.

The statistical study having been completed by Institutional Research, the Task Force focused its efforts on trying to identify those climate issues which are of special significance and/or concern with regard to the campus environment. Given the significance of the material, the Task Force felt that, in some cases, even a few negative responses should serve as a call to action on the problem areas.

While the main focus of the survey was on the campus climate for women and persons of color, the Task Force found that there are several things having to do with the climate which are not necessarily related to gender or race. An effort has been made to highlight these aspects of the environment as well.

The Task Force divided its work into two sections:

1. A review of the data and related information which deals with students, especially their experience in the classroom and their relationship to faculty

2. A review of the data and related information which deals with employees and the workplace environment.
The report includes the following:

1. Comments about the survey instrument and the other resources used by the group in the process of its deliberations.

2. Observations and comments about the main issues on which the group focused as a result of its review of the survey and the information from other resources.

3. Recommendations for action.

While the group's analysis of the data focused on identifying problem areas, the Task Force was pleased to find that, in many instances, corrective action has already been taken or is in progress. For example, some offices that had been designated by students as being difficult to deal with have since had extensive customer training and have begun to survey customer satisfaction on a regular basis. In another case, there were negative comments about the University's commitment to following affirmative action guidelines in hiring. Since then, new guidelines and policies have been developed and publicized. The group has tried to indicate these improvements and/or corrective action at appropriate points in the report.

The Task Force tried to make an honest assessment of the survey data and to place it in a more current context, given the fact that the survey was done several months prior to the time when the Task Force began its work.

B. Resources used by the Task Force

1. The Survey Instruments

The basic material used by the Task Force was the data from the Campus Climate Survey which was conducted in the Spring Semester, 1995. The following instruments were used in that study: Student Survey, Faculty/Student Survey and a Faculty/Staff Survey.

The Surveys were composed of questions followed by a choice of responses based on a Likert-type 5 point scale in addition to a "Not applicable" or "Don't know" option. The Task Force examined the responses for each of the groups or categories that were compared.

Although the response rates for the various groups surveyed were high enough to be considered statistically valid, the Task Force was disappointed in the low response rate for all groups surveyed.
Several reasons were offered for the low rate of return:

- The survey was done at a busy time of the year.
- The survey was too long.
- There was the feeling on the part of some that the survey would have no effect on the climate so why bother.
- There was some concern about the confidentiality of the survey results since the forms had been sent out with name labels on them. This came chiefly from faculty and staff.

The group conducted a fine-grained analysis of survey items, clarifying issues related to interpretation. Some of these issues had to do with statistical questions, e.g. How do we evaluate the significance of a particular range of responses when a large portion of respondents checked “Not applicable/Don’t know” as a response?

Other interpretive concerns related to the wording of items. Respondents were asked to rate agreement, for instance, with the following statement: “In practice, St. Thomas tends to be overly tolerant of racism.” It was unclear just how this type of wording affected responses. Could it suggest that low levels of tolerance in this area are acceptable while high levels are not? If this interpretation is possible, might it affect the evaluation of the response distribution?

The group also discussed the problem of complex wording related to the demands of survey construction. Some items are worded in a complex, double-negative fashion. For example, the following statement might create comprehension difficulties, especially for International students whose first language is not English: “I do not feel that I have been treated unfairly by faculty with regard to my ethnic status.”

In an effort to take these issues into account, the group undertook an item-by-item analysis which facilitated an in-depth assessment of the data. At the same time they worked to identify areas in the data that indicated a persistent problem needing further attention.

In addition, the Task Force reviewed written comments from the various respondents which had been prompted by certain survey items. However, the significance of these comments was difficult to weigh because it was unclear whether a single respondent had made several responses or several respondents had made single responses.
There was also some concern that the results of the survey, when taken out of the context of the ensemble of the responses, might give the impression that the campus climate is more positive than it is. This fear was reinforced when the results of the 1996 Students of Color Summer Racial Climate Study done by Lorena Munoz became available. It had a higher response rate (42%) and indicated greater dissatisfaction with the campus climate than the 1995 university survey.

Where comparison was possible, the Task Force did refer to the data which compared the results of this 1995 survey with the results of the first survey which was done in 1989. This comparison shows that, overall, the university climate has improved. However, there are some areas where there no improvement seems to have been made and at least two areas where the climate seems to have worsened. More precise information about these comparisons is included in the appropriate sections of this report.

2. Other Resources

Although the Task Force focused its attention chiefly on the analysis of the data from the Survey, the group felt it was appropriate to go beyond that in order to try to get a more complete picture of the current campus climate at St. Thomas. The goal of the group in doing so was twofold:

- to better identify the climate-related difficulties which currently act as barriers to full academic, personal and professional development of students, faculty and staff at St. Thomas

- to better identify those areas where progress toward positive change has been made since the Survey was done.

With these goals in mind, the Task Force drew on information gleaned from interviews with several individuals and from their own experiences as part of the St. Thomas community.
II. STUDENT-RELATED CLIMATE ISSUES

A. Introduction

For this part of its work, the Task Force used data from the Student Survey and from the Faculty/Student Survey. In the Student Survey the categories compared were: Graduate/Undergraduate, Non-white & International/White, Female/Male. In the Faculty/Student Survey, the categories compared were: Faculty/Students, Female Students/Male Students, Female Faculty/Male Faculty.

As was mentioned above, the student response rate was not as good as one might have hoped. Twenty percent of the undergraduate students and 25% of the graduate students responded. Fifteen percent of the non-white/international students and 24% of the white students did not respond. Sixteen percent of male students and 27% of female students responded. Thirty-nine percent of faculty responded.

It became evident to the group as their work progressed that the grouping of Non-white and International students was problematic because the two groups frequently have different needs and perceptions. Consequently the results sometimes appeared to be skewed. In addition, international students sometimes found the survey questions confusing because of difficulty with the language.

As indicated above, the Task Force also used interviews and its own experience as sources of additional information in formulating its observations and recommendations.

B. Observations and Comments

The review of the information revealed certain issues and/or areas of concern. Sometimes these had to do with institutional practices while others reflected persistent and complex attitudinal obstacles to building and accepting an affirming, supportive community.

In some cases these issues did not seem to be necessarily connected to race or gender. They seemed rather to reflect a sense of frustration on the part of many students which resulted in their finding the environment less conducive to academic and personal development.
Comments and observations on these areas follow.

1. **Group-based differences in perceiving racial diversity and gender**

Although a global evaluation of attitudinal data suggests that St. Thomas enjoys rather high levels of tolerance and appreciation for diversity, the Task Force found that the data also reflect some ambiguity about attitudes and some persistent differential patterns of perception.

For example, 61% disagreed with the statement: “There is a great deal of racial tension among students at UST.” However, 71% agreed with the statement: “In general, the St. Thomas community is accepting of people from various ethnic groups.”

In addition, patterns of differential perception sometimes revealed problematic interpretations of seemingly positive findings.

For example, on nine items evaluating student perceptions of sensitivity to race/gender/ethnic status among faculty, administrators, and staff, the general summary of responses is encouraging. In all cases, however, white students were more positive in their assessment of sensitivity and fair treatment than non-white/international students.

Other survey items further illustrate these differences in perception.

Students were asked to respond to the statement: “There are some faculty members at St. Thomas who have a reputation of discriminatory practices against women” and “There are some faculty who have a reputation of discriminatory practices against people of color.” Here differences in perception were significant: 51% of women students who responded to the first item (28% of all responses, including NA responses) chose “strongly” or “somewhat agree”, compared to 29% of male students (15% of total male respondents). For the second item regarding discrimination against people of color, 45% of the non-white/international students who responded chose either “strongly” or “somewhat” agree (24% of total responses, including NA responses) while 25.5% of white students responded similarly (11% of total responses). Even the most cautious interpretation of this data suggests that close to one-fourth of all women respondents and non-white/international respondents see enduring patterns of racism and sexism in St. Thomas classrooms. This is unacceptably high in the opinion of the Task Force.
Finally, while most students indicate that they have "seldom" or "never" experienced personal instances of inappropriate behavior linked to racism or sexism, similar race- and gender-based patterns emerge, with female students reporting more inappropriate behaviors than males, and students of color reporting more than white students.

These differing patterns of perception and experience have a number of consequences.

The most obvious negative consequence is that a significant number of students are feeling the effects of discrimination; they are not viewing St. Thomas as an inclusive, supportive community. The data suggest that many white students and many male students may be under-estimating the discomfort experienced by their peers due to racial and gender bias in and out of the classroom. As a result, they may be failing to take at least some responsibility for remediation of problematic situations.

The committee considered some reasons for this under-estimation of discomfort, including:

1) poor communication between groups of students, or too few opportunities for sharing experiences and concerns

2) lack of diversity in the classroom

Written comments addressing classroom experience suggest that many white students have not been in classes with students of color: "I have had no minority students in any of my classes"; "I have never had a minority student in a class at UST"; "Have only had 3 people of color in my 2 years of classes here"

3) lack of material by and/or about women and minorities in the curricula (undergraduate and graduate)

In responding to the following question: "In the courses I take, instructors attempt to include appropriate content or examples on people of color." 41.3% of the non-white/international students responded "Strongly disagree", "Somewhat disagree" or "Undecided".

The response with regard to gender was somewhat less negative.

To the question: "In the courses I take, instructors attempt to include appropriate content or examples on women," 24.5% of women students and 26.7% of the men students
responded "Strongly disagree," "Somewhat disagree" or "Undecided".

4) resistance to the idea of “special consideration” given to certain groups

For example, one student responding to the item “Most faculty are sensitive to the needs of female students/students of color” added: “Are there special needs for women and students of color?” In response to the item, “The environment for women at St. Thomas can be described as supportive and empowering” a student commented “Supportive and empowering environment?’ This is a school, not a daycare center.”

5) polarized beliefs about diversity and tolerance

The issue of resistance is linked to the emergence of highly polarized attitudes toward diversity, seen especially in student comments. There were many written comments reflecting real anger about the university’s efforts to be more inclusive and sensitive to climate issues – e.g., “I get tired of hearing on this campus about women or minority issues. What about equality and fairness for men and our beliefs, wants, values, and feelings? ...It is great to have everyone included, but when there is more of an emphasis put on women and those of minority than of the Catholic tradition that this fine university is based upon, I feel something is wrong”). “Please do not start shoving diversity down students’ throats. I think however anybody feels about anybody else is their own business and, however good or bad, should not be mandated by university bureaucracy”.

The written comments suggest, in a more striking fashion than the quantitative data, the existence of polarized views among students. There is a strong current of an angry “backlash” feeling, alongside statements of concern about persistent racial tension, lack of respect for diversity, and pleas for increased tolerance and acceptance.

The “backlash” comments are sometimes framed to imply that attention to diversity undermines the educational quality and/or Catholic nature of the university; they also reflect the perception by some men that they are excluded, inappropriately blamed for wrongdoing, and generally disadvantaged by diversity initiatives. These comments suggest the belief that a stronger sense of community could be achieved by reducing or eliminating the institutional focus on diversity.
In a contrasting fashion, those who are troubled by continuing intolerance suggest that St. Thomas should increase its focus on diversity in the service of creating a more unified community.

Many students expressed the view that St. Thomas has not done enough as an institution to affirm and promote tolerance and acceptance of diverse groups: “I think the climate at St. Thomas is very unwelcoming for many. Not necessarily just for minorities, but for students with less conservative ideas. Nothing is being done to make St. Thomas an accepting environment”). “St. Thomas is a very racist environment. There is so much negativity and ignorance in this school, it makes me ill!” “DIVERSITY – St. Thomas is known for being a conservative business school out to sell itself...”). “More diversity of all kinds – students, faculty and staff. With diversity comes tolerance and variety which is something UST does not seem to have much of...”

With regard to the issues raised in this section, the 1995 survey indicated that some negative changes in the classroom climate have taken place since the last survey in 1989. In 1995 higher percentages of male students were viewed as making sexist remarks and as attempting to intimidate the instructors than in 1989. Similarly, in 1995 more respondents viewed majority students as more likely to contribute, ask questions, make comments and receive encouragement as compared to minority students than in 1989.

2. Recruitment

Comments about the campus climate for persons of color led to consideration of recruitment efforts.

Some of the students of color interviewed expressed concern about the perception vs. the reality of cultural diversity at St. Thomas. Thirty-seven percent of all student respondents (43% undergraduate; 29% graduate) reported that actual cultural and ethnic diversity at St. Thomas was “Much Less Than I Expected,” based on recruitment information.

Some students of color who spoke with the committee suggested that the University might be engaged in false advertising in an effort to attract students. In their opinion, this misrepresentation often leads to profound disappointment for students who are expecting to find a more diverse student body.

While understanding the need to be appropriately inclusive in presenting images of the student body, the group felt that careful attention must be paid to ensuring that recruitment materials do
not misrepresent the current situation with regard to the diversity of the campus community, especially the student body. It is important to be honest about the number of students of color and the support services available to them. Creating unrealistic expectations can negatively affect student retention.

The Task Force recognizes that recruitment is an important part of the effort to increase the diversity of the student body. However, it is equally important that a consistent effort be made to create and sustain a more supportive environment for students of color once they arrive on campus. All members of the community must be mindful of their responsibility for making the campus climate more welcoming for students of color.

3. Academic Advising

Issues raised about advising did not seem to be directly connected to race or gender. However, they reflect the frustration and disappointment felt by many students with regard to what they consider to be a less than supportive climate at St. Thomas.

One of the survey items solicited responses to the following statement:

"Excellence in advising is emphasized in my college."

While more than half of the students responding agreed that advising was emphasized in their college or program (mean rating = 2.57 for undergrads and 2.78 for graduate students on a 5-point scale with 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree), there was some indication that improvements could be made in the advising program(s). This was most evident in the written comments where students voiced their dissatisfaction with current advising activities.

They requested that more time be allotted for advising and that they be given more basic information for course planning and scheduling purposes. They also expressed a need for basic indicators of interest and concern on the part of advisors, such as more advisor-initiated meetings and more personalized guidance discussions.

These are some representative comments:

"I feel as if there is no guidance for first-year students." (undergrad)

"Advisors are difficult to reach and not very helpful." (undergrad or grad?)
"I feel a lack of advising direction..." (grad student)

"Advisor-initiated contact with students [is needed] – a more mentor-oriented approach to student involvement. I feel that when I approach my advisor, it is always on a 'when-in-need' basis.

I would appreciate more interest in a relational attitude on the part of my advisor. I would like to know he cares."  
(undergrad)

Undergraduate students seem to experience a greater degree of satisfaction with advising at the upper division level (presumably in the major) than at the lower division level.

Realizing the complexity of the many forces that come into play with regard to academic advising, the Task Force members also discussed some of the questions that need to be addressed in order to ensure that proper advising takes place. Chief among these were:

Is advising seen as part of their educational role by faculty?

Is excellence in advising properly recognized and rewarded?

Should advising be evaluated differently (or is it evaluated at all?) so that problems could be identified and excellence acknowledged?

Do faculty have adequate informational resources for advising, especially with regard to general education courses at the undergraduate level?

There was also discussion about the role of students with regard to advising and their role in assuming some responsibility to contact and/or work with advisors in a timely fashion. Again, questions were raised.

- How do we help students to develop realistic expectations about the purpose and limitations of advising?

- How do we prepare faculty to address the varying needs and legitimate expectations of students? (scheduling assistance, selection and sequencing of courses, choice of a minor/major, career information and guidance, etc.)

- How do we help students develop a sense of their responsibility to contact and or work with advisors in a timely fashion?
While students expressed concerns about advising, these concerns do not generally seem to apply to the relationship between faculty and students who seek help. A majority of both undergraduate and graduate student respondents indicated that faculty are willing to assist them when they ask for help with their academic problems. However, both graduate and undergraduate students made it clear that they would appreciate more faculty initiated advising sessions.

4. Additional Areas of Concern

The committee also discussed ways in which concerns about advising might be related to another troubling perception emerging from the data. When asked to respond to the statement: “I feel I am a valued member of the St. Thomas Community,” 40% of the respondents checked either “Strongly Disagree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” or “Undecided.” The Task Force felt that, given the mission, history, and size of St. Thomas, this indication of widespread feeling of exclusion was highly problematic. This was disturbing because in this instance they seemed to feel undervalued, not because of gender or race, but because they were students. For example, younger faculty are treated less respectfully when mistaken for students.

a. Sexual Harassment/Violence

Of special concern to the Task Force were student comments, most of which occurred during the interviews, dealing with sexual harassment/violence. These comments dealt with three aspects of the issue: the fact that sexual harassment/violence does occur on campus; the fact that sexual harassment/violence is very frequently related to the use of alcohol; and lastly, the lack of clarity about institutional policies and procedures to be followed when instances of sexual harassment/violence are reported. In addition there is concern about whether or not instances of sexual harassment/violence are handled in a timely manner once they have been reported. It seems that frequently those who, because of their positions (residence hall staff, security officers, faculty, etc.), are called upon first to assist victims of harassment/violence are not always aware of the institutional policies and procedures to be followed.

Additionally, concerns were raised that no consistent university orientation program addressing sexual harassment/violence exists for graduate students who constitute 50% of the student body.
b. Sexual orientation

There is some evidence in the data that gay, lesbian and bisexual students feel unwelcome at St. Thomas while other students indicate that they think that inclusiveness at St. Thomas should not extend to gay and lesbian students. While the recent initiatives on campus to support these students are a welcome sign of increasing sensitivity to this issue, it is clear that there are instances of continued intolerance if not outright harassment and discrimination.

c. Students with eating disorders

While the topic was not addressed directly in the survey, discussions with women student leaders focused attention on the prevalence of eating disorders among women residents at the university. This was seen as an indication that the campus climate does not foster a positive self-image and the resulting self-esteem for many women students. Especially disturbing was the fact that some residence hall staff indicated that the environment at St. Thomas seems to encourage this problem by stressing, albeit unconsciously, conformity to a certain norm of behavior and appearance. There was some concern that this type of behavior, was the result of less-than-healthy attitudes toward male/female relationships on campus.

Although male students are less likely to develop eating disorders than female students, national statistics show that this is a growing problem among men. As a result, the Task Force concluded that this problem should receive more attention as it affects both men and women.

d. Students with disabilities

While the survey did not include questions concerning students with disabilities, Task Force members heard examples of insensitivity and discrimination toward these students by members of the St. Thomas community. As a result, it seems clear that this is an area where increased awareness and support are needed, if the climate on campus is to be improved for students with disabilities.

e. Religious diversity

There were some comments which indicated a strong polarization with regard to religious tolerance at St. Thomas.
This was illustrated by comments indicating that some non-Catholics feel uncomfortable and even unwelcome on campus. On the other hand, some student comments reflect the opinion that Catholic students with conservative views are likewise made to feel unwelcome. Once again the lack of understanding and mutual respect sours the campus climate for these students.

C. Conclusion

While not every issue raised by students in the survey has been addressed, it was the intention of the Task Force to highlight those areas which seem to be of most serious concern and to have the most significant impact on the daily lives of students.
III. WORKPLACE-RELATED CLIMATE ISSUES

A. Introduction

In this section of the report concerning employees and the workplace environment, the Task Force used data from the Faculty/Staff Survey in which the following categories were compared: Female/Male, Faculty/Staff, Female Faculty/Male Faculty, Female Staff/Male Staff and finally Faculty & Staff Non-white or International/ Faculty & Staff White.

The Task Force examined the survey findings consistent with the approach used in reviewing the data that dealt with student issues. The group reviewed the faculty and staff responses to the survey and the written comments prompted by some of the survey items. In addition, individual experiences were brought to the attention of the Task Force.

As in the section on students, several concerns arose regarding the construction of the survey instrument such as the wording of certain items which made them difficult to interpret. These difficulties of interpretation were troubling because they had the potential for invalidating some of the responses.

Similarly there was concern about the response-rate. Thirty-nine percent of faculty (41% full-time, 28% adjunct - with several faculty not indicating their status) and 43% of staff (60% exempt staff and 39.4% non-exempt) returned their surveys. The rather low response rate from faculty and staff is of special concern because they form the permanent core of the St. Thomas community and play a major role in influencing the general campus climate. The response rate of non-exempt staff is especially striking.

Task Force members learned that some faculty/staff chose not to participate in the survey because they were concerned about the confidentiality of their responses. Of those who did participate, 25% chose not to indicate their department. The Task Force felt this indicated a lack of trust within the university community.

In interpreting the results the Task Force found evidence of a “we versus they” attitude. Frequently individuals rated other departments, and the University as a whole, more negatively than they rated their own departments. Other examples of this attitude were found in comments about women being given preferential treatment or about there being an “old boys’ network”. It was felt that the increasing use of cross-functional and/or matrix groups will help to improve inter-departmental communication and to correct misperceptions or misunderstandings.
As was mentioned in the section on student related issues, the Task Force was disappointed that the survey did not address the climate for people with disabilities and recommends this be included in future surveys.

Although the Task Force's analyses of the data related to the workplace environment focused on identifying problem areas, the group was pleased to find (as was the case with students) that corrective action has already been planned or implemented in a number of areas.

B. Observations and Comments

A summary of the main concerns identified with regard to the workplace and employee satisfaction follows.

Overall, only 48% of faculty and staff who responded indicated that morale at St. Thomas is positive. Examining the two groups separately only 47% of staff compared to 65% of faculty reported that morale was high. The Task Force feels that the low rating from staff should prompt further study to determine its causes and to identify ways to ameliorate the situation.

Both faculty and staff perceived morale within their respective departments as being more positive than that of the University in general.

Non-exempt males seemed to be the least satisfied of all employees with regard to working relationships, morale, a sense of involvement and on the job autonomy. This problem was especially pronounced for those who work the late evening or night shift.

Night shift employees have little opportunity for interaction with other members of the community. Nor do they necessarily have access to Discover or e-mail which are now the University's main forms of internal communication. It is unclear how many of them even have the time or opportunity to read the Bulletin. This situation is complicated by the fact that in some departments the new-hires are assigned to the night shift. As a result, it is very difficult for these employees to get integrated into the community. The resulting potential for isolation or marginalization is troubling.

This sense of isolation also frequently affects faculty who come to campus only in the evening when few of their colleagues are around. This situation is aggravated by the fact that many of these are adjuncts who do not have other regular interaction with their departments and/or the rest of the university community. The Task Force was
pleased to learn that some effort is being made to better incorporate adjunct faculty into the life of the institution.

On a more general theme, the information reviewed by the Task Force indicated that members of the St. Thomas community need to be more respectful of each other. Incidents of lack of respect between faculty, staff and students were reported in the course of the group’s work. For example, faculty who look young enough to be mistaken for students noted that they are frequently treated poorly until they reveal their identity. A commitment to mutual respect would do much to lessen the likelihood of incidents like these.

It is of significant concern to the Task Force that 52% of the respondents feel that the morale on campus is not positive.

1. Exclusionary and Inappropriate Behaviors (Gender, Race, Sexual Group)

   a. The Environment for faculty and staff of color

   Faculty and staff rated the University’s commitment to diversity very low with respect to hiring women and minority faculty, and minority staff and administrators.

   In addition, there is a rather high level of dissatisfaction with the University’s efforts to create an equitable professional climate for faculty/staff women and people of color. Fifty-three percent reported they believe that minorities are not treated fairly at St. Thomas.

   Among faculty and staff respondents of color, 21% believe they have been discriminated against in job advancement based on their ethnicity. Approximately 25% of this same group believe they have been discriminated against in terms of base salary, promotion, and/or merit pay.

   Eighty-four percent of all faculty and staff respondents indicated they think that minorities are treated fairly in their departments. Sixty-five percent of all faculty and staff respondents reported they believe that minorities are treated fairly at the University in general. Although these percentages represent a majority of all employees, the Task Force feels the percentages are too low given the importance of the issue, even if one allows for some misconceptions or misinformation.

   In addition, there are some other indications that the campus climate for faculty and staff of color is not all that it should be. For example, some staff and faculty of color have reported that
they frequently feel obliged to wear their St. Thomas name tags or they are not recognized as being an employee of the institution.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the campus climate for persons of color has improved somewhat. For instance, both faculty and staff reported receiving or hearing fewer racist comments in the 1995 survey than in 1989 when the first survey was done.

Some respondents felt that the university's Affirmative Action policies and procedures for hiring are not being followed consistently. In this regard the Task Force was pleased to learn that the University's Affirmative Action policies and the guidelines for searches and hiring have been revised and are being distributed with the provision that they be used when hiring for all positions at the University.

b. Sexual Harassment/Violence

Some respondents reported that there is not sufficient and/or appropriate follow-up when sexual harassment complaints are made. The Task Force heard examples of situations where this seemed to be the case. As a means of addressing this issue, the Task Force suggests that the University's sexual harassment policy be more widely disseminated on a regular basis and published in a more "user friendly" format. When new employees (or students) receive a copy of the document they are not expecting to be victims of harassment. As a result, they may not read or even keep the document. It is only when a troubling situation arises that they look for the document. One suggestion is to post the policy in the various departments and in all restrooms.

Most faculty and staff reported seldom or never experiencing inappropriate behavior. However, for those who did report having had this experience, "sexist comments" was mentioned as the second most frequently experienced inappropriate behavior. The data also indicated that women experience significantly more inappropriate references to their personal life and more sexist comments by students, faculty and staff than men.

The 1995 survey results indicate that some changes have taken place in these areas since the 1989 Climate Survey.

In 1995 faculty and staff reported fewer instances of frequent sexist comments than in 1989. Some of this improvement may
be due to the training sessions on sexual harassment/violence for current and new employees. In addition, the Task Force was pleased to learn that the institutional procedures and policies concerning sexual harassment/violence are being reviewed and improved.

c. Exclusionary Attitudes and Behaviors

The Task Force also received information about groups of individuals who feel that they have been consistently overlooked. This has resulted in a real or perceived sense of exclusion on the part of these faculty and staff.

For example, it is difficult when special lectures or events of interest to the entire community are consistently scheduled at times when graduate faculty (and graduate students) are in class. Some service areas have hours directed primarily, if not exclusively, for daytime use. This makes it difficult for faculty and staff (and students) who are on campus only in the evening and contributes to the marginalization of some segments of the community.

Of special note is the fact that, when asked about their experience of inappropriate behavior on campus, the most cited example was “the exclusion of viewpoints in a group”.

While none of these examples is seen as intentional, they do reflect a mind-set which needs to be adjusted.

2. Job-Related Concerns

At the time the 1995 survey was conducted there was some uneasiness on campus about the possibility of staff reductions and a hiring freeze. This could have had some impact on the survey results with regard to job related concerns.

a. Quality Management

Thirty-four percent of the faculty and staff respondents indicated they feel that the way in which work is organized at St. Thomas does not foster quality.

There were several comments about the need to develop a more service-oriented attitude and approach toward the way services for students are organized and delivered. However, once again respondents reported more positive views regarding the
management and services of their departments as compared to those of the University as a whole.

While the 1995 survey was being conducted the University was in the process of developing some Total Quality Management initiatives. It is therefore possible that some of the preceding comments may have been influenced by this.

b. Compensation, Benefits and Opportunities for Advancement

Survey data and related comments indicated that faculty and staff have questions and/or concerns about salaries, merit pay, opportunities for promotion and their pensions.

The majority of respondents (56%) did not feel they are paid fairly. Seventy-six percent of staff and 64% of faculty reported that, in their opinion, St. Thomas does not have a good system for determining pay increases. Staff indicated that there is a need for more communication regarding the compensation system, salary ranges and promotion as it relates to compensation.

The data showed that most faculty and staff are satisfied with their fringe benefits, with the exception of non-exempt staff. The non-exempt staff feel they are not treated equitably with regard to their pension benefits. The Task Force was pleased to learn that this situation was rectified by action of the Board of Trustees at its meeting in November of this year.

Respondents indicated an interest in having the University explore work/family issues such as child care and flex-time. Since then several proposals have been presented some of which have been implemented, such as the Family Emergency/Parental Leave Policy, the new employee assistance program and the paid leave time option for non-exempt staff have been implemented.

The question of a child care facility remains a high priority for both employees and students. The Task Force feels strongly that this question should be resolved as soon as possible. In addition, flex-time options should be fully explored.

Only 35% of the respondents felt there were ample opportunities for advancement at the University. The difference between faculty and staff respondents in this regard is significant. Fifty-three percent of faculty responded affirmatively on this item while only 26% of the staff did so.
The difference between men and women on this point is also interesting. A large response difference occurred between female and male faculty in regard to the perception about opportunities for advancement. Only forty-nine percent of women faculty responded affirmatively to this item compared to 56% of men on the faculty.

The response difference between men and women staff is much less significant since both view the opportunities for advancement rather negatively. Twenty-six percent of the women staff and 29% of the men responded affirmatively to this item.

Some staff reported dissatisfaction with the current promotion policies while others indicated they did not know what the promotion policies were.

A number of positive changes have occurred since the survey was done which address some of the concerns expressed by respondents with regard to the issues raised in this section. The HAY job ranking system for classifying positions is being communicated university-wide through a series of presentations. Information regarding to whom and on what basis equity adjustments have been made is also being communicated to supervisors for their employees. Proposals for pay increases are now communicated directly to department heads to be shared by them with their staff. Additionally, the evaluation system for staff has been changed to the new Individual Objective and Development Plan (IODP). It has also been recommended that this system be reviewed to determine whether modifications are needed.

A special committee has been formed to address staff merit awards. This new merit award nomination program will also be reviewed after two years.

c. Allocation of Work Assignments and Resources

Concern regarding equity in resources, participation in departmental decisions and the allocation of work assignments was indicated. The manner in which male faculty/staff and female faculty/staff viewed allocation of job assignments was significantly different. While only 8.7% of the male staff felt job assignments were unfairly allocated, 21.3% of female staff reported these opinions. Faculty showed a similar difference of opinion with 3.5% of male faculty perceiving unfair task allocation, in comparison to 22% of female faculty.
There were significant differences among the various groups of respondents with regard to the equitable allocation of secretarial/support services, travel money, office space/equipment, work assignments/opportunities for developing skills needed for promotion and release time for attending professional development workshops/seminars. However, in every category women report feeling that they are treated significantly less fairly than men.

Staff feel more inequity than faculty.

d. Job Performance and Involvement

In general, faculty and staff are concerned about not having a voice in decisions, lacking accurate information, working with insufficient staff support to accomplish goals and being expected to do more with less. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents agreed that excellent performance of faculty/staff is expected. However, only 69% believe that the information they require to complete their work is readily available and only 66% believe the information is complete with one-quarter of them believing that available information is inaccurate and difficult to obtain. Further adding to the potential frustration, 57% of staff and 45% of faculty indicated there are not enough staff members to complete the work of the department. While this could reflect historical concerns regarding a potential hiring freeze, there clearly is cause for concern.

Among respondents, 25% believe the University is poorly managed and 34% report feeling uninvolved in departmental decision-making. While most staff felt their supervisors were competent and reported a positive working relationship with them, there are some signs of dissatisfaction. One-third of the staff respondents indicated that their supervisors do not tell them where they stand. One-quarter of the respondents believe that their supervisors are difficult to please, poor planners, do not provide enough supervision and do not treat everyone they supervise fairly.

Staff respondents indicated their desire for a 360-degree evaluation system which would permit them to have some input into the performance evaluation of colleagues and supervisors.
C. Conclusion

Although the survey raised many other issues regarding the workplace environment, the Task Force tried to focus on those areas which it considers to be most critical and most in need of attention.
IV. CONCLUSION TO THE REPORT

The Task Force sees this report as part of the university’s on-going effort to create a more inclusive community. It is their hope that the report will serve as a catalyst for constructive dialogue about the issues raised herein.

Some members of the community may see this report as not having taken a strong enough stand against things which they feel must be challenged and changed. Others will feel it is too negative and unduly critical - not giving sufficient recognition to the efforts that have been made to foster positive change in the campus climate, especially for women and persons of color. The Task Force hopes that most will see it as a tool for improving the environment where we study and work.

Although the focus of the report has been to highlight the main problem areas in the campus climate, the Task Force does not wish to overlook or minimize the significant progress that has been made in improving the environment, especially with regard to diversity and gender. For example, all of the following have contributed to the betterment of the campus:

- the Diverse Voices in the Classroom Faculty Development Program
- the student organization HANA
- the support group for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Students
- the Teaching Against Racism faculty initiative
- the Commitment to Diversity group
- the Multi-cultural Steering Committee
- the Luann Dummer Center for Women
- the Controversial Issues Forums
- the position of Director of Diversity Initiatives
- the Staff Council.
V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The Task Force offers the following recommendations and strategies for implementation to the university community. They have been presented to the Provost and the President for their review and appropriate action.

These recommendations do not address all of the issues of climate, nor do they propose solutions for all of the problems as we see them. However, it was the intention of the group to point out areas of significant concern and to suggest ways that we, as individuals and as a community, might begin to work together to improve the environment of the institution in a spirit of mutual respect and support.

A. Transformation of the Classroom Climate

Recommendation: To support faculty initiatives to explore diversity issues in the classroom by providing material which reflects a broader spectrum of cultural experiences and by engaging students in constructive dialogue about issues related to diversity. The Task Force recommends the following strategies for implementing this recommendation:

- Promote and continue to fund the Teaching Against Racism initiative begun by faculty during the 1996 spring semester.

- Provide opportunities for faculty to learn how to bring diversity into their courses, not as an "add on", but as an integral part of their courses.

- Provide opportunities for faculty to begin to transform their approach to their disciplines and to redefine the body of material they bring to their students.

- Provide resources to assist faculty (undergraduate and graduate) in identifying suitable materials by/about women and minorities and developing appropriate ways of incorporating them into programs/courses.

- Create an environment where faculty and students will be encouraged and assisted to be more open to diversity, especially when this means moving beyond one's comfort zone.

- Continue to support the Diverse Voices in the Classroom Program sponsored by the Office of Faculty Development.

- Refrain from expecting students of color to bear the main responsibility for addressing difficult situations/issues regarding
race and/or ethnicity, especially in the classroom. (This might also apply to issues regarding gender when one or the other gender is underrepresented in a classroom.)

- Develop a mechanism for handling complaints about inappropriate or discriminatory comments or behavior in the academic arena.

- Use service learning projects as additional opportunities to explore and to learn the value of diversity.

- Continue to support the implementation of the undergraduate curriculum diversity requirement and develop strategies to assess the effectiveness of this requirement.

- Recognize and reward faculty who foster an appreciation of diversity in the classroom and academic administrators who encourage faculty to do so.

B. Dialogue on Diversity

**Recommendation:** To create an environment and opportunities which promote dialogue about issues related to diversity on campus. The Task Force recommends the following strategies for implementing this recommendation:

- Provide safe places where issues of diversity can be discussed and questions raised with candor and civility in a spirit of mutual trust.

- Strengthen the focus on diversity during the orientation programs for new graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and staff.

- Develop a plan to involve current faculty and staff in diversity awareness training. Create a list of possible speakers and resource materials to be used by departments for this purpose.

- Create a web page listing university events and special resources related to diversity. (When the coordinated calendar is created, events related to diversity could be given a special code or identifying feature.)

- Identify potential speakers who would represent greater diversity to be used by those planning such events as Town and Gown, commencement and special seminars or lectures.
- Establish and fund an annual lecture series devoted to diversity issues modeled on the Luann Dummer Lecture Series. A university-wide competition could be used to select a name for the series.

- Create a series of forums designed to encourage the exchange of ideas on issues related to diversity in a non-threatening environment of mutual respect and support. [In progress]

- Recognize and reward those who make a special contribution to fostering an understanding of and appreciation for diversity on campus.

- Require that supervisors foster diversity by creating a work environment in their department which is supportive of diversity.

C Institutional Commitment to Diversity

**Recommendation:** To demonstrate the University's commitment to diversity as a Catholic institution which is called to foster respect for all individuals and for all cultures. The Task Force recommends the following strategies for implementing this recommendation:

- Seek opportunities to highlight the link between the university's Catholic identity and its commitment to diversity.

- Continue to increase the number of students, faculty and staff of color and to provide the necessary support services and environment needed for their retention.

- Use the President's Academic Convocation, the University Opening Celebration and the Malevich Leadership Conference to address the importance of diversity in a Catholic university in general and at St. Thomas specifically. (This was done in fall, 1996)

- Recommend that the status of the Board of Trustees Committee on Institutional Diversity be changed from that of an ad hoc to a standing committee.

- Recommend that efforts to encourage and foster diversity be a part of departmental goals for faculty and staff and promote individual accountability with regard to diversity.

- Increase support for institutional diversity efforts such as the Commitment to Diversity group and the Multi-cultural Steering Committee and HANA with special financial and human resources.
- Provide campus-wide support for students of color - over and above those offered through the Office of Multi-cultural Student Services in order to improve the institutional climate for these students.

- Provide a "user friendly" report annually on the University's Affirmative action goals for the year and on the progress made toward achieving the previous year's goals.

- Explore ways in which to better incorporate students with disabilities into the campus community and continue efforts to improve accessibility.

- Implement the following with regard to sexual harassment/violence:
  
  - Review the current policies and procedures to assess their effectiveness, especially with regard to referrals (In process)

  - Establish a regular process for informing/reminding the campus community about university policies and procedures (The training for new employees is in place. There is a component in the undergraduate orientation program which deals with these issues. However, there is no regular procedure for informing graduate students in all programs. There is still work to be done in the area of reminding current employees and students about the policies and procedures.)

  - Review the training with regard to dealing with victims of sexual harassment/violence for those in critical positions, e.g. Resident Assistants, Security Officers, Student Escorts as a preventive measure.

- Strengthen education and counseling programs dealing with eating disorders for women resident students and for the residence hall staff.
D. Improvement of the workplace environment at the University

Recommendation: To improve morale by addressing faculty/staff concerns about work-related policies and the workplace environment at the University. The Task Force recommends the following strategies for implementing this recommendation:

- Request that supervisors/managers allow members of their staffs to take an appropriate amount of time for professional and/or job skill development.

- Provide leadership/management training for supervisors/managers, especially in the areas of coaching, performance evaluation and team building.

- Provide a forum where exempt staff may discuss issues of special interest/concern to them and formulate recommendations for consideration by the administration. The monthly Administrators Meeting sponsored by the Provost might be revised to meet this need.

- Explore ways to provide for representation of the various categories of exempt staff on university committees.

- Reduce the number of employees required to work late night shifts by exploring ways to allow for the work normally done at night to be done on day and evening shifts or by using creative scheduling to allow for more interaction among these workers and other members of the community.

- Publish the exempt and hourly compensation pay range structure.

- Require Vice Presidents to review the current allocation of resources for professional development, travel and secretarial support among and within their various departments in order to ensure equitable and consistent funding for these areas.

- Continue to review faculty/staff salary equity concerns and report annually on progress made in this regard.

- Implement the recommendations of the Technology Task Force to ensure that faculty and staff have adequate equipment, training and technical support to carry out their responsibilities in a timely and effective manner. (In process)

- Make a commitment to addressing “work and family“ issues by providing a more supportive work environment which permits
such things as flexible working hours and telecommuting when appropriate. (In process in some departments)

- Encourage the establishment of more matrix type cross-functional teams to foster collaboration among departments and provide better service to students and colleagues.

- Sponsor a community appreciation event or day for faculty and staff in the spring of the year to thank them for service rendered during the academic year. (This would be distinct from the current Staff Appreciation Day which is geared chiefly to non-exempt staff and from the late summer Community Day which is used for discussion of issues of concern or interest to the community.)

E. Improvement of the general climate for all members of the University Community

Recommendation: To create a more welcoming and supportive environment for all who study, work or visit here. The Task Force recommend the following strategies for implementing this recommendation:

- Establish a child care center to serve students, faculty and staff

- Address parking concerns of faculty, staff and students

- Improve campus signage to make the campus more user-friendly for new students, new employees and visitors.

- Centralize scheduling of campus events and the publicity about them. (In process)

- Recommend the use of varied (or, when possible, repeated) scheduling for lecture series, film series, etc. in order to permit a broader spectrum of the university community to attend on a more regular basis. This is especially important for part-time and evening students and faculty.

- Conduct another Climate Survey in three years (1998) to assess institutional progress toward addressing on-going concerns and to identify emerging problems.
VI. FINAL COMMENTS

It is the intention of the Task Force that this report be shared with the university community and that:

- these recommendations be implemented in a timely and coordinated manner;

- that provision be made for assigning responsibility for implementing the recommendations and for monitoring the progress of the implementation; and

- that regular reports be given to the community on the progress of the implementation process.

Questions and comments on the report are welcomed by members of the Task Force.

Dave Baker
Linda Halverson
Jeannine Harff
Randy Herman
Sharon Howell
Ann Johnson
Jeanmarie Keim
Pauline Lambert, Chair
Erica Nakahodo
Greg Roberts
Al Sickbert
Colleen Striegel
Ronda Willhardt