

April 21, 2023

Campus Climate Assessment Initiative Leadership Team

Kaamilyah Abdullah-Span, <i>Chair</i>	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Nizam Arain	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Lorenzo Baber	College of Education
Domonic Cobb	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Keely Dugan	College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Psychology
Linell Edwards	Office of the Provost
Angela Reggans	Illinois Human Resources
Elizabeth Tsukahara	Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Maryalice Wu	Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Dear Colleagues:

Better understanding an organization's climate is key to making important structural changes that will help assure that all members of the university community feel respected and valued. The university made this a priority in its strategic plan, "The Next 150," by charging the campus to conduct climate surveys regularly "to educate and improve the campus community" with the goal of identifying "a path forward to respect diverse groups, develop educational strategies to increase knowledge about different cultures, and create a campus that celebrates our diverse university and community." Illinois last conducted a campuswide climate survey in 2011. To adhere to good practice and the directives established in the strategic plan, we will conduct a campuswide climate assessment during the 2023-2024 academic year that will include Illinois faculty, staff, and students.

The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion will lead this effort in partnership with the Office of the Provost, Illinois Human Resources, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Illinois is joining the University of Minnesota and Rutgers University in using the climate survey that the University of Michigan has used for several years. This collaboration will allow Illinois to compare our climate with three peer institutions (including University of Michigan). We will use a third-party firm to develop and securely administer the survey. The firm will analyze respondent data and provide the campus with the results.

The campus has charged a steering committee (see letter attached) to provide oversight of the campus climate work, provide input on the institutional agreement, and work with the third-party firm. We intend to launch the survey in fall 2023, and it is critical that we engage the campus using a holistic communication strategy and with transparency from pre-assessment to post-assessment. We want to achieve maximum participation and ensure effective use and implementation of the survey data once received.

This Leadership Team is charged with the following:

- Assist with identifying members for each working group and define the working groups' responsibilities and respective timelines.
- Provide leadership and support for institutional involvement in the campus climate process and implementation.
- Develop recommendations and implementation plans for the campus, colleges, and relevant administrative units based on survey results.
- Ensure all working groups deliver high-quality recommendations.
- Determine the frequency of conducting the climate survey and identify baseline data to use for future surveys and by which to measure institutional progress.
- Conduct a post-survey review of processes and develop protocols for future climate assessments.

There will be four working groups embedded into the Leadership team: communication, faculty and staff, students, and assessment. The communication group will focus on the communication strategy before the survey launches, while it is active, and what and how to share the survey results with the campus. The faculty and staff and student-focused working groups will identify approaches to increasing faculty, staff, and student participation on the survey and develop data-driven action and accountability plans to share with relevant constituent groups (e.g., deans, unit executive officers, etc.) based on the survey results. The assessment group will determine how to best share the results and assist the campus and units with data interpretation. Appendix A provides detailed descriptions of each of the working groups.

The groups will be led by Elizabeth Tsukahara, Nizam Arain, Domonic Cobb, and Maryalice Wu, respectively. The group leads are part of the Leadership Team and will report their groups' progress, decisions, and planning to the Leadership Team to ensure high-quality recommendations.

Kaamilyah Abdullah-Span will chair the Leadership Team. The team will meet monthly beginning in May and continue through Fall 2024. The Leadership Team shall submit periodic status reports to the Steering Committee reflecting its progress and noting any challenges or barriers to its work. The Leadership Team will submit a final report in late Fall 2024.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to doing this important work for the campus.

Sincerely,

The Campus Climate Assessment Initiative Steering Committee

Cc:

Sean Garrick, Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Danita Brown Young, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

William Bernhard, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

Shari Mickey-Boggs, Senior Associate Chancellor for Human Resources

Susan Martinis, Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation



Appendix A: Working Groups' Roles and Responsibilities

Communication Working Group (Elizabeth Tsukahara, lead): The Communication Working Group's role is to develop a comprehensive communication plan to ready the campus for the climate survey, generate enthusiasm and awareness of the survey, communicate regular updates and the findings to the campus, and strategize with the other working groups to develop effective communication plans for their respective constituents. Specifically, the Communication Working Group will:

- Develop a communications plan to apprise the campus of the climate survey by identifying, presenting, and soliciting input from relevant stakeholder groups.
- Develop publicity materials that will facilitate awareness of the survey, deadlines, and reasons for participation.
- Create and maintain climate survey FAQs and respond to inquiries from stakeholders.
- Provide guidance and feedback to the other working groups in their efforts to communicate effectively with unit executive officers, faculty, staff, and students, including but not limited to: sharing effective communication strategies for communicating to constituent groups, developing communication templates and messages in coordination with working groups.
- Provide message points and/or communication templates for faculty, staff, and students to communicate survey-related information to their communities throughout the process (i.e., informing and encouraging participation prior to the survey launch, reminders while survey is live, and sharing survey results and action plan to departments).
- Provide guidance for communication related to implementing recommendations and preparing for the next campus climate survey.

Faculty and Staff Working Group (Nizam Arain, lead): The Faculty and Staff Working Group's role is to facilitate and encourage faculty and staff's participation in the survey, share survey results with academic and administrative units, and assist units with responding to the survey data using actionable and measurable strategies. Specifically, the Faculty and Staff Working Group will:

- Discuss survey results with unit leaders (including but not limited to unit executive officers, senior diversity leaders, DEI committee chairs) and provide guidance around understanding the results, formally responding to the findings, and developing an action plan.
- Develop supports to assist units with developing a response and action plan, including but not limited to timelines, personnel/committees responsible for implementation, and accountability structures.
- In consultation with the Communications Working Group, identify opportunities to share findings and action items with faculty and staff groups.
- Create opportunities for staff and faculty to reflect on the results and to offer feedback on the recommendations, including but not limited to town hall discussions and focus group/listening sessions.
- Identify and disseminate opportunities for faculty and staff to get involved with campus implementation plan.

Student Working Group (Domonic Cobb, lead): The Student Working Group's role is to facilitate and encourage undergraduate and graduate students' participation, to solicit input from undergraduate and graduate students at various stages of the climate assessment process (e.g., developing



recommendations), and to share findings with the campus community. Specifically, the Student Working Group will:

- Provide guidance to the Communications Working Group on communication best practices to amplify outreach and participation of undergraduate and graduate students.
- Determine and facilitate engagement opportunities for sharing survey results with the student body.
- Create opportunities for students to offer feedback on proposed recommendations.
- Identify opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to get involved in the campus' implementation plan.

Assessment Working Group (Maryalice Wu, lead): The Assessment Working Group's role is to assist with data interpretation and usage and provide guidelines for using survey data. Specifically, the Assessment Working Group will:

- In collaboration with other working groups, identify strategies for sharing data in ways that maximize consumption and understanding.
- Develop data visualization tools to represent the data clearly and concisely (e.g., data dashboard, charts, infographic) and enable interaction with the data.
- Develop data sharing guidelines and procedures for faculty to have access to the data for research.
- Determine data de-identification needs and applicable processes.
- Assist colleges and administrative units with interpreting unit-specific data in collaboration with the Faculty and Staff Working Group.

