

**Assessing the Academic Work Environment for Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty
at the University of Michigan in 2023:
Gender, Race, and Rank in University-Related Climate**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report marks the fifth study of campus climate at The University of Michigan (U-M) that the ADVANCE Program has conducted since 2001. It provides an opportunity for us to learn how the climate at the university was experienced by different groups of faculty. Since our beginning, the ADVANCE team has engaged with U-M faculty and academic leaders to help us realize the vision that unites us all: the development of a just and equitable university environment where everyone can thrive and do their best work.

Our goal for the current climate study was to observe how faculty experience their working environments at U-M. Since the last climate assessment in 2017, we have collectively experienced a worldwide pandemic. Although university activity has mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels, the overall impact of the pandemic on faculty and the resulting U-M campus shutdown is not yet fully understood. This climate assessment was administered three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a few months into Winter 2023.

This study examined faculty experiences using more inclusive demographic data through variables that were self-reported. New questions provide new learning opportunities regarding faculty workload, perceived workload equity, mentoring received from other faculty, and codeswitching.¹

Across the previous four waves of ADVANCE's faculty climate study, we found that white men experience a significantly better climate than women or faculty of color, and especially women of color. The main differences were: disparaging comments from faculty about women, disparaging comments from faculty about race-ethnicity, experiences of unwanted or uninvited sexual attention, gender discrimination and racial discrimination. Not all items were significantly different and there have been incremental improvements on some measures in some years.

In winter 2023, we invited all tenure-track faculty, research-track faculty, clinical-track faculty, and lecturers with paid appointments at the Ann Arbor campus, including Michigan Medicine, to participate in a climate survey ($N = 7,164$) and 37% responded ($N = 2,623$). This initial report focuses on the evaluation of the general campus climate experiences of tenure-track faculty (41% response rate). We assessed differences in tenure-track faculty experiences across four gender/race-ethnicity groups (i.e., BIPOC+² women, BIPOC+ men, white women, white men) and across faculty rank (i.e., assistant professor,

¹ Codeswitching refers to the practice of adjusting oneself presentation by mirroring the norms, behaviors, and attributes of the dominant group (i.e., white people) in specific contexts.

² Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) were faculty who identified as historically Underrepresented Minority and Asian/Asian American. The "+" signifies the addition of Arab/Middle Eastern/North Africans into this group.

associate professor, professor). Any references to significant differences or group differences were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

The underlying assumption of this report was that aggregate data about difficulties faced by all or some faculty at the U-M will help us target intervention efforts to improve their circumstances and assess how well prior efforts were working overall. Aggregate data can only provide a picture of an overall group—that picture may, in fact, not reflect the lived experiences of a given individual or unit. This study provides a picture, in broad strokes, of our faculty across many different academic units and individual characteristics. To target areas of opportunities that will improve campus climate for faculty members, recommendations and resources have also been compiled based on the results of this survey.

FINDINGS

INTERSECTION OF GENDER/RACE-ETHNICITY

As noted above, we described overall differences by gender/race-ethnicity intersectional groups (i.e., BIPOC+ women, BIPOC+ men, white women, white men) as well as rank (i.e., assistant professor, associate professor, professor). We examined differences across these groups within this 2023 wave.

One aspect of the University's climate assessment explored how groups were discussed. Women (both BIPOC+ and white women) heard more disparaging comments by faculty about women than men (both BIPOC+ men and white men). BIPOC+ women overheard the greatest number of disparaging comments from faculty about racial-ethnic minorities. BIPOC+ men and white women were the second highest in hearing disparaging comments about racial-ethnic minorities, hearing them more frequently from faculty than white men. White men heard the fewest disparaging comments about racial-ethnic minorities. Further analyses showed that white men reported overhearing the least number of disparaging comments by faculty about people from other countries.

Overall, 55% of faculty reported having no experiences of discrimination in the last 12 months. White men were the least likely to report experiencing discrimination, than to not experience discrimination at all. BIPOC+ women were more likely than white women to report experiencing discrimination. Women (both BIPOC+ and white) were more likely than men (both BIPOC+ and white) to experience unwanted and uninvited sexual attention, than to not experience these behaviors.

Codeswitching is the practice of adjusting your self-presentation by mirroring the norms of the dominant group to experience greater acceptance and more positive treatment. Overall, faculty reported they seldom engaged in code switching. BIPOC+ women were the most likely to engage in codeswitching behaviors. BIPOC+ men and white women were more likely to engage in codeswitching when compared to white men. White men were the least likely to engage in these behaviors.

With regard to satisfaction with current position, on average, faculty were mostly satisfied with their current position at U-M. When we examined race-ethnicity and gender differences, BIPOC+ women were the least satisfied with their current position at the university when compared to white men. BIPOC+ women were more concerned for their physical health on campus when compared to men (both BIPOC+

men and white men). White women were more concerned for their physical health than white men. BIPOC+ women were the most concerned for their physical safety. BIPOC+ men and white women were more concerned for their physical safety when compared to white men. White men were the least concerned about their physical safety.

White men perceived being valued the most for their teaching and mentorship by members of their department, more than BIPOC+ faculty (both women and men).

There were no gender/race-ethnicity differences in the frequency of mentorship received. White men were the least likely to indicate that they have a formal or informal mentor at U-M. Similarly, white men were the least likely to indicate that they have an informal mentor outside of U-M. White men were also less likely to indicate that they have a formal mentor outside of U-M, when compared to BIPOC+ faculty (both women and men).

In terms of service to the university, there were no gender/race-ethnicity differences in faculty's perceived importance of having a leadership role. BIPOC+ women reported serving on fewer committees than white women. BIPOC+ women also reported serving as committee chair less often than white faculty (both women and men). BIPOC+ women were the least likely to be asked to serve in a department chair or administrative role when compared to white faculty (both women and men). BIPOC+ men were less likely to be asked to serve in a department chair or administrative role as compared to white men.

Faculty were asked to report their hours spent on various types of work. Within the professional activities, BIPOC+ men reported spending the greatest amount of time per week on scholarship or creative activities, more than white faculty (both women and men). There were no gender/race-ethnicity group differences in the other professional activities (i.e., teaching or teaching-related activities, clinical work) or visible service (i.e., mentoring assigned students and postdocs, service to U-M, service to professional discipline and community). White women reported spending the greatest amount of time engaging in care work, a type of invisible service,³ spending more hours than white men.

BIPOC+ women reported spending the greatest amount of time engaging in identity-based activities, another type of invisible service. White men reported spending more time on personal/family matters than BIPOC+ faculty (both women and men).

On average, faculty indicated they were likely to stay at U-M. Although there were no differences in the number of outside offers received in the last two years, white women were the most likely to have an outside offer resulting in a change in their situation at U-M, when compared to white men.

TENURE-TRACK RANKS

Tenure-track faculty were further examined based on their rank (i.e., assistant professor, associate professor, professor). Most tenure-track faculty at U-M were hired as assistant professors without tenure

³ Required work to support an academic unit or its members that is not recognized or credited during tenure and promotion reviews.

(75%)⁴, and were promoted to associate professors with tenure within 5 to 7 years, depending on the discipline. Since there is not a set timeline for being promoted to professor, some faculty may choose to remain at the associate professor rank for the duration of their career.

Assistant professors have minimal service obligations, so that they can focus on building a strong case for tenure. Associate professors and professors are eligible for more service opportunities than assistant professors. Assistant professors were the least likely to participate in service and leadership (i.e., service, committee member, committee chair, leadership opportunities), less than associate professors and professors. Assistant professors were more likely to have mentors, more than associate professors and professors. Associate professors were more likely to have mentors than professors.

Professors reported overhearing the lowest number of disparaging comments made by faculty about racial-ethnic minorities, less than assistant professors and associate professors. Associate professors overheard more disparaging comments from faculty about people from other countries, hearing them more frequently than professors. There were no differences by rank in the number of disparaging comments heard about people with various identities (i.e., LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, religious groups).

Associate professors were the most likely to report experiencing discrimination, more than assistant professors and professors. Assistant professors had more experiences of unwanted and uninvited sexual attention, than professors.

Professors were the least likely to report using codeswitching behaviors. Assistant professors also spent the least amount of time on care work (i.e., providing emotional support to students and/or colleagues; unofficial activities to make the academy “a better place”) to improve the institution, more than both associate professors and professors.

Associate professors were more likely to report their experiences as negative; mostly related to satisfaction (i.e., overall campus/environment, scholarly engagement, being valued in the department, teaching load, campus climate or environment). Associate professors overheard the greatest number of disparaging comments by faculty about women. Associate professors spent the greatest amount of time on care work to improve the institution. Associate professors were the least likely to stay at U-M in the next two years.

Across rank, faculty reported spending similar amounts of time on teaching, clinical work, mentoring students and postdocs, special requests, and identity-based activities. Assistant professors spent the greatest number of hours on their scholarship or creative activities. When compared to professors, associate professors spent fewer hours on service to the university or department as well as to their professional discipline or community. Assistant professors spent more hours on personal or family time, more than professors.

⁴ [Time in Rank for Instructional Tenure-Track Associate Professors](#) (2023). ADVANCE Program.

IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report focused on the fifth wave of the ADVANCE faculty climate survey of tenure-track faculty. At U-M, there have been numerous individual efforts to improve the climate over the last two decades, which resulted in some trends towards a more positive climate. However, faculty experienced aspects of the overall university climate similarly to prior waves with white men continuing to experience the most positive climate at U-M.

GENDER/RACE-ETHNICITY

Taken together, BIPOC+ women reported more negative experiences than the other three faculty groups and white men were more likely to have better experiences than the other three intersectional groups on three outcomes: *disparaging comments about race-ethnicity from faculty, codeswitching, and physical safety*. BIPOC+ women experienced the highest number of disparaging comments from faculty (i.e., about women, racial-ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ and people from other countries), hearing them more frequently than white men.

Given these persistent negative experiences, it was not surprising that BIPOC+ women engaged in codeswitching behaviors significantly more often than other faculty. These faculty may have intended to change their behaviors to garner greater acceptance and more positive treatment. BIPOC+ women also had greatest concern about physical safety around their workplace (more than BIPOC+ men, white women, and white men).

In addition, BIPOC+ women worked with various types of mentors (e.g., formal at U-M, informal outside of U-M), yet BIPOC+ women continued to have the most negative experiences and lower satisfaction among faculty. BIPOC+ women served on fewer committees than white women and were less likely to chair committees when compared to white men and women. They were also less likely to be asked to serve in an academic leadership role than white men and white women. Although white men were the least likely to have mentors, there were no significant differences in the frequency of mentorship received between the gender/race-ethnicity groups.

TENURE-TRACK RANK

Many of the outcomes by rank were consistent with a general expectation of growing responsibility and leadership roles so that associate professors made more contributions to the department or program than assistant professors; and professors served more than associate professors.

These analyses also highlighted that associate professors were the least satisfied with many aspects of their tenure-track faculty responsibilities (i.e., their current position, opportunities for scholarly engagement, being valued in their department, teaching load, campus environment). Associate professors reported being the least likely to stay at U-M for the next two years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 2001, each wave of this ADVANCE climate study had similar findings: faculty at U-M experienced some aspects of climate differently. White men consistently experienced a more positive climate than women and faculty of color in areas such as hearing disparaging comments by faculty, various forms of discrimination, and sexual harassment. Although this pattern has varied slightly over the years, including some positive gains, the overall pattern of *white men consistently experiencing a more positive climate than women and faculty of color has held over the past twenty-two years*. Although this is typical in academia and it is not unique to U-M, active efforts must be made to address this issue at U-M.

Through the years, some schools, colleges, departments, and institutes embarked on various initiatives to improve the faculty climate. [CRLT programs and services](#) as well as ADVANCE include multiple efforts to address faculty climate (e.g., department climate assessments, [RISE](#) Committee, multiple workshops), which appear to have resulted in incremental change, not systemic change.

In an effort to address systemic climate challenges, the University boldly implemented [DEI 1.0](#) (AY 2017 through AY 2021), although the project's momentum was interrupted by the world-wide pandemic, COVID-19. It is important to note that the DEI initiative is the first university-wide, multi-level effort to address university climate and culture. Prior to that, efforts to improve the climate and culture were addressed by some academic units at various times. Due to the decentralized nature of the university, prior efforts were implemented in an inconsistent and unsystematic way. It is only recently that we have been able to capture systematic efforts to change climate and their implications. Moreover, these systematic issues take time to address and resolve in a cohesive sustainable way. The university is beginning to do the work to do so, and we hope this report can serve as a call to action for university leadership.

After an evaluation year and planning year, [DEI 2.0](#) launched for AY 2024. Most recently, the [Culture Journey](#) identified the University of Michigan's core values as: integrity, respect, inclusion, equity, diversity, and innovation. These values should inform shared expectations about the university community, including faculty climate.

After twenty-two years, it is time to consider innovative approaches to address these long-standing faculty climate experiences. Using a multifaceted approach that builds on the current initiatives, the university could create norms, expectations, assessments and ultimately, accountability for creating and supporting a more positive climate for all faculty.

Given how pervasive and constant our faculty climate inequities remain after twenty-two years, we must intentionally make different choices and take actions to create an equitable faculty climate.