

UC Berkeley Department of Astronomy Climate Survey
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Summary and Initial Response

As a result of a faculty retreat last year, the Astronomy Department requested that the Division of Equity and Inclusion help it conduct a survey on departmental sexual/gendered climate in Spring 2015. Those surveyed included current faculty, staff, and students, and retired faculty and departmental alumni whose email addresses were known (total requests sent: 332). The survey opened Feb. 4 and closed about 5 weeks later. Reminders were sent to non-respondents after 2 weeks, and additional efforts were made to garner female respondents (since their numbers are intrinsically lower). The number of male respondents was 60 and female 45 (total response rate 33%). Faculty had the highest response rate (60%); graduate students and staff responded at 45%; undergraduates were low (20%). The number of alumni (all positions) who responded was 39 (response rate 30%). These response rates are generally considered adequate for a survey of this nature (they are similar to the all-UC climate survey of 2013).

The faculty met to discuss the survey responses on May 18, soon after they became available. The top metrics are:

- 1) Sexual harassment/assault climate: almost 30% (F & M) disagreed with the statement it was healthy; 40%(F) and 50%(M) agreed it was healthy; 30%(F) and 20%(M) were neutral.
- 2) Climate on gendered issues: 45%(F) and 20%(M) disagreed with the statement it was healthy; 30%(F) and 55%(M) agreed it was healthy; 25%(F & M) were neutral.
- 3) 40% of female respondents and 10% of male respondents reported "some form of sexual/gendered discomfort" from the department.
- 4) Of the 11 women reporting "unwanted sexual attention or harassment", half of them said it happened more than once (4 said more than 6 times).
- 5) The top forms of unwanted behavior were "invasion of personal space," "uncomfortable staring or comments," and "communications that made me uncomfortable." There were no reports of "abuse of power" or overt sexual assault.
- 6) The primary source of discomfort was faculty members, and the usual site for incidents was in an office.

The faculty discussion identified two priority issues that the survey highlighted. One is the general departmental climate on gendered issues, and the second is the behavior of faculty members (primarily behind closed doors). That is not to say that other issues are not apparent or important and need addressing, but these two require strong and immediate attention. Our next step is the release of this summary and the survey data at an "all hands" departmental meeting on May 28 to start a more comprehensive conversation and plan of action. As a footnote, any textual survey responses that warranted attention by the Office for the Prevention

of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD, which includes Title IX) were forwarded to that office by the Division of Equity and Inclusion.

Some ideas were suggested at the May 18 meeting. These include:

- 1) Consideration of some form of mandatory training for faculty, staff, postdocs, and graduate students on gender issues, and a healthy and inclusive climate.
- 2) A facilitated workshop in the fall on those issues (a particular form of #1).
- 3) A faculty viewing and discussion of the UCOP Interactive Theater piece on climate issues in faculty meetings.
- 4) Posting of the departmental statement on collegiality and climate in labs and classrooms (it is now on our website). That includes information on how to report incidents (and whether they trigger investigations).
- 5) A mechanism to allow anonymous reports within the department on uncomfortable incidents, and a mechanism for collecting and acting on them. The purpose would be to accommodate the desires of the reporter if they were holding back on reporting because they did not wish to trigger a formal investigation, e.g. by OPHD. This will require careful thought.
- 6) Various means of regularly monitoring whether the climate is improving.
- 7) Increased awareness of information that helps ameliorate problematic behavior (for example, the rich set of material provided by the AAS: <http://www.aas.org/cswa/>).

We will add to these the wisdom generated at the departmental meeting on May 28; whether you could attend or not please send any additional thoughts or recommendations to Gibor (basri@berkeley.edu). We will work through the summer for an implementation of ideas this fall (or sooner).

We also recommend that other Astronomy/Astrophysics/Physics departments consider conducting surveys similar to the one we just undertook. The survey questions can be requested from the Division of Equity and Inclusion (vcei@berkeley.edu). At the moment there is not sufficient data to know how the results for the Berkeley department compare with “national norms,” since those have not been established with a set of questions as detailed as this survey contained. The Division of Equity and Inclusion also welcomes suggestions for other questions or survey methodology. We note that a survey of this sort raises very real questions of privacy and confidentiality, and that the community should work together to make this kind of information available in an appropriate way.