Title: Report of the CACBSP on the 2017 UM-Flint Climate Study
Authored by the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning (CACBSP)
Approved by the CACBSP on November 15, 2017

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Document:
● To document the CACBSP’s deliberations and recommendations resulting from the 2017 UM-Flint Climate Study.
● To advise Chancellor Borrego on possible opportunities to strengthen the campus based on matters related to faculty, staff, and students presented in the Climate Study.
● To provide committee input that can be applied to campus priorities that were established in the 2017 Strategic Plan, for reference by those tasked with implementing the strategic priorities.

Recommendations regarding Staff:
● Improve hiring, review, and advancement practices to ensure greater transparency and accountability.
● Encourage improved fairness and consistency in hiring and promotion.
● Develop more fair and/or strict practices in hiring to ensure the legitimacy of faculty/staff searches.
● Evaluation of faculty/staff satisfaction with HR should be explored.
● Improved clarity in dismissal procedures and remediation
● Develop regular opportunities for staff to receive low-stakes performance feedback.
● Create accountability for administrators who are supervising staff to ensure consistency and fairness.
● The Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty should investigate how the child-care services at UM-Flint compare to those throughout the institution and at peer institutions.

Recommendations regarding Students:
● Ensure inclusiveness at the Recreation Center could be addressed by staff on campus, and resources provided to ensure inclusive facilities.
● Provide multiple avenues for student support (financial and otherwise) should exist whenever possible.
● Information on student support should be provided more regularly and explicitly to faculty (such as what to do in case of homelessness).
● Provide additional resources for emergency funds.
● Increase opportunities for funding for students (scholarship, fellowships…).
● Improve access to information about complaint resolution through clearly articulated procedures.
● Increase satisfaction with complaint resolution.
● Investigate whether or not the university is equitably serving all of its students.

Recommendations regarding Faculty:
● Provide remedies for possible salary compression, such as re-examination of salary increases for promotion.
● Deviations from the standard merit salary program rate should be investigated for consistency and fairness between faculty across the campus.
● Exceptions to the standard merit salary program rate should follow agreed upon definitions of what constitutes an exception.
● Opportunities to improve compensation for faculty should be investigated to improve recruitment and retention of quality faculty.
Promotion and tenure standards and procedures across campus need to be improved for fairness/consistency and transparency.

Steps should be taken to determine if faculty are not progressing from Associate Professor to Professor in some units and why this might be occurring.

Increase access to bias/diversity training for faculty.

Women faculty disproportionately perceived themselves to be challenged by work-life balance concerns. More should be done to assess why this is the case and which remedies could be employed to improve circumstances for women faculty.
Brief History of the Climate Study:

A climate study (hereafter CS) was one of the goals advocated by the Women’s Commission, and was begun in 2014. It consisted of faculty, staff, and administrators who were appointed through procedures set up under former Chancellor Ruth Person. In investigating conditions for women on the UM-Flint campus the Women’s Commission determined that a climate study of relevance to broader groups, including minorities, for example, should be undertaken. An initiative was put in place to secure an external entity to oversee the climate study, which came to fruition under Chancellor Borrego’s leadership. Due to the broader scope of the climate study, Chancellor Borrego appointed a working group to collaborate with the external consultant, Dr. Rankin, in order to develop an appropriate survey tool for UM-Flint. With input from working group members a survey was developed. It was disseminated to faculty, staff, and students in the fall of 2016, with participants taking the survey at that time (hence, the results of the CS reflect perceptions of respondents during fall 2016). Dr. Rankin led evaluation of the study and presented the findings to the campus in May of 2017. Members of the working group also convened to remove most of the names of specific individuals cited in the comments of the CS. As such, the comments released in the CS to the campus community did not fully disclose instances in which specific administrators or staff were cited by respondents. A broader range of individuals (either in frequency or number) were therefore named in the CS than was actually shared with the campus in the public version. The study was released to the campus community in June of 2017. It was freely available to all faculty, staff, and students upon login, but was set not to be printable, downloadable, or reproducible, as per Dr. Rankin’s comments at the May presentation.

Purpose of the Report:

Following the release of the CS the CACBSP voted unanimously at its July 2017 meeting to review the document and discuss it, with the goal being to develop recommendations related to information found in the sections on staff, faculty, and students. The charge of the CACBSP is to advise the Chancellor, particularly in the areas of budget and strategic planning. As part of its responsibility to advise the Chancellor, it was felt that the CACBSP might be able to offer additional thoughts on the CS to complement those that would inevitably emerge from other groups, including the Women’s Commission.

The CACBSP intends for this document to capture its discussions and to offer a nuanced response to the CS, in a spirit of constructive progress. It must be noted that the CACBSP’s reflections and recommendations upon the CS are not intended to be comprehensive nor to be its final consideration of the issues presented in the CS. Rather, the recommendations represent a starting point for further discussion (they are not meant to provide comprehensive recommendations or speak to all of the issues noted in the report); they should not be interpreted as a mandate to the Chancellor or to other groups/individuals that might be mentioned in the report. Some initiative in response to the CS might also emerge from the faculty and/or their elected representatives across campus as time goes on.

General Approach to the Climate Study:

The CACBSP members began with a debate regarding how to proceed in response to the document. Several factors were important in shaping the conversation; these included the following:

1) It was noted in the May 2017 presentation that the CS includes an inherent bias (being self-selected participants), and that caution should be used in generalizing results in certain ways (having a total response rate of 17% due to the numbers of students who did not take the survey as compared to the size of the student population), but within specific demographics there was statistical significance, and some of the
perceptions documented in the CS deserved attention irrespective of the number of people who might have shared a given view. Dr. Rankin explains this in the report (p. 10) as follows: “For groups with response rates less than 30%, caution is recommended when generalizing the results to the entire constituent group.” The faculty tenure-track response rate was 73%, staff was 50%, and faculty non-tenure-track was 24%.

2) The CACBSP’s charge to advise the Chancellor was most relevant to writing a report because of the CS’s broad applicability to staff, students, and faculty, in both academic and non-academic sectors of the university. Faculty Council might look at the CS from the perspective of faculty, the Women’s Commission from the perspective of women and minorities, and other groups related to their spheres, but the CACBSP is uniquely positioned to address its relevance in a way that could be tied into future prioritization of resources, alignment with strategic planning, and more generally the Chancellor’s concern for the welfare of all participants in the campus community. In consultation with Chancellor Borrego, the CACBSP members chose to prioritize this work for the end of the summer and early fall, given the perceived importance of the conversations that the CS broached for the campus community.

3) The CACBSP members discussed the typical protocols surrounding campus climate studies, particularly at the University of Michigan. Vice-Chancellor for Business and Finance Mike Hague was able to confirm, based on prior experience and knowledge of climate studies within U of M, that climate studies are a routine part of auditing measures that are undertaken throughout the university for a variety of reasons. Although the CS was rather unusual for UM-Flint, being the first CS conducted campus-wide in decades, our Ann Arbor colleagues would not have found the exercise remarkable. Rather, climate studies routinely evaluate sectors of the Ann Arbor campus. What was perhaps unusual, however, is that due to the infrequency of these kinds of studies in UM-Flint history, Chancellor Borrego authorized the release of the study to include comments as well as quantitative results to the entire campus. This was carefully weighed by several parties, including the Working Group, Dr. Rankin, and Chancellor Borrego, since it is generally not typical to release survey comments from climate studies to campus participants when they are conducted on the Ann Arbor campus. In this case, transparency was therefore prioritized over typical dissemination methods for the institution.

4) It was observed in discussion that the types of problems noted in the CS seemed to reflect a long history of challenges in the areas noted. If the perceptions presented in the CS regarding hiring, Human Resources practices, transparency, and possible discrimination and bullying were indeed occurring, the impetus would have been in place and developing on our campus for a considerable time, and predating the efforts of the Women’s Commission to secure the CS.

5) It was noted that the data reported in the CS was relatively consistent with that in other climate studies held in other parts of U of M. In other words, the statistical data was not particularly remarkable for a component of U of M. The data also demonstrates that UM-Flint is within the national range of results on these types of studies. Comments in the study are not reflective of comments from the un-redacted report. A group of four faculty members from the original working group redacted some of the names mentioned in the comments before it was released to the campus community (according to a presentation given about the process at the Sept. 15, 2017 governing faculty meeting by one of those members). Names of some individuals were removed to preserve confidentiality, while some identifiers were left in the public report.

6) Discussion also addressed the challenges of relying on climate studies for factual information and to what extent this would impact the CACBSP’s review of the document. For example, while the survey allowed participants to express unsubstantiated claims, in many instances the perception of the existence of certain
types of problems should be taken as seriously as substantiated claims. This was especially important to the CACBSP’s consideration of its role in assisting the campus in looking at the issues raised in the CS.

**Staff Concerns and Recommendations:**

As a significant body of respondents in the CS, and one whose perceptions were evaluated in the approach to the data, staff concerns were carefully considered.

Evident in the CS is the perception among staff that favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism are often significant factors in advancement, searches, and hiring. Consequences noted for such problems in the CS include the perception that many individuals are not qualified for their jobs and are unable to contribute what is necessary to fulfill them. A recommendation was made that appropriate parties be encouraged to improve hiring, review, and advancement practices to ensure greater transparency and accountability (both for the groups/individuals involved and their supervisors) for such tasks. It is also recommended that appropriate parties be encouraged to improve fairness and consistency in hiring and promotion, so as to eliminate the perception that knowing the right people is what secures a promotion or position.

Related to the concerns raised by staff regarding unjust hires, searches, and advancement, some expressed that greater accountability is needed for practices through Human Resources. CACBSP considered a possible audit of HR, which at the time of this report was planned for the current year. Connected to the concerns regarding HR practices among staff was the perception that the outcomes for searches within the university were often determined before they began. Recommendations to resolve such concerns considered by CACBSP members included the suggestion that there should be more fair and/or strict practices in hiring to ensure the legitimacy of faculty and staff searches, which could be encouraged through appropriate parties (i.e. units, offices, and HR). Another recommendation is that HR should instate a system of review for faculty/staff experiences with HR, such as that done by ITS following rendering services to members of these groups. Evaluation of faculty/staff satisfaction with HR should be explored.

A perception of unstable job security (1/4 of staff who answer the survey fear losing their jobs) also seemed apparent among some staff members, roughly ½ of whom have considered leaving their jobs in the past year. CACBSP members discussed the rumors that have circulated surrounding staff dismissals, noting that in most instances the reasons behind dismissals may not be discussed with the campus community due to the privacy of the individual being dismissed. Data to substantiate the rumors of many dismissals was not readily evident. That being said, CACBSP members discussed the perception of increased dismissals and hiring freezes, as well as fears regarding job security. Staff members had the perception that performance evaluations and job descriptions are clear. Nevertheless, CACBSP recommends that improved clarity in dismissal procedures and remediation be sought where possible by appropriate parties. It is also recommended that appropriate parties develop regular opportunities for staff to receive low-stakes performance feedback. Accountability for administrators who are supervising staff might also benefit from strengthened procedures to ensure consistency and fairness.

A factor discussed in favorable working conditions for faculty and staff included the availability of child care. Affordable child care through an employer is often a central factor in equitable conditions for parents. However, the current discount for faculty and staff at ECDC is only 3%. It is recommended by CACBSP members that the Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty investigate and report to CACBSP and/or Faculty Council on how the child-care services at UM-Flint compare to those throughout the institution and at peer institutions.
Generally the CS shows that staff members are happy (70-80%) with their benefits and vacation time, but more often than not they noted wanting more competitive salaries. In addition, most felt that supervisors and co-workers provide help in jobs and professional development.

**Student Concerns and Recommendations:**

In the context of discussing inclusiveness on campus, the possible concerns of students in the LGBTQ community were discussed by the CACBSP, including the practicalities of using facilities and budgetary resources to move towards a more inclusive campus. In particular, it was noted that the Recreation Center is a big part of student experience and resources for students on this campus, but it has yet to provide a solution for transgender students, who may or may not be comfortable using the existing change-rooms/restrooms, which are based on binary gender identification. The CACBSP recommends that inclusiveness at the Recreation Center be addressed by staff on campus, and that resources be provided to ensure the facilities necessary for inclusiveness to be apparent.

The unique challenges of Flint and Genesee County students were also discussed, particularly with respect to financial hardship. Close to 80% of UM-Flint students work, 58% report experiencing various forms of financial hardship, 57% rely on loans, and 79% of all families whose children attend UM-Flint earn under $100,000 per year. It was noted that students at UM-Flint may face challenges in the areas of homelessness, for example, that might occur with greater frequency at Flint than at Dearborn or Ann Arbor. Understanding whether UM-Flint provides a welcoming environment for such students was discussed by CACBSP in the context of for support and/or financial assistance when our students are confronted with situations such as homelessness. The CACBSP recommends that multiple avenues for student support exist whenever possible, and that information be provided more regularly and explicitly to faculty, who often advise students in these situations as a part of academic advising. The CACBSP discussed at length the existing mechanisms for financial support, including the Financial Aid office and inquiries through appropriate offices. CACBSP advocates that information on what to do in case of homelessness be provided to students when they join the student body, and that this information be equally available to faculty advisors. Additional resources for emergency funds were also recommended (such as for units to develop on their own).

The CACBSP also discussed whether there are sufficient financial resources for students at UM-Flint. It was suggested that UM-Flint consider creating something akin to Kalamazoo’s ‘Kalamazoo Promise,’ (through which local students receive tuition support) although it might be cost prohibitive as it would require major donations or an endowment that could be sustained over a long period of time. Irrespective of this type of funding program, anything that increases student funding and decreases the amount that they have to work will increase graduation rates and give students a better chance at having less debt following graduation.

Another recommendation regarding students is that they need improved access to information about the resolution of complaints and access to guidance in such processes. Dissatisfaction with the process of complaint resolution could be improved, along with ensuring swifter resolutions through clearly articulated procedures. This is a matter that could be taken up by the Provost and AAAC.

On the issue of racial diversity in the student body, CACBSP members noted that on many issues notable differences based on race were not particularly evident in the CS. However, one area where a difference in respondents was noted is that students who identify as being from a racial minority group were statistically more likely to consider leaving the university. The CACBSP recommends that steps be taken to determine why this is the case and to answer the question as to whether or not the university is equitably serving all of its students.
Overall it is evident that students are often faced with inequitable access to information. Finding ways to improve student awareness of resources, and to distribute those resources equitably, is also recommended. This could be explored through Admissions or other appropriate offices.

One of the ways to ensure that students receive helpful and accurate information on a variety of topics (from emergency support through their unit to dispute resolution) is through academic advising, which students consistently cite as being beneficial to developing meaningful mentoring relationships with faculty in their disciplines. Proper resources for advisors and advisees continue to be important to student success.

**Faculty Concerns and Recommendations:**

Among the most significant revelations from the faculty responses was that a relatively high number of respondents have considered leaving the university for financial reasons. CACBSP members discussed the possibility that this issue, which impacts retention, is related to salary compression, and recommend that this issue be considered jointly by the CACBSP and Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty, along with consideration of whether the rates of salary adjustment for Associate Professor and Professor need to be revisited since they were first set uniformly for the campus under prior leadership [former Chancellor Juan Mestas]. Reasonable remedies for salary compression should be examined.

Another concern regarding the high number of faculty among respondents who would consider leaving for financial reasons is the sense of fairness surrounding compensation. One example discussed was that not all faculty are receiving the standard campus average from their unit for merit pay, which is set each year by the Regents. For example, some deans are setting program dispensation for the merit program at a rate lower than that received by the faculty in the rest of the campus. This practice was considered to be in conflict with the requirements of the merit program, which mandate that all units must abide by the merit program in order to avoid unfair disparities between the units. Moreover, variability was discussed as a practice that accelerates disparities in salaries between the units, when they are already uneven. CACBSP members recommend that deviations from the standard rate should be investigated for consistency and fairness between faculty across the campus. Exceptions to the standard rate should follow agreed upon definitions of what constitutes an exception.

The CACBSP recommends that the CESF continue its work in evaluating faculty compensation and status. In recent reports the CESF has focused heavily on faculty retention. Consideration of mechanisms for retention and keeping salaries competitive should continue to be evaluated, with the results being aligned with recommendations from CACBSP. It also recommends that options to improve compensation and address other areas of faculty concern be investigated in order to bolster recruitment and retention of quality faculty.

It was a concern among CACBSP members that over half of the faculty surveyed felt that promotion and tenure standards were not clear. The CACBSP recommends that promotion and tenure standards and procedures across campus need to be improved for fairness/consistency and transparency. This would need to be taken up by the Provost’s office in coordination with appropriate faculty governance groups.

Another finding that was considered is that faculty felt that they struggled to find the time and support to engage in high-level research, despite high demands for research in promotion and tenure. CACBSP recommends that research resources available to faculty be evaluated across the units (such as by the Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty, possibly in conjunction with CACBSP and/or AAAC),
and that the matter of time and support be more carefully considered as a matter of central importance to the campus’s academic reputation. CACBSP members also discussed the data available through the Office of Institutional Analysis that suggests that faculty in some units are struggling to progress through the ranks. In particular, there is an abnormally high number of faculty in CAS who seem to be stuck between Associate Professor and Professor. The rough institutional average for the number of faculty at different ranks is 30% at Assistant, 30% at Associate, and 40% at Professor. In UM-Flint CAS (comprising roughly 62% of the campus’s tenure-stream faculty), has 48% of faculty at Associate Professor rank, while only 22% are at Professor rank. Other notable differences include that, although a small unit, SEHS does not have any faculty at Professor rank, while SHPS and SON have a large number of tenure-track (pre-tenure) faculty, possibly due to a recent period of hiring. SOM most closely approximates the balance of faculty at the various ranks from the Ann Arbor campus. CACBSP recommends that steps be taken to determine if faculty are not progressing from Associate Professor to Professor in some units and why this might be occurring. Irrespective of the reasons for progression or lack thereof through the ranks, normative balances of authority within systems of shared governance in higher education require that there be enough faculty at the Professor rank to ensure adequate numbers of mentors for Associate Professors, the scholarly prestige of the campus, and vigorous participation of faculty in shared governance.

An equity issue was also noted by CACBSP members in that according to the CS women faculty disproportionately perceived themselves to be challenged by work-life balance concerns. The CACBSP recommends that more be done by appropriate parties to assess why this is the case and which remedies could be employed to improve circumstances for women faculty.

Lastly, roughly 72% of faculty who took the CS survey believed that diversity training was available and that it could help to improve the campus climate. CACBSP recommends that the openness to such training be explored, and opportunities for training be provided collaboratively through appropriate bodies.

**Conclusion:**

As a matter of practicality, and in order to use its efforts to make meaningful recommendations, CACBSP chose to focus on areas of possible opportunity in the climate study when considering what to discuss and include in this report. This expedience, which excluded lengthy consideration of perceptions that did not present an opportunity or challenge, must be understood in the context that the CS demonstrated that UM-Flint is not remarkable in its campus climate compared to national averages and within U of M. Furthermore, student and faculty satisfaction at UM-Flint is generally high. The observations discussed in this report were intended to highlight areas of opportunity for both short and long-term work on the campus climate. It must be noted that even the areas of opportunity for improvement, notably regarding consistent, fair, and merit-based hiring and advancement, the CS results point to very important strengths in the campus as whole. Our faculty and staff are clearly committed to the campus’s academic and social integrity. Research and expertise are quite plainly at the forefront of the faculty and staff’s professional interests. These opportunities for improvement, therefore, speak to the campus’s ongoing commitment to the success of its members.