



Diverse Learning Environments Survey: Variations in Student Experiences by Race/Ethnicity

The Student Affairs Information and Research Office (SAIRO) is the research and assessment office within UCLA’s Student Affairs organization. The mission of SAIRO is to support the learning and development of the whole student by providing reliable, timely and useful information about students and their experiences; by developing the capacity of student affairs and other stakeholders to collect, interpret, and utilize data to enhance the quality of students’ educational experience and environment; and by helping Student Affairs units assess and document the effectiveness of their programs and practices.

For more information or to submit a data request, please contact SAIRO at:
(310) 206-8470
E-mail: sairo@saonet.ucla.edu
www.sairo.ucla.edu

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Executive Summary

In the winter and spring quarters of 2011, UCLA Student Affairs administered the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey to better address aspects of diversity and climate on campus. The DLE captured information on a variety of student experiences and perspectives. In an effort to better address the needs of all students at UCLA, this report highlights the experiences of various racial/ethnic groups and their academic and social engagement, diversity-related activities, global skills, and perspectives on campus climate. Analysis considered differences in factor mean scores in comparison to the overall campus mean.

In comparison to the overall mean, results indicate the following differences:

- American Indian and African American/Black students reported greater experiences with discrimination and bias in comparison to the overall average. White students reported the lowest.
- Multi-racial and White students reported significantly higher perceptions of sense of belonging, while Asian students reported lower perceptions.
- White students were more likely to perceive UCLA as committed to diversity while African American/Black students were least likely to believe so.
- Hispanic and Asian students were more likely to report lower academic self-concepts.
- African American/Black and Hispanic students reported significantly higher scores on critical consciousness, social agency, and pluralistic orientation than their peers overall.

DLE Survey & Sample

The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA, stems from research indicating that optimizing diversity in the learning environment can facilitate achievement of key outcomes, including improving students' motivations for lifelong learning, competencies and skills for living in a diverse society, and student retention and success. UCLA participated in this national research effort to generate greater understanding of diversity, student learning, and student success both inside and outside of the classroom. The DLE was administered in the winter and spring quarters of 2011 as a census survey of all enrolled undergraduate students at UCLA. In all, 7,597 students responded to the survey, representing 30% of enrolled UCLA undergraduates.

In this analysis, students' race and ethnic group was coded differently from IPEDs procedures that prioritize Hispanic student identities and assign them to a multiracial category when students mark more than one racial group. Rather, these analyses prioritized students' American Indian and African American/Black student identities (see below for more detail). With this classification, in comparison to the

overall undergraduate population at the time, the sample slightly under represents Hispanic students but more accurately represents American Indian and African American/Black student populations. In all, there were 119 American Indian and 148 African American/Black respondents. Given the underrepresentation of American Indian and African American/Black student experiences in research and reporting, this categorization provides a unique opportunity to explore these students' experiences.

DLE Sample

	Percent	#
Race (n=4,962)		
American Indian	2%	119
African American/Black	2%	148
Hispanic	9%	669
Asian	30%	2,283
White	20%	1,536
Multiracial	3%	203
Gender (n=4,989)		
Male	37%	1,847
Female	63%	3,142
Year in School (n=7,461)		
First Year	17%	1,270
Second Year	20%	1,551
Third Year	31%	2,371
Fourth Year or More	32%	2,405
Entry Status (n=7,461)		
Direct Entry	76%	5,685
Transfer	24%	1,776
First Generation College Students (n=4,857)		
Yes	20%	952
No	80%	3,905

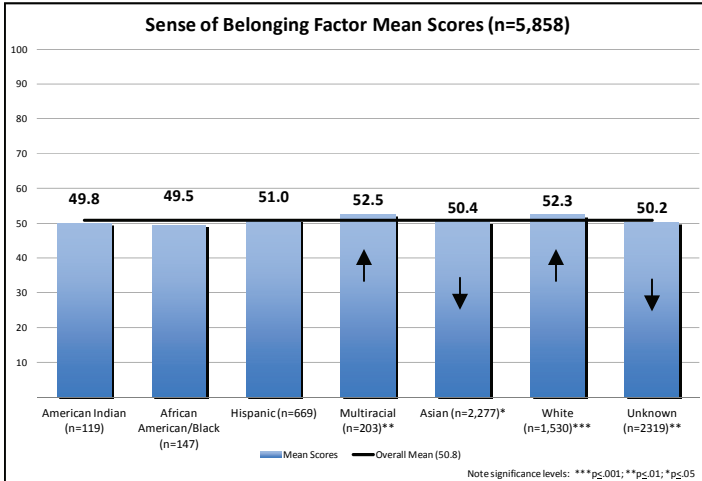
Overall Experiences of UCLA Students

In order to better understand students' experiences, HERI created factors of items that represent to broader themes in students' experiences, such as sense of belonging, validation, and discrimination. These factors were standardized to a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The reliability of these factors was also confirmed with the UCLA data. The DLE Survey Factor Variable list of all 18 factors and the items that make up each factor is included in Appendix I. This report describes the results of analyses comparing factor mean scores for each racial group in comparison to the overall mean. Student experiences are organized by four conceptual categories: 1) perceptions of campus climate, 2) engagement in academic and social activities, 3) participation in diversity-related activities, and 4) global perspectives and agency.

In these analyses, the standard IPEDs racial/ethnic categorization procedures generally utilized for institutional reporting were eschewed for a categorization that prioritized American Indian and African American/Black student identities in order to achieve sufficient cases for those groups to be meaningfully included in the analysis. Specifically, if students' marked American Indian or African American/Black they were categorized as such, rather than being included in the Hispanic or Multiracial categories defined by IPEDs. With this classification, the sample slightly under represents Hispanic students but more accurately represents American Indian and African American/Black student populations. Given the marginalization of American Indian and Black students and the limited ability to report on their experiences, this re-categorization provided an important opportunity to explore these students' experiences in more depth.

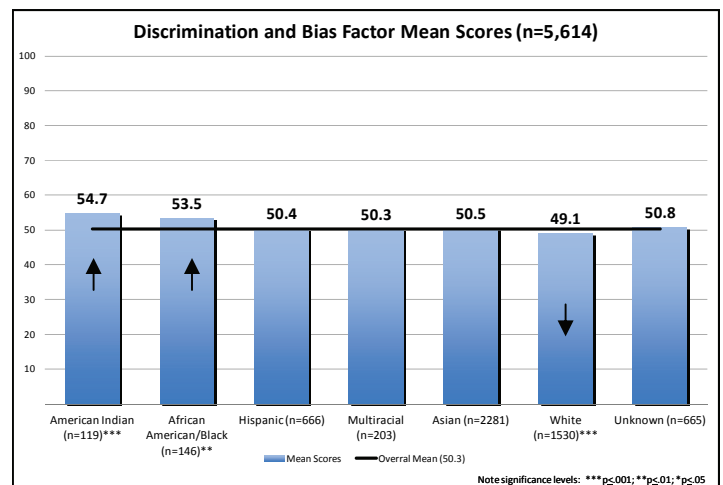
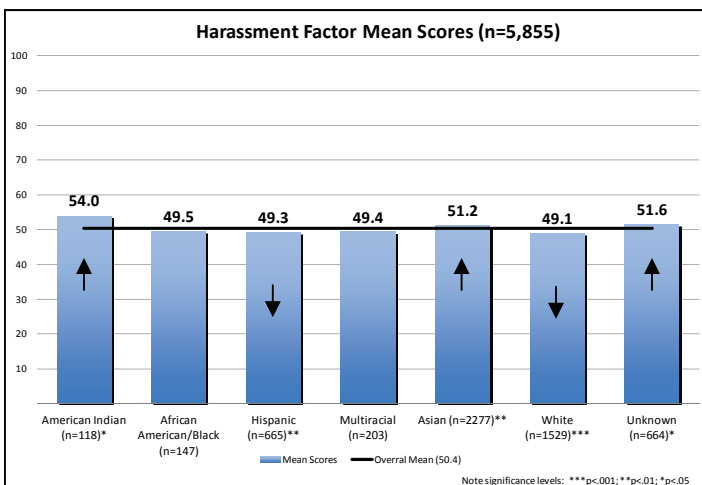
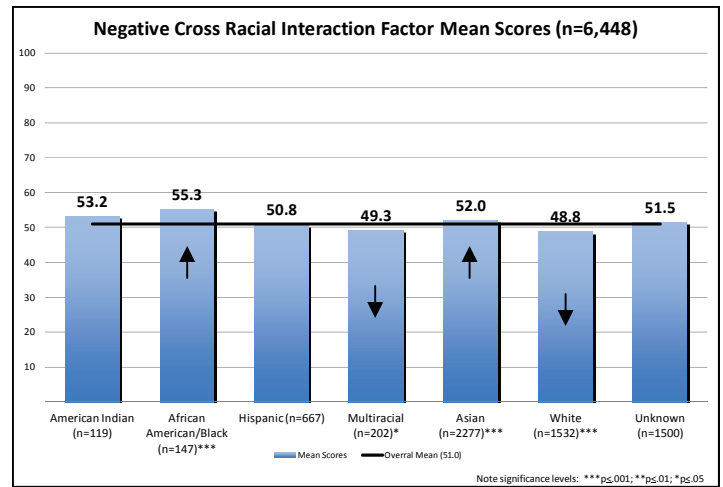
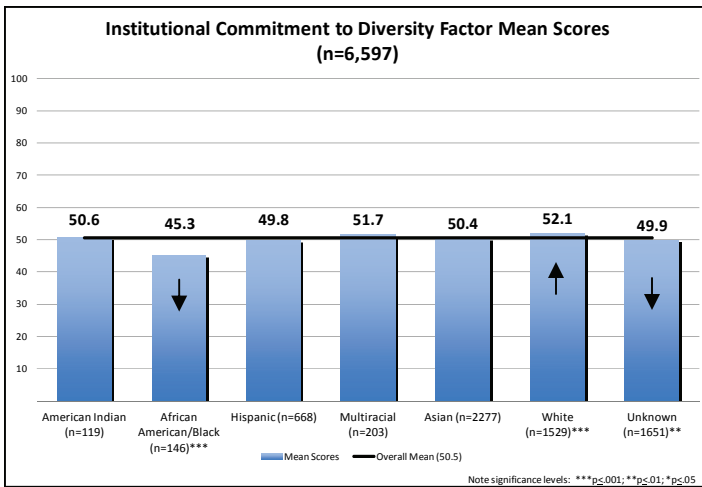
Perceptions of Campus Climate. Five factors were analyzed to gauge students' perceptions of campus climate. The mean scores disaggregated by race were compared to the overall mean to measure significant differences in the responses (as indicated by the number of asterisks). In summary,

- Multi-racial and White students reported significantly higher perceptions of sense of belonging, while Asian students reported lower perceptions.
- White students were more likely to perceive that UCLA had a strong commitment to diversity than other students. African American/Black students reported the lowest mean scores (45.3 vs. 50.3 overall).
- African American/Black and Asian students reported higher rates of experience with negative cross racial interactions (55.3 and 52.0 vs. 51.0).



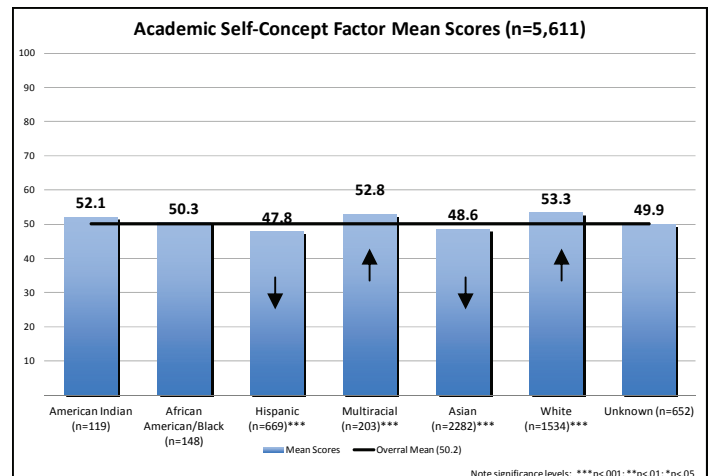
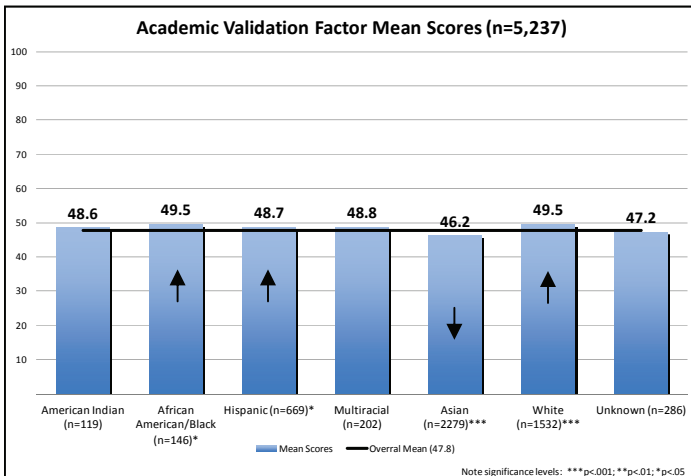
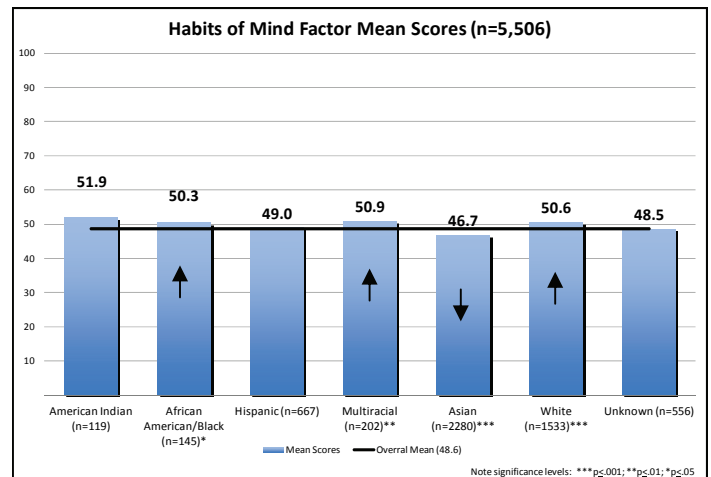
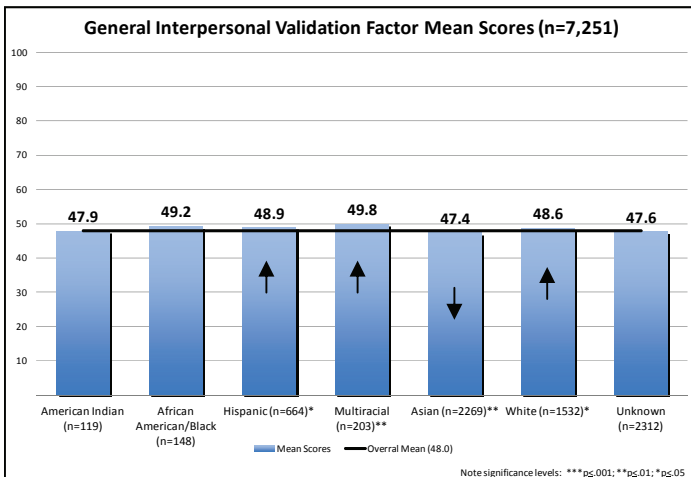
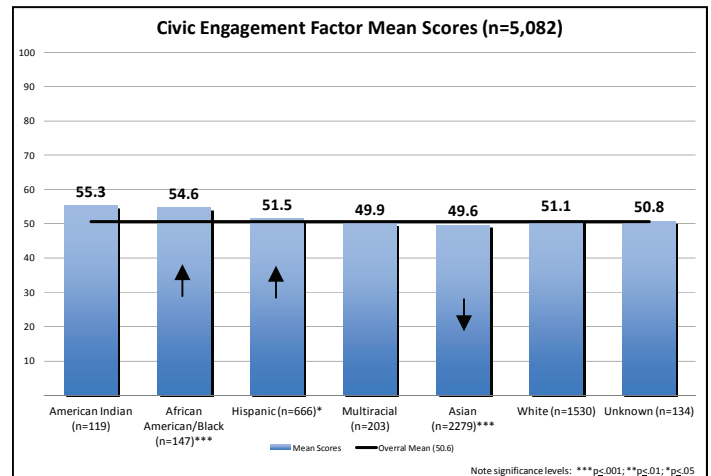
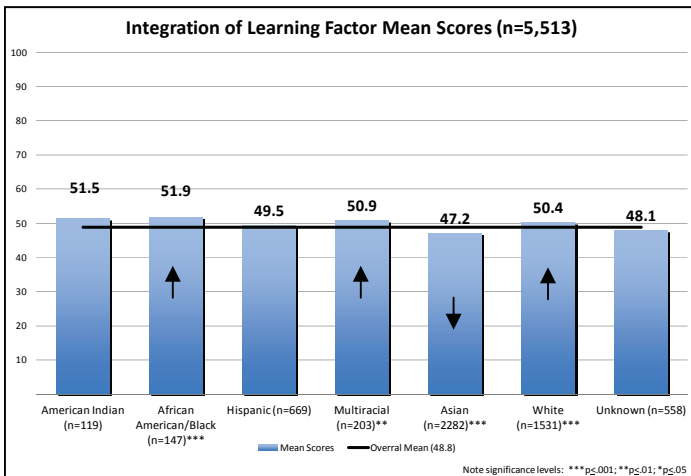
- American Indian and Asian students reported greater frequencies of harassment (54.0 and 51.2 vs. 50.4). Hispanic and White students reported significantly fewer experiences with harassment overall.

- American Indian and African American/Black students reported greater experiences with discrimination and bias in comparison to the overall average (54.7 and 53.5 vs. 50.3). White students reported the lowest frequency (49.1).



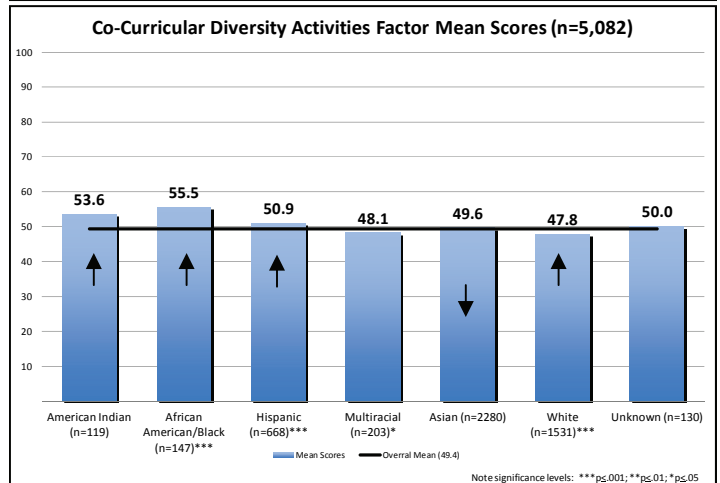
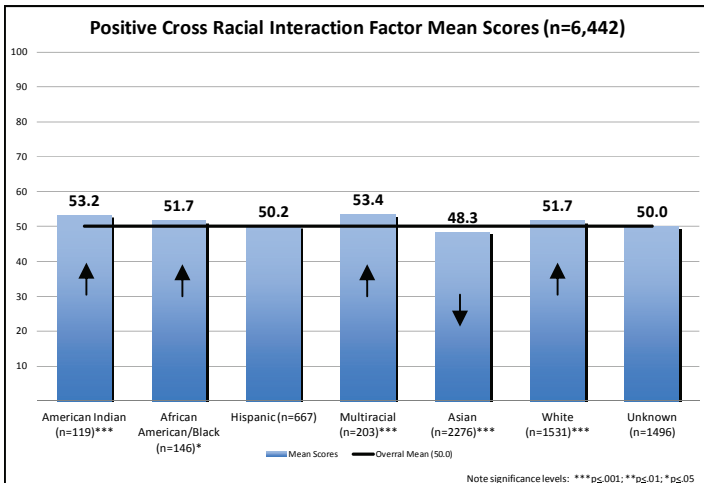
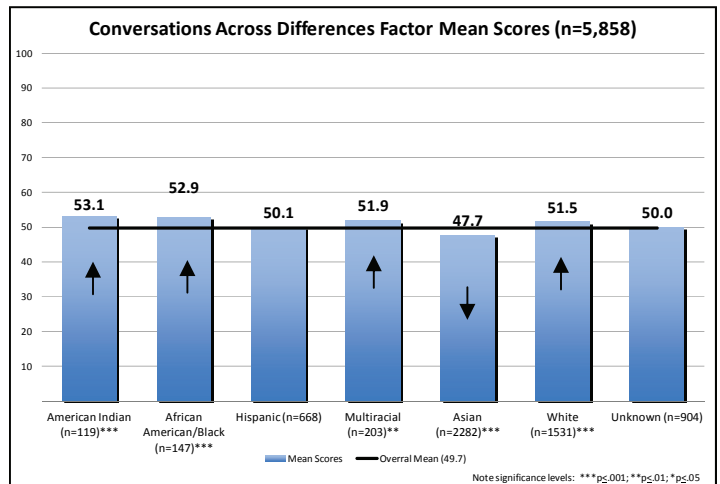
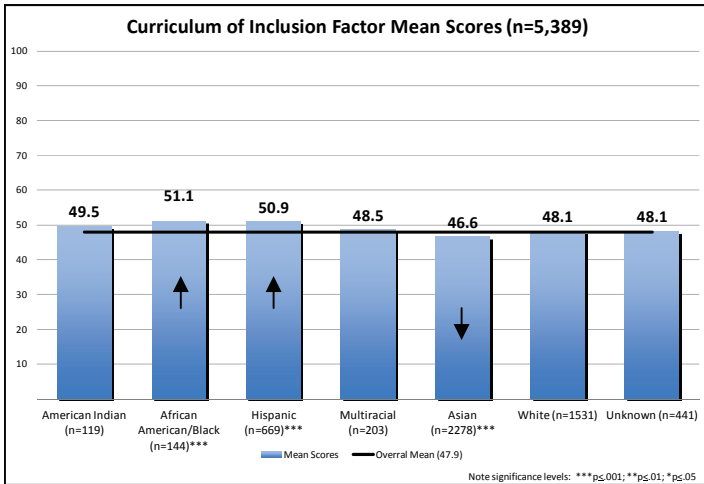
Academic and Social Engagement. Factors in this area explored students' frequencies of applying course concepts and skills (integration of learning), participation in community or global causes (civic engagement), connections with faculty and staff (general interpersonal validation), perception of validation within the classroom, academic self-concept, and critical thinking (habits of mind). Overall, in comparison to the mean for all students,

- African American/Black, Multiracial, and White students reported higher mean scores on a majority of the academic and social engagement measures.
- Asian students reported lower mean scores on all 6 factors.
- Hispanic and Asian students were more likely to report lower academic self-concepts (47.8 and 48.6 vs. 50.2 overall).



Engagement with Diversity-Related Activities. This section gauges students’ exposure to diversity-related academic content, co-curricular activities, and interaction with peers and perspectives that differ across race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, and privilege. In summary,

- American Indian students reported higher participation and engagement in conversations across differences (53.1 vs. 49.7), cross-racial interactions (53.2 vs. 50.0), and co-curricular diversity activities (52.8 vs. 49.8) in comparison to students overall.
- African American/Black students reported higher rates of participation on all 4 measures of diversity-related activities.
- In the reverse, Asian students reported lower rates of engagement on all 4 measures of diversity-related activities.



Story of the Unknown

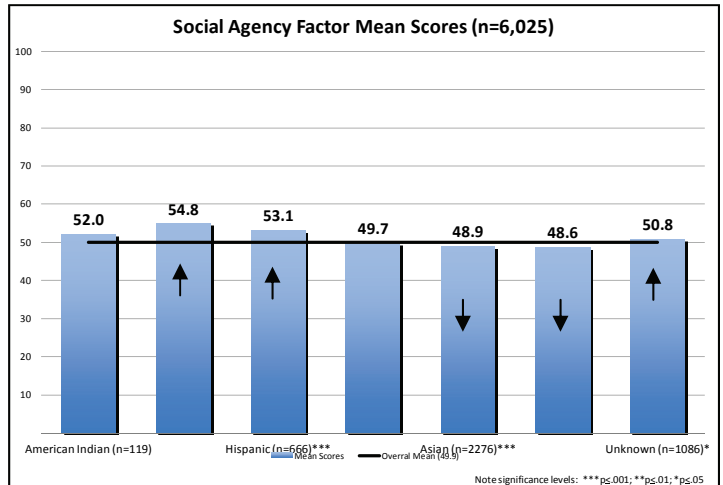
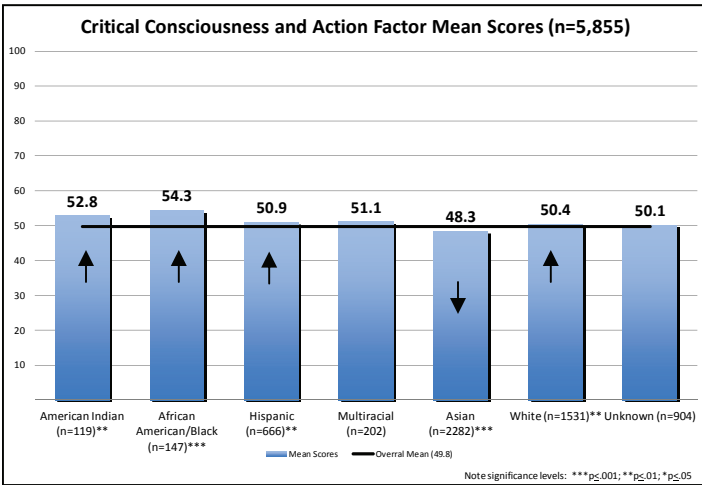
When survey respondents choose to not disclose their race/ethnic identifications, these students are generally placed in “unknown” or “other” categories. Often times, limited analyses are conducted on this group because little can be said about the composition. However, interesting trends arose when they were included in the analyses. Specifically, in comparison to the overall mean, students in this group were more likely to feel:

- ↓ Sense of Belonging
- ↓ Institutional Commitment to Diversity
- ↑ Harassment
- ↑ Social Agency

Perhaps, in response to students’ perceptions of the campus climate, they may choose to exercise their agency to not disclose personal information about themselves.

Global Perspectives and Agency. These factors explore students’ engagement with social or political issues (critical consciousness and action), preparedness to engage in global issues (pluralistic orientation) and personal value placed on these perspectives (social agency). Interestingly,

- African American/Black and Hispanic students reported significantly higher scores on critical consciousness, social agency, and pluralistic orientation than their peers overall.
- Asian students reported significantly lower scores on factors related to global perspectives and agency.
- Despite significantly higher scores on critical consciousness and pluralistic orientation, White students reported lower scores on social agency.

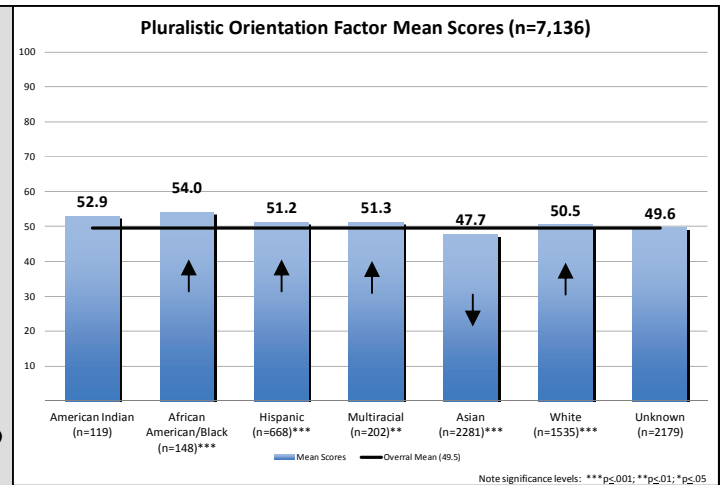


Conclusion

While overall measures of student experiences may show positive results for the campus, it is important for us to explore data in more depth to identify important differences across groups of students. This analysis allowed comparisons of student experiences across race/ethnicity and pointed out many areas of distinct differences among students in their perceptions, experiences and engagement with the campus environment and peers.

Overall, results indicate that attention may be needed to further support those having minoritized experiences, including Asian students. For example, African

American/Black students reported higher scores on academic and social engagement, participation in diversity-related activities, global perspectives, and agency. However, African American/Black students also reported significantly less favorable scores on campus climate, specifically with cross-racial interactions, experiences with discrimination and bias, and perception that UCLA is committed to diversity. These results provide a nuanced snapshot of students’ experiences that can help inform targeted programming efforts as well as broader campus initiatives to build community. Also, it is important to note that the DLE captured a unique picture of Asian student experiences. In general, Asian students reported significantly lower scores on most measures of perceptions of campus climate, academic and social engagement, participation in diversity activities, global perspectives, and agency. Additional attention to explore these areas would be beneficial.



Appendix I. Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Survey Factor Variable List

Institutional Commitment to Diversity

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. This college:

- * Promotes the appreciation of cultural difference
- * Has a long standing commitment to diversity
- * Has campus administrators who regularly speak about the value of diversity
- * Appreciates differences in sexual orientation
- * Accurately reflects the diversity of the student body in publications (e.g. brochures, website, etc.)

Harassment

How often experienced:

- * Threats of physical violence
- * Physical assaults or injuries
- * Anonymous phone calls
- * Damage to personal property
- * Reported an incident of discrimination
- * Experienced sexual harassment
- * Reported an incident of sexual harassment

Positive Cross-Racial Interaction

To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?

- * Had intellectual discussions outside of class
- * Shared personal feelings and problems
- * Had meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations outside of class
- * Studied or prepared for class
- * Socialized or partied
- * Dined or shared a meal

Conversations Across Difference

How often in past year did you interact with someone:

- * From a socioeconomic class different from your own
- * From a religion different from your own
- * Of a sexual orientation different from your own
- * From a country other than your own
- * With a disability
- * Discuss issues related to sexism, gender differences, or gender equity

Sense of Belonging

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree:

- * I feel a sense of belonging to this campus.
- * I feel that I am a member of this college.
- * I see myself as a part of the campus community.

- * If asked, I would recommend this college to others.

Discrimination and Bias

How often experienced:

- * Verbal comments
- * Written comments (e.g., emails, texts, writing on walls)
- * Offensive visual images or items
- * Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from faculty
- * Witnessed discrimination
- * Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from staff
- * Exclusion (e.g., from gatherings, events)
- * Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from students

Negative Cross-Racial Interaction

To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?

- * Had tense, somewhat hostile interactions
- * Had guarded, cautious interactions
- * Felt insulted or threatened because of your race/ethnicity

Civic Engagement

How often:

- * Publically communicated your opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, email, petition)
- * Demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest)
- * Helped raise money for a cause or campaign
- * Discussed politics
- * Performed community service

General Interpersonal Validation

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree:

- * At least one faculty member has taken an interest in my development
- * At least one staff member has taken an interest in my development
- * Staff recognize my achievements
- * Faculty believe in my potential to succeed academically
- * Faculty empower me to learn here
- * Staff encourage me to get involved in campus activities

Academic Validation in the Classroom

How often experienced:

- * Felt that faculty provided me with the feedback that helped me assess my progress in class
- * Faculty were able to determine my level of understanding of course material
- * Felt that my contributions were valued in class
- * Felt that faculty encouraged me to ask questions and participate in discussions

Curriculum of Inclusion

How many courses have you taken that include:

- * Materials/readings about race/ethnicity
- * Materials/readings about socioeconomic class differences
- * Materials about gender
- * Materials about privilege
- * Materials/readings about sexual orientation
- * Opportunities for intensive dialogue between students with different backgrounds and beliefs
- * Materials/readings about disability
- * Opportunities to study and serve communities in need (e.g., service learning)

Co-curricular Diversity Activities

How often:

- * Participated in ongoing campus-organized discussions on racial/ethnic issues (e.g., intergroup dialogue)
- * Participated in Racial/Ethnic or Cultural Center activities
- * Attended debates or panels about diversity issues
- * Participated in the Women's/Men's Center activities
- * Attended presentations, performances, and art exhibits on diversity
- * Participated in the LGBT Center activities

Social Agency

Rate importance to you personally:

- * Participating in a community action program
- * Helping others who are in difficulty
- * Influencing social values
- * Becoming a community leader
- * Helping to promote racial understanding
- * Keeping up to date with political affairs

Pluralistic Orientation

Rate self compared to an average person your age

- * Tolerance of others with different beliefs
- * Openness to having my own views challenged
- * Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people
- * Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective
- * Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues

Critical Consciousness and Action

How often in past year:

- * Made an effort to educate others about social issues
- * Critically evaluated your own position on an issue
- * Challenged others on issues of discrimination
- * Recognized the biases that affect your own thinking
- * Feel challenged to think more broadly about an issue
- * Make an effort to get to know people from diverse backgrounds
- * Keeping up to date with political affairs

Academic Self-Concept

Rate yourself compared to an average person your age:

- * Academic ability
- * Self-confidence (intellectual)
- * Drive to achieve
- * Mathematical ability

Habits of Mind

How often experienced:

- * Seek solutions to problems and explain them to others

- * Evaluate the quality and reliability of information you received
- * Seek alternate solutions to a problem
- * Support your opinions with a logical argument
- * Seek feedback on your academic work
- * Explore topics on your own, even though it was not required for class
- * Take a risk because you felt you had more to gain
- * Ask questions in class
- * Revise your papers to improve your writing
- * Accept mistakes as part of the learning process
- * Look up scientific research articles and resources

Integration of Learning

How often in past year:

- * Applied concepts from courses to real life situations
- * Used different points of view to make an argument
- * Integrated skills and knowledge from different sources and experiences