

## Supplemental Analysis of 2019 NACCC Survey Results

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## 1.0 Introduction

During the first half of 2019, Towson University (TU) administered the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) to the undergraduate student body. The NACCC is a survey designed to measure the experiences and perspectives of students in relation to the racial climate of a campus. TU achieved a robust response rate for this survey, receiving 4,151 responses for a total response rate of 23.3 percent of all undergraduates invited to participate.

Results of the survey were originally received and reported by the USC Race and Equity Center, which designed the NACCC and currently organizes participation with colleges and universities across the country. Based on how the results of each survey compare to other colleges and universities within the cohort, the Race and Equity Center assigns each school a score of one to four “ribbons” in various categories. Subsequently, TU was provided a report detailing how its racial climate compares to other colleges. TU was also provided a breakdown of each survey question that compared the results for “white students” to the results for “students of color.” After issuing this report, the Race and Equity Center provided TU with the raw survey results so that the University could conduct further analysis as desired.

As part of this additional analysis, the Office of Inclusion and Institutional Equity (OIIE) has asked the Regional Economic Studies Institute (RESI) to examine the raw survey results and create a report of additional findings that may be of interest to OIIE. In conversations between OIIE and RESI, it was suggested that RESI should look at additional demographics beyond race, and should also attempt to break down “students of color” into component racial groups, in order to see how experiences differ between various minorities. This report contains additional analysis based on these suggestions.

## 2.0 Findings

There are many factors beyond race that can correspond to a less inclusive environment for any given student, including demographics such as gender, sexual orientation, and religion, as well as other factors like participation in Greek life, on-campus housing, or transfer status.

As will be discussed below, there are no demographic groups that provided overall negative responses to questions, nor are there any groups that provided drastically different responses than any other group. However, there are many differences that are both statistically significant and notable for how they reflect on the experiences of students at TU.

### 2.1 Exploring Non-Racial Demographics

Throughout the survey, the vast majority of questions pertain directly to racial issues, which limits their applicability in determining what other issues may have an effect on a student's experience. In order to examine other demographic factors, RESI looked specifically at a question that asked all respondents how safe, welcome, or included they feel at TU. As each of these questions asked for a respondent's feeling on a seven-point scale, RESI compared mean responses on a scale from one to seven, where seven indicates completely safe, welcome, or included.

Notably, sexual orientation of the respondent appeared to have a statistically significant impact on how safe, welcome, and included students feel at TU. Students were offered to choose from an extensive list of orientations, with the ability to select as many descriptors as they felt applied to them.

For this analysis, RESI compared students who chose to select *only* straight/heterosexual with students who selected one or more of the alternative options. Students who selected *both* straight/heterosexual and any additional options were placed in the latter group. The results of this comparison are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Average Experience of TU Students by Sexual Orientation on a 7-Point Scale**

|                       | Safe          | Welcome       | Included      |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| LGBQA+                | 5.74          | 5.50          | 4.94          |
| Straight/Heterosexual | 5.90          | 5.74          | 5.26          |
| <b>Difference</b>     | <b>-0.16*</b> | <b>-0.24*</b> | <b>-0.32*</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

Students who identified with any of the listed LGBQA+ designations were less likely to feel safe, welcome, or included while at TU. This difference was most pronounced when students were asked if they feel included, although the difference in all three cases was found to be statistically significant.

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Gender is another major demographic factor with the potential to affect whether a student feels safe, welcome, and included at TU. The difference in responses between men and women is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Average Experience of TU Students by Gender on a 7-Point Scale**

|                   | Safe          | Welcome      | Included     |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Women             | 5.82          | 5.70         | 5.21         |
| Men               | 6.02          | 5.75         | 5.22         |
| <b>Difference</b> | <b>-0.20*</b> | <b>-0.05</b> | <b>-0.01</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

As seen above, women report lower overall feelings of safety at TU compared to men, despite relatively similar levels of feeling welcome and included. The smaller differences shown for feelings of welcome and inclusion did not rise to a level of statistical significance.

Students were also presented with gender options outside of the gender binary. In addition to identifying as a man or woman, respondents could choose to identify as gender nonconforming, non-binary, transgender<sup>1</sup>, or with a gender identity not listed.<sup>2</sup> Although there were an insufficient number of responses to conduct a statistical analysis on each additional category, it is possible to analyze these respondents as a collective group. Figure 3 displays the average response of this group in comparison to both men and women.

**Figure 3: Analysis Using Alternative Responses as a Third Category**

|           | Safe  | Welcome | Included |
|-----------|-------|---------|----------|
| Women     | 5.82  | 5.70    | 5.21     |
| Men       | 6.02  | 5.75    | 5.22     |
| All Other | 5.41* | 4.76*   | 4.71*    |

As seen above, students who selected a gender option other than man or woman report much lower feelings of being safe, welcome, and included at TU. Despite the low count of students in this third category<sup>3</sup>, the differences in all three categories were found to be statistically significant.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Respondents identifying as transgender had the option of selecting either “transgender man” or “transgender woman.”

<sup>2</sup> Respondents who stated that they identified as a gender not listed were given the option to specify their gender. None of the respondents who selected this category opted to specify.

<sup>3</sup> Of the students who provided an answer to the questions regarding feeling safe, welcome, or included, only 1.8 percent selected a gender other than male or female.

<sup>4</sup> Responses from students included in the “other” gender category are statistically significant from the responses of men, women, and both men and women combined.

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Students were also asked if they have been diagnosed with a disability. It should be noted that disability in this case covers a range of conditions, including physical disability, long-term medical conditions, mental or emotional disability, and more.

While students were able to specify additional details about their condition, this comparison only looks at whether a student reported having a disability at all. The results of this comparison are seen below in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Average Experience of TU Students by Reported Disability on a 7-Point Scale**

|                   | Safe          | Welcome       | Included      |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Disability        | 5.66          | 5.41          | 4.89          |
| No Disability     | 5.90          | 5.74          | 5.25          |
| <b>Difference</b> | <b>-0.25*</b> | <b>-0.34*</b> | <b>-0.35*</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

Students who report being diagnosed with a disability show lower overall feelings of safety, welcome, and inclusion at TU than those who are not disabled. All three differences achieve a level of statistical significance.

Feelings of inclusion at TU can be affected by factors other than personal demographics. In some cases, it can be affected by something as simple as how you came to attend the University. Figure 5 shows the responses of students broken down by whether or not they transferred to TU from another college or university.

**Figure 5: Average Experience of TU Students by Transfer Status on a 7-Point Scale**

|                   | Safe         | Welcome       | Included      |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Transfer          | 5.86         | 5.64          | 5.11          |
| Non-Transfer      | 5.89         | 5.75          | 5.28          |
| <b>Difference</b> | <b>-0.03</b> | <b>-0.11*</b> | <b>-0.17*</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

Students who came to TU as transfers feel slightly less welcome and included than students who have attended for their entire college career. While each of these differences is smaller than some of the other differences viewed earlier in this section, the discrepancies in feelings of welcome and inclusion both achieve the level of statistical significance.

Participation in Greek life at TU also has a significant impact on whether a student feels included. Students were asked a direct binary (Yes or No) question of whether they are currently a member of a fraternity or sorority. Figure 6 shows the comparison in results for students depending on their answer to that question.

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**Figure 6: Average Experience of TU Students by Participation in Greek Life on a 7-Point Scale**

|                   | Safe        | Welcome      | Included     |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Greek             | 5.89        | 5.89         | 5.71         |
| Non-Greek         | 5.87        | 5.68         | 5.14         |
| <b>Difference</b> | <b>0.02</b> | <b>0.21*</b> | <b>0.57*</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

As seen above, students who are members of a fraternity or sorority feel significantly more included than those who are not. Participation in Greek life at TU also correlates with feeling more welcome, albeit to a smaller degree than inclusion. Similar to transfer students, the small difference in feelings of safety does not rise to a level of statistical significance.

The final demographic variable examined by RESI was the choice of religious identity. Students were presented a list of available choices and given the option of selecting as many identities as they believed applied to them. Figure 7 below shows results for the most common choices among religious identities.

**Figure 7: Average Experience of TU Students by Religion on a 7-Point Scale**

|                                | Safe  | Welcome | Included |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| No Affiliation or Nonreligious | 5.94* | 5.74    | 5.22     |
| Catholic                       | 5.88  | 5.81*   | 5.32*    |
| Christian Non-Catholic         | 5.85  | 5.64*   | 5.15*    |
| Jewish                         | 5.91  | 5.86    | 5.44*    |
| Muslim                         | 5.69* | 5.55    | 5.12     |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

There appears to be some variation among student experiences that correlates to their religious identity. However, this variation does not always rise to a level of statistical significance. As with other tables in this section, an asterisk indicates that the difference between the listed group and all other students is statistically significant. For example, although Muslim students have the lowest average scores for each metric among the above groups, only feelings of safety are significantly different from all other students.

At this stage, RESI cannot confirm the statistical significance of any of the variations presented among religious identities. It should be noted that the above figure does not include students who identified themselves as Buddhist or Hindu, due to there being an insufficient number of responses in these categories for meaningful statistical analysis. It also excludes any students who selected affiliation with more than one of the above choices.

## 2.2 Experience on Campus vs In the Surrounding Community

In addition to the above analysis, RESI also compared these responses to a similar question that asked respondents how safe, welcome, or included they feel in the town surrounding TU.<sup>5</sup> When looking across the entire student body, it is clear that respondents have more positive feelings while at TU than when in the surrounding area. Overall responses can be seen below in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Average Experience of TU Students On-Campus vs In the Surrounding City/Town**

|          | At TU | In Surrounding City/Town | Difference  |
|----------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Safe     | 5.87  | 4.52                     | <b>1.36</b> |
| Welcome  | 5.70  | 4.91                     | <b>0.80</b> |
| Included | 5.21  | 4.79                     | <b>0.41</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

As seen above, students feel significantly more safe, welcome, and included at TU than they do while in the surrounding area. The largest difference is seen in safety, where respondents on average state that they feel more than a full point less safe in the surrounding area.

While most demographic groups experience fairly similar decreases in their responses when the focus shifts to the surrounding area, there are some notable differences in how different racial groups respond to this question. Figure 9 shows the difference in how safe students of different racial groups feel when venturing away from campus.

**Figure 9: Average Feeling of Safety at TU vs. Surrounding City/Town, by Racial Identity**

| Racial Group              | At TU | In Surrounding City/Town | Difference  |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Asian or Asian American   | 5.79  | 4.55                     | <b>1.24</b> |
| Black or African American | 5.72  | 4.75                     | <b>0.97</b> |
| White or Caucasian        | 5.96  | 4.43                     | <b>1.53</b> |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano   | 5.96  | 4.38                     | <b>1.58</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

Among the four largest racial groups at Towson University, Black or African American students feel the least safe, although all groups report relatively high levels of safety. However, Black or African American students experience the smallest drop in feelings of safety when venturing off-campus, becoming the racial group with the highest feelings of safety in the area surrounding TU. Although they report the highest feelings of safety while on campus, white

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the wording of the survey does not provide a specific definition for the surrounding city. In the case of TU, this has the potential to be interpreted as referring to either Towson or Baltimore.

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students and Hispanic students experience the largest drop in feelings of safety when in the surrounding area.

This difference along racial lines is also evident for feelings of welcome, as shown in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Feelings of Welcome at TU vs. Surrounding City/Town, by Racial Identity**

| Racial Group              | At TU | In Surrounding City/Town | Difference  |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Asian or Asian American   | 5.58  | 4.87                     | <b>0.70</b> |
| Black or African American | 5.50  | 5.02                     | <b>0.48</b> |
| White or Caucasian        | 5.84  | 4.89                     | <b>0.95</b> |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano   | 5.63  | 4.80                     | <b>0.83</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

As seen above, Black or African American students report the highest feelings of welcome in the surrounding area, despite reporting the lowest feelings of welcome while on-campus. This echoes the disparity seen in feelings of safety. It is also reflected in the final measure, feelings of inclusion, shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Feelings of Inclusion at TU vs. Surrounding City/Town, by Racial Identity**

| Racial Group              | At TU | In Surrounding City/Town | Difference  |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Asian or Asian American   | 5.00  | 4.77                     | <b>0.23</b> |
| Black or African American | 5.01  | 4.85                     | <b>0.16</b> |
| White or Caucasian        | 5.37  | 4.81                     | <b>0.56</b> |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano   | 5.03  | 4.66                     | <b>0.38</b> |

Sources: NACCC, RESI

Once again, the reduced feelings of inclusion between on-campus and off-campus is smallest for students who identify as Black or African American, and highest for those who identify as white or Caucasian. Unlike the previous measures, there is only a negligible discrepancy in feeling between the two racial groups when off-campus. The difference is instead attributable almost entirely to White or Caucasian students feeling more included while at TU.

### 2.3 Differences in Microaggressions Between Racial Groups

There are many additional questions in the NACCC for which “students of color” could be broken down into many of its component groups. For this report, RESI focused on a series of questions about microaggressions, illustrating how the experiences of racial groups differ beyond the basic distinction of white and non-white students.

Students were asked whether they had ever been subject to a list of microaggressions at TU. While many students responded that they had been subject to one or more of the listed events, the prevalence of each particular microaggression varied depending on the racial identity of the respondent.

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Figure 12 below displays the percentage of respondents within each racial group who have experienced the listed microaggression at TU. This analysis includes the three largest minority racial groups among respondents, as well as the responses from students who identified as white or Caucasian.

**Figure 12: Microaggressions Experienced by Racial Groups at Towson University**

| <b>Microaggression</b>   | <b>Asian or<br/>Asian<br/>American</b> | <b>Hispanic/<br/>Latino/<br/>Chicano</b> | <b>Black or<br/>African<br/>American</b> | <b>White or<br/>Caucasian</b> |
|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Jokes related to race that make you uncomfortable  | 25.2%                                  | 28.7%                                    | 29.8%                                    | 18.0%                         |
| Being viewed as a foreigner even if you are not  | 19.9%                                  | 12.1%                                    | 9.9%                                     | 2.4%                          |
| Not speaking out in class about topics related to race because of negative reactions by professors and/or classmates | 18.7%                                  | 20.8%                                    | 24.5%                                    | 22.6%                         |
| Being asked or expected to represent the views of your entire race in class discussions                              | 17.8%                                  | 17.8%                                    | 27.9%                                    | 9.6%                          |
| Being viewed as naturally more able than others in your classes  | 17.2%                                  | 6.6%                                     | 6.5%                                     | 11.2%                         |
| Feeling excluded by students of your own race  | 13.1%                                  | 13.6%                                    | 20.7%                                    | 7.3%                          |
| Being viewed as naturally less able than others in your classes  | 8.9%                                   | 15.6%                                    | 20.6%                                    | 5.3%                          |
| Considered only to have been admitted because of your race   | 7.1%                                   | 10.9%                                    | 11.3%                                    | 2.6%                          |
| Assumed to be a natural athlete and/or a member of a college sports team   | 3.0%                                   | 2.4%                                     | 13.4%                                    | 2.9%                          |
| Being asked for ID by campus police/safety when others are not   | 2.1%                                   | 3.9%                                     | 5.6%                                     | 0.8%                          |

Source: NACCC, RESI

There are both similarities and differences when it comes to the microaggressions experienced by students in each racial group. Events experienced by one group appear more likely to be experienced by the other groups, as is the case with race-related jokes and being unable to speak in class about topics regarding race. These events are also reported as occurring to a significant portion of white or Caucasian students.

However, there are some microaggressions that are experienced primarily by minority groups, or in some cases by only one or two minority groups. The latter case demonstrates the danger in reporting results of “students of color” as a block without providing additional analysis. For example, among all of the above racial groups, Black or African American students report that

they are assumed to be natural athletes or members of a sports team far more often than other groups, who rarely report having experienced that particular microaggression. They are also more likely to state that they feel excluded by students of their own race, or that they are expected to represent the views of their entire race. Asian or Asian American students are much more likely than other groups to state that they are viewed as a foreigner or as naturally more able in their class.

### 3.0 Conclusion

Identity—whether based on race, sexuality, gender, or religion—is a complex issue. Many of the above findings illustrate the danger in combining all non-white students into a single group for the purposes of statistical analysis. These findings demonstrate the experience at TU (and the surrounding community) is not uniform for all minority students. Lumping students into a single category (“students of color”) causes these experiences to be lost into a single overall statistic. Each survey question has been analyzed by NACCC as a comparison between white students and “students of color.” Ultimately, there may be additional insights to be gained from looking at additional questions with a more granular perspective.

This report does not contain all of the potential demographic groups, survey questions, or lines of inquiry that may result in statistically significant results, or results which are considered meaningful by the community. Instead, this report is intended as a guide to the potential value and limitations of both the survey results and the analysis provided by the NACCC organization. While the above report includes many items that the initial analysis identified as compelling, there are many other items in the survey that may be of interest to various groups on campus. RESI hopes that this report contributes to the community’s interest and understanding of the NACCC survey results.