



## 2021 UML FACULTY WORK CLIMATE SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Making WAVES (Women Academics Values & Engaged in STEM)**

In the summer of 2021, the National Science Foundation (NSF)-Funded *Making WAVES* Work Climate Survey was administered to University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell) faculty. The 2021 survey marks the final survey to be conducted under the auspices of WAVES because this project is in its final year of NSF funding. Future biennial surveys will be conducted by a new ADVANCE Office for Faculty Equity now funded by the Provost's Office to both expand and institutionalize the work that was done by WAVES over the last five years. In presenting these results to the campus community, our hope is that people will respond with questions, reflections, and suggestions for strategies to continue to improve the work climate at our university. A more detailed summary of results is available below.

The Faculty Work Climate survey was administered to UMass Lowell faculty in 2017, 2019, and 2021 to measure faculty's experiences of microaggressions, gender bias, and support within various academic settings. While most of the survey has remained the same over time, portions of the survey have been updated and changed across administrations to address emerging issues (e.g., including experiences of racial microaggressions). This report focuses primarily on the findings from 2021 and provides some comparisons of the 2021 data with data from 2017 and 2019.

### **Methods**

In July 2021, the internal evaluator for the WAVES grant sent an email invitation to all UMass Lowell full-time faculty inviting them to complete the Faculty Climate Survey. The invitation included a link to a Qualtrics administered anonymous survey. A total of 310 (51%) of the 609 full-time faculty completed the survey.

The survey included 158 closed-ended questions, which formed the basis for 24 sub-scale scores for the key dependent variables representing various aspects of gender bias, racial microaggressions, sexual harassment, support on campus, and job satisfaction (the list of variables and the questions that were added together to form scores for each are presented in Appendix A). In addition, nine open-ended questions provided faculty the opportunity to describe their experiences in more depth. Changes over time for the questions asked in 2017, 2019, and 2021, were also examined.

## Key Findings

In general, **the majority of faculty are satisfied with their jobs**, with 73.3% of faculty reporting some level of satisfaction with their jobs. While 5.5% are extremely dissatisfied with their jobs, 18.4% of respondents are extremely satisfied with their jobs.

The experiences of faculty regarding overall climate and perceived gender bias differ depending on the faculty members' gender, race, faculty rank, and college. In general, **women reported more gender bias towards women and fewer resources for women faculty members**. This sentiment has been consistent since 2017. Women also reported more frequent experiences of feeling devalued in various university settings and more negative experiences within their departments than men did. Overall, women indicate that their departments have less team orientation, less collective efficacy toward equity and less tolerance for individual differences than men do. They also report experiencing more sexist behaviors, and less influence in departmental decision-making than men do.

When comparing the 2021 data to the 2017 and 2019 data, **faculty perceived less subtle gender bias towards women in 2021 than in 2019**, but higher than in 2017. As has been found to be the case in evaluations of biases-related initiatives in other organizations, it is likely that awareness increased because of WAVES and other campus efforts to address gender and racial inequities on campus. Thus, the results indicating an increase in 2019 followed by decrease in 2021 are promising because they suggest progress is being made in this area – first by increased awareness in 2019 and then by a decrease in incidences in 2021. Similar comparisons over time for experiences of racial microaggressions and/or intersectional biases are not possible because the 2017 and 2019 surveys focused primarily on gender. The 2021 mean ratings related to racial microaggressions are very low; however, these results are impossible to interpret because of the very small numbers of non-White faculty at UMass Lowell.

Participants reported **low incidences of sexual harassment**, which includes three forms: sexist behavior, offensive behavior, and unwanted sexual attention. A total of 19 people reporting some form of sexist behavior, one person reporting highly offensive sexual behavior, and no one reporting unwanted sexual attention.

**Associate Professors with tenure continue to be the least satisfied with their jobs**. They also believe more gender bias is present towards women than faculty from other ranks do. **Teaching professors reported lower departmental fairness** in assignments and responsibilities than other faculty did.

The **College of Education faculty** consistently reported the lowest levels of job satisfaction, as well as the lowest levels of perceived tolerance for individual differences and fairness in departmental decisions. The **School of Business** faculty consistently reported the highest levels of job satisfaction, as well as the highest levels of perceived tolerance for individual differences and fairness in departmental decisions. The fact that the College of Education was experiencing a

major transition from a college to a school within another college during the time of the survey should be considered when interpreting these results.

When considering **differences among faculty of different races in experiences of climate**, many comparisons could not be made because only eight faculty who completed the survey indicated that they were faculty of color but not Asian. Additionally, we had to combine racial groups into only four categories (White, Asian, faculty of color who are not Asian, and did not report) because of the small numbers of faculty of color. Given that the 10 people who “did not report” their racial identity also belonged in one of the three other groups, it is additionally difficult to draw strong conclusions about the data by race.

Two additional findings may have implications for how the university approaches policy issues. One is that faculty report only moderate satisfaction with their work-life balance, and, in response to the impact of Covid, some faculty reported negative experiences with their work-life balance during the survey year. The other is that faculty reported only a moderate sense of safety to report bias/discrimination issues of concern; a few faculty noted concerns about retaliation. Discussing concerns with chairs was described as somewhat safer than with others.

The qualitative data suggest that **perceived respect from administrators, colleagues, and students are the factors that most often contribute to faculty feeling valued. Likewise, a lack of respect from these same groups is most likely to make faculty feel devalued.**

Receiving respect and support as part of one’s work, being recognized and receiving opportunities to grow all also contributed greatly to making faculty feel valued. A lack of recognition and support as well as negative experiences related to one’s demographic identities, especially faculty rank, frequently contributed to faculty feeling devalued. Several faculty reported feeling devalued due to imbalanced salary structure issues related to promotion and job security. **More faculty reported that they received respect and support from colleagues in 2019 and 2021 than in 2017.** More faculty felt motivated and received recognition and support for their research in 2021 than in 2019.

Almost one third of the survey respondents commented about their experiences during the pandemic. Most of these respondents experienced negative interactions in the remote work environment during the pandemic, including challenges with work-life balance. However, almost one quarter of those who commented suggested that the pandemic created a better work environment for them because they were able to avoid situations in which bias or harassment occurred.

### **Recommendations**

UMass Lowell, through support for the WAVES Program in combination with other complementary diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)-related initiatives, has contributed to enhanced awareness and the creation of new knowledge and best practices to establish an equitable academic environment for faculty success. However, it is not time for complacency.

Perceptions of the workplace climate at UMass Lowell are mixed. Most faculty are satisfied with their jobs; however, satisfaction ratings land at both ends of the spectrum. While there appears to be progress over time, gender bias continues to be reported among women. They – in comparison to men - also report fewer resources available for their own work, fewer institutional supports for women faculty generally, and feeling devalued more often in university settings. Tenured Associate Professors continue to be the least satisfied faculty group on campus. To support faculty equity, these issues need continued attention.

Specific recommendations include:

**1. Celebrate the successes, for example:**

- Faculty currently report less gender bias than they did in 2019.
- Awareness of biases and microaggressions has increased since 2017.
- Faculty have been involved in and responding positively to equity initiatives, including bystander training.

**2. Expand initiatives designed to address the microaggressions, biases, and harassment that are still experienced among faculty**

- Continue current efforts to raise awareness of bias, promote bystander action, and establish supportive departmental cultures (including intersectional social identities)
- Coordinate with other entities on campus that are focused on raising awareness

**3. Identify and address policies and practices that embody systemic biases**

- Follow up on recommendations made by the 2019-2020 Sexual Harassment Task Force and the 2020-2021 Social Justice Task Forces

**4. Hire and promote more women in male-dominated fields and racially and ethnically diverse faculty across the university.** The fact that our numbers for both of these groups are so low is a concern for many on campus; we will only address this issue with ongoing concerted, proactive recruitment efforts.

- Provost's office, deans, department chairs, and Human Resources will continue to prioritize the hiring of faculty from under-represented groups
- Implement strategic recruitment supports through the ADVANCE Office for Faculty Equity (e.g., an ambassador program or other approaches to supporting diverse job candidates)
- Explore opportunities to attract candidates from diverse groups even before they are on the job market (e.g., postdoc programs)

**5. Increase support for Associate Professors**

- Provide additional professional development and leadership opportunities

- Design collaborative mentoring programs specifically targeted for associate professors
- Consider a more in-depth study to understand the distinctive challenges and needs of associate professors

**6. Identify supports specifically for Teaching Faculty**

- Coordinate with efforts in various colleges and through the UMass Lowell Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) focused on Teaching Professors
- Seek to further understand and address teaching professors' lower sense of departmental fairness and its intersection with minoritized identities

**7. Address the moderate sense of safety in reporting bias issues of concern**

- Provide more mechanisms for people to discuss concerns outside of formal channels
- Support chairs, who appear to provide the safest context for discussing concerns, in their understanding of how to respond

**8. Support policies to address challenges around work-life balance**

- Coordinate with the Family-Friendly Campus Initiative to implement policies that are supportive of care givers
- Further document specific faculty challenges around care giving roles
- Coordinate around supports for off-campus childcare and emergency drop-in care

**9. Ensure sustainable capacity to conduct faculty climate surveys on a biennial basis beyond the WAVES funding**

- The Faculty Work Climate Survey provides valuable information about multiple dimensions of campus climate. It also provides an opportunity for sharing findings at feedback sessions with the UMass Lowell community to increase awareness of concerns and to set goals for continued improvement.
- It is imperative that we continue to collect data so that we can see whether the decreased reported in 2021 following the increased reporting of gender bias in 2019 compared to the baseline in 2017 is temporary, or if it is indicative of an initial increase in awareness followed by progress on the problem.