# Rankin & Associates, Consulting

### Assessment • Planning • Interventions

# Finger Lakes Community College

# Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working

## Executive Summary

# August 2019

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**Executive Summary**

### History of the Project

Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC) seeks to create an environment characterized by openness, fairness, and equal access for all students, staff, and faculty. Creating and maintaining a welcoming community environment that respects individuals, their needs, abilities, and potential is critically important.

The college undertook the campus climate survey to evaluate the current campus climate as it is experienced and perceived by all members of the college community. The goals were multifold:

- Identify successful initiatives.
- Uncover any challenges facing members of the FLCC community.
- Develop strategic initiatives to build on successes, address challenges, and create lasting positive change.

To ensure full transparency and to provide a more complete perspective, in summer 2018, FLCC contracted with Rankin & Associates Consulting (R&A) to help lead this effort. Beginning in August 2018, an R&A team worked with a Climate Study Working Group (CSWG) of FLCC students, staff, and faculty to develop an assessment and promote it during the February to March 2019 survey administration period. Nine hundred members of the FLCC community completed the *FLCC Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living, and Working*, which represented a 24% response rate.

### Methodology

**Survey Instrument.** [1] The CSWG reviewed several drafts of the initial survey that R&A proposed and vetted the questions to be contextually appropriate for FLCC. The final college-wide survey instrument contained 117 questions, including quantitative questions and open-ended questions for respondents to provide commentary. Respondents also had opportunities to "write-in" responses should the list of available response choices not include the specific response they wished to offer.

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[1] The full assessment is available in Appendix D in the full report.

**Incentives.** As an incentive for completing the assessment, eligible members of the FLCC community were offered the opportunity to enter a random drawing. Student respondents were offered two one-semester parking passes for the "B" (visitor) parking area, two president's dedicated parking spots for one month, and one semester of books valued up to $500 from the FLCC Book Nook. Faculty and staff respondents were offered two one-semester parking passes for the B lot, and dinner for two at Julia in fall 2019 accompanied by one bottled of wine (red or white) from the Viticulture program.

**Institutional Review.** The study was vetted through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, which is meant to ensure confidentiality and protect the rights and welfare of individuals participating in a research study. The IRB through the Office of Assessment, Planning and Continuous Improvement reviewed the survey and processes and approved the assessment on January 18th, 2019.

**Sample Construction.** All eligible members of the FLCC community were invited to participate in the assessment.[2] Prospective respondents received an invitation from President Robert Nye that contained the URL link to the survey instrument. The CSWG's marketing subcommittee worked with FLCC's communications team to create inclusive, thoughtful, and tailored messaging for email distribution, social media platforms, and items including posters, postcards, and digital screens. Nine hundred surveys were returned for a 24% overall response rate. Of respondents, 68% ($n = 610$) of the sample were Students, 13% ($n = 114$) were Faculty members, and 20% ($n = 176$) were Staff. Table 1 provides a summary of selected demographic characteristics of assessment respondents.

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[2] A detailed presentation of sample characteristics is offered later in the full report.

*Table 1*. **FLCC Sample Demographics**

| Characteristic | Subgroup | *n* | % of Sample |
|---|---|---|---|
| Position status | Student | 610 | 67.8 |
| | Faculty | 114 | 12.7 |
| | Staff | 176 | 19.6 |
| Gender identity | Women | 537 | 59.7 |
| | Men | 321 | 35.7 |
| | Trans-spectrum | 28 | 3.1 |
| | Missing | 14 | 1.6 |
| Racial/ethnic identity | Black/African American | 39 | 4.3 |
| | Multiracial | 51 | 5.7 |
| | People of Color | 52 | 5.8 |
| | White/European American/European | 716 | 79.6 |
| | Missing | 42 | 4.7 |
| Sexual identity | LGQ+ | 106 | 11.8 |
| | Bisexual | 81 | 9.0 |
| | Heterosexual | 680 | 75.6 |
| | Missing | 33 | 3.7 |
| Citizenship status | U.S. Citizen, Birth | 838 | 93.1 |
| | Non-U.S. Citizen/U.S. Citizen, Naturalized/Multiple | 46 | 5.1 |
| | Missing | 16 | 1.8 |
| Disability status | Single Disability | 101 | 11.2 |
| | No Disability | 682 | 75.8 |
| | Multiple Disabilities | 97 | 10.8 |
| | Missing | 20 | 2.2 |
| Religious affiliation | Christian Religious Affiliation | 360 | 40.0 |
| | Other Religious Affiliation | 41 | 4.6 |
| | No Religious Affiliation | 429 | 47.7 |
| | Multiple Religious Affiliations | 34 | 3.8 |
| | Missing | 36 | 4.0 |

Note: The total *n* for each demographic characteristic may differ as a result of missing data.

**Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyses.** In the quantitative and qualitative analyses used throughout the report, methods accepted in their respective fields are applied. More detailed information is provided in the full report.

**Limitations.**[3] Two limitations existed in this project that may have influenced the representativeness of the sample. Respondents "self-selected" to participate in the study. This type of bias can occur when an individual's decision to participate is correlated with experiences and concerns being measured by the study, causing a type of non-representativeness known as selection bias. The second limitation may have occurred where response rates were less than 30% for some groups. For groups with response rates less than 30%, caution should be used when generalizing the results to the entire constituent group.

**Key Findings – Areas of Strength**

1.  **High Levels of Comfort With the Climate at FLCC**

    Climate was defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students—as well as the campus environment and college policies—that influence the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential.[4] The level of comfort experienced by faculty, staff, and students is one indicator of campus climate.

    - 78% ($n = 703$) of survey respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate at FLCC.
    - 69% ($n = 200$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their division.
    - 71% ($n = 205$) of Faculty and Staff respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their department.
    - 87% ($n = 631$) of Student and Faculty respondents were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

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[3] A more detailed explanation on limitations is offered in the full report.
[4] Rankin & Reason (2008)

2. **Faculty Respondents – Positive Attitudes About Faculty Work**

*Tenured and Tenure-Track*

- 83% ($n = 60$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the criteria for tenure were clear.
- 75% ($n = 54$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had job security.
- 70% ($n = 50$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that teaching was valued by FLCC.

*Non-Tenure-Track*

- 85% ($n = 35$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that clear expectations of their responsibilities existed.
- 78% ($n = 32$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that teaching was valued by FLCC.

*All Faculty*

- Majority of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by faculty in their departments/programs (73%, $n = 83$), by their department/program chairs (81%, $n = 91$), by other faculty at FLCC (73%, $n = 83$), and by students in the classroom (90%, $n = 102$).

3. **Staff Respondents – Positive Attitudes About Staff Work**

- 75% ($n = 126$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their supervisors were supportive of their taking leave.
- 73% ($n = 128$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance.
- 72% ($n = 124$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that FLCC provided them with resources to pursue training/professional development opportunities.
- 71% ($n = 124$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were given a reasonable time frame to complete assigned responsibilities.

- Majority of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by coworkers in their department (78%, $n = 137$) and supervisors/managers (75%, $n = 131$).

4. **Student Respondents – Positive Attitudes About Academic Experiences**

   The way students perceive and experience their campus climate influences their performance and success in college.[5] Research also supports the pedagogical value of a diverse student body and faculty for improving learning outcomes.[6] Attitudes toward academic pursuits are one indicator of campus climate.

   - 80% ($n = 481$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had faculty members/professors whom they perceived as role models.
   - 77% ($n = 465$) of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the campus climate at FLCC encouraged free and open discussion of difficult topics.
   - Majority of Student respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they felt valued by FLCC faculty/professors (84%, $n = 505$), by FLCC staff (80%, $n = 481$), and by other students in the classroom (71%, $n = 430$).

**Key Findings – Opportunities for Improvement**

1. **Experiences of Exclusionary, Intimidating, Offensive, and/or Hostile Conduct**

   Several empirical studies reinforce the importance of the perception of non-discriminatory environments for positive learning and developmental outcomes.[7] Research also underscores the relationship between workplace discrimination and subsequent productivity.[8] The survey requested information on experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.

   - 17% ($n = 151$) of respondents indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct.[9]

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[5] Pascarella & Terenzini (2005)

[6] Hale (2004); Harper & Hurtado (2007); Harper & Quaye (2004)

[7] Aguirre & Messineo (1997); Flowers & Pascarella (1999); Pascarella & Terenzini (2005); Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora (2011)

[8] Silverschanz, Cortina, Konik, & Magley (2008); Waldo (1998)

[9] The literature on microaggressions is clear that this type of conduct has a negative influence on people who experience the conduct, even if they feel at the time that it had no impact (Sue, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009).

*Difference Based on Position Status*

- Higher percentages of Staff respondents (17%, $n = 30$) and Faculty respondents (6%, $n = 7$) than Student respondents (1%, $n = 5$) thought that the conduct was based on their position (e.g., staff, faculty, student).

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences of exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct at FLCC. Sixty-four respondents elaborated on experiences with this conduct. Two themes emerged across all of the responses: problems with the conflict report process (e.g., inconsistent procedures, lack of accountability) and different opinions (e.g., lack of support for divergent views). Student respondents described an additional theme: misconduct by professors (e.g., unfair and inequitable treatment of students).

2. **Less Comfort With Campus, Workplace, and Classroom Climates**

    Prior research on campus climate has focused on the experiences of faculty, staff, and students associated with historically underserved social/community/affinity groups (e.g., women, People of Color, people with disabilities, first-generation students, and veterans).[10] Several groups at FLCC indicated that they were less comfortable than their majority counterparts with the climates of the campus, workplace, and classroom.

    *Examples of Findings for Overall Climate at FLCC*

    - A lower percentage of Staff respondents (15%, $n = 26$) than Faculty respondents (29%, $n = 33$) and Student respondents (40%, $n = 244$) felt "very comfortable" with the overall climate at FLCC.
    - A higher percentage of Respondents of Color (5%, $n = 7$) than White respondents (1%, $n = 8$) were "very uncomfortable" with the overall climate at FLCC.
    - A lower percentage of LGQ+ respondents (24%, $n = 25$) than Heterosexual respondents (37%, $n = 248$) felt "very comfortable" with the overall climate at FLCC.

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[10] Harper & Hurtado (2007); Hart & Fellabaum (2008); Rankin (2003); Rankin & Reason (2005); Worthington, et al. (2008)

- A higher percentage of Respondents with Multiple Disabilities (5%, $n = 5$) compared with Respondents with No Disability (1%, $n = 8$) were "very uncomfortable" with the overall climate at FLCC.

- A higher percentage of First-Generation respondents (38%, $n = 200$) than Not-First-Generation respondents (29%, $n = 102$) were "very comfortable" with the overall campus climate.

*Examples of Findings for Division Climate*

- A lower percentage of Women Faculty and Staff respondents (24%, $n = 42$) than Men Faculty and Staff respondents (42%, $n = 40$) felt "very comfortable" with the climate in their division.

*Examples of Findings for Department Climate*

- A lower percentage of Men Faculty and Staff respondents (21%, $n = 20$) than Women Faculty and Staff respondents (39%, $n = 68$) felt "comfortable" with the climate in their department.

*Examples of Findings for Classroom Climate*

- A higher percentage of First-Generation Faculty and Student respondents (45%, $n = 195$) than Not-First-Generation Faculty and Student respondents (35%, $n = 98$) felt "very comfortable" with the climate in their classes.

3. **Faculty and Staff Respondents – Seriously Considered Leaving FLCC**

- 41% ($n = 47$) of Faculty respondents and 58% ($n = 102$) of Staff respondents had seriously considered leaving FLCC in the past year.
    - Top reasons why Faculty respondents seriously considered leaving included: low salary/pay rate (53%, $n = 25$) and organizational inefficiencies (38%, $n = 18$).
    - Top reasons why Staff respondents seriously considered leaving included: a lack of institutional support (48%, $n = 49$) and organizational inefficiencies (47%, $n = 48$).

Eighty-two Faculty and Staff respondents elaborated on why they had seriously considered leaving FLCC. Three themes emerged from the responses: feel undervalued (e.g., not feeling appreciated or respected despite length of service), low salary (e.g., underpaid, gender differences in pay), and negative workplace environment (e.g., bullying, unprofessionalism, and inappropriate behaviors from coworkers).

4. **Staff Respondents – Challenges With Work-Life Issues**
   - 55% ($n = 95$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that a hierarchy existed within staff positions that allowed some voices to be valued more than others.
   - 54% ($n = 92$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that their workload has increased without additional compensation.
   - 31% ($n = 53$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were pressured by departmental/program work requirements that occurred outside of their job title/description.
   - 23% ($n = 38$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that FLCC policies (e.g., FMLA) were fairly applied across FLCC.
   - 28% ($n = 48$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that staff salaries were competitive.
   - 30% ($n = 51$) of Staff respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that staff opinions were valued by FLCC faculty and administration.

Staff respondents elaborated on their perceptions of the workplace climate at FLCC. Three themes emerged from the responses: low salaries (e.g., new hires taking pay cuts, campus safety officers underpaid), lack of job security (e.g., employment not guaranteed), and a need for flexible work schedules (e.g., some wish for flexible work schedules as an option, and if available, the ability to take it depends on supervisor).

5. **Faculty Respondents – Challenges With Faculty Work**
   - 40% ($n = 29$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they performed more work to help students (e.g., formal

and informal advising, helping with student groups and activities) than did their colleagues.

- 38% ($n = 27$) of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were burdened by service responsibilities (e.g., committee memberships, departmental/program work assignments) beyond those of their colleagues with similar performance expectations.

- 15% ($n = 17$) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that salaries for tenure-track faculty positions were competitive.

- 20% ($n = 22$) of Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that salaries for adjunct professors were competitive.

- 22% ($n = 9$) of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they had job security.

6. **Student Respondents'** *Perceived Academic Success*

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the *Perceived Academic Success* scale derived from Question 14 on the survey. Using this scale, analyses revealed:

- Significant differences existed in the overall test for means for Student respondents by gender identity and racial identity on *Perceived Academic Success*.

*Examples of Findings*

- Women Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than Men Student respondents.

- White Student respondents had greater *Perceived Academic Success* than People of Color/Black/Multiracial Student respondents.

7. **Meaningful Percentage of Respondents Experienced Unwanted Sexual Conduct**

In 2014, *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assaul*t indicated that sexual assault is a substantial issue for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the physical health, mental health, and academic success of students. The report highlights that one in five women is sexually assaulted

while in college. One section of the FLCC survey requested information regarding sexual assault.

- 4% (*n* = 39) of respondents indicated that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact/conduct while at FLCC.
    - 1% (*n* = 5) of respondents experienced relationship violence (e.g., ridiculed, controlling, hitting).
    - 2% (*n* = 16) of respondents experienced stalking (e.g., following me, on social media, texting, phone calls).
    - 2% (*n* = 15) of respondents experienced sexual interaction (e.g., catcalling, repeated sexual advances, sexual harassment).
    - Fewer than five respondents experienced unwanted sexual contact (e.g., fondling, rape, sexual assault, penetration without consent).
- Most respondents did not report the unwanted sexual contact/conduct.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to elaborate on why they did not report unwanted sexual contact/conduct. The primary rationale cited for not reporting these incidents was that the incidents did not feel serious/damaging enough to report.

**Conclusion.**

FLCC climate findings[11] were consistent with those found in higher education institutions across the country, based on the work of R&A Consulting.[12] For example, 70% to 80% of respondents in similar reports found the campus climate to be "very comfortable" or "comfortable." FLCC was as the top of this range with 80% of FLCC respondents indicating that they were "very comfortable" or "comfortable" with the overall climate at FLCC. Twenty percent to 25% of respondents in similar reports indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. At FLCC, a slightly lower percentage of respondents (17%, *n* = 151) indicated that they personally had experienced exclusionary,

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[11] Additional findings disaggregated by position status and other selected demographic characteristics are provided in the full report.
[12] Rankin & Associates Consulting (2016)

intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. The results also paralleled the findings of other climate studies of specific constituent groups offered in the literature.[13]

FLCC's climate assessment report provides baseline data on diversity and inclusion, and addresses FLCC's mission and goals. While the findings may guide decision-making regarding policies and practices at FLCC, it is important to note that the cultural fabric of any institution and the unique aspects of each campus's environment must be taken into consideration when deliberating additional action items based on these findings. The climate assessment findings provide the FLCC community with an opportunity to build upon its strengths and to develop a deeper awareness of the challenges ahead. FLCC, with support from senior administrators and collaborative leadership, is in a prime position to actualize its commitments to promote an inclusive campus and to institute organizational structures that respond to the needs of its dynamic campus community.

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[13] Guiffrida, Gouveia, Wall, & Seward (2002); Harper & Hurtado (2007); Harper & Quaye (2004); Hurtado & Ponjuan (2005); Rankin & Reason (2005); Sears (2002); Settles, Cortina, Malley, & Stewart (2006); Silverschanz et al. (2008); Yosso et al. (2009)

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