

A compelling data-driven story galvanizes action on improving campus climate.

Frame the Story: Big Data Made Accessible

ANDREW EPPIG LOVES DATA. “Data helps us learn more about the world,” he said. “I don’t just love data, but I love analysis too, because analysis helps patterns emerge. Then we see the individual stories come together.”

Eppig’s love of data is not surprising. He has excelled at math and science all of his life. While he was a doctoral student in experimental particle physics, he helped build experiments using the particle collider at the CERN laboratory in Geneva, Switzerland, and his dissertation topic was on quarks, the fundamental building blocks of matter. As he was finishing his dissertation, Eppig worked on a National Science Foundation Advance Program that attempted to address inequities in higher education, especially for women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. “I was looking for something smaller scale and something that addressed social justice, and I ended up loving it,” he said. “I could look at data and analysis that was attached to understanding the inequalities that I saw around me.” After completing his dissertation, Eppig turned to the field of institutional research to pursue his passion in number crunching and problem solving.

Both his skill set and passion are helpful in his current job as the institutional research analyst for the Division of Equity & Inclusion at Berkeley. In 2013, the University of California system undertook what is believed the largest **survey of campus climate** in American higher education. The survey, made up of more than 100 questions, sought to measure the attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential.

It was offered to over 400,000 faculty, students, staff, and fellows across UC’s 10 campuses, a national research lab, and other locations.

At Berkeley alone, 13,000 campus members responded to the survey. When disaggregated by demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion, department, age, the survey data yielded millions of data points. It was fortuitous — or just good planning — that Eppig was responsible for analyzing the Berkeley campus survey data, and most importantly, finding a way to let the data tell a story that would influence campus and student leaders and not just be another study to sit on a shelf.

Eppig likes to tell the story of his first presentation on the campus climate survey, which had more than 100 slides and took well over 90 minutes to present. At his first presentation, he could see the eyes of the audience glazing over. And those whose eyes weren’t glazing over were asking laser-point questions about methodology, response rates, and question design. Eppig knew that he had not clearly communicated the core findings of the survey.

“Initially, I looked at just some basic things. But then people started asking about this question, or that question. When you have 100 slides to show, even the most engaged people lose interest, and it would get very technical very quickly. I needed a way to capture the most salient points,” he said. “Then I realized that every way you sliced the data, it pretty much told the same story. I was looking for a way to a) not bore the audience and b) respect the fact that the survey asked many questions. We realized we had to distill the essence and tell the story across all of these questions.”



Andrew Eppig,
Institutional Research
Analyst, Equity & Inclusion

And what is that story? “There is a certain subset of people at Berkeley experiencing a worse climate than others, and those are people who are also marginalized in the broader society: Blacks, Latinos, LGBTQ, persons with disabilities, Pacific Islanders,” said Eppig. “This marginalization in society was being reflected on campus. It was about finding this story and finding a way of conveying this succinctly. We went from 100 slides to 15 slides. Now, people were more engaged, because the issues were more tangible. These are simple declarative findings that we can move forward on and begin to change things.”

The survey also found:

- » One in four survey respondents personally experienced exclusionary behavior from others such as harassment or intimidation. For marginalized groups such as African Americans, as many as two in five experienced exclusionary behavior.
- » Racial/ethnic groups differ on how they view climate for themselves compared to other groups. In particular, non-African Americans overestimate the level of respect toward African Americans. For example, many (47 percent) African American undergraduate respondents reported that

the climate at Berkeley was “Respectful” or “Very Respectful” for African Americans, while a majority of Asian (89 percent) and white (87 percent) undergraduates reported a respectful climate for African Americans.

- » Exclusion occurs most often in classrooms, work spaces, and public spaces. Roughly two in five undergraduate respondents who reported experiencing exclusion within the past year indicated that it took place in classes, labs, and clinical settings (42 percent) as well as in public spaces (39 percent). Over half (55 percent) of graduate students said it took place in classes, labs, and clinical settings. Almost half (49 percent) of faculty and almost one third (32 percent) of staff who reported experiencing exclusion said it took place in meetings with other people.
- » Climate varies widely by department. Some department respondents are more comfortable within their department compared to campus, while others are more comfortable on campus than within their department. Only a handful of respondents are uncomfortable both within their department and on campus overall.

In the fall of 2014, the findings for each control unit, division, school, and college were shared with their respective leadership who were then expected to develop action plans to address negative climate. As a result of these survey findings, in 2014, Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas B. Dirks announced a series of initial steps and decisions in support of the goals and aspirations regarding campus climate at Berkeley. He subsequently awarded funding through the campus budget process to the Division of Equity & Inclusion to support and implement new projects and ideas. These projects include:

- » A new undergraduate course in intergroup dialogue in which students will develop the language and capacity for dialogue in a diverse society as well as the skills to work with differences and conflicts as opportunities for deeper understanding.
- » The Faculty Leadership Series on Inclusive Classroom and Departmental Practices will engage faculty from across the Berkeley campus in a series of structured, peer-lead dialogues on inclusivity in

classroom and departmental practices.

- » All 800 graduate student instructors (GSIs) will receive training on diversity and inclusion in classroom and teaching practices. The training will also feed into ongoing graduate-level pedagogy courses.
- » Funding is being used to continue the Innovation Grants (see page 58) to spur innovative practices that address exclusion, build intergroup connections, and create a more welcoming campus climate.
- » Campus offices and student organizations will coordinate a series of town halls and symposia to engage students, staff, and faculty in the dialogue and discussion of campus climate, diversity, and inclusion.
- » The campus’s Multicultural Education Program (see page 51) will continue to provide open enrollment and customized workshops.
- » Staff-focused projects will be added to improve the diversity of senior level staff and management, including the Next Opportunity at Work (NOW) Conference and a pilot program for professionals of color.

“Some people have said that these findings are not surprising, while for others the data really opened their eyes. The fact that most exclusion occurs in classrooms was new information. And now GSIs have undergone training to improve classroom climate,” Eppig said.

More recently, in 2015, Chancellor Dirks and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Claude Steele launched the Berkeley **African American Initiative**, a comprehensive effort to achieve a critical mass of African American students, faculty, and staff, and to improve the social and academic support for current and future African Americans at Berkeley. The initiative announcement directly quoted findings from Eppig’s work that found that African Americans felt the least respected at Berkeley.

Eppig said, “It is notable to me just how much Berkeley reflects our broader society and that it’s not much different from American society as a

whole. These problems aren't unique to Berkeley, but at the same time there's no 'Berkeley bubble' that protects people."

"We live in a world where people respond well to data, especially those who control budgets and make decisions," Eppig concluded. "When you can bring something that distills the story in five minutes and we tell them we have good evidence on what's going on, they're saying, 'Oh, that doesn't look good...what can we do to improve the climate on campus and in our departments?'"

The Catalyst Moment

A compelling data-driven story can galvanize action on improving campus climate.

Best Practices

- » When analyzing results, disaggregate repeatedly. For example, Eppig was able to disaggregate the very large Asian American population into smaller groups, such as East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander, yielding more precise and nuanced findings.
- » Survey at the local or department level. "You need to disentangle a campus effect from a local effect," Eppig said.
- » Dedicate resources and staff to collect and analyze diversity-related data. Berkeley has a full-time analyst who is funded by the Division of Equity & Inclusion. This level of support and expertise is allowing Berkeley to be at the forefront of this type of work.

Lessons Learned

- » Ask fewer questions. Berkeley's survey had more than 100 questions, and there were many incomplete surveys. Fewer questions may have increased response rates.
- » Ask better questions on sexual harassment — not just sexual assaults — to examine sexual violence as a continuum of behavior.
- » Heavily promote the survey administration across all departments. Low response rates in smaller departments made it difficult to interpret those results.

What's Next

- » Tools and sample questions will be provided for departments to create their own follow-up surveys.
- » Eppig will publish historical trends of faculty hiring that compares the faculty availability pool to faculty applicants and hires by discipline, race/ethnicity, and gender. This information will be shared with deans to assess their progress in diversifying the faculty in their departments.