

OFFICE OF



INSTITUTIONAL
ENGAGEMENT
& EXCELLENCE

GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

2026

CAMPUS CLIMATE

SURVEY REPORT

Building Community, Belonging, and Student Success

Prepared by:
Office of Institutional Engagement and Excellence
August 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Governors State University is committed to creating a campus environment where every student and employee feels welcomed, supported, valued, and empowered to succeed. The findings in this report reflect both our strengths and our opportunities for growth. We are grateful to everyone who participated in the Campus Climate Survey and stakeholder forums. Your voices will help shape the future of our institution and guide our efforts to strengthen belonging, engagement, and student success.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	Executive Summary
03	I. Introduction and Methodology
04	II. Climate for Diversity and Equity
06	III. Belonging and Community
07	IV. Institutional Commitment to Diversity and Equity
08	V. Interaction & Comfort Across Differences
09	VI. Discrimination and Harassment
10	VII. Reporting and Awareness
11	VIII. Stakeholder Forum Feedback
13	IX. Recommendations
15	X. Continuous Improvement
16	Appendix

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

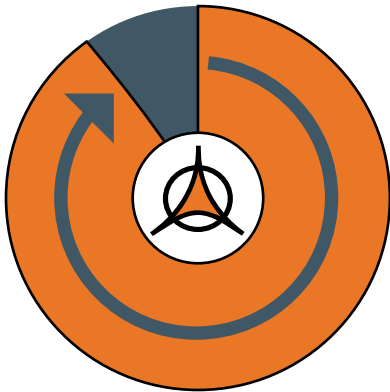
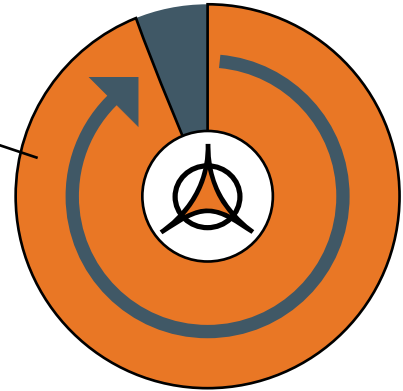
October 20 – November 20, 2025

Total Respondents = 711

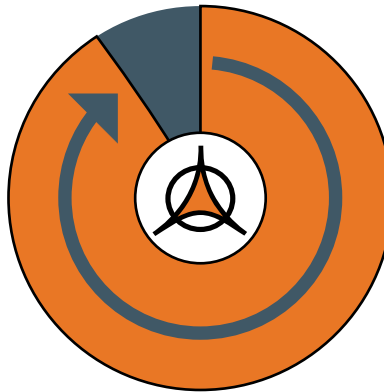
Overall Climate Satisfaction = 84%

2023 Climate Satisfaction = 81%

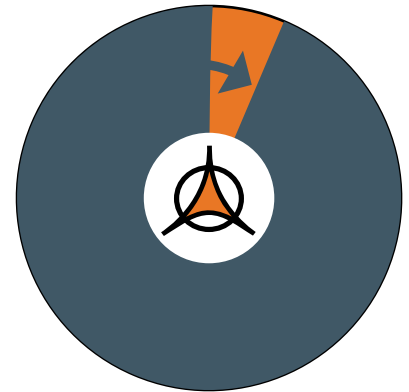
Change Since Previous Survey = +3 Percentage Points



BELONGING
76%



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT
78%



DISCRIMINATION / HARASSMENT
14%

COMPARISON TO PEER INSTITUTIONS

Above Average Across Most Indicators

KEY STRENGTHS

- Positive overall climate
- Strong perceptions of diversity and inclusion
- High levels of interaction across difference
- Strong sense of belonging
- Positive perceptions of institutional commitment

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Communication and transparency
- Student success and persistence
- Trust and accountability
- Awareness of resources
- Reporting process understanding

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Governors State University is committed to fostering a campus environment where students and employees feel welcomed, valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of our campus community is essential to advancing student success, employee engagement, institutional effectiveness, and a culture of belonging.

To support this commitment, Governors State University participated in the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Campus Climate Survey during the Fall 2025 semester. The survey provides insight into perceptions of campus climate, belonging, institutional commitment, interactions across difference, discrimination and harassment, and awareness of reporting resources and processes.

This report presents the results of the survey, comparisons with peer institutions, and feedback collected through a series of stakeholder forums. Together, these findings provide a comprehensive view of the campus experience and identify both institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The purpose of this report is to inform reflection, dialogue, planning, and action. By listening to the voices of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, Governors State University can continue strengthening a campus culture that promotes belonging, engagement, well-being, and success for all members of the university community.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Administration

The Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Campus Climate Survey was administered between October 20 and November 20, 2025. HEDS is a nationally recognized consortium that assists colleges and universities in collecting and analyzing institutional data to support planning, assessment, and improvement efforts. The survey was administered electronically and distributed to students, faculty, staff, and administrators across the university.

The Campus Climate Survey is conducted at Governors State University on a three-year cycle and is designed to assess perceptions and experiences related to campus climate, belonging, institutional commitment, interactions across difference, discrimination and harassment, and reporting awareness. Standardized survey instruments and reporting methodologies provided by HEDS allow participating institutions to compare results with peer institutions and national benchmarks.

Respondents

A total of 711 individuals participated in the survey, representing a broad cross-section of the university community. Respondents included undergraduate students (28%), graduate students (23%), faculty (17%), and staff/administrators (28%), with a small number not identifying a role. The majority of respondents identified as women (68%), followed by men (31%) and non-binary individuals (1%). Respondents also represented a diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, with White (39%) and African American/Black (33%) respondents comprising the largest groups (Table 1).

The diversity of the respondent pool provides important insight into the experiences and perceptions of the Governors State University community across multiple identities and perspectives.

Stakeholder Forums

Following the release of the preliminary survey findings, the Office of Institutional Engagement and Excellence facilitated a series of virtual stakeholder forums to gather additional feedback and context. Participation across forums ranged from approximately 15 to 65 participants.

The forums were organized around six focus areas:

- Community and Belonging
- Student Success, Belonging, and Persistence
- Leadership and Institutional Culture
- Faculty Experience
- Staff Workplace Experience
- Diversity and Inclusion Experience

Participants reviewed preliminary survey findings and engaged in structured activities designed to identify strengths, concerns, opportunities, and recommendations. Feedback from these discussions was analyzed and organized into common themes that informed the recommendations presented in this report.

Guiding Principles

The analysis and recommendations contained in this report are guided by several core principles:

- Continuous Improvement
- Student and Employee Success
- Belonging and Community
- Equity and Access
- Accountability and Transparency
- Data-Informed Decision Making

These principles reflect the University's commitment to using assessment results to strengthen institutional effectiveness and improve the experiences of all members of the campus community.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

ROLE			GENDER			RACE		
	N	%		N	%		N	%
Undergraduate Student	200	28	Man	222	31	AfricanAmerican / Black	236	33
Grad Student	165	23	Non-Binary	7	1	Asian	24	3
Faculty	123	17	Woman	482	68	Hispanic/ Latino	66	9
Staff/Admin	199	28				International	35	5
Blank	24	3				Multiple	31	4
						White	275	39
						Other	22	3
						Blanks	20	3

II. CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Overview

Campus climate for diversity and equity reflects how members of the university community perceive the institution's commitment to creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel respected, valued, and supported. Positive perceptions in this area contribute to belonging, engagement, student success, and employee satisfaction.

Overall Findings

Overall, respondents reported favorable perceptions of Governors State University's climate for diversity and equity. The University's overall satisfaction score was 4.21 on a five-point scale, representing an 84% satisfaction rate and an increase from 81% reported in the 2023 Campus Climate Survey.

When compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University performed favorably, exceeding comparison institutions on measures related to diversity, equity, and campus climate. Results were generally positive across demographic groups, with the highest levels of satisfaction reported among graduate students, international respondents, and respondents identifying as African American/Black. Faculty also reported particularly strong perceptions of the University's climate for diversity and equity.

While perceptions were positive overall, some variation existed across demographic groups. Hispanic/Latino respondents, individuals identifying with multiple races/ethnicities, and some employee populations reported somewhat lower satisfaction levels than the institutional average. Although these groups still reported generally positive perceptions, their responses suggest opportunities to continue strengthening communication, engagement, and consistency of experience across the institution (**Table 2**).

TABLE 2: SATISFACTION WITH CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND EQUITY										
	Diversity		Undergrad Student		Grad Student		Faculty		Staff/Admin	
	AVG	%	AVG	%	AVG	%	AVG	%	AVG	%
ALL	4.21	84	4.18	84	4.30	86	3.92	78	4.08	82
Man	4.18	84	4.4	88	4.36	87	3.67	73	4.12	82
Non-Bi	3.67	73	4.00	80	5.00	100	3.00	60	-	-
Woman	4.24	85	4.37	87	4.41	88	3.88	78	4.20	84
African American/ Black	4.23	85	4.38	88	4.43	89	4.43	89	4.27	85
Asian	4.33	87	5.00	100	4.33	87	4.00	80	4.00	80
Hispanic/ Latino	4.15	83	4.20	84	4.25	85	3.50	70	3.92	78
International	4.40	88	4.50	90	4.60	92	-	-	4.00	80
Multiple	4.12	82	4.20	84	4.25	85	2.00	40	3.50	70
White	4.20	84	4.38	88	4.60	92	3.65	73	4.12	82
Other	4.10	82	4.33	87	4.00	80	3.50	70	4.50	90

While overall results were favorable, satisfaction varied modestly across demographic groups. Graduate students reported the highest levels of satisfaction, followed by undergraduate students and staff/administrators. Faculty reported the lowest satisfaction levels among the major respondent groups, though perceptions remained generally positive.

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that diversity and equity remain important strengths of the Governors State University experience. Satisfaction with campus climate for diversity and equity increased since the previous survey and exceeded peer institution benchmarks. While perceptions were positive across most groups, continued attention to communication, engagement, and the experiences of specific populations can help ensure that all members of the university community experience the institution's commitment to diversity, equity, belonging, and student success.

III. BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

Overview

Belonging and community are important indicators of campus climate and contribute significantly to student success, employee engagement, well-being, and institutional commitment. Individuals who feel connected to the university community are more likely to participate in campus life, persist through challenges, and experience positive educational and workplace outcomes.

Overall Findings

Overall, respondents reported positive perceptions of belonging and community at Governors State University. Survey results indicate that most students and employees feel respected, valued, and connected to the university community. Respondents generally reported a strong sense of belonging and positive relationships with peers, faculty, staff, and colleagues.

Compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University performed favorably on measures related to belonging, community, and interpersonal connection. Respondents were more likely than their peers to report feeling welcomed, supported, and accepted as members of the campus community.

Positive perceptions of belonging were observed across most demographic groups, with particularly strong results among graduate students, international respondents, and individuals identifying as African American/Black. Faculty and staff also reported generally positive perceptions of community and workplace connection.

While the findings are encouraging, some demographic groups reported lower levels of belonging than the institutional average. Responses suggest opportunities to further strengthen engagement, connection, and awareness of opportunities for involvement, particularly among populations that may experience the campus differently due to role, identity, or level of engagement. (**Table 3**).

TABLE 3: KEY BELONGING & COMMUNITY INDICATORS (AGGREGATED)

Measure	N	Favorable %	Neutral %	Unfavorable %	Mean
Personal sense of belonging (climate item)	716	76.2%	14.1%	9.7%	4.04
Perceived belonging of others	713	71.9%	17.9%	10.1%	3.93
“I feel like I belong at GovState”	629	79.5%	15.9%	4.7%	4.16
“I feel connected to my peers at GovState”	628	77.3%	15.4%	7.2%	4.14

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that belonging and community are among Governors State University’s greatest strengths. Most respondents reported feeling welcomed, respected, and connected to the campus community, and the University performed favorably when compared to peer institutions. These results reflect a strong foundation for student and employee success while also highlighting opportunities to further strengthen engagement and connection across all segments of the university community.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Overview

Institutional commitment reflects the extent to which students and employees believe the University values diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion and actively works to create an environment where all individuals can thrive. Perceptions of institutional commitment influence trust, engagement, belonging, and confidence in the University's ability to support its community members.

Overall Findings

Respondents reported positive perceptions of Governors State University's commitment to diversity and equity. Most students and employees indicated that the University values diversity, promotes an inclusive environment, and demonstrates support for individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

Compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University performed favorably on measures related to institutional commitment. Respondents generally rated the University's efforts higher than those reported at comparable institutions, reflecting confidence in the institution's values and commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

Positive perceptions were observed across most demographic groups, with particularly strong responses among graduate students, African American/Black respondents, international respondents, and women. Faculty, staff, and students generally agreed that diversity and inclusion are important institutional priorities and that the University has made meaningful efforts to support these values.

While the findings are encouraging, some respondents expressed less certainty regarding specific institutional actions, resources, and initiatives. These responses suggest opportunities to strengthen communication, increase awareness of ongoing efforts, and provide greater visibility into how institutional priorities are translated into action. (Table 4).

TABLE 4: KEY INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT INDICATORS

Measure	N	Favorable %	Neutral %	Unfavorable %	Mean
Senior leadership demonstrates commitment to diversity & equity	711	78.1%	15.7%	6.2%	4.10
Recruitment of historically marginalized groups is a priority	709	74.6%	17.5%	7.9%	4.03
Retention of historically marginalized groups is a priority	706	71.8%	19.0%	9.2%	3.96
Campus environment is free from tensions related to difference	708	56.9%	22.6%	20.5%	3.53

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that respondents view Governors State University as an institution that values diversity, equity, belonging, and inclusion. Compared to peer institutions, GovState performed favorably on measures of institutional commitment, indicating that these values are recognized across the campus community. Continued efforts to communicate initiatives, highlight progress, and increase awareness of available resources can further strengthen understanding of the University's commitment and enhance confidence in institutional efforts.

V. INTERACTION AND COMFORT ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Overview

Interaction across difference is an important indicator of campus climate because it reflects how frequently individuals engage with people whose backgrounds, identities, experiences, or perspectives differ from their own. Meaningful interaction across difference contributes to learning, personal growth, community building, and preparation for participation in an increasingly diverse and interconnected society.

This section examines both the frequency of interaction and the level of comfort respondents experience when engaging with individuals from different racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, political, gender, and social identities.

Overall Findings

Overall, respondents reported frequent interaction with individuals from backgrounds different from their own and generally expressed high levels of comfort engaging across those differences. The findings suggest that diversity at Governors State University is experienced not only through representation but also through meaningful interaction among students and employees.

Respondents reported the highest levels of interaction across race and ethnicity, age, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Comfort levels were also generally favorable, with most respondents indicating that they feel comfortable interacting with individuals whose experiences, perspectives, and identities differ from their own.

Compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University performed favorably on measures related to interaction and comfort across difference. Respondents reported both higher frequencies of interaction and stronger levels of comfort than many comparison institutions, suggesting that diversity is an active and visible component of the campus experience.

While comfort levels were positive overall, some differences emerged across specific identity categories. Consistent with national trends, respondents reported lower levels of interaction with individuals who are undocumented, individuals with disabilities, and individuals whose first language is not English. Comfort levels related to political differences were also somewhat lower than those reported for other identity groups, reflecting broader societal trends (**Table 5**).

TABLE 5: INTERACTION & COMFORT ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Identity Dimension	Regular Interaction %	Comfortable Interacting %	Pattern Observed
Race / Ethnicity	High	Very High	Frequent interaction paired with strong comfort
Socioeconomic Background	High	Very High	Comfort exceeds frequency of interaction
Gender	High	Very High	Strong alignment between interaction and comfort
Sexual Orientation	Moderate–High	Very High	Comfort outpaces interaction
Age / Generation	High	Very High	One of the strongest alignment areas
Religion	Moderate	High	Comfort remains strong despite lower interaction
Disability	Lower	Moderate–High	Limited exposure; openness remains
Non-Native English Speakers	Lower	Moderate–High	Comfort higher than interaction
Undocumented Immigrants	Low	Moderate	Least frequent interaction; higher neutrality
Political Views	Moderate–High	Mixed	Interaction common; comfort more divided

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that interaction and engagement across difference are among Governors State University's greatest strengths. Respondents reported frequent interaction with individuals from diverse backgrounds and generally expressed high levels of comfort engaging across differences. Compared to peer institutions, GovState performed favorably on these measures, indicating that diversity contributes positively to learning, community, and the overall campus experience. Continued opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and engagement can further strengthen these positive outcomes.

VI. DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Overview

Experiences with discrimination and harassment are important indicators of campus climate because they can affect an individual's sense of belonging, safety, engagement, and well-being. Understanding these experiences helps institutions identify areas where barriers may exist and informs efforts to create a respectful and supportive environment for all members of the campus community.

This section examines respondents' experiences with discrimination and harassment, exposure to insensitive or disparaging remarks, and perceptions of the campus environment as it relates to respect and inclusion.

Overall Findings

Overall, most respondents reported that they had not personally experienced discrimination or harassment at Governors State University. Similarly, most respondents indicated that they rarely or never encountered insensitive or disparaging remarks directed toward themselves or others.

Compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University reported lower rates of discrimination and harassment. Approximately 14% of respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination or harassment, compared to approximately 16% among peer institutions. Respondents also generally reported lower levels of exposure to insensitive remarks than those reported by comparison institutions.

Among those who reported experiences of discrimination or harassment, incidents most commonly involved comments or behaviors related to race or ethnicity, political viewpoints, gender, age, religion, disability, or other aspects of identity. Students were identified most frequently as the source of insensitive remarks, followed by employees and other members of the campus community.

While experiences varied across demographic groups, the findings generally align with national trends in higher education, where members of historically marginalized populations are more likely to report experiences of discrimination or harassment than the campus population overall (**Table 6**).

TABLE 6. FREQUENCY OF HEARING INSENSITIVE OR DISPARAGING REMARKS

Identity Dimension	Rarely / Sometimes	Often / Very Often	Pattern Observed
Race / Ethnicity	Majority	Minority	Present but not pervasive
Sexual Orientation	Majority	Small minority	Lower overall frequency
Gender / Gender Identity	Majority	Minority	Varies by context
Socioeconomic Background	Majority	Minority	Present but uneven
Religion	Majority	Small minority	Less frequent
Disability	Strong majority	Very small minority	Least reported
Immigration Status	Strong majority	Very small minority	Limited exposure
Political Views	Majority	Notable minority	Most commonly reported
Age / Generation	Majority	Minority	Moderate frequency
Language Background	Strong majority	Very small minority	Least reported

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that the majority of respondents experience Governors State University as a respectful and welcoming environment and do not report personal experiences with discrimination or harassment. Compared to peer institutions, GovState reported lower rates of discrimination and harassment and lower exposure to insensitive remarks. At the same time, the experiences reported by some members of the community highlight the importance of continuing efforts to promote respect, awareness, accountability, and support for all students and employees.

VII. REPORTING AWARENESS

Overview

Awareness of reporting resources and processes is an important component of a healthy campus climate. Community members are more likely to seek assistance, report concerns, and access support when they understand available resources and have confidence in institutional processes. Measuring reporting awareness helps institutions identify opportunities to strengthen communication, transparency, and trust.

This section examines respondents' awareness of reporting resources, understanding of reporting procedures, and reporting behaviors related to discrimination, harassment, and other campus concerns.

Overall Findings

Overall, respondents demonstrated moderate to high levels of awareness regarding reporting resources and support services at Governors State University. Most respondents indicated that they know whom to contact if they experience or witness discrimination, harassment, or other concerning behaviors.

While awareness of reporting contacts was generally strong, respondents reported lower levels of understanding regarding the reporting process itself. Questions related to how reports are investigated, what outcomes may occur, and how information is communicated generated more neutral responses than questions related to awareness of reporting contacts. These findings suggest that many individuals know where to seek assistance but may be less familiar with what happens after a report is submitted.

Among respondents who experienced discrimination or harassment, many indicated that they did not formally report the incident. Common reasons included believing the issue was not serious enough to report, uncertainty that reporting would result in action, preferring to address the situation independently, or lack of familiarity with available reporting options.

Compared to peer institutions participating in the HEDS Campus Climate Survey, Governors State University demonstrated reporting awareness levels that were generally comparable to or slightly higher than national averages. Similar to peer institutions, respondents expressed greater confidence in knowing where to report concerns than in understanding the details of the reporting process (**Table 7**).

TABLE 7 (AWARENESS, BEHAVIOR, AND REPORTING)

Measure	N	Favorable %	Neutral %	Unfavorable %	Pattern Observed
Know whom to contact					Generally positive
Process is clear					Mixed
Incident reported					Less common
Incident not reported					More common
Know whom to contact to report an incident	~710	Majority	Notable	Minority	General awareness present
Reporting process is clear	~708	Moderate	Higher neutrality	Minority	Clarity less consistent
Investigation process is clear	~706	Moderate	Highest neutrality	Minority	Least understood area

Key Takeaway

The findings suggest that awareness of reporting resources at Governors State University is generally strong, with most respondents indicating that they know where to seek assistance or report concerns. Consistent with national trends, respondents reported greater awareness of reporting contacts than understanding of reporting procedures and outcomes. Continued efforts to increase visibility, communication, and understanding of institutional processes can help strengthen confidence in reporting systems and ensure that students and employees feel informed and supported when concerns arise.

VIII. STAKEHOLDER AND FORUM FEEDBACK

Overview

Following the release of the preliminary Campus Climate Survey findings, Governors State University conducted a series of stakeholder forums to gather feedback, reactions, and recommendations from members of the campus community. While the survey provided valuable quantitative data regarding perceptions and experiences, the forums offered an opportunity to better understand the context behind the findings and identify priorities for future action.

The forums were designed to encourage reflection, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving. Participants were asked to review the preliminary findings, discuss areas of strength and opportunity, and provide recommendations for strengthening the campus climate and supporting student and employee success.

Feedback from the forums was reviewed and analyzed to identify common themes, concerns, and opportunities. The findings presented in this section informed the recommendations and next steps outlined later in this report.

Forum Process and Participation

Six virtual stakeholder forums were conducted during Spring 2026. Participation ranged from approximately 15 to 65 individuals per session and included students, faculty, staff, administrators, and other members of the university community.

Each session included:

- A presentation of the preliminary Campus Climate Survey findings
- Discussion of key survey results
- An interactive activity aligned with the forum topic
- Collection of participant feedback and recommendations

The following stakeholder forums were conducted:

- Community and Belonging
- Student Success, Belonging and Persistence
- Leadership and Institutional Culture
- Faculty Experience
- Staff Workplace Experience
- Diversity and Inclusion Experience

Overarching Themes

Although each forum focused on a different aspect of campus climate, several themes emerged consistently across multiple stakeholder groups.

Communication and Transparency

Communication was the most frequently discussed topic across all forums. Participants expressed a desire for greater awareness of institutional initiatives, resources, decisions, and opportunities for involvement. Participants indicated that communication influences trust, engagement, and confidence in the institution.

Belonging and Connection

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of feeling connected to the university community. Relationships with faculty, staff, peers, supervisors, and colleagues were frequently identified as important contributors to positive experiences and success.

Student Success and Support

Participants viewed campus climate as closely connected to student success. Advising, mentoring, engagement opportunities, faculty support, and access to resources were frequently identified as important factors influencing student persistence and achievement.

Trust and Accountability

Many participants discussed the importance of trust in leadership, institutional processes, and decision-making. Participants expressed a desire for greater visibility regarding actions taken in response to feedback and concerns.

Engagement and Community Building

Participants identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration, engagement, and relationship-building across departments, populations, and campus constituencies.

Awareness of Resources and Opportunities

Several participants noted that resources often exist but are not always well known. Increased communication and visibility of support services, programs, and opportunities emerged as recurring recommendations.

FOCUS GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Community and Belonging

Participants described Governors State University as welcoming, diverse, and relationship-centered. Belonging was frequently associated with supportive relationships, engagement opportunities, mentorship, and feeling valued as a member of the community.

Student Success, Belonging and Persistence

Participants emphasized the strong relationship between belonging and student success. Students are more likely to persist when they feel connected, supported, informed, and engaged. Faculty and staff relationships were identified as important contributors to persistence and achievement.

Leadership and Institutional Culture

Participants generally recognized the University's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and student success. At the same time, they expressed a desire for greater communication, transparency, and visibility regarding institutional decisions and priorities.

Faculty Experience

Faculty participants emphasized communication, shared governance, professional support, workload balance, and opportunities for engagement in institutional decision-making.

Staff Workplace Experience

Staff participants identified communication, recognition, professional development, and supervisory effectiveness as important factors influencing workplace climate and employee satisfaction.

Diversity and Inclusion Experience

Participants consistently identified diversity as one of the University's greatest strengths. They expressed appreciation for opportunities to engage with individuals from different backgrounds and emphasized the importance of continuing educational, cultural, and community-building initiatives.

Key Takeaway

The stakeholder forums largely reinforced the survey findings. Participants expressed pride in Governors State University's diversity, welcoming environment, and commitment to student success while also identifying opportunities to strengthen communication, transparency, trust, engagement, and awareness of resources. Together, the survey findings and stakeholder feedback provide a strong foundation for continuous improvement and informed action.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The recommendations presented in this report are informed by three primary sources: (1) the 2026 Campus Climate Survey findings, (2) comparative data from peer institutions participating in the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Campus Climate Survey, and (3) feedback collected through stakeholder forums involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Overall, the findings indicate that Governors State University possesses many strengths, particularly in the areas of diversity, belonging, institutional commitment, and engagement across difference. Respondents reported positive perceptions across most climate indicators, and the University performed favorably when compared to peer institutions. At the same time, survey findings and stakeholder feedback identified opportunities to strengthen communication, trust, engagement, awareness of resources, and support systems that contribute to student and employee success.

The recommendations below are intended to guide institutional planning, continuous improvement efforts, and campus-wide conversations over the next three years.

Recommendation Area 1: Communication and Transparency

Communication emerged as the most consistent theme across survey findings and stakeholder forums. Strengthening communication and transparency can increase awareness of institutional priorities, available resources, and decision-making processes while fostering greater trust, engagement, and confidence in the institution through the following actions:

- Increase communication regarding institutional priorities, decisions, and initiatives.
- Improve awareness of programs, services, and resources available to students and employees.
- Share progress related to strategic goals, student success efforts, and climate initiatives.
- Demonstrate how stakeholder feedback informs institutional decisions and actions.
- Utilize multiple communication channels to reach diverse campus audiences.

Recommendation Area 2: Student Success, Belonging and Persistence

Survey findings and stakeholder feedback reinforce the strong relationship between campus climate, belonging, and student success. Strengthening support systems and opportunities for connection can help students feel more engaged, supported, and connected to the institution, resulting in improved persistence and academic success through the following actions:

- Expand mentoring, coaching, and peer-support opportunities.
- Strengthen advising accessibility and effectiveness.
- Increase awareness and utilization of student support services.
- Expand engagement opportunities for commuter, transfer, adult, graduate, and first-year students.
- Continue initiatives that address barriers to persistence and completion.

Recommendation Area 3: Leadership, Trust, and Accountability

Stakeholder feedback consistently emphasized the importance of leadership visibility, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability. Strengthening these areas can increase confidence in institutional leadership, decision-making processes, and organizational responsiveness through the following actions:

- Increase opportunities for stakeholder feedback and participation.
- Improve visibility of institutional actions and outcomes.
- Strengthen leadership and supervisory development initiatives.
- Enhance communication regarding decisions and their rationale.
- Develop mechanisms for reporting progress on key institutional initiatives.

Recommendation Area 4: Community Engagement and Employee Experience

Belonging and connection emerged as important contributors to both student success and employee satisfaction. Expanding opportunities for engagement, collaboration, recognition, and professional growth can strengthen community connections and enhance the overall campus experience through the following actions:

- Expand opportunities for community-building and cross-campus engagement.
- Increase recognition and appreciation efforts for students and employees.
- Support professional development and leadership development opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration across departments and divisions.
- Continue fostering a culture of respect, belonging, and engagement.

Recommendation Area 5: Diversity, Pluralism, and Engagement Across Difference

The survey findings indicate that diversity and interaction across difference remain among Governors State University's greatest strengths and distinguishing characteristics. Continuing to cultivate opportunities for dialogue, learning, and engagement can reinforce a campus culture where differences are valued and diverse perspectives contribute positively to learning, community, and institutional success through the following actions:

- Continue supporting educational, cultural, and community-building programming.
- Expand opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and engagement across differences.
- Promote pluralism, perspective-taking, and civil discourse.
- Increase awareness of diverse identities, experiences, and viewpoints.
- Continue assessing climate indicators related to diversity, belonging, and engagement.

Recommendation Area 6: Awareness of Resources and Institutional Processes

While respondents generally reported knowing where to seek assistance and access resources, stakeholder feedback suggested opportunities to strengthen awareness, understanding, and confidence in institutional processes. Improving visibility and understanding of available resources can help ensure that students and employees feel informed, supported, and confident in their ability to access assistance when needed through the following actions:

- Increase education regarding available resources and support services.
- Improve communication regarding reporting procedures and institutional processes.
- Strengthen awareness of student and employee assistance resources.
- Ensure information is accessible, visible, and easy to navigate.
- Regularly assess awareness and utilization of campus resources.

Recommended Institutional Priorities (2026 – 2029)

While all recommendations are important, survey findings, peer comparisons, and stakeholder feedback suggest the following priorities may have the greatest impact on campus climate and institutional effectiveness:

1. Communication and Transparency
2. Student Success, Belonging, and Persistence
3. Leadership, Trust, and Accountability
4. Community Engagement and Employee Experience
5. Diversity, Pluralism, and Engagement Across Difference
6. Awareness of Resources and Institutional Processes

These priorities emerged consistently across multiple data sources and represent opportunities to build upon existing strengths while addressing areas identified for continued growth.

X. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The findings of the 2026 Campus Climate Survey provide Governors State University with an opportunity to build upon existing strengths while addressing areas identified for continued growth. The survey findings, comparative data, and stakeholder feedback collectively affirm many positive aspects of the campus experience, including diversity, belonging, institutional commitment, and engagement across difference.

The recommendations outlined in this report are intended to guide ongoing planning, decision-making, and assessment efforts over the next three years. As the University moves forward, attention should be focused on strengthening communication and transparency, supporting student success and persistence, fostering trust and accountability, enhancing community engagement, promoting diversity and pluralism, and increasing awareness of resources and institutional processes.

Creating and sustaining a positive campus climate is a shared responsibility. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and campus partners all play an important role in fostering an environment where individuals feel welcomed, valued, respected, and supported. Progress should be reviewed periodically through existing planning and assessment processes, stakeholder feedback, and future campus climate assessments to ensure continuous learning and improvement.

Final Reflection

The findings of the 2026 Campus Climate Survey reveal a university community with many strengths and a strong foundation for continued growth. Respondents reported positive perceptions across most climate indicators, and Governors State University performed favorably when compared to peer institutions. The survey and stakeholder forums also identified opportunities to strengthen communication, trust, engagement, and awareness of resources that support both students and employees.

Most importantly, the findings reinforce the connection between campus climate and institutional success. A positive climate contributes to student engagement, belonging, persistence, retention, and completion, while also supporting employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The results further highlight the importance of collaboration, diversity, equity, inclusion, and meaningful engagement across difference as essential components of a thriving university community.

Campus climate is not a destination but an ongoing process of listening, learning, and improving. By building upon its strengths and continuing to invest in student success, employee well-being, community engagement, and inclusive excellence, Governors State University can continue to cultivate a campus environment where all members of the community are empowered to learn, contribute, succeed, and belong.



APPENDIX

HEDS Survey Methodology

<https://www.govst.edu/HEDS-Survey-Methodology>

HEDS Campus Climate Survey Instrument

<https://www.govst.edu/HEDS-Campus-Climate-Survey-Instrument>

HEDS Survey Timeline and Activities

<https://www.govst.edu/HEDS-Survey-Timeline-and-Activities>

Request for Climate Survey Participation

<https://www.govst.edu/Request-for-Climate-Survey-Participation>

Respondent Demographics

<https://www.govst.edu/Respondent-Demographics>

Peer Comparison

<https://www.govst.edu/Peer-Comparison>

Climate Survey Methodology

<https://www.govst.edu/Climate-Survey-Methodology>

Stakeholder Feedback Themes

<https://www.govst.edu/Stakeholder-Feedback-Themes>

2023 Campus Climate Survey Results

<https://www.govst.edu/2023-Campus-Climate-Survey-Results>

