

Dartmouth Community Study FAQs

Why did Dartmouth conduct a study?

Dartmouth seeks to be a community distinguished by creative and dynamic scholarship, where students are engaged in learning both in and out of the classroom, and where we attract the very best faculty and staff. To achieve this we must identify ways we can foster an inclusive and welcoming environment so that each member of the community has the potential to thrive and fully contribute to our academic mission.

In addition to helping us understand the experiences of our faculty, students, and staff, study findings will help us develop specific actions and initiatives to strengthen the campus environment.

Who conducted the study?

A working group of faculty, students, and staff organized this study. We contracted with [Rankin & Associates](#), a faculty-led group of national experts in the study of campus culture and climate, to help guide our initial efforts.

- Denise Anthony, Vice Provost for Academic Initiatives, Professor of Sociology, Chair
- Alicia Betsinger, Associate Provost of Institutional Research
- Oscar Cornejo, Jr. '17
- Evelyn M. Ellis, Vice President for Institutional Diversity & Equity
- Spencer Hatch GR
- Leslie P. Henderson, PhD Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, and Professor of Physiology and Neurobiology at Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth
- Punam Keller, Associate Dean For Innovation And Growth; Charles Henry Jones Third Century Professor of Management, Tuck School of Business
- Reese C. Kelly, Interim Director, Office of Pluralism and Leadership, Director, Center for Gender and Student Engagement and Lecturer, Women's and Gender Studies
- Heather Lindkvist, Title IX Coordinator/Clery Act Compliance Officer
- Lorin Parker, Human Resources Director for Training & Development, Interim Director for Employee Relations
- Israel Reyes, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese

Why was an external consultant used?

In reviewing efforts by other colleges and universities to conduct similar projects, several best practices were identified. One was the need for external expertise in survey administration. Surveys on sensitive subjects like learning, working, and living environments that are led by an independent, outside agency are likely to yield higher response rates and provide more credible findings. We also wanted all community members to feel they could respond honestly and confidentially without any fear of retaliation. In addition, Rankin is led by Susan Rankin, PhD, a nationally recognized scholar and expert on studies of campus climate and inclusivity.

What was the study timeline?

In Spring 2015 the Working Group collaborated with Rankin & Associates to review relevant data, conduct focus groups with community members, and begin development of the campus-wide survey.

In October 2015 all faculty, students, and staff were invited to participate in a campus-wide survey about their experiences at Dartmouth. The survey was administered by Rankin & Associates who also analyzed the data.

In Spring 2016 the [final report](#) and an executive summary from Rankin & Associates was shared with the campus community.

How were survey questions developed?

The survey was developed by the members of the Working Group with guidance from Rankin & Associates. Rankin & Associates has administered similar surveys at more than 175 colleges and universities. The Working Group selected survey questions from Rankin's existing, validated set of questions, editing them to be specific to Dartmouth. Focus groups conducted in Spring 2015 helped identify themes that were especially relevant to Dartmouth.

Why was this a population survey?

A population survey allows maximum participation and inclusion of all voices; hence, the survey was open to all students, faculty, and staff at Dartmouth.

Who was invited to participate in the survey?

All faculty, students, and staff were invited to participate. The survey was

voluntary and was open from October 6-November 6, 2015.

How was confidentiality protected?

No information that would personally identify a respondent was needed to take the survey, that is, no personal information such as names or IDs were asked in the survey. In addition, no potentially personally identifiable will be shared in any presentations or publications resulting from the study.

Neither Dartmouth nor Rankin & Associates will report data for an identified group (e.g., new faculty members in Thayer) where the number of individuals in that group is less than five. Identifiable comments submitted for open-ended questions will not be shared with Dartmouth or in the final report (only deidentified summaries compiled by Rankin will be made available).

How was the survey advertised?

Numerous avenues were used to promote the survey at Dartmouth, including but not limited to posters, postcards, table tents, emails from campus leaders, Facebook, and ads in The Dartmouth.

How was the survey administered?

The survey was administered as a web survey and paper copies were made available. Email invitations to participate were sent to all faculty, student, and staff school email addresses on the first day of data collection, October 6, 2015. Each email included a link to the online survey. Additional reminders were sent over the course of the month of October.

What sorts of questions were included?

The survey covered a wide breadth of topics related to faculty, student, and staff perceptions and experiences within the learning, working and living environment at Dartmouth. You can view the complete survey in the final report [link].

Was the study approved by Dartmouth's IRB?

Yes, this study was reviewed and approved by the Dartmouth Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects [IRB #28984].

What was the process for informed consent?

Functioning as a gateway to the survey, the consent form provided details about the survey, set expectations for the types of questions to be asked, and allowed individuals to make an informed decision whether participation was right for them. Individuals who felt they would become distressed taking such a survey could choose not to participate (and not enter the survey), and individuals who consented to participate were prepared for the sensitive topics. The consent form emphasized that respondents could skip any question they did not want to answer (except the first one identifying them as faculty, staff, or student), and that they could stop the survey at any time they felt uncomfortable or simply wished to stop. In addition, all consent forms concluded with contact information for a responsible IRB and research representative.

What happened if individuals became upset while answering the questions?

Several sections of the survey had links to on- and off-campus resources that could be contacted if someone became upset.

How long did it take to complete the survey?

The survey took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.

Were incentives offered for participation in the survey?

Yes. To encourage participation, anyone completing the survey was eligible for a variety of prizes through a raffle. Prizes included meals with the president and provost, \$5 gift cards to local businesses, and iPads.

How many people participated in the survey?

Our overall response rate was 26% with 2,753 participants.

Our response rate was only 26%, are the results valid?

Survey research does not typically have 100% response rates. Since this was a population survey in which all faculty, students, and staff at Dartmouth were invited to participate, instead of a sample survey that is open only to a selected sample group, 100% is not expected. Generally, we aim to have a response rate of 30% or greater. Faculty and Staff participation rates exceeded this marker (35% and 37% respectively). While student participation rates were lower than 30%, the results from this survey were

consistent with data from the many other student surveys we've conducted in the last several years.

Will the community be able to view the findings?

Yes, a final report, including a summary of findings from the survey and recommendations of the working group, will be made available to the Dartmouth community in Spring 2016.

How will Dartmouth use the results?

Study findings will help guide future Dartmouth actions, including informing initiatives currently underway, such as Moving Dartmouth Forward. We will develop specific and measurable actions or initiatives to improve the learning, working, and living environment based on these data, and combined with other information previously or subsequently collected.

What was the purpose of the focus groups?

In May 2015, Dartmouth hosted 19 focus groups that featured a cross-section of faculty, staff, and students. These focus groups provided an opportunity for members of the Dartmouth community to share experiences, concerns, viewpoints, and attitudes about the institution. This information was summarized by Rankin and used to inform the survey questions to be tailored to Dartmouth's particular environment and needs.

Is the survey proprietary?

Yes. The survey instrument was developed specifically for Dartmouth and we will be able to conduct this survey in the future without engaging an external consultant.

Will Dartmouth conduct a study like this again?

Dartmouth will use the final report and the dataset to develop and assess actions to strengthen our campus environment. We will conduct another campus-wide survey after we have allowed enough time to reasonably assess whether actions taken as a result of this study and related initiatives have produced desired outcomes. The specific date for the next survey has not yet been set.

Is it possible to have access to the dataset for other research projects?

Requests from faculty, students, and staff to access this dataset will not be considered until Fall 2016. Please check with the Office of Institutional Research after this time to make a request.

Who do I contact if I still have questions?

Please contact [Alicia Betsinger](#), Associate Provost for Institutional Research