

Academic Incivility and the Graduate Student Experience:

Summary of Fall 2007 Survey of UMN-TC Graduate Students

Introduction

In fall 2007, the Student Conflict Resolution Center (SCRC) surveyed all UMN-TC graduate students to determine the scope, manifestations, and effects of academic incivility on the graduate student population. Nearly 1,800 graduate students responded. 19.2 percent reported being harassed. 78.2 percent of those harassed did not report the situation to anyone at the University. The top three reasons for not reporting were: fear of impact on future career; fear of retaliation; and the belief that no one would help them. 83.0 percent of the students who encountered harassment reported that it somewhat or completely interfered with their ability to work or study. 43.7 percent who experienced harassment reported they considered leaving the U as a result. 29.9 percent of students who observed another graduate student being harassed considered leaving as a result.

Survey Response Rates

Total UMNTC graduate (non-professional) students	10,731
Total survey participants	1,783

By gender

Female	1,061
Male	731

By citizenship status

Not indicated	29
Citizen	1,350
Temporary Resident/International Student	362
Permanent Resident	50

By ethnicity

Not specified	177
African American	48
American Indian	<20
Asian	183
Hispanic	47
Caucasian	1,251

By primary degree program

Masters	683
PhD	1,037
Other	58

Student survey response totals by college affiliation

Academic Health Center	<20
Allied Health Programs, Center for	<20
Biological Sciences	64
Continuing Education	29
Dentistry	<20
Design	34
Education and Human Development	363
Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences	132
Law	0
Liberal Arts	414
Management, Carlson	66
Medical School	35
Nursing	52
Pharmacy	<20
Public Policy, HHH	105
Public Health	45
Technology, Institute of	410
Veterinary Medicine	<20

Harassment Experience Questions

Students were asked a series of 24 questions. The first section of the survey consisted of demographic information. The second and third sections of the survey were contingencies – either personally experiencing harassment as defined below or observing another student experiencing the behavior in question. If a student reported they had not been harassed (after being provided the definition), the student would proceed to being asked if they had observed another student being harassed.

Within the “personally experienced” and “observed” contingencies, there were two subdivisions: (1) students who reported the harassment and what their experience of reporting was, and (2) students who did not report the behavior and why they did not. Finally students were asked about the effects of the harassment personally and academically.

Have you (Q3) experienced harassment (Q15) observed another graduate student being harassed while at the U of M?

(Harassment is behavior that is offensive, intimidating, or hostile which interferes with the ability to work or study)

	Personally Experienced	Observed
Yes	344 (19.2%)	290 (16.2%)
No	1,449 (80.8%)	1,503 (83.8%)

What were the manifestations of the harassing behavior?

Verbal hostility	217 (29.2%)	193 (27.7%)
Talking negatively about you	144 (19.4%)	105 (15.1%)
Hostile electronic communication	104 (14.0%)	97 (13.9%)
Threats to academic status	88 (11.8%)	95 (13.6%)
Denial of access to resources	76 (10.2%)	69 (9.9%)
Threats to employment status	64 (8.6%)	64 (9.2%)
Romantic/sexual advances	31 (4.2%)	51 (7.3%)
Unwanted or threatened physical contact	20 (2.7%)	22 (3.2%)

By whom were you harassed?

Faculty (non-advisor)	155 (36.4%)	[not asked]
Student	115 (27.0%)	[not asked]
Graduate Advisor	82 (19.2%)	[not asked]
Staff	45 (10.6%)	[not asked]
Administrator	29 (6.8%)	[not asked]

Did you report the harassing behavior?

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Yes	75 (21.8%)	28 (9.7%)
No	269 (78.2%)	262 (90.3%)

Where did you report the harassing behavior?

Department Chair	26 (28.0%)	12 (30.8%)
Advisor	24 (25.8%)	11 (28.2%)
DGS	20 (21.5%)	6 (15.4%)
Faculty (non-advisor)	10 (10.8%)	5 (12.8%)
Supervisor	10 (10.8%)	4 (10.3%)
DGS Assistant	3 (3.2%)	1 (2.6%)

How satisfied were you with the handling of your complaint?

Completely dissatisfied	20 (26.7%)	[not asked]
Somewhat dissatisfied	20 (26.7%)	[not asked]
No opinion	5 (6.7%)	[not asked]
Somewhat satisfied	22 (29.3%)	[not asked]
Completely satisfied	8 (10.7%)	[not asked]

Were there things that could have been done to improve the reporting process and how your complaint was handled?

Yes	48 (67.6%)	[not asked]
No	23 (32.4%)	[not asked]

What prevented you from reporting the harassment?

Fear of impact on career	142 (23.5%)	76 (13.9%)
Fear of retaliation	138 (22.8%)	94 (17.2%)
Did not believe anyone would help	121 (20.0%)	88 (16.1%)
Did not believe it was serious enough	100 (16.6%)	40 (7.3%)
Unsure of where to go	67 (11.1%)	56 (10.3%)
Believe individuals in authority already knew	36 (6.0%)	65 (11.9%)
Did not feel it was my place	[not asked]	127 (23.3%)

Has the harassment kept you from performing to the best of your abilities?

No opinion	12 (3.5%)	[not asked]
Did no interfere	46 (13.5%)	[not asked]
Somewhat interfered	219 (64.0%)	[not asked]
Completely interfered	65 (19.0%)	[not asked]

Did the harassment you experienced lead you to do something different while at the U?

No	82 (18.6%)	138 (45.2%)
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Changed classes	18 (4.1%)	12 (3.9%)
Changed program plan	38 (8.6%)	16 (5.2%)
Changed work study routine to avoid harasser	98 (22.2%)	49 (16.1%)
Changed committee member	24 (5.4%)	13 (4.3%)
Changed advisor	46 (10.4%)	20 (6.6%)
Changed area of study	26 (5.9%)	12 (3.9%)
Considered but not yet taken action	49 (11.1%)	8 (2.6%)
Would like to take action, but I did not know what to do	33 (7.5%)	17 (5.6%)

Has the harassment caused you to consider leaving the U?

Yes	149 (43.7%)	84 (29.9%)
No	192 (56.3%)	197 (70.1%)

Has the harassment you experienced affected you in any of the following ways?

Feeling anxious	250 (22.0%)	107 (24.1%)
Excessive thoughts about the harassment	186 (16.3%)	64 (14.4%)
Disrupted sleep	150 (13.2%)	45 (10.1%)
Loss of concentration	190 (16.7%)	70 (15.8%)
Feeling edgy/irritable	198 (17.4%)	91 (20.5%)
Feeling depressed	164 (14.4%)	67 (15.1%)

Survey Support

The Student Conflict Resolution Center thanks the Office of Measurement Services (and Shelly Wymer) for ongoing support in the administration and interpretation of the survey.