

## **FORWARD Forum (April 1, 2016) Addresses NDSU Climate**

Participants at the first FORWARD Forum – a presentation/discussion series aimed at making NDSU an even better place – identified barriers and suggested actions to improve our organizational climate for diversity.

Results from the NDSU Climate for Diversity Survey presented by Kara-Gravley Stack, Director of Diversity Initiatives, and Chris Ray, Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator in the School of Education, revealed room for improvement in the organizational climate at NDSU. Their presentation, “How Can We Improve the Climate at NDSU?”, engaged the audience to contribute their ideas.

The good news is that 76% of survey respondents reported feeling “comfortable” or “very comfortable” with the climate for diversity at NDSU; 60-68% of respondents believe administrators value diversity; and all faculty and most staff groups indicated small (<10%) improvements in comfort with climate from 2009 to 2014. However, the overall feeling of comfort with climate for diversity at NDSU has declined somewhat over this time period, from 83% to 76%. Disparities between specific faculty and staff identity groups are notable in the 2014 results, including the 12% gap between faculty women and men that has persisted from 2009 to 2014, and a 20% gap between perceptions of staff of color and white staff, an increase from 9% in 2009. Further, faculty, staff and students all reported increases in personal experience with harassment in 2014, with higher rates in minority identity groups than in non-minority identity groups. Most respondents who indicated harassment on the survey did not officially report it within the institution. (The full survey report is available at [https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/diversity/Climate\\_Survey\\_2014\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/diversity/Climate_Survey_2014_Final_Report.pdf).)

Barriers to climate improvements that were identified through audience discussion include insufficient training/open discussion about climate-related issues such as harassment, perceived accountability gaps and resulting of lack of trust in reporting, an unclear institutional home for climate-related issues, and need for more diversity/broader cultural understanding on our campus and in the community.

Ideas suggested for immediate actions that individuals can take to improve climate are speaking up when issues contributing to negative climate appear, supporting our colleagues, participating in trainings and discussions about climate-related issues, and becoming familiar with our rights and responsibilities in the workplace. <https://workspaces.ndsu.edu>

Suggested actions to work toward as an institution include more training about climate-related issues, improved policy and policy implementation, and clear signals of support for a continuously improving climate.

A complete listing of ideas generated through discussion at this first FORWARD Forum can be obtained from [Karen.Froelich@ndsu.edu](mailto:Karen.Froelich@ndsu.edu).

The next FORWARD Forum will take place Tuesday, April 26, 2016, 11:00-12:00 in the Badlands Room of Memorial Union. The topic is "How Can We Retain Our Valued Colleagues at NDSU?".