This assessment study is a culminating activity of an eight-year initiative to facilitate gender equity and more equitable campus environments - Mentoring Institutional Equity in New York State Two-Year Colleges. Eighteen two-year colleges participated in the application and implementation of an educational equity model designed to enhance gender equity within the very fabric of the institutions (policies, practices, classroom climate, curricula, support services among others) involving continual commitment and nurturing. In order to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative, the effort recently focused on student perceptions of equitable campus climates and personal/career growth support and opportunities. A series of discussions and group activities at statewide service workshops resulted in a general consensus regarding dimensions of evaluation format, content, feasibility, among other factors. The students became the beneficiaries of the initiative, as confirmed by the generally favorable perceptions of equitable campus climates and learning environments. A few areas perceived as less favorable included awareness of sexual harassment procedures and policies, introduction of nontraditional careers and role models, free interaction without tension, and faculty/staff/administrator diversity. Included in this report are the equity assessment student survey form, faculty/staff/administrator feedback form, item mean summary, and item graphics. (VWC)
SUMMARY:

EQUITY ASSESSMENT STUDY

Prepared by:
Dr. LaVerna M. Fadale
Dr. Peisheng Zhao

May 1999
(VATEA #9020-99-2002)
INTRODUCTION

This assessment study is a culminating activity of an eight-year initiative to facilitate gender equity and more equitable campus environments—Mentoring Institutional Equity in New York State Two-Year Colleges. Eighteen two-year colleges have participated in the application and implementation of an educational equity model designed to enhance gender equity within the very fabric of the institutions (policies, practices, classroom climate, curricula, support services among others) involving continual commitment and nurturing.

The following colleges participated as equity sites and served as primary data sources:

- College of Aeronautics
- Columbia-Greene Community College
- Culinary Institute of America
- Dutchess Community College
- Genesee Community College
- Jamestown Community College
- Jefferson Community College
- Niagara County Community College
- North Country Community College
- Orange County Community College
- Schenectady County Community College
- Sullivan County Community College
- SUNY College/Ag & Tech, Cobleskill
- SUNY College/Technology, Alfred
- SUNY College/Technology, Delhi
- Trocaire College
- Ulster County Community College
- Westchester Community College

The cooperation of students, faculty, staff and administrators at these site colleges and at the anonymous control non-site colleges is greatly appreciated. Their support and interest were critical to the completion of this assessment activity. Also, a special thank you to those who provided technical and production support throughout this study. Hopefully, the results will be useful to all colleges in the continuing efforts toward gender equity and more equitable campus environments.

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1Educational Equity Options Model, WOW, 1325 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, (202) 638-3143.
SUMMARY: EQUITY ASSESSMENT STUDY

Background

An eight-year initiative in New York State used a structure of support with 18 two-year colleges (community, technical, independent, specialized) to apply and implement an educational equity model built upon change, assessment and professional development. The effort was designed to facilitate gender equity within the institutional fabric and involved a process that requires continual strengthening, nurturing and commitment to equity from the educational environment as a whole.

During initial cycles of the Institutional Equity statewide initiative, the primary evaluative emphasis was program-related. Interest with effectiveness of strategies, content, material/personnel resources and needs identification led to verification of 30 program-related criteria indicating successful equity institutionalization.

In order to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the initiative, the effort recently focused on student perceptions of equitable campus climates and personal/career growth support/opportunities. A series of discussions and group activities at statewide inservice workshops resulted in a general consensus regarding dimensions of evaluation format, content, feasibility, among other factors.

In June 1997, a working group of ten representative equity team members used the information base collected from statewide workshops to explicate domain and items of a student survey instrument. The domain categories were confirmed as: a) campus climate diversity/tolerance; b) equitable instruction--courses, classrooms, teaching-learning tasks; and c) career/academic/personal growth support. The consensus and agreement reached by professionals knowledgeable and experienced with institutionalizing equity served as verification of content validity. After preliminary review/revision, the initial draft survey was field-tested (N=150±) by volunteer sites in September 1997. Discussion and feedback from field-testing led to the Pilot Edition of the Student Survey which was administered during early spring 1998 (N=850±). Using these pilot data, split-half correlation analysis indicated a high level of reliability among items. Correlation for each pair was significant at the 0.01 level.

1 For additional information—Guidebook for Using EEO Model in Postsecondary Institutions, ED 393 502 (ERIC).
Study Design

Research Questions

Three research questions were used regarding student data:

1. To what extent did students perceive existence of an equitable college environment which included college climate/diversity/tolerance; courses/classrooms/tasks; and career/academic/personal support?

2. To what extent did factors of gender, age, ethnicity, college seniority contribute to differences in perceptions of environment?

3. To what extent do student perceptions of equitable environments differ at equity site and non-site colleges; and among colleges in various geographical regions?

Perceptional ratings were collected from site faculty, staff and administrators to help determine:

4. To what extent has participation as an equity site been perceived as a contributor to increased equitable college environment?

Data Collection Instruments and Data Sources

The primary data collection tool was the finalized Student Survey (Attachment A). The instrument consisted of 16 content items. Five-point Likert scales were used to determine the extent to which students perceived the existence of an equitable environment at institutional and classroom levels, and with personal support systems (5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Undecided; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree). These items were categorized as 1) climate/diversity, tolerance; 2) courses, classrooms, tasks; 3) career, academic, personal support. Four additional items collected demographic information including gender, semester completed, age and ethnic heritage.

A Feedback Form (Attachment B) was used to collect faculty, staff and administrator perceptions regarding their perceived impact of participation in the initiative.
The primary source of student data was representative samples of students from all equity site colleges in New York State. Non-site colleges were invited to serve as anonymous control sites by administering the equity survey to students representative of the local campus.

Representative samples of local staff from equity site colleges served as primary source of feedback from faculty and administrators.

**Procedures**

In late August 1998, packets of data collection materials were distributed to the 18 equity colleges. The packets contained Student Survey Forms, a Directions/Code Sheet, Faculty/Staff Feedback Forms, a Summary Cover Sheet and Instructions for the return of all completed forms prior to the December 1998 holidays. Based on reported local enrollments, the overall requested student sample size was 5.1% (N=2800).

An invitation to potential control non-site colleges was also mailed in late August. Those colleges expressing interest in serving as an anonymous control received packets of Student Survey Forms and the Directions/Code Sheet with a requested return prior to the December holidays.

Follow-up, additional information and support were available throughout the semester to facilitate the process. (All responding colleges received a summary of local data, March 1999.)

**Data Analysis**

The return rate of usable completed student surveys from equity sites was 84% (N=2343). Control or non-site colleges provided 249 completed/usable student surveys.

Data analyses of student data included frequencies used to examine each item relative to student perceptions of campus environments. Percentage, item mean scores and chi-square analyses were used to measure the extent of agreement and disagreement to each item statement.

The total scores (80 maximum, 16 minimum) were also used as dependent variables to determine overall perceptions of students regarding an equitable environment. The ANOVA method was used to determine differences among groups—gender, age, ethnicity, college seniority; between regions, site and non-site colleges. Scheffe and LSD (Least Significant Difference) Post Hoc were used for comparison studies. The significance level was set at 0.05.

The 217 completed Faculty/Staff/Administrator Forms were analyzed using means and frequencies.
Outcomes and Results

Analysis of student survey data resulted in the following outcomes.

1. **Student perceptions regarding existence of equitable environment**

Data analysis of each item statement indicated that most students at equity sites were generally satisfied with their college environments. With the exception of item #4 (harassment awareness), a substantial majority of students indicated agreement or strong agreement with the remaining 15 item statements. The distribution of percentage rates varied. A number of students disagreed/strongly disagreed with the following (listed in descending order of disagreement).

- **Item 4 - 28.7%**  
  *This college has made me aware of sexual harassment procedures and policies.*

- **Item 13 - 15.8%**  
  *When careers are discussed/portrayed, my instructors make an effort to introduce nontraditional careers and role models.*

- **Item 9 - 14.2%**  
  *All diverse groups interact freely without tension at this college.*

- **Item 7 - 13.6%**  
  *This college has a diverse faculty, staff and administration.*
Although the most frequent discrepancies were with the "uncertain" rating, some significant differences in chi square tests among groups were indicated relative to item agreement, subsequently summed.

For 100% of the items, age group differences in perceptions of equitable environment were indicated. Older students were very often more positive (sig. <.05) than expected.

For 50% of the items, students with two or fewer semesters of enrollment were significantly more positive (sig. <.05) than expected (#5-climate; #6-faculty expectation; #7-diverse faculty; #8-bias-free print; #9-free interaction; #11-support services; #14-faculty; and #15-comfort).

Females tended to agree with seven items more than expected as compared to males who tended to disagree more than expected: #1-accepting environment (sig. <.01), #2-instructor treatment (sig. <.003), #3-course barriers (sig. <.001), #6-faculty expectation (sig. <.003), #11-support services (sig. <.01), #12-role models (sig. <.01), #16-classroom equity (sig. .000).
Further item details are provided in the subsequent table and Attachment C.

**Item Statement Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 - Respectful Environment</td>
<td>2322</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>9583</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2 - Treated by Instructors</td>
<td>2336</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<td>4.08</td>
<td>.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q4 - Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.19</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Q5 - Climate Satisfaction</td>
<td>2336</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>9058</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 - Faculty Expectation</td>
<td>2323</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>9460</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q7 - Diversity Staff</td>
<td>2326</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>8664</td>
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<td>Q9 - Free Group Interaction</td>
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<td>1.03</td>
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<td>Q10 - Identifying Equity Issues</td>
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<td>Q13 - Introduce Non-Trad. Careers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.56</td>
<td>.80</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3.94</td>
<td>.87</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.78</td>
<td>22889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item #1 (accepting and respectful environment for males and females) showed the highest mean score from equity site students of 4.13. Item #4 (awareness of sexual harassment procedures/policies) received the lowest mean score of 3.21.

Based on these data, students at equity colleges generally found a positive campus environment.

2. **To what extent did factors of gender, age, ethnicity, college seniority contribute to differences in perceptions of an equitable environment?**

To determine not only the extent that college environments were perceived equitable, but also differences among gender, age, ethnicity and college seniority factors, the sum of total item scores for all students was used in analyses. Overall, using the total score as a dependent variable, the Independent Sample t-test showed that female students perceived the environment of their campus significantly more positive than male students (sig. <.05). Data analyses, using ANOVA method, resulted in significant differences in perceptions of environment for factors of ethnicity, age and semesters of enrollment (college seniority).
**Ethnic Heritage.** When total scores were examined (ANOVA) by gender and ethnic heritage, results showed the following:

a. Students of minority heritage were significantly less positive than non-minority students (sig. <.01).

b. While female students in general perceived the environment of their campus significantly more positive than male students (sig. <.05), the Independent Sample t-test showed that minority males were significantly less favorable than majority males (sig. <.01) and also less favorable than minority females (sig. <.05).

c. Although the Post Hoc Scheffe test did not find significant differences among ethnic groups (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American), the LSD (Least Significant Difference) test indicated differences did exist between White and Hispanic students and between White and Black students (sig. <.05).

**Ethnic Difference /Male vs. Female**

![Bar chart](chart.png)
**Age.** When total scores were examined (ANOVA) by age and gender, analyses indicated the subsequent findings:

a. Older students were significantly more positive than younger students (sig. <.01).

b. Post Hoc Scheffe tests indicated that students 28 or older agreed with the items significantly more than students 17-21 or 22-27 (sig. .000 and .003). Students 28 and older were most positive followed by 22-27 year olds. Those 17-21 were least positive about the campus environment.

c. No significant differences were found between males and females within age subgroupings.

**Age Difference /Male vs. Female**

![Age Difference Chart]

- **Age 17-21**
  - Male: 59.98
  - Female: 60.95

- **Age 22-27**
  - Male: 61.81
  - Female: 60.61

- **Age >28**
  - Male: 62.9
  - Female: 63.82
Semester of Enrollment. When total scores were examined (ANOVA) by semester of enrollment and gender, results indicated that:

a. Differences exist among semester of enrollment groups (sig. < .05).

b. Post Hoc Scheffe test indicated that students enrolled in the first or second semester were significantly more positive than students enrolled in their third or fourth semester (sig. < .05). No difference was found among other semester groups.

Semester Difference /Male vs. Female
3. *To what extent do student perceptions of campus environments differ at equity site and non-site colleges; and among colleges in geographical regions?*

The geographical regions of colleges were examined as a contributing factor to perceptual differences. Site colleges were categorized into urban, suburban or rural colleges. Total scores served as the dependent variable which resulted in identification of significant differences between suburban and urban colleges—student total scores were significantly more positive at suburban colleges when compared to rural colleges (sig. <.02). Male students in urban colleges were least positive in their perceptions (sig. <.03).

**Regional Differences /Male vs. Female**

![Bar chart showing male and female scores by region](chart)

Colleges within each regional category showed a varying range of item total scores. Significant differences (sig. <.05) within each category were most frequent among college types—community, specialized, technical and independent. Non-site colleges that volunteered to serve as an anonymous control group (N=249) were included in these analyses. Non-site total item scores were significantly lower (sig. <.05) than comparable rural site colleges.
In addition, one site college administered the survey on a pre (N=22)/post (N=15) basis to students enrolled in a developmental writing course. The content used in the course was related to gender issues and topics. Cautious observation (due to limited numbers) showed that students responded somewhat more positively on the post-administration for items #2, 10, 12, 13 and 14—questions dealing with the classroom and growth support. The focus of gender equity in the course may have prompted more critical perceptions of the college climate/diversity resulting in lower scores at the end of the course.

Perceptions of Faculty/Staff/Administrators

4. **To what extent has participation as an equity site been perceived as a contributor to more equitable college environments?**

The Feedback Form was completed by 217 representatives of equity site colleges - 39% faculty; 30% professional staff; 14% support staff and 17% administrators. A mean rating of 3.4 (5 = extensively; 1 = minimally) was received in response to an overall perceived contribution of serving as an equity site to an equitable learning climate. Similar ratings were requested for topics reflecting specific items of the student survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Classroom environment</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Mission statements, policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Bias-free publications/resources &amp; texts</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Curricular infusion (equity concepts)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Student &amp; faculty awareness of harassment/other policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Student awareness/accessibility to all career options</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Supportive relationships among faculty &amp; students</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Positive relationships among students in academic &amp; social settings</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Institutional commitment/endorsement for institutionalizing equity</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Gender-balanced enrollments</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The perceived impact of participating as an equity site was favorable. The area of least impact was gender-balanced enrollments, probably the most difficult objective to achieve. Open-ended comments credited the initiative for awareness, activities and changes in support and policies.
Closing Discussion—Selected Data Highlights and Implications

During the eight-year span of this initiative, a variety of objectives have been achieved such as equity-inclusive mission statements; bias-free texts, resources and publications; increased awareness, commitment, and collaboration; and in several classes, curricular infusion of equity-related issues. Data confirmed the quality, quantity and speed of results facilitated by the focus of the initiative. Several of these results were woven into the fabric of institutions. In some instances, the integration was done so effectively that the link to the initiative was not readily obvious to the peripherally involved.

The student became the beneficiaries of the initiative, as confirmed by the generally favorable perceptions of equitable campus climates and learning environments. Perceptual differences as noted by data, should serve as guides to colleges as they continue to maximize an equitable learning environment for all students.

The students at site colleges generally perceived their campus environments and growth opportunities as equitable. A few areas perceived as less favorable included awareness of sexual harassment procedures and policies (28.7% of student responses), introduction of nontraditional careers and role models (15.8%), free interaction without tension (14.2%), and faculty/staff/administrator diversity (13.6%).

Significant differences in perceptions of an equitable campus climate included:

- Female students were generally more positive than male students.
- Older equity site students (>28) were significantly more positive when compared with younger students. Students aged 17-21 were least positive.
- Students enrolled in their first and second semesters at site colleges indicated greater satisfaction than students in semester three or more.
- Data indicated gender, age and ethnic heritage as primary overall contributors to differences in perceptions of environment.
- Non-minority students were more positive than minority students in their responses to 75% of survey items.
- Male students of minority heritage indicated significantly less satisfaction than other male and all other female students at site colleges.
Differences in perceptions were indicated regionally: students enrolled in urban colleges were least favorable and students in suburban sites were more favorable than students in rural colleges. Further, rural control students tended to be less positive than comparable rural site colleges.

Faculty, staff and administrators perceived participation as an equity site contributed to maximizing an equitable environment; particularly in terms of awareness and changes in support and policies. The area of least impact was gender-balanced enrollments.
EQUITY ASSESSMENT: STUDENT SURVEY

Directions:
Blacken the circle that most accurately indicates your level of agreement with each statement.

1. This college attempts to create an accepting respectful environment for both males and females.
2. I am treated the same outside of class as in class by my instructors.
3. Gender and ethnic backgrounds are not barriers to course or program options.
4. This college has made me aware of sexual harassment procedures and policies.
5. Overall, I am satisfied with cultural, racial and social climate on this campus.
6. Faculty expect the same academic performance from female and male students.
7. This college has a diverse faculty, staff and administration.
8. My textbooks, tests and other instructional/resource materials are free of bias against women, racial/ethnic and/or other groups.
9. All diverse groups interact freely without tension at this college.
10. I can identify specific examples of equity issues incorporated into most of my classes.
11. Coordination of services and support throughout the college helps students achieve individual career goals.
12. The college provides a sufficient number of role models in advisement and nontraditional career positions.
13. When careers are discussed or portrayed, my instructors make an effort to introduce non-traditional careers and role models.
14. Faculty in my field have good relationships with students of my gender/ethnicity.
15. I have a sense of belonging and comfort on this campus.
16. In my program, a positive and equitable classroom environment exists for achieving my career goals.

Blacken circle with number of correct response for questions 17-20.
17. Gender: (1) Male (2) Female
18. Semester completed: (1) 0-2 (2) 3-4 (3) 5 or more
19. Your age: (1) 17-21 (2) 22-27 (3) 28 & older
20. Your ethnic heritage: (1) Native American Indian (2) Hispanic (3) Asian/Pacific Islander (4) White (non-Hispanic) (5) Black (non-Hispanic) (6) Other
FACULTY/STAFF/ADMINISTRATOR FEEDBACK FORM
Mentoring Institutional Equity

Directions: Your college serves as a site with this statewide equity initiative. Based on your current perspective and awareness, respond as appropriate to the following items.

College: ____________________________ Equity Team Member Yes No

__Faculty  __Professional Staff  __Support Staff  __Administrator

1. To what extent has participation as an Equity Site contributed to an equitable climate/learning environment at your college? (Circle your rating.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extensively</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>DK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. To what extent has the Equity Initiative contributed to increased equity in the following areas: (Circle your rating.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extensively</th>
<th>Minimally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Classroom environment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Mission statements, policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Bias-free publications/resources &amp; texts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Curricular infusion (equity concepts)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Student &amp; faculty awareness of harassment/other policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Student awareness/accessibility to all career options</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Supportive relationships among faculty &amp; students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Positive relationships among students in academic &amp; social settings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Institutional commitment/endorsement for institutionalizing equity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Gender-balanced enrollments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Briefly describe the one most important local outcome attributable to the equity effort:


4. Other comments? ____________________________

Thank you!
## Item Mean Summary

### Site Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Q01</th>
<th>Q02</th>
<th>Q03</th>
<th>Q04</th>
<th>Q05</th>
<th>Q06</th>
<th>Q07</th>
<th>Q08</th>
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