

MTN Pathways | DEI Culture On Campus

Each fall, schools starting Credo's Moving the Needle (MTN) participate in a survey of undergraduates that asks them about the culture of the institutions and quality of specific support services. As part of the assessment of the campus culture, students are asked about their institution's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) through several questions which are then used to compute a DEI Scale.

Categorizing students by their DEI scoreⁱ as high, moderate, or low shows a strong relationship between their ratings of DEI at their institution and their plans to return next fallⁱⁱ. Nearly all undergraduate respondents (96%) who have high DEI evaluations plan to return, whereas only 85% of those with low evaluations intend to come back. Interestingly, this relationship is more pronounced for returning students. Only 77% with low DEI scores indicate plans to return, compared to new students (matriculants in the semester of administration) of whom 88% with low scores plan to return.

Pathways Survey Response and the DEI Scale

In fall 2022, 11 schools participated in the *Pathways to Student Success Survey*. A total of 2,609 students completed it resulting in a response rate of 15%. The sample generated a relatively low margin of error of $\pm 2\%$. The five-point scaleⁱⁱⁱ questions used to measure the DEI climate on campus include:

- The institution is committed to celebrating the backgrounds and identities of all its students.
- I am comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions, even if they are different from others.
- Meaningful conversations between students with different backgrounds and identities are encouraged.
- Challenges and tensions between groups of students who are different from each other are discussed openly.
- The institution is committed to the success of all students regardless of their background or identity.

The resulting scale ($\bar{x} = 3.82$; $s = .838$; $n = 2489$) has a solid strength ($\alpha = 0.875$).

Results: Connections Scale and Correlates of Success

Across MTN analyses, several variables known to be linked to student success are used to disaggregate data. Looking at differences in the DEI Scale by these correlates of success, shows students have differing perceptions of the DEI climate on their campus based on both their demographic and personal profile. (See Table 1.)

- Female and minority^{iv} students report stronger evaluations than male and white students. These differences are largely explained by much lower evaluations by white males (3.59).
- Resident students have a lower evaluation than commuters, though whether students matriculated as first-time or transfer students does not impact students' ratings.
- Students who are campus employees are less likely to indicate the campus has a climate promoting DEI.
- First generation students are more likely to indicate the campus has a strong DEI environment. This relationship is at least partially linked to minority status, with nearly half (48%) of minority students also being first generation, whereas only 38% of white students are.

Table 1: DEI Scale by Correlates of Success

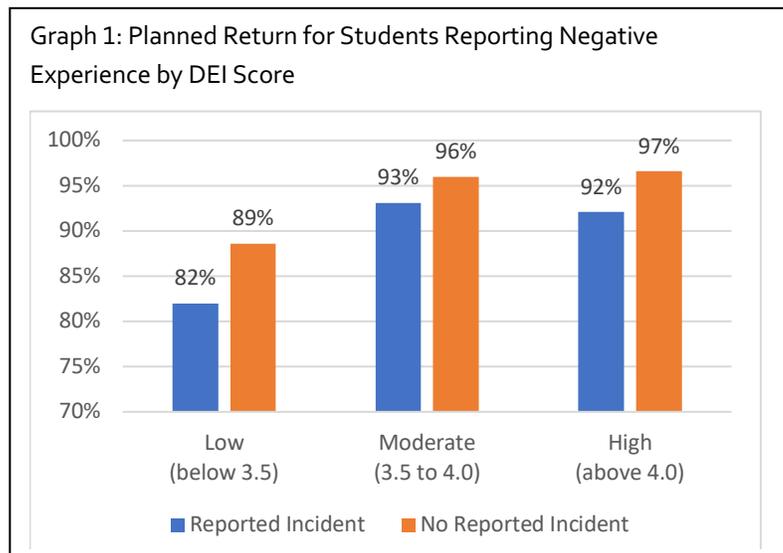
		Mean	Sig
Sex	Male	3.70	*
	Female	3.86	
Race	White	3.76	*
	Minority	3.90	
Admit status	FTFT	3.82	
	Transfer	3.90	
Residency	Resident	3.74	*
	Commuter	3.88	
Athlete	Athlete	3.80	
	Non-Athlete	3.83	
Campus Employee	Employee	3.74	*
	Non-employee	3.85	
First Generation	First Gen	3.90	*
	Non-First Gen	3.75	
Pell Eligible	Pell	3.86	
	Non-Pell	3.80	

* Denotes a statistically significant difference with the category using an independent sample t-test with $p < .05$.

DEI and Negative Experiences

Nearly a third (32%) of students indicate having at least one negative experience based on their personal characteristics since enrolling at their institution. Students are most likely to indicate that their experience was based on political beliefs (12%) and faith traditions (8%).

Not surprisingly, there is a correlation between reporting a negative experience and students' plan to return next fall. For those who reported a negative experience, 87% plan to return compared to 95% of those who did not report one. It does, however, appear that having a strong DEI program on campus may mitigate some of the desire to leave. (See Graph 1.) Using DEI ranked categories shows that students who report having a negative experience and have lower perceptions of the institution's commitment to DEI plan to return at a much lower rate (82%). For students reporting that the institution has a moderate or high commitment to DEI the return rate climbs by at least 10% points and approximates those who did not report a negative experience (95%).



Implications

There is a complex relationship between students' perceptions of the institution's DEI climate, their personal characteristics, and ultimately their plans to return next fall.

- There may be some backlash to recent emphasis on DEI programming with white males having much lower evaluations than both minority students and females.
- Students who are seemingly more integrated into campus life such as resident students and campus employees tend to have lower evaluations of the DEI culture than others.
- Students with high DEI evaluations are more likely to be planning to return next fall. Both high and moderate evaluations of schools' commitment to DEI appears to offset the desire to leave for those who report having negative campus experiences based on personal characteristics or identity.

ⁱ The DEI Scale (described above) was divided into three equal categories with strong (4.1 or higher), moderate (3.5 to 4.0) and weak (below 3.5).

ⁱⁱ Planned return is computed by the number of students who indicated they intend to return next fall divided by the total number students excluding those planning to graduate.

ⁱⁱⁱ Questions use a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

^{iv} Due to small numbers in various categories, the analysis uses the U.S. Department of Education's classification for minority students. Minority students include those who identify as Asian, Black/African American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American, or Multiracial. The analysis excludes Unknown or International students.