

# CIRES Culture Survey

## HIGHLIGHTS

2018

CIRES Culture Survey

Workplace environment, treatment and recommendations

A majority of employees at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) at the University of Colorado Boulder indicated that they are proud to work in their CIRES workplace and that they would choose to work at CIRES again. However, those

*"Diversity is fundamental to our success as a research organization committed to advancing our understanding of the global, regional, and local environments and the human relationship with those environments, for the benefit of society." -Waleed Abdalati, CIRES Director*

men and women who have experienced uncivil or hostile treatment in the course of their work are much less likely to choose CIRES again or to recommend that others work at CIRES. This finding is consistent with the 2018 Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2018), which found that scientific organizations should go above and beyond compliance with federal employment law to develop cultures of respect and civility; in essence to develop a much higher standard of workplace conduct.

The 2018 inaugural CIRES Culture Survey was conducted as part of the CIRES Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Program to understand the strengths of the Institute, the nature and scope of problems in the workplace culture, and to inform an action plan to address those problems, with the aim of assuring a positive work environment for everyone at CIRES.

### **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

The survey was developed with the CU Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) and a committee of CIRES employees drawn from across the Institute. In Spring 2018, the CU Office of Institutional Research administered the survey. OIEC conducted data analysis and delivered reports to CIRES in Fall 2018.

Three similar versions of the survey were delivered to three major segments of CIRES, depending primarily upon work location. Response rates for the three versions were 51%, 60% and 77%, with an overall response rate of 60%. The survey respondents reflected CIRES overall.

Students (undergraduate and graduate) responded at lower rates than postdoctoral researchers and professional employees. Results below are for postdoctoral and professional employees only unless stated otherwise.

The full survey will be reissued every four years. More focused surveys will be issued as needed to assess the effectiveness of particular programs and policies meant to address aspects of the results.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Survey respondents were 45% female, 6% international (non-U.S. citizen), 11% U.S. members of under-represented groups, and 5% LGBTQIA.
- No significant difference was found between white U.S. citizens, members of U.S. under-represented groups, LGBTQIA and international employees.
- If they had it to do over, 78% of CIRES employees would choose to work at CIRES again. The responses between the three versions by CIRES work location were 85%, 74%, and 83%.
- 100% of undergraduate respondents agree/strongly agree that “Overall, the workplace culture here is positive.”
- 95% of graduate students and 93% of undergraduate students agree that “my identity does not influence my colleagues’/coworkers’ opinions about my abilities.”
- The great majority of CIRES employees are proud to work in their workplace (87%)
- Relatively fewer employees reported sexual harassment compared to other reports of harassment in geosciences. Of all those responding, 7% of female employees and fewer than 1% of male employees indicated they had been sexually harassed.
- Students tended to rate their experiences more favorably and experienced considerably less hostile treatment (11%) compared with professional employees and postdocs (34%).
- However, 32% of CIRES respondents (including students) reported experiencing uncivil or hostile treatment in the last two years (40% women/26% men). **Note** that we use the word hostile in its everyday sense and not in the legal sense; this survey is insufficient to assess the severity or pervasiveness of behaviors in individual cases.
- Factor analysis indicates positive supports (e.g. mentoring, sense of belonging) provide a buffering effect for negative aspects of the workplace.
- Of those employees who reported experiencing negative workplace behaviors, slightly more than 30% attributed the treatment to some aspect of one or more protected class identities covered by the CU discrimination and harassment policy, most commonly gender or age.
- Those who have experienced negative treatment report much lower levels of satisfaction and represent higher risk of employee turnover.
- 5% of survey respondents reported they had experienced protected-class discrimination within the last two years. Another 5% of respondents indicated they may have been discriminated against, but that they “were not sure if the discrimination was a result of their identity/identities.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Office of Equity and Compliance offered recommendations for addressing the issues and bolstering the strengths. High-level recommendations include:

- Communicate CIRES' near- and long-term goals and core values, including those associated with workplace culture.
- Make values an explicit aspect of onboarding and develop a formal and extended onboarding system.
- Formalize a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee with authority to assist the Director for D&I.
- Conduct focus groups to better understand employee desire for improved sense of community and belonging.
- Invest resources to support a mentoring program for professional employees.
- Develop a monitoring program to track demographic diversity and establish benchmarks for recruiting and retention progress going forward.
- Promote best and promising practices to optimize diverse recruiting.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Supervisor's Academy and training program, including how to address negative workplace behaviors.
- Continue to implement D&I and workplace culture training events CIRES-wide.

## NEXT STEPS ACTIONS

The D&I Director and CIRES HR are taking steps in 2019 to implement the recommendations. These include:

- Establishing a D&I committee.
- Increasing capacity for recruiting and onboarding.
- Supporting the new CIRES Members Council mentoring program (under development)
- Conducting focus groups and interviews to develop a more nuanced understanding of the survey results.
- Capacitating CIRES supervisors to address negative workplace behaviors and promote positive aspects of the workplace.
- Drafting a D&I strategic plan with the help of CIRES employees.
- Providing CIRES-wide D&I training events.
- Facilitating workgroup discussions and agreements about norms associated with the findings of the survey.

## CONCLUSION

CIRES is committed to establishing a workplace culture where everyone is able to thrive, for the benefit of our mission and for the people who work here. While our results reflect long-standing dynamics within academic and scientific cultures, the results also show positive aspects of the CIRES workplace culture. As evidenced by existing commitments to D&I, CIRES

will continue to use evidence-based strategies to improve our workplace culture and to address issues.



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