



Political Orientation Most Common Cause of Discrimination at U. of Michigan

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A new report from the University of Michigan (U-M) found that political orientation was the most common cause of discrimination amongst U-M students last year.

Twenty-one percent of students said they had experienced one or more incidents of discrimination due to their political leanings, edging out those who cited either gender or race, according to the 2016 climate survey on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), released Thursday.

Fewer than half of all students reported having frequent and meaningful interactions with people who hold political opinions different from their own, though undergraduates were more likely than graduate students to have had such experience, with only 38.3 percent of the latter answering in the affirmative.

Female students and faculty were both less likely than their male counterparts to engage with those holding political views unlike their own.

A notable discrepancy was also apparent among tenured and non-tenured faculty on this issue: Only 31 percent of tenure track faculty reported they often interacted with people not of their political ideology, while about half of non-tenure track do so.

In contrast, about a third of staff did not say they often connected with those who don't share their political outlook.

Eleven percent of staff reported at least one politics-based discriminatory event.

Sex was the leading cause of discrimination amongst staff and faculty, according to the report.

The survey was conducted in fall 2016, as the contentious presidential election came to a head, and before a rash of high profile, racially charged incidents across the country,

The survey—which began with the question, "What is your current sex?"—asked staff, faculty, and students how frequently they were concerned for their physical safety on campus and to rate on a scale climate measures like "individualistic" or "collaborative" and "ageist" or "non-ageist."

According to the report, "The university is sponsoring a series of events focusing on the issue of free speech with participants from a variety of perspectives in an effort to encourage greater productive interactions across different political orientations and ideologies."

An event on campus in October featuring conservative social scientist Charles Murray was interrupted for 40 minutes by student protesters, who accused him of being a white supremacist and chanted, "Charles Murray go away; sexist, racist, KKK!"

Robert Sellers, vice provost for equity and inclusion, told campus paper the *Michigan Daily* that he was surprised to see such a high number of students reported homogenous political interactions, and high levels of discrimination based on politics.

The survey was released ahead of the one-year anniversary of U-M's launch of a 5-year diversity initiative.

Programming throughout the week to mark that occasion include a diversity scavenger hunt and cultural festival.

A recent report from the libertarian Cato Institute found 50 percent of students say the dominant political view on campus is liberal.