



2021 CU Boulder Campus Culture Survey Executive Summary

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Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance

Office of Data Analytics



University of Colorado **Boulder**

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Survey Content

The four versions of the CCS (faculty, staff, graduate student, and undergraduate) are tailored to reflect each group's distinct perspective within their respective university contexts. The survey assesses participants' sense of belonging, respect, and support. The CCS also asks questions about identity-based discrimination and harassment, as well as experiences of incivility. In addition, the survey covers a range of identity-based harms that may occur in the workplace, classroom, and (for undergraduates) residence hall environments.

Students are asked about mentoring and also about sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, and stalking (results to be shared in fall 2022). In addition, undergraduates answer questions about close friendships at CU and difficulty connecting with study peers.

Finally, CCS asks for information about key demographic and background characteristics that supplement demographic information drawn from institutional records.

Survey Administration

The CCS launched on October 18 and closed November 28, 2021; 45,384 students and employees were invited to take the survey.

Participation Rates

Participation rates were: faculty 59%, staff 73%, graduate students 48%, and undergraduates 30%. In each survey group, respondents were generally very similar to the overall population.

Survey Findings

The 2021 CU Boulder Campus Culture Survey Report details role-specific results that are valuable for more refined understanding of the campus experience unique to faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. That report also reveals consistent and compelling results that have overarching implications for addressing concerns broadly shared in our campus community. This executive summary identifies the commonalities across roles and highlights key role-specific findings.

This overview of key results focuses primarily on those survey items that statistical analyses indicate are most representative of the underlying themes of the survey (see the structural equation modeling results in the Survey Report; a brief summary of results is presented [here](#)).

Findings for participants in all roles with minoritized identities are often substantially less positive than the aggregated results. Please explore the CCS [website](#) of results including the survey results dashboard to gain a fuller understanding of the diverse range of experiences that CU community members reported in this survey.

For questions about the survey or findings, send an [email](#) or visit the OIEC Assessment [webpage](#).

Overall Results

Examination of the findings shows that among respondents in all four campus roles (undergraduates, graduate students, staff, and faculty):

- A majority feel proud to work and study at CU (63%-75%).
- However, nearly half (44%-49%) report experiencing incivility in the context of their CU-related activities.
- The experience of incivility has negative impacts on respondents' confidence in their abilities, on their productivity, on their health and wellness, and on their commitment to CU Boulder.
 - Among respondents who attribute the incivility to an aspect of their identity, these negative consequences are more prevalent.
- When respondents perceive that those in authority in their classroom, graduate program, or department effectively address problematic/uncivil behaviors, they are more likely to perceive their classroom/work environment as positive and supportive and more likely to indicate that they would choose to work or study at CU Boulder again, if they had it to do over again.
 - The percentage of respondents who report experiencing incivility is substantially lower when they perceive those in leadership roles as being effective at managing difficult classroom discussions/addressing problematic behavior.

By campus role, *positive* findings of note include:

Undergraduates

- The majority of undergraduate participants *agree/strongly agree* that:
 - In most of their courses, the classroom norms are respectful (79%) and that everyone is treated with dignity (76%).
 - They feel intellectually stimulated at CU Boulder (71%).
- A majority report having a high-quality, *CU-made* close friend at CU (63%). Across students, those with a close CU-made friend are more likely to agree that they would choose to attend CU again.
- Those who report having more than one mentor (28%) are also more likely to say that they would choose to attend CU again.

Graduate Students

- The majority of graduate student participants *agree/strongly agree* that:
 - Their department culture is respectful (77%) and that in their department, they're treated like they belong (70%).
 - The intellectual climate is positive (77%).
 - Overall, the social climate is positive (71%).
- A great majority of graduate students have at least one mentor (73%) and almost half indicate that they have more than one mentor (47%).

Staff

- The majority of staff participants agree/strongly agree that:
 - Their department culture is respectful (72%), including feeling that their work is respected by the people they work with (76%) and that they are treated with respect by their colleagues (76%).

Faculty

- The majority of staff participants agree/strongly agree that:
 - Their work is respected by those they work with (73%) and that they are treated with respect by their department colleagues (68%).

By campus role, *concerning findings of note* include:

Undergraduates

- About half of undergraduate participants agree/strongly agree that:
 - Faculty are invested in their success (56%).
 - They feel a connection with one or more of their instructors (57%).
 - Offensive comments made during class discussions have been challenged by course instructors (58%).
 - They feel able to trust most of the other people who live in their residence hall (50%).

Graduate Students

- About half or fewer graduate student respondents agree/strongly agree that in their graduate program:
 - Evaluation criteria are clear (55%).
 - Faculty effectively address problematic behaviors that undermine the academic/work environment (50%).
 - Departmental resources are allocated transparently (42%).

Staff

- Low percentages of staff participants agree/strongly agree that:
 - Their work is valued by CU (55%).
 - They are provided opportunities to advance in their career (42%).
 - Departmental resources are allocated transparently (46%).
 - Staff are treated with respect by faculty (51%; for staff in Academic Affairs, 43%).

Faculty

- About half or fewer faculty agree/strongly agree that, in their department:
 - They're comfortable bringing up issues of concern without fear that it will affect how they're treated by senior faculty (53%).
 - They do not feel excluded from informal networks within their department (46%).
 - They receive adequate support/mentoring to advance in their career (45%).
 - Evaluation criteria for performance and promotion are clear (46%).
 - Departmental resources are allocated transparently (42%).

Structural Equation Model Results

In order to understand the complex relationships among the constructs or themes measured in the Campus Culture Survey (CCS) and their ability, when considered together, to predict important outcomes like Commitment to CU, we used a powerful statistical technique called structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM assesses whether the themes that the survey intended to measure are valid, it organizes the data from theme-related survey questions into “Factors” or average scores for each theme, and it describes the relationship of those Factors to an outcome of interest.

Because each role received a unique version of the survey tailored to their specific campus and workplace experiences, we tested separate models for undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and faculty—each predicting the same primary outcome of interest, participants’ commitment to CU, measured by agreement with the survey item “If I had it to do over again, I would choose to work at/attend CU Boulder.” Explore the full results in greater detail in the 2021 CCS Survey Report.

For undergraduate students, here are the key findings:

- The single most predictive factor of their commitment to CU is their overall sense of belonging to the university.
 - Students who feel that they belong at CU also are the most likely to agree that they would choose CU again, if given the choice.
 - Undergraduates’ sense of belonging within their residence hall showed a similar, but smaller, positive relationship with their commitment to CU.
 - On the other hand, experiences of identity harms were significantly *negatively* related to commitment.
 - In other words, undergraduate students who *do* feel that they belong at CU (in both general and specific contexts) and who *do not* feel that they have been harmed due to their identity are more committed to the university.
 - This sense of belonging has its roots in the norms that they perceive on campus based on the culture that is cultivated in their classrooms, as well as their experiences making friends.
 - However, undergraduates’ sense of belonging to the university (and thus, their commitment) is impaired by experiences of uncivil behavior.
 - In addition to belonging, being supported by more than one mentor also strengthens undergraduates’ commitment to the university.
 - Furthermore, undergraduate students who are harmed by sexual harassment, discrimination, or other problematic experiences related to their identity show weaker commitment to CU.

Results for graduate students, staff, and faculty show many commonalities:

- For all three of these groups, CU belonging and department belonging are significantly positively related to commitment to CU.
 - Notably, for graduate students only, belonging within their department is more strongly related to commitment to CU than belonging to the university as a whole.
 - For faculty and staff, just as with undergraduates, CU belonging is the strongest predictor of commitment.

- For graduate students, staff, and faculty, participants' sense of belonging is based in the positivity of their campus environment.
 - This environment is shaped by perceptions of norms (the informal rules for how community members should treat each other) as well as participants' sense of respect and support in their department—all of which are impaired by experiences of incivility.
- In addition, graduate students, faculty, and staff who are harmed by sexual harassment, discrimination, or other negative identity-related experiences are less committed to the university.
- Finally, as with undergraduates, graduate students report a greater likelihood of choosing CU again when they are connected to more than one mentor.

Two common themes emerge across the results of all four models:

- First, the importance of belonging—students, faculty, and staff who feel valued and supported on campus and in their departments are the most likely to say they would choose CU again if given the choice.
- The second key theme is the detrimental impact of incivility, identity-based harms, sexual harassment, and protected-class discrimination—these problematic experiences lead students, faculty, and staff to say they would not choose CU again if given the choice.

In sum, across participants—from undergraduates to graduate students to faculty to staff—a campus environment where people feel that they belong and can be themselves bolsters their commitment to the university.