

Supporting While Marginalized:

Racial Realities of Student Affairs Professionals

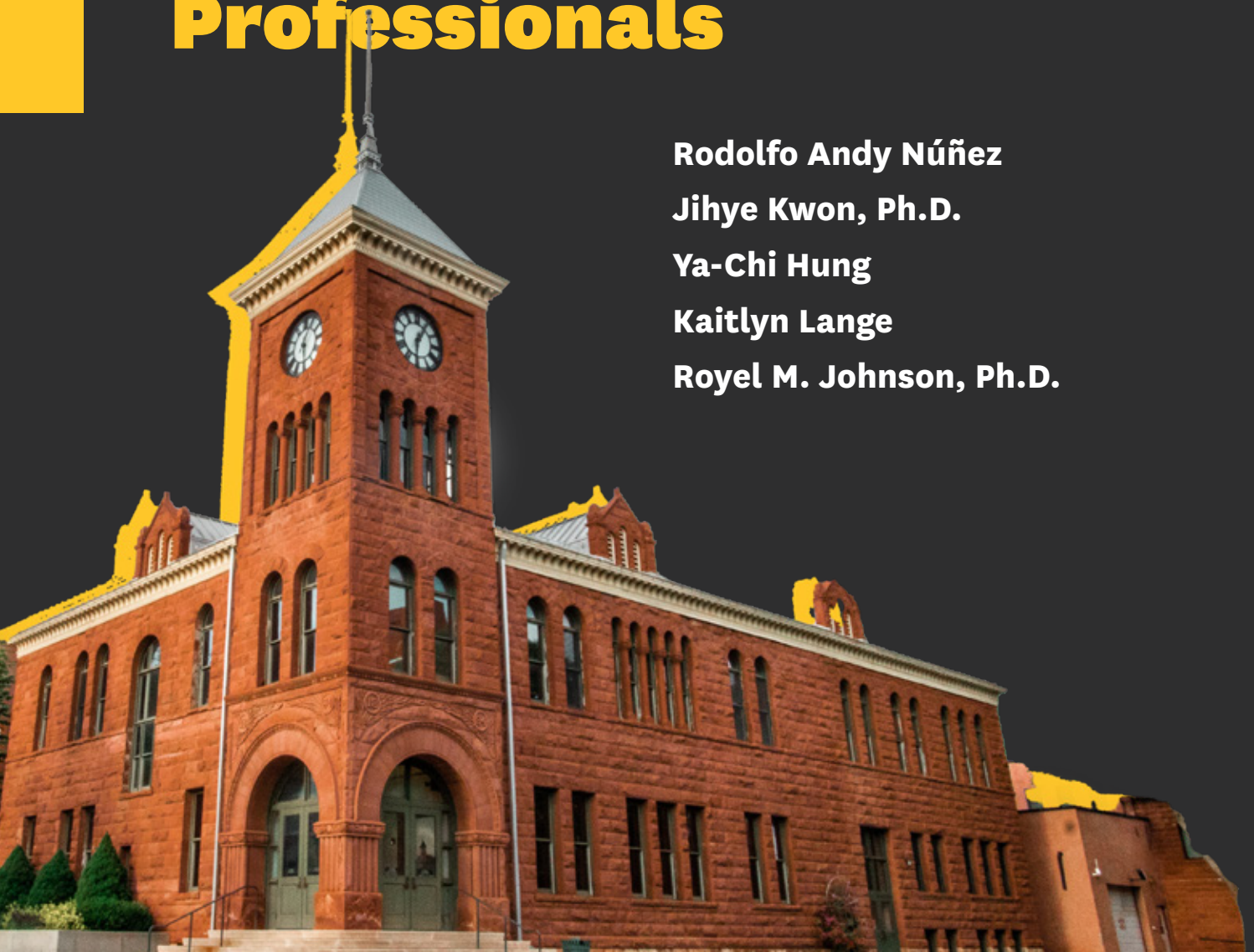
Rodolfo Andy Núñez

Jihye Kwon, Ph.D.

Ya-Chi Hung

Kaitlyn Lange

Royel M. Johnson, Ph.D.



CONTENTS

3	Executive Summary
4	Evolving Burden on Student Affairs Professionals
5	Race and Racism in Student Affairs
6	Using NACCC Data to Inform DEI Change
7	Sample Description
9	Theme 1: Racialized Incidents Among Student Affairs Professionals
16	Theme 2: Institutional and Workplace Racial DEI Culture
22	Theme 3: Workplace Belonging and Equity
27	Conclusion
28	Recommendations for Action
30	References
31	Appendix

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Núñez, R. A., Kwon, J., Hung, Y., Lange, K., & Johnson, R. M. (2025, July). *Supporting while marginalized: Racial realities of student affairs professionals*. University of Southern California, USC Race and Equity Center.

Executive Summary

This brief presents findings from a subset of the 2021–2023 National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) Staff Survey, focusing on the experiences of 1,992 student affairs professionals across 73 U.S. institutions. The analysis highlights how racism, institutional culture, and perceptions of workplace equity and belonging shape the professional lives of student affairs staff, particularly those from racially minoritized groups.

Key findings reveal that over half of student affairs professionals have witnessed racism on campus, and one in three report personally experiencing it. Black, Asian, and biracial/multiracial staff were likely to perceive racism as a significant problem both in their departments and institution-wide.

While a growing number of staff identify as people of color, many report inadequate institutional responses to racism, limited trust in leadership's DEI commitments, and insufficient professional development around race-related issues. Staff of color were less likely to feel a sense of mattering, inclusion, and equal consideration for advancement. Many also expressed deep frustration and emotional distress tied to racialized incidents.

These findings offer a timely opportunity for higher education leaders to reflect on and reimagine their inclusion efforts—not just for students, but for the professionals who directly support them. By addressing the systemic challenges detailed in this report, institutions can improve retention, well-being, and organizational effectiveness in student affairs.



Evolving Burden on Student Affairs Professionals

The student affairs profession already faced persistent issues with retention and burnout because of frustrations with excessive workload and pay inequities (Anderson, 2020; Stebleton & Buford, 2021). According to the Higher Education Employee Retention Survey (ERS) by College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), student affairs is the field facing the most significant retention challenges, with 39% of staff indicating they are likely to seek other employment opportunities within the next year (Bichsel et al., 2023). The workplace environments of 2022 grew more tense from the unique challenges of a society attempting to return to “normalcy” once the COVID-19 pandemic was considered overcome. In 2020, when most employees were sent to remote working environments, they experienced a sense of vertigo attempting to change all their processes to be possible from their homes.

Come 2022, the dizzying effect was felt again when being requested to return to their “normal” work arrangement prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) survey for Higher Education Employee Retention reported in 2022, 62% of student affairs professionals responded that most of their duties could be performed remotely, but only 23% were in hybrid or remote work arrangements (Bichsel, et al. 2023). In a search for better work-life balance, more flexibility, and stronger workplace boundaries, higher education employees pushed back against these requests.

While actively overcoming the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, college campuses in America were shaken again by what many called the “Racial Reckoning Summer of 2020.” The protests rose in

the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many more at the hands of American police, forcing the country to look inward at their racial inequities. Numerous Asian and Asian American individuals were physically attacked due to anti-Asian sentiment fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic. American higher education students, employees, and faculty asked their institutions to do the very same. In requiring their places of work to face their racial inequities, student affairs professionals were faced with evaluating the racism in their work in two ways.

First, racially minoritized student affairs professionals were burdened with fighting for equity in their own workplaces while also processing the traumatic events happening outside their workplace (Acosta, 2020).

Second, as college campuses incorporated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans and statements into their responsibilities, student affairs departments had to ask themselves how to make their campuses equitable for their students, as well (Harrison, 2010; Stebleton & Buford, 2021).

Race and Racism in Student Affairs

Racism remains a pervasive issue on college campuses, and student affairs is no different. Understanding the racialized experiences of student affairs workers is crucial, as research has shown that race-related stressors can result in various adverse outcomes for employees, including depression, anxiety, turnover, and burnout (Carter, 2007; Velez et al., 2018).

In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that 32% of student affairs professionals identified with a non-white race or ethnicity (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). By 2022, this figure had risen to 37% (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). However, diversifying the workforce is just one aspect; it is equally crucial to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment. Student affairs workplaces must evaluate whether they have adapted to support this rapidly growing demographic.

While student affairs workplaces already grapple with high levels of burnout and frustration, as noted by Stebleton & Buford (2021), racialized experiences can compound these difficulties. Therefore, examining the racialized experiences of these professionals is a crucial first step in dismantling yet another barrier to success within the student affairs profession.

While an extensive body of research has primarily focused on the experiences of campus racial climate for student populations, less is currently known of how student affairs professionals experience the climate. Hence, these findings can be instrumental in guiding campus planning discussions and offering perspectives on addressing challenges, with the goal of fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace climate for student affairs employees that may help curb the adverse outcomes that lead to burnout and turnover.



Using NACCC Data to Inform DEI Change

The data we present in this brief reflects racialized experiences that we believe many student affairs professionals can relate to. One significant challenge within the realm of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), particularly concerning workplace racism, is the lack of open dialogue or a tendency to avoid addressing these issues. The purpose of sharing these findings is to provide a factual basis for discussing the well-being and DEI efforts in student affairs. Our data serves as a valuable tool to initiate conversations about race. When conversations are grounded in factual information supported by data, they offer perspective and opportunities for engaging in meaningful discussions. As individuals become more comfortable discussing race, they are better equipped to recognize how their own actions

and beliefs may contribute to racial inequities in society, particularly within their own institution of employment.

The National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates (NACCC) encompasses a set of five surveys designed to evaluate the campus's racial climate by targeting undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, faculty, and students at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). These surveys were developed by the University of Southern California (USC) Race and Equity Center to gather insights from members of the campus community regarding their experiences in relation to racial climate. Since its inception in 2019, the NACCC has been administered to over 1.6 million respondents and implemented in 169 colleges and universities across the United States.

This report draws on data from the NACCC Staff Survey, which focuses on six key content areas essential for assessing campus racial climate: (1) Workplace Mattering; (2) Workplace Equity; (3) Racial Learning and Literacy; (4) Encounters with Racial Stress; (5) Appraisals of Institutional Commitment; and (6) Impact of External Environments (see Appendix A for list of included survey items). The goal of the NACCC is to help leaders in higher education better understand and more strategically address campus racial problems on campus before they escalate to crises.



Sample Description

The sample for this report consists of responses from 1,992 professionals in the student affairs field across 73 institutions (see Table 1; see Appendix B). Our sample of institutions comprises 28 two-year institutions and 45 four-year institutions.

The sample demographic breakdown is as follows: 54% White or European American, 18% Hispanic or Latinx, 12% Black or African American, 5% Asian or Asian American, and 7% identifying as biracial or multiracial.

Notably, our sample reveals a slight overrepresentation of student affairs professionals of color compared to the race breakdown of Student and Academic Affairs and Other Education Services Occupations provided by the 2022 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), namely with respect to Hispanic or Latinx professionals and those identifying as either biracial or multiracial (U.S. Department of Education, 2023) (see Table 2).

Terminology

The term *Latinx* disrupts the erasure of women and gender nonconforming people who have challenged the longstanding gendered labels of Latino in the United States.

The phraseology “*of color*” refers to multiple groups of historically-minoritized people as distinctive from the racialized experiences of white people and helps acknowledge the ways racism has impacted those groups, as a mechanism of white supremacy.

Table 1. Breakdown of the 73 institutions that participated in NACCC Staff Survey from which the analytical sample of student-affairs professionals are derived, by institutional type.

Institutional Type Breakdown	Institutions	Student Affairs Employees
Total N	73 (100%)	1,992 (100%)
Public, 2-year	28 (38%)	700 (35%)
Private, 4-year	45 (62%)	1,292 (65%)

Table 2. Racial/ethnic breakdowns of the sample of student affairs professionals who participated in the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates and those provided by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Respondent Racial/Ethnic Breakdown	NACCC 2021-2023	IPEDS/NCES Fall 2022
Total N	1,992 (100%)	172,400 (100%)
Asian or Asian American	5%	4%
Black or African American	12%	13%
Hispanic or Latinx	18%	11%
White or European American	54%	63%
Biracial or Multiracial	7%	2%
Another group not listed*	4%	6%

* Includes respondents who identify as monoracially Arab or Arab American, Middle Eastern, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or any other racial/ethnic identities.



Theme 1:
Racialized Incidents Among
Student Affairs Professionals



More Black and Asian Student Affairs Professionals Report Racism as a Problem on Campus

NACCC respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which racism is a problem at their (a) work environment and (b) institution at large. Examination of racial disparities revealed that Black or African American, Asian or Asian American, and biracial or multiracial professionals perceived racism as being more severe in both settings (see Figure 1). About one in ten Black or African American respondents (13%) and Asian or Asian American respondents (10%) reported racism to be either “mostly” or “completely” a problem in their immediate work environment. Considering their institutions at large, Asian or Asian American respondents (31%), Black or African American respondents (30%), and biracial or multiracial respondents (30%) reported racism to be either “mostly” or “completely” a problem. This trend underscores the uneven burden of racial harm within the student affairs profession, where staff of color may see, hear, and experience racial issues on campus than their White colleagues.

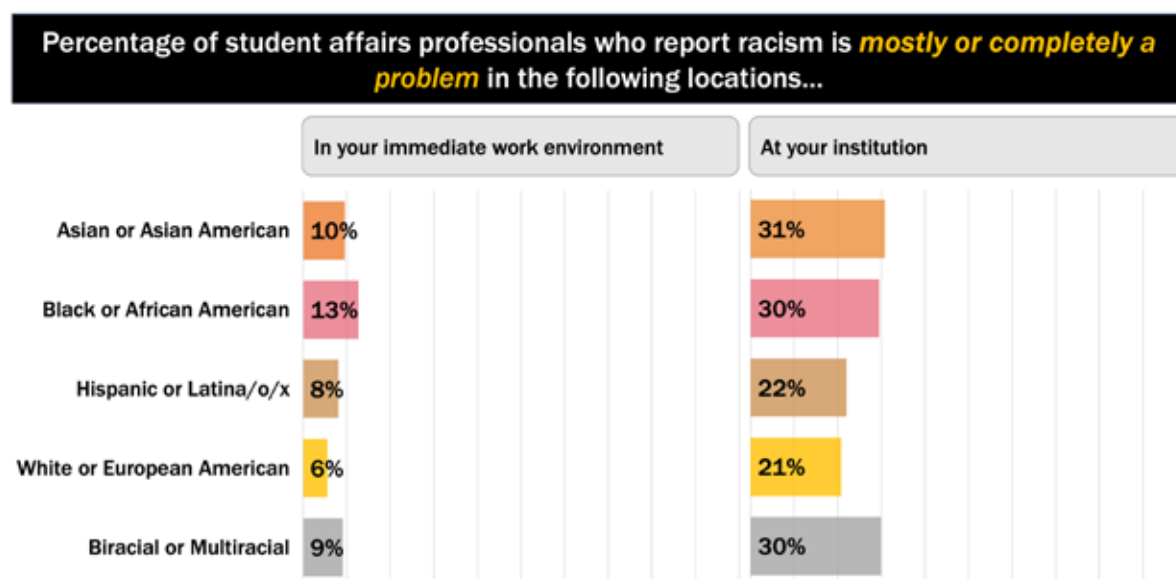


Figure 1. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported that racism is mostly or completely a problem in their immediate work environment and at their institution overall, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Over Half of Student Affairs Professionals Report Witnessing Racism on Campus

In the NACCC survey, respondents were asked how often they had witnessed racism on campus in the past year. Using a five-point scale, response options ranged from ‘Never’ [1] to ‘Almost always’ [5]. Results indicated nearly three in five (59%) of student affairs professionals reported witnessing racism on campus in the past year (see Figure 2). Among all racial groups, biracial or multiracial (73%) and Black or African American (63%) respondents were the most likely to report witnessing racism on campus, followed by Asian or Asian American respondents (60%).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who report *ever witnessing racism on campus*

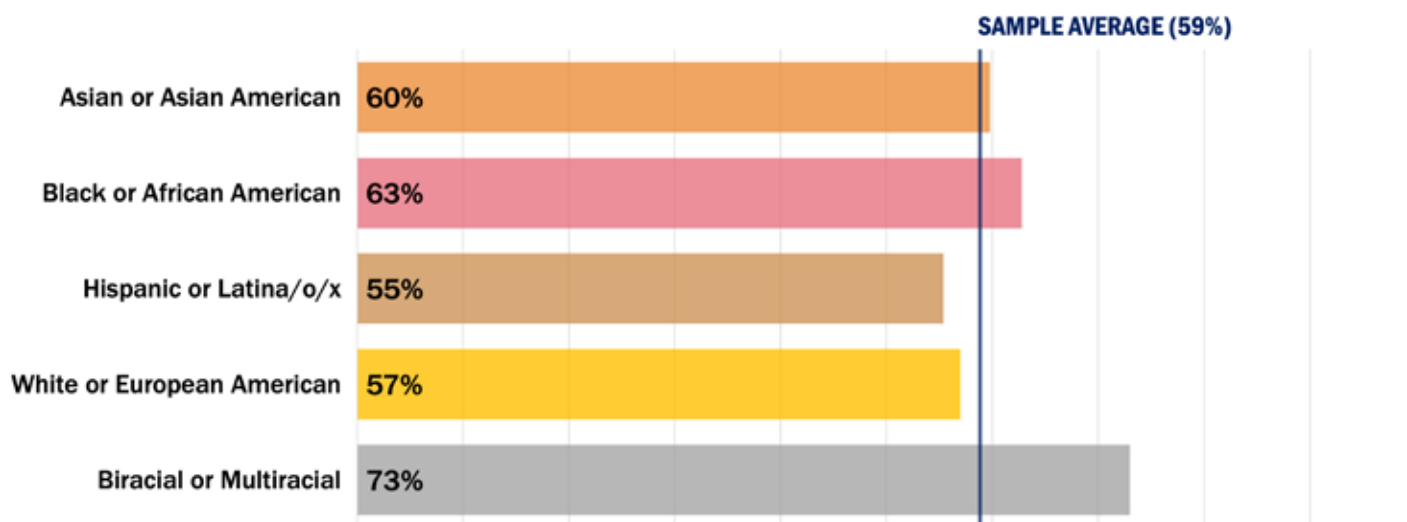


Figure 2. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported ever witnessing racism on campus, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

One in Three Student Affairs Professionals Report Personal Experience of Racism on Campus

NACCC respondents reported how often they had personally experienced racism at their institutions in the past year. Using a five-point scale, response options ranged from ‘Never’ [1] to ‘Almost always’ [5]. Results revealed that a total of 33% of student affairs professionals reported experiencing racism on campus (see Figure 3). Among all racial groups, Black or African American respondents (61%) were the most likely to report experiencing racism on campus, followed by Asian or Asian American (46%) and biracial or multiracial (46%) respondents.

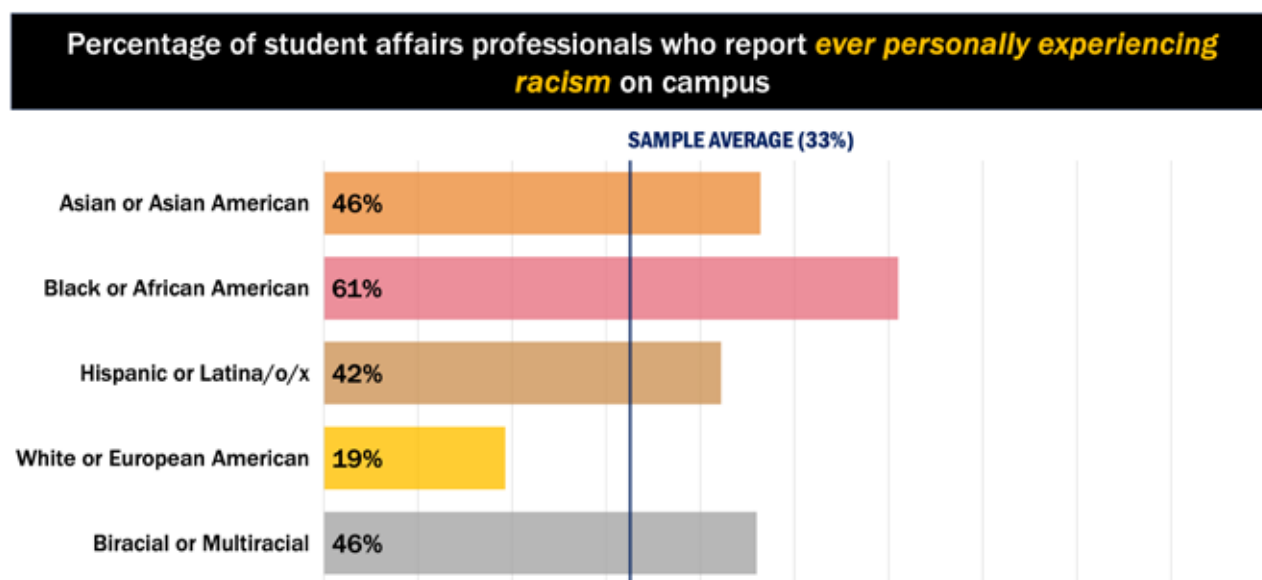


Figure 3. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported ever personally experiencing racism on campus, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Perpetrators of Racism Include White Colleagues and External Contacts in Their Work

When asked about experiencing racism from different groups, student affairs professionals reported experiencing racism from those they have contact with (see Figure 4) as follows: White staff (27%), White students (22%), White faculty (21%), staff of color (16%), students of color (15%), and faculty of color (11%). The sequence of the results indicate that more racism happened by staff and students than faculty. Notably, there has been about twice as much racism by White faculty than Faculty of color toward student affairs professionals. In addition to experiencing racism from their campus community members, 22% of student affairs professionals reported experiencing racism from individuals outside their institution such as vendors, partners, or community contacts.

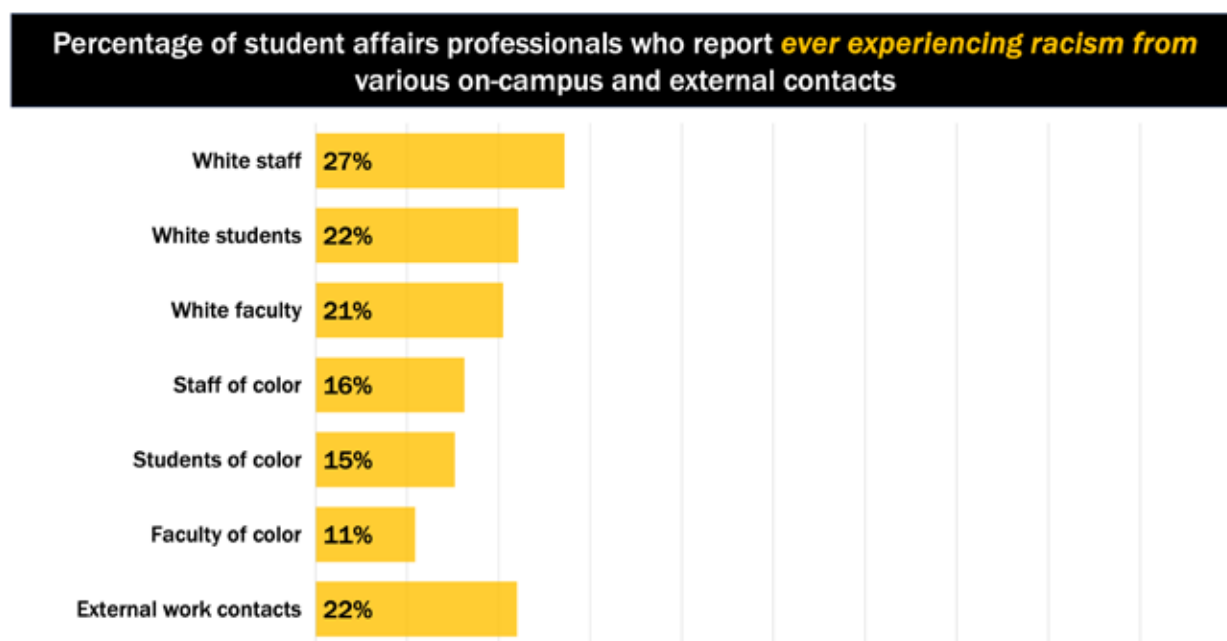


Figure 4. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported ever experiencing racism from various on-campus and external contacts.

The Commonly Reported Racist or Racialized Experiences by Student Affairs Professionals

Among the 15 racialized or racist incidents listed in the NACCC, the five most reported incidents by student affairs professionals of color were: avoiding race-related discussions due to fear of negative reactions from coworkers (32%), being mistaken for someone else of the same race/ethnicity (27%), being asked or expected to represent the views and/or experiences of their entire race in meetings (24%), being viewed as naturally less capable than others because of their race (21%), and hearing or overhearing negative or insensitive comments about their racial/ethnic group (20%). Notably, Black or African American professionals were more likely to report experiencing racialized or racist incidents compared to their colleagues of color (see Figure 5).

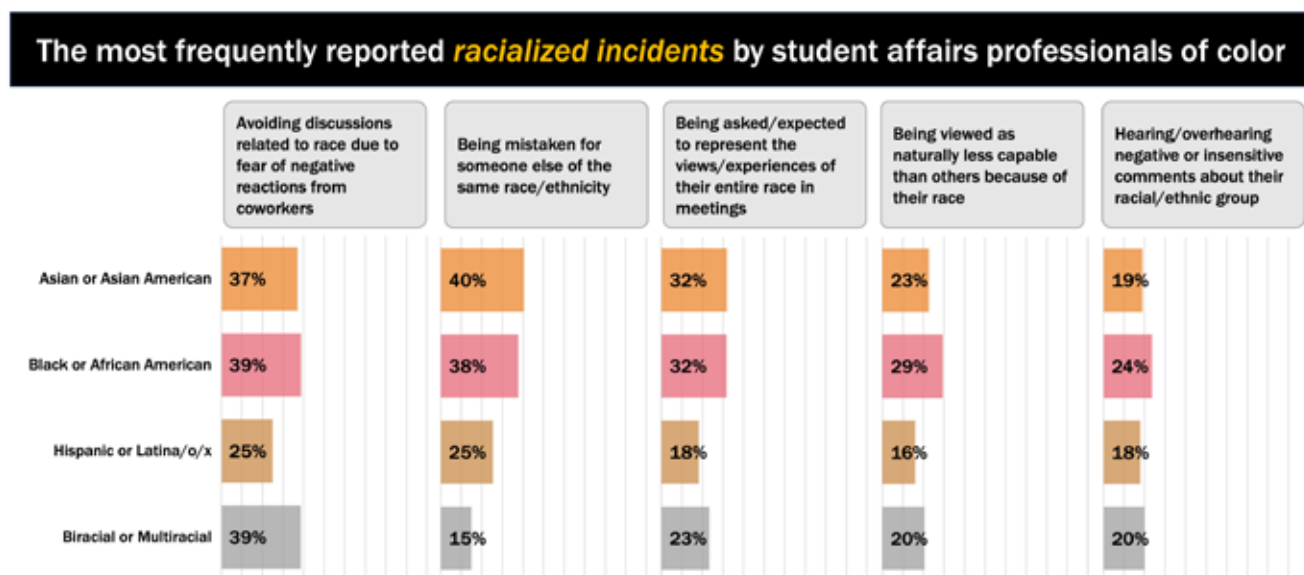


Figure 5. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported experiencing the most commonly experienced racist or racialized incidents, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Student Affairs Professionals Overwhelmingly Express Frustration Regarding Campus Racism

When asked to select from a list of aftereffects due to experiencing or witnessing racism on campus (a select-all-that-apply question), the most commonly shared aftereffect was feelings of frustration (reported by 72% of respondents), followed by feelings of anger (50%), increase in their personal motivation or activism to make change (40%), and decline in mental health or emotional well-being (27%) (see Figure 6)

Aftereffects of Experiencing or Witnessing Racism on Campus	%
Feelings of frustration	72%
Feelings of anger	50%
Increase in your personal motivation or activism to make change	40%
Decline in your mental health or emotional well-being	27%
Feelings of loneliness, not belonging, and/or isolation	22%
Difficulty concentrating at work	21%
Decline in your physical health	6%

Figure 6. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported experiencing aftereffects of experiencing or witnessing racism on campus.



Theme 2:

Institutional and Workplace
Racial DEI Culture

Institutional Programs and Policies for Addressing Race and Racism are Inadequate

In the NACCC survey, respondents indicated the groups of people in their campus community from which they have learned about race. Student affairs staff were most likely to report learning about race through self-learning and self-reflection, with 70% of staff of color and 81% of White staff reporting this, while about half of the staff members reported receiving formal professional development from the institution as a learning source (see Figure 7A). On a five-point scale, with response options ranging from ‘Not at

all’ [1] to ‘Extremely’ [5], staff self-rated their level of knowledge about the following policies and resources relating to racism and racist incidents: (1) how racism is defined at their institution, (2) how to respond to or act against a racist incident at work, (3) where to find resources if you or a colleague experienced a racist incident at work, and (4) where to make a report of a racist incident at work. A mean score was calculated from the four items, with values ranging from 1.0 - 5.0, with higher values reflecting more knowledge of policies and resources related to racism and racist incidents. Student affairs professionals reported an average knowledge level of 3.1, suggesting a moderate level of proficiency (see Figure 7B).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who report **learning about race** from the following sources

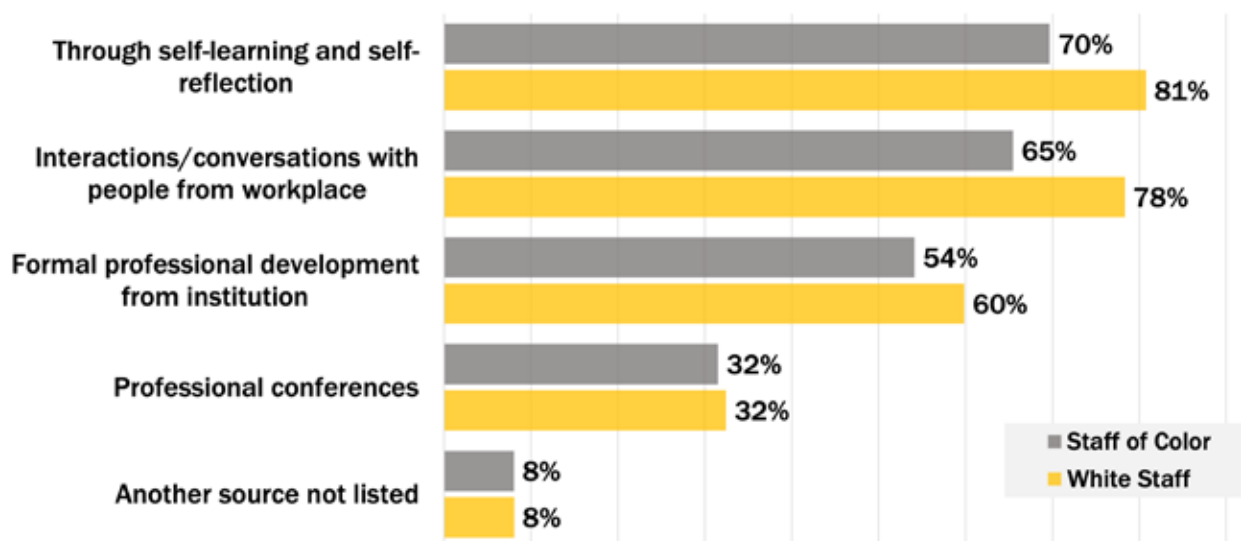


Figure 7A. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported learning about race from various sources, disaggregated by white staff and staff of color.

Extent to which student affairs professionals are *knowledgeable* of institutional policies and resources related to racism and racist incidents

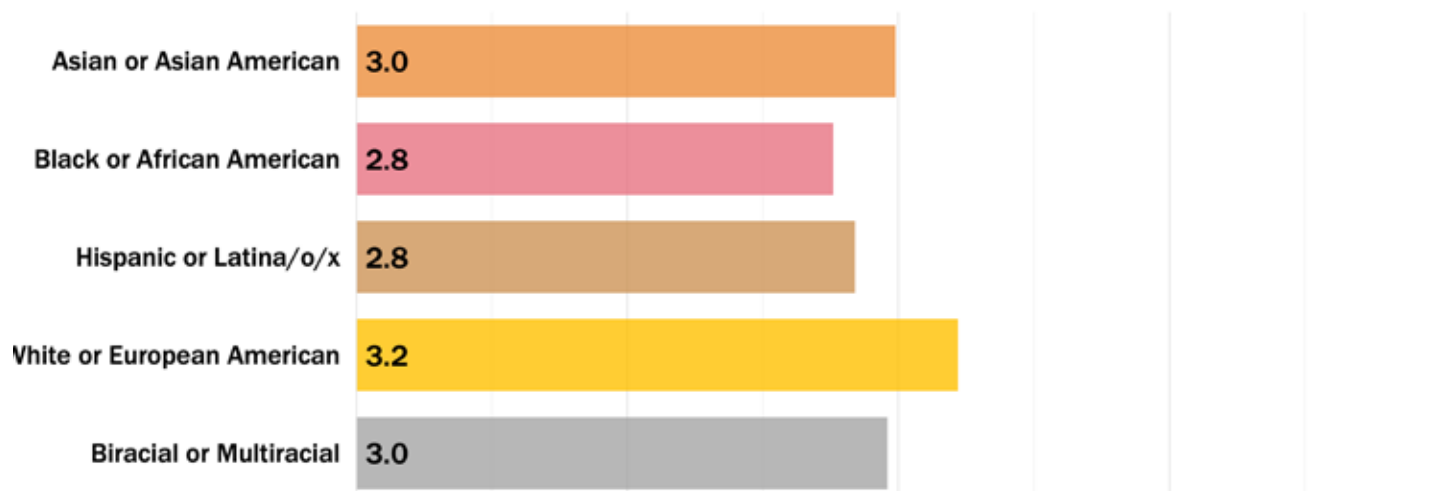


Figure 7B. Extent to which student affairs professionals are knowledgeable of institutional policies and resources related to racism and racist incidents, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Institutions Demonstrate a Lack of Commitment to Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The results indicated insufficient and varying levels of respondents' confidence in their institution's long-term commitment to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in

the workplace. About half (51%) of White student-affairs professionals reported being very or extremely confident in their institution's long-term commitment to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace; however, only 30% of Black or African American professionals and 35% of Asian or Asian American professionals reported so (see Figure 8).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who are **very or extremely confident** in their institution's long-term commitment to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace

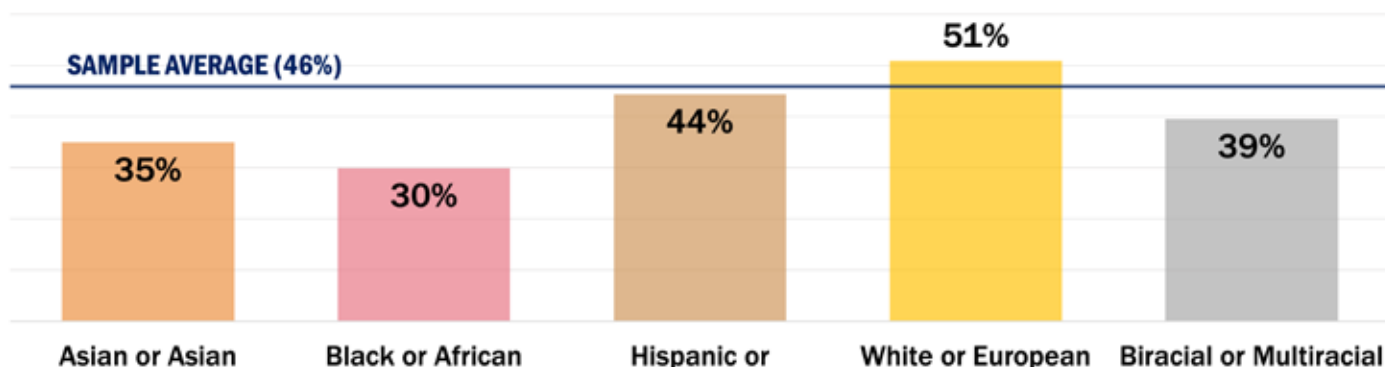


Figure 8. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported they are very or extremely confident in their institution's long-term commitment to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Concerns Regarding the Recruitment and Retention of Staff of Color are Significant

NACCC respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe their institution is committed to (a) racial diversity among staff and (b) retaining staff of color. Two-thirds (67%) of student affairs professionals reported that their institutions were mostly or strongly committed to

racial diversity among staff, with Black or African American professionals (52%) reporting the lowest percentage. Fewer (63%) reported that their institutions were mostly or strongly committed to retaining staff of color, with Black or African American professionals (45%) and Asian or Asian American professionals (51%) reporting the lowest percentages (see Figure 9).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who believe their institution is *mostly or strongly committed* to the following...

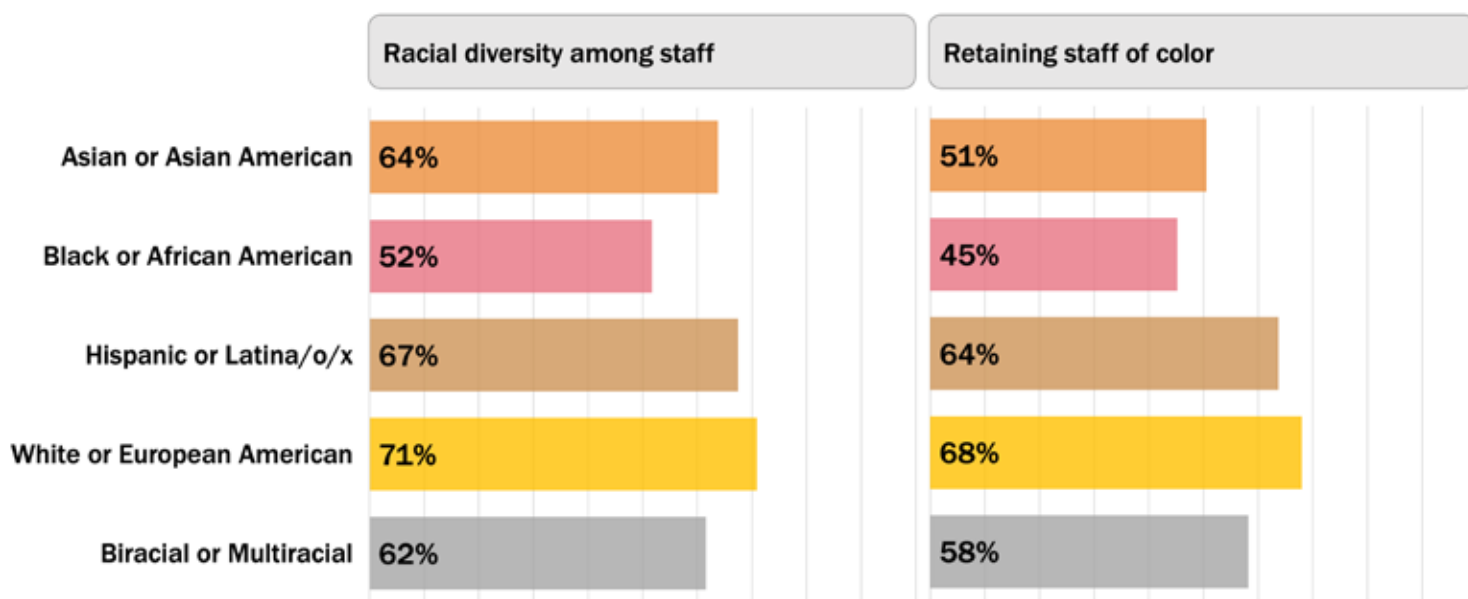


Figure 9. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported they believe their institution is mostly or strongly committed to racial diversity among staff and retaining staff of color, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

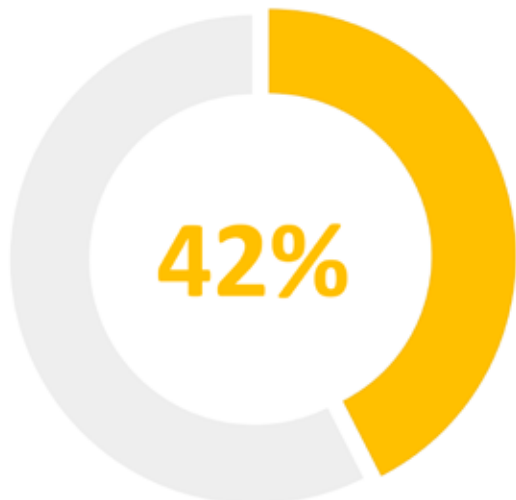
Student Affairs Leaders' Inaction Regarding Critical National Racial Incidents

During the data collection period, several national socio-political events were shaping the racial climate of higher education, including the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment,

as well as the prevalence of police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people. Forty-two percent of student affairs professionals reported their leaders had addressed anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment, while 50% reported their leaders had addressed police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people (see Figure 10).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who report that their **leaders have addressed** national sociopolitical events

Anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment



Police brutality and racially motivated
violence against Black people



Figure 10. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported their leader have addressed (a) anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment as well as (b) police brutality and racially motivated violence against Black people.



Theme 3: Workplace Belonging and Equity



Low Sense of Mattering Among Student Affairs Staff—Notably Racially Minoritized Staff

In the NACCC survey, respondents were asked to indicate how much they felt they mattered at their institution. Using a five-point scale, response options ranged from ‘Not at all’ [1]

to ‘Strongly’ [5]. Overall, less than half (43%) of respondents reported feeling that they either “mostly” or “strongly” matter at their institution, with Asian or Asian American professionals (33%) and Black or African American professionals (38%) reporting so at the lowest rates. Across all racial groups, Asian or Asian American professionals (10%) and Hispanic or Latinx professionals (9%) reported feeling that they do not matter at all at their institution (see Figure 11).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who report feeling they **mostly or strongly matter** at their institution

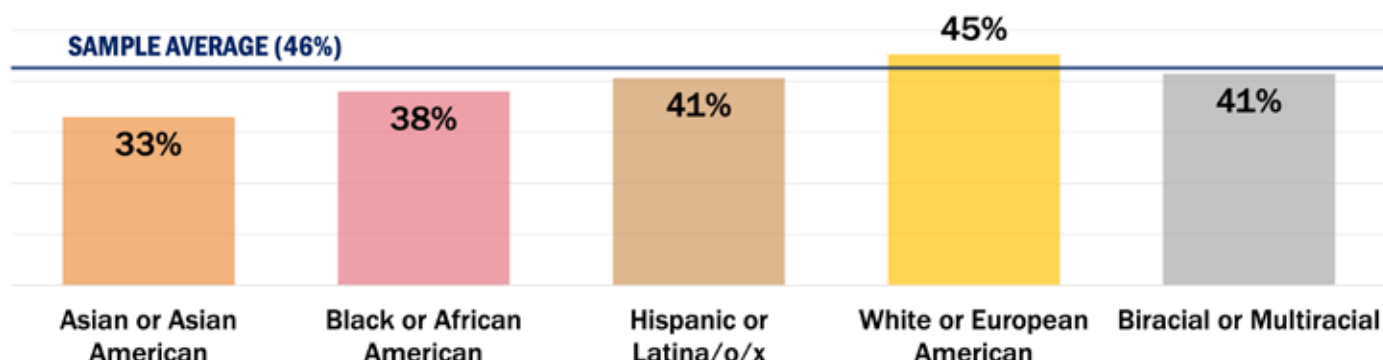


Figure 11. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported feeling they mostly or strongly matter at their institution, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Not Everyone Feels Welcome or Included in Their Work Environment

In the NACCC survey, respondents indicated the Using seven-point bipolar scales (e.g., ‘Completely unwelcome’ [1] to ‘Completely welcome’ [7]), NACCC respondents reported the extent to which they felt (a) welcome/unwelcome and (b) included/excluded in their immediate work environment. Over 1 in 10 of Black or African

American student-affairs professionals (11%) reported feeling unwelcome in their workplace environment, the highest proportion of all racial groups, followed by Hispanic or Latinx professionals (9%) and Asian or Asian American (8%) professionals (see Figure 12). Further, sixteen percent of biracial or multiracial student-affairs professionals reported feeling excluded in their workplace environment, the highest proportion of all racial groups, followed by Hispanic or Latinx professionals (15%) and Black or African American (15%) professionals.

Percentage of student affairs professionals who report feeling **unwelcome and excluded** in their immediate work environment

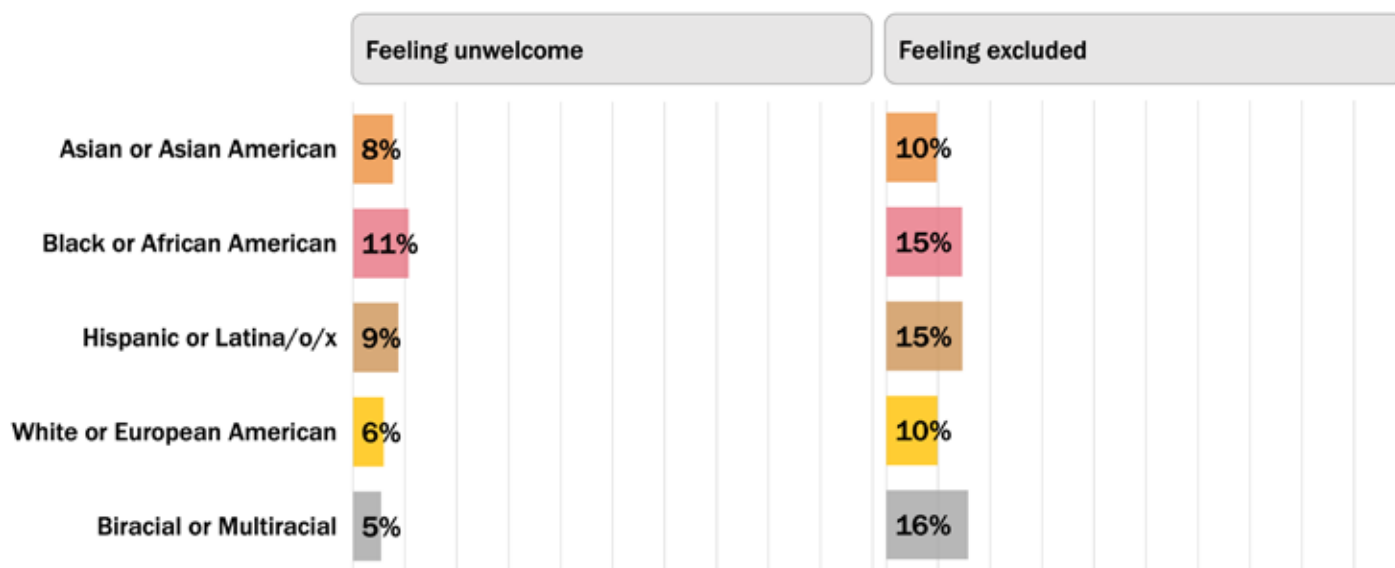


Figure 12. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported feeling (a) unwelcome and (b) excluded in their immediate work environment, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Not All Perspectives Are Valued Equally in the Workplace

NACCC respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe their perspective is valued in decision-making processes in the

workplace. One in ten (10%) Black or African American student-affairs professionals reported feeling that their perspective is “not at all” valued in decision-making processes at their workplace, followed by Latinx professionals (see Figure 13).

Percentage of student affairs professionals who believe their perspective is **not at all valued** in decision-making processes in the workplace

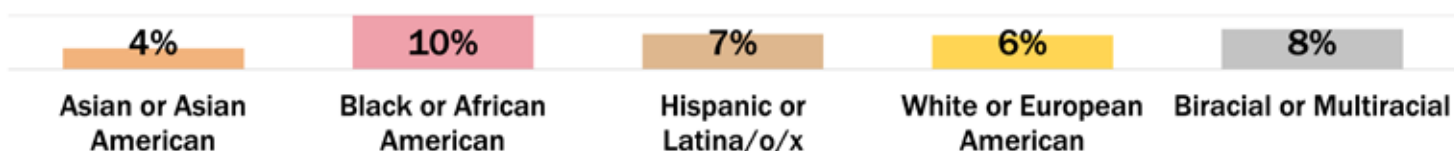


Figure 13. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported believing their perspective is not at all valued in decision-making processes in the workplace, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity.

Many Professionals Report Insufficient Advancement and Supervisor Support

In the NACCC survey, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with various statements related to topics of workplace equity, including opportunities for advancement, consideration for career growth, and receiving support from supervisors to succeed in their work. Black or African American (34%) and Hispanic or Latinx (32%) professionals disagreed

the most regarding whether they received equal opportunities for advancement compared to their colleagues (see Figure 14). Regarding equal consideration for growth, Black or African American (32%) and Hispanic or Latinx (31%) professionals disagreed the most regarding whether they were considered equally for leadership and career growth opportunities compared to their colleagues. Asian or Asian American (20%) student-affairs professionals disagreed the most regarding whether they received enough support from their supervisors or leaders to succeed in their work.

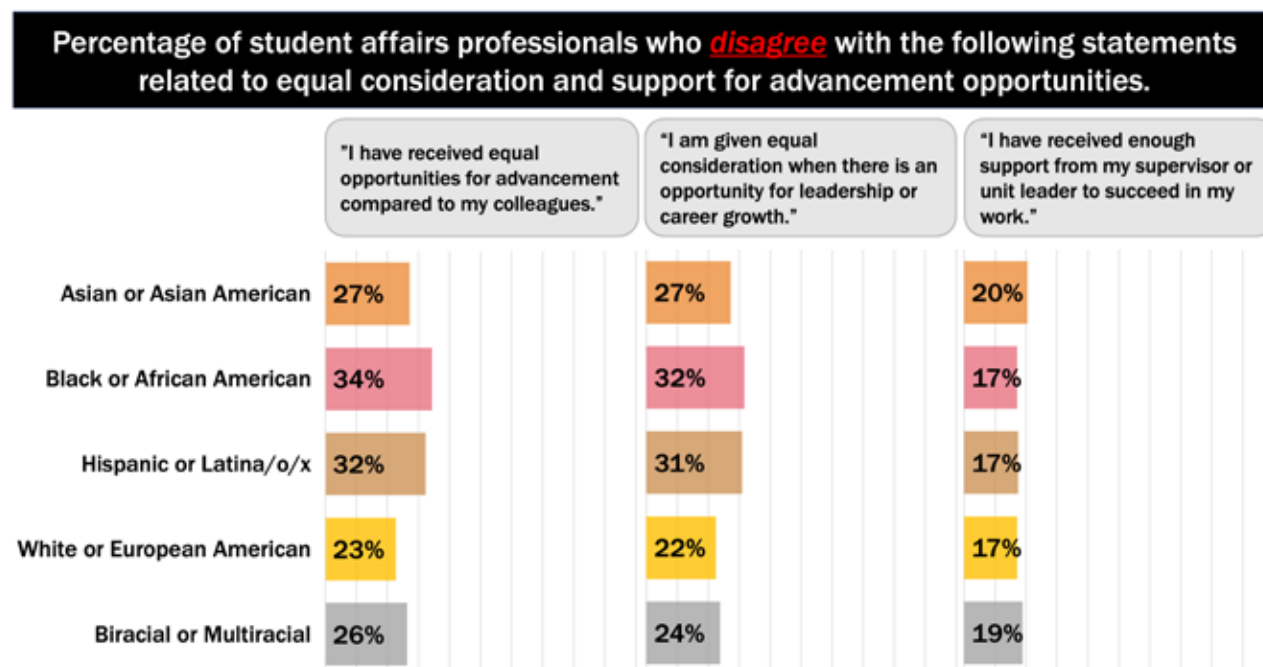


Figure 14. Proportion of student affairs professionals who reported disagreeing with the following statements related to equal consideration and support for advancement opportunities, disaggregated by racial/ethnic identity: (a) "I have received equal opportunities for advancement compared to my colleagues," (b) "I am given equal consideration when there is an opportunity for leadership or career growth," and (c) "I have received enough support from my supervisor or unit leader to succeed in my work."

Conclusion

The findings presented in this brief illuminate a troubling but all-too-familiar reality for many student affairs professionals: racism is not only a problem among student populations but also deeply embedded within the professional environments tasked with supporting them. Student affairs staff—particularly those who identify as Black, Asian, Latinx, biracial, or multiracial—report witnessing, experiencing, and feeling the persistent effects of racism in ways that impact their sense of belonging, emotional well-being, and career advancement. These experiences are often compounded by limited institutional responsiveness, a lack of clear racial equity infrastructure, and a disconnect between DEI rhetoric and action.

Although institutions have made progress in diversifying the student affairs workforce, the data suggest that demographic representation alone does not equate to equity or inclusion. Racially minoritized professionals continue to face unequal treatment, isolation, and skepticism about their expertise and contributions. When institutions fail to address these inequities, the consequences reverberate across the organization—resulting in lower retention, decreased morale, and diminished capacity to serve an increasingly diverse student body.

Racial equity must be treated as a central institutional priority, not a peripheral concern, especially—particularly in today’s volatile political climate. The well-being of student affairs professionals is directly tied to institutional effectiveness, student engagement, and the broader mission of higher education. Without bold, intentional action to create equitable and affirming work environments, colleges and universities risk losing the very staff members who are central to their diversity and student success efforts.

This brief is a call to action. It offers a data-informed foundation from which campus leaders, supervisors, and student affairs professionals can begin or deepen conversations about racial climate and workplace equity. More importantly, it provides clear, specific recommendations that institutions can implement immediately. Addressing racism in the workplace is not a matter of individual resilience, but of institutional responsibility. The path forward requires more than acknowledgment—it demands sustained commitment, measurable change, and collective accountability.

Recommendations for Action

1. Implement a Standardized Protocol for Reporting and Addressing Workplace Racism

- Create a centralized online reporting tool for racial harassment and microaggressions experienced by staff.
- Designate trained staff within Human Resources (HR) or DEI offices to investigate and respond to reports within a 30-day timeframe.
- Publicize case outcomes in anonymized summaries to promote transparency and institutional accountability.

Responsible Unit: Human Resources, DEI Office, Institutional Equity Teams

2. Integrate Racial Equity Goals into Annual Staff Evaluations and Unit Goals

- Require all student affairs departments to set one to two measurable racial equity goals annually (e.g., diversifying hiring pools, improving staff sense of belonging). The measurement can be done via a campus climate survey for staff and an internal employee database.
- Include a reflection on DEI contributions in department heads' performance reviews.
- Include 360-degree feedback from supervisees in supervisor evaluations to assess inclusion practices.

Responsible Unit: Division of Student Affairs, Institutional Effectiveness, Unit Supervisors

3. Regularly Assess Staff Experiences with Disaggregated Climate Data

- Administer climate surveys every two years and disaggregate data by race, gender, sexual orientation and division.
- Present findings to campus leadership and develop targeted action plans with unit leaders. Track diversity and equity goals every two years.

Responsible Unit: Institutional Research, DEI Office, Student Affairs Assessment Teams

4. Establish Peer-Led Racial Affinity Groups for Staff of Color and White Allies

- Fund and support racial affinity groups (e.g., Black staff network, Latinx staff collective) that meet regularly for support, feedback, and professional development.
- Create facilitated learning circles for White staff focused on antiracism education and accountability.

Responsible Unit: Chief Diversity Officer, Student Affairs VP, Employee Resource Group Coordinators

Recommendations for Action

5. Launch Targeted Retention Programs for Staff of Color

- Conduct annual stay interviews with staff of color to identify retention factors and workplace challenges.
- Develop mentorship or sponsorship programs that pair staff of color with senior leaders to support career growth.

Responsible Unit: Human Resources, Provost Office, Division of Student Affairs

6. Audit and Improve Equity in Advancement and Promotion Practices

- Review five years of promotion and salary data disaggregated by race and gender to identify disparities.
- Require search and promotion committees to participate in bias-reduction training and use standardized evaluation rubrics.

Responsible Unit: Human Resources, Institutional Research, Faculty/Staff Senate (if applicable)

7. Ensure Formal DEI Learning is Available and Accessible

- Provide workshops every semester on topics such as racial microaggressions, campus racial climate, and structural racism.
- Compensate or provide release time for staff to participate in racial equity training as part of professional development.

Responsible Unit: DEI Office, Professional Development Committee

References

- Acosta, A. (2020, September 1). A conversation about race. JCC Conexions. <https://naspa.org/blog/a-conversation-about-race>
- Anderson, R. K. (2020, October). Burned out or burned through? The costs of student affairs diversity work. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1822853>
- Bichsel, J., Fuesting, M., Tubbs, D., & Schneider, J. (2023, September). The CUPA-HR 2023 Higher Education Employee Retention Survey. CUPA-HR. <https://www.cupahr.org/surveys/research-briefs/higher-ed-employee-retention-survey-findings-september-2023/>
- Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury: Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35, 13-105.
- Harrison, L. M. (2010, June). Consequences and strategies student affairs professionals engage in their advocacy roles. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 47(2), 197-214. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6003>
- Stebbleton, M. J., & Buford, M. (2021, November 14). Are we still doing it for the “work?” Student affairs educators and the great resignation. JCC Conexions, 7(4). <https://naspa.org/blog/are-we-still-doing-it-for-the-work-student-affairs-educators-and-the-great-resignation>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). (2016, Spring). Table 314.40. Employees in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, sex, employment status, control and level of institution, and primary occupation: Fall 2015. Human Resources component, Fall Staff section. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_314.40.asp.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). (2023, Spring). Table 314.40. Employees in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, sex, employment status, control and level of institution, and primary occupation: Fall 2022. Human Resources component. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_314.40.asp.
- Velez, B. L., Cox, R., Jr., Polihronakis, C. J., & Moradi, B. (2018, March). Discrimination, work outcomes, and mental health among women of color: The protective role of womanist attitudes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 65(2), 178-193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000274>

Appendix A

List of Selected Items from the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climate (NACCC) Staff Survey.

To what extent do you think racism is a problem...?

Response options: Not at all, Slightly, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely, I don't know

- a. In your immediate work environment
- b. At [School Name]

In the past year, how often have you witnessed racism happening at [School Name]?

- Never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost always

In the past year, how often have you personally experienced racism at [School Name]?

- Never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost always

In the past year, how often have you experienced racism from the following people at [School Name]?

Response options: Never, A few times in the year, A few times a month, A few times a week, Almost every day, I don't work with this group of people

- a. Staff of color
- b. White staff
- c. Faculty of color
- d. White faculty
- e. Students of color
- f. White students
- g. People outside of [School Name] you were in contact with for work

Appendix A

In the past year, have you personally experienced any of the following racial microaggressions or racist incidents in your current workplace? Select all that apply.

(By “personally experienced” we mean that you experienced racism that happened to you.)

- ☐ Not speaking out in your workplace about topics related to race for fear of negative reactions from coworkers
- ☐ Being asked or expected to represent the views and/or experiences of your entire race in meetings
- ☐ Being confused with someone else of the same race/ethnicity
- ☐ Being viewed as naturally less able than others in your workplace
- ☐ Hearing or overhearing negative or insensitive comments about your racial/ethnic group or people of your same race/ethnicity

Have the overall racist incidents you have experienced or witnessed on your campus resulted in any of the following? Select all that apply.

[The question is only presented to respondents who personally experienced or witnessed racist incidents at their institution.]

- ☐ Decline in your physical health
- ☐ Decline in your mental health or emotional well-being
- ☐ Feelings of frustration
- ☐ Feelings of anger
- ☐ Feelings of loneliness, not belonging, and/or isolation
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating at work
- ☐ Increase in your personal motivation or activism to make change

In the past year, have you learned about or engaged in discussion about race or racism from the following sources? Select all that apply.

(By “racism,” we mean specific harmful acts, behaviors, or attitudes directed at individuals based on their race.)

- ☐ Interactions/conversations with people from your workplace
- ☐ Formal professional development from [School Name]
- ☐ Professional conferences
- ☐ Through self-learning and self-reflection (e.g., reading, social media, podcast)
- ☐ Another source not listed

Appendix A

How knowledgeable are you about the following policies or resources at [School Name]?

Response options: Not at all knowledgeable/To my knowledge, no such policies or resources exist or are publicized; Slightly knowledgeable; Somewhat knowledgeable; Very knowledgeable; Extremely knowledgeable

- a. How racism is defined at [School Name]
- b. How to respond to or act against a racist incident at work
- c. Where to find resources if you or a colleague experienced a racist incident at work
- d. Where to make a report of a racist incident at work

How confident are you that [School Name] has a long-term commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in your workplace?

- Not at all confident
- Slightly confident
- Somewhat confident
- Very confident
- Extremely confident
- *I don't know*

In your opinion or experience, how committed is [School Name] to each of the following?

Response options: Not committed at all, Slightly committed, Somewhat committed, Mostly committed, Strongly committed, Not applicable

- a. Racial diversity among staff
- b. Retaining staff of color

In the past year, have leaders in your work unit addressed any of the following issues (e.g., in meetings, via email, or other forms of communication)? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Anti-Asian hate crimes and harassment
- ☐ Police brutality and racially-motivated violence against Black people

Overall, to what extent do you feel you matter at [School Name]?

(By “matter,” we mean that others notice and care about what you think, want, and have to say.)

- I don't matter at all
- I slightly matter
- I somewhat matter
- I mostly matter
- I strongly matter

Appendix A

How welcome or unwelcome do you feel in your immediate work environment?

- Completely unwelcome
- Moderately unwelcome
- Slightly unwelcome
- Neither welcome nor unwelcome
- Slightly welcome
- Moderately welcome
- Completely welcome

How included or excluded do you feel in your immediate work environment?

- Completely excluded
- Moderately excluded
- Slightly excluded
- Neither included nor excluded
- Slightly included
- Moderately included
- Completely included

To what degree do you feel your perspective is valued in the decision-making process in your workplace?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Mostly
- Strongly
- *Not applicable*

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

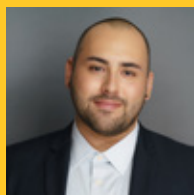
Response options: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree

- a. I have received equal opportunities for advancement compared to my colleagues.
- b. I am given equal consideration when there is an opportunity for leadership or career growth.
- c. I have received enough support from my supervisor or unit leader to succeed in my work.

Appendix B

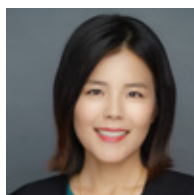
Table A. List of the 73 institutions that participated in NACCC Staff Survey from which the analytical sample of student-affairs professionals are derived, by institutional type.

Public, 2-year Institutions		
Butte College	Fullerton College	Pasadena City College
Citrus College	Glendale Community College	Queensborough Community College
Clovis Community College	Grossmont College	Riverside City College
College of the Desert	Long Beach City College	San Bernardino Valley College
Compton College	Los Medanos College	San Diego Mesa College
Crafton Hills College	Moorpark College	San Jose City College
Cuyamaca College	Moreno Valley College	Santa Barbara City College
Diablo Valley College	Mt. San Jacinto College	Santa Monica College
Evergreen Valley College	Napa Valley College	Southwestern College
	Norco College	
Private, 4-year Institutions		
Albright College	Grinnell College	Soka University of America
Allegheny College	Hamilton College	Southwestern University
Alvernia University	Knox College	St. Olaf College
Barnard College	Luther College	The University of the South
Bryn Mawr College	Macalester College	Trinity University
Bucknell University	McPherson College	Union College
Cabrini University	Muhlenberg College	University of Puget Sound
Centre College	Oberlin College	Virginia Wesleyan University
Colorado College	Pitzer College	Wabash College
Concordia College	Randolph College	Washington and Lee University
DePauw University	Reed College	Wellesley College
Dickinson College	Rollins College	Westminster College
Emory University	Sarah Lawrence College	Whitman College
Gonzaga University	Scripps College	Whittier College
Goucher College	Skidmore College	Wofford College



Rodolfo Andy Núñez (he/him)

is the Senior Research Analyst at the USC Race and Equity Center.



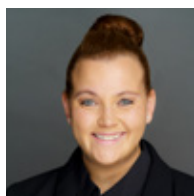
Jihye Kwon, Ph.D. (she/her)

is the Associate Director for Survey Research at the USC Race and Equity Center and an Adjunct Professor in the USC Rossier School of Education.



Ya-Chi Hung (she/her)

is the former Associate Director for Survey Research of the USC Race and Equity Center.



Kaitlyn Lange (she/her)

is the Data Collection Coordinator at the USC Race and Equity Center.



Royel M. Johnson, Ph.D. (he/him)

is the Director of the National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates at the USC Race and Equity Center and is an Associate Professor and PhD Program Chair in the USC Rossier School of Education.

USC Race and Equity Center



ABOUT THE USC RACE AND EQUITY CENTER

Founded by Dr. Shaun R. Harper, and directed by Dr. Jessica T. DeCuir-Gunby, the USC Race and Equity Center is a dynamic research and organizational improvement center that helps leaders and professionals in educational institutions, corporations, and other contexts strategically develop and achieve equity goals, better understand and correct climate problems, avoid and recover from DEI-related crises, and foster sustainable cultures of inclusion and respect.

The mission of the USC Race and Equity Center is to illuminate, disrupt, and dismantle racism in all its forms. We do this through rigorous interdisciplinary research, high-quality professional learning experiences, the production and wide dissemination of useful tools, trustworthy consultations and strategy advising, and substantive partnerships. Our rigorous approach is built on research,

scalable and adaptable models of success, and continuous feedback from partners, clients, and communities. While race and ethnicity are at the epicenter of our work, we also value their intersectionality with other identities, and therefore aim to advance equity for all persons experiencing marginalization.

The Center annually serves hundreds of K-12 schools and districts, colleges and universities, government agencies, businesses and firms, and other organizations spanning a multitude of sectors. More than \$22 million in grants from Atlantic Philanthropies, Bill and Melinda Gates, ECMC, Spencer, Ford, Lumina, W. K. Kellogg, Kresge, Sloan, College Futures, Annie E. Casey, and Open Society Foundations have funded our research and partnerships.

USC Race and Equity Center

race.usc.edu