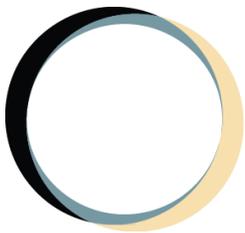


# NCAR | UCAR

**Workplace Culture Survey  
August 2017**

**Executive Summary**



**NRC**  
National Research Center Inc

  
**SPRING INSTITUTE**  
FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING  
*Bridging Cultures • Building Futures*

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Survey Background

NCAR|UCAR is developing a new Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategic plan to more actively diversify the workplace and support a welcoming and inclusive environment. As part of this plan, the NCAR|UCAR Workplace Culture Survey provides a snapshot of the opinions of employees regarding their work environment and culture with a specific aim of assessing the workplace in terms of D&I. The 2017 survey serves as a baseline and captures employees' opinions on six aspects of the organization: respect, trust, engagement, equity of opportunity, feelings of belonging, and UCAR's commitment to D&I. Additional strategic plan activities include an assessment of current policies and practices, programs and activities, and a review of best practices in the peer-reviewed literature.

UCAR contracted with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning (Spring Institute) to develop and administer the 2017 Workforce Culture Survey. The survey was administered online May 17, 2017 through June 9, 2017. Of the approximately 1,372 employees presumed to have received a survey, 925 completed the survey, providing a response rate of 67%.

The 2017 Workplace Culture Survey gathered a wealth of information related to employees' values and experiences, and their alignment with organizational goals related to diversity and inclusion. Both organizational strengths and challenges were identified to help UCAR staff move forward.

## Strengths and Challenges for the Organization

### Organizational Strengths

The survey found many areas of NCAR|UCAR culture where a high proportion of employees gave positive ratings. By and large, employees generally rated most characteristics of the organization positively. Across all items on the survey, at least two-thirds of employees gave affirming responses to most questions. Figure 1 on the following page shows the overall rating for each dimension or domain assessed through the survey.

**Figure 1: Employee Ratings by Domain<sup>1</sup>**



NCAR|UCAR’s strengths related to high levels of employee engagement, the inclusive and respectful atmosphere experienced in most areas of the organization, the general feeling of equity and trust reported by most employees and strong support for D&I activities in the workplace.

High Levels of Employee Engagement: Employees at UCAR are engaged. Job satisfaction is high and most staff members are committed to staying. More than 9 in 10 employees would recommend to a friend UCAR as a place to work.

Positive Ratings around Inclusivity and Belonging: Employees’ perceptions were positive when rating how welcoming NCAR|UCAR|UCP was in general and also for employees from a variety of backgrounds. About 8 in 10 employees felt their labs, departments or programs did an excellent or good job making employees feeling welcome.

Atmosphere of Respect: Employees generally felt that they were treated with respect and that in most areas of the organization an atmosphere of respect was fostered. Employees commonly felt their co-workers valued their contributions and reported feeling integral to their work team.

Trust and Support: Most employees trusted their supervisors and co-workers and felt that someone at work cared about them as a person.

Equity in Actions: A strong majority of employees felt as though they were treated fairly and 8 in 10 felt that their supervisors were good at ensuring fair treatment of employees.

<sup>1</sup> Questions that were negatively worded were reverse coded so that the positive or desired outcome was being presented for calculation of the percent positive in the domain and construct ratings. See *Appendix VI: Survey Methodology* for more detail on the calculation of domain scores.

Strong Levels of Employee Support for D&I Activities: About 8 in 10 employees felt that the organization was doing a good job at promoting D&I and was moving in the right direction in taking on diversity and inclusion activities. Most employees reported that their supervisors took actions to support D&I and felt personally responsible to further D&I efforts in the organization. Eighty-five percent of employees felt D&I should be a core value of the institution.

Finally, when compared a benchmark database of national local employee opinions and other federal lab assessments, UCAR's ratings often were more positive than in other organizations. Rarely did UCAR score lower than other government agencies.

## **Areas for Organizational Growth**

The primary goal of the Workplace Culture Survey was to serve as a needs assessment to promote organizational learning. Although the work climate at UCAR was rated positively by many, a disparity in employee experience was evident. Areas where UCAR could work to improve policies, structures, culture, or performance included communication and decision-making, supervisory skills, exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors, and commitment to D&I. Striving to ensure all NCAR|UCAR employees have similar experiences within the organization also is an opportunity area for improvement.

Disparities between Employees: The largest challenge to D&I found in the survey was the variability in employee ratings. NCAR|UCAR is not the same work environment for all (see Figure 2 on the following page). Although most employees reported a sense of belonging, experiencing respect and equitable treatment, not all employees reported the same experiences. The number and size of these disparities in opinion varied by employee identities.

The employee groups reporting the most positive experiences at NCAR|UCAR were:

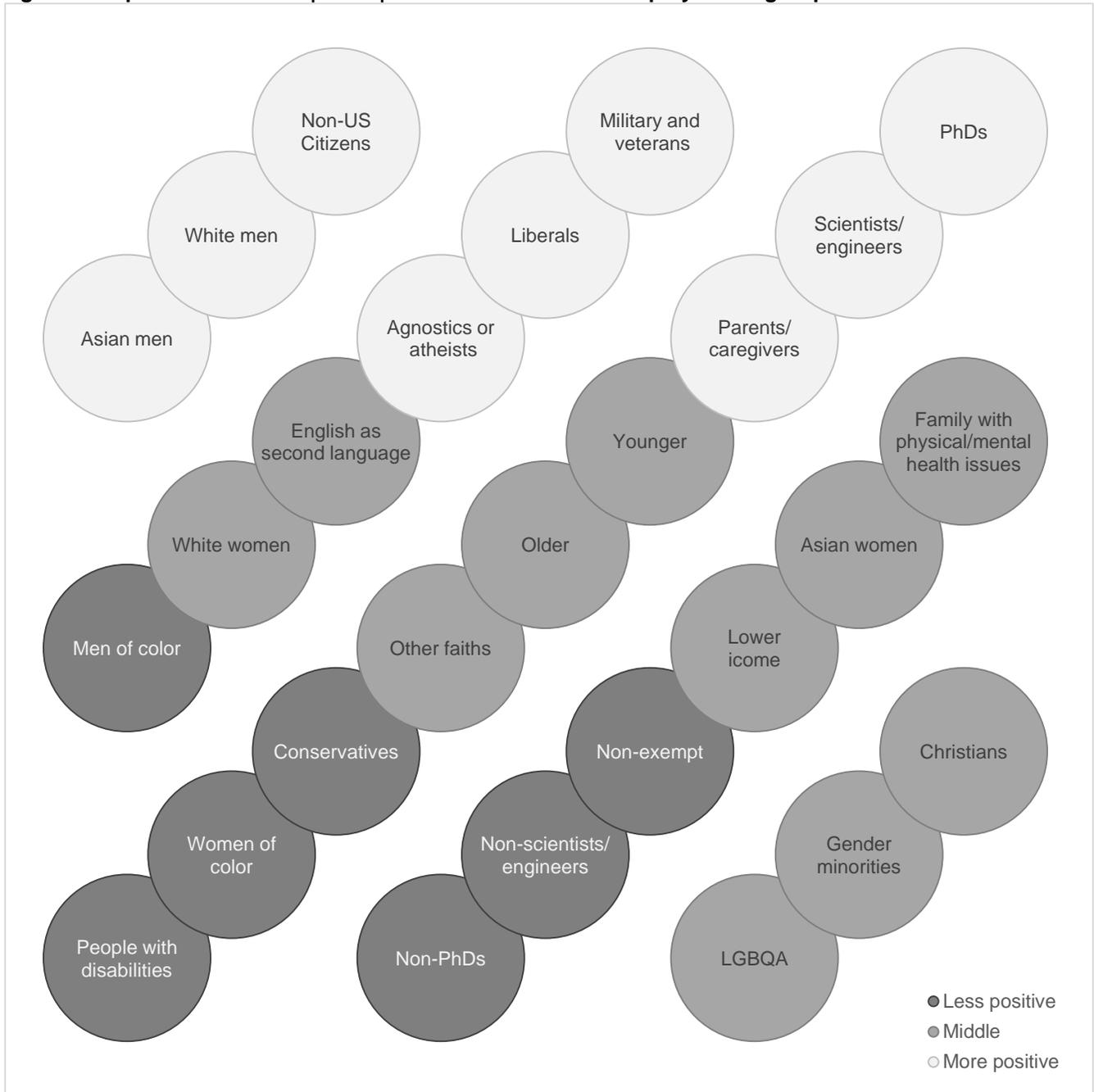
- Asian men
- White men
- People who are liberal
- People who have PhDs
- People who are scientists or engineers
- People who are agnostic or atheist
- People who are veterans or military
- People who are parents/caregivers
- People who are not U.S. citizens

The employee groups reporting the least positive experiences at NCAR|UCAR were:

- Persons with disabilities
- Women of color (not Asian)
- Men of color (not Asian)
- People who are conservative
- People who do not have PhDs
- People who work in other jobs (not scientists or engineers)
- Non-exempt employees

There also were differences in evaluations given by job family, entity, and lab/department/program, further demonstrating that employee experiences vary significantly across the organization.

**Figure 2: Experience of NCAR|UCAR|UCP Work Culture for Employee Subgroups<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> This summary is based on an algorithm using the following data: 1) the number of statistically significant differences by the identity, 2) the responses to welcoming question (question 9) - perceptions of all employees, 3) responses to welcoming question (question 9) - ratings by the specific entity group, and 4) the average “percent positive” responses for all of the evaluative questions in the survey. Groups categorized as “more positive” had lower numbers of statistically significant differences, received higher ratings of how welcoming UCAR was for them, gave more positive ratings about their own experience feeling welcomed at UCAR, and had higher overall positive ratings for all of the questions combined.

Further, in most instances, UCAR’s work environment was perceived to be more inclusive than many experienced it to be. The differences between the experience of inclusivity by select groups of employees and the perception of inclusivity by the majority of UCAR employees was most extreme among conservatives, women of color, Christians, employees without a PhD, employees with disabilities, men of color, younger employees and white women. The majority of UCAR employees felt that the environment was significantly more welcoming to these employee subgroups than was reported by those within the subgroup. These disconnects are important to recognize as UCAR moves forward with D&I planning.

**Figure 3: Comfort and Fit: Perceptions Compared to Experiences**

Identity Group	Percent rating positively (very welcoming and welcoming)		
	Employees of specific identity rated	Employees Not in specific identity rated	Differences
Welcoming for people who are conservative	38%	61%	+23%
Welcoming for women of color	66%	84%	+18%
Welcoming for people of Christian faith	74%	89%	+15%
Welcoming for people who do not have PhDs	63%	78%	+15%
Welcoming for persons with disabilities	71%	84%	+13%
Welcoming for men of color	73%	86%	+13%
Welcoming for people who are younger	76%	89%	+13%
Welcoming for white women	85%	96%	+11%
Welcoming for people who are older	76%	86%	+10%
Welcoming for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual minorities	83%	90%	+7%
Welcoming for people who are veterans or military	86%	92%	+6%
Welcoming for people whose first language is not English	85%	88%	+3%
Welcoming for people of other faiths	84%	89%	+5%
Welcoming for people whose first language is not English	85%	88%	+3%
Welcoming for white men	93%	96%	+3%
Welcoming for people who are agnostic or atheist	93%	95%	+2%
Welcoming for people who are parents/caregivers	89%	91%	+2%
Welcoming for people who are liberal	97%	98%	+1%
Welcoming for people who are not U.S. Citizens	92%	92%	0%

**Communication and Shared Decision-making:** A number of the lowest rated questions on the survey related to employees feeling that they were not in the “information loop.” Other lower ratings were given to the job done to inform employees about decisions that impacted their jobs in a timely manner and to shared decision-making. Only 6 in 10 employees felt that their labs/department/program welcomed employee involvement in decisions and a similar proportion felt their ideas were considered when final decisions were made.

**Supervisory Skills:** Nearly one-half of employees felt that their lab/department/program did not do a good job of promoting employees with good people skills to supervisory positions and there was an overall need in the organization to better address issues of poor performance and provide more accurate informal feedback to employees. Further, 3 in 10 employees felt that their supervisors could do a better

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Employee groups in the “less positive” group were identified using the converse. Groups identified as “middle” are those where these four measures often fell in the middle or they scored well on some measures but not others.

job of addressing unfair treatment in their workplace.

Exclusionary and Discriminatory Behaviors: About 10-15% of employees observed unjust hiring, discipline or promotion practices in the 12 months prior. These behaviors were most commonly attributed to educational attainment, racial identity, gender identity, cronyism and age. Criticisms being made behind someone's back, insensitive or inappropriate comments or jokes, and comments that unfairly questioned someone's ability or skills were also reported by a significant number of employees.

Commitment to D&I: Although 8 in 10 employees felt that D&I should be a core value at UCAR, only 6 in 10 felt it was. A significant number of employees felt their entities did not do a good job at providing effective response to reports of discrimination and exclusionary behavior nor did they think the organization held managers and supervisors accountable for promoting diversity and inclusion.

## Recommendations

The recommendations summarized here are based on current best practices in the diversity management field. Diversity management refers to the voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs (Mor Barak, 2005, 2011). Please refer to the Recommendations section of the full report for a further elaboration of the recommendations and the research-based rationale for them.

### **1. Strengthen communication about the business case as it relates to diversity and inclusion**

According to the results of the climate employee survey, only 61% of the surveyed employees reported that UCAR/NCAR is doing a good job educating employees about the scientific education and business benefits of diversity and inclusion. Based on this we recommend: 1) Refinement of the current business case, and 2) Development of a clearly defined communication strategy.

According to best practices in the field of diversity and inclusion, demonstrating and consistently communicating how diversity and inclusion impact innovation and the bottom line in tangible ways will help generate buy-in from the wider management team as well as the entire staff, and help build inclusion into the culture of the organization. Regularly highlighting the contributions of diverse staff members can contribute to this outcome.

### **2. Develop and implement a system-wide training strategy that creates both motivation and skills for the promotion of diversity and inclusion by supervisors and managers**

Engaging managers and supervisors in long-term cultural change will be key in implementing the Diversity and Inclusion strategic plan. This requires an ongoing strategy of impacting the culture, not just a one-time intervention. With this in mind, it is recommended that HR work together with the Office of D&I to launch a series of diversity and inclusion trainings to help managers become more aware of their attitudes and implicit biases which directly impact minority engagement and turnover. The goal of the training program would be to increase knowledge about diversity, to improve attitudes about diversity, and to develop inclusion skills.

### **3. Conduct gender competence training sessions**

Given the data findings in relation to the lower levels of workplace engagement and satisfaction amongst women in general, and women of color specifically, a series of gender competence training events for all levels of employees would be extremely valuable. Prejudice on the basis of gender is so normalized in society that both women and men often have a hard time identifying unconscious or internalized sexism and misogyny unless given the time and safe space to engage in dialogue and reflection. The goal of the training program would be to promote a better understanding of gendered behavior and related issues that arise within the organization. The sessions would build participants' skills in incorporating gender considerations into everyday practice and the organizational culture.

As a part of this training, it would also be important to discuss the not uncommon feelings reported by some men, and white men in particular, of perceived reverse discrimination and having to modify their behavior to fit in. Improving understanding and acceptance of transgender staff is also important to address.

### **4. Offer supervisory training programs**

Nearly half of the employees feel that NCAR/UCAR is not doing a good job at promoting people with good people skills. Based on the survey findings in this particular area, and in addition to the specific Diversity & Inclusion training, the implementation of a supervisory training program that strengthens the more general "people" skills of supervisors is recommended. This training program would include conflict management, mentoring, communication, employee feedback and shared decision-making.

### **5. Review and strengthen policies and procedures to support the implementation of inclusive environments**

#### ***5.1 Recruitment and selection practices***

Diversity and Inclusion studies show that some of the benefits of greater diversity in hiring are increasing innovation and agility, acquiring new talent, enhancing employee engagement, and ultimately driving growth and profitability. Survey results and open survey comments indicate that specific labs, departments or programs at UCAR|NCAR could do better at hiring people from diverse backgrounds.

We recommend:

- Assessing and expanding the currently defined recruiting pipeline in order to attract more diverse candidates, in particular for scientific positions
- Using informal recruitment judiciously so that homogeneity is not replicated and entrenched. Consider ways to broaden the referral base to include individuals of different socio-demographic backgrounds so that diversity increases and so that candidates have an in-house network for support and informal information.
- Crafting a diversity recruitment program aimed at increasing the diversity of the applicant pool with an increased emphasis on recruiting women, people of color, and other minority categories. Doing so is not just a matter of making it a targeted recruiting priority, but of being able to demonstrate that UCAR|NCAR is a welcoming place for them.

Specific ideas for improving hiring practices include:

- Diverse search committees that balance the emphasis on the technical skills of its members with considerations of diversity and inclusion

- Tools and structures to limit the impact of implicit bias in hiring practices
- Awareness-building to counteract age and disability discrimination by search committees and decision-makers

### **5.2 Mentoring and development**

Only one-half of employees felt they were provided opportunities for career development. Women of color, lower educated employees and disabled employees in particular rated opportunities for career advancement lower.

Mentoring partnerships can be a powerful tool to help advance the careers of women and minority groups. The development of a mentoring program at UCAR|NCAR geared to provide women and minority groups with visibility, coaching and sponsorship as well as exposure to challenging assignments will allow them to grow and advance.

### **5.3 Orientation and Onboarding Processes**

Research indicates a strong correlation between the early experiences of diverse employees and their willingness to stay with the organization. We recommend:

- Reviewing the current onboarding process and to put special emphasis on facilitating employee socialization & community attachment.
- Adding touch points in the onboarding process that speaks to the organization's values regarding diversity and inclusion.
- Creating social opportunities for new employees to engage with each other, as well as with seasoned staff.

### **5.4. Accountability and Measurement**

In order to hold managers accountable for inclusive behavior and to assess the behavioral change stimulated by diversity training, the following practices are recommended:

- Incorporating diversity metrics into the managers' goals and the performance review process. Receiving qualitative feedback on inclusivity performance can also be enhanced by including appropriate questions in 180° and 360° feedback processes.
- In addition, we recommend that managers' track record with inclusivity be considered as part of their performance evaluations and have an impact on advancement and compensation.

## **6. Include a focus on specific categories of diversity and responsive inclusion approaches within the system-wide training strategy**

Regardless of the type of diversity involved, there are a lot of similarities among inclusion strategies, and the training related thereto. But it is also important to call out and address the types of diversity that are most challenging within an institution and address them specifically. Based on the findings in this report, a series of focus groups is recommended. Discussions with specific populations will allow a better understanding of the nature of the issues encountered by certain groups and help summarize those for use as concrete examples to draw upon in training, including the development of relevant case scenarios.

The categories of employees that have had the least positive experiences include:

- Persons with disabilities

- Women of color (not Asian)
- Men of color (not Asian)
- People with conservative political views

In addition, for certain questions in the survey, there are significant differences in additional populations that we believe deserve consideration:

- People whose first language is not English
- White women
- People who are younger

It is important that these groups feel heard and that their experiences be effectively considered in designing and conducting training.

## **7. Organize Next Step Workshops (NSW)**

Organizational change is more effective when employees take the lead. Debriefing of the results and creation of action plans will provide structure and accountability, enhance the innovativeness of what is being implemented, and contribute to buy-in on the part of employees. With this end in mind, a series of Next Steps Workshops is recommended to review the climate survey results with managers from different departments/programs/divisions. The workshops would facilitate a discussion of the specific focus areas identified by the survey results with the goal of establishing an inclusion improvement action plan.

The NSW workshops should be conducted during the weeks immediately following the dissemination of the survey results. The workshops would culminate in the creation of an inclusion work plan with specific goals and measurable outcomes, as well as a realistic timeline for implementation. The next recommendation provides a venue in which the work of the NSW groups could be integrated across the organization.

## **8. Conduct a Diversity & Inclusion Action Summit as a means to launch organization-wide efforts to improve diversity and inclusion**

In an organization as diverse and far-flung as NCAR/UCAR, it is essential that there is an organization-wide vision, strategy and action plan for embedding diversity and inclusion deeper into the culture of the organization. In addition to the NSW groups, hosting a Diversity & Inclusion Action Summit is recommended. This summit would be used to craft such a vision and develop responsive strategies/actions with input from across the spectrum of the organization.

The foundational methodology recommended for such a meeting is the Appreciative Inquiry Summit, which offers a strength-based approach to culture change that supports positive change on the basis of best practice and inquiry into what we can imagine that builds upon that. Because NCAR/UCAR has a lot of strengths in D&I already, there is a lot to draw from using this approach, and it also changes the dynamic from “solving a problem” to “co-creating an ideal.”

## **9. Plan Future Organization-Wide Inquiries and Summits to build upon and sustain the momentum toward a culture of Diversity & Inclusion**

Moving towards the vision created for Diversity & Inclusion, and embracing a culture of D&I, is not a one-time event. In order to sustain the movement, a strategy needs to be in place that leverages what

comes out of the Next Step Workshops and the first Diversity & Inclusion Action Summit.

Specifically, hosting an annual Diversity & Inclusion Summits and a cascading series of organization-wide Appreciative Inquiries will help sustain the early successes of the diversity and inclusion plans that are developed. Success, even in small ways, begets more success, if the focus is placed on celebrating and building upon what can be learned from the elements of that. A follow-up Appreciative Summit can then be rooted in the organization-wide findings of these interviews, and structured to develop the next level of strategies and action plans in pursuit of the D&I vision, effectively building a self-reinforcing culture that embraces that.