2026 Campus Climate Survey

Executive Summary | Sonoma State University

About the Survey

Sonoma State University administered the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Campus Climate Survey from April 7–24, 2026, to assess the experiences and perceptions of students and employees. A total of **1,120 campus community members participated**, representing an overall response rate of **19%** (12% among students and 26% among employees).

This was Sonoma State's third campus climate survey in six years, following surveys in 2021 and 2023. An advisory committee recommended the HEDS instrument based on its established methodology, standardized analysis, opportunities for comparison with other institutions, and flexibility to include Sonoma State-specific questions.

The survey took place during a period of leadership transitions, budget reductions, layoffs, program changes, and enrollment challenges. These circumstances provide context for understanding campus experiences, although the survey does not establish their effects on individual responses.

Key Findings

Campus Climate and Belonging

Students generally rated overall campus climate more positively than employees (**74% versus 60%**). Both groups rated their own sense of belonging more favorably than their perceptions of belonging across the campus community. Among students, 66% rated their own belonging positively compared with 57% for community-wide belonging. Among employees, the corresponding figures were 61% and 38%.

Institutional Commitment

Perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity and equity were mixed, with employees consistently reporting less favorable views than students. The largest difference concerned whether the campus was free from identity-related tensions (59% of students and 31% of employees agreed). On a Sonoma State-specific question, 57% of students and 49% of employees agreed that the University responds effectively when concerns about equity are raised.

Insensitive Remarks, Discrimination, and Harassment

Insensitive or disparaging remarks about political affiliation or views were the most frequently reported category, with 51% of students and 61% of employees reporting hearing them at least sometimes. Approximately 38% of both groups reported feeling very comfortable interacting with people holding different political views.

Employees were more likely than students to report experiencing discrimination or harassment (**24% versus 15%**).

Differences Across Demographic Groups

Overall campus climate ratings were generally similar across racial/ethnic and gender identity groups. Differences were more pronounced on measures of institutional support and negative experiences.

- **LGBQ+ respondents** reported less favorable perceptions of institutional support, more frequent exposure to certain disparaging remarks, and higher reported experiences of discrimination or harassment (22% compared with 15% among heterosexual respondents).
- **Nonbinary respondents** reported more frequent gender-related disparaging remarks and higher experiences of discrimination or harassment (36%, compared with 19% of women and 13% of men).
- **Race and ethnicity:** Respondents identifying with multiple races/ethnicities reported less favorable perceptions of institutional support on several measures and more frequent exposure to certain disparaging remarks. Hispanic/Latino respondents were often among the more positive groups on measures of institutional commitment and Sonoma State-specific equity questions.

Some demographic groups included relatively small numbers of respondents, and these findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Institutional Strengths and Opportunities

Students reported positive perceptions of welcoming campus spaces (82%), support for basic needs (78%), teaching practices that support students from diverse backgrounds (77%), and Sonoma State's commitment to serving historically underserved students as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (77%).

Lower levels of agreement concerned institutional responsiveness to equity concerns (57% of students and 49% of employees) and clear information about resources for undocumented students (61% of students). Campus activities addressing diversity and equity were generally associated with increased support for diversity and equity among respondents.

Comparisons With Other Institutions

HEDS compared Sonoma State respondents with respondents at 43 other Master's Colleges and Universities. The largest differences were concentrated among particular employee, political, religious, and racial/ethnic groups rather than across respondents overall.

Differences in respondent composition and relatively small subgroup sizes limit the interpretation of these comparisons.

Looking Ahead

The 2026 Campus Climate Survey findings provide a starting point for continued reflection, dialogue, and collaboration across Sonoma State University. The results will be shared with campus groups to inform institutional priorities and identify opportunities to strengthen campus climate.

This work aligns with the California State University's Student Success Framework, which emphasizes student-centered, equity-driven, data-informed, collaborative, and transparent approaches to institutional improvement.

The publication of these findings marks the beginning of continued engagement with the results. Through ongoing opportunities for collaboration, Sonoma State remains committed to strengthening campus experiences and fostering an environment where students, faculty, and staff feel respected, valued, and connected.

This executive summary presents selected findings from the 2025–2026 Campus Climate Survey Report. The full report includes additional results, methodology, subgroup analyses, and institutional comparisons. Findings reflect survey respondents and may not represent the entire campus community.