



FINAL REPORT

ON THREE FOCUS GROUPS

**AMONG FACULTY AND CLASSIFIED
EMPLOYEES**

on

CLIMATE SURVEY/DIVERSITY FOLLOW-UP

in

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

for

**VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY'S
EQUITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE**

by

Kinzey & Day Market Research
Rebecca Day
Reynolds Kinzey
Kinzey & Day Qualitative Market Research
1913 Huguenot Road, Suite 301
Richmond, VA 23235
www.Kinzeyandday.com

May 17, 2007

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report presents the findings from three focus groups conducted for Virginia Commonwealth University's Equity and Diversity Committee by Kinzey & Day Qualitative Market Research. These groups were conducted among faculty and classified employees at Virginia Commonwealth University. One group was conducted among general faculty members; one group was conducted exclusively with African American faculty; and one group was conducted with classified employees.

The main purpose of this research was to follow-up on the Climate Survey which was conducted among faculty and staff in fall of 2006. The Climate Survey was conducted as a university-wide survey, and 2,051 of the 4,672 full-time faculty and staff responded (44%). The focus groups were intended to shed more light on the perceptions of faculty and staff on diversity issues. Because of the limited resources and time available, the University's Equity and Diversity Committee decided to focus particularly on the perceptions of African American faculty and staff, which is why one focus group was conducted exclusively among African American faculty.

The following specific areas were investigated:

- General Feelings about Working at VCU
- Diversity Issues
- Issues of Faculty Rank and Employee Type

A statement of **METHODOLOGY** follows this section, followed by an **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** presenting the major findings from the groups and a **DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS** from each of the focus groups conducted. The **MODERATOR'S GUIDE**, outlining the discussion of the groups, is included as an appendix to the report.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of a focus group interview is to provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' behavior, attitudes, and/or perceptions of issues. Typically, focus groups are used to explore more complex attitudes that cannot be determined by wide-scale surveys: for example, perceptions of diversity issues. A more in-depth understanding of participants' motivations can be achieved because fewer people are interviewed, allowing more time for fuller responses, and respondents are free to elaborate on their responses. The moderator also has considerably more opportunity to ask follow-up questions than a telephone surveyor.

On the other hand, the smaller number of people involved in focus groups means that the behavior, attitudes, and perceptions expressed are not necessarily statistically representative of the entire population. For example, questions of past behavior or general levels of awareness of products and advertising within a target population are generally better answered by larger, more representative surveys. Further, the more in-depth understanding which can be gained through focus groups must sometimes be developed by analyzing both what is said and unsaid, by watching non-verbal signals (such as body signals), by judging the quickness of a response, or the emphasis placed on wording.

Focus groups are a valuable tool in research, often allowing insights not possible from wider studies. However, the findings should not be taken as quantitative. Some care needs to be exercised with the analysis of the findings, but, used judiciously and, particularly in combination with quantitative surveys, they can help provide directions for marketing, product design, or advertising and public awareness campaigns.

The Focus Groups

All participants are full-time faculty and staff at Virginia Commonwealth University. All were recruited for the focus groups by VCU's Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory (SERL), which conducted the Climate Survey.

The University Equity and Diversity Committee decided to conduct three focus groups to provide greater insights into diversity issues. One group was conducted among general faculty (which included a mix of Caucasian and African Americans and a mix of males and females); one group was conducted exclusively among African American faculty members; and one group was conducted among classified employees.

The groups were to be conducted on campus, on May 2, 3 and 4, 2007. The groups for May 2 and 3, the group with general faculty and the group exclusively composed of African American faculty, were conducted as scheduled. On May 4, the day the group with classified employees was to be held, only three participants were able to attend. By chance, all three were Caucasian, even though the group was intended to be approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ African American (all three were also women). A mini-group with

these three participants was conducted at that time. However, to make up for the lack of African American participants, a make-up group exclusively composed of five African American classified employees was scheduled and conducted on May 10, 2007. Taken together, the two smaller groups represent “one group” of classified employees, with a majority of participants being African American.

As it turned out, separating the group of classified employees into exclusively all Caucasian and all African American groups may have been even better in that it may have assured even greater candor among all participants.

The results of both these mini groups are reported together in the third detailed summary of this report.

Each group began at noon and lasted approximately 90 minutes.

The **MODERATOR'S GUIDE** used by the moderator was designed by the moderator, in consultation with the University's Equity and Diversity Committee. A copy is included as an appendix to this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings from the three focus groups are very consistent and suggest that perceptions of VCU's commitment to diversity vary greatly along gender and racial lines.

The key findings from the groups are as follows:

- White males are generally satisfied with VCU's commitment to diversity. They generally do not see problems along racial and gender lines.
- White women are considerably less satisfied. White female faculty members said that they see inequities in work load, salary, and promotional opportunities. White female classified employees also see inequities along gender lines, although they perhaps see even more inequalities between how faculty and classified employees are treated.
- White women were generally less outspoken about gender inequities than African Americans, but that does not necessarily mean that they are less dissatisfied. Cultural differences may cause some differences in how dissatisfaction is expressed.
- African American faculty, staff and classified employees all said that they do not believe that VCU is really committed to diversity and equality. They said that African Americans are not treated equally in hiring and particularly in retention and promotion. They are dismayed at the lack of African Americans in high levels of administration. Several faculty members said that they cannot in good conscience recruit African Americans to teach at VCU because of the way they believe they will be treated once they are hired.
- African Americans themselves disagreed on whether the situation is worse for African American men or women, but they seemed to feel race is a greater problem than gender.
- African Americans said that they feel there are still preconceived notions about African Americans and they cannot always "be themselves" on campus.
- African Americans said that the commitment to diversity and equality must begin "at the top" and be enforced across the campus. They said that departments vary greatly in their commitment to diversity and all departments need to be held accountable.
- Classified employees said that they are not always treated with the respect they deserve. They feel that some faculty members do not respect the jobs that they do.

It should be recalled that these three focus groups were primarily intended to explore differences in opinions between white and African American participants on racial diversity and only secondarily on gender differences. That is why one all African American group was held (along with more general groups). The findings from these groups suggest that the greatest sources of dissatisfaction are racial and gender inequities. Because the groups were recruited more along racial lines than gender lines, the findings about race should be considered more definite (only four White female participants participated, and no group of solely white female faculty members was conducted). Generally, the groups indicated that there may be fewer problems around age, religion, and sexual orientation. However, the findings may have been different if groups had been conducted exclusively, for example, among gay, lesbian and transgendered participants.

These findings, combined with other findings reported in the *DETAILED SUMMARIES OF FINDINGS* suggest that the VCU Committee on Diversity and Equity should consider the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. First, there appears to be very strong dissatisfaction among African American faculty and employees about VCU's progress in diversity and equity. The university needs to confront this issue.
2. The university should open an honest dialogue with African American faculty and employees about what progress has been made and what progress still needs to be made.
3. On one hand, the demographic study conducted for the committee demonstrates that VCU is doing well with diversity relative to other state schools in Virginia. Some African American faculty members seem to be unaware of this.
4. On the other hand, it appears that the predominately white faculty and even more predominately white administration may not be aware of inequities that still exist.
5. More than dialogue is required. It is very difficult for African Americans to believe that VCU is serious about diversity when there are so few African Americans in higher levels of administration.
6. There is a strong perception that commitment to diversity varies greatly from department to department. Oversight must come from the highest levels, and departments should be held accountable for fair practices in hiring, retention, and promotion.
7. Even beyond hiring, retention, and promotion policies, it appears that something should be done with regard to the overall climate at the university: African Americans feel that they cannot be themselves in this environment, and that is a problem.

8. While the findings about other diversity markers are less definite, the findings that African Americans are more dissatisfied than the majority groups should encourage the diversity committee to continue to look at other markers. Clearly, the findings from this study suggest there are still gender issues at VCU, and they should be explored further. Similarly, if focus groups had been conducted among other minorities, other problems may have surfaced as well, and these should also be investigated as well.

***DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
GENERAL FACULTY***

The Group Composition

The composition of the group was ideal for a discussion of diversity. The group included 13 faculty members: 3 African American women; 1 African American male; 4 Caucasian women; and 5 Caucasian men.

The perceptions of these sub-groups on diversity issues were very consistent with their ethnicity and gender: The African American male was the most outspoken and negative about the University record on diversity, particularly racial diversity. He is clearly angry. The African American women were also very dissatisfied although perhaps less angry about the situation. The Caucasian women were also dissatisfied and said that women are not treated equitably at VCU, although they were somewhat less outspoken than the African American women (one directly said that she personally was in a “good situation,” but that she knows that is not true for all women). The Caucasian males had the most positive view of VCU’s record on diversity, although one commented, “I haven’t ever had any problems here, but I’m a WASP.”

General Feelings about Teaching at VCU

Most participants seemed to be generally satisfied teaching at VCU, and most said that they would like to be teaching at VCU five years from now. They generally said that they very much like the students:

“I like the students – bright, intelligent, sometimes a challenge. Diverse.”

“I love my students.”

“VCU opens it doors to students who may not have had a chance to go to college.”

“I like the feeling that I’ve had an impact (on my students).”

Others said that they particularly like the feeling of support they get from their departments:

“I like my Chair. It’s a dream job. We don’t get told what to do.”

“I agree. Minimal micromanagement.”

“My department is more like a family.”

However, some participants said that even though VCU has an open door policy, it cannot always give students what they need, and some suggested there is some tension between the open door policy and the university's commitment to academic excellence:

"We have an open door policy here, but we can't give the students what they need to keep them here. We don't put forth what we need to give students who need help a leg up."

"There is a problem between being open to everybody and having academic excellence. There are so many students who can't get to that level."

"We have a pretense that the university wants academic excellence."

However, for several participants, the greatest source of personal dissatisfaction at VCU is that, in their opinion, VCU does not provide the infrastructure they need to support research and grants:

"It's very difficult to administer and manage grants. You have to have an infrastructure for doctoral students and funding for research is lacking."

"I agree. I just got awarded a 3 million dollar grant, and I couldn't print it off because of the lack of technology. I need a new computer. The infrastructure can't support the grant I was awarded. I've threatened to give it back."

"It's very difficult to do research here. You do it against the odds."

When asked how big a source of dissatisfaction this problem is, participants said that it is "huge."

Perceptions of Diversity Issues

A majority of these participants said that they do **not** feel that VCU is truly committed to achieving a diverse faculty. Some said that VCU claims to be committed to diversity and may be at some levels, but that at best the commitment is "perfunctory."

"At the deans' level or even at the administration level, yes, the school is committed, but not at other levels. They want people with the most grants, the most publications, and they may not be diverse. It is perfunctory at most levels."

"VCU is a large entity. To say that it is committed to diversity is perfunctory. How much is done to recruit minorities? The pool of candidates is limited, so it takes a lot of effort to find gender and ethnicity."

"Whatever the verbal statements are, they are not being translated into reality."

“You don’t see the same diversity among faculty as you see with students. When the rubber hits the road, the scale tilts to people who have the grants and publications.”

“The university is not focused on creating a diverse faculty.”

“I do not see the evidence among the faculty that they are committed to diversity.”

“Someone told me that she was very surprised that I was teaching here as an African American. The word on the street is if you are black, you need not apply to that school.”

Participants said that the commitment to diversity varies greatly from department to department. Some pointed out that their own departments have very few African American faculty members.

The majority of the participants (particularly the African American participants and the Caucasian women) said that they do not feel fully supported in their careers at VCU, and they pointed to inequalities in work loads, promotions, opportunities, and pay:

“There is a difference in teaching loads according to gender. I teach 3 to 4 courses a semester while my male counterparts who are at the same level teach only one.”

“You can’t get a promotion if you don’t show leadership, and women are not given those opportunities.”

Issues of Faculty Rank

Participants seemed to suggest that there are some issues of fairness with different ranks of faculty, although they see this as somewhat inherent in a hierarchical system.

“Different ranks are not treated as equals, but that is the way it is in all areas with different ranks.”

“Tenure track vs. non-tenure track is where the inequality comes in. All of the collateral faculty in my department are women. The department is supportive of assistant professors but not of collateral faculty.”

“Adjunct faculty are not appreciated at all.”

“There is a hierarchy. Rank does have privileges. That is normal. But race should not have privileges. Gender should not have privileges.”

DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY

Composition of Group

The focus group included 11 participants. All are African American. Eight are women; three are men.

General Feelings about Teaching at VCU

Participants were first asked about what they liked about teaching at VCU, and they at first seemed very positive about the school. Like participants in the first group, they talked about the students and the diversity of students, and some suggested that they find the atmosphere supportive:

“The students are the best thing. Every year is different.”

“The diversity of the student body and the flexibility here.”

“Students are diverse, and we have the ability to be creative in our jobs.”

“VCU is very supportive to people trying new ideas.”

“There are opportunities for advancement here.”

However, as soon as they were asked if anything could be improved, the conversation turned to issues of diversity and the group became very negative about VCU and its administration.

General Feelings about Diversity Issues

These participants expressed even more frustration about diversity (and the lack of it) at VCU than the African Americans in the mixed group. They were also more open about how the climate at VCU affects them as people. They also leveled more criticism directly at the administration:

“One of the negative things is trying to get the administrators to understand the needs of the faculty and our fears. They treat us like children.”

“I would like to think that they are opened-minded, but they don’t have open minds at times. You find yourself constantly under a microscope. I feel I have to defend myself every day.”

“I appreciate working here, but things on campus are less friendly, less diverse now (than they used to be). There are no African American deans, no African

American provost. No sustained interest to be diverse at that level. They say one thing, but they don't demonstrate it."

Participants said that there is a sense of community among students, but not among faculty. They said that this is particularly hard on African Americans:

"No (there is no sense of community here). The emphasis is not on people here. The interest is about building and expanding. It is very negative for people of color."

"The student body feels a sense of community, but not faculty."

"I never go to faculty activities. You are always being judged – how you dress, how you talk. Also, I'm usually the only African American at a function. I'm the only African American in my department."

"There is even more isolation on the MCV campus. There is no emphasis on diversity there. They are not committed to it."

"The medical campus has a more difficult time with retention than the academic campus. We also have more trouble recruiting African American faculty."

Of the 11 participants, not a single one would say that the University is committed to diversity. One did say that she would not quite say that the university is not committed to diversity. She said that it sometimes depends on the department. Others agreed that some departments seem much more committed to diversity than others.

Participants said that there are problems both with recruitment and retention of African Americans:

"Recruitment is there at the undergraduate level. African Americans are actively pursued. Why not the same effort on the faculty level? Why not the same percentage of African Americans?"

"When a person of color is going to leave, no one cares and tries to get them to stay. They don't make an effort. They don't always make the effort with Whites, but they do it more often with Whites. The university talks a good game, but it's not there."

"White colleagues and administration get the research."

Some said that VCU's location in the City of Richmond hurts the recruitment of African Americans:

"Richmond has a reputation. People get a sense of what is bad with the city and also with the university, so the city itself is a deterrent."

Some of the participants said that they know they should be actively trying to recruit other African Americans, but they are not encouraged to do so. Others said they could not in good conscience ask friends to teach at VCU:

“There’s no carrot for trying to bring in people of color.”

“I mentor other people (African Americans) to go into my field, but not to teach here. I’m not in the business of losing friends.”

One participant said that his son graduated from VCU but would not consider it for graduate school because of the climate here. Another said her daughter chose a historic Black college over VCU because she didn’t want to spend her four years at college without having an African American professor.

Overall, participants said that being African American at VCU is not a comfortable experience:

“It’s a climate issue. People don’t feel comfortable.”

“When we are among ourselves, we can be ourselves. When we are with Whites, we have to be careful about how we act and talk.”

“If I sneeze, you hear about it.”

“If I don’t show up at a faculty event, everyone notices (because I’m the only African American in my department).”

“As African Americans, we develop a healthy paranoia. We never really know about our jobs.”

“African Americans are not treated fairly here.”

What Should be Done to Develop More Racial Diversity at VCU

When asked what can be done about the situation, participants said that a commitment to diversity has to start at the top and be enforced over all departments:

“It starts at the top. If the president is not committed, it isn’t going to happen.”

“It differs greatly by department. People need to be held accountable for diversity. If you talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.”

Specifically, participants pointed out that none of the vice presidents at VCU is a minority and only one is female.

Perceptions of Gender and Other Issues

Participants said that there are also gender issues at VCU, but even the women participants seemed to be much more concerned about racial issues. They particularly pointed out that salaries are not always equal between the genders.

They also commented that sexual orientation and disability issues need to be improved as well, but, again, they were much more concerned with the racial issues.

Issues of Rank and Employment Type

Participants agreed that rank and tenure go together. They said that salaries are sometimes unequal within the same rank, and that is an issue for them.

They also said that classified employees “do not get any respect” at VCU. They said that if the administration is the “upper class” at VCU, classified employees are the “ghetto.”

***DETAILED SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:
STAFF (CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES)***

The Group

On May 4, the day the group with classified employees was to be held, only three participants were able to attend. By chance, all three were Caucasian, even though the group was intended to be approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ African American (all three were also women). A mini-group with these three participants was conducted at that time. However, to make up for the lack of African American participants, a make-up group exclusively composed of five African American classified employees was scheduled and conducted on May 10, 2007 (three of these are female and two are male). Taken together, the two smaller groups represent “one group” of classified employees, with a majority of participants being African American.

As it turned out, separating the two groups into exclusively all Caucasian and all African American groups may have been even better in that it may have assured even greater candor among all participants.

The results of both these two groups are reported together below.

General Feelings about Working at VCU

Both Caucasian and African American participants said that they very much liked the flexibility of the working schedule VCU offers them. Many of the women have children and some are single moms:

“I enjoy the flexibility of schedule. It’s good for a working mom.”

“I like the flexibility of the hours. If something comes up with my kids, I can take off.”

However, the overall feelings about working at VCU differed greatly between the two groups. The Caucasians are much more satisfied, even gushing about the work environment (even though they later complained about not always being respected as classified employees). One of the older Caucasian woman also said that she at least felt legally protected as a woman on the workplace (although she, too, also later said that inequalities between the sexes exist at VCU):

“I enjoy my department and the people I work with.”

“I love my office. It’s like a big family. I’ve got a great boss. She is fair and wants everyone to grow and develop. It’s the best job I’ve ever had. I’m able to be creative. There are lots of opportunities.”

“I wanted a job that was legally fair. I’m the only woman in my department – sort of landed a job in a man’s world. But as long as I was able to prove myself, I was allowed to grow. I’m very proud of VCU. I’m amazed at the research and expertise of the faculty. There’s a great deal of pride.”

All three said that they feel that they can “be themselves” at VCU. Two expect to be at VCU five years from now, and the third said she would if she were not reaching retirement age.

By contrast, the African Americans have much more ambiguous feelings about whether they could say they are proud to be at VCU. Many complained that as African Americans they cannot be themselves at VCU.

The African Americans immediately complained that they do not feel that all people are treated equally at VCU. All five seemed to be in complete agreement about this:

“There’s not much uniformity about position. I have a friend who has the same position as me. There’s complete difference in the number of hours worked. He works much less than I do. He gets paid more. He is White.”

“They treat people differently.”

“They promote less qualified people with degrees over more qualified people who don’t have degrees.”

“There are people who are pre-selected to be advanced. They are going to be promoted no matter what.”

Participants suggested that “pre-selection” was sometimes directly racist, but sometimes was more “indirectly” racist:

“Some people want to help their friends, but you don’t see this pre-selection happening for Black people.”

“People want to hire who they are comfortable with. They look at us as Affirmative Action projects.”

Further, participants said that they feel that White people on campus have preconceived notions about what African American people are like, about what African Americans can and cannot do, and about what jobs African Americans should and should not have. They said that because of these preconceived notions they cannot really “be themselves” at VCU (these comments echo those made by participants in the all African American faculty group):

“In my own department, I can be myself, but not when I go out to other departments. People have preconceived notions that African American people are not as smart. I constantly get asked questions about what I do and how I got my job.”

“As an African American female working in a White-dominated hierarchy, I have to wear a mask. They let you know what your position is and what your box is. And don’t go outside the box.”

“I know that I don’t sound African American over the phone, so I’ll talk to be people on a professional level, and then when they meet me, you can see that they are shocked: how did she (as an African American) get this job?”

VCU’s Commitment to Diversity

The Caucasian women said that VCU is committed to diversity, although they did imply that more still needed to be done. They said that there are remnants of inequality between men and women, particularly in terms of pay, and they said that more diversity is needed at the highest levels:

“As a whole, VCU is committed to diversity, but it’s been a trickle down effect...”

“It depends on the department.”

“We have come a long way. It used to be a woman had to do twice the work to get less money. I’ve never been able to catch up with what men make. But we’re only two generations away from the civil rights movement. They have a good start. But I would love to see more diversity and more females in all levels, not just the student body.”

“I’d also like to see more diversity at the top level.”

“If they advertise that they are diverse, they need to show it.”

“But they are doing as much as they can. I really believe that.”

However, all three Caucasians said that they personally do not see any racial problem at all at VCU, in terms of attracting, hiring, and promoting.

In strong contrast, the African Americans said that VCU is not committed to diversity. They sometimes disagreed whether African American men or African American women

have more problems getting jobs and promotions, but they all agreed that race is a major factor.

Some were willing to say that the University might be committed on some general level, but that individual departments vary greatly.

African American participants in this group, like other African American participants, pointed out the lack of African Americans at the highest level of administration (one of these participants said that there is one African American vice president; other African American participants had said there are none). They do not want anyone made a vice president simply because he or she is African American, but they said that they are sure there are African American candidates who are qualified for the position:

“What is important is that there are no African Americans at the highest level. They should be hiring the best qualified individuals regardless of race.”

“I would like to see an African American woman at a high level.”

“But it shouldn’t be like Affirmative Action. It should be because she’s qualified.”

Like other African Americans, these participants said that the commitment to diversity must begin at the top and it must be enforced from the top to assure accountability across all departments:

“Something needs to be enforced. It must begin at the top, and there must be accountability for all reviews and hires.”

“You can’t legislate what’s in people’s hearts. The people at the top need diversity training.”

“I don’t think it has anything to do with diversity training. It has to do with people higher up saying that something has to be done. People will continue to hire the way they do (using favoritism) unless they are told to do otherwise.”

Other Diversity Issues

Participants in both groups said that they do not think there are significant issues with age and religion. Two of the Caucasian women said that they think there are still some issues around sexual orientation. African Americans said that they did not think there were any particular issues around sexual orientation, but they cautioned that people of different sexual orientations might feel very differently if they were asked directly.

Perceptions of Being Classified Employees

Both Caucasian and African American participants said that classified employees are not always shown the respect they should be shown. At this point in the session, the African Americans were already more outspoken and continued to be so:

“They (faculty) just don’t understand classified positions.”

“Some of the PhD’s just don’t have any respect...”

“Professors think they are better than other people.”

“Faculty members don’t have any appreciation for the technical, administrative, or business side.”

“There is a hierarchy. Classified employees are peons.”

Even though the Caucasian women were less outspoken, they said the lack of respect for classified employees and the lingering effects of gender inequality can erode people’s sense of self-worth:

“It’s unfair. Absolutely. Your sense of self-worth is affected. You don’t feel good about yourself.”

“And it affects health and home life because women are called on to do so much more.”

“The faculty are world-class, but you don’t hear about the woman who answers the phone, who helps make things happen. So, staff doesn’t get acknowledged.”

APPENDIX

A: MODERATOR'S GUIDE



**Climate Survey Follow-Up
Focus Group Discussion Guide**

KINZEY & DAY QUALITATIVE MARKET RESEARCH

February 27, 2007

Date: TBD
Times: TBD
Location: TBD, Richmond, VA

INTRODUCTION: (10 min.)

We'll be talking informally about working here at VCU and about diversity issues.
We'll be doing several things today:

1. Participating in a group discussion
2. Talking about the VCU Climate Survey

RESPONDENT INTROS:

- o First name
- o What you do here at VCU (which campus, department, etc)
- o Favorite hobby, sport, or leisure time activity

MODERATOR INTRO: Name, purpose of research

DISCLOSURES: Taping (if being done), observer

GUIDELINES: Voice level, keep the discussion conversational, everyone needs to share his/her opinion, no wrong answers

PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

No names used in report. Please do NOT attribute anything you hear in this room to anyone by name, even in casual conversation.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS (10 - 15 minutes)

- First, let's talk just a little about working here at VCU. What are the best things about working here? What makes for a pleasant environment here? Are there things that detract from the working environment here, things VCU should work on?
- Overall, how satisfied with VCU are you? Reasons you would say that? Are there things that VCU could do to make you more satisfied?
- Do you think you'll still be working here five years from now? Reasons you would say that?
- In general, do you feel that there is a sense of "community" at VCU or not? Reasons you would say that? How important to you is it that you feel a sense of community where you work? Are there any obstacles to VCU creating a sense of community? What might make the sense of community here even stronger?
- If there were a stronger sense of community here, would that affect your decision to stay here or not?
- Do you, personally, feel comfortable working here – do you feel that you can "be yourself" and still fit in? Are there any barriers to feeling that you can be yourself and fit in? If so, is there anything VCU can do to make the environment more comfortable?

DIVERSITY ISSUES

- I'd like for us to talk specifically about diversity issues and the climate survey which at least some of you participated in (HAVE DIVERSITY MARKERS ON A FLIP CHART). First, do you think that VCU is committed to diversity and creating a diverse workforce? The climate survey indicates that most faculty and staff believe that it is (89%). Do you agree or not? What does the university do to make you believe that it is committed (or not)? What else could it be doing?
- Do you think that the university attracts the most qualified and capable employees regardless of race, ethnic background, gender, etc. Reasons you would say that?
- How about retaining the most qualified.... Reasons you would say that?
- And promoting the most qualified.... Reasons you would say that?

- (As necessary) According to the climate survey, most faculty and staff seem to think that VCU is doing an acceptable job in all three of these areas, but is doing less well with retention and promotion, particularly with respect with gender and with race. Do you agree or not? If you do agree, what makes you feel the university is doing less well with these issues? What do you think are the reasons for the university doing less well in these areas?
- Regardless of how good a job you feel the university is doing, what could VCU do BETTER in its efforts to recruit, retain, and promote racial minorities and women?

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

- How important is it to you, personally, for the University to have a diverse faculty? Reasons? And staff? Reasons? What about the administration? How important is it to you that VCU have a diverse administration? Reasons? How well has VCU done in all of those areas?
- Do you think VCU places enough emphasis on diversity issues? Reasons you would say that? Do you think it places too much emphasis on diversity issues? Are there certain diversity issues that VCU might seem to emphasize more than others? Are there diversity issues that VCU should place more emphasis on?
- (Faculty groups only) Research universities like VCU typically base hiring and promotion decisions based on merit – research productivity, service, excellence in teaching. How could VCU do a better job of ensuring a diverse faculty given the importance placed on merit in these decisions?
- Specifically, do you feel that the university should consider racial diversity when making decisions about recruiting and retention? Reasons you would say that? How about gender diversity? Reasons you would say that?

ISSUES OF FACULTY RANK AND EMPLOYEE TYPE

- Diversity is often thought about in terms of the markers we saw listed earlier on the flip chart. Are there any other “diversity” issues that you feel might affect the environment at VCU? If so, how so? (SEE IF ANYONE SPONTANEOUSLY MENTIONS FACULTY RANK, EMPLOYEE TYPE, AND/OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND).
- (For faculty groups) What about faculty rank? Do you think the environment at VCU is equally supportive of all faculty ranks or not? Reasons you would say that? What could be done to make the environment more equitable and supportive?

- (For all groups) What about different kinds of employees? Do you think the environment is equally supportive to all employees or not? Reasons you would say that? What could be done to make the environment more equitable and supportive?
- Finally, what about socio-economic background? Do you think the environment at VCU is equally supportive of all of its employees regardless to socio-economic background? Reasons you would say that? What could be done to make the environment more equitable and supportive?

CLOSE

- I'm going to look over my notes for just a moment to make sure that I have covered everything. While I'm doing that, I'd like for you to work in smaller groups, to talk about what we've said today. Are there any other diversity issues that we should have covered? Is there anything else that needs to be said about the issues we have covered?