

# Assessing Multicultural Climate: Case Study of the Psychology Department at a Midwestern University

Alyssa Eversmeyer, M.A., Nina J. Parekh, M.A., Katelyn Frey, Ph.D., Erica Temes, M.A.,  
Nathan Bitecofer, M.A., Ryan Thibodeau, M.A., Jennifer Stanley, Ph.D., John Queener, Ph.D.

With additional questions, please contact the research team:

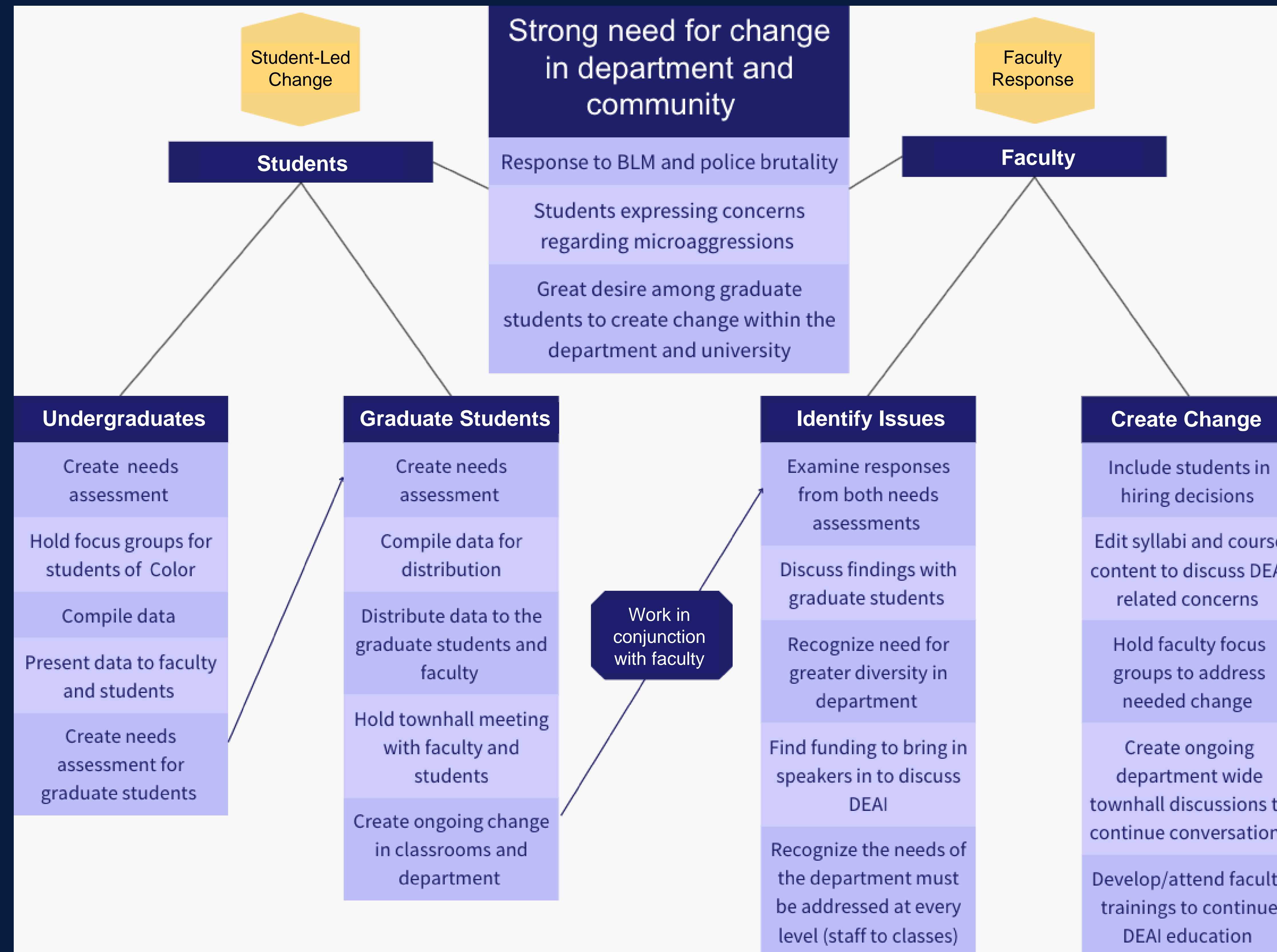


## TASK FORCE DEVELOPMENT

- This task force stemmed from a process group held for students and faculty in June 2020 in the midst of heightened conversations about police brutality and Black Lives Matter protests. Students and faculty discussed the role of higher education and psychology in social justice initiatives.
- After this meeting, the department developed a task force to focus on racial justice and issues related to diversity (broadly defined), equity, accessibility, and inclusion.
- The task force surveyed undergraduate and graduate psychology students in the 2021-2022 academic year to assess their perceptions and needs related to the department's racial and general climate.

## MEASURES

- Perceptions of the racial climate** were assessed using three approaches: one-item self-report, semantic differential scales, and a Likert scale created by the task force.
- Students' experiences** related to diversity, equity, and inclusion were assessed using items gauging the frequency with which they have heard racial microaggressions or derogatory remarks from other students, faculty, or staff, and the frequency with which they have been graded unfairly or discouraged because of their racial identity.
- Engagement and experiences** in coursework, research, advising, and teaching were assessed with Likert scale items.
- Open-ended questions** probed students' thoughts on key actions related to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion and invited grad students to anonymously share specific instances of prejudice or discrimination.



**"Faculty need additional training on what is considered a microaggression and what NOT to say to minority students. It is already hard to be a minority student in higher education because there are so few of us, that being microaggressed and put down by faculty makes it extremely discouraging and difficult to finish the program."**



## RESULTS

### Undergraduate Psychology Students

Response Rate: 40%, n = 369  
White: n = 261, People of Color: n = 99

### Graduate Psychology Students

Response Rate: ~45%, n = 41  
White: n = 28, People of Color: n = 11

- Compared to White students, students of Color report **less satisfaction** with the racial climate and feel the department is **less responsive** to racial issues. They are **less likely** to feel that the psychology advisor can relate to their issues and background, and they witness **more frequent** racial microaggressions and derogatory remarks.
- The most common suggestions for improving DEAI in the Psychology Department were to talk about it more, provide racial diversity training for faculty, hire more racially diverse faculty, and reduce structural inequalities and power imbalances.
- Most undergraduate students expressed that the psychology department is doing a good job on issues of racial diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion.
- Graduate students reported examples of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and sexual harassment, as well as dismissiveness and invalidation from faculty.

## RESPONSE

- Results were presented to faculty and students, and two townhalls were held.
- Students and faculty on the task force collaboratively implemented changes: developing a long-term diversity plan, providing DEAI trainings to students and faculty, addressing sexual harassment and Title IX concerns, and increasing support for graduate student instructors.