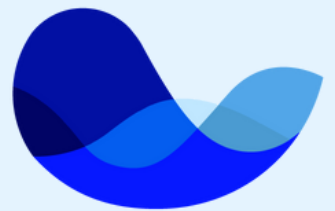


CULTURAL INSIGHTS REPORT

NC STATE
UNIVERSITY

Humanities and
Social Sciences



TIDAL EQUALITY

curiosity · courage · candour · empathy · equality



INTRODUCTION

Recently, our team at Tidal Equality led a College-wide strategic planning process in which all employees (staff and faculty) and students of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences were invited to participate in the development of a new *Strategic Plan*, using Tidal Equality's unique Wave® strategic-design methodology. The Wave® process included Listening Visits (a series of virtual focus groups), a voluntary Anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire, and an open, collaborative, online Strategy Design Process, through which members of the College community were invited to share insights and make contributions to the development of a new *Strategic Plan*.

Through the Wave® process, we learned a great deal about community members' perceptions about the College's existing culture and strategy. We learned about specific challenges that are top of mind for members of the community as a whole, as well as about challenges more prominently experienced by particular populations within the College, and we identified key assets in terms of the College's culture and work that make many proud to live, work, and learn there.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- About This Cultural Insights Report
- About Tidal Equality

ABOUT THE PROCESS

- The Listening Visits and Anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire
- The Strategic Design Sessions
- Strategic Documents Drafting
- Representation in Listening Visits and Qualitative Insights Questionnaire

THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES'S UNIQUE CONTEXT

CULTURAL INSIGHTS

- Assets
- Challenge Themes
- Remedies



ABOUT THIS CULTURAL INSIGHTS REPORT

This *Cultural Insights Report* was developed from insights collected throughout the Wave® strategic planning process, specifically through the Listening Visits and Qualitative Insights Questionnaire. This document is a companion piece to the new *Strategic Plan 2022-2027* and *Culture Charter*. It aims to provide College leaders and community members with clarity and a shared understanding of the cultural and strategic issues present at the time the new *Strategic Plan* was created. The new *Strategic Plan* has been designed to build upon assets and address challenges, so that leaders and community members can work together to strengthen and improve the College's culture in ways that will empower strategic, cultural, and student success for years to come.

In this report, you will see anonymized quotes presented throughout. Please note, these quotes come directly from participant submissions to the anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire, the methodology of which is explained in detail below. Quotes have been selected to reflect broader themes in the data set. Further, the statistics presented in this report also come directly from the population who completed the Qualitative Insights Questionnaire.

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ABOUT TIDAL EQUALITY

Tidal Equality (Tidal) is a strategy firm that helps organizations build equality, effectiveness, and prosperity. We deliver strategic, collaborative, and evidence-based methodologies that enable us to partner deeply with clients and build trust across diverse stakeholder groups.

The Tidal team works in a wide variety of public and private sector environments around the world. Our strategic plan development methodology has been designed to enhance equity in the strategic design process by bringing a diversity of voices into strategic planning in alignment with our organizational vision, which is “to co-create a world where equality is the new status quo and everyone can achieve their full potential.” We endeavor to co-design strategic plans with our clients that are compelling and resonant, unique, elegant in their simplicity, and ultimately effective in helping disparate stakeholders—leaders and community members alike—foster common cause and objectives to the benefit of their organizations and communities.

All of our work is rooted in multidisciplinary research and world-class data from the fields of organizational behavior and change, organizational strategy, as well as in effectiveness studies on diversity, equity, and inclusion solutions. We have served as trusted partners on complex, transformative, strategic-design and culture change projects.

ABOUT THE PROCESS

The Listening Visits and Anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire

As part of the Wave® strategic design process, we listened to and learned from the experiences and perspectives of a broad number of the College’s community members. We held several (virtual) Listening Visits at which attendees were invited to share insights particular to the challenges that the College—and its people—face, and barriers preventing the institution and its people from achieving their full potential. In total, 108 people participated in the strategic design process, 88 participated in the (virtual) Listening Visits; and 83 made contributions to the Qualitative Insights Questionnaire. Participation in these phases of the project was voluntary.





The Listening Visits and Anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire (cont.)

From these participant contributions, we learned about the current state at the College and heard important ideas for how priorities should shift in order to enhance the College's unique value and position, and how the College could be made more relevant to its many community members, partners, and interest groups. We also learned how inequity is at play in the College's systems and its culture by asking equity-focused questions in all stages of the process.

Listening Visits were open to both full-time and part-time EHRA and SHRA staff members; faculty members, including tenured, non-tenured, full-time and part-time; senior leadership and board members; temporary employees; and students and alumni. In these sessions we explored broad questions about challenges, strengths, opportunities, and equity issues.

The Qualitative Insights Questionnaire, drafted with the support of the Project Planning Feedback Team, was designed to further explore initial findings from the Qualitative Insights Questionnaire and also to collect both quantitative and qualitative information about the experiences and perspectives of the College's many community members. We always take extraordinary measures to ensure respondent confidentiality and anonymity, and for that reason all questions in the Questionnaire were optional, and any quotes reproduced herein have had any identifying details (such as department, gender, race, or age) redacted.



The Strategic Design Sessions

From what we heard and learned through the Listening Visits and Qualitative Insights Questionnaire, we created a unique series of (virtual) strategic design sessions in our digital facilitation platform—open to all of the College’s community members—in which we reflected back to participants at a high level the College’s unique challenges, the assets working in its favor, and shared hopes for its future.

In the (virtual) strategic design sessions, participants were guided to help us create a vision statement by submitting their own vision, a renewed set of values, as well as by voting on key strategic priorities, based on data from the Listening Visits and Qualitative Insights Questionnaire. Collectively, these contributions are woven together in the College’s new *Strategic Plan*, **Shape the Conversation to Build a Better Future**. We also engaged participants in identifying behavioral aspirations—for the College’s community members and leadership—that will supercharge the *Strategic Plan*. These behavioral aspirations are presented in the *College of Humanities and Social Sciences Culture Charter*.

At every step of the co-design process, participants were invited to refine the co-designed elements in order to produce a *Strategic Plan* and supporting documents created *by the College, for the College*.

Strategic Documents Drafting

After the close of the co-design sessions, our team synthesized the contributions into two draft documents open for feedback and refinement by leaders, as well as the Project Planning Feedback Team. These documents included the new *College of Humanities and Social Sciences Strategic Plan 2022-2027* and the *Culture Charter*.

Representation in Listening Visits and Qualitative Insights Questionnaire

College Populations Consulted in the Listening Visits

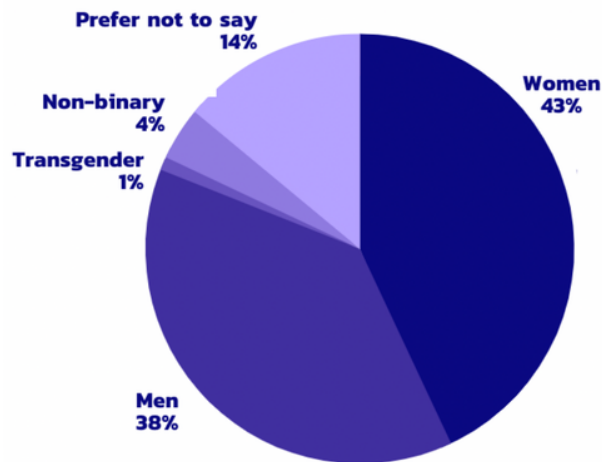
With the input of the Project Planning Feedback Team, Tidal Equality met with voluntary representatives from the following populations in the Listening Visits (virtual focus groups):

- Members of Staff or Faculty in a Student Support or Advisory Function
- Non-faculty EHRA (Advisors, Trainers, etc.)
- Professional-track Faculty
- Undergraduate and Graduate Students
- Post-doctoral Scholars (Teaching and/or Research)
- Executive Leadership Team (Deans, Directors, Department Heads)
- Staff Member (with Direct Reports)
- Staff Member (with No Direct Reports)
- Tenure-track Untenured Faculty
- Tenured Faculty
- Dean's Board

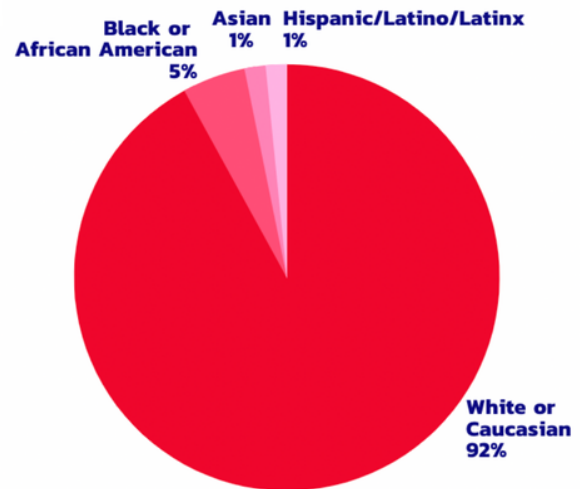


Representation and Demographic Characteristics of Qualitative Insights Questionnaire Respondents

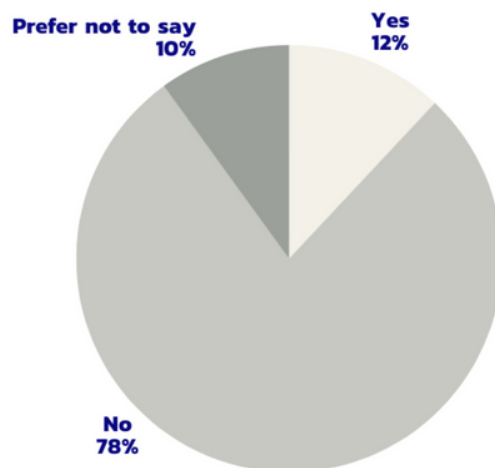
Gender Identification



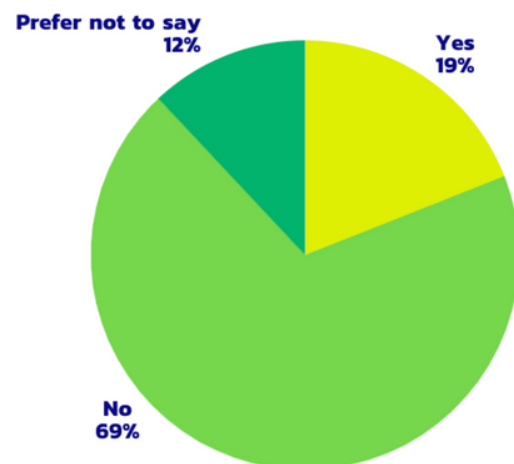
Racial or Ethnic Identification



Identifies as Belonging to LGBTQ2+

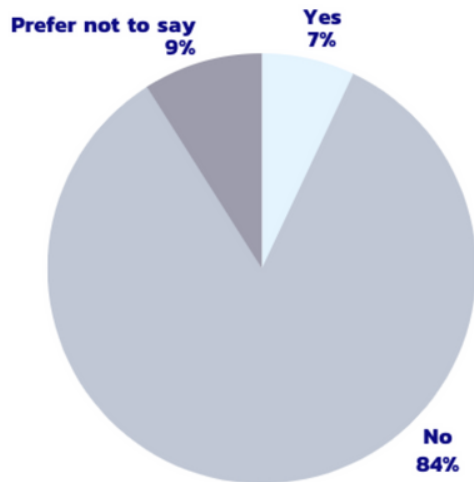


Has a Visible or Invisible Disability

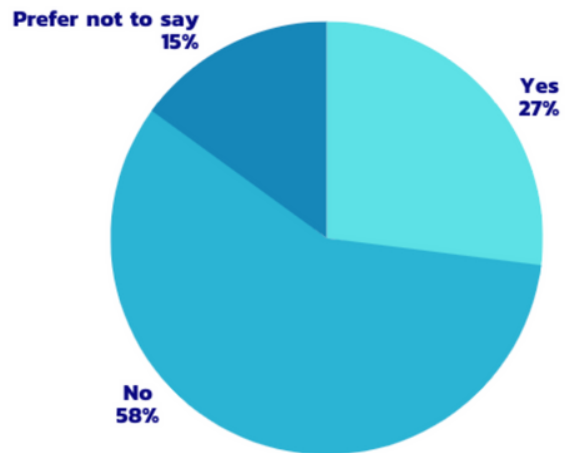


Representation and Demographic Characteristics of Qualitative Insights Questionnaire Respondents (cont.)

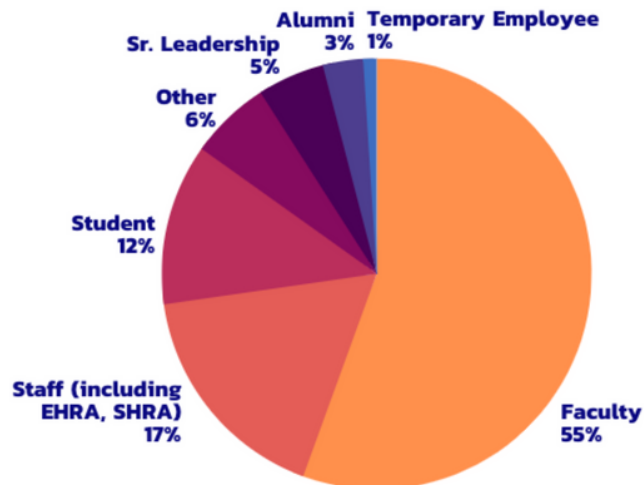
"Do you identify as belonging to an equity-seeking racial or ethnic minority?"



"Are you a person with a dimension of diversity or identity relevant to your experiences in the workplace?"



Demographics of Ranks, Roles, and Positions





THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES'S UNIQUE CONTEXT

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is made up of a dedicated, caring, and collaborative community of students, staff, and faculty, who work together to push the boundaries of critical thinking, interdisciplinary teaching and research, and innovation across a diversity of fields, roles, and environments. The College shares similar challenges to many of the Colleges and divisions we have worked with at NC State, including issues related to significant resource constraints, negative power dynamics between faculty and staff, and, as well, a variety of equity issues. This College, however, has a strong preexisting sense of collective identity, collegiality, and a warmth that is uncommon to find in a higher education setting. In our professional view, the warmth and collegiality of the culture can be harnessed to tackle challenges and optimize strengths.

During a time of rapid technological and scientific development and intense political complexity, the College plays a vital role as a humanities and social sciences college at a STEM university. It is apparent that, as scholars of the humanities and social sciences within an epicenter of innovation; as staff who empower the students and the work of the College; and, as well, as students who learn there, College community members share an imperative to exchange insights, innovations, and ideas as broadly and creatively as possible locally, nationally and beyond and have a uniquely valuable perspective to offer the university and the communities it serves.

Finally, for a number of complex reasons—some of them to do with the realities of a global pandemic, shifting work patterns, and individual and family needs and some of them to do with the impact of challenges people are experiencing and observing in the workplace—the College does have a high attrition risk at this time. The details around this attrition risk are detailed below.



CULTURAL INSIGHTS



Assets

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences at NC State has a number of key assets. These assets have the potential to augment and promote the cultural and strategic success of the College.

1. Humanities and Social Sciences in STEM

In many ways, being a humanities and social sciences college within a STEM-university is an enormous asset. The College provides essential skills, employment readiness capabilities, and ideas and insights about human societies and our planet that are essential for all students whose university experience is meant to teach them how to think and do in the broader world. These contributions are vital to student success across the North Carolina State University campus and beyond.

2. Interdisciplinary Excellence

The College's excellence in interdisciplinary teaching, education, and research constantly upholds critical thinking, creativity, and positive change.

Assets (cont.)

3. Collegial Culture

There is a culture of collegiality among employees who share a care and concern toward each other, and who are dedicated to working together across a diversity of fields, departments, roles, and backgrounds.

4. Genuine Commitment to Students and Community

There is a genuine commitment to student success and well-being through quality education, teaching, research, and the aim of providing the best possible service to the communities the College serves.

5. New Leadership

Many are encouraged by the new leadership and the efforts being made to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, and to improve communication, accountability, and transparency.





Challenge Themes

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences has a positive set of assets that, if harnessed and built upon, can support the College's growth and positive change moving forward. At the same time, a number of challenge themes emerged through the Listening Visits and the qualitative and quantitative data collected via the anonymous Qualitative Insights Questionnaire. For some groups, these challenge themes are significant and have made it difficult for them to fully achieve their potential at the College. The challenges are ongoing. Some are rooted in the College's context within a STEM-university, and others in more systemic issues.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the scope and significance of these concerns will help the College leadership and community members alike in addressing these challenges. The top five challenge themes are as follows:

- 1. Challenges presented by being a humanities and social sciences college within the context of a STEM-university**
- 2. Equity issues impeding the growth and success of students and employees**
- 3. Stress and burnout**
- 4. Over-reliance on state and university resources**
- 5. Lack of physical and mental space and incentives to collaborate effectively**

These challenge themes are explored in-depth below, with supporting qualitative and quantitative data.

“There’s unequal value attributed to those of us who work in the humanities compared to those in other colleges who are viewed as engaged in more ‘lucrative’ pursuits.”

Humanities and Social Sciences Within a STEM University

There is a general sense that the College has had continued struggles to be seen and heard and to access adequate support and resourcing within the context of a STEM-centered university. While College members feel the College already makes significant contributions to the University—especially in terms of teaching critical thought, leading interdisciplinary education and research, and contributing employment-ready skills and innovation capacity across a diversity of fields, roles, and environments—many feel this contribution is undervalued and under-resourced.

Many feel that the needs of the College are too often ignored by the University, especially when it comes to allocation of resources in student scholarships, advancing interdisciplinary education, and wage and salary increases. For some, decisions around these areas seem to be made by a risk-averse leadership, which worsens this problem.

“At a ‘STEM’ school, The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is often overlooked and undervalued, but our programs are some of the finest in the nation. We place students in impressive and competitive careers, and we give students ‘soft’ skills that can translate to so many different fields. I also think we have the power to cultivate empathy and emphasize the value of diversity in a direct and meaningful way.”

“The university leadership needs to take the humanities/social sciences more seriously as interdisciplinary partners.”

Humanities and Social Sciences Within a STEM University (cont.)

Lack of due credit and recognition or celebration of the College’s achievements and successes are some examples of the gaps in treatment and recognition of the humanities in comparison to the ‘hard’ sciences. Many faculty and staff member respondents share strong perceptions of being less valued and being treated poorly by their peers in science-centered departments and colleges. For example, there is a perception that the humanities are less important when it comes to expanding innovation and solving complex problems.

Furthermore, there is a perception among respondents that the College has limited influence in University-wide decisions, which has made it difficult for it to leverage its unique value in contributing its expertise in a diversity of STEM fields. As a result, many students and faculty alike feel discouraged from pursuing unique research and academic interests, and the overall identity and standing of the College within NC State also suffers.

“The leadership is risk averse, unwilling to leverage the college's resources and strengths for greater influence in university-wide decision-making.”

“The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is definitely viewed as unimportant and is looked down upon in any instance where our researchers engage in university-wide functions (e.g., research symposia). The College is not making its mark on the university. I'm not seeing how our departments are involved in the university strategic plan, and our successes are not celebrated at the university level.”

Equity Issues Impeding Growth and Student and Employee Success

In both Listening Visits and in the Qualitative Insights Questionnaire we heard from many people throughout the College population that there is insufficient equality of opportunity and there are specific inequities getting in the way of some individuals and populations having the opportunity to thrive in their roles and careers.

When asked in the Qualitative Insights, "Does everyone have an equal opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential (regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, or other dimensions of diversity and identity)?"

64% of respondents indicated "no," as opposed to 36% who indicated "yes."

In open text responses to questions about equality of opportunity and also to questions regarding key challenges facing the College today, four key sub-themes emerged related to equity issues impeding growth, and student and employee success, as follows:

1. Roles Ranks and Hierarchies
2. Bias and Discrimination
3. Underrepresentation
4. Pay Inequity and Low Pay

These four themes are expanded upon in more detail below.

64%

OF RESPONDENTS DO NOT BELIEVE EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED AND REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AT THE COLLEGE (REGARDLESS OF RACE, GENDER, ETHNICITY, ABILITY, SEXUALITY, OR OTHER DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY AND IDENTITY).

36%

BELIEVE EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

“As a staff member, I do not feel like I'm respected, compensated, valued, or recognized as much as faculty.”

1. Roles, Ranks, and Hierarchies

Those with less status or decision-making power report inequitable experiences. This is exemplified by perceptions of a “culture of classism” by staff members who are feeling “left out” by faculty members and leaders at the College. Some examples shared include: unfair treatment of staff by faculty who can be dismissive of their capabilities and contributions; exclusion of staff perspectives from key decision-making activities; staff not being given an equal amount of respect for their work and skills; and administrative-heavy tasks falling disproportionately on staff.

“I feel like we work in a caste system that rewards some faculty members (and staff) while paying others half (or less) for work that has just as much or more value.”

“Without the people who help with advising, creating a sense of community, making sure enrollment, registration and graduation are seamless, and referring students to resources such as counseling, the career center, or student groups, the education faculty provide would not be as effective. Staff are not respected by faculty for what they do.”

“I am told I cannot cross the chasm between non-tenure track and tenure track no matter my credentials, service, or accomplishments. So I'm stuck in a place from which I cannot advance.”

1. Roles, Ranks, and Hierarchies (cont.)

Both via the anonymous Insights Questionnaire and (virtual) Listening Visits, participants shared experiences and perspectives of what they perceive as an unfair tenure system. Respondents report that tenured positions at the College are few and far between, and that the majority of the faculty work falls outside the tenure system. A small but significant proportion of participants and respondents find that the current system inadvertently favors members who either belong to historically advantaged groups or have held high-status positions/roles within the College.

“There are ways that certain ranks of faculty are excluded, not only from decision-making processes, but also from conversations about what is happening in our departments and our college and from opportunities to thrive in our research. For example, we have faculty meetings that are restricted to TT faculty, resources that are restricted to TT faculty, etc.”

“There are numerous staff who have higher level degrees who are treated like receptionists instead of people who can bring more to the table.”

1. Roles, Ranks, and Hierarchies (cont.)

This challenge stems from traditional academic hierarchies established within the institution and is exacerbated by the position of the College within a STEM-centered university.

Additionally, limited access to and availability of resources and support is further alienating groups of staff and non-tenured faculty members who are finding it difficult to achieve their full potential at the College. As a result, tensions and feelings of resentment exist between groups of staff and faculty—and between tenured and non-tenured faculty—and negatively affect employee morale, productivity, and the overall sense of belonging at the College.

“No one who is NTT in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences has almost any career opportunity (or chance for upward mobility) in contrast to their TT faculty counterparts.”

“The reality is that our college relies heavily on NTT instruction and that most NTT instructors have heavier teaching loads than most TT faculty. Lecturers need more compensation, as well as more institutional respect. What NTT faculty definitely don't need is limited opportunities for increased compensation, and especially anything that would add any uncertainty about future employment opportunities. Lecturers also have limited—and really unclear—opportunities for advancement. The invitation to apply for promotion to Senior Lecturer arrives sporadically and unpredictably. It's very unclear whether there are any further opportunities for advancement. It's also unclear how to prepare for advancement or what criteria will make it happen.”

“You might observe leadership having coffee with male counterparts, but a woman is never part of that group.”

“Certain groups, particularly black women, can't afford to show any weakness, while others can get away with most anything.”

2. Bias and Discrimination

A small but significant proportion of participants and respondents shared concerns for, and experiences of, bias and discrimination at the College. This challenge has impacted members from historically disadvantaged groups and communities such as women, racialized and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and more. Rooted in systemic challenges such as sexism, racism, and ableism, bias and discrimination manifests as micro- and macro-aggressions, exclusionary behavior, and limited access to opportunities and resources.

Some woman-identified respondents expressed concerns of a “boys club” culture at the College, which has not only impacted their morale but affected their growth and advancement. For example, women and especially women of color report “struggling to be heard” or “taken seriously” during meetings. Some also shared instances of being sidelined by their male colleagues during informal conversations with senior leaders. We also heard from women with caregiving responsibilities who feel unsupported by the College when it comes to inviting them to, and ensuring they can participate in, key meetings.

“Although there are efforts to do otherwise, we tend to follow heterosexual, white, cisgender, and male ‘norms’ and a very traditional structure.”

“White male graduate students in our department have to do A LOT less work than others to achieve similar teaching evaluations, which is incredibly frustrating.”

“There are many cases in [my department] of students of color or of a non-traditional gender orientation (anything besides man or woman) feeling discriminated against and treated poorly .”

2. Bias and Discrimination (cont.)

Moreover, a number of participants perceive unfair or biased policies and practices and suggest these are disproportionately impacting members from racialized and ethnic backgrounds. For example, a number of racialized respondents report being afforded less agency and autonomy in their roles, as well as experiencing micromanagement.

Some students and employees who identify as non-binary and transgendered, as well as allies, cite that both employees and students have experienced refusals to use correct pronouns and, in the student context, unfair assessment and support practices that lead to isolation.

Further, people with visible and invisible disabilities find it difficult to succeed and advance within the College. In pursuit of equitable access to accommodations, disabled people cite navigating long documentation processes and inadequate understanding and support from the disabilities office as common issues.

“I know of a black female colleague who left for another university with a much more diverse community and better mentorship.”

“I feel like faculty of color are often spoken over.”

“I have a disability and I am often forced to do things without consideration of my disability. Many students have the same issue. We are not considered if we are not the same as the majority.”

“[I think] the University does a good job of recruiting from underrepresented groups, but a very poor job of retaining them.”

“Most of the leadership in departments and the Dean's office are white, cisgendered, and male.”

3. Underrepresentation

Representation gaps in leadership and tenured positions, and between faculty and staff roles, pose challenges for attracting and retaining a diverse talent pool, as well as supporting the diversity of students at the College.

Among Questionnaire respondents who elected to self-identify, the majority of the leadership, faculty and staff positions represented are occupied by members identifying as white or Caucasian. The gender distribution of those identifying as male and female is relatively the same, if not equal, across these groups. There was minimal representation from racial and ethnic minorities and those with diverse gender and sexual identities.

“There are not enough faculty (and students) of color, and those we have are overburdened and often the victims of discrimination.”

“The lack of diverse identities represented in our junior and senior faculty—they don't yet reflect the best we could achieve in retention and recruitment.”

“The College of Humanities and Social Sciences continues to rely on a small group of faculty of color to perform public-facing service to bolster the University's image.”

3. Underrepresentation (cont.)

According to a number of respondents and Listening Visit participants, lack of diverse representation in leadership roles has resulted in fewer opportunities to build more equitable support mechanisms for students, staff, and faculty from marginalized populations. As a result, there is undue pressure on minority groups to expand diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work and seek more equitable opportunities. We heard that those from racialized and ethnic backgrounds are given tasks of bolstering the University's image and DEI initiatives disproportionate to those from historically advantaged groups. As a result, a culture of “all talk, no action” in DEI has persisted and lends a performative tone to DEI-related actions and communications. In addition, some feel that where diverse representation does exist at the leadership level, that diversity does not also represent real power to generate change.

“I see problems both with retaining faculty of color and with retaining female faculty, and both seem to come down to not providing adequate support for these populations.”

“I am happy to see more women and POC in positions of leadership across NCSU, but visibility in leadership does not equate to real power to generate change. Never has and never will.”

“Pay equity issues wreak havoc on recruitment and retention, which impacts the quality of what we offer and, in turn, our standing vis-à-vis the rest of the University and, more broadly, the Academy.”

“I am not being paid enough for the job I do as an NTT first-year instructor.”

4. Pay Inequity and Low Pay

Inequities in pay and low salaries are widely reported challenges across the College’s participant and respondent groups, particularly among women and non-tenured faculty. Too many report that pay and compensation is minimal and have described it as pay that is “below cost-of-living wages.”

Rooted in the challenge of historically systemic inequality, pay inequity is reported by people across various roles and responsibilities within the College and disproportionately among those whose dimensions of diversity are historically disadvantaged.

Many women report being paid significantly less than their male colleagues, despite having similar roles and experiences. Some respondents assert that gender inequity in pay and compensation is so common that managers deny women raises and promotions while promoting male counterparts, all with impunity.

“Women are clearly underpaid; salaries are more than 15% less on average than men based on the salary database.”

“My students need and deserve more of my time and energy and attention—I am unable to provide these adequately because of time constraints, which are related to financial constraints.”

“The College of Humanities and Social Sciences needs to redistribute some of the salaries earned by administrators to tenured faculty and pay adjuncts and graduate students a respectable wage.”

4. Pay Inequity and Low Pay (cont.)

A small but significant proportion of staff members who have been with the College for many years shared concerns about salary compression and the dearth of consideration for promotions or raises. During the (virtual) Listening Visits and via the Questionnaire, we heard of increasing workloads but stagnant pay for staff members.

Many non-tenured faculty respondents report concerns of low salaries and pay inequity, as well. Several feel that their work and contributions continuously fail to receive recognition in the form of competitive salaries and equitable pay compared to tenured faculty members. Some feel this discrepancy prevents them from effectively supporting students and from pursuing interdisciplinary research interests. Finally, poor salary transparency and irregular evaluation of pay scales and contracts, in addition to limited access to financial support and resources, exacerbates this challenge. This leaves many employees feeling undervalued and unmotivated and has compelled several respondents to take up multiple jobs or consider alternative employment.

“I am a parent who can only afford part-time childcare. I am forced to look for extra income because my salary as a university lecturer is insufficient in paying for our needs. My mental health has never been so low.”

“Even as a senior faculty member, my low pay requires me to keep multiple part-time jobs.”

“Inequity in terms of workload and contribution vs. compensation. Our lowest paid employees (\$40K) teach the bulk of our courses, bring in huge credit hours, and pay for the entire department.”

“The College of Humanities and Social Sciences undervalues its professional track faculty and graduate students. We rarely see cost of living raises, and many of us take second jobs to make up for the deficit. This leads to faculty burnout, which limits faculty potential when it comes to serving students.”

Stress and Burnout

Many respondents to the Questionnaire and participants in the (virtual) Listening Visits feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and stressed by disproportionate workload distribution at the College. This has impacted employee productivity and morale as well as the overall culture of the College, where groups with less status or decision-making power report relatively higher levels of stress and burnout.

Many non-tenured faculty members are struggling to balance heavy workloads with teaching commitments. They feel heavy teaching loads and large class sizes hamper their ability to give adequate time to students, to explore research and interdisciplinary collaboration opportunities, and to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Some indicate a worsening situation with the COVID-19 pandemic as workloads were perceived to increase without much support from the College or the University.

“I am working to the bone to do my teaching and therefore don’t have any time to do the research or creative work that I want to do. Additionally, my pay is so low that I also have to seek out additional employment just to make ends meet. If I had to boil that down to one word, it’d be this: exploitation.”

“NTT faculty feel overworked, undervalued, and with limited and uncertain potential. The heavy teaching loads also contribute to time pressures that can limit what we are able to give to students.

That’s an especially big deal as NTT faculty often teach broad arrays of students, and as students can need a lot from us: often I’m the only faculty member that a lower-level student knows one-on-one, which means NTT faculty can especially bear a significant load when it comes to things like recommendation requests.”

“Women and POC are asked to do more, and their efforts on behalf of all constituencies is often rendered invisible by being labeled as ‘teaching’ or ‘service,’ neither of which counts as highly in promotion as ‘research.’”

Stress and Burnout (cont.)

Woman-identified employees report being saddled with “office housework”—the uncompensated and unrecognized administrative tasks that take away from their personal time. Those caring for children or dependents at home are directly impacted by this challenge. A number of women note that such tasks often get categorized as “service tasks,” which pose barriers for their promotion and advancement at the College.

“As a lecturer, I end semesters exhausted; it sometimes takes weeks to recover fully. The tiredness limits my opportunities for development and refinement; it also means I’m able to give less and less thorough feedback to students than I think would be most helpful. This problem has gotten incredibly worse since COVID. Even now that we’re back in person, the expectation to provide constant makeup sucks up so much time and energy. The 2020–21 academic year was the hardest year of my life, and while I appreciate that we got a small amount of additional compensation for developing contingency plans, there was no college-wide recognition that the workload had increased by at least 50%. Even now that we’re back in person, managing makeup assignments, recordings, etc. has added a substantial uncompensated workload. Because much of this scales according to the number of classes you teach, this load has hit NTT faculty the hardest.”

“In my department, associate professors—and more women than men—have taken on administrative responsibilities that come with a stipend to try to assuage low salaries that cannot keep up with the rapidly rising costs of living in our area.”

Stress and Burnout (cont.)

A small but significant number of staff members also share concerns of unfair and unequal work distribution within teams and departments. There is a perception that increased workload and poor support mechanisms—especially mental health support—prevents staff from accessing career opportunities, as the majority of their time is spent managing an unwieldy workload.

Finally, some cite a misalignment between job descriptions and actual work being done as a reason for employee stress and burnout, exacerbated by gaps in funding, infrastructural support, and resources. As a result, there is a discrepancy between those who are more likely to be able to enjoy a healthy work-life balance and those burdened with a disproportionate volume of uncompensated work and responsibilities.

“Burnout is exacerbated by professional uncertainty. On one-year contracts without really any clue about how long my job will be around, it can be difficult to be emotionally secure and committed.”

“We lose the enrollment of prospective students and garner the dissatisfaction of current students because we offer less funding than our peer liberal arts colleges and even some of our peer colleges on campus.”

Over-reliance on State and University Resources

In addition to and related to the challenge of being a humanities and social sciences college within a STEM university, we heard from Listening Visit participants and Questionnaire respondents that the College is currently operating within a resource-constrained environment.

Resource scarcity has resulted in an over-reliance on state and university funding, which in turn has stifled the College’s opportunity to be entrepreneurial in its funding pursuits and to build independent financial sustainability. The current long-standing resourcing model prevents the College from expanding its capacity, empowering its people, and equitably supporting the diversity of its students and employees alike.

“The College is underfunded and is still treated primarily as a service college at a STEM-oriented university. While this situation has improved marginally over the past few decades, the University has never invested what is needed to ensure that even the service is of the highest quality, and its level of support for graduate students in college programs is less than half of what it should be.”

“It isn't Engineering and therefore has limited resources.”

Over-reliance on State and University Resources (cont.)

Poor resourcing makes it difficult for faculty—especially non-tenured faculty—to get funding for interdisciplinary research. Gaps in available resources and financial support have limited access to other critical programs, such as scholarships, financial aid, campus placement initiatives, and key services. For example, lack of counselors and therapists and gaps in accessing timely mental health services for students is an ongoing challenge. This was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic when employees had to adjust to new ways of working, with limited resources and little support.

“We need to focus less on complaining about the lack of resources coming from the University. We aren't likely to get more from the University. We need to be entrepreneurial.”

“The school could provide proper resources for students to discuss their issues and concerns so that the students actually can succeed. (Example)

If you do not have employees at the counseling center, do not send students there. Help a student find a therapist off campus or show them how they can do that.”

Over-reliance on State and University Resources (cont.)

This also shows up as deep-rooted ‘resource silos’. For example, unfair and unequal distribution of resources across teams and departments has left certain units and departments with more access to information and resources than others.

As a consequence, the College is left in a vulnerable position of “doing more with less.” “Penny pinching attitudes” of leaders when allocating funding and resources is an example.

Respondents feel that the College needs to be more entrepreneurial in capitalizing its unique value by creating more innovative and sustained pathways for financial independence to support excellence in interdisciplinary education and research.

“We as a faculty cannot meet the needs of the students in the ways they need under the conditions we're facing - hybrid teaching is so much harder, yet it was just expected of us with no support; we're told again and again to be flexible and responsive, which takes more time and effort, but there's been almost no acknowledging that we, too, are in a pandemic.”

Lack of Physical and Mental Space and Incentives to Collaborate Effectively

From what we heard during the Listening Visits, and in the responses to the Questionnaire, silos—both internal and external to the College—are limiting opportunities for healthy collaboration across roles, disciplines, departments, colleges, and beyond.

Internally, faculty and staff have expressed feeling disconnected from other units and departments within the College. For example, many find that beyond their own teams and areas of responsibility, they are unaware of the work being done in other departments or areas. For some, the onus to find opportunities to work together, get information, or collaborate involuntarily falls on individual employees, and too often these efforts go unrecognized, so there is little incentive to pursue them.

“I don't really know what happens outside of my department. I wish I knew more about what is going on within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences as a whole, but I haven't had any training or education on how Academia works and have had to try to figure things out on my own. This makes it hard to understand what is happening in the overall department and to know what possibilities there are for my future.”

Lack of Physical and Mental Space and Incentives to Collaborate Effectively (cont.)

Because, as cited above, the College is undervalued as a humanities and social sciences College in a STEM-focused university, trying to ensure that the College has a seat at the table and plays an integral role in collaborative partnerships and interdisciplinary work within the university system is an ongoing challenge. This is a challenge within the College as well.

Respondents cite the lack of adequate physical and mental space for students and employees alike to engage cross-functional partnerships, in terms of infrastructure, hybrid programs, networking opportunities, and cross-leadership and faculty interactions. Further, limited incentives, such as interdisciplinary scholarships, poor funding for cross-functional research, and internship opportunities, also discourage interdisciplinary and collaborative work that College community members wish to take part in.

“The reality is that the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is at the bottom of everything in terms of how NCSU operates, whether that means professional development, valuing the knowledge its faculty produces—without having or being asked to collaborate across disciplines—or salary/spending.”



Lack of Physical and Mental Space and Incentives to Collaborate Effectively (cont.)

This challenge limits opportunities of all kinds—especially for those from historically disadvantaged communities. For example, people find it difficult to access information about opportunities in other units, departments, or even colleges. The problem has also limited the potential for the College to innovate and collectively solve the most complex problems facing humankind. Many feel the leadership needs to work more closely and proactively with other leaders across departments and disciplines to encourage more cross-functional collaboration in education and research.

Attrition Risk and Top Reasons Cited

Questionnaire participants were asked if they had “seriously entertained the thought of seeking employment outside of the College in the past six months,” responding as follows:

Yes	57%
No	34%
Prefer not to say	9%

Those who responded in the affirmative were further able to select issues of most concern that were contributing to their consideration to depart. Because respondents were able to choose “all that applied,” the resulting percentages exceed 100%. These are the top five issues chosen:

Pay/Compensation	77%
Burnout	59%
Professional Growth Opportunities	41%
Equity Issues	32%
Leadership Culture	23%

57%

**OF RESPONDENTS
HAVE SERIOUSLY
ENTERTAINED
THE THOUGHT OF
SEEKING
EMPLOYMENT
OUTSIDE OF THE
COLLEGE IN THE PAST
6 MONTHS**

**OF THE PRIMARY
CONTRIBUTING REASONS**

77%

**REPORT
PAY OR COMPENSATION**

Remedies

Read together—both the **Assets** and **Challenge Themes**—described above point to opportunities for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to create unique value and greater equity and equality of opportunity for its various stakeholders—inside and outside the College. While it has some significant challenges to work through, culturally, the College also has many strengths it can harness to help build an even more cohesive community as it undertakes strategic change toward greater educational and service excellence. The new *Strategic Plan* and *Culture Charter*—co-designed with a broad cross-section of the College’s employees, students, and leaders—together address the challenges and opportunities defined in this *Cultural Insights Report* and provide direction for a way forward.

Where today, the College struggles to sustain itself within a STEM-centered university, tomorrow, the College’s leaders and community members will embrace its unique value and build a unified culture by deploying the *Strategic Plan*—**Shape the Conversation to Build a Better Future**—as their common cause and shared purpose.

Where today, groups of students and employees share significant concerns about inequitable educational and employment experiences and service offerings, tomorrow, relying on this *Strategic Plan*, the College will embrace the voices of a diversity of students and employees, improve representation, reduce barriers to equitable pay, and focus on equity in work and everyday decision-making.





Remedies (cont.)

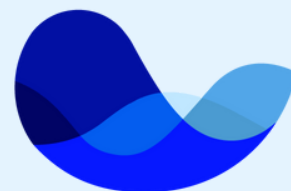
Where today, too many employees are overwhelmed and exhausted due to overwork, tomorrow, with the support of thoughtful leaders and guidance from the *Strategic Plan*, the College will demonstrate greater discernment in divesting itself of activities and work that does not serve students and employees effectively toward its strategic goals.

Finally, where today, the College is operating in a siloed environment—both internally and externally—and lacks the space for meaningful collaboration, tomorrow, acting on the *Strategic Plan*, the College will pursue new interdisciplinary partnerships and work collectively to innovate and solve the most complex problems facing its communities.

The *Strategic Plan*—which will guide prioritization and investments and shape activities—and the *Culture Charter*—which is designed to help guide healthy and productive behaviors and interactions—are designed to help the College’s leaders and community members address opportunities and challenges presented in this *Cultural Insights Report*.

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