

# Research Brief

## Diversity at Pepperdine University, Part II: Psychological Diversity

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### INTRODUCTION

Pepperdine is committed to diversity, a commitment that stems from its Christian heritage (Pepperdine University, 2014). This heritage compels members of the Pepperdine community to treat every individual, regardless of background, with respect and compassion, and to consider the diverse perspectives and expressions of others. Through this inclusion of others, educational endeavors are enriched and enhanced by different points of view. Thus, diversity is critical to higher education.

In Part I of this series, diversity was defined as attracting and serving a population of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Part I presented structural diversity data for Pepperdine University. Key findings revealed that Pepperdine's minority student population has steadily increased, with female minority students graduating at rates that were as high as, or often higher than, their male counterparts and the majority population. Another important finding was that Seaver College's student population has experienced population growth in most ethnic groups, particularly among Latinos and Asians; however, ethnic proportions among faculty have remained stable, leading to a disparity between the student and faculty ethnic distributions. This disparity between faculty and students was similar to national trends.

This research brief presents data on the psychological dimension of diversity among a sample of Pepperdine University students. As described in Part I, the psychological dimension refers to the perceived commitment of a community to diversity and support for diverse groups, as well as the perception of discrimination and racial conflict (Hurtado et al., 2008).

### PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

Efforts to understand persistence, retention, and graduation must take into account the influence of students' peers (Reason, 2009). According to Terenzini and Reason (2005), the college experience consists of three primary influences: the institution's internal organizational context, the peer environment, and the students' individual experiences. The authors stress that the peer environment "embodies the system of dominant and normative values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations that characterize a campus' student body," (Terenzini & Reason, 2005, p. 11).

Extensive research has been conducted on how campus climate, which is the institutional environment that includes the attitudes, perceptions, behaviors and expectations around race, ethnicity and diversity, can have both positive and

### KEY FINDINGS

- ⇒ Seniors graduating from Pepperdine in recent years reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the ethnic diversity of its student body than did seniors graduating from other private and religious universities in the United States.
- ⇒ African American participants reported higher levels of perceived discrimination than did participants from other ethnic groups in Pepperdine's undergraduate population.
- ⇒ Female African American participants reported having "meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations" and "intellectual discussions" outside of class with individuals from an ethnicity other than their own at a higher frequency than their male counterparts reported.

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deleterious effects on student outcomes (see Cabrera, Nora, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Hagedorn, 1999; Fegain, 1992, Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; and, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In a study conducted by Hurtado (2007), which examined the empirical links between campus diversity experiences and democratic outcomes, students who reported positive interactions with their diverse peers had higher levels of cultural and social awareness, more complex thinking about people and their behaviors, and a stronger ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective.

Hence, students do not live in isolation but interact with one another on a regular basis. At some point during a student’s college experience, these interactions will occur with individuals from a different ethnic background. These interactions have the potential to greatly shape a student’s college success, but the potential exists to hinder success as well. The perception of a hostile environment, such as perceived campus discrimination, can result in lower academic integration, social integration, and institutional commitment, all of which directly impact retention and academic success (Hurtado et al., 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students of color, moreover, tend to have more direct encounters with discrimination when compared to their Caucasian peers (Hurtado et al., 2008).

## PEPPERDINE DIVERSITY DATA: PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION

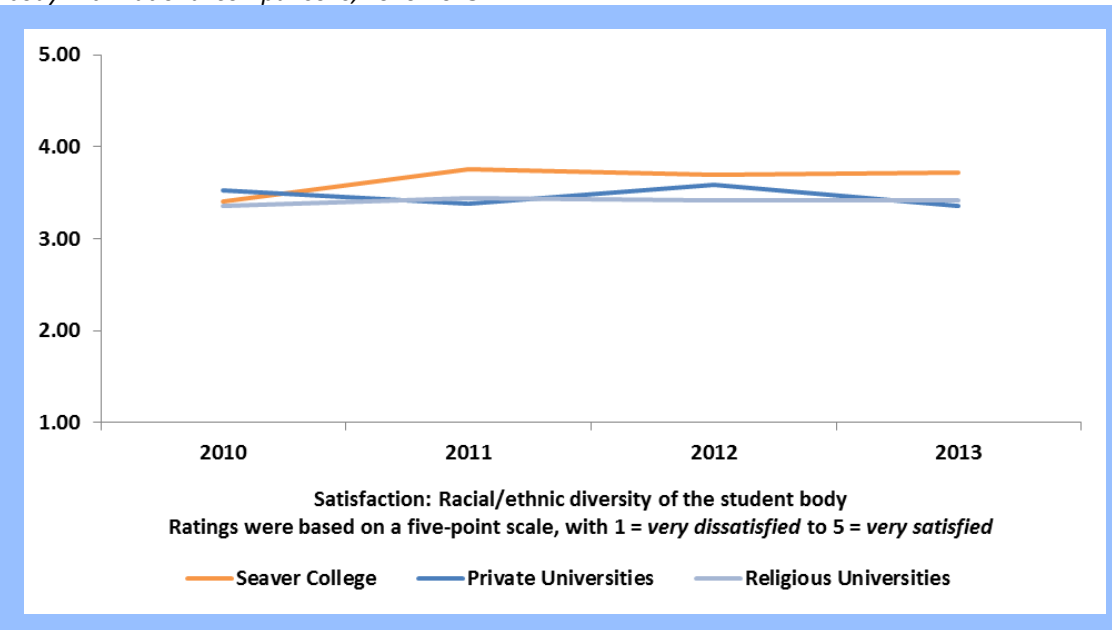
Data presented in this brief are primarily from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), College Senior Survey (CSS),

which was administered during the spring semester of 2013. The CSS is an annual national undergraduate survey in which Pepperdine partners with the CIRP at the University of California, Los Angeles, to collect data from Seaver College graduating seniors. The analytical sample consisted of 549 graduating seniors (i.e., students who received their bachelor’s degree during the 2012-2013 academic year, as indicated in PeopleSoft). National comparisons are presented for selected metrics. The two national comparison groups were private universities and religious universities, which includes nonsectarian, Catholic, and other religious four-year colleges.

In regards to analyses conducted on Pepperdine University (i.e., Seaver College) participants only, results are disaggregated by both gender and ethnicity in order to examine any potential gender disparities occurring within the different ethnic groups. Thus, Pepperdine-specific results are presented at the aggregate level and by gender and ethnicity.

Figure 1 shows a trend analysis of Seaver College graduating seniors’ satisfaction levels with the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body between the years 2010 and 2013 and compares those levels with those reported at other private and religious universities across the country. Across all four years, the satisfaction levels reported by Seaver College participants were significantly higher than those in both national comparison groups, except in 2010, in which Seaver College was significantly lower than private universities ( $p < .05$ ). Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. The four-year average for Pepperdine was 3.64, compared to a four-year average rating of 3.46 for private universities and 3.41 for religious universities.

Figure 1. *Seaver College graduating seniors’ satisfaction with the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body with national comparisons, 2010-2013*

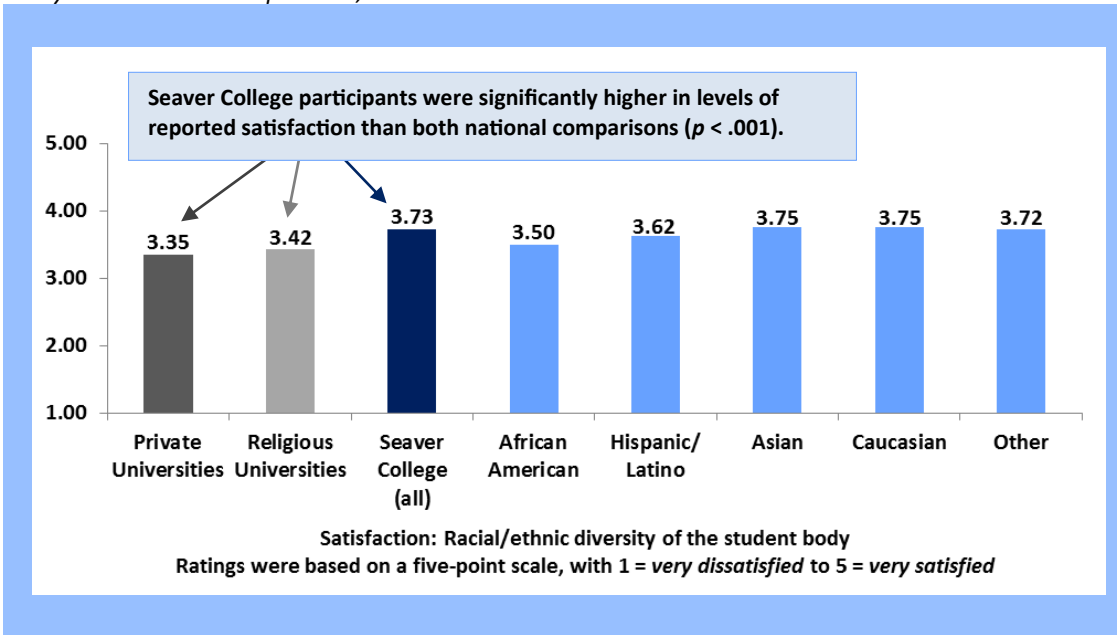


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2011-2013;  $p$  values from  $t$  tests. Item: “Please rate your satisfaction with your college in each area: Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body.” Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. The two national comparison groups were private universities and religious universities, which includes nonsectarian, Catholic, and other religious four-year colleges. For all four years, Pepperdine was significantly higher than both national comparisons, with the exception of 2010, in which Pepperdine was significantly lower than private universities only ( $p < .05$ ). Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

2010: Seaver College  $n = 406$ ; Private Universities  $n = 3,510$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 17,366$ .  
 2011: Seaver College  $n = 315$ ; Private Universities  $n = 5,160$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 11,469$ .  
 2012: Seaver College  $n = 527$ ; Private Universities  $n = 3,031$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 14,787$ .  
 2013: Seaver College  $n = 515$ ; Private Universities  $n = 4,853$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 16,605$ .

When examining the 2013 Seaver College sample survey results in more depth among the different ethnic groups, one sees that African American participants reported slightly lower levels of satisfaction with the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body, and Asian and Caucasian students reported slightly higher levels of satisfaction when compared to all Seaver College participants, although these differences were not statistically significant (Figure 2). Within the ethnic groups, the satisfaction levels reported by Hispanic/Latino females were statistically significantly lower ( $m = 3.35$ ) than the levels reported by their male counterparts ( $m = 4.06$ ;  $p < .05$ ; Figure 3). Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*.

Figure 2. Seaver College graduating seniors' satisfaction with the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body with national comparisons, 2013

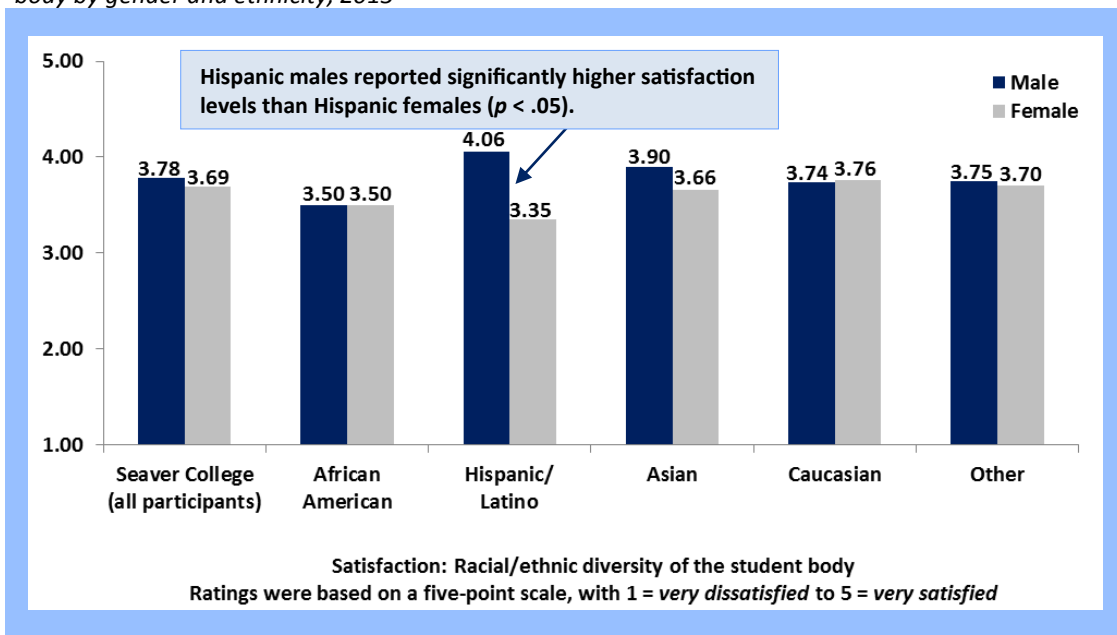


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013;  $p$  values from  $t$  tests. Item: "Please rate your satisfaction with your college in each area: Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body." Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. Significant differences were observed between Seaver College and both national comparison groups ( $p < .001$  for both). No significant differences were observed between ethnic groups. "Other" includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

- Seaver College (all participants)
- Seaver College (ethnic groups)
- Private Universities (comparison)
- Religious Universities (comparison)

Seaver College  $n = 504$ ; Private Universities  $n = 4,853$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 16,605$ .

Figure 3. Seaver College graduating seniors' satisfaction with the racial/ethnic diversity of the student body by gender and ethnicity, 2013

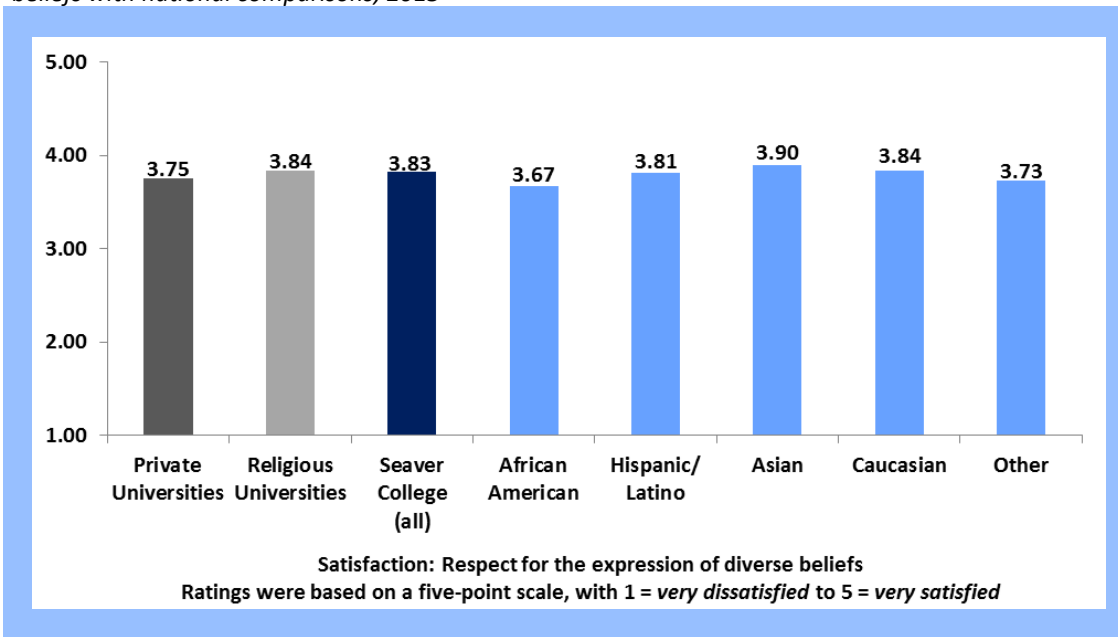


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013;  $p$  values from Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney tests. Item: "Please rate your satisfaction with your college in each area: Racial/ethnic diversity of the student body." Significant differences were observed within the Hispanic/Latino ethnic group between genders ( $p < .05$ ). No significant differences were observed across ethnic groups. Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. "Other" includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

$n = 504$  for all Seaver College participants;  $n = 204$  for male participants;  $n = 300$  for female participants.

One characteristic that comprises the psychological dimension of diversity is how students perceive their institution’s attitudes and expectations toward ethnicity and diversity. Participants from the 2013 sample rated their satisfaction with the respect for the expression of diverse beliefs at Seaver College (Figure 4). Participants overall, and across ethnic groups, expressed levels of satisfaction that were similar to national averages on these measures. However, Seaver College’s African American males ( $m = 3.25$ ) rated their satisfaction with the respect for the expression of diverse beliefs almost one point lower than their female counterparts ( $m = 4.00$ ; Figure 5) although this difference was not statistically significant. Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*.

Figure 4. Seaver College graduating seniors’ satisfaction with the respect for the expression of diverse beliefs with national comparisons, 2013

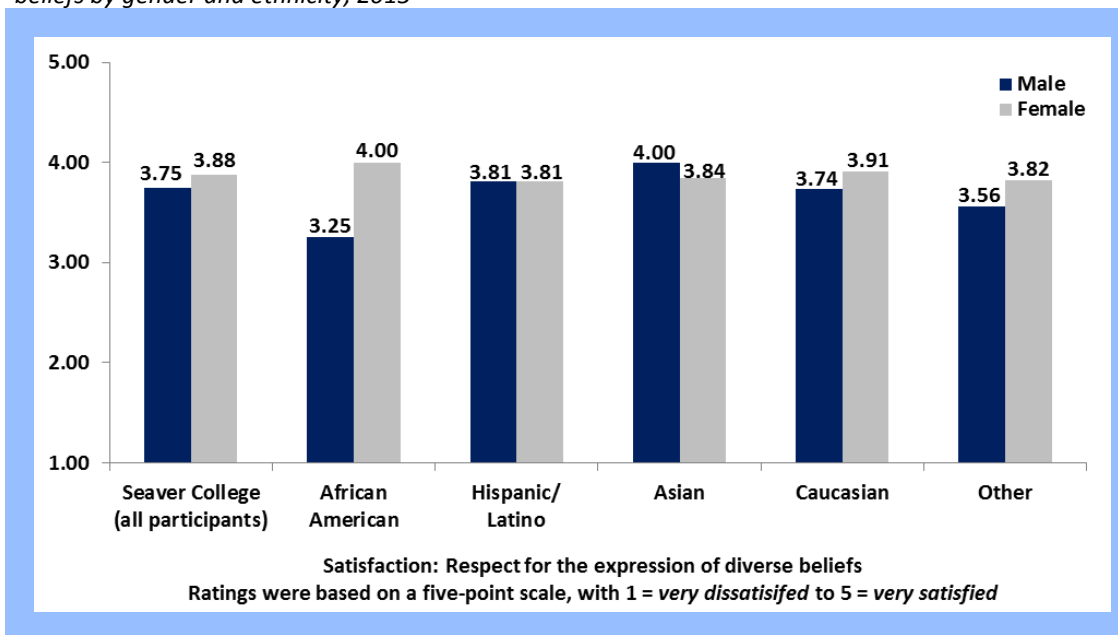


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013. Item: “Please rate your satisfaction with your college in each area: Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs.” Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. No significant differences were observed between Seaver College and the national comparison groups, or across the ethnic groups. “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

- Seaver College (all participants)
- Seaver College (ethnic groups)
- Private Universities (comparison)
- Religious Universities (comparison)

Seaver College  $n = 505$ ; Private Universities  $n=4,853$ ; Religious Universities  $n=16,604$ .

Figure 5. Seaver College graduating seniors’ satisfaction with the respect for the expression of diverse beliefs by gender and ethnicity, 2013

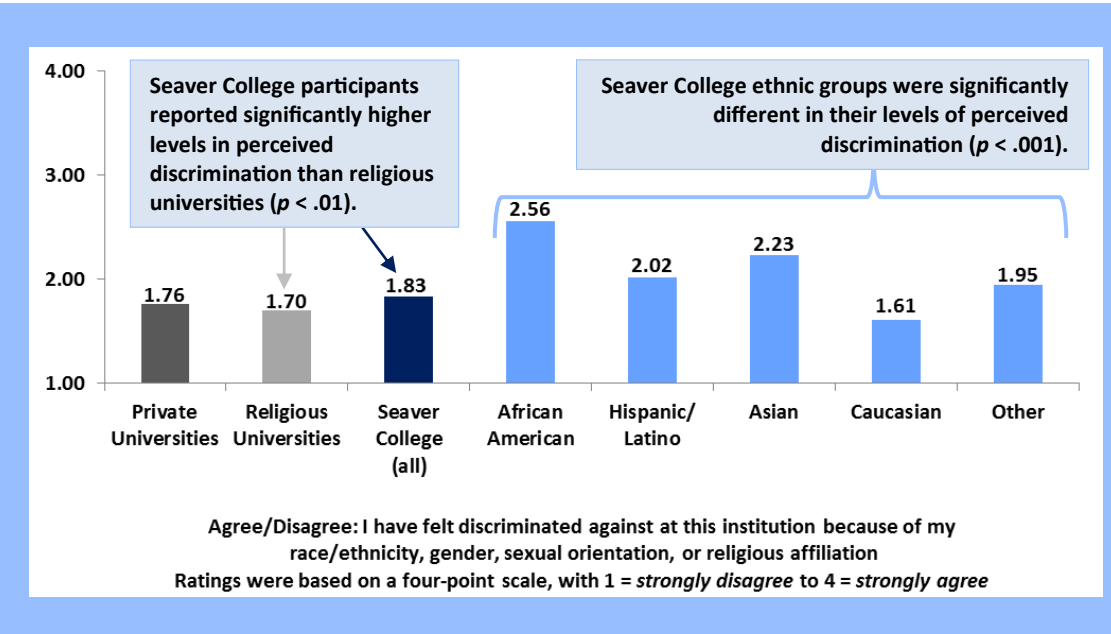


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013. Item: “Please rate your satisfaction with your college in each area: Respect for the expression of diverse beliefs.” Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. No significant differences were observed. “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

$n = 505$  for Seaver College;  $n = 205$  for male participants;  $n = 300$  for female participants.

Perceived discrimination is another vital facet of the psychological dimension of diversity. This dimension was assessed by asking participants to agree or disagree with the following item, “I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.” Ratings were based on a four-point scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. In responding to that question, Seaver College participants reported levels of perceived discrimination that were statistically significantly higher than the levels reported at other religious universities ( $p < .01$ ; Figure 6). Among the Seaver College sample, African American participants reported statistically significantly higher levels of perceived discrimination than did all other ethnic groups ( $p < .001$ ; Figure 6), and both African American males ( $m = 2.63$ ) and females ( $m = 2.50$ ) reported higher levels of perceived discrimination than did males and females from different ethnic groups (Figure 7).

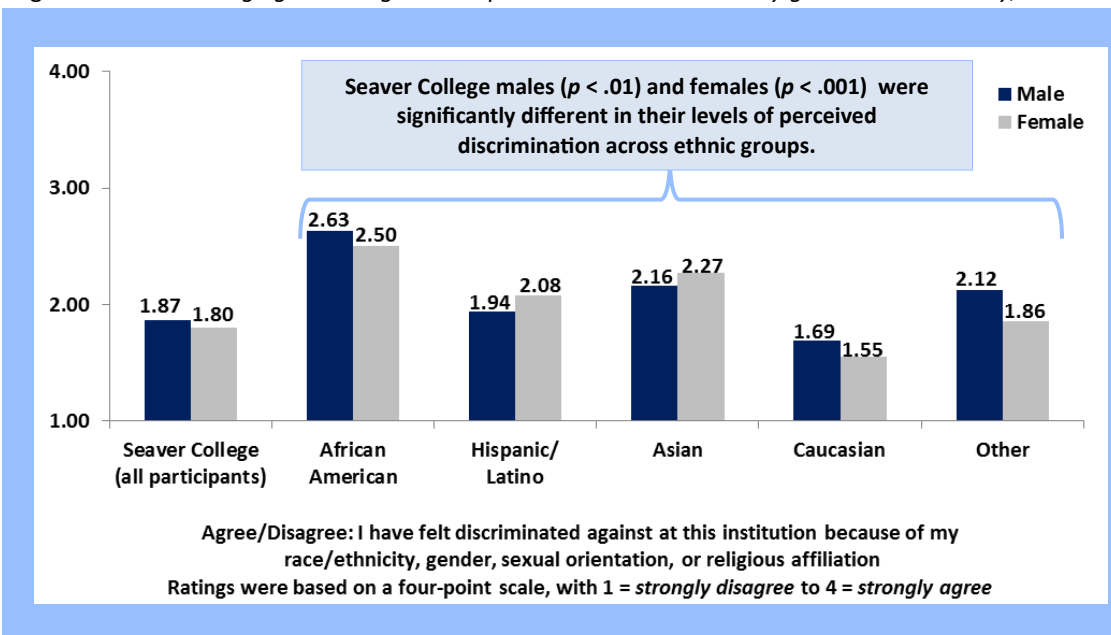
Figure 6. Seaver College graduating seniors’ perceived discrimination with national comparisons, 2013



Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013;  $p$  values from  $t$  tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests. Item: “Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.” Ratings were based on a four-point scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. Significant differences were observed between Seaver College and religious universities ( $p < .01$ ), and across ethnic groups ( $p < .001$ ). “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

Seaver College  $n = 505$ ; Private Universities  $n = 4,854$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 16,588$ .

Figure 7. Seaver College graduating seniors’ perceived discrimination by gender and ethnicity, 2013



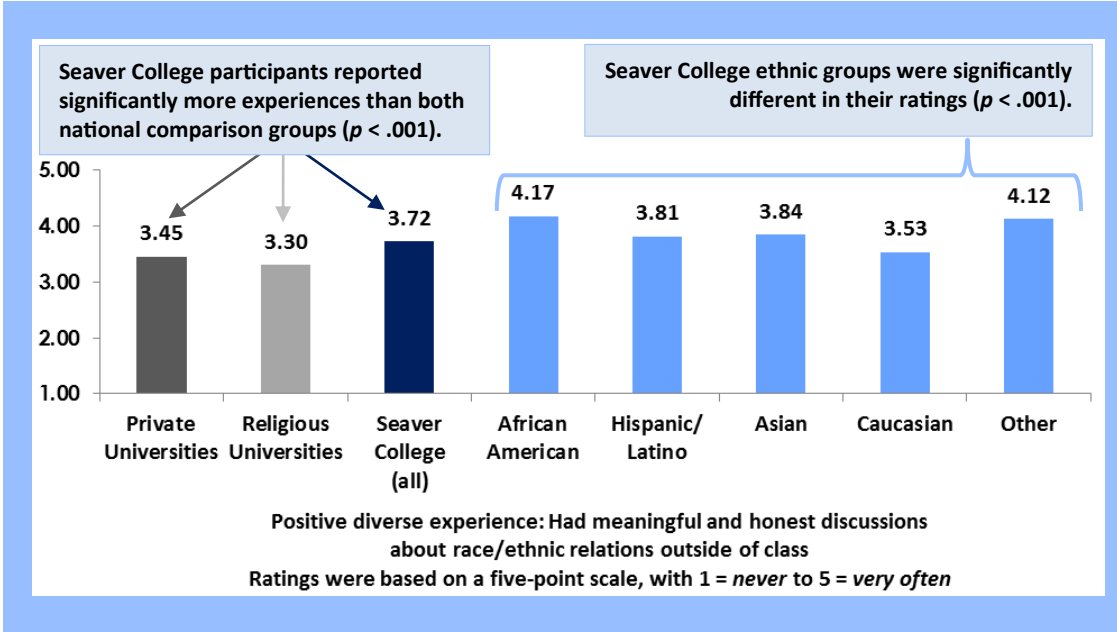
Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013;  $p$  values from Kruskal-Wallis tests. Item: “Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: I have felt discriminated against at this institution because of my race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.” Ratings were based on a four-point scale, with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. Significant differences were observed across ethnic groups for males ( $p < .01$ ) and females ( $p < .001$ ). No significant differences were observed for gender within each ethnic group. “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

$n = 505$  for Seaver College;  $n = 204$  for male participants;  $n = 301$  for female participants.



As stated earlier, interactions with individuals from different ethnic groups can have both positive and adverse impacts on a student. As an example of a positive experience, Seaver College participants reported significantly more “meaningful and honest discussions about race/ethnic relations outside of class” with individuals from an ethnicity other than their own than did participants in both national comparison groups and between Seaver College’s ethnic groups ( $p < .001$ ; Figure 8). Seaver College African American female participants reported significantly higher interactions ( $m = 4.80$ ) than did their male counterparts ( $m = 3.38$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and across the female ethnic groups ( $p < .001$ ; Figure 9). Ratings were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*.

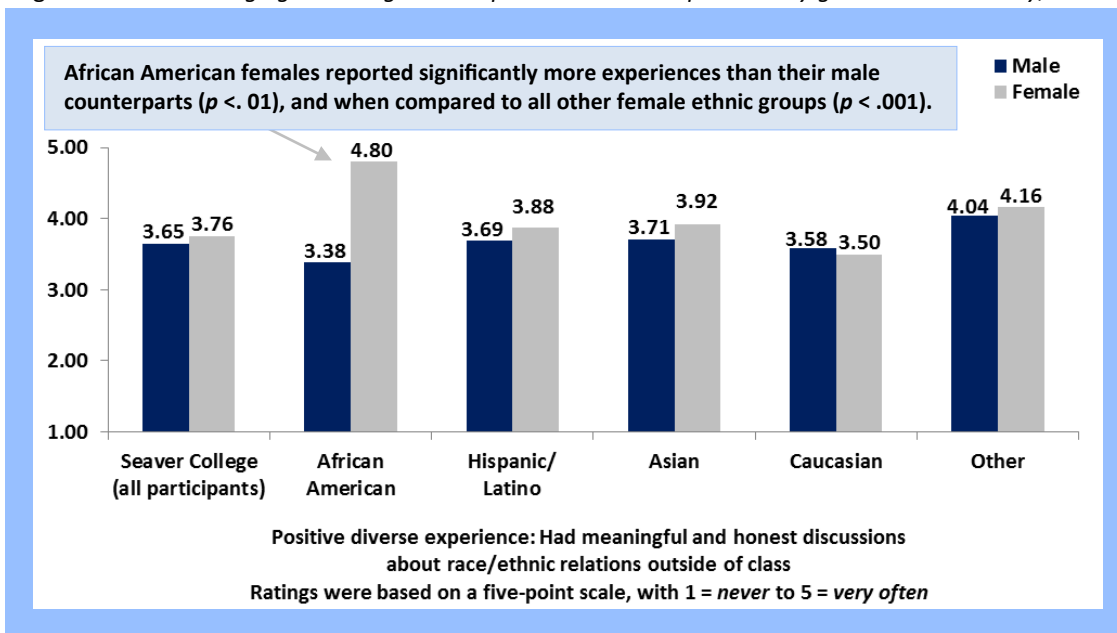
Figure 8. Seaver College graduating seniors’ positive diverse experience with national comparisons, 2013



Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013;  $p$  values from  $t$  tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests. Item: “To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?” Responses were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Significant differences were observed between Seaver College and both comparison national comparison groups ( $p < .001$ ), and between Seaver College ethnic groups ( $p < .001$ ). “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

Seaver College  $n = 506$ ; Private Universities  $n = 4,852$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 16,537$ .

Figure 9. Seaver College graduating seniors’ positive diverse experience by gender and ethnicity, 2013

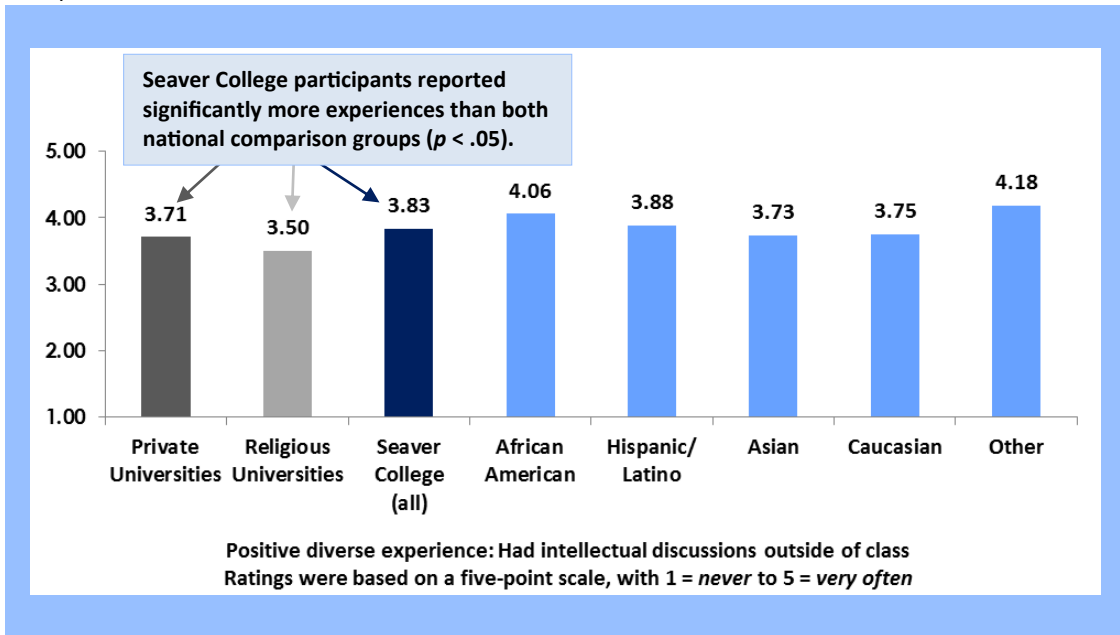


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, 2013;  $p$  values from Kruskal-Wallis and Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney tests. Item: “To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?” Responses were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Significant differences were observed across ethnic groups for female participants only ( $p < .001$ ), and within the African American ethnic group between genders ( $p < .01$ ). “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

$n = 506$  for Seaver College;  $n = 205$  for male participants;  $n = 301$  for female participants.

A similar trend was observed in regards to participants who reported having “intellectual discussions outside of class” with individuals from a different ethnicity other than their own. Reported levels from Seaver College participants were statistically significantly higher when compared to both national groups ( $p < .05$ ; Figure 10). Among the Seaver College sample, African American ( $m = 4.50$ ) and Asian ( $m = 3.88$ ) females reported significantly more discussions than did their male counterparts (African American males  $m = 3.50$ ; Asian male  $m = 3.48$ ;  $p < .05$  for both; Figure 11). Ratings were based on a five-point scale with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*.

Figure 10. Seaver College graduating seniors’ additional positive diverse experience with national comparisons, 2013

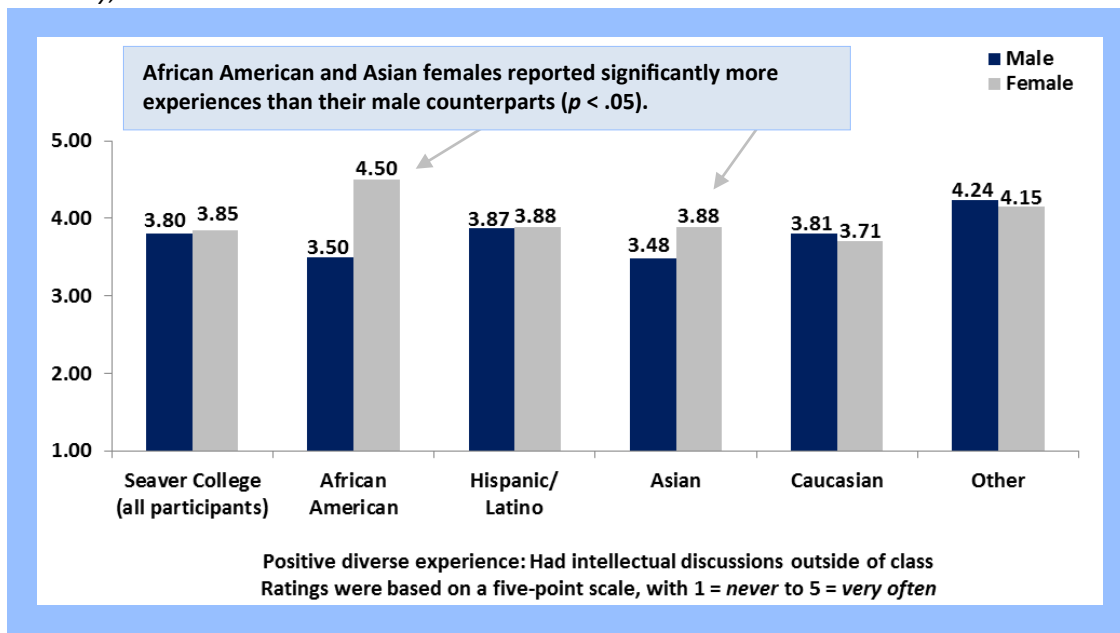


Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, Spring 2013.;  $p$  values from  $t$  tests. Item: “To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?” Responses were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Significant differences were observed between Seaver College and both comparison national comparison groups ( $p < .05$ ). No significant differences were observed between ethnic groups. “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

- Seaver College (all participants)
- Seaver College (ethnic groups)
- Private Universities (comparison)
- Religious Universities (comparison)

Seaver College  $n = 503$ ; Private Universities  $n = 4,836$ ; Religious Universities  $n = 16,483$ .

Figure 11. Seaver College graduating seniors’ additional positive diverse experience by gender and ethnicity, 2013



Source: CIRP College Senior Survey, 2013; PeopleSoft, 2013;  $p$  values from Kruskal-Wallis and Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney tests. Item: “To what extent have you experienced the following with students from a racial/ethnic group other than your own?” Responses were based on a five-point scale, with 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Significant differences were observed within genders for the African American and Asian ethnic groups ( $p < .05$  for both). No significant differences were observed across the ethnic groups. “Other” includes more than one ethnicity, American Indian, and other ethnicity. Data are based on Seaver College graduating seniors only, as reported in PeopleSoft.

$n = 503$  for Seaver College;  $n = 204$  for male participants;  $n = 299$  for female participants.

## CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of Seaver College's psychological diversity data revealed gender disparities within the ethnic groups, specifically for African American and Latino participants. This disparity highlights the importance of analyzing diversity metrics by ethnicity *and* gender, which allows for a more in-depth examination of how minority students (male and female) respond to questions related to diversity. These gender disparities are not discernible at the aggregate level.

Research clearly ties the educational benefits of diversity to higher education learning outcomes (Hurtado, 2007). Hurtado contends that a key impetus for linking diversity with an institution's educational goals is to better position the next generation of leaders to advance social progress. Faith-based institutions, moreover, often adhere to arguably higher standards due to their religious foundations. Thus, it is perhaps even more essential that such universities prepare future leaders who will not only advance social progress, but who will also engage in compassionate service and treat all individuals from different backgrounds equitably.

Reason (2009) stresses that in order for institutions to effectively address student persistence, the student peer environment must be considered. The psychological dimension of diversity provides a quantitative snapshot of Pepperdine students' college experiences and their perceptions of the campus climate; but, it is only one method. Follow-up assessments are needed in order to understand in more depth what students perceive to be institutional assets in regards to diversity, as well as areas of growth for the institution. As Reason (2009) further posits, institutions must know who their students are, and the constraints to engagement they face, in order to craft effective actions.

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