AMENA Task Force Final Report

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AMENA Task Force

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I.   INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2022, President Helldobler charged the Asian Middle Eastern North African (AMENA) Task force "to assess the needs and obstacles faced by this population of faculty, staff and students at WP." The Task Force was charged with providing recommendations in the form of a report to the Chief Diversity Officer that might help the AMENA population have a better sense of belonging, and to be successful here at William Paterson University.
Specifically, the AMENA Task was charged with:

● Assessing the needs and obstacles faced by the AMENA population of faculty, staff, and students
● Developing a list of benchmarks that the university should consider when measuring success with students and staff of this population
● Identifying and recommending successful programs or initiatives that the university should consider for improving student success for AMENA identified students, faculty and staff

The Task Force represents members of the university community, including faculty, students, administrators, and alumni: Dr. Rajender Kaur, Professor of English, and Director of the Global Asia Studies Program; Dr. Keumjae Park, Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice; Dr. Bahar Ashnai, Associate Professor of Marketing, Management and Professional Sales; Manmeet S. Kohli, Director of Hospitality Services, Aroob Abdelaziz, WPU Student Alumni, Hanifa Ahmed (undergraduate student); and Daniel Youn (undergraduate student).

II.   NOTES ON THE TERMINOLOGY

We wish to clarify the use of the term "AMENA" first. AMENA is a broad umbrella term and covers a very diverse population with affiliations with a vast region encompassing nearly 40% of the world's land mass. Very often, Asian and the MENA identities are distinguished in scholarly/policy literature, and hence, Asians/Asian-Americans and Middle Easterners/North Africans are often considered as distinctive groups in current U.S. racial discourse. Despite its breadth and diversity, AMENA groups have the common experience of being one of the most invisible groups on the WP campus.
For the purposes of this Task Force Report, we will use "Asian" to encompass both Asians and Asian Americans, and "MENA" to refer to both immigrant and U.S.-born people of Middle East and North African heritage. The histories and the daily life experiences of Asian and MENA populations are shaped by different racial stereotypes and patterns of discrimination. "Asian/Asian American" is already a blanket term that collapses a diverse group of over 40 ethnicities with very different histories of arrival in the United States. For instance, "South Asia" which often signposts "India," includes seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar (formerly Burma), Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka). Similarly, the "East Asian" label subsumes China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia, all very distinctive nations.
MENA (Middle-East and North Africa) in turn, is a similarly imprecise term for a complex demographic group. The Task Force recognizes that the term "Middle East" is Eurocentric in origin; it gestures to colonial cartography that collapsed a disparate and diverse region comprising different nationalities, ethnicities, and religions, intersecting three continents,

Europe, Asia, and Africa, into a flattened term. West Asia may be a geographically more accurate term for the "Middle East" but not everyone in this population identifies as "West Asian" either. Together with North Africa (Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Western Sahara occupied by Morocco), MENA is often identified as the Arab world, covering approximately 20+ countries. However, even this count varies by different definitions of the region used by institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, and the US Census Bureau. Census Bureau's shifting racial categorization has been inadequate particularly for the MENA population. Recently, for example, the 2020 US Census chose not to include Middle Easterners as a distinctive category, in spite of the mobilization to do so. As a result, Middle Eastern and North African groups continue to be forced to check off "White."

Despite distinctive experiences and histories, however, Asians and MENA students and faculty/staff on WP campus share a common invisibility as the smallest minority group on campus. By conducting this need assessment on the "AMENA" population as a whole in this report, we will highlight this common experience of marginalization, while our recommendations will also consider how to address the diversity within this population.

III.   METHODOLOGY

The Task Force committee utilized data from several sources to provide the state of AMENA members on campus.

Existing Institutional Data on Asian Students:
> With the help of the Institutional Effectiveness Office (Director, Dr. Sue Gerber), we obtained basic admission, enrollment, retention, and graduation data on "Asians." Because the university does not track Middle-Eastern and North African students as a category, there was no available enrollment data on students of Middle-Eastern and North African descent. This report will discuss this issue in the Recommendation section.

2020 HEDS Campus Climate Survey Results:
> The university conducted a comprehensive climate survey on diversity and inclusion in Spring 2020. The Climate survey included several variables relevant to the need assessment of the AMENA population, and had a demographic question on ethnic identities which included several identity categories within the AMENA population. We used relevant results from this climate survey in this report.

AMENA Task Force Student Surveys and Faculty/staff Surveys (Fall 2022):
> To address the lack of sufficient data on the Middle-East and North African, the task force decided to conduct its own survey. The data collection efforts were two-pronged: Surveys and student focus groups/interviews. We conducted the faculty/staff surveys via the university's faculty/staff email list, and separate student surveys via the student email list. Both surveys were conducted between 11/4/2022 and 11/16/2022.
> A total of 363 faculty, staff, and administrators participated in the faculty/staff survey (Referred to as "FS surveys" in this report). A total of 806 students responded to the student survey ("Student surveys"). While the total number of responses appears to be robust, we are unable to calculate the response rates at this time because we do not know

how many people are included in the global email lists. After eliminating incomplete surveys, we obtained a sample of 338 faculty and staff and 718 students.

Both survey instruments included close-ended questions and open-ended questions. Our questions focused on student experiences, perceived challenges, and recommendations for improvement and change to ensure the well-being of AMENA students, staff, and faculty.

Focus group and interview efforts:

Though the AMENA student surveys included some open-ended questions, we also conducted one additional focus group discussion with five AMENA identifying students. We also reached out to individual AMENA students in the committee members' personal networks and to the roster of Muslim Student Association for interviews, but were able to recruit only a few more students. The qualitative data from the focus group discussions and the ad hoc interviews are incorporated in the qualitative analysis part of the report.

Limitations of the data

Unfortunately, there are several limitations in the data we used in this report. Some of these are admittedly more critical than others. First, there is no data inclusive of all AMENA members in the university. The university only tracks the "Asian" category among its students. Hence, we do not have institutional data on Middle-East and North African students' academic performance, enrollment, and retention. The institutional data also do not disaggregate subgroups within the AMENA population (e.g., East Asians, South Asians, Middle-Easterners, etc.), so we were unable to come up with subgroup comparisons. We acknowledge that the university data reported here gives only a partial picture of AMENA student retention and enrollment.

While our survey included a relatively large number of respondents identifying as the AMENA group (69 faculty and staff, 181 students), we have no way of assessing whether our sample is representative of the population. Therefore, our discussions of the survey results should be considered as exploratory and illustrative, rather than conclusive.

One critical omission in this report is an analysis of gender. Our survey unintentionally omitted individual information on gender and sexuality, which was critical. We will rely on our benchmark research to model programs at other institutions addressing equity issues related to gender and sexuality. We attempted to ameliorate this void in our focus group discussions. But the few volunteers for our focus group and individual interviews were all women; therefore, we did not have a chance to compare the perspectives of students by gender and sexuality. As the university develops programming for this group, there may be a need to collect more feedback/data for diverse gender identities.

Benchmark Research

To find benchmark programs, we searched for relevant scholarly literature and searched for university web sites for information on programming. While there are universities offering separate programs and cultural centers for Asian/Asian American students and MENA/Arab American students, we found few university programs encompassing AMENA students as a

whole. The only benchmark for a combined program we found was at UC San Diego (APIMEDA Programs & Services), which we will highlight below.

We found that there is a larger body of literature on Asian college students than on MENA students. Centers and programs for Asian/Asian American students are widespread around the country. A common theme in the literature pertaining to campus climate assessments of Asian students is the erasure of diversity within the category. Asians are often neglected in universities' diversity and inclusion work because they are mistakenly assumed to have class privilege because of the pervasiveness of the "model minority" myth. However, Asians include a wide range of income and class backgrounds. While South Asian Indians, Filipinos, Japanese, and Chinese have higher levels of median income than the overall U.S. median, some South Asians and many groups of Southeastern heritage such as Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmongs lag well behind the U.S. median income. Similarly, racial experiences are different across different subgroups of the Asian community. Another critical lesson from the literature is that regardless of class, there is a persistence of racist remarks and hostile behaviors targeting Asians, which have been heightened further by skyrocketing anti-Asian violence since the COVID pandemic. (The highly publicized report from Stop AAPI Hate website reports 11,500 hate incidents between March 2020 and March 2022 alone. https://stopaapihate.org/year-2-report/).

The literature on MENA heritage students is considerably more limited than on Asian students. The few scholarly articles we located commonly point out the problem with categorizing MENA heritage students as "White," which has been the practice by the U.S. Census Bureau. Sheila Modir and Keating (2018) critique the paucity, and the difficulty of collecting data on the "Middle Eastern" population on campus given the contested and shifting constructions of race in the US. In addition, a study by Neda Maghbouleh, Ariela Schachter and René D. Flores (2022) finds that while the federal government officially recognizes people from many of the MENA countries as White, their lived experience is quite contrary to this categorization. Most individuals of the MENA demographic report not being perceived as White and, unlike Whites, they are constantly discriminated against.

In recent years, there has been a growing mobilization by MENA students on many campuses to demand visibility, cultural space, and programming. . For instance, at Yale University and the University of Illinois, campus spaces for MENA cultural center/Arab American cultural center have opened in recent years. Students are asking for a MENA cultural center at University of Maryland too. At Northwestern University, the active MENA student association has pushed for the Celebration of Arab American heritage month on campus. UC Davis, on the other hand, has a grouping of Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asians under their MENASA program https://menasa.ucdavis.edu/. In Michigan, where the nation's largest Arab community is located (Dearborn, MI), Central Michigan University began the celebration of Arab American Heritage Month because of student initiatives. University of Michigan Ann Arbor has a special welcome and connection program called SALAM for new MENA freshmen and transfer students. UM Ann Arbor's SALAM program is particularly interesting, as it involves special acclimation programs for new students to make connections with the existing Arab student community, learning about its history, and ways to get involved. The website states that its programming includes student panels and group activities. We think something like this can be integrated into our new student orientation programs and be sustained as student mentor programs after new students are acclimated into the campus.

While most universities we have looked at have more or less separate programs for Asian and MENA students, there is one notable university program encompassing the diverse population. As mentioned earlier in this section, UC San Diego has a unique program for APIMEDA (https://apimeda.ucsd.edu/). At UC San Diego which is one of few universities that has an Asian Pacific Islander Middle Eastern Desi American (APIMEDA) program, they state the importance of "community development, enhance coalition building with and within the APIMEDA students, staff and faculty, fostering greater visibility for the diversity within the APIMEDA community, and help students gain skills for success in their future careers. APIMEDA Programs and Services serves students from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups that make up the Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Southwest Asian North African American communities." In order to ensure the success of APIMEDA students, faculty and staff, they recommend the following initiatives as good practices: a APIMEDA Community Forum, a set weekly APIMEDA community time, an APIMEDA newsletter, and a series of workshops/lectures called "Sharing Our Invisible Histories." Similarly, UC Davis has a MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian) program that "aims to create spaces for MENASA students to come together to create community, celebrate their cultural /religious diversity, as well as provide academic and social support to students." Part of MENASA's mission is to "advocate and educate the UC Davis community about the various historical, cultural, political, and religious dynamics that shape the experiences of our Middle Eastern/North African/South Asian students on campus and alternatively try to provide students the support necessary to flourish academically and professionally in a supportive environment."

Another benchmark suggested by Nguyen, M. H., Chan, J., Nguyen, B. M. D., & Teranishi, R. T. (2018) is the need to examine disaggregated data of the various sub groups that make up AMENA, "as aggregate data may lead to erroneous conclusions that AAP/(MENA) students are academically successful, well-adjusted, and satisfied with their college experiences—a rationale often used to exclude AAPIs/(AMENA) from campus conversations regarding diversity, ethnic representation, and racial climate.

Insights from the literature and other university programs will inform our recommendations in this report.

IV.   FINDINGS FROM DATA

The various data sources we have incorporated include both quantitative and qualitative data. In this section, we will first discuss *quantitative* data from the University Factbook, HEDS 2020 Campus Climate Survey Report, and AMENA Task Force's 2022 Surveys. The second half of the section will discuss *qualitative* data from the open-ended question in the AMENA Task Force Surveys as well as student focus group discussions and ad hoc interviews.

Quantitative Data on Students

University Factbook Data: Asian Student Enrollment and Retention

All institutional data in this section on Asian students are from the 2022-2023 University Fact Book available at the WP University webpage. As discussed above, the university does not track "Middle Eastern/West Asian" as a separate category. Here, we will draw upon data on the "Asian" category to shed light on *a segment* of AMENA students. According to the Fact Book

2022-2023, the total number of Asian students enrolled in the university in Fall 2022, Asian students account for 8% of all full-time students both undergraduate and graduate levels. The Pie chart below (Fig. 1.1) shows the distribution of Asian students by college in Fall 2022. About half of Asian students at the university are in the College of Science and Health (50%). In addition, according to the University Fact Book, the proportion of Asian students among full-time undergraduate students has increased slightly after having remained constant at 7% over the years, but part-time undergraduate Asian students have increased from 6% in Fall 2018 to 10% in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022.

Table 1.1 Enrolled Students by Ethnicity 2018-2022

Ethnicity	Fall 2018		Fall 2019		Fall 2020		Fall 2021		Fall 2022	
	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct	Count	Pct
Asian	611	7%	602	7%	577	7%	562	8%	510	8%
Black	1602	18%	1629	19%	1533	19%	1334	18%	1253	19%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5	0%	5	0%	8	0%	9	0%	8	0%
Hispanic	2811	32%	2810	33%	2681	34%	2446	34%	2238	34%
Multi-Racial	258	3%	267	3%	254	3%	218	3%	188	3%
Native American	12	0%	13	0%	9	0%	8	0%	3	0%
White	3229	37%	3043	35%	2757	35%	2455	34%	2192	33%
International	42	0%	49	1%	55	1%	95	1%	103	2%
Unknown	165	2%	187	2%	97	1%	92	1%	109	2%
Total	8735	100%	8605	100%	7971	100%	7219	100%	6604	100%

Figure 1.1 Distribution of Asian Students by College, Fall 2022
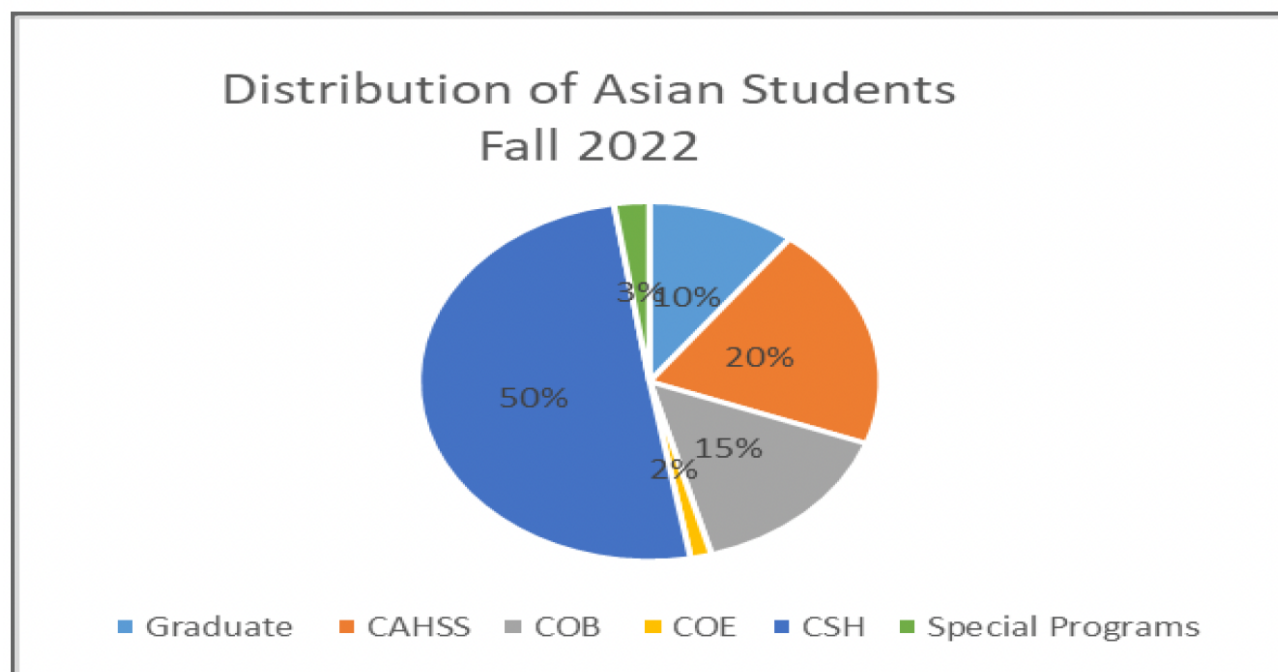
Next, we looked at admissions data. There has been a slight downward trend in the yield rates among accepted Asian students since Fall 2019, but the decline (8% from the peak) appears to be less than among Blacks (13%), and Hispanics (10%), and similar to Whites (8%). Table 1.2 shows the admissions funnel data in the past 5 years for undergraduate first-time students.

Table 1.2. University Fact Book Data on Admissions Funnel for 2018-2022
(Undergraduate First-time)

	Entering Semester	Completed Applications	Accepted Applications	Enrolled	Accept %	Yield %
First-Time in College						
Asian	Fall 2018	572	560	92	98%	16%
	Fall 2019	570	553	99	97%	18%
	Fall 2020	621	593	89	95%	15%
	Fall 2021	502	490	64	98%	13%
	Fall 2022	510	489	51	96%	10%
Black	Fall 2018	2,103	1,765	451	84%	26%
	Fall 2019	2,622	2,204	428	84%	19%
	Fall 2020	2,585	2,134	310	83%	15%
	Fall 2021	2,176	1,924	227	88%	12%
	Fall 2022	1,818	1,538	205	85%	13%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Fall 2018	3	3	0	100%	0%
	Fall 2019	2	2	2	100%	100%
	Fall 2020	10	10	4	100%	40%
	Fall 2021	6	6	2	100%	33%
	Fall 2022	6	6	2	100%	33%
Hispanic	Fall 2018	2,855	2,722	611	95%	22%
	Fall 2019	3,349	3,108	550	93%	18%
	Fall 2020	3,429	3,170	448	92%	14%
	Fall 2021	2,941	2,797	392	95%	14%
	Fall 2022	2,615	2,447	299	94%	12%
Multi-Racial	Fall 2018	275	261	65	95%	25%
	Fall 2019	281	253	49	90%	19%
	Fall 2020	289	259	45	90%	17%
	Fall 2021	200	190	22	95%	12%
	Fall 2022	48	42	11	88%	26%
Native American	Fall 2018	9	9	1	100%	11%
	Fall 2019	12	12	3	100%	25%
	Fall 2020	6	6	0	100%	0%
	Fall 2021	5	5	1	100%	20%
	Fall 2022	10	10	0	100%	0%
White	Fall 2018	2,226	2,189	469	98%	21%
	Fall 2019	2,320	2,262	383	98%	17%
	Fall 2020	2,107	2,037	344	97%	17%
	Fall 2021	1,996	1,949	257	98%	13%
	Fall 2022	1,607	1,561	199	97%	13%
International	Fall 2018	39	38	5	97%	13%
	Fall 2019	55	45	8	82%	18%
	Fall 2020	108	100	5	93%	5%
	Fall 2021	138	128	18	93%	14%
	Fall 2022	56	49	8	88%	16%
Unknown	Fall 2018	68	59	10	87%	17%
	Fall 2019	129	115	15	89%	13%
	Fall 2020	154	135	18	88%	13%
	Fall 2021	162	149	13	92%	9%
	Fall 2022	393	323	31	82%	10%

Graduate student admission data show a different trend. Enrollment among Asian students in graduate programs has increased in number as shown in Table 1.3. This is consistent with other race/ethnicity groups at WP (Table 1.4).

Table 1.3. Admissions Funnel for 2018-2022 (Graduate, Asians Only)

Term	Completed App	Admitted	Enrolled	Acceptance Rate	Yield
Fall 2018	81	62	40	77%	65%
Fall 2019	84	58	40	69%	69%
Fall 2020	111	84	48	76%	57%
Fall 2021	196	142	94	72%	66%
Fall 2022	206	148	87	72%	59%

Table 1.4 Admissions Funnel for 2018-2022 (Graduate, All Races)

| Term	Completed App	Admitted	Enrolled	Acceptance Rate	Yield
Fall 2018	1366	951	659	70%	69%
Fall 2019	1313	978	663	74%	68%
Fall 2020	1457	1188	774	82%	65%
Fall 2021	2102	1550	946	74%	61%
Fall 2022	2127	1683	1038	79%	62%

Next, Table 2.1 shows Asian students' retention data. Asian students' 4-year graduation rates in 2009 were 25% but improved somewhat recently, as shown in the table. In the most recent three cohorts, the 4-year graduation rates were 48% (2016), 38% (2017), and 46% (2018). The 6-year graduation rates for the most recent 3 years were 69% (2014), 63% (2015) and 63% (2-16). The 4-year graduation rates are higher for female Asian students than male Asian students (Fig. 2.1).

Table 2.1 Asian Students Retention and Graduation Rates All Colleges

Cohort	N	% Retn Yr1	% Retn Yr2	% Retn Yr3	% Retn Yr4	% Grad Yr4	% Grad Yr6
⊞ Fall 2009	111	85%	72%	65%	39%	25%	60%
⊞ Fall 2010	125	85%	71%	64%	35%	27%	54%
⊞ Fall 2011	115	88%	77%	76%	30%	42%	67%
⊞ Fall 2012	92	74%	67%	66%	32%	34%	62%
⊞ Fall 2013	113	74%	69%	59%	32%	27%	55%
⊞ Fall 2014	104	85%	73%	73%	26%	46%	69%
⊞ Fall 2015	109	81%	71%	69%	30%	39%	63%
⊞ Fall 2016	115	83%	71%	69%	20%	48%	63%
⊞ Fall 2017	99	81%	69%	62%	25%	38%	0%
⊞ Fall 2018	92	85%	77%	76%	27%	46%	0%
⊞ Fall 2019	101	85%	74%	68%	0%	0%	0%
⊞ Fall 2020	93	80%	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%
⊞ Fall 2021	66	80%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
⊞ Fall 2022	53	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	1388	79%	65%	57%	23%	29%	39%

Figure 2.1 Asian Students' 4-year Graduation Rates by Gender
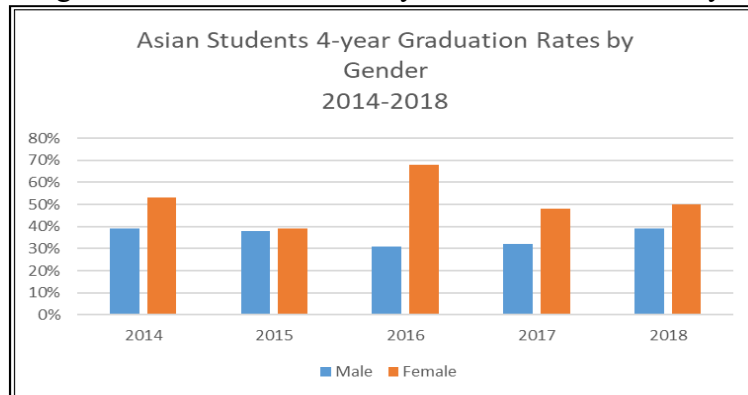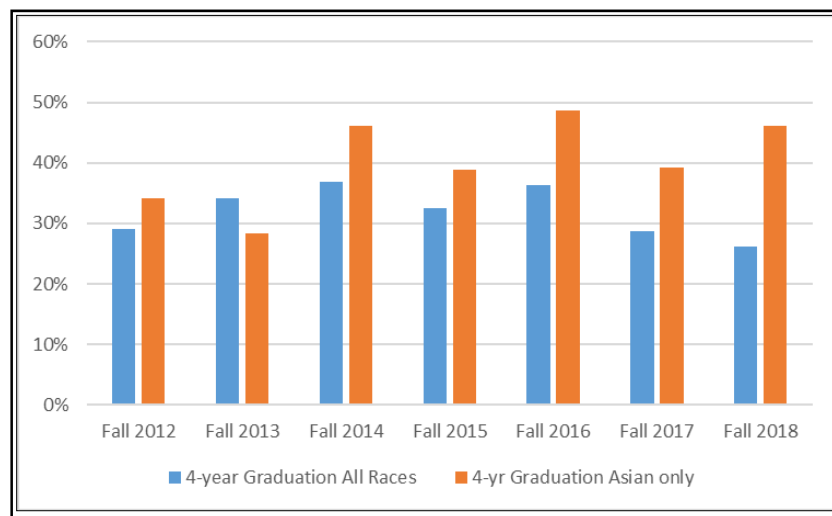
To understand where these graduation rates fare, we need to compare them with the university's general population. Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3 show Asian students' graduation rates in comparison with all races. Asian students' 4-year graduation and 6-year rates have been higher than the overall student body with the exception of 2013. It is noteworthy that WP Asian students' 6-year graduation rates are also far higher than the national average of 46% (Department of Education. 2016). As it is the case with other racial groups, Asian female students graduated at a higher rate consistently as compared to Asian male students.

Figure 2.2   4-Year Graduation Rate All Races vs. Asians

Figure 2.3   6-year Graduation Rates All Races vs. Asians
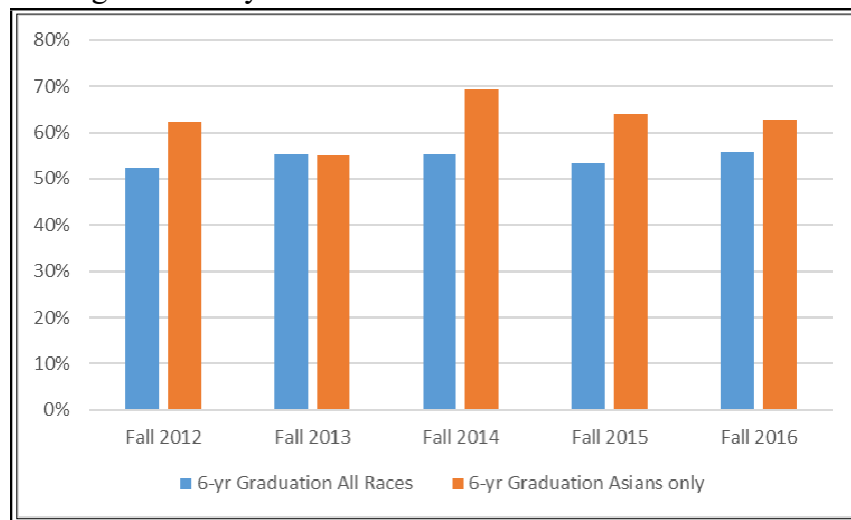
In summary, institutional data on enrollment, retention, and graduation show that the proportion of Asian students has increased in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022, and the number of Asian student enrollment in graduate programs has also increased. Asian students' graduation rates are higher than the general student population at WP, and among Asian students, female students tend to show higher graduation rates than male students. The largest percent of Asian students are in the College of Science and Health.

A critical limitation of the institutional data is the omission of Middle Eastern and North African students. As the Task Force's surveys will show below, Middle Eastern students are a sizable segment of the AMENA student body and yet we have not had institutional tracking on these students. Hence, we will make a recommendation to create the MENA category in the institutional data collection and begin to track the MENA student population.

HEDS DE Campus Climate Survey Results: Students and Faculty/Staff Combined

During Spring 2020, William Paterson University conducted a comprehensive Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey using the instrument designed by The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS). The survey instrument included many measures for diversity and equity as well as for a general sense of belonging and experiences of discrimination among the members of WP's campus. The survey instrument used a 5-point scale, with 1=Very dissatisfied, 2=Generally dissatisfied, 3=Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, 4=Generally satisfied, and 5=Very satisfied. This section summarizes relevant results from the tabulated data.

The survey included an ethnicity question which included "Asian," "Asian American," "Middle Eastern," "South Asian," and "Southeast Asian." While this question does not disaggregate the "African" category and also omits "East Asian" as a category, we will use this variable as a reasonable proxy to represent much of the AMENA population in the university. The caveat is that the survey allowed respondents to check off multiple identity categories, and therefore there is likely some overlap between categories. For the purpose of our report, we will look at the results for "Asian" "Asian American" "Middle Eastern" "South Asian" and "Southeast Asian" respondents in the climate survey. We excluded "African" because North Africans are likely to be only a small segment of the "African" identifying groups. Furthermore, much of the "African" population is likely to be covered by the work of Black population task force.

As a short-hand summary, the Climate Survey found that, in general, there were no significant differences between the views of WP members and in other medium and large size institutions with regard to campus climate for diversity and equity and institutional support for diversity and equity. (The only minor exception were WP graduate students who had more positive views on institutional support than students in other institutions) There was also no statistically significant difference between WP members and other institutions with regard to negative experiences. (HEDS 2020, Tab 3)

Our summary, shown in Table 3.1, is the combined results for AMENA faculty/staff and AMENA students' responses, as the Climate Survey Report does not provide separate tabulations for faculty/staff and students on these variables.

Table 3.1 Responses to Select DEI Questions by AMENA Subgroup

	Column 1 Satisfied with Overall Diversity & Equity Indicator (Scale 1-5)	Column 2 Satisfied with Institutional Support for Diversity & Equity (Scale 1-5)	Column 3 Likely Heard Disparaging Remarks (Scale 1-5)	Column 4 Experienced Discrimination Harassment (Percent "Yes")

Asian	3.96*	3.79*	1.94*	11%*
Asian American	3.8*	3.81*	1.9 -*	8%*
Middle Eastern	4.08*	4.10*	1.59 -*	6%*
South Asian	3.78*	3.61*	2.1*	17%*
Southeast Asian	3.67	3.86	1.9	11%

 * Positive difference ("more likely") with other institutions
-* Negative difference ("less likely") with other institutions
No asterisk- No comparison possible with other institutions due to the small sample size.

As shown in Column 1 and 2, with regard to overall campus climate on diversity and equity, AMENA groups together had a similar or "small *positive* difference" with large size institutions and "large *positive* difference" with small institutions. This means that our AMENA students and faculty/staff, compared to other institutions, are likely to have positive perceptions of the DEI climate at WP campus. (HEDS 2020, Tab 5). With regard to institutional support for diversity and equity, AMENA groups generally had a similar or "medium *positive* difference" with large size institutions, and "large *positive* difference" with small institutions (HEDS 2020, Tab 6).

AMENA groups at WP are more likely to hear intensive or disparaging remarks than those at other institutions. However, there were subgroup differences in the results as shown in Column 4. "Asian Americans" and "Middle Eastern" members at WP are less likely to hear disparaging remarks than those at large institutions ("medium difference"), and compared to small institutions, much less likely to hear negative remarks ("large difference"). On the other hand, "Asians" and "South Asians" indicated that they hear disparaging remarks slightly more often than peers at larger institutions ("small difference") and similarly or less, compared to small institutions (HEDS 2020, Tab 7). Southeast Asian members' responses were not statistically different from those at larger or small institutions.

AMENA members at WP are less likely to experience discrimination and harassment compared to peers at other institutions (Column 4). To the question "Have you ever been discriminated against, or harassed on WP campus, at an off-campus residence, or at an off-campus program/event affiliated with WP," 11% of Asian, 8% of Asian American, 6% of Middle Eastern, 17% of South Asian, and 11% of Southeast Asian responded "yes." These percentages are *lower* than those at larger and smaller other institutions. In particular, Middle Eastern members and Asian American identifying members at WP are less likely to experience discrimination and harassment compared to other institutions at "medium" or "large" level (HEDS 2020, Tab 8). As stated earlier, the HEDS report did not provide us with disaggregated data on these variables by gender. As a result, we do not have specific information on the experience of women and gender non-binary members of AMENA subgroups.

HEDS data show that AMENA groups are generally comfortable with interacting with people of other races/ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and religion. To the question, "How comfortable are you interacting with people of other race/ethnicity," between 89% and 100% of the AMENA members answered "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable." With regard to interacting with people of other socioeconomic backgrounds, between 90%-96% of the
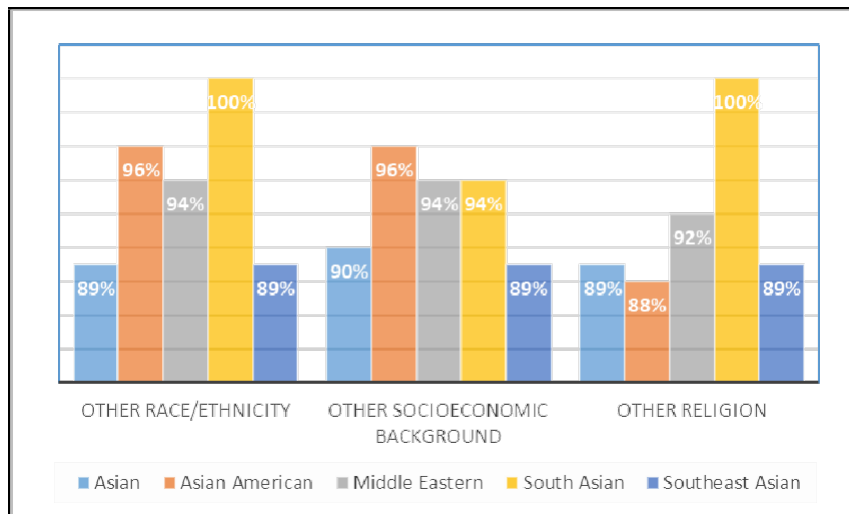
AMENA members answered "very comfortable" or "somewhat comfortable." AMENA group members predominantly answered they are comfortable interacting with people of other religions, ranging from 88% to 100%. (Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1 Comfort Level Interacting with Others by AMENA Subgroup

In summary, the 2020 HEDS Climate Survey data indicates that AMENA members of the University, including students and faculty/staff, are likely to have more positive views on diversity and equity climate at the institution, compared to other institutions of higher education. They are also less likely to have heard disparaging remarks, but there were some differences between subgroups; while Middle Eastern members at WP are much less likely to hear disparaging remarks than those at large institutions, Asians and South Asians indicated that they hear disparaging remarks slightly more than peers at larger institutions. AMENA members at WP are also less likely to have experienced harassment and discrimination than their peers at other institutions; In particular, Middle Eastern members and Asian American- identifying members at WP are much less likely to experience discrimination and harassment compared to other institutions. These paint a generally positive campus climate for the AMENA population, but there are some nuanced differences between subgroups which may deserve institutional attention.

AMENA Task Force Student Survey Findings

Given below is a summary of the findings from the original surveys the AMENA Task Force administered in Fall 2022. A total of 718 students and 339 faculty/staff participated respectively in the survey. We report student surveys and faculty/staff surveys in different subsections.

A.   Demographics of the AMENA Students

Of the 718 students who responded to the AMENA surveys, 181 students, or 25.2% of the sample, checked off the various ethnic and regional identities of the AMENA population. The distribution of the AMENA subgroups among these 181 students are shown in Figure 4.1.

As shown in Fig. 4.1, Middle Eastern/West Asians were the largest group among AMENA respondents. Based on these proportions, we can estimate that Middle-Eastern students are likely to be the largest subgroup among AMENA students followed by Southeast Asian students.

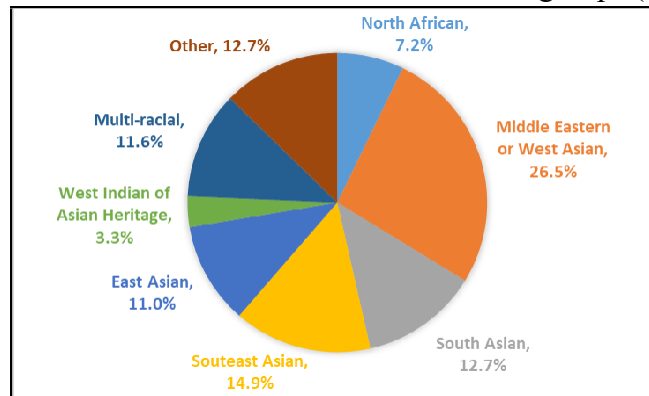Figure 4.1 Distribution of AMENA Student Subgroups (N=181)

Figure 4.2 and 4.3 show the distribution of cohort and residential types of AMENA students. There were more seniors than other cohorts (Figure 4.2). There were far more commuters among AMENA students than residential students in the sample (Figure 4.3). While 63.1% of non-AMENA students reported they were commuters, 68.3% of AMENA students were commuters; this difference was statistically significant ($p<05$), meaning AMENA students are more likely to be commuters than non-AMENA students.
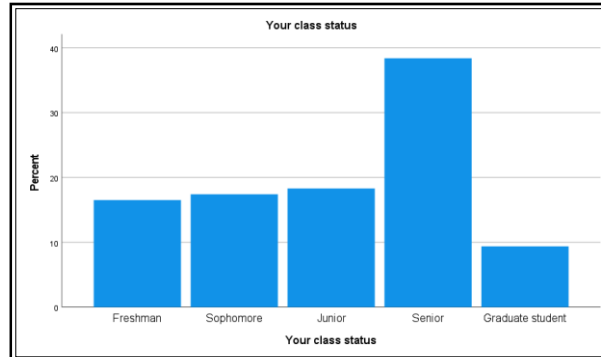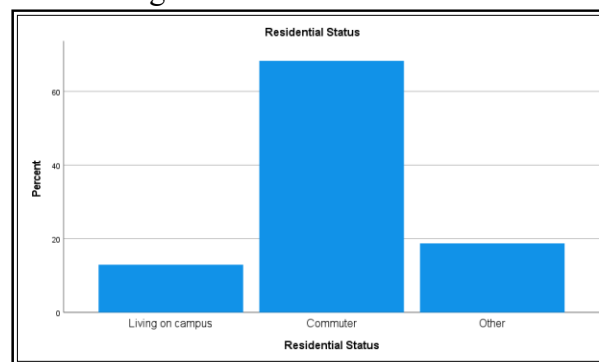
Figure. 4.2. Distribution of Cohorts

Figure 4.3 Residential Status
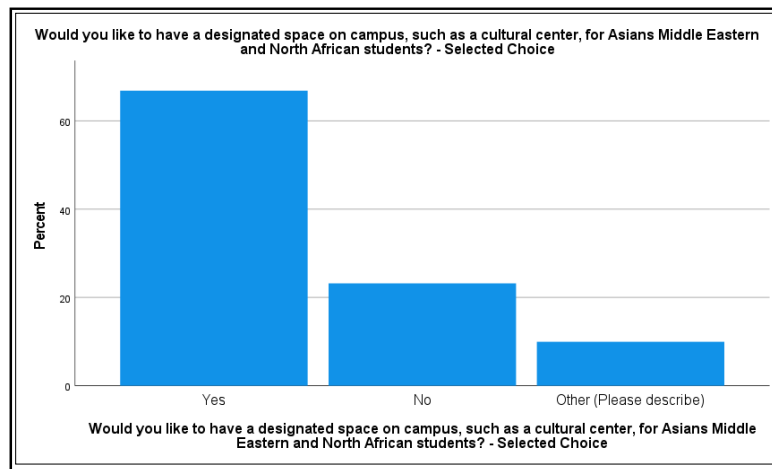
B.   Experiences on Campus

The survey included a series of questions to measure experience of discrimination, sense of belonging and possible obstacles and challenges. These questions are measured using a 5- point scale, with 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. We believed that it was important to compare AMENA students' responses to those of non-AMENA students, and therefore performed statistical significance tests (t-test) between AMENA and non-AMENA students. *The findings indicate that AMENA students are more likely to feel being treated unfairly and discriminated against, compared to non-AMENA students at a statistically significant level* (p<.05). Table 4.1 summaries the responses from a series of relevant questions to this theme.

In this survey, discrimination was measured by the question, "Have you ever been discriminated against or harassed because of your race/ethnicity, on the WP campus or at an off-campus university event?" While the overall respondents generally disagree with this statement (Mean=1.92), there was a statistically meaningful difference (p<.001) between the mean score for AMENA students (2.25) and for non-AMENA students (1.73). *This means that AMENA students are more likely to agree they have been discriminated against than non-AMENA students. AMENA students are also less likely to feel that their voices are heard* (Table 4.1).

They are less likely to believe they are treated fairly by faculty/staff and by other students. They are less likely to feel supported. For these important DEI measures, there were significant differences between AMENA students and non-AMENA students at .05 level. (The only question that was not statistically significant at .05 level of confidence was the question "I feel a strong sense of belonging in WP," but this question could be considered significant at a less rigorous threshold, at .10 level). For the purpose of assessing the campus climate specific to AMENA students' experiences, Table 4.1 summarizes these critical findings.

Table 4.1 Comparison of DEI Experiences between Non-AMENA and AMENA Students

Question	Non-AMENA	AMENA	Statistical Significance (p<.05)
Have you ever been discriminated against or harassed because of your race/ethnicity, on the WP campus or at an off-campus university event?	1.73	2.25	Yes (p<.001)
I feel a strong sense of belonging in William Paterson University.	3.64	3.48	Yes (p<.10)
I feel that my voice is heard at WP.	3.45	3.25	Yes (p<.05)
I am treated fairly and without bias by faculty and staff.	4.01	3.75	Yes (p<.01)
I am treated fairly and without bias by other students.	3.99	3.74	Yes (p<.01)
I feel well supported at William Paterson University	3.79	3.61	Yes (p<.05)

Would you like to have a designated space on campus, such as a cultural center, for Asians Middle Eastern and North African students? - Selected Choice

We also wanted to know whether there were differences among different subgroups within AMENA students. We performed One-way ANOVA tests for this purpose, but none of the tests resulted in statistically significant differences. *Therefore, we conclude that there is no statistically meaningful difference across the subgroups within AMENA population* (Table 4.2)

Table 4.2 Differences in Experiences among Subgroups within the AMENA Students

Question	Statistical Sig. (One-way ANOVA)
Have you ever been discriminated against or harassed because of your race/ ethnicity, on the WP campus or at an off-campus university event?	No (p=.30)
I feel a strong sense of belonging in William Paterson University.	No (p=.84)
I feel that my voice is heard at WP.	No (p=.83)
I am treated fairly and without bias by faculty and staff.	No (p=.92)
I am treated fairly and without bias by other students.	No (p=.96)
I feel well supported at William Paterson University	No (p=.83)
Do you feel that all community members experience a sense of belonging or community at William Paterson University?	No (p=.86)

In addition, we asked AMENA students whether they would like to see a designated space for AMENA students. We found strong support for this. *Sixty-seven percent of the AMENA respondents replied "yes" to the question "Would you like to have a designated space on campus, such as a cultural center, for AMENA students?"* (Figure 4.4)

Figure. 4.4. Support for a Designated Space

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In summary, our survey results gave us important indication that AMENA students are more likely to be treated unfairly and discriminated against, compared to non-AMENA students. They also think their voices are not heard. These critical findings call for the attention of the university leadership and inform the university's policies and programs, including but not limited to, physical spaces for AMENA students for which the survey indicated a strong support.

Quantitative Data on Faculty/Staff

University Factbook Data: Asian Faculty/staff

The university does not have a category for Middle Eastern and North African employees. As a result, we do not have combined statistics for AMENA faculty/staff. University Factbook 2022, however, has data on "Asian" employees (Table 5.1). As of Fall 2022, Asian employees are 9% of the university's staff. Of these, 64% (or 54 persons) are instructional faculty. This is a decrease from 79 Asian instructional faculty in Fall 2018 (WP Factbook 2022). As a result, the overall percentage of Asian employees has decreased from 10% to 9%.

Table 5.1 WP Employee Demographics

Full Time Employees by Ethnicity*

|	Fall 2018		Fall 2019		Fall 2020		Fall 2021		Fall 2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asian	110	10%	110	10%	106	10%	105	10%	84	9%
Black	179	16%	176	16%	173	16%	156	15%	134	15%
Hispanic	161	14%	166	15%	167	15%	156	15%	137	15%
Multi-racial	17	1%	18	2%	17	2%	15	1%	12	1%
Native American	3	0%	3	0%	3	0%	3	0%	3	0%
White	651	57%	631	56%	612	56%	555	55%	507	57%
Non-resident	6	1%	5	0%	7	1%	4	0%	2	0%
Other/unknown	11	1%	10	1%	11	1%	13	1%	12	1%
Total	**1138**	**100%**	**1119**	**100%**	**1096**	**100%**	**1007**	**100%**	**891**	**100%**

The HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey Results

The HEDS Report combined results for all members of the community (faculty/staff and students). The results from the Campus Climate Survey are discussed in the previous section on AMENA students. Please refer to page 10 of this report.

AMENA Task Force Faculty/Staff Survey Findings

A.   Demographic Information

A total of 339 faculty, staff, and administrators responded to the Fall 2022 surveys conducted by the Task Force. Of these, 69 respondents, or 20.3% checked off the various ethnic and regional identities of the AMENA population. AMENA faculty and staff are likely to have served the university for a long time. For example, those who served in the university for more than 15 years were 33.3% of the AMENA respondents. Additional 30.4% stated they served for
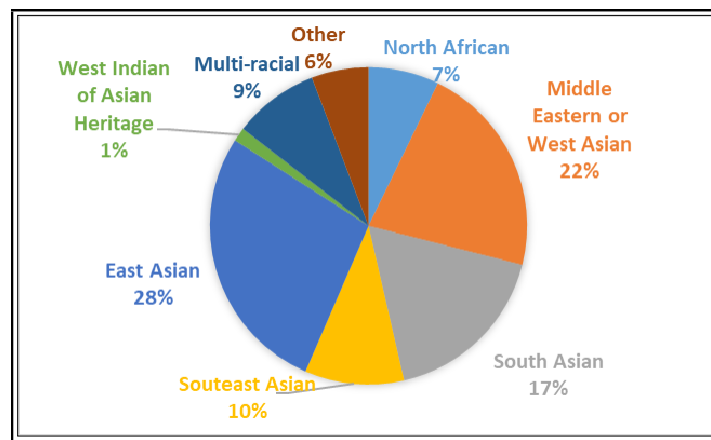
7-15 years. In terms of the roles they serve, 32.2% of the AMENA respondents were full-time faculty, 33.7% were part-time faculty, 1.2% were Librarians, 21.9% were Staff, 5.6% were Administrators, and 5.3% checked off "Other."

The regional subgroup distributions are shown in Figure 5.3. The largest group was East Asians (28%) followed by Middle Eastern or West Asians (22%), South Asians (17%), and Southeast Asians (10%). (With additional examination, we found that the proportion of Middle Eastern/Western Asians was influenced by a large percentage of part-time faculty, compared to other subgroups.)

Figure 5.2 Distribution of AMENA Faculty/Staff Subgroups (N=69)

B. Experiences of AMENA Faculty and Staff

We asked a series of questions regarding perception of the community, satisfaction with the work environment, and fair treatment of all respondents and then performed statistical tests to compare non-AMENA and AMENA members' experiences and views. These questions were measured using a 5-point scale, with 1=strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither disagree nor agree, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree. Table 5.1 summaries the responses from a series of relevant questions to this theme.

As a global measure for WP as a community, we asked "Do you feel that all community members experience a sense of belonging or community at William Paterson University?" The mean scores were 2.91 for non-AMENA and 3.05 for AMENA respondents respectively. However the difference is not statistically significant (p>.05).

In order to measure faculty and staff's perception of the overall work environment, we asked the question, "Are you satisfied with your current work environment at WP?" By and large, faculty/staff responded "neither agree nor disagree" on the job satisfaction question (Mean=3.17). The mean scores for non-AMENA and AMENA faculty/staff were 3.18 and 3.00 respectively. However, this difference was not statistically significant according to the T-test (p=.307).

Just as in the Student Surveys, our Faculty/Staff Surveys also included a series of questions to measure fair treatment. These questions were asked to all respondents, and we compared the responses by non-AMENA and AMENA members. Overall, the item with the highest mean score overall was peer support ("I am well-supported by my colleagues and co-

workers") and the item with the lowest mean score was being valued by the administration ("I am valued and appreciated by the administration").

To compare AMENA faculty/staff experiences and views of non-AMENA members, we performed statistical tests for the difference of the mean scores. The findings indicate that there was no statistically significant difference in AMENA faculty/staff's responses and non-AMENA members' with an exception of one notable item; responses to the question, "students treat me fairly without biases" showed a significant difference between AMENA and non-AMENA faculty/ staff, whereby AMENA faculty/staff felt they were treated unfairly by students. We recognize that this is an important finding, especially in relation to AMENA faculty members' experiences in the classroom.

Table 5.1 Comparison of DEI Experiences between Non-AMENA and AMENA Faculty/Staff

Question	Non-AMENA	AMENA	Statistical Significance (p<.05)
Are you satisfied with your current work environment at WP?	3.18	3.00	No (p.=.307)
have a strong sense of belonging in William Paterson University.	3.29	3.27	No (p.=.906)
I am well-supported by my colleagues/co-workers at William Paterson University.	3.76	3.58	No (p.=.218)
Students treat me fairly without biases.	3.92	3.65	Yes (p.=.036)
I feel I am valued and appreciated by the administration.	2.86	2.81	No (p.=.782)
My voices are heard and respected in my department/office/ unit.	3.70	3.67	No (p.=.814)

We further wanted to know whether there were differences in the experiences and perceptions among different subgroups within AMENA faculty and staff. We performed a One-way ANOVA tests for this purpose, but none of the tests resulted in statistically significant differences (Table 5.2). *Therefore, we conclude that there is no statistically meaningful difference in the experiences and perceptions across AMENA subgroup members of the university.*

Table 5.2 Comparisons of Experiences among Subgroups within AMENA Faculty/Staff

Question	Significance (One-way ANOVA)
Are you satisfied with your current work environment at WP?	No (p=.50)
have a strong sense of belonging in William Paterson University.	No (p=.81)
I am well-supported by my colleagues/co-workers at William Paterson University.	No (p=.24)
Students treat me fairly without biases.	No (p=.57)
I feel I am valued and appreciated by the administration.	No (p=.78)
My voices are heard and respected in my department/office/unit.	No (p=.46)
I have been treated unfairly because I am AMENA	No (p=.51)
My racial/ethnic identity has negatively affected evaluation of my work performance	No (p=.78)

In summary, The Task Force's Faculty/Staff Survey results indicate that AMENA faculty/staff members are less likely to be treated fairly and without biases by students. This finding raises questions about student evaluations of AMENA faculty, and classroom dynamics in courses taught by AMENA faculty, which we will revisit in the recommendation section. On the other hand, AMENA faculty/staff generally had similar reactions to the overall climate on work conditions and fair treatment with non-AMENA faculty/staff. .

Qualitative Data

Qualitative Data from Student Survey and Focus Group

The qualitative analysis is based largely on comments and answers to open-ended questions included in the Task Force's own surveys administered in Fall 2022 to Faculty/Staff and Students. In addition, we conducted a student focus group with 6 AMENA identifying students. We tried hard to organize more focus groups, but student responses to our numerous outreach efforts were low unfortunately. The analysis in this section is based largely on the surveys, the focus group discussion, and individual interviews we were able to conduct.

Despite the monolithic umbrella term that seeks to encapsulate a very diverse demographic group with different stories of arrival and belonging in the US, there were a few common themes we identified in the surveys. Below, we summarize 3 themes: AMENA students' campus life experience at WPU, their perception of the challenges they face in feeling an integral and valued part of the campus community, and their recommendations for improving their sense of belonging and aiding their success.

A.   Experience of Campus Life at WP

Our first question of the qualitative survey asked students why they chose to come to WPUNJ. In general, students spoke very highly of WPU's affordability and accessibility, both in terms of its location and the layout of the campus itself, the range and excellence of its academic programs, the diversity of the WPU community, and the ample resources on campus. Many students stated they enrolled at WPU either because siblings/family had attended WPU, or because members of their demographic/ethnic community were attending WPU. They expressed a positive sense of belonging and pride in WPU. Key themes:

- Affordability: low cost of tuition and generous financial aid are major factors in their decision to choose WPU.

- Accessibility: location and proximity to New York City as a motivating factor. It was an easy school to commute to. In addition, the small walkable campus where the buildings are close to each other, makes it easy to navigate

- Diversity: Students emphasized the diversity of the school, its small, well knit, inclusive community. They appreciate, in particular, that WPU is supportive of LGBTQ students

- Excellence and variety of Programs: WPU's academic reputation, the fact that it is a medium sized university and that it offers a range of well reputed programs were all important in attracting the AMENA students to WPU. Nursing, MBA, Music, Education Communication Disorders, Art, Chemistry, Environmental Science Program, a variety of Minors, were some of the programs that motivated students to choose WPU.

- Many identified Civic engagement opportunities as a positive aspect of their experience of WPU

- They also cited the helpfulness of Staff/teachers. More specifically, they appreciated that it was easy to transfer credits, the staff was helpful and respectful.

- In general students spoke highly of WPU: "I believe that William Paterson gave me the power to keep dreaming, loving, and inspiring."

- Campus Life: beauty, convenience, atmosphere, facilities were all appreciated. In addition, students appreciated the many campus resources, including the and cited in particular the Library, Career Center, mentoring for Career Readiness, and helpful faculty and staff.

- Education: In terms of educations students appreciated the flexibility of evening and night classes, and the small class size.

However, they did also provide a critique of WPU:

- A lack of representation of AMENA visibility both in terms of campus life (cultural activities, food options, spaces dedicated to AMENA students), and in terms of academics and curriculum. They identified a lack of focus on AMENA materials/ experiences/histories.

- They also think most courses as being US centric.

- Students consistently identified lack of representation in cultural events, curriculum, and food. "I don't feel as if there are enough events that are for Middle East cultures. I see Hispanic cultures, African cultures, and even Asian cultures but never seen Middle East, maybe I never got a memo for them but to my knowledge, I don't know"

- There is ignorance regarding the religious sensitivities of the MENA population in particular. MENA students would like the Cafeteria/Dining Hall to have a pork free section.

- They also identified the difficulty of establishing networks, affiliations, and friendships with the WPU community who do not understand them, and see them as Other.

- Students identified wanting to have a dedicated space for AMENA students. Muslim students expressed the need to have a prayer room on campus.

- They stressed the importance of having interfaith dialogues to educate and raise awareness of cultural and religious differences

- In the face of challenges they banked on family, on their own determination and will power.
- Identified stereotyping where their timid personality and accent automatically identifies them as less intellectually able.
- Hesitation about whether they would be welcome to enter Latinx or African American Spaces
- Specifically identified WPU's support of LGBTQI+ as a model for the proactive role the university can play in supporting AMENA students.

B.   Perceived Challenges of Being an AMENA Student at WPU

As a follow up to the question of why they chose WPU, we asked students to detail the challenges they have faced or currently face because of their ethnicity/race. Although students were highly appreciative of WPU, its academic excellence and reputation, its diversity, and its many resources, when questioned about their actual experience of being a student at WPU, they spoke of a lack of representation, a lack of belonging, experiences of discrimination and prejudice, and being constantly stereotyped.

- They consistently expressed the difficulty of communicating with others, and of feeling they did/would not "fit in" unless they were White. This perception was sharply conveyed by an international student who felt that the university student community is very segregated and identity based. Other AMENA students spoke of being discriminated against for their appearance and spoke out again racial
  discrimination. They felt they were discriminated against for their appearance, wearing a hijab, and for having an accent.
- They spoke of microaggressions, and of not being comfortable. They spoke of being abused by racist slurs and therefore taking online classes as a refuge against the hostility and alienation they experience at WPU.
- Asian/Asian American students spoke about the negative pressures of high expectations demanded by the model minority stereotype to excel. They highlighted the incidence of depression rates being high among Asian Americans as evidence of the toll that high expectations and demands to excel take.
- AMENA students also critiqued professors for being discriminatory, and showing implicit bias and racial discrimination.
- They consistently identified the lack of an institutional space dedicated to them where they could more comfortably socialize or be among their community. In particular, Muslim students expressed the need for a prayer room.

- Sample students Comments:
  "I have felt as if I didn't belong in certain parts of the campus. There'd be times where I was the only Asian present in the room so it was harder for me to communicate with others than it was for them."

  "I felt that I could never truly fit in with my classmates because I wasn't white."

  "I am an international student and haven't actually lived in my country for a long time. But for a school with such a wide diversity of cultures, you guys sure do segregate into groups a lot."

There's this line of separation between groups, and from my initial inexperienced eye, cultural identity seems to be a major defining factor."

Faculty/Professors discriminate: "May get looked at differently as I wear a hijab, sometimes feel unwelcome by students or staff, got called a racist slur.. hence why I only stuck to online classes this semester."

"It is proven that Asian Americans face the highest rates of depression/mental illness as such and I would say I agree. There are lots of expectations I must meet."

The main themes that emerge then are negative stereotyping, of being overlooked by the University that does not have special organizations and academic programs. Middle Eastern students in particular feel alienated—for their hijab, their accent, microaggressions by fellow students, professors, and staff, there is no MENA club, or events. They feel there is lack of representation and feel they are discriminated against for being Muslim.

C.   Recommendation for Improvement and Change

We asked students for feedback on the areas of concern and need, and of recommendations to ensure the well-being and success of Asian, Middle-Eastern, and North-African students at WP?

An analysis of the responses from students highlights some common themes. It would appear that AMENA students interpret the challenges they face in belonging, being valued, and appreciated on campus as a microcosm and continuation of the challenges this demographic group experiences in American society at large. Many students identify the invisibility and discrimination they feel as a systemic problem, a continuation of the discrimination they feel in the world outside, and therefore feel it cannot be changed at the institution. Instead, they put the onus of handling the stresses and challenges of their experience squarely on themselves, of being self-reliant, of cultivating a thick skin that ignores everyday microaggressions, and of developing self-esteem that will enable them to "move on." They emphasized the values of perseverance, personal development, and endurance, of "ignoring other peoples thoughts and opinions and just doing me" Paradoxically, instead of resentment and despair, many students expressed the importance of learning about other cultures so that they can in turn share their culture, and thus build bridges of understanding. Many students also underscore the importance of learning and appreciating their own culture.

Their recommendations can be identified as the following:
- Need for greater representation of AMENA in campus life and the curriculum: cultural events and clubs, curriculum offering, in leadership, faculty and staff, and food (more halal options).
- A consistent theme was that the university could fight AMENA invisibility by organizing cultural events, festivals, and talks to educate the larger community about the vibrancy of AMENA cultures/peoples/histories/faiths. Many students spoke of the value of dialogue and of disseminating information, and spreading awareness of AMENA
- A dedicated space for AMENA/an AMENA Cultural Centre where students can socialize with their community.

- A Prayer Room for MENA-the current one is small and not maintained well at all, is hard to find.
- Interfaith dialogues, festivals, events to mark Ramadan, and Bengali New year/Independence Day, and to educate the larger community about AMENA populations: their history, culture, and faith
- Diversity training for faculty and staff
- Need to improve the experience of commuter students, many of whom happen to be AMENA

Sample Comments:

"I learned to love myself and understand that some people are ignorant and uneducated I have tried to not look at my difference in culture as a setback from learning other peoples cultures. I have become more open to learning about where other people come from so that I can also share my culture with others."

"Ignoring other peoples thoughts and opinions and just doing me."

"Keeping to myself and accepting that I am different in order to successfully move on Let AMENA students use their voices throughout campus and make us feel seen. I think it'd be nice if there was an AMENA club or something."

"I recommend open dialogue or interfaith conversation. Talents shows, lectures or workshop for students and teachers to attend."

"Provide culture nights where students can come and see our culture and foods and music and history because we have rich history as well."

"Provide more scholarship opportunities and increase representation on campus."

"Do more activities related to the Bengali culture. Like Bengali new year events. Bengali Independence Day. The University has a huge population of Bangladeshi American students and yet not once have I seen an event to honor us Bengali it's always Indian or Arabic related stuff."

Qualitative Data from Faculty/staff Surveys

Faculty and Staff were asked similar questions as the students on the challenges they face at WPU because of their ethnicity/ belonging to AMENA, the areas of concern that need to be addressed to ensure the well-being of AMENA faculty/staff, the students, and recommendations for improvement and change to ensure well-being and success of AMENA faculty and staff.

A. Perceived Challenges

In general AMENA faculty/staff comments on whether they were treated fairly by students. colleagues, and the administration reflected a higher level of dissatisfaction than faculty/staff of other races and ethnicities. The comments by faculty noted that they were unfairly evaluated by students and tended to receive bad reviews, they were shown less respect by students and their colleagues, they faced many more microaggressions from their students, and their male colleagues, and had to work twice as hard at their teaching, and as faculty/staff than their

colleagues. AMENA faculty and staff report a poor sense of belonging and unfair evaluations. Staff. They spoke of a glass ceiling that hampered their opportunities for advancement and promotion.

Many emphasized that they still felt or were treated as perpetual outsiders, were marginalized consistently whether that was in day to day interactions or in the tasks, teaching schedules, courses they were assigned, the rotation of the courses they teach. Faculty reported not having their voices heard, often they are not given credit for their ideas and input which are instead attributed to their colleagues. They do not get adequate recognition for their work. They also complained that their commitment to social justice was questioned and the histories of violence against AMENA erased in community discourse, or did not get enough attention in curriculum and programs

In addition, female AMENA faculty spoke of the double marginalization they feel both as teachers and as faculty, and of the microaggressions or prejudice they faced from students, and their male colleagues in particular.

AMENA faculty and staff spoke strongly against the lip service to diversity initiatives, and the lack of equity in their experience. AMENA is invisible on campus. There is no effort to record the MENA demographic group by the university. Members of the AMENA group felt invisibilized either because they are misidentified as White or in the case of Asian Americans that they are not seen as a minority. There is erasure of Asian American histories. They were concerned about the rising racial discrimination and xenophobia against Asian Americans, and of Islamophobia against the MENA community.

Sample Responses

"I feel that knowledge and skills that are assumed for my White colleagues are not assumed for me. There is an element of surprise or "I am impressed" when my capabilities are observed or noticed. So, the feeling of being continually evaluated and having to prove myself is always there."

"Not having my ideas heard, having them attributed to others when I am make suggestions that are good, struggling to get courses I teach in rotation, unfair schedule or classes, lack of empathy or help in the work I do"

"So much Marginalized and have to justify every time injustice is felt. Too much scripted buzz words but no real action. Power differential is highly evident being the other in the classroom. hence notions of difference invoked in interaction"

"Differential treatment from students and colleagues. With students I get less respect than my Caucasian colleagues do, even those colleagues who's teaching needs work. I have also noticed that when I give assignments similar to my White colleagues I get a lot more pushback. As for my own colleagues, I have experience gaslighting and serious disrespect from White male colleagues although my female colleagues (no matter what race) are great"

B.   Areas of Concern That Hamper AMENA Faculty/Staff Wellbeing and Success

In general, faculty and staff spoke again of the invisibility of the AMENA group on campus in terms of a lack of the effort to collect demographic data so as to address equity and diversity issues, lack of AMENA in campus activities, cultural events, special holidays, food choices, and an egregious lack of AMENA in the curriculum offerings, a dedicated space devoted to AMENA.

Many respondents stressed the need for greater acceptance. They spoke against prejudice and discrimination based on their accent, a failure to account for differences due to culture and upbringing, and a lack of empathy and sensitivity in evaluations to account for these differences. Many emphasized the need to do evaluations by faculty and peers differently. DEI training for students when they enter college so that they accept difference, and for faculty so that they are made aware and uncomfortable about their biases and prejudices.

AMENA faculty and staff also spoke of the need to value professional skills, competence, and experience over ethnicity. They stressed the need for equal opportunity and a fair promotion process. There is skepticism about the sincerity of administrative support for AMENA members and the perception is that it is mere lip service. At least one member spoke about their perception that things have got worse under the current administration.

Sample Responses

"Educating students on DEI while onboarding and stressing about the acceptance of everyone as a WPU family."

"Some faculty members need a wake up call, they need to be made uncomfortable about their biases and prejudices"

"There is a need to recognize that having an accent that is different from the dominant accent should not detract from someone's worth, ability or qualification. There is a need to understand that cultural/social/economic/political circumstances that surround the personal and academic development of individuals from other cultures may place them on uneven platforms with individuals born and raised in America, and that this unevenness should be considered when these individuals are being evaluated."

"Middle Easterns are an invisible minority. By the government data, this group is not even considered a minority and is racially classified as White. This categorization has compromised accurate reporting and analysis of the discrimination against the group and its inclusion and equity."

"Folks get marginalize more when truth is spoken. A tactic is to suppress voices by manufacturing lies and then justifying them."

C.   Faculty/staff's Concerns for AMENA Students

Faculty spoke of the need to integrate AMENA students better in Campus life by increasing their sense of belonging and making them feel seen, welcome, and supported. They stressed the need for more intentional clubs, for greater discussions on topics of concern such as Anti-Asian violence, Islamophobia, Palestine, and about the need to have more staff and faculty representation of people who look like AMENA students. They recommended that a cultural center and student organizations dedicated to AMENA would help students' sense of belonging. They also emphasized that having AMENA representatives in career and counseling centers would be beneficial.

Sample Responses

"Encourage celebrating and knowing their traditions."

"These students, because they are in the minority and come from different cultural contexts, tend to feel somewhat "out of place" in the American context. The school needs to recognize this fact and put effort into making them feel seen, welcome, and supported."

"More faculty that look like them, more resources for student organizations, more space for discussion of issues that concern AMENA students such as Palestine, Islamophobia, anti-Asian violence..."

"increase numbers so every student at WPU has an opportunity to interact with people from these cultures and histories (while ensuring the heterogeneity of peoples from/of AMENA) . better integration of AMENA students in the university life."

"Better and more intentional student clubs that are broad (AMENA-based) not narrowly identitarian which allow for student-faculty interactions"

"At least someone culturally competent in Asian, Middle-Eastern, and North African cultures in the counseling center and the center for diversity and inclusion."

D.   Recommendations for Change/Improvement

A majority of the responses emphasized the need for raising awareness of the AMENA group, of educating the campus community about the rich history and cultures of the AMENA region, of giving more space to AMENA in curriculum and programming at campus, of creating a dedicated cultural center and more intentional student clubs. Respondents also noted the need to not "lump" together Asians and MENA as their experiences and histories are vastly different.

Sample Responses
"increase enrollment integration of more AMENA histories and cultures into courses inclusion of the AMENA - American experiences (racialization) in the curriculum and forums to voice those experiences."

"AMENA as a region and population to be recognized by faculty, students, and admin 2. Programming around AMENA issues for campus awareness."

"As an adjunct professor with few benefits and no job security, it's hard to feel valued regardless of race or ethnicity. But in regards to AMENA, Asians and Middle Easterners/North Africans face vastly different cultural biases—e.g., for the latter group: Islamophobia or, on the flip side, indifference to the conflicts within Islamic communities—so it makes little sense to lump both demographics into one group."

"The cultures are so rich in history, spices, and arts. However first generation Americans miss out of learning this through texts and immersion experiences. Offering more classes give people a chance to learn about themselves and others. More importantly it embraces acceptance."

"I do not think it's appropriate to lump Asians and Middle Easterners/North Africans into the same group. MENA has long existed as a separate group for a reason. These parties are vastly culturally different and face very different cultural biases from society at large."

"Be inclusive of Asians when minoritized populations are discussed"

"The university has a large AMENA population on campus. And in 2022 there are not enough programs, food, or consideration for their needs. Is also love to see more courses centered around this in academia. There is psychology of Latinx and African American but haven't been courses developed to include AMENA much."

V.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The heterogeneity of the AMENA Category undercuts a one size fit all policy measures to counteract discrimination and prejudice. Given the literature, we take caution in lumping together the diverse groups within the AMENA umbrella. But we adopt the term AMENA to signal the need for coalition-building as a category of people apart from the larger minoritized groups such as Black and Hispanic groups. The term also represents the need to find common grounds to draw attention to AMENA groups' particular invisibility, cultural needs, and unacknowledged discrimination not addressed by measures focusing on Black and Hispanic members of the university. In making recommendations for services, policies, and programs, we will try to strike a balance for the need to stand together and yet to be acknowledged for the diverse, and even disparate, perspectives of the AMENA members of the campus.

Our list of recommendations below is informed by the literature, our data analysis, and models of ideas/programs at other universities. We propose a three-pronged framework to organize various initiatives the University can take to create a more inclusive and supportive campus environment, not only for AMENA faculty/staff and students but for all members of the campus community.

Framework for Recommendations

A. Inter-Cultural Understanding and Integration
- Curriculum inclusivity
- Intergroup dialogues
- Interfaith dialogues

B. Strengthening AMENA Community Capacities and Intra-group Alliance
- Space (e.g., cultural center) for AMENA students
- Inclusive campus calendar for holidays/celebrations
- Culturally appropriate food options
- AMENA student mentoring program
- Support for AMENA affinity groups and clubs
- More AMENA Faculty/staff and mentors for AMENA students
- Leadership programs for AMENA students
- Visibility of AMENA achievements

C. Policies and Institutional Directions
- Track MENA students
- Outreach activities specifically for first-generation college students, and/or immigrant students
- Possibility of AANHPI serving designation
- Assess the impact of biases in student evaluation
- Include lessons on AMENA groups and their diversity in DEI training
- Increase sensitivity among managers and supervisors

A. Inter-Cultural Understanding and Integration Initiatives

Purpose: The purpose of these initiatives is to primarily create an educational environment in which individuals of different cultures, backgrounds, and race/ethnicities (including but not limited to AMENA population) achieve (1) an understanding and awareness of one and the other, (2) develop a sense of collective community, and (3) build closeness and connectedness.

Recommendations:

- **Curriculum inclusivity**: Many students expressed the importance of developing understanding of AMENA histories and culture among WP members. We recommend the University makes a commitment to support and expand the existing curriculum on AMENA regions, histories, and AMENA population in the U.S. This is critical for the DEI work. This should be an integral part of the University's on-going decolonizing the curriculum efforts. At the minimum, we recommend that courses in Middle Eastern Studies and Global Asia Studies courses are offered each semester, and academic advisors are well-informed of these course offerings.

  Response: We will work with both the UCC and the Senate's newly formed Diversity Council to review curriculum to ensure that AMENA histories and cultures are integrated where appropriate. My concern regarding Middle Eastern Studies and Global Asia Studies continues to be one of enrollments and who is enrolling in those courses. If we are seeking a wider community understanding of AMENA histories and cultures then integration where appropriate would reach a broader audience. We will continue to support courses/programs where students are enrolled but cannot provide assurances that courses will run every semester even with low enrollments.

- **Intergroup dialogues**: In order for students to learn about other cultures and thus build bridges of understanding, create forums, workshops, and lecture series to encourage inter- cultural dialogue and coalition on common concerns and social justice issues, and involve various identity affinity student groups in organizing them.

  Response: We will work with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) on programming that seeks to build bridges of understanding, create forums and a lecture series to encourage intercultural dialogues in the coming academic year. We will work with our faculty and staff as appropriate to help us determine programming.

- **Interfaith dialogues**: Religion is often used as a marker of "otherness." The lack of understanding and acceptance of non-Christian faiths and traditions often becomes a basis for biased/discriminatory behaviors. This bias especially targets AMENA members who may be diverse non-Judeo-Christian faith traditions. Increase opportunities for students to learn about diversity of faith traditions and inter-faith dialogues to foster mutual respect.

  Response: I will want to discuss this recommendation with the Provost; I will need to know what expertise we have available on campus to lead these types of conversations and where we have religious content knowledge.

B. **Strengthening AMENA Community Capacities and Intra-group Alliance**

*Purpose***:** The primary purpose of these initiatives is to create a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging and acceptance for AMENA members (especially students). We emphasize the need to strengthen engagement and leadership opportunities for AMENA members in the university. The goal is to enable AMENA population's cultural and ethnic preferences and needs so as to allow them to learn and grow in more supportive environments. These initiatives have a complementary impact, by signaling and creating an awareness of AMENA groups' cultural specifics to the other members of our campus. Thus, these initiatives are connected to the Integration Initiatives, by aiming to strengthen inter-cultural integration while strengthening intra-cultural capacities and visibility.

Recommendations:

- **Create a space (e.g., cultural center) for AMENA population**. Our data suggests there is some preference for distinctive spaces for Asian and MENA students. They can be adjacent to each other to maximize connectivity. Some faith traditions may require a specific environment respectful of the rituals (e.g., faith traditions that require taking off

shoes). An inter-faith prayer/meditation space can be designed in consideration of the needs of various faith traditions.

R e s p o n s e : We can explore how we might rethink the Center for Chinese Art as a possible space to create more programming and gathering. While I appreciate the need for spaces for groups to gather, we simply do not have the available space or finances to do this for every group on campus. We could certainly revisit this if we reach the federal designation to be an AAPI serving institution.

⬩ **Include in the Campus Calendars holidays/cultural celebrations** pertaining to AMENA region and cultures (e.g. Lunar new year, Vesaki Day, Ramadan, Eid, Diwali, and Nowruz). Include AMENA related holidays in university's acknowledgement messages on special days.
Response: We have begun this practice through the Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

⬩ **Increase culturally appropriate food options** in campus restaurants, especially Halal food options. We understand that the University food service has begun to serve Halal food already, but it is very limited (currently only in two evening meals a week). Two meals a week is not enough for Muslim students living on campus. We recommend that continuing feedback would be collected from students and faculty/staff on whether these options are adequate and expand more culturally appropriate food option. For example, making dates and milk available during Ramadan can be very helpful as these are the items students typically break the fast in the evening during Ramadan.

Response: We will work with Aramark and our residence hall students to find the right balance of Halal food opportunities in Wayne Dining.

⬩ **Create a student mentoring program for AMENA heritage students** and create programming to connect new students to AMENA student mentors. This could include an AMENA student panel in the orientation programs for incoming students where new students will have the opportunity to listen to AMENA students' experiences at WP and make connections to potential AMENA student mentors; this will allow incoming students to feel that there is a community they can belong to.
Response: We will explore this idea through the Center for Diversity and Inclusion which has similar mentoring programs for other marginalized populations.

⬩ **Recruit faculty/staff mentors of AMENA heritage**. Increase diversity inclusive of AMENA population in the student-facing staff (e.g., counseling and wellness, career development, advisors, DEI center, etc.).
Response: While race based hiring is illegal, we can certainly work with intentionality to recruit more qualified candidates in these critical areas of need from the AMENA population.

⬩ **Offer leadership training to increase AMENA students' engagement and leadership in Student Government Association (SGA) and clubs.**
 R e s p o n s e : We do have leadership training programs for our students, we will work with our AMENA students to determine how we might better engage them in this opportunity.

- **Increase the visibility of AMENA faculty/staff/students' achievements, especially of those who are marginalized within (e.g., women, LGBTQ+)** in the University website and publications.

  R e s p o n s e : W e will work with Marketing and Public Relations to make this happen. Perhaps create a page on our DEI website that highlights these as well.

- **Raise faculty understanding on Muslim students' special needs** during Ramadan (e.g., prayer requirements, the physical difficulty of fasting, etc.) which may need accommodation.

  Response: The Provost regularly communicates with all faculty regarding the needs during Ramadan, however, as a state institution we cannot force faulty to make accommodations.

C.   Policies and Institutional Directions

*Purpose***:** The primary purpose of these initiatives is to improve the structural elements in the university to be more intentional about increasing AMENA students, faculty/staff's visibility, and representation, creating a sense of belonging, mainstreaming the AMENA population as core members of the university community. AMENA population is a substantial constituent of the campus community. This should be acknowledged and made visible in the university policies and programs including the DEI work.

<u>Recommendations</u>**:**

'   **Track MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) students in university data collection** and collect data on their academic success, enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Response: These are controlled by the federal government and we cannot require students to disclose this information. This is also true of LGBTQIA students, faculty, and staff.

'   **Expand recruitment efforts for AMENA students from high school**. This may be as simple as including images of AMENA population representatives, both students, staff, and faculty from campus in marketing and publicity campaigns so that potential students know there is an AMENA community on campus. If possible, hire bilingual admissions staff who speak a widely spoken language among AMENA population (e.g., Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Chinese, Korean, etc.).
    Response: I will have a conversation with the Vice President of Enrollment Management on how we might strategically do this. I will seek to get us to the 10% mark to obtain AAPI status within four years.

'   **Increase outreach activities specifically for first-generation college students, and/or immigrant students** who may need extra help in navigating the college application processes. The Task Force recognizes that our Asian student population is increasing and has the potential to grow further, given the large Asian American communities in the northern NJ region and the rapid growth of Nursing and Business majors popular among AMENA students.

Response: This is a difficult one to implement because how would we know which students are struggling? If they self-identify, great. But often this is not the case. If the Committee has ideas on how we might better determine students who are struggling I am open to those ideas.

'   **Consider and plan for the possibility of meeting the threshold as a AANHPI serving institution**. Ten percent is the threshold to receive the designation as Asian American Native American and Pacific Islander (AANHPI)-serving institution under Title III Part A Section 320 of HEA. With the vitalization of AMENA communities on campus, and greater outreach/recruitment efforts, we may be able to reach the 10% in the near future, which will then open up opportunities for grant funding for additional programs.

Response: We will seek this designation.

'   **Further assess the impact of biases in student evaluation**. AMENA faculty/staff reported that they are likely to be treated unfairly by students and faced biases. There was a statistically significant difference in this question between AMENA faculty/staff and non-AMENA faculty/staff. We also know that the literature affirms that this affects other minoritized groups of faculty (e.g., Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). We recommend that the university assesses further how student biases may translate into teaching evaluations and performance evaluations of faculty/staff in general, and establishes ways to ameliorate the impacts of potential biases.

Response: I will direct the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to assess this through the electronic evaluations we have available. We can benchmark non-AMENA faculty with AMENA faculty to determine if there are impacts.

- **Include lessons on particular types of stereotyping, micro-aggressions, and harmful remarks targeting AMENA members in faculty/staff and students' diversity training material**.

Response: I will work with the new CDO to implement this training when they arrive after July 1st.

- **Allocate Student Life personnel and resources to particularly mentor and support AMENA identity groups** and student clubs and encourage their engagement on campus activities.

Response: We will continue to strengthen the CDI as we require more programming in this area, but we will need the help of faculty and staff to get students to attend.

- **Increase sensitivity among managers and supervisors regarding the needs of some employees for whom essential family visits may involve long-distance international trips**. This may require consideration of flexible vacation and leave arrangements for some staff members, including but not limited to, AMENA members.

Response: This one is more challenging given the state and collective bargaining rules we have in place. But I am certainly willing to look into what flexibility we have; I know we have granted a year of leave without pay for this purpose which is one of tools we have available to us.

VI.   CONCLUSIONS: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Over the course of this past year our work of assessing the campus climate regarding the AMENA focus group has only underscored the vast diversity of this group, and how underserved it is, in regards to diversity and equity measures. Insofar as we were limited by a lack of institutional data tracking, it is hard to measure, with any accuracy, the AMENA group's sense of belonging. Nevertheless, our survey response rate appears robust and is comparable to other such DEI studies on campus. In general, both quantitative and qualitative data speak to the need of AMENA to have their voices heard, and to their commitment to participate collaboratively in creating campus inclusiveness through inter-faith conversations, cultural events, and sensitivity training. The request for more courses on AMENA histories/cultures/region is salutary and should inform the university's initiatives on decolonizing the curriculum.

There is an urgent need to track the numbers of MENA students in particular and ensure a robust campus climate of inclusiveness and belonging. Anecdotally at least, we are seeing larger numbers of students from this demographic group and collecting data on the High School districts and towns that these students come from to WP can help aid the university's enrollment and retention efforts. We cannot help but think that our failure to recruit AMENA students in focus groups speaks loudly about both their lack of faith in campus climate change and about their vulnerability and insecurity in having their voices heard and understood. A few individual interviews with stakeholders have revealed as much. We also wonder if immigration status might have played a role in AMENA students' reluctance to participate in focus groups.

In hindsight, further efforts to assess gendered experiences of AMENA groups, and additional faculty/staff focus groups could have been very helpful, although we were unable to accomplish these within the Task Force's time frame. The hypervisibility of hijab/headscarf wearing students/ faculty/staff deserves important consideration. We hope that future task forces will give important consideration to gender in assessing inclusiveness and belonging.

Redoubling efforts to increase enrollment of International AMENA students, especially as there already appears to be an uptick in these numbers, is recommended. Further, serving these students needs in terms of food and accommodation on campus, creating community, as well as, acclimatization to the U.S. will enhance these students' sense of belonging and inclusion.

In conclusion, we would like to thank each member of the AMENA Task Force for their hard work and commitment to improving the campus climate for the AMENA population and for making WPU an inclusive community for all. We firmly believe that executing on the modest recommendations we have made will go a long way toward ameliorating the relative marginalization and invisibility of the AMENA group, especially students, and will in turn make the university a welcoming space for all.

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