PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INVENTORY

An Institutional Climate Measure

St. Philip's College

Moral and Ethical Development Case Study
Multi-Year Comparison

September 2018

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Introduction

These assessments provides data to support the St. Philip's College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and Student Leaning Outcomes Assessment. We ask students to examine their values as part of understanding their ethical and moral development.

The assessment consists of three parts, which were assembled to align with the three student learning outcomes outlined in the St. Philip's College QEP:

1. Students gain the skills to assess their own values and the origins of those values (e.g., fairness, respect)
2. Students identify and know about ethical issues (e.g., academic integrity, broad issues)
3. Students analyze ethical perspectives (e.g., how perspectives might differ by character)

Since Fall 2016, this assessment has been administered four times:

Administration	Date
Time 1 (T1)	Fall 2016 (August 2016)
Time 2 (T2)	Fall 2016 (November 2016)
Time 3 (T3)	Fall 2017 (August – November 2017)
Time 4 (T4)	Spring 2017 (February 2017)

Note: The T1, etc. notation will be used throughout the report to represent each administration.

This report presents a multi-year comparison of the four data points thus far. Due to sampling issues (i.e., response rates), this report does not reflect any inferential statistics or any other type of statistical modeling – this type of analysis should be appropriate once the 2017-2018 data is collected. Rather, this report examines apparent trends in the data with expanded context from the individual reports.

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Case Study Comparison

This case study and the subsequent value ranking items were designed with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development as a foundation (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010), as well as the AAC&U Characteristic Traits of the Dimensions document. Rohan (2000) suggested that value identification, value prioritization, and the consistency of prioritization over time are good measures of personal value development. Based on Rohan's research and the QEP student learning outcomes, the case study included opportunities for students to identify values and prioritize influences. The case study additional measures also allow us to better understand change overtime at St. Philip's College.

The case study was administered online, and students were asked to make a decision based upon a scenario involving academic integrity. This process provides an opportunity for respondents to consider and react to an ethical issue. The selection of reasons for their initial decision provides potential opportunities to see what values are shaping student decisions and where students generally stand within the stages of moral development.

Text of the Case Study

Maria has spent the past two weeks studying hard for her final exam. Every night, Maria's friends knew they could find her in the library or at a local coffee shop pouring over notes, flashcards, and various textbooks. On the day of the exam, Maria felt confident that her hard work would pay off. She sat at her usual desk and greeted her good friend Tim as he sat at an adjacent desk. Maria had offered to study with Tim multiple times over the past two weeks, and each time he declined. Tim asked Maria how much she had studied for the test. After she responded, Tim slouched in his chair and said that he didn't study much at all. Tim had another important test in his major subject tomorrow, he said, which took up more of his time. He was a little worried, as he had an academic scholarship to maintain.

At the start of the exam, the professor handed out the exams and sat at the front of the room. Ten minutes later, the professor's phone rang: It was an important call from his son. The professor stepped outside to speak with his son. After the door closed, Maria looked up and noticed that, once the professor had left the room, Tim had pulled a sheet of class notes from his pocket to help answer the questions. Maria was annoyed – after all, she had spent innumerable hours studying for this exam, while Tim had not put in any effort. Tim completed his exam using his notes, and handed it in once the professor returned. As Maria stood up to hand in her exam, she considered informing the professor of Tim's cheating.

References

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rohan, M. J. (2000). A rose by any name? The values construct. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*(3), 255-277.

Table 1: Case Study Decision Comparison

Should Maria tell the Professor?

	T1 (n=1507)	T2 (n=573)	T3 (n=623)	T4 (n=152)
Yes	87%	88%	84%	82%
No	13%	12%	16%	18%

■ Yes ■ No
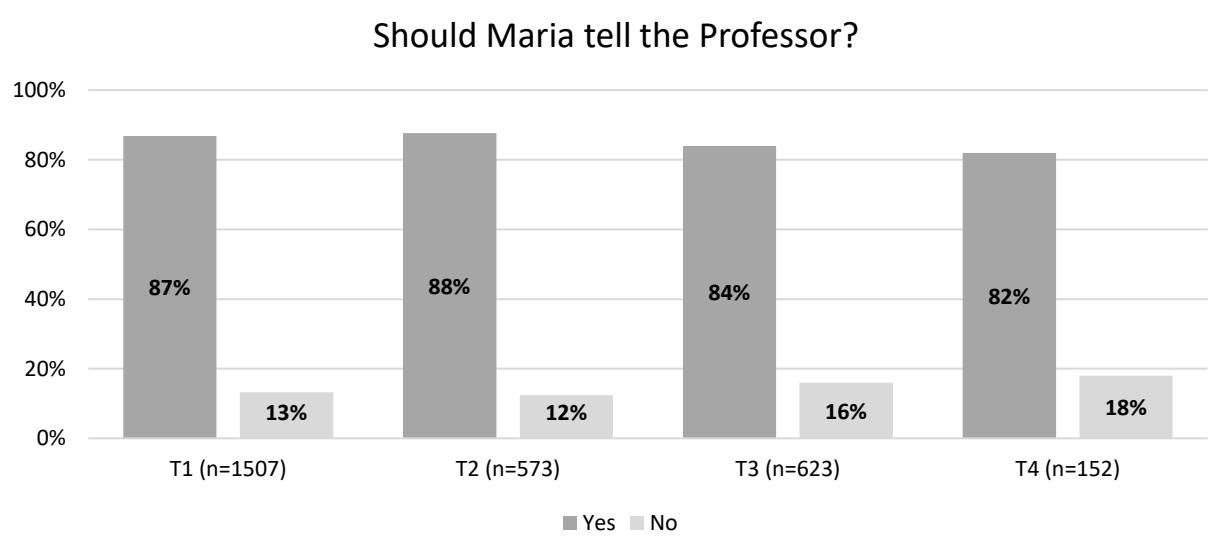
Table 2: Commitment to Case Study Decision Comparison

How committed are you to your decision regarding whether Maria should tell the professor about Tim?

	Not at all committed	Not very committed	Slightly committed	Somewhat committed	Very committed	Extremely committed
T1 (n=1482)	1%	3%	8%	24%	38%	27%
T2 (n=567)	2%	3%	9%	22%	38%	26%
T3 (n=616)	1%	3%	11%	23%	36%	26%
T4 (n=152)	0%	3%	11%	17%	48%	21%

■ T1 (n=1482) ■ T2 (n=567) ■ T3 (n=616) ▨ T4 (n=152)
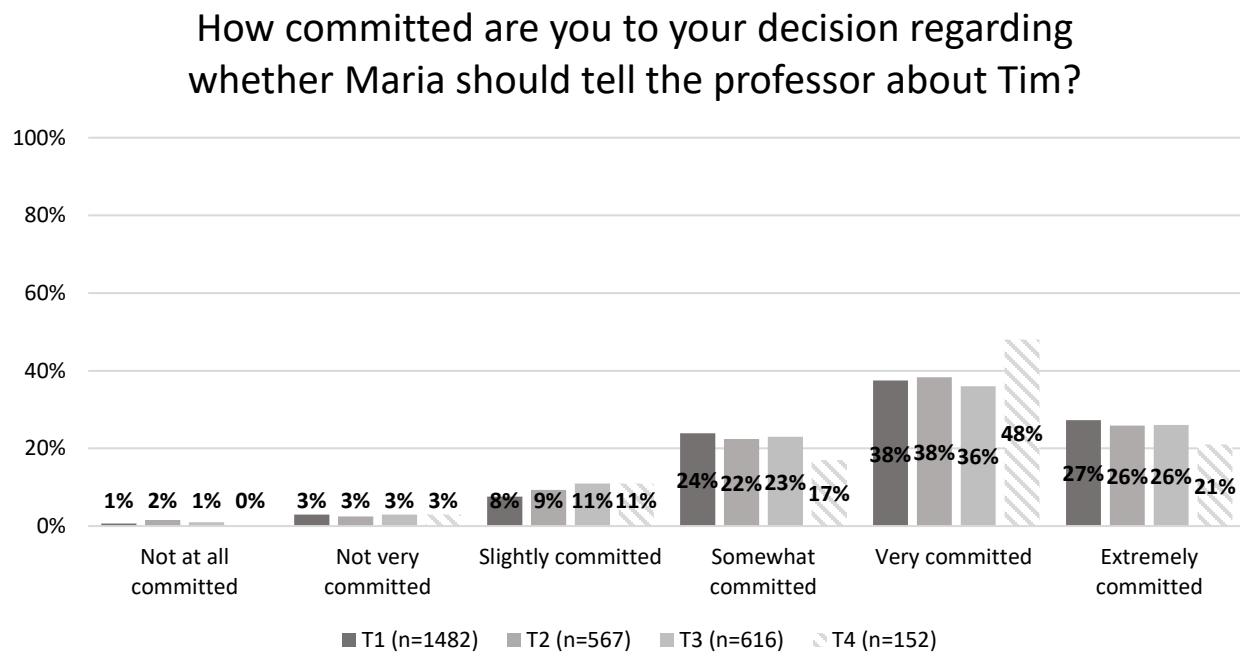
Across all four administrations, students remained relatively consistent in both their response to the case study scenario as well as their level of commitment to that decision. Between 82% and 87% of students indicated that they would report the cheating to their professor. Interestingly, there is an apparent artifact of the low sample size for the T4 administration – the sharp spike as in "very committed" students stands out within the response pattern and may not indicate a greater level of commitment as compared with prior years.

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Table 3: Frequency of Case Study Response Reasons Comparison

	T1	T2	T3	T4
Level 1 Reasons				
Cheating is against the class rules.	791	303	322	73
Tim does not deserve a better grade than Maria.	333	111	127	30
Tim's grade doesn't affect Maria's grade.	231	75	101	25
Tim will no longer be Maria's friend.	73	19	25	7
Level 2 Reasons				
Tim does not deserve an academic scholarship if he cheats.	607	212	247	58
Cheating hurts everyone in the class.	441	220	174	53
It is not Maria's job to turn in Tim.	202	66	76	17
Reporting Tim will not end all cheating – why bother?	114	39	61	17
Level 3 Reasons				
Maria believes cheating is morally wrong.	891	330	326	90
Maria compromises her ethics by allowing Tim to cheat.	490	222	198	58
It does not matter because learning is more important than good grades.	199	70	112	20
It wouldn't be fair for Tim to lose his scholarship because of one mistake.	98	34	57	8

Throughout the four administrations of the case study, student reasoning for their decision has remained remarkably consistent. Students generally favored higher level reasoning when thinking through their decision-making, with Level 3 responses garnering the most consistent selection. Moreover, the positively-worded reasons were chosen most often, which aligns with the earlier patterns of students choosing to report the cheating. Students were then asked to assess the level of importance assigned to each reason – frequencies of importance are not represented here due to space.

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Case Study Scoring

In order to assess the long-term change in students' responses to the case study dilemma, as well as developments in their reasoning and prioritization, each student respondent was assigned a weighted score for each level of reasoning (1 to 3). The score was calculated using the following steps:

1. When a student selected a reason for their decision, they were assigned a 1, 2, or 3 according to the level of moral reasoning associated with the choice. For example, a student who picked two Level 1 reasons and one Level 3 reason would be assigned a 1, 1, and 3.

2. Next, the three assigned level values were then multiplied by the prioritization of the respective reason. Prioritization was scaled from 1 (Not important) to 4 (Very important). This product was calculated for all three reason levels and then summed together within level. For example, the student who selected two Level 1 reasons and one Level 3 reason prioritized each reason as 1 (Not important), 2 (Slightly important), and 4 (Very important), respectively. Accordingly, the student received a Level 1 score of 3, a Level 2 score of 0, and a Level 3 score of 12. Scores of 0 were assigned to students who did not select a reason in a particular level.

3. Finally, the average score for each level was calculated for the entire institution.

These level scores are useful for assessing change over time. The scores themselves allow us to understand whether students are picking more or fewer reasons from different levels. Additionally, a reduction or increase in the standard deviation (SD) of a score will show whether students are selecting similar or different degrees of prioritization for each level.

Over time, we want to see the mean scores for Level 1 decrease and the scores for Levels 2 and 3 increase, indicating that students are improving their ethical and moral reasoning in response to the case study. We also want to see decreasing SDs over time, meaning that students are becoming more consistent in their prioritization of a given level of reasoning.

Table 4: Case Study Aggregate Level Score Comparison

	Level 1 Score	Level 2 Score	Level 3 Score
T1 Aggregate	3.41	6.32	12.27
T2 Aggregate	3.16	6.62	12.79
T3 Aggregate	2.74	2.54	3.36
T4 Aggregate	2.87	3.02	3.96

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Table 5: Case Study Aggregate Level Score Descriptive Statistic Comparison

	T1			T2			T3			T4		
	n	**M**	**SD**	**n**	**M**	**SD**	**n**	**M**	**SD**	**n**	**M**	**SD**
Level 1 Score	1472	3.41	2.24	567	3.16	2.18	743	2.74	2.38	165	2.87	2.37
Level 2 Score	1472	6.32	6.32	567	6.62	4.56	743	2.54	2.45	165	3.02	2.60
Level 3 Score	1472	12.27	7.76	567	12.79	7.71	743	3.36	2.89	165	3.96	2.88

When comparing the four case study scores, it is appropriate to segment them into pre-post groupings (i.e., T1 and T2, T3 and T4). In the first pair of administrations, there is a promising decrease in Level 1 score, an increase in Levels 2 and 3 scores, and an overall decrease in variability of importance level. This indicated a generally higher level of reasoning among students as well as an increase in consistent prioritization. The second pair provided more mixed results. The Level 1 score increased from pre- to post-test and variability across all three scores either remained the same of increased. These findings, however, should be viewed with caution: The sample size from T3 to T4 dropped dramatically, which likely influences any longitudinal patterns. Moreover, the number of students who took all four assessments was affected by the poor sample size for T4, which means that entirely new groups of students could be surveyed at any point. A future report will instead take a cohort approach to analysis, splitting students into groups based upon their class standing.

Another potential statistical artifact can be identified in the severe decline in Level 3 scores from T2 to T3. This may suggest that the scores for T1 and T2 were artificially inflated by outliers – for instance, if any respondents merely selected the top response for all items, the score would be heavily weighted in the direction of their systematic response pattern. Outliers would not necessarily influence the overall trend but rather complicate analysis and interpretation, meaning that once outliers are removed the general increase or decrease of scores would likely remain the same. This will be addressed before any inferential analysis is conducted.

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Figure 1: Multi-year Case Study Averages with Standard Deviations
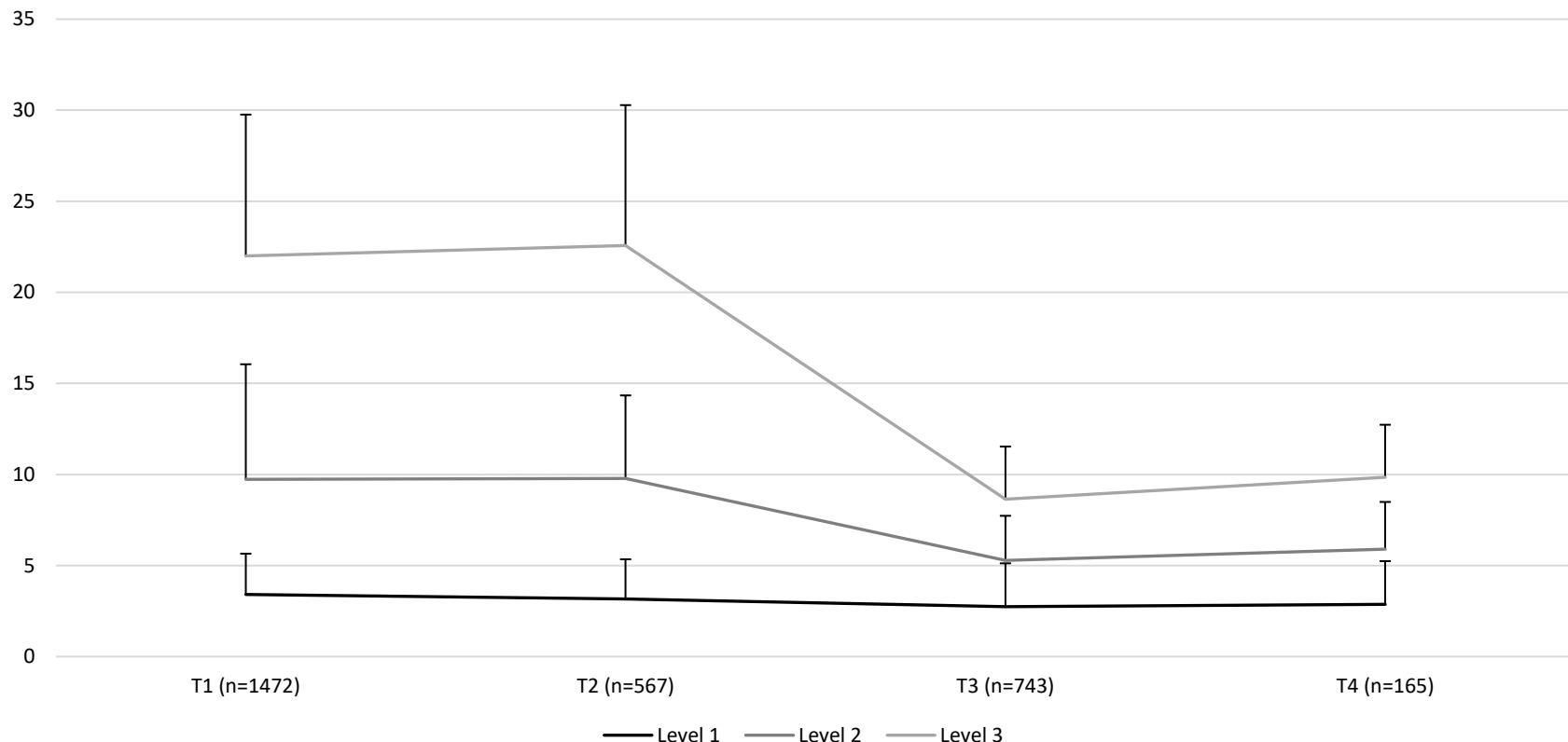
This chart presents the scores and standard deviations over time. The positive range of the standard deviation is represented for clarity in the chart.

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Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory Factors

A team of assessment professionals at St. Philip's College originally selected 10 items from the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) as an institutional climate measure for their QEP. The items closely aligned with the student learning outcomes assessment. The PSRI is a nationally-administered climate instrument designed to assess students' perceptions of institutional support and opportunities for education in personal and social responsibility. The PSRI not only provides data for institutional improvement, but also continues exploration into interventions and strategies that will inform a national conversation on ways to strengthen learning for personal and social responsibility. The research emerging from this project informs good practice for the development of personal and social responsibility for all students.

Based upon the 10 PSRI items selected by the St. Philip's College QEP team, three factors from the PSRI dimensions of Cultivating Academic Integrity, Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others, and Refining Ethical and Moral Reasoning were administered to derive a more comprehensive snapshot of the campus climates for personal and social responsibility. Although the 10 items most closely align with the student learning outcomes, the composite factors that include those 10 items provide a greater understanding of the campus climate related to the learning outcomes. Both the individual items and the climate factors provide information to strengthen learning and development for ethical and moral reasoning on campus.

Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory Sample Survey Items to Track for QEP		
PSRI Item	**Related student learning outcome**	**Related Process Outcome**
My experiences at this campus have increased my ability to learn from diverse perspectives	3	2, 3, 4
My experiences at this campus have helped me develop a better understanding of academic integrity	1, 2	3, 4
Faculty at this institution understand the campus academic policies	2	4
Faculty reinforce the campus academic policies	2, 3	3, 4
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others is a major focus of this campus	3	3, 4
Faculty at this institution help students think through new and challenging ideas or perspectives	1, 2, 3	3, 4
This campus has high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree	1, 2, 3	3, 4
Helping students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning is a major focus of this campus	1, 2, 3	2, 3, 4
This campus helps students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly	1, 2, 3	2, 3, 4
This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their academic work	1, 2, 3	3, 4

Note: This assessment did not track process outcomes (4).

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Table 6: Personal and Social Responsibility Campus Climate Factor Comparison

	T2		T4	
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
Faculty Roles in Academic Integrity	**4.43**	**0.83**	**4.45**	**0.74**
Faculty at this institution understand the campus academic honesty policies	4.43	1.01	4.46	0.97
Faculty at this institution support the campus academic honesty policies	4.44	1.08	4.46	0.99
Faculty reinforce the campus academic honesty policies	4.36	0.97	4.35	0.91
Formal course syllabi define academic dishonesty (including such issues as plagiarism, improper citation of Internet sources, buying papers from others, cheating on assignments or tests, etc.)	4.51	0.97	4.57	0.88
General Climate for Perspective Taking	**4.30**	**0.85**	**4.16**	**0.91**
Helping students recognize the importance of taking seriously the perspectives of others is a major focus of this campus	4.27	1.00	4.18	1.08
This campus helps students understand the connections between appreciating various opinions and perspectives and being a well-informed citizen	4.31	0.98	4.15	1.06
It is safe to hold unpopular positions on this campus	4.06	1.10	3.90	1.14
Faculty at this institution teach about the importance of considering diverse intellectual viewpoints	4.30	0.99	4.17	1.06
Faculty at this institution help students think through new and challenging ideas or perspectives	4.40	0.93	4.26	1.02
Students at this institution are respectful of one another when discussing controversial issues or perspectives	4.32	0.96	4.23	1.03
This campus has high expectations for students in terms of their ability to take seriously the perspectives of others, especially those with whom they disagree	4.36	0.95	4.22	1.07

*Response ranged from 1 = Strongly disagree/Almost never to 5 = Strongly agree/Almost always

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Table 7: Personal and Social Responsibility Campus Climate Factor Comparison cont.

	T2		T4	
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**
General Climate for Ethical and Moral Reasoning	**4.27**	**0.96**	**4.19**	**0.96**
Helping students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning is a major focus of this campus	4.26	1.06	4.18	1.10
This campus helps students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly	4.29	1.04	4.20	1.04
The importance of developing a personal sense of ethical and moral reasoning is frequently communicated to students	4.25	1.05	4.15	1.12
This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their academic work	4.33	1.02	4.26	1.00
This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their personal life	4.27	1.04	4.19	1.06

*Response ranged from 1 = Strongly disagree/Almost never to 5 = Strongly agree/Almost always

The PSRI factors were administered in the post-test phase once new students had enough time on campus to gauge their perceptions of the campus climates. Overall, students favored the higher end of response scale for most items (i.e., "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" or "Often" and "Almost Always"). The climate for Academic Integrity remained consistent across both administrations. The other two factors declined somewhat from T2 to T4: The General Climate for Perspective Taking dropped from 4.30 to 4.16 and the General Climate for Ethical and Moral Reasoning fell from 4.27 to 4.19. This change could be due to the drop in sample size; however, students in T4 still maintained positive perceptions of the campus climates. A future administration of the factors will clarify whether this was a momentary artifact in the data or indicative of an overall trend.