Present: Tim Sands, (presiding), April Myers, Kim O’Rourke, Cyril Clarke, Amy Sebring, Laurel Miner for Daniel Sui, Frances Keene, Aimée Surprenant, Rachel Holloway, Alan Grant, Debra Stoudt for Laura Belmonte, Tsai Lu Liu, Kevin Pitts, Julia Ross, Lara Khansa for Saonee Sarker, Lee Learman, Tyler Walters, Natalia Guerrero, Joe Merola, Rachel Miles for Robert Weiss, Evan Lavender-Smith, Janice Austin, Jennifer Jones, LaTawnya Burleson, Callan Bartel, Kiera Schneiderman, Shahed Sanuri, Alex Efird, Rachel Maizel, Yohan Sequeira, Riley DeHority, Emily Tirrell, Gary Long, Nicole Pitterson, Stuart Feigenbaum, Rodney Gaines, Charles Lowery, Virginia Buechner-Maxwell, Renee LeClair, Amber Robinson, Melissa Faircloth, Kelly Oaks, John Gray Williams, Eric Glenn, & Francisco Carvallo for Dave Close

Absent with notice: Bryan Garey, Paul Winistorfer, Stephanie Trout, Kari Evans, William Storey & Sally Shupe

Absent: Menah Pratt, Daniel Givens, Paul Knox, Dwayne Edwards, Daniel Hindman, Lujean Baab, & Serena Young

Guests: Monty Abbas, Mark Sikes, Caitlin Armstrong, James Bridgeforth, Zai Cook, Becca Berglie, Felicity Bilow, Lori Rose, Doyee Byun, Catherine Cotrupi, Ashley Dayer, Kayla Dean, Poorvesh Dongre, Holli Gardner Drewry, Carol Geary, Aaron Gross, Leslie Howe, Katie Hundley, Soumil Joshi, Justin Lemkul, Monique Logan, Julie McClafferty, Kat Nelson, Olivia Ryan, Demetria Somervell, & Stacey Wilkerson

Dr. Sands called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

2. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of April 1, 2024

Dr. Merola noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (http://www.governance.vt.edu).

3. Unfinished Business

Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs
Resolution CGPSA 2023-24A
Resolution to Protect Against Caste and Caste-Based Discrimination

At the April 1 University Council meeting, second reading was deferred to May 6, 2024.

4. New Business

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24D
Resolution to Amend Article IV and Clarify Sections of the Faculty Senate Constitution
Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution defines the faculty types that are eligible for membership in the Faculty Senate and eliminates the cap on number of senators permitted. This resolution also clarifies research faculty and their representation as well as explains processes for selecting alternate senators. Additionally, this resolution will update language in the Faculty Senate Constitution to be consistent with language in the University Council Constitution.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24E
Resolution to Endorse the Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics at the University Level

Rachel Miles presented the resolution for first reading. This statement is meant to be educational and used as guidance. It is important for the university community to be aware of the information collected on the use of metrics in research and the relationship to faculty promotion, tenure, and awards. This statement is not intended to be university policy and has been approved by the Faculty Senate.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24F
Resolution to Revise Faculty Handbook Language on Nominations to University Distinguished Professor and Alumni Distinguished Professor

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution revises the Faculty Handbook to give the President and the Executive Vice President and Provost an opportunity to make nominations for University Distinguished Professor and Alumni Distinguished Professor. This will provide an additional path for faculty to receive this recognition and will not impede nominations being made using the existing process.

Commission on Faculty Affairs
Resolution CFA 2023-24G
Resolution to Update the Faculty Handbook Description of Expectations for Promotion and Tenure

Justin Lemkul presented the resolution for first reading. This resolution clarifies evaluating contributions for clinical faculty, specifically with the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

4. Presentation

Rachel Maizel, President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, gave a presentation on the GPSS climate survey results (attached).

Dean Surprenant provided the following opening remarks:

“I wanted to begin by thanking Rachel and her colleagues for carrying out these climate surveys, compiling the results, and sharing them with the various departments and the University Council. It has been a great deal of work including a great deal of emotional labor. Thank you.

“Given our limited time here today we will be concentrating on the areas where improvements are necessary and not identifying and celebrating the wonderful stories of support and empowerment. Those are plentiful, however.

“Engaging in difficult conversations surrounding graduate student climate issues is not only important but also necessary for fostering a supportive and inclusive academic community. These discussions provide a place for us to address concerns such as mental health, work-life
balance, diversity, equity, and inclusion, which profoundly impact the well-being and success of graduate students.

“Treating graduate students well is not just a matter of ethics; it's a strategic investment. When graduate students feel valued and respected, they are more inclined to engage their intellect fully in their research and scholarship. They become more resilient, more creative, and more productive. These students are the next generation of scholars, scientists, and leaders. By nurturing their talents and supporting their growth, we ensure a continuous stream of fresh perspectives and novel solutions to the complex problems facing our world.”

After: “I intend to form a Working Group on Graduate Student Climate and Success. The Working Group on Graduate Student Climate and Success is intended to address the concerns detailed today. This working group will be responsible for conducting a comprehensive review of current practices, policies, and experiences related to graduate student climate. The ultimate goal is to ensure a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of the academic community, particularly graduate students, who are integral to the mission and success of our institution.”

Rachel Maizel will provide an executive summary that will be distributed to University Council at a later date.

5. Announcement of Approval and Posting of UC Cabinet, Commission, and Committee Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (http://www.governance.vt.edu). Note that the purpose of voting on minutes of the University Council Cabinet, Commissions, and Committees reporting to University Council Cabinet is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

• University Council Cabinet
  March 11, 2024
  March 25, 2024

• Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs
  November 8, 2023
  February 14, 2024

• Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
  November 15, 2022
  February 21, 2023
  March 21, 2023
  April 18, 2023
  September 19, 2023
  October 17, 2023
  November 17, 2023
  February 20, 2024

• Commission on Faculty Affairs
  September 29, 2023
  February 23, 2024
  March 22, 2024
• Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs  
  March 13, 2024

• Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies  
  March 20, 2024  
  April 3, 2024

• Commission on Outreach and International Affairs  
  March 21, 2024

• Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs  
  October 24, 2023  
  February 27, 2024  
  March 26, 2024

• Athletics Committee  
  March 21, 2024

• Climate Action, Sustainability, and Energy Committee  
  February 26, 2024

• Transportation and Parking Committee  
  March 12, 2024

6. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:34 p.m.
2023-'24 GPSS Climate & Culture Survey

Rachel Maizel, Charly Hartle, Zabrina Lewis, Trevor Jeyaraj, and Tori Engler
Acknowledgments:

**GPSS Climate & Culture Committee:**
Charly Hartle (Entomology, defending)
Zabrina Lewis (Biological Systems Engineering)
Trevor Jeyaraj (ASPECT)
Tori Engler (Fish & Wildlife, defending)

**Physics Ad-Hoc Committee:**
Nicholas W.G. Smith (graduated)
Andrew Gustafson
Sarah Healy
Gyang Chung
Alma Robinson (Advanced Instructor, Dept.
DEI Committee Chair)
Bryan Hanson (Graduate Ombudsperson)

**Additional Acknowledgements:**
Dean Aimee Surprenant (Dean of Graduate School)
Professor Mark Pitt (Physics Dept. Chair)
Professor Camillo Mariani (Director of Graduate Program Physics)
Dean Kevin Pitts (Dean of College of Science)

Thank you
Introduction:

Goals:
1. Understand where we are at the University, College, and Departmental levels.
2. Identify strengths and areas of growth

Background:
1. Inspired by the Physics Ad-hoc Committee.
2. Students in Fall 2023 self-selected which departments to survey.
4. March-April discussions with departments on individual results.
5. April 22nd talk as a community overarching themes.
Disclaimer:

To respect student’s anonymity as well as maintain confidentiality and trust we will not be showing specific department breakdowns besides physics (*already publicly available*).

We will be as clear as we can while protecting confidentiality and trust.

We want to be clear that this survey is not intended to ostracise or guilt any individual party or place individual blame… Well-meaning people may be skeptical of this whole endeavor, so we hope that the information provided here, directly from the experiences of the graduate student body, demonstrates that there are areas of concern than need to be addressed.
Top Two Recommendations and Asks:

1. Identify policies, practices and procedures that need to be changed to protect students from the institutional structures in place enabling mistreatment. Graduate students must be a main part of this conversation.

2. The University issue (a) a public statement prioritizing addressing these areas and (b) support both CGPSA and recognize that this is a community wide effort that will affect all constituencies.
## Survey Respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Total respondents that completed the survey</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Graduate School Climate Survey ‘22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entomology</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>~48%</td>
<td>~44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and Wildlife</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>~45%</td>
<td>~48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>~53%</td>
<td>~33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>~33%</td>
<td>~28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Ed.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>~49%</td>
<td>~39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>~32%</td>
<td>~26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics***</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>~57%</td>
<td>~44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Filters:

Percent of completed respondents ≥ 18% for each of the 6 filters

Sexuality/Gender Filters:

- **Heterosexual (Het) Cisgender(Cis) Male**
  Selected “Male” and “Heterosexual”

- **Non-Heterosexual(Het)**
  Did not select “Heterosexual”

- **Non-Cisgender(Cis) Male**
  Did not select “Male”

Race Filters:

- **White Heterosexual(Het)**
  Selected “Heterosexual” and only selected “White”

- **Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME)**
  Did not only select “White”

- **BAME Non-Cisgender(Cis) Male**
  Did not only select “White” and did not select “Male”
Outline:

Main areas of Growth/Mistreatment:
- General areas extracted from student open-ended section
  - Further Broken down into general themes
  1. Racial or Nationality Motivated Mistreatment
  2. LGBTQ+ Motivated Mistreatment
  3. Sexual or Gender Motivated Mistreatment
  4. General Academic Abuse and/or Bullying
  5. Ableism Motivated Mistreatment
  6. Student Perception of Mistreatment Not Being Handled Effectively
  7. Funding Related Concerns or Mistreatment

Will address in Exec Summary
Racial or Nationality Mistreatment:

There’s too many to list… so we are just presenting a few

1. **Misidentifying/misaddressing BAME students**
   - Mispronouncing/misspelling names repeatedly
   - Inability to differentiate between students
   - Incorrectly assuming race/nationality

2. **Dismissal of identity**
   - Invalidating students’ lived experiences
   - Ignored or dismissed due to nationality

3. **Financial exploitation**
   - Feeling targeted due to international status

4. **General mistreatment, etc.**
   - Slurs
   - False color blindness
   - Boundaries violated
   - Increased judgement
Racial or Nationality Mistreatment:

Mark all that apply if you have ever experienced or witnessed the following:

(a) Racial insensitivity
(b) False color blindness/ invalidating of racial or ethnic identity
(c) Racial hostility
(d) Denied equitable research opportunities, funding, or resources
(e) None at all
(f) Other

Percent of Respondents in Filter

Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents in different categories experiencing racial or national mistreatment.
LGBTQ+ Mistreatment:

1. Disrespect/disregard for identity
   - Identity used to de-legitimize their work
   - ~50% of non-het students feel like a spokesperson for their identity in courses
   - General disrespect

2. General transphobia/queerphobia
   - Jokes
   - Purposeful misgendering and deadnaming
   - Slurs
   - Harassment
Sexual/Gender Mistreatment:

1. Bullying
   - Condescension
   - Being told don’t belong
   - Treated differently than cis-male peers
   - Extreme harshness
   - Being disparaged or lied about

2. Sexual jokes, etc.
   - Jokes
   - Lewd comments or suggestions

3. Uncomfortable working conditions

4. Harassment
   - Clear Title IX violations
Sexual or Gender Motivated Mistreatment:

Mark all that apply if you have ever experienced or witnessed the following:

(a) Sexually based remarks or jokes that made you (or another) uncomfortable
(b) You or another person’s personal or physical boundaries encroached on
(c) Being condescended, insulted or overly questioned
(d) Opportunities to network were falsely advertised
(e) None at all
(f) Other

Percent of Respondents in Filter
General Academic Abuse/Bullying:

There’s too many to list… so we are just presenting a few

1. Toxic work environment
   - Fearful environment
   - Gaslighting
   - Driving students to “mental health crises”
   - Name-calling
   - Emotional abuse
   - Berating and verbal abuse
   - Advisor taking anger out on students

2. Threatening students academically
   - Threatening to withdraw help, graduation, termination, etc.

3. Ignoring safety protocols → unsafe working environment

4. General bullying/abuse
   - Retaliation for speaking out
   - Condescending, dismissive, shutdown, etc.
   - Excessive criticism
   - Excessive work hours
Ableism Mistreatment:

1. Lack of accommodations
   - Feel like disability is never considered or accommodated without students having to put in a lot of legwork
   - Perceived retaliation for requesting accommodations
   - Refusing to provide accommodations despite accommodation letter

2. General discrimination
Effects of Mistreatment
Mistreatment-Academic Effects:

Indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected you academically (mark all that apply)

(a) Had difficulty attending classes/meetings
(b) Had difficulty concentrating on course-related tasks
(c) Had to withdraw from a course or take an incomplete
(d) Seriously considered leaving the program
(e) Had difficulty completing research duties
(f) Had difficulty preparing/completing core exams (quals, prelims, etc.)
(g) Did not affect at all
(h) Other
Mistreatment-Day-to-Day Effects:

Indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected you day-to-day (mark all that apply)

(a) Changed offices or considered changing offices
(b) Avoided departmental or professional events
(c) Changed daily routine to avoid certain people or places
(d) Felt uncomfortable voicing your opinion or thoughts
(e) Did not affect at all
(f) Other

Percent of Respondents in Filter
Reporting
**Question to the audience:** What percentage of students experiencing or witnessing mistreatment report to appropriate channels?

- Reported
- Did not report
- Reported some instances did not report others

>60% of students experiencing or witnessing mistreatment never report.
Barriers Preventing Reporting:

Open-ended: Students were asked why they chose to report or not to report.

Why not?: Evaluated students responses picking out instances where they described why they chose not to report.

Coding Themes: Sorted responses into 6 general themes.
Barriers Preventing Reporting:

Question to the audience: Why do you think students chose not to report?

Fear of Retaliation

Didn’t believe anything meaningful would be done

 Didn’t feel it was there place to report or was asked not to

Didn’t believe it was severe enough/didn’t want to get someone in trouble

Someone else reported it

Didn’t want to stress the victim

0% of students in 7 departments indicated a lack of knowing where to report affected their decision
Student Recommendations:

1. Work with PRIDE center for better LGBTQ+ training for all members of department.
2. Increased accountability in cases of mistreatment (e.g. take disciplinary action against faculty or staff mistreating students).
3. Listen more to student complaints about mistreatment.
4. Promote healthy relationships between advisors and students.
5. Monitor trends/concerning track records for faculty members.
6. More mandatory mentoring training and mental health resources for advisors.
7. Allow students to rotate labs
Stay tuned, Executive Summary coming soon!

Thank you
References


Opening message:
We would like to thank you for your time and participation in filling out this survey. The goal of this survey is to provide a unique chance for a critical evaluation of the department and is an important stepping stone in improving the overall climate and culture. We ask that you be candid in your assessment of the climate of your department. These responses will provide us with valuable insight into what recommendations should be made to the department and University, as well as which issues should be addressed with priority.
We hope we can use this opportunity to have everyone’s voices heard and accurately determine the culture of the department through this survey. We would like to emphasize that this survey is confidential. The GPSS Climate and Culture Ad-hoc Committee will not release any of your raw data collected from this survey to anyone outside of the Ad-hoc committee. We will submit a summarized report to the department, University, and GPSS utilizing the aggregated data to highlight the findings and to make recommendations. This report will make all efforts to remove identifying information within the data to minimize fears of retaliation.
The survey has about 30 questions and will take 10 minutes to complete. All questions are voluntary; answer only the questions which you are comfortable with.
We appreciate your participation.
Confidentiality Statement:
We appreciate your authentic and candid responses to this climate survey. We are taking measures to ensure that the data collected within this survey remains anonymous. Any reporting of the data will make every effort to ensure that the individual responses remain confidential. For example, no one outside of the ad-hoc committee will read your responses, and all identifying information within the responses to the open-ended question will be redacted to ensure confidentiality. This survey does not collect your IP address or email in an attempt to offer further anonymity.

If something does need to be reported to the office of Title IX they will not be able to do anything without your permission unless there is an imminent threat to your or others' safety. They will also not have your email or IP address so it will be difficult for them to identify the respondent.

If you find that this survey triggers the need to further share your experience in your program and you would like to talk with a confidential and informal resource, please feel free to reach out to the Ombuds for the Graduate School community at gradombud@vt.edu.

Support Resources:
At the bottom of each page of the survey, there is a link that will take you to confidential and non-confidential resources. If you need help taking the survey due to language or accessibility considerations please contact the survey team

Resources:
- **Office of Graduate Ombudsman**
  - Gradombud@vt.edu
  - 540-231-9573
- **Katie Polidoro Title IX Coordinator**
  - email: polidoro@vt.edu
  - 540-231-1824
- To report “Gender Based Harassment and Violence” to Title IX directly via reporting form
- **Women’s Center at Virginia Tech**
  - Womenscenter.vt.edu
  - wcsupport@vt.edu
- **Cook Counseling Center**
  - General/emergency appointment call 540-231-6557 to schedule
- **TimelyCare** (24/7 on-demand mental health support)
- The **Office for Equity and Accessibility** oea.vt.edu
- **Dean of Students Office** dos.vt.edu
- **Schiffert Health Center** healthcenter.vt.edu
- **Services for Students with Disabilities Office** ssd.vt.edu
- **Student Conduct Office** studentconduct.vt.edu
- **Virginia Tech Police Department** police.vt.edu
- The **Raft Crisis Hotline (FREE)** is a program of NRVCS (New River Valley Community Services) that offers free paraprofessional phone counseling services to the community. If you are in crisis or need someone to talk to, call Raft now at 540-961-8400. More info: https://newrivervalle.wpengine.com/raft/
- **RESPOND 24/7 crisis line (FREE)** – A mental health assessment and referral service of Montgomery Regional Hospital and Lewis Gale Hospital. Call 540-776-1100 or 800-541-9992

**Definition of identity** = a combination of characteristics, attributes, or behaviors that make us who we are. E.g. sexuality, race, gender, beliefs, etc., are all integral parts of identity.

For each of the following 4 statements select all that apply...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Post docs/Staff</th>
<th>Departmental Leadership</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
<th>Undergrad Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I see people who share my identity in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have seen mistreatment of those who share my identity in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued as an individual by...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have felt ignored or disregarded by

How often have you experienced or witnessed others experience mistreatment from...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 times</th>
<th>1-2 times</th>
<th>3-5 times</th>
<th>6-8 times</th>
<th>9 or more times</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post docs/staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Leadership</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other graduate students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the following statements select all that apply...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>My Research</th>
<th>My Teaching</th>
<th>My Courses</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have experienced/witnessed mistreatment in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt/feel valued as an individual in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been talked over, ignored, or condescended in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel, or others have been, a spokesperson for my(their) identity in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How likely would you be to encourage a prospective colleague or friend who resembles you (in background/identity) to work or study in your department at Virginia Tech?

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very likely
From your first day at Virginia Tech until now, have you experienced or witnessed any of the following forms of gender or sexually-motivated mistreatment? (mark all that apply)

- [ ] Sexually based remarks or jokes that made you (or another) uncomfortable
- [ ] Your or another person’s personal or physical boundaries encroached on
- [ ] Being condescended to, insulted, slighted, or overly questioned
- [ ] Opportunities to network were falsely advertised, (e.g. An invite to a meeting outside of the university which was advertised as a chance for discussion of work/research but which was actually intended as a date)
- [ ] None at all
- [ ] Other

Other

From your first day at Virginia Tech until now, have you experienced or witnessed any of the following forms of racial or ethnically motivated mistreatment? (mark all that apply)

- [ ] Racial insensitivity (i.e. someone shows a lack of tact or understanding towards those of a different racial background)
- [ ] False color blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity (e.g. diminishing someone’s experience by saying something like “I don’t see color”)
- [ ] Racial hostility (e.g. had someone express jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of certain race or ethnicity get unfair advantages and benefits due to their race or ethnicity)
- [ ] Denied equitable research opportunities, research funding, or lab/resource access
- [ ] None at all
- [ ] Other

Other
Since your first day at Virginia Tech until now, if you are a student of South Asian origin/descent, have you encountered any instances of caste-based discrimination or bias in your department and/or the University? Please briefly describe.

For each of the following questions please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. If I were to experience or witness mistreatment I would feel comfortable reporting the situation to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of professors for courses I am(was) enrolled in</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Title IX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Grad Students</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Office of the Graduate Ombudsperson</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Leadership</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the following questions please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

| The University has physical structures in place that reduce friction for my or others’ identity and/or disability (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms, braille signage, etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
| | | | | |
My Department has physical structures in place that reduce friction for my or others’ identity and/or disability (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms, braille signage, etc.)
The Department treats cases of mistreatment seriously.
I feel if I reported cases of mistreatment to University avenues (e.g. Title IX, OEA, etc.) it would be handled effectively.
I feel if I reported cases of mistreatment to Department avenues (e.g. Department Leadership, Faculty, etc.) it would be handled effectively.
The Department takes effective measures to prevent mistreatment.

For each of the following, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement:

- I feel that my work in this program is meaningful to me.
- I am satisfied with my progress in this program.
- I feel I have the opportunities to contribute professionally in ways that I value.
- I feel supported by my advisor (or temporary advisor).

Please indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected you *academically* in any of the following ways *(mark all that apply)*

- Had difficulty attending classes or meetings
- Had difficulty concentrating on course-related tasks such as assignments or exams
- Had to withdraw from a course or take an incomplete
Please indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected your day-to-day life in any of the following ways (mark all that apply)

- Seriously considered leaving school or program
- Had difficulty completing research duties
- Had difficulty preparing and completing mandatory exams (e.g. qualifying, preliminary, pre-defense, defense, etc.)
- Did not affect at all
- Other

Other

Please indicate the frequency to which the following have added stress to your time at Virginia Tech:

- Seriously considered leaving school or program
- Had difficulty completing research duties
- Had difficulty preparing and completing mandatory exams (e.g. qualifying, preliminary, pre-defense, defense, etc.)
- Did not affect at all
- Other

Other

Please indicate the frequency to which the following have added stress to your time at Virginia Tech:

- Never
- Once or twice
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Constantly
- N/A
Mistreatment from fellow graduate students.
Mistreatment from faculty
Mistreatment from staff
Mistreatment from undergraduates
Interactions with advisor (or temporary advisor)
Overall workload
Teaching responsibilities (when you were/are a GTA)
Research responsibilities
Financial support

Are you a domestic student?
- Yes
- No
- Choose not to respond

What is your gender identity?
- Male
- Female
- Transgender male
- Transgender female
- Genderqueer/non-binary
- Two-spirit
- Agender
What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual or straight
- Homosexual or gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Demisexual
- Choose not to respond
- Other

What is your race or ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

- White
- Black or African American
- Person of African-descent
- Asian or Asian American
Native American or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian (and/or) other Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx

Middle Eastern or North African

Multi-racial/two or more races

Please self-describe in the space below if the above categories do not capture your race/ethnicity well

Choose not to respond

Other, self describe:

What is your religion or belief system?

Christianity

Islam

Judaism

Buddhism

Hinduism

Sikhism

Jainism

Atheism

Agnosticism

Choose not to respond

Other
Do you identify as an individual with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

If you answered that you have ever witnessed/experienced an instance(s) of mistreatment or invalidation of identity we would appreciate you taking the time to share. We understand and appreciate that this is a personal question and would just like to remind you that the department leadership will not read any of these responses.

If you ever witnessed/experienced an instance(s) of mistreatment or invalidation of identity please indicate whether or not you reported it to the appropriate channels?

- Reported
- Did not report
- Reported some instances did not report others

Please briefly share why you chose to report or not.

[Blank space for response]
What are 1-2 actions you’d like to see the department and/or University take towards improving the culture? (please specify in response whether a department or University action or both)

What are 1-2 questions you would like to see in future departmental climate surveys?

Please indicate on the following scale how effective you think this survey is:

- Ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Neutral
- Somewhat effective
- Effective

Is there anything else you’d like to add or share? This is your opportunity to do so.
We would like to thank you for your time and participation in filling out this survey. We ask that you be candid in your assessment of the departmental climate. These responses will provide us with valuable insight into what recommendations should be made to the departmental leadership as well as which issues should be addressed with priority. This survey, and your responses, provides a unique chance for critical evaluation of the department and is an important stepping stone in improving climate.

We would also like to thank all who bravely shared their stories and/or signed the petition which made this survey and student-led ad-hoc committee possible. We hope we can use this opportunity to have everyone’s voice heard and accurately determine the culture of the department through this survey. Please take this opportunity to let your voice be heard.

We would like to emphasize that this survey is confidential. The ad-hoc committee will not release any of your raw data collected from this survey to anyone outside of the ad-hoc committee, including department leadership and the university. We will submit a summarized report on May 15th to department leadership and Dean Surprenant utilizing the aggregated data to highlight the findings and to make recommendations. This report will remove all identifying information within the data to minimize fears of retaliation.

The survey has about 30 questions and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

All questions are voluntary; Please answer the questions which you are comfortable with.
We appreciate your participation and hope this is a step forward to enact positive change in our department community.

Confidentiality Statement:
We appreciate your authentic and candid responses to this climate survey. We are taking measures to ensure that the data collected within this survey remains anonymous. Any reporting of the data will also ensure that the individual responses remain confidential. For example, no one outside of the ad-hoc committee will read your responses, and all identifying information within the responses to the open-ended question will be redacted to ensure confidentiality. This survey does not collect your IP address or email in an attempt to offer anonymity. The department leadership and Dean Surprenant will only receive a summarized report sanitized of identifying information. After we submit the summarized report all of your raw data will be deleted from the platform.

If something does need to be reported to the office of Title IX they will not be able to do anything without your permission unless there is an imminent threat to your or others' safety. They will also not have your email or IP address so it will be difficult for them to identify the respondent.

If you find that this survey triggers the need to further share your experience in your program and you would like to talk with a confidential and informal resource, please feel free to reach out to the Ombuds for the Graduate School community at gradombud@vt.edu.

Support Resources:
If you have questions or need help taking the survey due to language or accessibility considerations please contact the survey team via gradombud@vt.edu.
We also recognize that these questions may trigger emotions that cause distress. Please recognize the various resources available to assist you in those moments:

- **Office of Graduate Ombudsman**
  - Email: Gradombud@vt.edu
  - Phone: 540-231-9573
- **Katie Polidoro, Title IX Coordinator**
  - Email: polidoro@vt.edu
  - Phone: 540-231-1824
  - To report “Gender Based Harassment and Violence” to Title IX directly via reporting form
- **Women’s Center at Virginia Tech**
  - Website: Womenscenter.vt.edu
  - Email: wcsupport@vt.edu
- **Cook Counseling Center**
  - Phone: 540-231-6557
- **TimelyCare (24/7 on-demand mental health support)**

---

How many years have you attended graduate school in the physics department at Virginia Tech?

- [ ] 0-1 year
- [ ] 1-2 years
- [ ] 2-3 years
- [ ] 3-4 years
- [ ] 5 or more years

Are you a domestic student?

- [ ] Yes
- [x] No
What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender male
- Transgender female
- Genderqueer/non-binary
- Two-spirit
- Agender
- Bigender
- Androgynous
- Choose not to respond
- Other

What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual or straight
- Homosexual or gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Demisexual
- Choose not to respond
What is your race or ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

- [ ] White
- [ ] Black or African American
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Native American or Alaska Native
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- [ ] Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx
- [ ] Middle Eastern or North African
- [ ] Choose not to respond
- [ ] Other

What is your religion or belief system?

- [ ] Christianity
- [ ] Islam
- [ ] Judaism
- [ ] Buddhism
- [ ] Hinduism
- [ ] Sikhism
- [ ] Jainism
- [ ] Atheism
- [ ] Agnosticism
Do you identify as an individual with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Choose not to respond

For each of the following questions please indicate your level of comfort expressing opposing views in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very uncomfortable</th>
<th>Somewhat uncomfortable</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat comfortable</th>
<th>Very comfortable</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lab Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Seminars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the following five statements select all that apply...

**Definition of identity** = a *combination of characteristics, attributes, or behaviors that make us who we are. E.g. sexuality, race, gender, beliefs, etc... are all integral parts of identity*

- I see people who share my identity in...
- I have seen the mistreatment of those who share my identity in...
- I have experienced or witnessed others experience mistreatment from...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>My Research</th>
<th>My Teaching</th>
<th>My Courses</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued as an individual by...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have felt ignored or disregarded by...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experienced/witnessed mistreatment in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt/feel valued as an individual in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been talked over, ignored, or condescended in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I, or others have been, a spokesperson for my(their) identity in...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How likely would you be to encourage a prospective colleague or friend who resembles you (in background/identity) to work or study in the Physics department at Virginia Tech?

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Very likely

During your time at Virginia Tech have you experienced or witnessed any of the following forms of gender or sexually motivated mistreatment? (mark all that apply)

- Sexually based remarks or jokes that made you (or another) uncomfortable
- Your or another person's personal or physical boundaries encroached on
- Being condescended to, insulted, slighted, or overly questioned
Have you experienced or witnessed any of the following forms of racial or ethnically motivated behaviors during your time at Virginia Tech? (mark all that apply)

- Racial insensitivity
- False color blindness/invalidating racial or ethnic identity
- Racial hostility (e.g. had someone express jealousy or hostility surrounding the notion that people of certain race or ethnicity get unfair advantages and benefits due to their race or ethnicity)
- Denied equitable research opportunities, research funding, or lab/resource access

Have you experienced or witnessed invalidation of experiences due to identity during your time at Virginia Tech?

For example:

- *Someone told me that they “don’t see color” or we should not think about race anymore*
- *Someone did not believe me when I told them I was born in the U.S*
- *Someone told me that the person who offended me or made me uncomfortable “didn’t actually mean it” or is “actually a really nice person”*

- Yes
- No
- I’m not sure
For the following questions please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often feel under scrutiny by the people in my department</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often feel supported by the people in my department</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have to work harder than others to be perceived as a legitimate physicist in my department</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have to work harder than others to be perceived as a legitimate physicist in my research group</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though I have to work harder than my colleagues to be treated fairly</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If I were to experience or witness mistreatment I would feel comfortable reporting the situation to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My advisor:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majority of professors for courses I am (was) enrolled in:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Title IX:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any graduate students:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Office of the Graduate School Ombuds:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department leadership:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the questions in this section please indicate your level of agreement with the statement.
The university has physical structures in place that reduce friction for my or others' identity and/or disability (e.g. gender neutral bathrooms, braille signage, etc.):

The physics department leadership empathizes with students experiences:

The physics department leadership understands student experiences:

The department treats cases of mistreatment seriously:

The department intentionally/unintentionally perpetuates mistreatment:

I feel if I reported cases of mistreatment it would be handled effectively:

The department takes effective measures to prevent mistreatment:

For each of the following, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my work in this program is meaningful to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my progress in this program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have the opportunities to contribute professionally in ways that I value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued for my work in this program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected you academically in any of the following ways (mark all that apply)

- [ ] Had difficulty attending classes or meetings
Please indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected your day-to-day life in any of the following ways (mark all that apply)

- Had difficulty concentrating on course-related tasks such as assignments or exams
- Had to withdraw from a course or take an incomplete
- Seriously considered leaving school or program
- Had difficulty completing research duties
- Had difficulty preparing and completing mandatory exams (e.g. qualifying, preliminary, pre-defense, defense)
- Did not affect at all
- Other

Please indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected your day-to-day life in any of the following ways (mark all that apply)

- Changed offices or considered changing offices
- Avoided departmental or professional events
- Changed daily routine to avoid certain people or places
- Felt uncomfortable voicing your opinion or thoughts
- Did not affect at all
- Other

Please indicate the frequency to which the following have added stress to your time at Virginia Tech:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once or twice</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Constantly</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment from fellow students</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment from faculty</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment from staff</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment from undergraduates</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with advisor (or temporary advisor if first year)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall workload</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibilities (when you were/are a GTA)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research responsibilities</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered that you have ever witnessed/experienced an instance(s) of mistreatment or invalidation of identity we would appreciate you taking the time to share. We understand and appreciate that this is a personal question and would just like to remind you that the department leadership will not read any of these responses.

If you ever witnessed/experienced an instance(s) of mistreatment or invalidation of identity please indicate whether or not you reported it to the appropriate channels?

- Reported
- Did not report
- Reported some instances did not report others
- N/A

Please briefly share why you chose to report or not to report:
What are 1-2 actions you’d like to see the department take towards improving the culture?

What are 1-2 questions you would like to see in future departmental climate surveys?

Is there anything else you’d like to add or share? This is your opportunity to do so.
I. INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 2023, the authors of this report, along with Alma Robinson and Graduate Ombudsperson Bryan Hanson, were charged with conducting and analyzing a survey of the graduate students in the Virginia Tech Physics Department (henceforth referred to as "the Physics Department"). The survey asked questions about departmental climate, focusing on cases of witnessing, experiencing, and reporting mistreatment. We hope this report will not just be an accurate analysis of the current climate but also a first step towards improving the experiences of those in our Physics community. After completing this analysis, our primary recommendation is for the creation of a student-led working group involving faculty and department leadership to discuss ways to improve the departmental climate. At the time of the survey, there were 87 graduate students in the Physics Department. Sixty students began the survey, with fifty completing it. To analyze the survey, we broke the responses into six different filters (each filter has at least 10 respondents).

Gender and Sexuality Filters:
1. Heterosexual(het) Male: Answered "male" for gender and "heterosexual" for sexuality
2. Non-Heterosexual(het): Did not answer "heterosexual" for sexuality
3. Non-Male: Did not answer "male" for gender

Race and Nationality Filters:
1. White Heterosexual(het) Domestic Male: Heterosexual Males who answered only "white" for race and "yes" to "Are you a domestic student?"
2. Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME): Did not answer only "white" for race;
3. BAME Non-Male: Did not answer only "white" for race and did not answer "male" for gender.

As we will discuss in more detail, we find main areas of mistreatment in the form of gender/sexually motivated mistreatment, LGBTQ+ mistreatment, and racially motivated mistreatment. These instances of mistreatment have sizable effects on students' academic and daily lives. But the department should note that this (a) has been normalized, (b) is prevalent at high frequencies, and (c) it is not just graduate students perpetuating this mistreatment, it is at all levels.

B. LBGTQ+ Mistreatment

Through analyzing free response questions, we identified three main areas of mistreatment concerning LGBTQ+ students. These themes and a summary of these themes come directly from the students in the free response section:
1. Disrespect of identity: LGBTQ+ students feel that they are not taken seriously by their cis-gender heterosexual counterparts. Their identity is used against them to invalidate their experiences and delegitimize them as physicists.
2. Overly questioned about identity: LGBTQ+ students feel they are often interrogated about their identity and must defend themselves with little to no support from peers.
Denied equitable research opportunities,
Racial insensitivity
Racial hostility
Other
None at all
False color blindness/invalidating of racial or
filters of white-het domestic males, BAME, and BAME non-male;
(a) Gender/Sexuality filters of het-male, non-het, non-male, (b) Race/Nationality filters of white-het domestic males, BAME, and BAME non-male; (2) racial mistreatment:
(a) Gender/Sexuality filters, and (d) Race/Nationality filters.

3. General homophobia: Students report experiencing and witnessing homophobic jokes and slurs. There is a general feeling of normalization of homophobia in the department so students do not report these incidents when they occur.

Furthermore, through analysis of responses to survey questions, it was found that LGBTQ+ students often experienced or witnessed more mistreatment than other demographic groups. In particular, compared to het males, it was found to be a 6 times increase of reported/witnessed mistreatment perpetrated from faculty, 4 times increase perpetrated from department leadership, and a 2 times increase perpetrated from graduate student. This is in response to the survey question asking students to identify if they "have experienced or witnessed others experience mistreatment from..." In general, it was found that LGBTQ+ students were noticeably more likely to experience/witness mistreatment in all categories of mistreatment, including sexual-based and racially-based mistreatment, as compared to their het male counterparts.

C. Racial Mistreatment

We would now like to address mistreatment that stems from a racial or ethnic bias. In a "mark all that apply" question, students were asked if they had experienced or witnessed various forms of racial mistreatment, see Fig. 1(c-d).

The most prevalent form of mistreatment came in racial insensitivity, with approximately 45% of non-het students, 35% of non-males, and 40% of BAME non-males reporting that they had experienced or observed it. Furthermore, it is important to note that all three of the previous filters reported at least one instance of being denied equitable resources/treatment based on race. While the percentage is small, the fact that it is happening at all is an indictment on our department. Such instances would not just violate the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, but also a violation of Title VI.

The open-ended questions also provided insight into racial mistreatment. We have identified four general categories that encompass student experiences.

1. Racial Insensitivity: This can be inappropriate comments/jokes or an increased judgment of those of a particular race/nationality. The sources of this mistreatment are not just other students but also include faculty.

2. Assuming Race or Nationality: There have been multiple reports of faculty and graduate students incorrectly assuming a student’s race or nationality, sometimes in public settings.

3. Slurs: Students report hearing slurs and being referred to by derogatory stereotypical names based on their race; the perpetrators are not limited to graduate students.

4. Racial hostility: Students report negative and condescending remarks about a student’s race and professors targeting certain races within their courses. This is a Violation of the Virginia Tech Principles of Community and Title VI.

The responses from this report indicate that many students within the department experience or witness acts of racial mistreatment, most often in the form of insensitivity. The department will need to take careful and thoughtful steps so that physicists of all backgrounds feel welcome at Virginia Tech.

III. EFFECTS OF MISTREATMENT

A. Academic Effects

Students were asked to indicate if experiences of mistreatment have affected them academically through "select all that apply" questions, see Appendix Fig. 5(a-b). More than 50% of het males report no effect from mistreatment on their academic performance. This is very dissimilar to the reports of non-male/non-het students; they find that instances of mistreatment in the environment they work and learn in directly affects their attendance (>20%/>30%), concentration (>30%/>50%), research (>20%/>45%), and core exams (>15%), even cause them to seriously consider leaving (~30%/50%). The excess of students who report multifaceted effects on academic performance illustrates how the current climate is directly hindering their ability to succeed.
Students were asked to indicate if their experiences of mistreatment had any of the following effects on their daily lives, see Appendix Fig. 5(c–d). Eighty percent of non-het and ∼60% of non-male students are uncomfortable voicing their thoughts daily. Alarming, for both non-male and non-het students, ∼30% have changed or considered changing offices, missed out on events, and altered their daily routine to avoid sources of mistreatment.

IV. REPORTING AND STUDENT PERCEPTION

Previously, we showed that the students most likely to experience or witness mistreatment are also the ones that are most affected in their day-to-day and academic (non-het, non-male, and BAME non-male students). Now, we consider whether or not students are reporting mistreatment. Students were asked "if they had ever witnessed or experienced an instance(s) of mistreatment or invalidation of identity to indicate whether or not they reported it to the appropriate channels," Fig. 2(a). Note, here we have not used any of the gender/sexuality or race/nationality filters; Fig. (a) includes all students who answered the question. Only about ∼10% of students reported all instances of mistreatment. Over 60% of students indicated that they "did not report" any instance of mistreatment. And roughly a quarter of students state that they "reported some instances but did not report others" implying that at least a quarter of students are witnessing or experiencing multiple acts of mistreatment.

To understand what could be holding students back from reporting, the survey asked students to "briefly share why you chose to report or not to report." The answers were predominantly reasons they did not report. These explanations were categorized into five general themes, the frequency of each theme is shown in Fig. 2(b). The main contributor for why students do not report is a feeling of "why bother" or a "lack of belief anything meaningful will be done." We want to emphasize that no student indicated a lack of knowledge of resources as their decision to not report. Using a Likert Scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," respondents were asked to share their level of agreement with the statement "I feel if I reported cases of mistreatment, it would be handled effectively." Similarly, respondents were asked to share their level of agreement with the following statements regarding the Physics Department’s handling of mistreatment: a) "The Physics Department recognizes cases of mistreatment seriously," b) "The Physics Department intentionally/unintentionally perpetrates mistreatment." c) "I feel if I reported cases of mistreatment, it would be handled effectively." d) "The Physics Department takes effective measures to prevent mistreatment." (see Appendix Fig. 3). We want to point out that no non-het respondent answered "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to reported cases of mistreatment being handled effectively. Furthermore, non-het, non-male, and BAME non-male respondents all expressed disagreement on average with the statements that the Physics Department takes cases of mistreatment seriously, handles reported cases of mistreatment effectively, or takes effective measures to prevent mistreatment.

Considering this information in light of previous sections, we see that non-het, non-male, and BAME non-male students witness/experience mistreatment at higher rates, express less comfort about reporting these instances to those within the department, and have less faith that the department will handle this mistreatment effectively.

V. CONCLUSION

There is a systemic issue of mistreatment in the physics department, with minority students experiencing/witnessing the largest portion of this mistreatment. Across the board, non-male and LGBTQ+ students experience/witness significantly more mistreatment than het males. We also observe significant increases in incidents of mistreatment from our BAME non-male students. Sexually based, racially-based, and LGBTQ+ mistreatment prevails as a large barrier for many students in completing their degree in the physics department. While the results of this survey present as dire, many universities have shown that a more equitable working environment can be achieved through careful monitoring and continued efforts to reduce mistreatment.

From the results and feedback of the students who took the survey, we strongly recommend that a student-led working group between graduate students and faculty be formed in determining a path forward. The ad-hoc committee firmly believes that progress toward a healthier climate in the physics department is achievable through concerted, continuous efforts, including future climate surveys. We hope the reader is inspired for change and considers aiding these efforts. For resources that helped us, see [1–5].

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

In an interest of keeping the executive summary concise, the following graphs were not included in the main text. You can also find copies of the majority of these graphs and more in the presentation that accompanies this document. In Section IV, we refer to a series of Likert Scale questions gauging the comfortability of students reporting to various department and university resources ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (-2) to "Strongly Agree" (2). The first two rows of Fig. 3 consider department-level avenues of reporting such as: to any graduate student, their advisor, the majority of professors they are (were) enrolled in, and to department leadership. A black dashed line at zero indicates a neutral response. The shaded grey region from -0.5 to +0.5 we consider to be a fairly neutral response. The final row of Fig. 3 considers two university-level structures of reporting: the Office of Title IX, and the Office of the Graduate Ombudsperson.

FIG. 3: Average responses to the question, "If I were to experience or witness mistreatment, I would feel comfortable reporting the situation to..." "Strongly disagree" disagree was assigned a point value of -2, "Disagree" was assigned a point value of -1, and so on. The shaded grey region indicates values between ±0.5 in the neutral zone.

Fig. 4 considers students perception on how the department handles mistreatment, as was discussed in Section IV.

FIG. 4: Responses to the questions regarding the response of the Physics Department to mistreatment. Numeric values were assigned in the same way as in Fig. 3.

As discussed in Section III, Fig. 5, shows the breakdown that the affects of experiencing mistreatment have on our student population.
FIG. 5: Academic affects of mistreatment: (a) Gender/Sexuality filter (b) Race/Ethnicity filter; Day-to-day affects of mistreatment: (c) Gender/Sexuality filter, and (d) Race/Ethnicity filter.