

## ACE Diversity SIG Member Survey

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“Diversity is defined as differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and other human differences.”

*Pathway to Diversity*, Strategic Planning Task Force on Diversity, USDA, 1991

During the 2005 ACE meeting, members of the Diversity SIG discussed how to better serve our members within the SIG, as well as other ACE members. As a result, the ACE Diversity SIG Member Survey was born. During fall 2005, the Diversity SIG officers developed and then distributed the survey to members via email. Around 20% of the members responded with their questions and ideas on diversity and the Diversity SIG.

*Demographics:*

The majority of respondents were female (72.7%, n=8) and listed their ethnicity/racial group membership as white (81.8%, n=9). Over half of the respondents (54.5%) selected 50-59 as their age range, followed by 18.2% of respondents who selected 40-49 years old. When asked what type of agency/institution they worked for, 72.7% of Diversity SIG members who responded selected "state extension." The remaining three members selected "academic unit" (n=2) and "other USDA or federal agency" (n=1).

Diversity SIG members were also asked how long they have been an ACE member. The greatest percentage, 36.4%, have been ACE members from 6-10 years, followed by 27.3% who have been members for 11-20 years, and 18.2% who have been members for 3-5 years. Members were then given a list of 13 job descriptions to choose from, with the option to select multiple items. Of these, "editing," "writing," and "PR/marketing" were selected by almost half (45.5%) of the respondents. Other job selected descriptions included "administration" (18.2%), "broadcast," "educational video," "graphic design," "information technology," and "teaching" (9.1%).

*Diversity:*

Respondents were first asked to explain why they joined the ACE Diversity SIG by selecting the appropriate response(s) from a list provided. All but one respondent selected “I want to interact with people committed to working with diverse publics” (See Table 1). Nine of the respondents (81.8%) selected “I want to learn more about working effectively with diverse publics,” and eight (63.6%) selected “I am committed to working with diverse publics.”

Table 1. Why members joined the ACE Diversity SIG.

	N	%
I want to interact with people committed to working with diverse publics	10	90.9%
I want to learn more about working effectively with diverse publics	9	81.8%
I am committed to working with diverse publics	7	63.6%
I want to help guide ACE in becoming more committed to supporting diversity in its membership and programming	5	45.5
I want to better understand what diversity means	5	45.5

The majority of respondents (n=9, 81.8%) feel they currently face diversity challenges in their work roles. These challenges include “not serving/reaching members of diverse publics as we should” (n=7, 63.6%) and “recruiting interns and/or employees from diverse publics” (n=6, 54.5%) (See Table 2). Almost half (45.5%) of the respondents also selected “reaching members of diverse publics we serve” and “not understanding diverse publics as we should” as diversity challenges they currently face. Respondents were also given the opportunity to write in their own diversity challenges. One person listed funding for translating marketing and educational materials. Another respondent wrote that although they have the resources to translate the materials, their office does not have the resources to further serve the diverse public once they have reached them.

Table 2. Diversity challenges faced by SIG members in their current work roles.

	N	%
Not serving/reaching members of diverse publics as we should	7	63.6%
Recruiting interns and/or employees from diverse publics	6	54.5%
Reaching members of diverse publics we serve	5	45.5%
Not understanding diverse publics as we should	5	45.5%
Understanding the needs of diverse publics being served	4	36.4%
Understanding the cultural values of diverse publics being served	4	36.4%
Translating educational material into another language	4	36.4%
Responding to people who say or do insensitive things to others who are different than themselves	3	27.3%

Two open-ended questions were included in this section asking respondents what they thought the Diversity SIG could do for 1) its own members and 2) all members of ACE. Several respondents suggested regional diversity workshops similar to the one held in Washington, D.C. One suggestion was to teach members how to modify pre-existent materials to reach nontraditional audiences. While one respondent suggested an online diversity discussion via email, several others recommended a diversity tip of the month type program also via email.

A network to share materials in different languages was also suggested by a respondent, as was posting more recent diversity articles on the SIG website. One respondent asked to focus on other diversity topics “such as, socioeconomic class diversity, working with handicapped audiences, cultural issues, etc.” Several respondents recommended working with other SIGs to host joint workshops. A final suggestion was for Diversity SIG members to work closely with the ACE membership committee in identifying ways to promote the organization to people working at 1890 Colleges and the Native American Colleges identified as land grant institutions.

*Conclusion:*

Results of this survey show that the majority of ACE Diversity SIG members are white (81.8%), female (72.7%), and between the ages of 50-59 (54.5%). In addition, many of the Diversity SIG members work in “editing,” “writing,” and “PR/marketing” (45.5%). These demographics are similar to those seen throughout the communication field. A key finding of this survey is that Diversity SIG members do feel they are facing diversity challenges at work. The majority of members who responded joined the Diversity SIG to learn how to work better with diverse publics (81.8%) and feel they are not serving/reaching members of diverse publics as they should (63.6%). The findings of this survey are somewhat limited by the small response rate and should be viewed cautiously. Although the survey was sent to the Diversity SIG listserv twice, only 11 members responded.

As officers of the Diversity SIG we are compelled to look beyond our own understanding of diversity in order to realize the needs of those we serve--our members. We need to help provide solutions including electronic information sources offered via email and/or the SIG website. This information should include diversity tips, diversity articles, and advice on how to reach audiences and how to communicate with them. In addition, our programming at the ACE conference should be focused on encompassing these practical needs of our members. Perhaps in doing so, our membership base will strengthen and grow.