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# "Why Are We Still Talking About Diversity?" Combatting Misconceptions in an Academic Library

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# “Why are we still talking about diversity?”

## Combating misconceptions in an academic library

Michael Mungin and Yasmeen Shorish

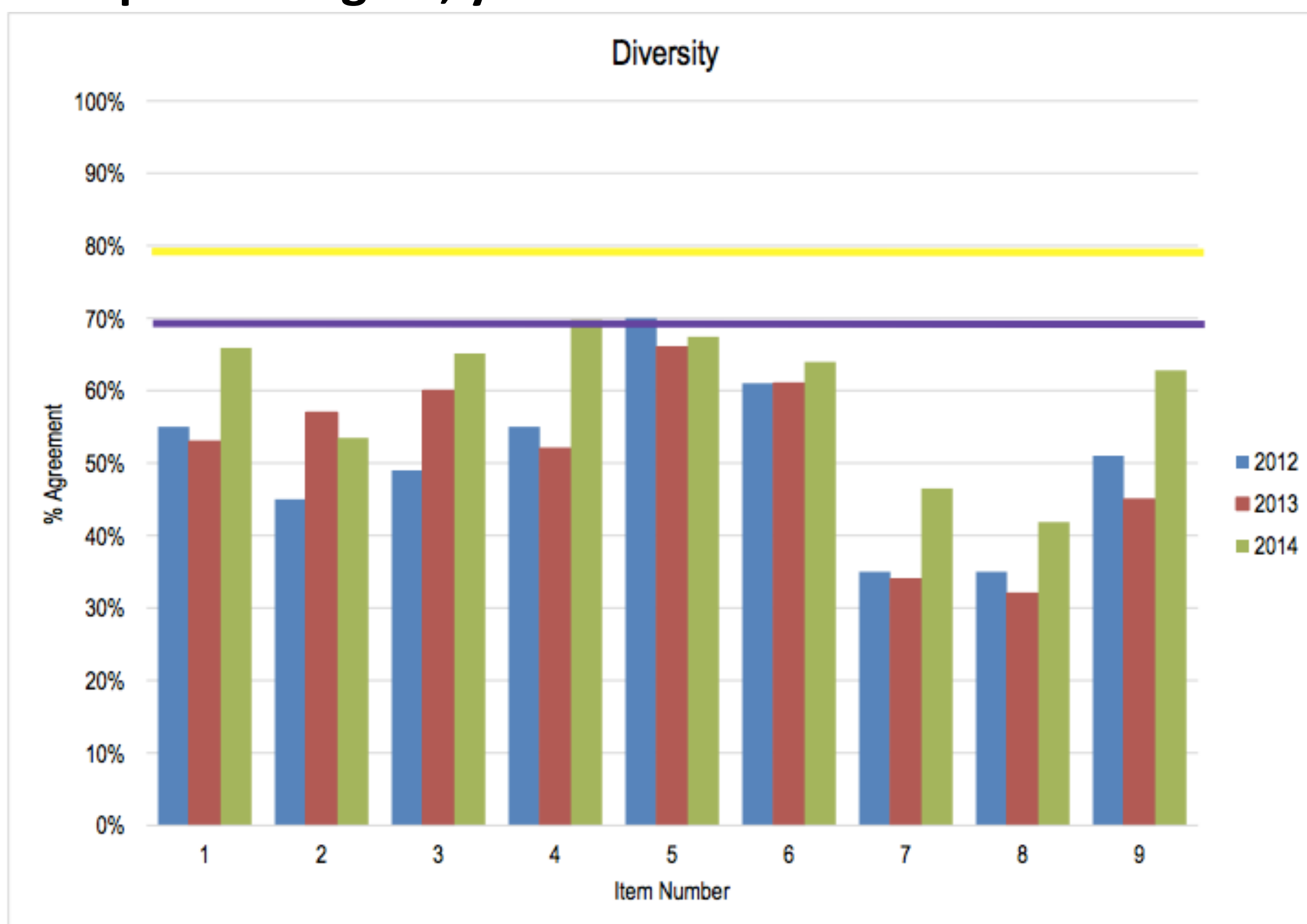
James Madison University Libraries & Educational Technologies (LET)

### Motivation

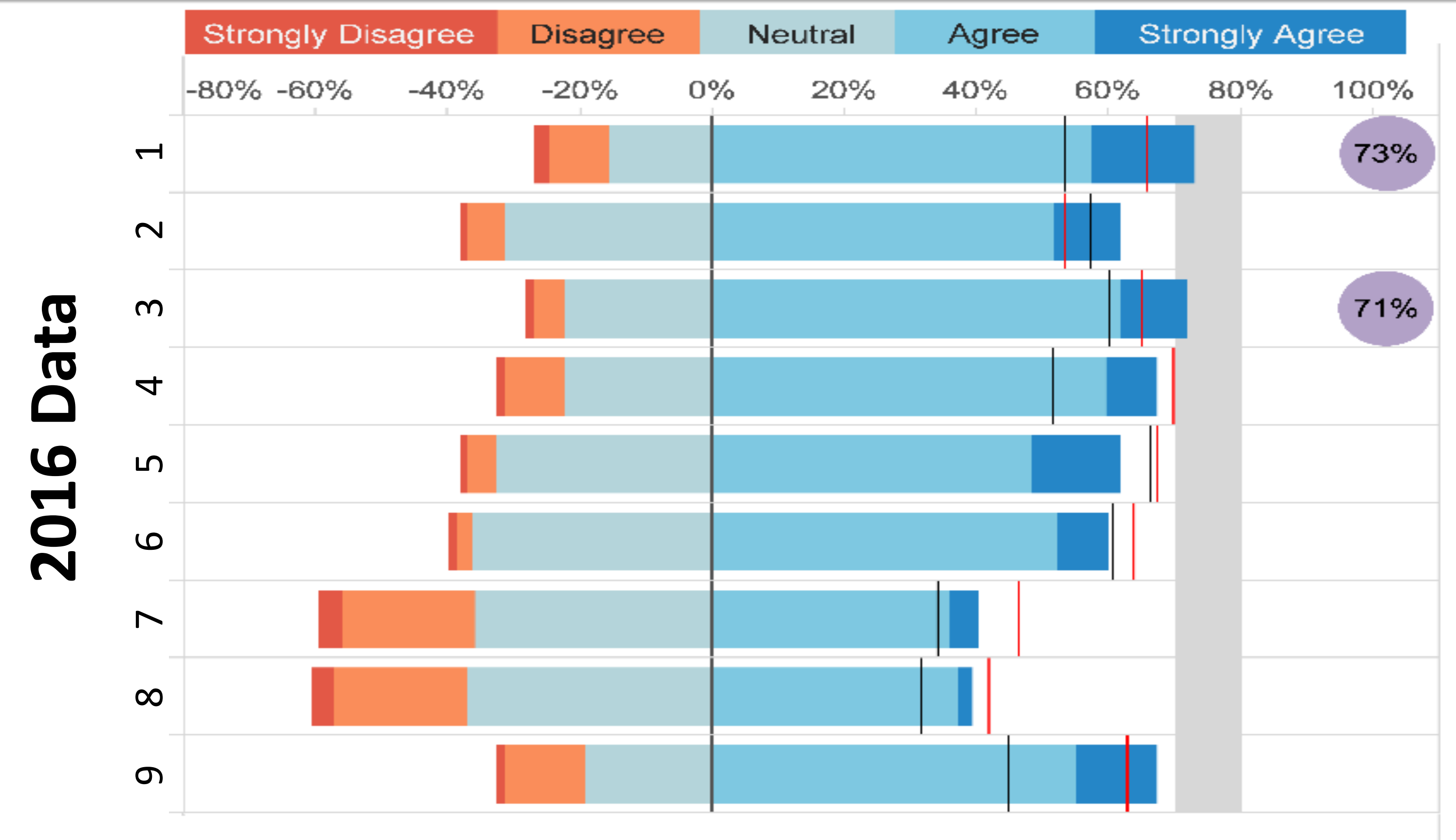
Since 2012, LET has administered a Work Life Satisfaction Survey (WLSS). One area of focus is diversity. LET has consistently missed target goals in this domain. Moreover, some of the anonymous composite comments were very negative. The LET Diversity Council decided to produce an outreach event to help address some of the data reflected in the WLSS. The outreach event occurred in March 2016, and the WLSS was administered again in April. This poster will discuss whether efforts have had a positive effect on the WLSS results.

### Historical Data

Purple line = goal; yellow line = reach



- 1.I am familiar with LET’s guiding principles and goals regarding diversity
- 2.LET’s guiding principles and goals on diversity are consistent with my own
- 3.LET’s diversity programs and initiatives seek to enhance the diversity of our environment
- 4.LET values diversity in its workforce
- 5.My co-workers value diversity
- 6.LET creates a comfortable environment for diverse faculty and staff
- 7.LET is effective in recruiting a diverse faculty and staff
- 8.LET’s recruiting efforts have resulted in a diverse faculty and staff
- 9.I understand the mission of the Diversity Council and how it is engaged with the university’s diversity effort



### Intervention

Year to year, comments indicated a lack of clarity on what diversity means, but also negatively implied that it was a concern for quota or “agenda” purposes. Commenters frequently question the need to talk about diversity. One goal for the outreach event was to come to a common understanding of diversity and its importance in the organization. The two hour, facilitated discussion covered what diversity meant to participants and what it meant in other contexts. At the conclusion of the event, the importance of diversity as a core value of the organization was affirmed, although those present were not able to clearly articulate an organizational definition for diversity. Additional details on the outreach event are available on the accompanying handout.

### Discussion

After the outreach event, the numeric results indicated gains on the WLSS. For the first time, we achieved basic goals on questions 1 and 3, which concern organizational diversity principles and the efficacy of diversity-related programs. This progress is tempered by the most recent set of comments, which still indicate some level of confusion, resistance, and apathy about diversity-enhancement efforts. These comments point to issues for the Diversity Council to address in the future. Solidifying diversity as a core, normative value of the organization is a goal that we will continue to work towards.