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AMERICAN
SOCIETY FOR
18TH CENTURY
STUDIES

American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
Membership Survey & Engagement Report

Prepared for the Executive Board, March 2022

Gladiator's Executive Summary + Overview

The American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) is a membership society focused on the study of all aspects of the period from the later seventeenth through the early nineteenth century. Membership spans many roles within academia including the humanistic, artistic, and social scientific fields.

Over the last year, ASECS has experienced noticeable tension among its members. Concerns about racial and gender equity have created frustration for many members. As a result, ASECS hosted forums for members to express their concerns, but has yet to establish clear next steps for moving forward and acknowledging what was learned.

In addition to this challenge, the leadership team recognized the layers of difficulty facing their membership at this moment in time. With the decreasing humanities support in higher education systems paired with a global pandemic, the membership has experienced compounding challenges and expects a new set of needs to be met by the organization.

As ASECS considers next steps, the organizational leadership was looking for clear feedback from the larger membership group and a set of recommendations. In order to achieve that clarity, the Gladiator Consulting team completed the following activities:

Discovery + Assessment

The work began with learning about ASECS. Through the discovery phase, we explored the organization's foundational documents, current realities, and dreams for the future. This process included:

- Review of by-laws, communications and other key organizational documents and plans;
- Attending the August Town Hall;
- Interviews and small group conversations with organizational leadership;
- Developing a survey designed to garner member feedback on the future of ASECS; and
- Distributing and analyzing the membership survey.

Leadership Conversations

After the survey results had been reviewed, the Gladiator team conducted three small focus group discussions to contextualize the initial findings and discuss options for moving forward. The first session was conducted with the executive board, and the following two sessions were conducted with caucus, affiliate, and committee leadership members.

Key Findings & Recommendations

The survey and focused conversations results provided a broad, yet thorough look at the current ASECS membership landscape. It is clear from our engagement that much of the organizational membership and leadership desires to build a more inclusive and welcoming organization. It is also clear that experiences as members and leaders vary widely by racial and gender identity, and ability

status. Our recommendations for moving forward are narrowed into the following three categories:

- Operationalize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility;
- Begin a stakeholder-driven strategic planning process, centering those voices most impacted by inequities within the organization and the field broadly;
- Build opportunities for continued Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility training.

In the detailed analysis that follows, we acknowledge not only the external challenges facing eighteenth-century studies, but the internal tensions and challenges that are born in a large organization with a membership made up of varying racial and gender identities, generations, career stages, institution types, and socio-economic backgrounds. We strive to highlight that it is imperative to include each of these identities in leadership positions with transparent decision-making processes that center those most impacted by inequities. Paired with clear and improved communication channels and targeted membership benefits and supports, the organization will be well on its way to the inclusive, welcoming environment that it hopes to build.

Survey Development

In August of 2021, ASECS leadership began to discuss possibilities for surveying ASECS membership with two goals: to understand membership perspectives on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging as well as to gain more knowledge about the current membership and their needs. ASECS Leadership decided to hire Gladiator Consulting to lead in survey development, deployment, and analysis. A project team was developed (Lisa Freeman and Jennifer Germann) to meet with Gladiator and advise on approach.

To assess membership engagement and experience, a 36-item survey was distributed via SurveyMonkey on October 19, 2021 with a closing date of October 31, 2021. The survey was promoted through email reminders and social media posts. The survey was sent to 1,902 email addresses. 40 email addresses bounced and 35 individuals opted out from Survey Monkey emails, resulting in a final distribution number of 1,827.

In total, 675 members completed the survey in its entirety resulting in a very robust 36.9% response rate. There were an additional 94 members who began the survey and answered at least 1 question but ultimately did not click “Done” on the last page of the survey. Their responses are included in the survey analysis.

The specific objectives of the survey were to:

- Understand member demographics, disciplines, working conditions, and conference preferences;
- Shape the mission and purpose as a scholarly organization;
- Understand what is working for members and where ASECS could enhance member experience and benefits;
- Understand membership perceptions around diversity and inclusion at ASECS; and
- Gather diversity and inclusion information with respect to member experience.

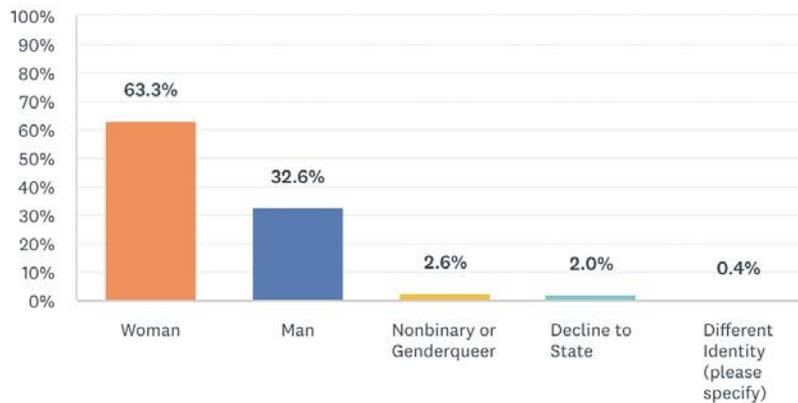
Demographics

Gender

63.3% of respondents self-identified as woman from a list of “Woman, Man, Nonbinary or Genderqueer, Decline to State, and Different Identity (please specify).”

With what gender do you identify with? Please check all that apply.

Answered: 758 Skipped: 11

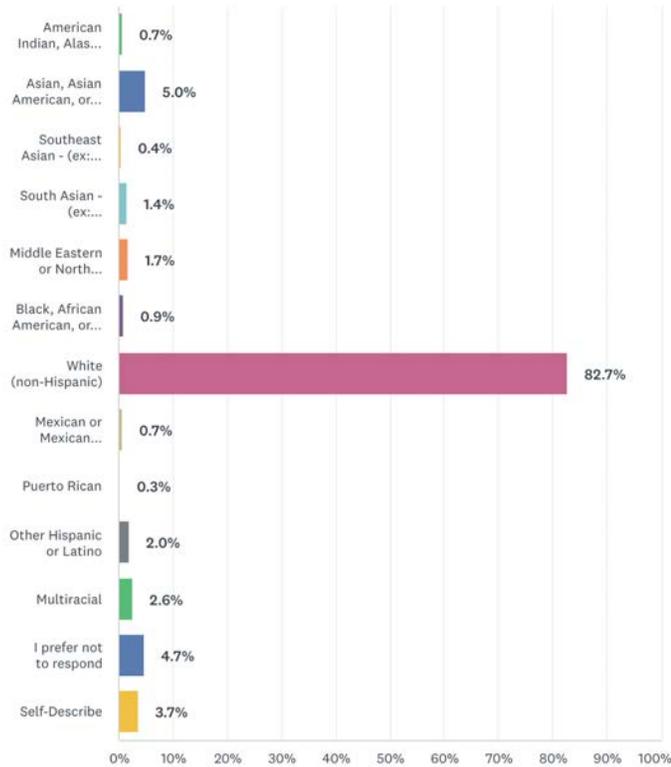


Race/Ethnicity

82.7% of respondents self-identified as “White (Non-Hispanic).”

I identify my race/ethnicity as (select all that apply)

Answered: 759 Skipped: 10

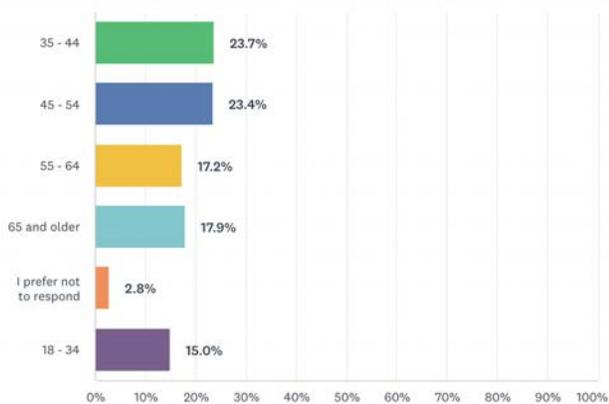


Age

23.7% of respondents self-selected the age range of “35-44”.

What is your age?

Answered: 755 Skipped: 14



Country of Residence

A total of 665 respondents typed in their state or country of residence. The consultants went through each entry to code if the submitted text was within the USA or outside of the USA. 73.9% of the entries were of states within the USA. Entries outside of the USA included:

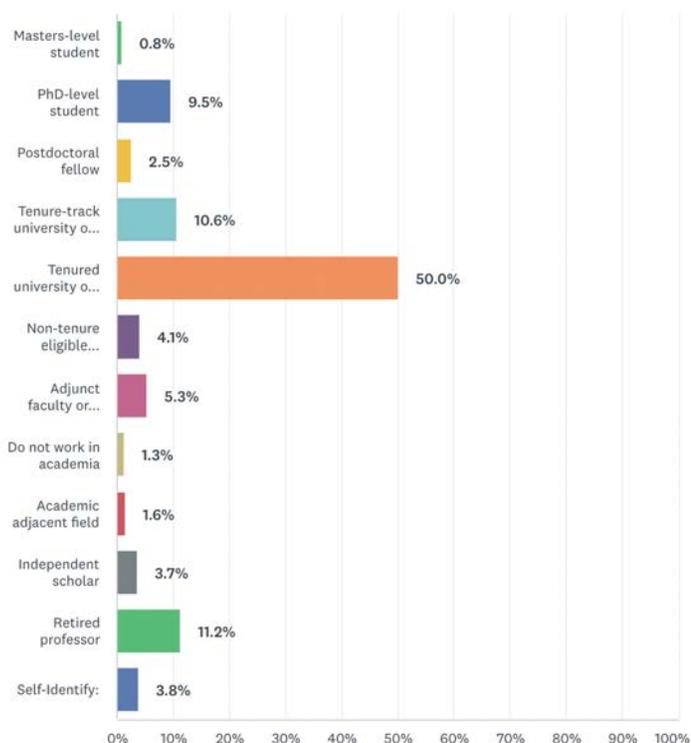
- Bulgaria (n = 1)
- Canada (n = 48)
- China (n = 3)
- Finland (n = 1)
- France (n = 2)
- Germany (n = 5)
- Ireland (n = 2)
- Israel (n = 4)
- Italy (n = 3)
- Luxembourg (n = 1)
- New Zealand (n = 2)
- Portugal (n = 1)
- Singapore (n = 1)
- South Korea (n = 1)
- Switzerland (n = 1)
- Turkey (n = 2)
- United Kingdom (n = 22)

Classification

50% of respondents self-selected the option of “I am a tenured university or college professor.”

Please select the most appropriate option below that apply to you:

Answered: 756 Skipped: 13

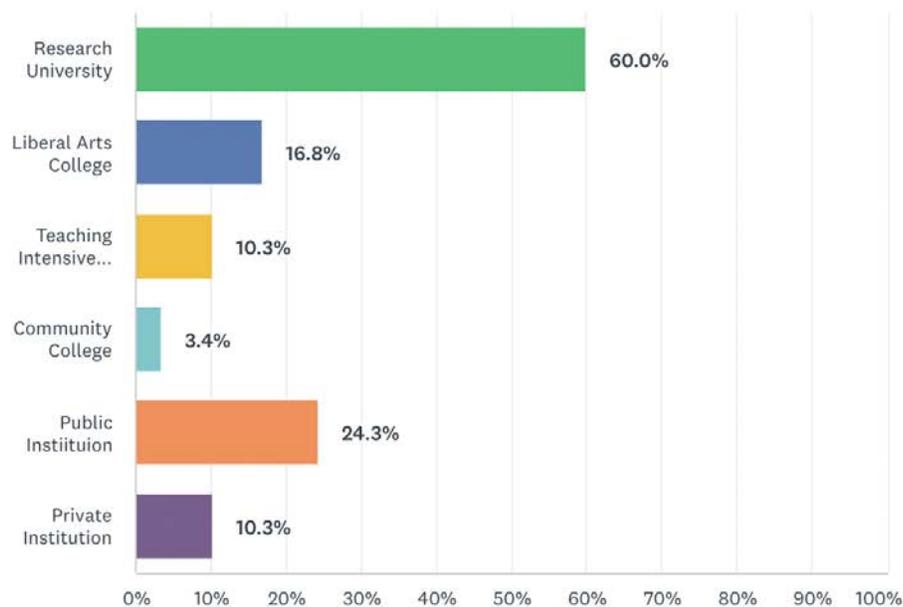


University Affiliation (Faculty Only)

There were 642 respondents who answered the question “If you teach at a college or university, please indicate the type(s).” 59.9% selected “Research University” from the following options:

If you teach at a college or university, please indicate the type(s)

Answered: 642 Skipped: 127



ASECS Membership Experience

Membership History

When examining organizational tenure, 31.4% of respondents indicated that they had been a member of ASECS for more than 20 years and that they had become a member early in their career (either in graduate school or early in their faculty experience). Additionally, 46.8% indicated that they were also a member of an ASECS affiliate.

Respondents were asked, “Why have you continued to be a member of ASECS?” One of the primary response themes consisted of ASECS being the intellectual “home” of members. For example, one respondent shared:

ASECS is the professional organization that has most nourished me both intellectually and collegially. It encourages me to undertake new work in new arenas, and it provides me with a wide network of generous and knowledgeable scholars...



Another respondent shared “At my home institution, I’m the only one who specializes in my field. ASECS helps me feel less isolated as an eighteenth-centuryist!” Finally, this additional comment also captures this theme of home and belonging, “Because it’s where my people are. It is the home of my intellectual identity as a scholar.” While not all encompassing, these quotes are representative of a number of members with varying backgrounds and tenures in the organization.

Conference Preferences

Conference attendance was also listed as a reason for respondents to continue their ASECS membership. Specifically, of the 592 respondents who answered this question, 135 mentioned their appreciation of the ASECS conference in their response. For example, one respondent shared “I am always energized by seeing colleagues at the conference and hearing papers presented there. For me, it is the most important conference I attend.” Another stated, “I work in a wide range of areas and it is one of the few conferences where I can see what people are doing in other disciplines.”

59.5% of respondents shared that they had attended the 2021 ASECS virtual annual conference. Additionally, 75.8% of respondents shared that they would attend another virtual ASECS conference and 79.7% would support ASECS holding alternate-year conferences beginning in 2025.

Membership Opportunities

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to 29 prompts regarding opportunities provided to them due to their ASECS membership. After data collection, the consultants collapsed the scale items of *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* to be *Agreement* and *Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree* to become *Disagreement*.

Data analysis revealed that prompts regarding learning about the field as a whole (ex: identify new research topics, grow intellectually, read new work) and building/expanding upon one’s network (ex: build professional networks and/or relationships; build personal networks and/or relationships) tended to have a higher level of agreement (80% or higher) than prompts regarding mentorship, support, and learning about new pedagogies.

Considering that many individuals join ASECS so early in their academic careers, this highlights a unique opportunity for ASECS to consider offering specialized services from which individuals who are newer to the field could especially benefit.

ASECS Mission

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to describe the mission of ASECS. Among the responses, the prominent theme was that members saw the mission of ASECS to be advancing the study of the eighteenth century. Selected responses included:

- “Further scholarship and teaching on the eighteenth century;”
- “I have always thought of ASECS as a body dedicated to sharing and fostering current scholarship in eighteenth-century studies;”



- “Promote collaborative and cross-disciplinary approaches to 18c studies;” and
- “To bring together 18-century studies scholars, to share research and build community.”

Academic Discipline

When asked to indicate their academic discipline, the largest subgroup of respondents (39.2%) indicated that they were in the English (English/English Literature) discipline.

The majority (70% or higher) of respondents indicated agreement that their discipline was represented and included in ASECS publications, supported by resources available to ASECS members, and reflected in ASECS leadership and membership.

We took a step further and looked at these responses a few different ways, comparing the response between tenured and tenure-track faculty to those who were not on a tenure track. In general, this disaggregation of responses provided little difference in response. The one notable increase is that nearly 20% of non-tenure track members were unable to identify if they were represented amongst leadership of ASECS. And in general, non-tenure-track members were more likely to answer “agree” versus “strongly agree” to questions regarding support from ASECS.

When asked about current challenges being faced within their academic careers, respondents provided the following answers:

Institutional Support: There was a resounding observed theme of respondents indicating they had little (or decreasing) support from their institution. Examples of these comments included: “Dwindling institutional support for the humanities,” and “The general collapse of (or withdrawal of material support for) academic humanities...”

Balancing Academic Requirements: Several respondents included the word “balance” in their responses. This encompassed work/life balance as well as balancing academic requirements. For example, one respondent wrote “How to balance teaching and research and work and life. Teaching administrative tasks (tenure committees, university committees, etc.) take up a large amount of time and energy...”; another had similar sentiments when they shared, “Balancing many requirements of being mid-career: teaching, grad student supervision, my own publications/research, program administration, service.”

Transition to Retirement: There were many respondents who will soon retire or have retired (n= 65) and have a desire to remain engaged within the field. For example, one respondent shared “I am retired so the main challenge is to maintain research activities.” There was also a sub-theme of individuals being concerned that their field will cease to exist when they retire. One respondent stated “I have had a successful career. The challenge is making sure my department will hire (in) eighteenth-century studies when I retire. Indeed, part of the reason I continue is that if I retire, no one will be teaching eighteenth-century studies...”

Again, we looked at the disaggregated data to understand if tenure-track and non-tenure track members were experiencing challenges differently. In addition to the three main themes mentioned



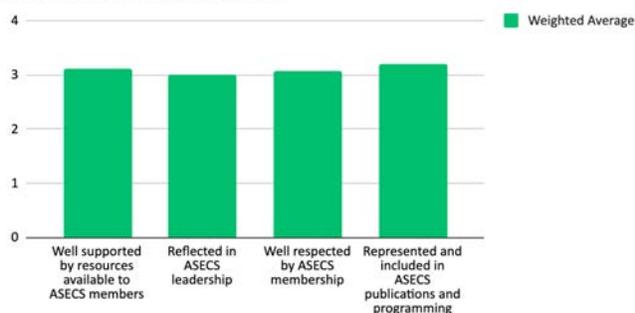
above, the top challenge for those members who do not have and may not be seeking tenure, is access to stable, well-paying, and full-time employment. Several members have left traditional academia altogether and are looking for support in applying their research and studies outside of the classroom, as well as maintaining a community of scholarship. Adequate child care was also mentioned as a challenge, especially in the current environment.

It should be noted that many challenges mentioned above were compounded by experiences of sexism, ableism, and racial discrimination. These persistent practices inhibit the ability to advance and be supported in one's institution and reinforce inequitable structures.

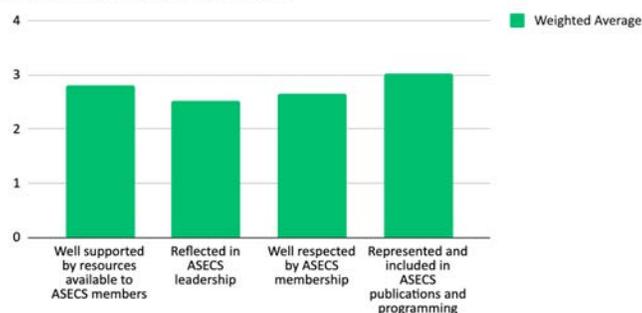
Tenure Track

Non-Tenure Track

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: My discipline is...



Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: My discipline is...



COVID-19 Challenges

When asked about the COVID pandemic, 72.6% of respondents indicated that COVID has had an adverse affect on their academic career and scholarly life.

Analysis of the open-ended comments revealed that respondents are facing a number of challenges. Some of which include:

Experiences of alienation: Respondents shared that they are limited now to virtual-only interactions and lack access to resources. For example, one respondent stated “Lack of intellectual exchange and access to libraries and archives.” Another wrote, “It’s made it impossible to get to archives.” Another respondent summarized this when they shared, “The inability to meet with people in three dimensions, the inability to work in archives, the strains on family and needs for supporting those around me, and the distraction and stress that inhibited concentration on sustained projects—all had a negative effect.”

Difficulties with teaching in new ways: Respondents shared the challenges that they are facing in having to teach in different modes and in different ways. For example, one respondent wrote, “Teaching remotely for a year; and now teaching in an environment where students have to be



masked and spread out has made teaching quite difficult at a liberal arts school where the format is almost entirely discussion based and not lecture based.” Another revealed that teaching in a different mode had impacted their evaluations when they explained, “Teaching asynchronously devastated my teaching evaluations.”

Health concerns: Respondents shared stories of suffering from “long COVID” and teaching at institutions with limited COVID precautions. Several members expressed concern about attending in-person conferences based on the knowledge of vaccination rates at their own institutions.

Work-life balance: Several respondents shared their challenges with balancing increased virtual course loads with managing child care constraints and family health priorities. In many cases, members were simultaneously teaching their own courses while also home-schooling their children.

Member Insights on Racial Equity & Inclusion

General Responses

Overall, responses showed that respondents indicated agreement with prompts such as having a “basic understanding of concepts related to racial equity,” valuing the opportunity to “examine and discuss the impacts of race on our work at ASECS,” and the ability to “identify examples of institutional racism.” Additionally, responses also showed that respondents indicated agreement with the prompts of being able to “identify examples of structural racism,” comfort with “talking about race,” as well as comfort when “others talk about race.”

This level of agreement was not as high with prompts inquiring about specifics. For example, less than half (41.1%) of respondents indicated agreement with having, “the tools to address interpersonal racism at ASECS.” Additionally, only about a quarter (27.8%) of respondents indicated agreement with having “the tools to address institutional racism within ASECS.”

Since members indicated that they encountered racism within ASECS, it is important that the organization provide the opportunity to engage in training so that members have the tools to address instances of racism.

Those specific questions were asked and the results revealed that overall:

- 30% of respondents agreed that they had identified examples of **interpersonal/individual** racism at ASECS;
- 33.1% of respondents agreed that they had identified examples of **institutional** racism within ASECS; and
- 36.6% of respondents agreed that they had identified examples of **structural** racism within ASECS.

To further contextualize this observation, the consulting team compared responses to this question based on the demographic data that was collected. Specifically, the consultants compared the individuals who self-selected as “White (non-Hispanic),” (n = 628) to the combined responses of



individuals (n = 92) who self-selected at least one ethnicity from this list: “American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American; Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; Black, African American, or African; Mexican or Mexican American; Puerto Rican; Other Hispanic or Latino; and Multiracial.”

Though racism exists across all countries, this grouping was done in light of specificities and nuances of racism that occurs within the United States. One respondent captured this when they shared, “I’m not an American, and I do often feel there are nuances and codes in play in many interactions and discussion(s) that I’m not fully grasping.”

This analysis revealed the following percentages of agreement towards the below prompts:

- I have identified examples of interpersonal/individual racism at ASECS.
 - **55.7%** of individuals from the combined grouping of minorities indicated agreement with this statement.
 - **28.6%** of White (non-Hispanic) respondents indicated agreement with this statement.
- I have identified examples of structural racism within ASECS.
 - **56.7%** of individuals from the combined grouping of minorities indicated agreement with this statement.
 - **36.6%** of White (non-Hispanic) respondents indicated agreement with this statement.
- I have identified examples of institutional racism within ASECS.
 - **53.7%** of individuals from the combined grouping of minorities indicated agreement with this statement.
 - **32.9%** of White (non-Hispanic) respondents indicated agreement with this statement.

These percentages highlight that the experiences of these two groups are noticeably different.

Review of open-ended comments within this survey section revealed three primary themes:

Support for Continued Exploration and Discussion: Many respondents indicated that they believed these conversations on the topic of racial equity and inclusion were important and that they were appreciative that these conversations were happening. For example, one respondent shared “I have noticed a significant increase in discussion of race, class, empire, inequality, and other related themes at ASECS meetings. This is a good thing.” Another respondent stated, “I am not a member of a minority group, so I don’t feel comfortable speaking for them. However, those ASECS members who are, have reported feeling alienated and discriminated against, and I trust their experiences.”



Acknowledgement of Issue, Question of Discipline Appropriateness: Another observed theme within the analysis was instances of respondents acknowledging the importance of discussions of racism but questioning specifically if ASECS and the discipline of the 18th-century studies was the place to have these continued conversations. For example, one respondent shared, “We need to address equity and inclusion. It’s not the main function of ASECS though.” Another respondent explained, “I think it is important that ASECS be an institution that encourages and promotes the scholarship of individuals of all racial backgrounds...I do not think however, that as scholars we should be forced to engage with topics of racism in our own research.”

Frustration With Continued Discussion: It should be noted that there were a few responses that indicated a sense of frustration surrounding these conversations and the occurrence of them within the survey. For example, one respondent wrote, “This section of the questionnaire was a waste of my time.” Another shared, “I believe ‘Racial Equity & Inclusions’ are code words for implementing programs of ‘guaranteed outcome’ to replace ‘equal opportunity.’ I see it as a ‘war’ on merit.”

Membership Experiences with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Additional questions were asked of respondents to gain understanding of membership experiences. The majority of respondents (71.4%) indicated agreement with the statement, “Our organization respects individuals and values differences.” There were mixed responses with the statement, “We have free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs,” in that 58.4% indicated agreement, 24.3% indicated disagreement, and 17.3% selecting “I Don’t Know.”

Responses were almost equal with the statement, “We have frequent conversations about how race/ethnicity impact how we work together at ASECS,” with agreement/disagreement/and I Don’t Know all being within the range of 30%.

Almost half (45.5%) of respondents agreed that they had personally witnessed gender discrimination during their time as an ASECS member and 22.9% indicated that they had been on the receiving end of discrimination during their time as a member. When this question was further analyzed, it was observed that 20.2% of individuals who self-identified as White (non-Hispanic) indicated agreement with this statement whereas double (47.8%) of individuals from the combined minority group indicated agreement.

Leadership Conversations

At the conclusion of the survey, the Gladiator team held three listening sessions with organizational leadership to discuss preliminary findings and themes from the survey and briefly look towards action steps for the future. The first group engagement was with current and past board members of ASECS, held on November 30, 2021. The following two sessions held December 8 and December 13, 2021, consisted of caucus chairs, committee appointments, and affiliate representatives. Each session was 90 minutes in length with opportunities for attendees to share their perspectives.



General Theme Reflections

When reviewing the survey results, the leadership teams were most concerned with the disconnect between newer members who are early in their careers and longer-term members who began their careers in a very different educational landscape and sociopolitical environment. Access to conference funding and high membership fees were brought up as a concern as many institutions are no longer providing financial support for their faculty members to participate. It was acknowledged that there needs to be more room for leadership from graduate students and early career professionals, as well as those who are academic-adjacent.

There was a shared agreement about the need to continue conversations on race, belonging, accessibility and equity within the organization. Caucus and affiliate leaders were encouraged by the addition of the DEIA questions in the survey and recommended those answers be disaggregated by race and shared to the broader membership to get a full picture of the current state of the organization. It was made clear that harm has been done to members who do not identify as white and that not everyone feels safe to participate fully in the organization, especially when sharing research. The impacts of past leadership statements and decisions are still being felt and need intentional resolutions.

Strategic Questions

After the review of survey themes in each of the engagement sessions, we asked the group a series of three questions:

- (1) What is currently moving us forward as an organization?
- (2) What is holding us back?
- (3) Over the next two years, how can ASECS build an inclusive and engaged membership?

Each group, while different in structure, came to similar agreements for both the present state and future state of the organization.

What is Currently Moving Us Forward?

Full Time Staff: In general, leadership felt the addition of full-time staff was a huge step forward for the organization. The ability to have someone dedicated to membership operations and helping drive strategic direction and coordination amongst leadership is greatly appreciated.

New Website Development: A new website in development was mentioned by every listening session as an asset for the organization moving forward. Updated functionality for philanthropic contributions, greater access to board minutes, bylaws and general membership benefits were highlighted as must-have features.

Caucus Collaboration: It was recognized that exceptional work is being done by affiliates and caucus groups within ASECS. There have been increased opportunities for cross-pollination work that makes for exciting sessions and content. However, it was noted that during the conference, these sessions are often scheduled at the same time, limiting participation.



Early Career Scholars: It was expressed by more than one session attendee that early career scholars are moving not only the organization, but the entire field of study in a positive direction. They have clarity of vision in terms of structural issues facing academia right now and broader knowledge of how the eighteenth century interacts with our current cultural understanding.

What is Holding Us Back?

Lack of Transparency: Everyone acknowledged that while each caucus and affiliate group had robust communication with their membership, the overall flow of information from ASECS top leaders was lacking. This was particularly true for budgetary information. It is not clear how and why budget decisions are made. This was also heard in membership surveys and during the August Town Hall session.

No Clear Mission: The leadership from board, caucuses, committees and affiliates all shared that the lack of a clear, concise vision and mission statement is holding the organization back.

Generational Divides: It seems clear that there is division amongst newer, younger members and those from older generations who have been long-standing members of the organization. While this is common, especially in conversations regarding access and equity, this level of disconnect is discouraging the newer members from participating fully.

Lack of Trust: The actions of the past president and the show of support for him from portions of the membership are still being felt by non-white members and those who are engaged in research that critically examines race and equity. Because of this experience paired with other personal instances of microaggressions, several leadership members mentioned feeling apprehension about sharing their work or speaking publicly for fear of retribution from portions of the membership.

In What Ways Can We Build an Inclusive and Engaged Membership?

Embedded DEIA: Session participants emphasized that the idea of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility needs to be embedded in all policies and practices moving forward, and intentionally so. Showing leadership support and buy-in will go a long way with membership.

Support for Early Career Scholars: Several members expressed the need for the organization to strategically fundraise, ideally from within its membership, to provide greater support and access for early career and financially-constrained members. However, it was noted the current fundraising technology on the website was hard to find and navigate. In addition to monetary support, there is room to improve and tailor the mentorship and networking opportunities available to members.

Board Restructuring: In each session, the need for better representation within the upper-levels of ASECS leadership was discussed. In order to achieve this, many session attendees believed that restructuring the board and the organization bylaws were the best paths forward to achieve greater representation in leadership roles.

Increased Transparency and Communications: In both sessions with caucus, affiliate and committee leadership, it was clear that providing avenues for increased transparency in both decision-making



and organizational operations was key. Providing a space for important documents to be reviewed regularly online was offered as a solution, as well as greater budget details, and more accountability from the executive committee regarding external communications.

Intentional Networking: Session attendees would like to see more intentional, accessible and varied networking opportunities throughout the year and within the conference structure. This was especially highlighted in a recommendation to have a “speed dating” session to pair more well-established members with newer members looking to make connections in the field.

Recommended Next Steps

Through this initial discovery process, ASECS now has a wealth of information about a broad cross section of its membership which provides insights into the current landscape of the organization. It is clear from our engagement that the leadership desires to build a more inclusive and welcoming organization that actively works to prevent discrimination of any kind. Similarly, there is a growing push from early career scholars and non-white members to push the organization further into becoming an actively anti-racist society. While we believe this is a necessary goal, we acknowledge that not all members are equally invested in this project and some feel they do not have the right tools to proceed. To that end, we recommend the following next steps on the path forward from here:

- Operationalize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility;
- Begin a stakeholder-driven strategic planning process, through centering impacted leadership; and
- Build opportunities for continued Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility training.

Operationalizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Prioritize building a culture of inclusivity and belonging across publications, sub-groups, and levels of leadership. This starts with foundational organizational policies and processes.

Bylaws & Leadership: Building an inclusive and representative leadership structure is both defined and limited by the current organizational bylaws. We recommend a significant restructuring of the requirements of and expectations for board and committee leadership to allow for greater representation and manageable commitments. In addition, it is recommended that the society explore compensation for critical, time-heavy roles in the organization that have traditionally been completed on a voluntary basis. This will allow a broader subset of your membership to participate in these roles.

Internal Communications Strategy: ASECS should review its existing structures/functions for internal communications and feedback strategies and assess 1) what is helpful, 2) what is not working as intended, and 3) what new practices can be introduced. For example, how can the new website be designed to highlight current work of members? Is the process for publication



submission clear? In what ways can the organization build cross-collaboration throughout the year between conferences?

Membership Supports & Benefits: Together with the leadership of the DEIA Committee, ASECS should consider the existing diversity of its membership (early career, mid-career, late-career, retirement, tenure, non-tenure, academic adjacent, etc) as a structural launching pad for integrating a culture of belonging and support. With this lens, the taskforce should review existing membership benefits and adjust to align with the current needs and realities of the membership, intentionally examining where barriers may exist for some members to access said benefits.

Conference Planning: It is unanimously agreed upon that the Annual Conference is a top benefit of being an ASECS member. It is also widely agreed that the conference structure does not serve the entire membership. We recommend a critical look at session planning, venue selection, attendance fees, lodging options, accessibility accommodations, and program delivery through an intentional DEIA lens. The DEIA, Women's and Early Career caucuses of ASECS should lead the process of identifying areas of improvement in partnership with the planning committee. It is imperative that a diverse and representative taskforce is assigned to this effort.

Stakeholder Driven Strategic Planning Through Centering Those Most Impacted by Inequities Within the Organization and the Field Broadly

ASECS is a well-established organization that has a long history of supporting eighteenth-century studies and scholars around the world. It is also an organization that has found itself at the precipice of a universal cultural shift with a need to address long-standing practices in order to strengthen its path to the future. A strategic plan will help define a clear mission, vision and collective values for the organization while providing actionable strategies for supporting, sustaining, and even growing the membership base.

Stakeholder or participatory planning that centers impacted membership requires the involvement of those stakeholders who are most often affected by systemic oppression and discrimination such as people of color, women, persons with a disability, youth, and members of the LGBTQIA community. We strongly note that it is important for impacted members to move past involvement and into leadership and decision-making roles. Members of privilege, those who have not traditionally been impacted by discrimination and oppression, are still included in the process to share their experiences, but should primarily be expected support the priorities of the impacted membership over their own.

At Gladiator, we encourage the philosophies of real-time strategic planning and stakeholder-driven action plans. We suggest ASECS consider a strategic planning process that would engage many stakeholder groups in the process of reviewing the organization's mission/vision/values, and establishing the short, mid, and long term goals of the organization with an intentional focus on diversity, racial equity, inclusion, and accessibility.



Create An Ongoing And Multifaceted Educational Process To Build DEIA Capacity

The path to belonging and a more equitable organization is nonlinear and infinite; the learning never stops. Organizations are fluid entities that change everyday, not just as individuals leave and join. While several survey respondents expressed disdain and even threatened to leave the organization because of the questions focused on DEIA, we did recognize that a significant portion of the ASECS membership is ready to join these conversations and continue the work already begun by the DEIA committee.

The measurement to strive for here is growth. We recommend an educational process that accommodates different learning styles and allows for both the grace to lean in and out while providing for accountability to learning. The key to a successful educational plan is centering the reality that members are not accountable to trainers or consultants who come and go. Ultimately they are only accountable to one another. Therefore, the most impactful growth will come from a sustained effort from within that uplifts relationships across racial, gender, and other identity differences and institutional silos to promote compassion and understanding.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility challenges facing the organization and the field as a whole are not occurring in a vacuum, but rather are deeply impacted by individual decisions and national and global events. An educational plan should not be fixed, but flexible, fluid, and responsive. We recommend the following resources and approaches for consideration:

[Crossroads](#)

[Witnessing Whiteness](#)

[Affinity Groups](#)

[Racial Equity Tools](#)

[Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#)

Final Thoughts

ASECS has a tremendous amount of resources in the form of member commitment and engagement. A high response rate on a very long survey indicates that your members are engaged and ready to help shape the future of the organization to not only better serve them, but the scholars who come after them. There is a strong sense of community that has already been built within the society. And there is room to improve. The observations and recommended actions laid out in this report are meant to provide a beginning roadmap for building the welcoming, inclusive organization that ASECS membership desires it to be.

We understand that the field of eighteenth-century studies is being hit with challenges not only from the pandemic, but from the ever shrinking number of resources available at institutions. We read numerous comments speaking of curriculum being cut, tenured positions being left unfilled after retirement, and entire departments and degrees facing elimination. Class loads are high and research time and money is limited while wages remain stagnant. These are big challenges for any



one organization to take on. And we must acknowledge that while everyone is feeling the strain, the members of your organization who identify as Black, differently abled, members of the LGBTQIA community, and women are impacted differently and in most cases more severely.

In order for the recommendations shared here to be successful - whether explicitly related to DEIA or not - it will require leadership to commit to acknowledging that conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility have an important place within ASECS membership and more broadly, within the field of eighteenth-century studies as a whole. It is the only way to build an organization where everyone feels welcome and able to participate in and benefit from the community. In making this commitment, there will undoubtedly be continued moments of discomfort, but with the right intentional tools and practices in place, those moments will lead to growth, both for the organization and for scholarship focusing on the long eighteenth century.



Appendix 1: Survey Questions

This appendix lists the survey texts and answer options as originally provided.

ASECS Membership Survey Questions

Dear ASECS Member,

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey. As you know, over the last year the Board has initiated a series of intentional conversations about the future of ASECS and in particular about how we can become a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization. This survey, devised in conjunction with the Gladiator Consulting team, is the next step both in that very important process and in cultivating a better understanding of who our members are and what our professional situations and scholarly needs might be.

This survey will assist us in:

- understanding our member demographics, disciplines, working conditions, and conference preferences
- shaping our mission and purpose as a scholarly organization
- understanding what is working for members and where we might enhance member experience and benefits
- understanding membership perceptions around diversity and inclusion at ASECS
- gathering diversity and inclusion information with respect to member experience

We want to stress that all answers will be completely anonymous, including the optional additional comment sections. Any identifying information that is shared will be anonymized by the Gladiator team, who will then compile and share with ASECS leadership the general themes that emerge from your responses.

Your participation is important to us as we look to how ASECS might best serve its members and ensure a vibrant and inclusive future for the society. . We very much appreciate your time and care.

Yours,

The ASECS Board



SECTION ONE: Demographics

1) Gender: (You can choose multiple options)

- Woman
- Man
- Nonbinary or Genderqueer
- Different Identity:_____
- Decline to State

2) I Identify my race/ethnicity as (select all that apply):

- American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American
- Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
- Southeast Asian - (ex: Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Thai, Vietnamese)
- South Asian - (ex: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani)
- Middle Eastern or North African
- Black, African American, or African
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Mexican or Mexican American
- Puerto Rican
- Other Hispanic or Latino
- Multiracial
- I prefer not to respond
- Self-Describe:

3) Age:

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 and older
- I prefer not to respond

4) State and/or Country of residence:



5) Please select the most appropriate options below that apply to you:

- I am a Masters-level student
- I am a PhD-level student
- I am a postdoctoral fellow
- I am a tenure-track university or college professor
- I am a tenured university or college professor
- I am a non-tenure eligible faculty member
- I am adjunct faculty or a lecturer
- I do not work in academia
- I am in an academic adjacent field
- I am an independent scholar
- I am a retired professor
- Self-Identify:_____

If you teach at a college or university, please indicate the type (check all that apply):

- Research University
- Liberal Arts College
- Teaching Intensive College
- Community College
- Public Institution
- Private Institution

Please indicate your current teaching load:

- 2/2
- 3/3
- 4/4
- 5/5
- Other (please specify)
- I am not currently teaching

Please indicate the levels you teach:

- Undergraduate Students
- Graduate Students
- Not applicable (not currently teaching)
- Other (please specify)

6) How long have you been a member of ASECS?

- Less than 5 years



- 5 to 10 years
- 11 to 20 years
- More than 20 years
- Occasional panelist/ participant

7) Are you also a member of an ASECS affiliate?

- YES
- NO
- Occasional panelist/ participant at affiliate meetings

8) How did you travel to the last ASECS meeting that you attended in person?

- Train
- Plane
- Bus
- Automobile
- Car Pool
- Other

9) Did you attend the 2021 ASECS virtual annual conference?

- Yes
- No

10) Would you ever attend another virtual ASECS annual conference?

- YES
- NO

11) Would you support an ASECS initiative to hold alternate-year conferences beginning in 2025 in order to reduce our collective carbon footprint?

- YES
- NO

12) If ASECS opts for an alternate-year cycle of in-person national meetings, would you be more likely to attend an in-person ASECS [regional] affiliate conference in the alternate year?



- YES
- NO

SECTION TWO Mission

1) In your own words, what would you say is the MISSION of ASECS?

2) ASECS has provided me with opportunities to: each of these items would be set in the same kind of grid of other sections--with strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, I don't know

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Grow intellectually | • Build personal networks and/or relationships |
| • Publish my work | • Access research resources |
| • Present my work | • Access teaching resources |
| • Gain recognition for my work | • Learn about new pedagogies |
| • Receive support for my work (fellowships, travel grants, awards/prizes, etc.) | • Discuss current challenges in higher education |
| • Collaborate with scholars in my field | • Participate in professional development workshops |
| • Collaborate with scholars outside of my field | • Access information about professional development |
| • Learn about subjects outside my field/discipline | • Receive early career support and/or advice |
| • Hear new work | • Be mentored |
| • Read new work | • Mentor others |
| • Find out about new publications | • Participate on committees (prizes, travel awards, caucuses, publications, etc.) |
| • Identify new research topics | • Take on a leadership role (board, caucuses, publications, etc.) |
| • Exchange ideas about debates in the field | • Visit new cities/places |
| • Build professional networks and/or relationships | |



- Engage with collections and/or participate in cultural events at conference destination

5) Why have you continued to be a member of ASECS?

6) **Additional comments:**

SECTION THREE: Discipline

1) Please indicate your discipline:

2) My discipline is well supported by resources available to ASECS members:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

3) My discipline is reflected in ASECS leadership

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know



4) My discipline is well-respected by ASECS membership

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

5) My discipline is represented and included in ASECS publications and programming

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

6) At what level of your career did you join ASECS?

7) What challenges are you currently facing in your academic career?

8) Has Covid had an adverse affect on your academic career/scholarly life?

Yes

No

Explain if yes:



SECTION FOUR: Examining Racial Equity & Inclusion

Questions adapted from Living Cities Staff Racial Equity & Inclusion Competency Survey
<https://livingcities.s3.amazonaws.com/resource/344/download.pdf>

1) I have a basic understanding of concepts related to racial equity.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

2) It is valuable to examine and discuss the impacts of race on our work at ASECS.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

3) I can identify examples of interpersonal/individual racism (i.e. using coded language, questioning someone's competence based on their race or ethnicity).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

4) If "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to question xxx, I have identified examples of interpersonal/individual racism at ASECS.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

5) If “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to question xxx, I have the tools to address interpersonal racism at ASECS

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

6) I can identify examples of institutional racism (i.e., when organizational programs or policies work better for white people than for people of color, usually unintentionally or inadvertently).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

7) If “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to question xxx, I have identified examples of institutional racism within ASECS.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know



8* If “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to question xxx, I have the tools to address institutional racism within ASECS.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don’t know

9) I can identify examples of structural racism (i.e. people of color have been left out of wealth creation, education advancement as a result of centuries of structured racialized practices, etc.).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don’t know

10) If “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to question xxx, I have identified examples of structural racism within ASECS.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don’t know

11) If “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” to the previous question, I have the tools to address structural racism within ASECS.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree



- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

12) I am comfortable talking about race.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

13) I am comfortable when others talk about race.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

Additional Comments:

SECTION FIVE: Membership Experience with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility

1. Our leaders prioritize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know



2. Our organization has an explicit commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

3. Our organization has a racially/ethnically diverse membership

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

4. We have a diversity of perspectives, styles, and beliefs in organizational leadership roles

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

5. I have personally witnessed racial discrimination during my time as a member of the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



6. I have personally witnessed gender discrimination during my time as a member of the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. I have personally witnessed discrimination against those with differing abilities during my time as a member of the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. I have been on the receiving end of any such discrimination during my time as a member of the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. Discrimination issues are readily addressed at our organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

10. Should discrimination occur, I know how to report the issue to leadership

- Strongly agree



- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. I do not fear retaliation for calling out issues of discrimination

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. Our organization respects individuals and values differences

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

13. Our leadership team communicates well with the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14. We have frequent conversations about how race/ethnicity impact how we work together at ASECS

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree



- Strongly Disagree

15. We have free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

16. There have been ideas, opinions, or beliefs expressed by fellow members that have threatened aspects of my identity.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

17. My voice is heard in the organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. I can bring my “whole self” as a member of this organization

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

19. Leadership at ASECS participates in and supports conversations about racial equity internally.

- Strongly agree
- Agree



- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

20. ASECS recognizes and eliminates exclusionary or non-transparent operational practices

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

21. ASECS has taken steps to reduce racial inequities within the organization.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

22. ASECS has taken steps to reduce racial inequities within our academic field generally.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

23. ASECS creates an environment where everyone has equitable opportunities to serve on committees and join the Board.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree



- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

24. ASECS creates an environment where everyone has equitable opportunities to participate in publications and the annual conference.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I don't know

Additional Comments:

Disaggregated Survey Results

- [Pdf Link: Survey results with no open-ended comments included](#)
- [PDF link: Respondents identified as white \(non-hispanic\)](#)
- [PDF Link: Respondents identified as Non-White \(USA\)](#)
- [PDF Link: Respondents identified as Non-USA](#)

Gladiator Project Plan

- [PDF Link: Initial Gladiator Scope](#)

