

# Study of Cultural Competence in a Christian Secondary Education Environment

Nancy Ricketts, DBA  
Indiana Wesleyan University  
nancy.ricketts@myemail.indwes.edu

## 1 Background

The applied doctoral project (ADP) explored the faculty and staff's level of cultural competence and how it could promote a genuine sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community for students of all races in a Christian school community. The study was initiated due to the African American student population at Greater Equity Christian School (GECS) expressing a feeling of not belonging to the school community. Cultural competence was introduced to encourage a true sense of belonging and connectedness in the school community. For this study, the definition of cultural competence is the set of skills, values, and principles used to acknowledge, respect, and foster positive interactions with individuals and groups of different cultures (Wilson, 2021). The goal of the study was to answer the driving research question: **An academic institution is deemed culturally competent if it can combine knowledge and awareness of differing groups of individuals while promoting a unified community. How will GECS improve cultural competency and leadership skills through professional development activities, which is necessary to increase the sense of belonging in the school community?**

## 2 Methods

This study used a quantitative research method to assess the perception of the faculty and staff at GECS on their level of cultural competence.

1. An authorized research assistant was identified.
2. An anonymous survey was administered by SurveyMonkey.
3. An invitation to the survey with consent options was emailed.
4. Participants responding "YES" to the consent question were given access to the survey questions.
5. Participants responding "NO" to the consent question were directed to the end of the survey.
6. Invitees had one week to complete the survey.

## 3 Results

Thirty-five out of 148 invitees participated in the survey. A 23.64 % response rate inspired a focus on the proposed improvement plan to educate the GECS faculty on the need for cultural competence self-assessment as a foundation for growth. However, 33 of the 148 participants consenting to the survey answered some or all the questions.

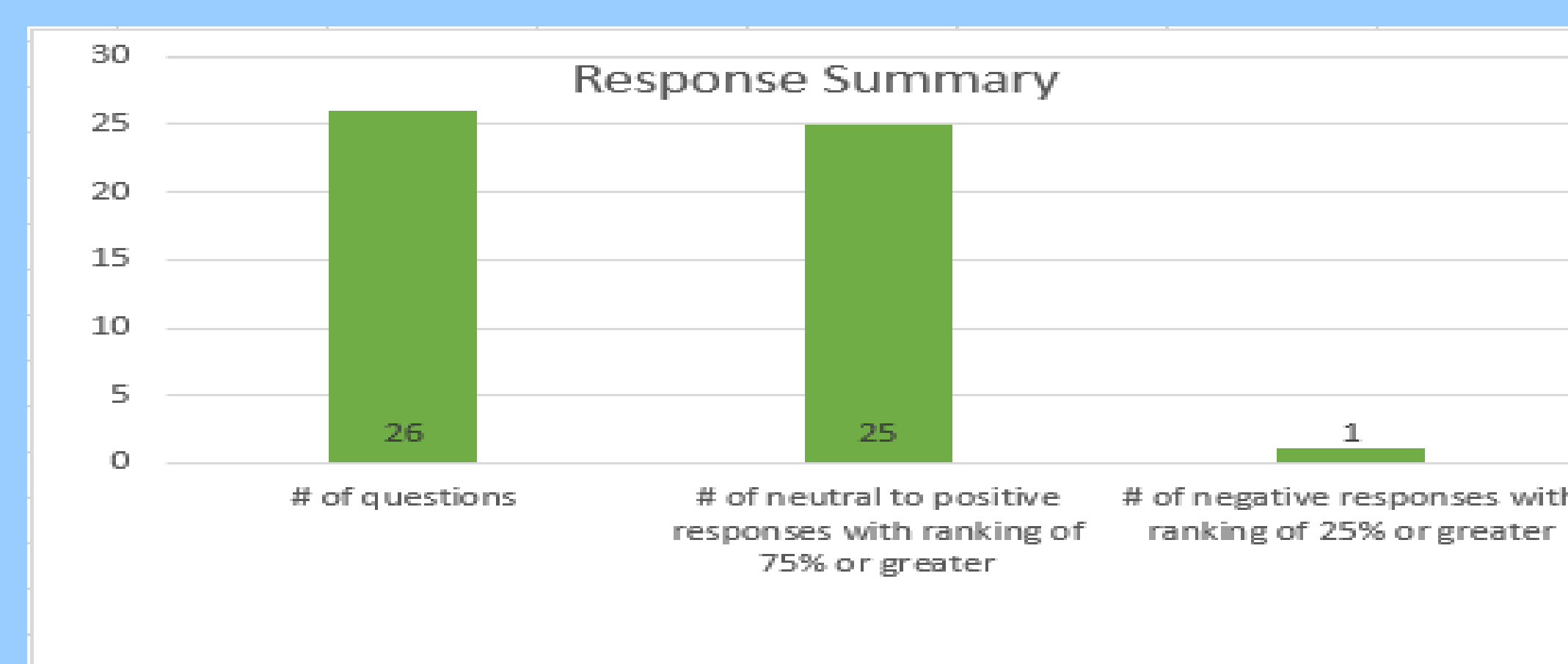
The questionnaire was organized into five sections utilizing a five-point Likert scale multiple-choice questions relevant to:

- cultural competence (adult focus)
- cultural competence (student focus)
- belonging
- educating all students
- professional development

Responses to one question dealing with the teacher's comfort level with addressing issues in the classroom related to students of different cultures getting along had a greater than 25% negative response rate. All other questions had a positive and neutral response rate of 75% or greater.

The survey results did not prove the null hypothesis of a low level of cultural competence at GECS. The resulting contrast between the student claim and the survey results indicates a cognitive dissonance and the need for a change management plan. A change management plan was created to include five initiatives designed to increase cultural competence in the faculty and staff.

Survey Question Ranking Summary



## 4 Conclusion

The resulting recommendations focus on increasing cultural competence in the faculty and staff at GECS. The suggested activities include:

- ❖ organizing affinity groups for all minority groups represented in the school environment
- ❖ seeking minority teaching talent
- ❖ participating in an equity audit
- ❖ conducting regular diversity forums
- ❖ educating and training

Recognizing the work will never be done, GECS is committed to growing their cultural competence as their school community continues to diversify, meeting the needs of every one of God's creations entrusted to them for educating and spiritually nurturing.

## 5 References

Wilson, S. (2021, April 6). *Understanding cultural competency*. HumanServicesEdu. <https://www.humanservicesedu.org/cultural-competency/>.

Disclaimer: This study used a pseudonym for the name of the organization in recognition that confidentiality and anonymity are paramount in academic consultative research.