

Visioneering Wichita Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Survey Results Overview April 2008

Background

In 2006 Visioneering Wichita released the results from the first Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony survey which serve as a benchmark for measuring advancements in racial diversity in Wichita's long-term strategic plan. The survey will be conducted every two years, and was just conducted in February/March of 2008.

The on-line survey measures perceptions of racial opportunities and harmony issues in social interaction, jobs, education and new this year health and leadership opportunities.

Process

The volunteer Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Strategic Alliance works with Wichita State University's Center for Economic Development and Business Research (CEDBR) to develop the survey. CEDBR analyzed the survey responses.

In 2008, 1,740 people who reside in the Wichita metropolitan area took the survey. It was available in English and Spanish. An online survey was chosen because it was the most cost-effective way to have a statistically valid survey.

The survey was open from February 5 to March 17. For those without access to computers at home or work, the Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Strategic Alliance worked with community centers to provide additional access to the on-line survey.

Overall Results

There was no statistical difference in the **overall index** of racial opportunity and harmony from two years ago. 2008 – 57 compared to 56.8 in 2006.

As before, there were little differences among perceptions about racial diversity, opportunity and harmony and issues in social interaction, jobs and education among demographic sub groups, including income, age and education. The biggest variation in perception was in the race demographic sub group with Whites highest and African Americans lowest.

With the **individual questions**, perceptions related to educational and economic opportunity show the greatest variation (education, college, job and start business) with African American persons less positive on the index than White respondents. There was less variation in perceptions related to racial harmony (get along, improve) among the sub groups.

Three discussion points:

1. Little movement in the index value is not surprising. We know that perceptions are hard to change. From the earliest days of the United States to the present, progress toward racial harmony has been slow and difficult. Given our country's history, we must continue progress made in our community which improves racial harmony and opportunity. People have perceptions that while we have made progress over the decades in some areas (social interactions), recognize we are not where we want to be.
2. Measuring these perceptions holds us as accountable as a community. Combine that with people are hopeful we can make progress, and we must continue our efforts.
3. People continue to have perceptions that while we have made progress in some areas (social interactions), recognize we are now where we want to be. The different "yardsticks" by which different groups measure progress may be one explanation of different perceptions. (re: earlier Eagle story)

Ongoing Efforts

Two years ago during the baseline the Visioneering Wichita Racial Diversity, Opportunity and Harmony Alliance volunteers shared information with many groups and the community.

One example of what happened after last year's survey was the launch of the Minority Business Initiative by the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Alliance. The second class of minority business owners and entrepreneurs started in February.

Another example is the College Mecca Alliance is focusing on a strategy to recruit more minority students to the 23 area colleges.

These groups and others – such as the City's New Communities initiative and USD 259's College Career Centers – also address these important issues.

What's Next

Planning at the Alliance meeting will determine next steps on how to continue sharing this message and assist all groups with incorporating the lessons into their plans for achieving the community's long-term plan.