

Carnegie Mellon University Rowing Club External Survey Report

The Carnegie Mellon University Rowing Club External Survey was constructed by the Carnegie Mellon University Rowing Club Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee. As part of our acknowledgement of the elitism and homogeneity in the sport of rowing as a whole and the possibility of our club not meeting the values of inclusion that we strive to have, the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee constructed a survey, posed to members of the Carnegie Mellon University community who showed interest in our team, but ultimately decided not to stay, to pinpoint our areas of improvement. In this report, we will go into more detail about our methodology, results, and future plans moving forward. Please address any questions to the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Chair at inclusion@tartancrew.org.

At the Carnegie Mellon University Rowing Club (CMURC), we recognize that there are potential barriers of entry to rowing for many students on campus, such as dues payments, access to necessary equipment, and a base-level of fitness, as well as potential cultural and social barriers to entry and stay. Collectively, these barriers may be preventing members of the Carnegie Mellon University community from entering our team, as well as causing our current team members to feel uncomfortable, excluded, or disconnected from our team as a whole.

The possibility of inaccessibility and exclusion, and our complacency with it, conflicts with our mission statement and values as a team. Our mission statement states that “we are committed to fostering an environment where everyone feels welcomed and supported” and that “we believe that [rowing] has the power to change lives and want to make that opportunity accessible to anyone who wants to join.” Our mission statement clearly displays our values of inclusion and our commitment to fostering an accessible and welcoming club. With the construction of our Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Committee, we recognize that we have work to be done in order to make our club more accessible and welcoming to anyone who wants to be a member on this team.

In order to address our potential problems on this team, we needed to pinpoint the areas in the most need of change. This is the purpose of our external survey, to pose questions to members of the Carnegie Mellon University community who expressed interest in our team, but ultimately decided against sticking with us, to then have direction for improvement directly driven by the perspective of our community.

This report was constructed and written by the Carnegie Mellon University Rowing Club Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee.

Summary of Key Results

- When asked why they chose to not join/leave the club, the most popular responses among participants were “time demand of the club” (25.45%), “academic stress” (21.82%), and “did not think I met the physical demands of the sport” (13.36%).
- When asked what resources provided from the team would have increased the likelihood of them staying on the team, the most popular choice among participants was “transportation to novice practice” (35.00%).
- When asked which aspect of team culture, if improved, would have increased their desire to stay on the team, “if the team was more inclusive of all physical abilities” (25.00%) was overwhelmingly the most popular choice.

Methodology

This survey was sent out to a list of 334 Carnegie Mellon University community members, who had entered their contact information during one of the various recruitment events within the last two years. The survey was held live between September 25 and October 12 via Qualtrics. The notification to complete the survey was sent out via email, with an incentive to complete the survey by being entered in a raffle to win a \$20 Amazon gift card. The survey included five multiple-answer multiple choice questions, seven Likert scale questions, and one open-ended question.

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Which events did you participate in?
2. Why did you choose to not join / leave the rowing club?
3. Which of the following resources provided from the team, would increase your chance of staying on the team?
4. How much rowing experience did you have prior to your interaction with CMURC?
5. Which of the following aspects of our team culture, if improved, would have increased your desire to stay on the team?

Likert Scale Questions:

1. Members of the rowing club made me feel welcome.
2. Members of the rowing club made me feel included.
3. Members of the rowing club respected me.
4. The rowing club is an inclusive club of all races and ethnicities.
5. The rowing club is an inclusive club of all socioeconomic backgrounds.
6. The rowing club is an inclusive club of all physical abilities.
7. The rowing club is an inclusive club of all genders and sexual orientations.

Open-Ended Question:

1. Do you have any comments or personal experiences you can share with us?

Results

Below is a table including the mean and standard deviation for each likert scale question on the external survey. These questions could be scored from 1 to 5, with a 1 response indicating strong disagreement with that statement, and a 5 indicating strong agreement with that statement. Note that these means are not significantly different from one another, but still provide information regarding how team members generally agreed or disagreed with each statement.

Summary	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7
n	24	24	24	25	23	24	25
Mean	3.92	3.75	3.96	3.88	3.52	3.04	3.92
Std Deviation	1	1.05	1.1	1.03	1.28	0.98	0.98

Because these responses were not solicited from current team members, we cannot analyze the differences between prospective/former members of the men's and women's teams. Participants' mean response to every Likert scale question was in the range of 3.00-4.00, indicating middling-slightly positive agreement across the board. The least agreeable statement with a mean of 3.04 was "the rowing club is an inclusive club of all socioeconomic backgrounds."

The following figures are bar charts showing the distribution of participant responses to the multiple choice questions.

Fig. 1

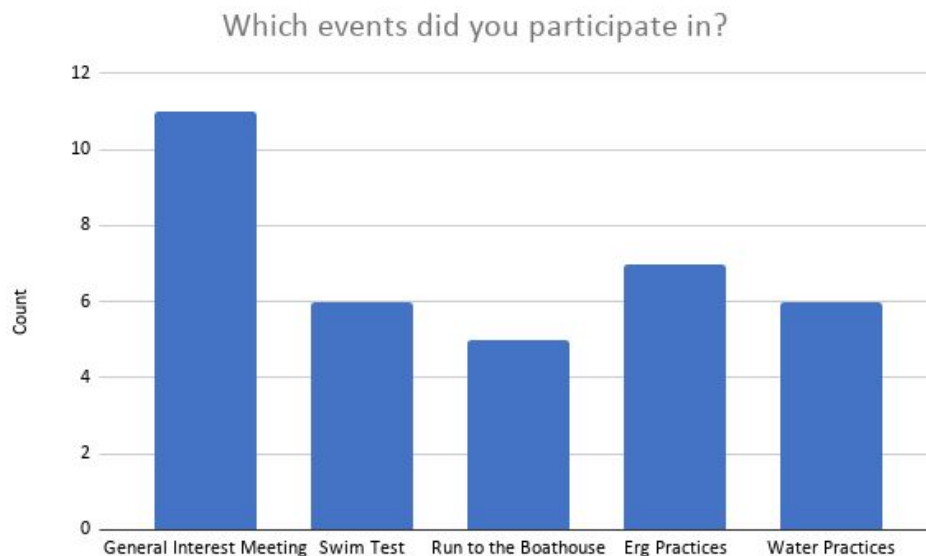


Fig. 2

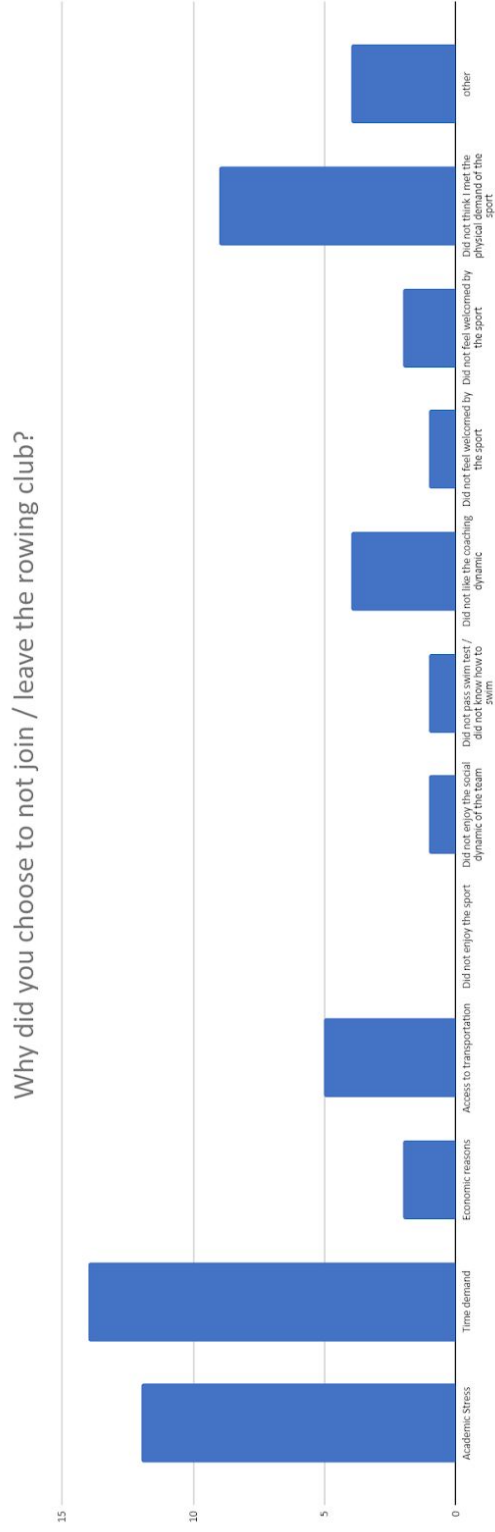


Fig. 3

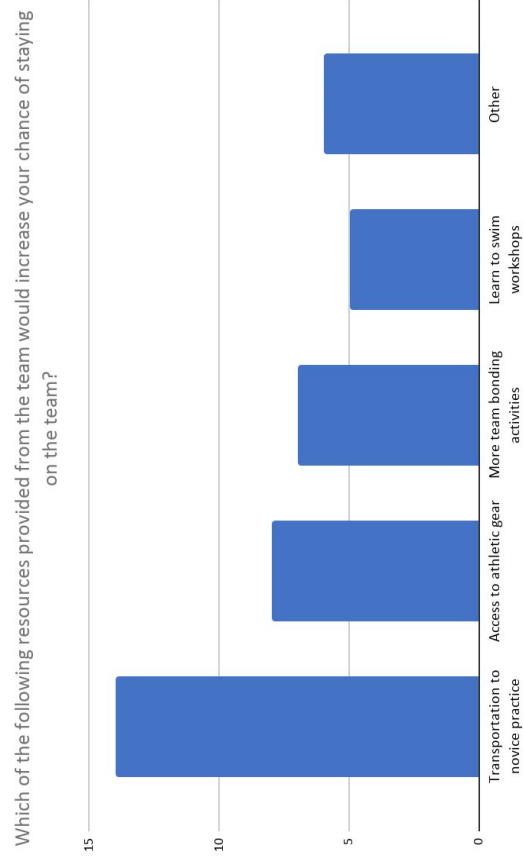


Fig. 4

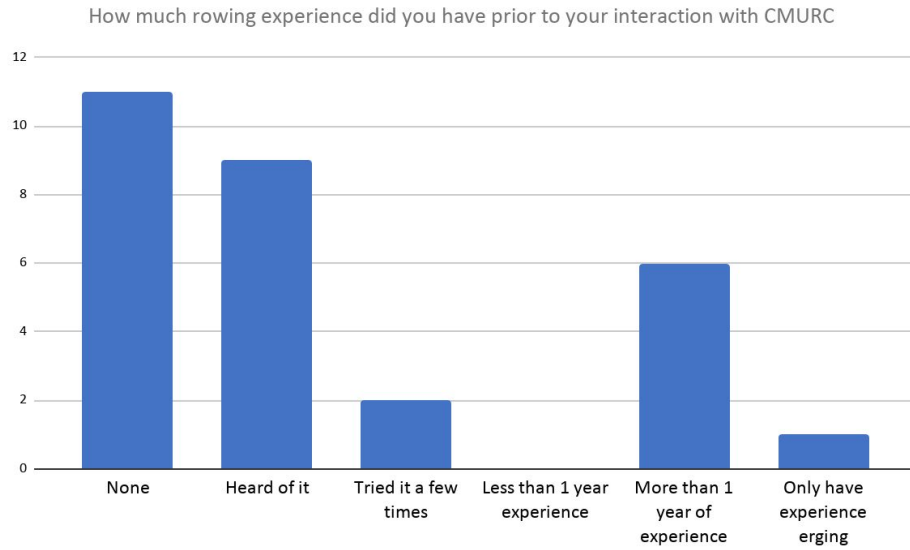
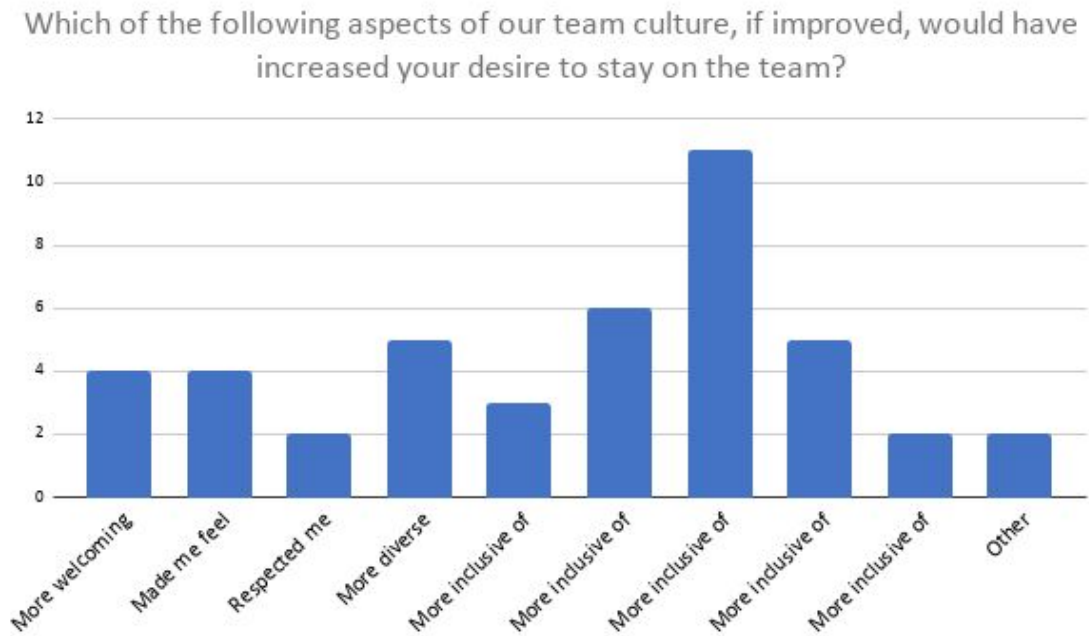


Fig. 5



Conclusions and Discussion

From the results, it looks like the biggest deterrents from the team are academic stress, time demand, and physical ability. Academic stress and time demand seem to go hand-in-hand, so we will look at these two concerns as one unit, relating to time. Though we cannot do anything to change the workload at CMU or the amount of time an individual has to put into this team, we can work to make our recreational aspect of the team more established. In our constitution, our team currently states that we support both competitive and recreational rowing in our club. However, our team culture emphasizes the competitive aspect of rowing over the recreational. In order to adjust this structure, the DEI Committee is looking for ways to incorporate a less intense training program for members of the CMU community who would like to enjoy the sport recreationally. Options include alternative practices with coaches, specifically for people looking to row recreationally, as well as not focusing on competitions for those entering the team for the first time. Starting in the spring semester, the DEI Committee will be conducting interviews with current team members to further address this matter. For those intending to row recreationally, the DEI Committee is also looking at lowering the dues requirement for those members.

The other major concern for members of the CMU community was the level of physical ability required to join the team. This was a shared concern with current CMURC team members, who felt that there was a baseline requirement of physical fitness upon entry to the team. Currently, we say we welcome all physical abilities, however we do require novice athletes to run to practice (about four miles) and come equipped with adequate running shoes, athletic attire, and general knowledge of how to take care of yourself as an athlete. Looking at these requirements logically, requiring a new athlete to go from no physical training to running four miles six days a week, without adequate training gear, is not safe nor conducive to long-term success. We want new athletes to build-up their fitness in a way that encourages long-term growth and success as a rower, not to stunt that potential by encouraging poor training behaviors. The DEI Committee is looking towards alternative options to get novice safely to practice, as this was mentioned as a potential solution in the survey results. To help fund this, the DEI Committee is working with the Tartan Crew Alumni Network (TCAN) to attain funding for a novice bus to practice. As another means of encouraging the growth of new athletes, the DEI Committee is putting together a community bin of athletic attire for new athletes to take what they need for safe and effective training. These two solutions were selected as resources that would help CMU community members to stay on the team. Along similar lines, the DEI Committee is looking into ways we can ease new athletes into our training program by incorporating weight lifting and shorter runs into their introduction to the team.

Other concerns mentioned were in relation to the cost of the sport and the swim test requirement. To address the economic concerns, the DEI Committee is exploring alternative ways to satisfy the membership dues requirement through fundraising and TCAN sponsorships. To address the concern with the swim test, with survey responses indicating that learn-to-swim opportunities would increase their chances of staying on the team, the DEI Committee is working with CMU Athletics and other swimming-related sports teams at CMU to organize a learn-to-swim workshop.

The last concerns raised were related to the team culture and coaching dynamic on the team. One solution to the lack of enjoyment of the team culture is an increase in team-bonding activities, as mentioned by participants in the survey. An aspect of the team culture that current team members expressed concern

with was the tolerance of insensitive jokes and comments. To combat this issue, we hope the generation of a de-identified feedback form will help people voice their concerns, available on our website and checked weekly by the DEI Chair. In addition, we're working towards creating a culture that shuts down these ideas and comments in the moment. To foster this culture, we will be having mandatory annual anti-racism workshops with the entire team, as well as talking with our coaches about how to handle offensive behavior. In accordance with these proposed changes, we have updated the Constitution to include suspensionable offenses for behavior that infringes on our efforts of fostering an inclusive space. Our coaches will be included in all of the above changes, though if there are additional concerns, team members are encouraged to reach out to the DEI Chair or to use the de-identified feedback form.

The results from the external survey have led us to look internally at our team structure and culture. To find more answers and solutions, our next step is to continue the conversation with interviews about the novice experience.

note: In our Constitution, our Committee is currently called the "Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Committee". However, in accordance with the other inclusion committees in rowing, we will be moving towards calling ourselves the "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee", which is the reason for this title use in this document. In future Constitution revisions, this change will be officially made.