

Opened-Ended Questions



The Spring 2022 Campus Climate Survey had six opened-ended questions. 301 respondents took the time to provide feedback to one or more of the open-ended questions: 170 faculty, 27 administrators, 112 classified, and 6 unknown. The six questions are listed below. As with any series of open-ended questions many responses did not directly address the question being asked, instead the questions were used as a safe space to express other concerns or provide opinions on non-question related issues. Therefore, themes and categories were developed across all of the questions to better understand the campus climate.

- Q1. What do you see are the greatest challenges PCC will face in the next five years?
- Q2. What is your understanding of collegiality in a college environment?
- Q3. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve communication at the college?
- Q4. Do you have any suggestions on how the college can improve collegiality?
- Q5. Please offer any additional comments or suggestions to improve our climate for diversity?
- Q6. Please add any other comments you would like to make regarding this survey?

The general themes across the questions were **Enrollment, Campus Environment, Transparency, Trust/Honesty/Accountability, Respect, Employment Environment, Employee Events, and Communication/Dialogue**. Within each theme responses were categorized to provide a depth of understanding. For example within **Enrollment** the categories identified were *declining enrollment, value of education, shifting demographics, and long term Distance Education*. Within **Transparency**, *shared responsibility, active and participatory leadership*. Within **Campus Environment**, *Health/Safety, Mental Health Concerns, Toxic campus environment, dignity and civility, shared goals and inclusivity*. Within **Trust/Honesty/Accountability**, *unity and equity*. Within **Respect**, *Diversity of Opinions, Appreciation, Humanizing, Value all employees and the work they do*. Within **Employment Environment**, *talent retention, hiring processes, career advancement, career ladders, physical space and environment, code of conduct, flexible working opportunities, and professional development/learning*. Within **Employee Events**, *Social events, Team Building events, Inter Divisions and inter department events, Town Halls*. Within **Communication/Dialogue**, *tone, listening sessions, regular updates in multiple formats, College Hour, Brave Conversations, engage Faculty and staff*.

Enrollment was a central concern expressed in the questions regarding the biggest challenges PCC would face in the next five years but it was also present in the responses to other questions. A few of the comments include: *Continuing drop in student enrollment; The changing demographics of the area will challenge us to ramp up our recruitment practices to attract non-traditional student (e.g., older students or students who would not normally attend college). We need to adjust our recruitment practices and programming to acknowledge these new realities and to better serve our existing community. We also need to consider how we will manage the footprint of the campus considering the long-term decline in enrollment and a shift to more online programming. We have to assess the value of investing heavily in physical infrastructure given the likelihood that we may have many fewer students on campus; Maintaining pace for the need of skilled labor; Convincing students that a college education is still the best option for advancing and succeeding in society; Retaining students; Shrinking enrollment; administrative perception that PCC is a racist institution; Overcoming the educational shifts due to COVID.*

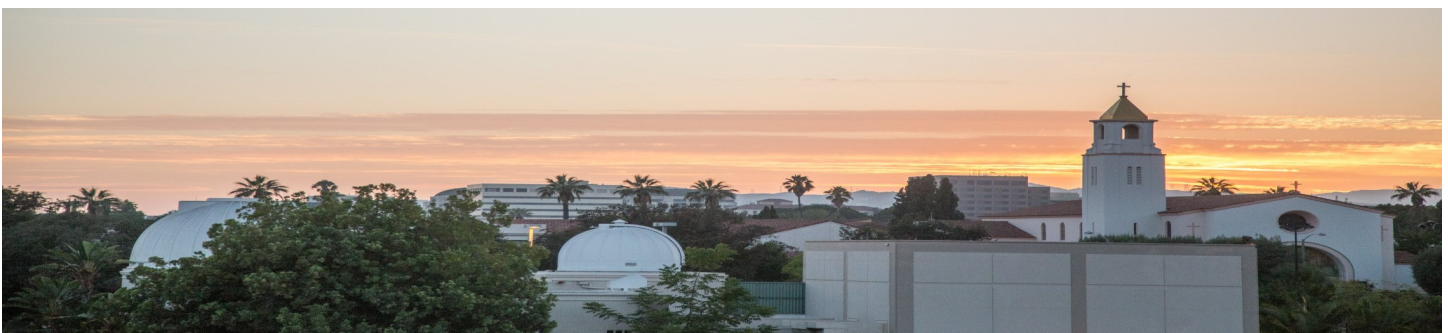
Transparency was a central theme expressed over all of the questions. A few of the comments regarding transparency include: *Transparency in communication from the administration, the rationale is not shared in management decisions; It is rooted in trust and respect. For these to be present, transparency is the key, especially at the highest levels of the administration; An honest and open environment between faculty, administration, and staff; Add the rationale for management decisions. There must be some, but we only hear the outcome; Be transparent and include everyone in communication not just selected group; Transparency in decision-making; More transparent communication from above; At an*

individual level, there are some faculty who should be limited by their excessive campus-wide emails that effect morale of others. Bullying by negative comments; Honesty, transparency, mindfulness in decision-making, true inclusion/ implementation of ideas from those most impacted (students and employees).

Campus Environment - There is concern about the toxic environment and the ability of campus constituents to be civil with each other. Some of those comments include *Mental health issues– both faculty and students as we process all of the loss and fear of the last two years, not only with Covid but with government and racial unrest; Admin-Faculty ongoing tensions and the consequences; A divide amongst classifications and the feeling that some are superior to others and can choose when to return to campus; Tensions with political climate of administration and Staff/Faculty, inability to feel comfortable and/or confident with our administration., inability to share our views honestly; the college has become too political instead of focusing on teaching; Collaboration across constituency groups. This constant bickering and finger pointing is counter-productive. Enrollment is going to be a big issue; truly coming together to heal. Charting a course in the post-pandemic space; Building relationships where everyone feels comfortable and happy on campus; Civil discourse and behavior.*

Trust/Honesty/Accountability - *breaking down silos and collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators, Also, setting up systems of accountability; Being honest; building collegiality and trust after the pandemic; Developing trust among admin and faculty; Being united in vision and approach. Seeing equity for adjunct faculty as essential to equity for students; Be honest and forthcoming. Explain WHY things are done; No one trusts each other; Hold managers ACCOUNTABLE to be collegial to staff. Then they must LEAD BY EXAMPLE; Be honest and open, treat staff like the professionals we are; Be truthful and transparent in the communication as well as stop all the back room conversations without all parties involved; Have an open , honest dialogue on the needs of the college. Put pride aside and listen; and rebuilding trust at all levels; Equitable growth across campus.*

Respect - *Working together as a team for a common goal with mutual respect; Collegiality involves working together as a team in a respective and positive manner. This relies heavily on communication, organization, and respect; respectful and kind; It sounds like we should back each other up, but that doesn't always happen; A climate of cooperation and mutual respect which allows for divergent opinions and approaches; Faculty, Administration and staff should all communicate with each other respectfully and work as a team to figure out how to improve our campus; Collegiality is treating everyone with respect independent of their views; A mutual respect and actions of such in daily interactions. There is a culture of "niceness" at PCC but it is disingenuous. Emails are hostile, people snap at each other. People should be treated with respect at all times. It is okay and expected that people will disagree, but people should be able to share their opinions in a non-hostile environment; Respecting one another, professional to professional, professional to student and professional to administration. People treat each other with dignity and respect, not assuming the worst, giving the benefit of the doubt; Having good managers who respect and value employees; Different constituent groups and faculty with differing opinions should be able to communicate and express differing opinions in a professional and collegial tone.*



Employee Environment - *Realigning to the new challenges that have emerged since the pandemic; work flexibility; career advancement opportunities; modernizing our approach to climate-change related sustainability and resilience; Adequate funding to do the work we do as effectively as possible. Lack of sufficient funding to keep the grounds as nice as they once were; Truly coming together to heal. Charting a course in the post-pandemic environment; Losing highly qualified employees because of the lack of career advancements on the staff supporting side; Attrition of great employees and loss of institutional knowledge; Lack of providing on-going training on technical skills, leadership skills; Only conceptual talking of equity, not applying in practice on how to do on what needs to be done; Maintaining talented teaching faculty due to wages lower than neighboring colleges.; 1. Addressing the "us vs them" negative climate between people that are supposed to be supporting one another for the benefit of students, between admin/faculty/classified. 2. The constant turn over of higher admin who start a project, change policy and then go to another institution leaving those who are committed to PCC forever trying to figure out how things work now, until it is changed again. This increases frustration and reduces efficiency as even the simplest task can take way too long and involve way too many people to get done; Have people in the same place at the same time working together instead of never seeing each other or just in passing (e.g. common areas people actually want to use. better offices...).*

Employee Events - *I really thought the staff/faculty event on the mirror pools in the middle of campus was important. After COVID many of us finally got to talk with other colleagues from different departments. I think a mid-semester fun event with food and/or conference with food would help morale and give us a chance to mix; Joint social activities, it is either a staff or faculty event, rarely are both at the same events in the same numbers; Have all faculty, staff, and admin visit each other's departments; Sponsor more department get-togethers encouraging socialization; The administration should host regular forums and social events to create community and connection. Quarterly town halls- providing updates to the campus community; Virtual Town halls to dispense information and answer employee questions (Questions can be submitted ahead of time. Remaining questions answered in writing or FAQ.) President Office Hours: In addition to, the face-to-face meeting, provide an opportunity to meet virtually. Possibly, rotate the meeting times, days and evenings; Having presidential events actually during college hour Tuesday and Thursday from 12-1pm.*

Communication/Dialogue - *Create work group chats, weekly summary of work (if needed); President update in a newsletter format, video, etc. Monthly email with updates that are essential to complete the work of the college. Semester forum or as needed when critical information needs to be conveyed; Have effective 2 way communication at meetings, particularly at the division/department level and make it a priority to respond to suggestions and ideas; Working together, even through disagreements, with respect, listening to diverse opinions and ideas, and willingness to compromise with colleagues to get things done; A positive communication climate; a desire to build bridges and share experiences and information; sharing of best practices; Good communication, sharing information, giving credit and appreciation to each other, working together; Encourage people who work on the same things to meet and talk about ideas. Not sure how to get them to follow through though?; When it is possible listen to everyone at the table and take into consideration the different points of view then come up with several strategies to accommodate; Having an open, honest dialogue on the needs of the college. Put pride aside and listen; Town Halls or workshops on what needs to be done. Have Admin actually LISTEN to our needs; PCC employees may benefit by having a place where everyone is able to share their concerns, and experiences and where we feel heard, respected, and visible, not just communicating, taking an active role, and finding our own solutions together; Welcome input from all, not just a few or full time faculty; Have professional effective workplace experts/consultants teach course about better communications skills and techniques. Not bias professors from other colleges; One place where official messaging comes out and includes everything and everyone! Different messages should not go out to different groups; it seems that clear and timely communication in the wake of global events and how they may impact students would be helpful as students process their experiences. With that communication, it signals that the college itself is not only aware of the issues that are there, but also takes these issues quite seriously.*

The Word cloud on the cover page illustrates the variety of responses provided by survey participants across the themes and categories. Although many comments were hostile and negative, many were positive and provided useful suggestions for improving the campus climate and focusing on our mission of serving students. Working to humanize each other and understanding the very complex and stressful environment we all faced over the last two years could provide us with opportunities to focus on reconnecting with each other and may help us improve the college overall.

Areas for Improvement

1. **Focus on students.** Many respondents expressed the need to focus on students and understand their unique circumstances. Declining enrollment was cited over a 100 times in the comments as a major concern for the college. It is important that all of our conversations focus on improving the college environment to attract and serve students. Our focus needs to be on providing prospective students with a college environment where they can grow and flourish. Trust, respect, transparency, are all central to improving the campus environment for students as well as faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. **Communication, Communication, Communication.** The open-ended responses spoke of transparency and a lack of understanding in the decision-making processes at the college. College employees want to understand how decisions are arrived at and would like to participate in the process or at least be provided information on the process. It can feel disingenuous to only be communicated the outcome without providing context. Thus, it will be imperative for constituency leaders and the administration to take the time to provide context to the decision-making process in addition to the outcome. Also, there is a need to provide information in multiple formats and to provide opportunities for all college employees to express their opinions and engage in dialogue about improving the college.
3. **Employee Environment.** It was expressed across all of the open-ended questions the need to provide opportunities for employees to interact and reconnect. COVID has taken a toll on the every college employee in fear, anxiety, loss, and instability. This cannot be overlooked as the college moves into more face-to-face interactions. Making the time and providing the spaces for all employees to have conversations and just enjoy each others company will be important to rebuilding trust, civility, appreciation, and dignity. As important as it is to value the work that all employees of the college do, it is equally important to value each other. Additionally, there seemed to be a lot of confusion over the hiring processes at the college, specifically the time it takes to hire student employees and how final employment recommendations are made to the Board of Trustees. Respondents were also concerned about talent retention, retaining institutional knowledge, and providing career ladders and/or pathways to other employment opportunities and this too can become a an area of improvement for the college.

