



**NC STATE
UNIVERSITY**

PACE CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

An initiative of the Belk Center at NC State

706 Hillsborough Street | Raleigh, NC 27603

Walla Walla Community College

Walla Walla, Washington

PACE Qualitative Summary

PACE Climate Survey for Community Colleges

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QUALITATIVE SUMMARY

PACE Climate Survey respondents were given an opportunity to submit about perceptions on their success and barriers in their roles at the institution. Of the 254 Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) employees who completed the PACE Climate Survey, 184 respondents (72.4%) provided open-ended comments.

Qualitative Questions

The three qualitative questions are based on employee perceptions of success in their role, barriers to success in their role, and what issues their institution should prioritize:

- 1) Think about the times when you have felt most successful in your role. What contributed to those successes? This could include processes, policies, resources, or any aspect of the workplace. Please avoid sharing personal details that could identify you.
- 2) What are the barriers that make it difficult for you to be successful in your role? This could include processes, policies, resources, or any aspect of the workplace. Please avoid sharing personal details that could identify you.
- 3) Looking forward, what are the most important issues or areas that leadership at your community college should address, and why?

Analysis

Open-ended responses were analyzed using the Canvs AI Platform, a secure, cloud-based text analytics tool designed to help institutions interpret qualitative feedback from employees. The platform uses advanced natural language processing (NLP), machine learning (ML), and Large Language Models (LLMs) through ChatGPT Enterprise to generate nets, codes, and topics. These results are presented through an interactive visual dashboard accessible only to authorized users, enabling a better understanding of patterns and trends across respondent feedback.

The tables below show the most frequently applied code for each survey question, a summary of key insights related to that code, and selected comments that illustrate employee perspectives of this code.

SUCSESSES

Think about the times when you have felt most successful in your role. What contributed to those successes? This could include processes, policies, resources, or any aspect of the workplace. Please avoid sharing personal details that could identify you.

CODE: Supervisor and Peer Support

Insights: Just over a quarter of respondents shared the support of supervisors and other coworkers helped them feel successful. Supportive supervisors provided clear feedback, valued employee contributions, and balanced providing assistance as needed without micromanaging. Other coworkers were emotionally supportive and willing to step in with knowledge or resources when help was needed.

Exemplar Comments

The support of supervisors/management to complete tasks in a timely manner without micromanaging. Support of colleagues to help provide information/knowledge regarding an error/issue/problem/process whether it be a system issue or new process to help solve in a timely manner. Collaboration is key to improve processes and solve complex problems.

Supportive supervisor and coworkers who step outside of their role to assist myself and others needed in our department, during crucial times.

The times when I have felt most successful in my role have been when I had supervisors who took the time to understand the work I performed, trusted my judgement and skills, and provided a nice balance of both autonomy and support as needed (in other words, didn't micro-manage and didn't leave me hanging with no notable support for the work my team does).

The support, acknowledgment, encouragement, and feedback of immediate colleagues (my department chair and my other colleagues in the department). - The backing and material support of supervisors (e.g. when my dean purchased materials that I needed).

BARRIERS

What are the barriers that make it difficult for you to be successful in your role? This could include processes, policies, resources, or any aspect of the workplace. Please avoid sharing personal details that could identify you.

CODE: Executive Leadership Performance

Insights: More than a fifth of respondents indicated that poor relationships between employees and administrators serve as a major barrier to success. Employees describe leadership as disconnected and disinterested in the daily work done in their departments. Those who are impacted by decisions do not feel their opinions are taken into account when decisions are made. Communication about those decision making processes is perceived as slow, inconsistent, unclear, and often not trusted.

Exemplar Comments

I am often bullied and harassed by members of ELT, including the President, I have been forced to reduce my activity and roles across campus because it is unsafe for me to participate. There are no standard procedures or policies to ensure transparency across the college. Answers to questions are often different depending on which ELT member you are asking.

All discussion is advisory only and decisions are made behind closed doors. Most of the time, I feel like I'm spinning my wheels and have to undo thoughtful work just to appease some VP. Leadership doesn't delegate authority and so bottlenecks are frequent.

Leadership at the executive level is often a barrier to success. I don't believe it is intentional, but an outcome of lack of capacity, competence, clarity, and trust. Often it is difficult to act because it takes too long for decisions to be made.

The most significant barriers I face are vice presidents that have zero understanding of programs and even less interest in learning anything about them, the students, its people, the highly successful processes used, or the needs of those industries the programs serve.

PRIORITIES

Looking forward, what are the most important issues or areas that leadership at your community college should address, and why?

CODE: Communication Clarity & Transparency

Insights: Nearly a fourth of respondents shared a desire for leadership to prioritize better communication, especially improvements to clarity and transparency. Employees want to be informed of decisions that impact their work, even if they are not included in the decision-making process. Beyond their own work, employees want to know what is happening across the college in a timely manner to improve collaboration among teams and departments.

Exemplar Comments

I would like to be well informed of decisions made that affect my department/program. Even if I do not have any authority to affect the changes, I would like to be kept in the loop. I understand there are decisions to be made that are above my pay grade, but I think I'm entitled to know what's going on in regard to my program specifically.

Internal communication - such as new hires, old faces in new places, program excellence, student achievement, impact in community, etc. Hearing the stories from a main source as opposed to hearing from a colleague that a staff member is no longer working at the college months after they have left. Overall, better internal communication.

Quality of communication - there is a lot of communication going out, but it's either superficial fluff that just takes up space in the inbox, just there to check a box of "yep, we communicated," or it's something significant that's now too late for people to weigh in on. Address blockages in communication trickle-down, making sure that information is ACTUALLY making its way out from ELT to directors/deans, to everyone else. Bring new and different voices to the table. There's a lot of reference to Participatory Governance, but there's NO information about how to get involved or how to get a seat at the table. There may be different decision-making groups and councils and committees, but the same 10 people sit on many of those councils, and only bring their own opinions and viewpoints to the table. There needs to be a better way for more and different people to be involved and heard.

The college needs strong, clear, decisive leadership and communication (not pro forma attempts to show we have inclusive shared governance). We might be more open than we have been in the past, but major decisions are still made in a secretive manner.