First Ever Climate Survey Examines Morale, Trust, Communication

In the fall of 2011, we conducted our first ever climate survey, looking at issues of morale, trust, and communication among employees of the Kern Community College District.

The full report on the survey can be found here on the district research web page. Here are a few highlights for Porterville College.

- The survey came about during discussions last year regarding the district strategic plan. As part of those discussions, goal 2 of the plan was developed to “Create a collaborative culture and positive climate.” Part of goal 2 was Objective 2.2 which states that “Trust, morale, and communication will improve over baseline 2011-12 as measured by climate surveys by June 30, 2014.”
- Also included in that plan was Objective 3.2 which states that the district will “Improve facilities and maintenance as measured by climate surveys and operational reports as compared to 2011-12 baseline.”
- Both of these objectives were intentionally non-specific because the climate survey had not yet been drafted. It was drafted and administered in fall 2011 district-wide. The survey was conducted among all employees across the district and student leadership, defined as associated student leaders and club presidents. Because the numbers were small, I won’t be focusing on student responses below.
- This research brief will focus on the Porterville College results. For the complete report, click on the link above.
- The survey had eight sections, as follows:
  - Part I, Climate: this section focused on trust and morale issues.
  - Part II, Interactions: focused on how positive/negative group to group interactions are across employee groups and students.
  - Part III, Diversity: examined how welcoming and supportive the work environment is of similarities and differences among various demographic groups.
  - Part IV, Communication: looked at how well communication flows throughout the college and district.
  - Part V, Participation: asked the extent to which employees participate in various types of meetings and campus and community activities.
  - Part VI, Professional Development: gathered information on participation in professional development activities.
  - Part VII, Overall: was one simple question: if you had to do it over again, would you choose to work for this college/district.
Part VIII: Demographics: a few simple demographics were asked for statistical purposes only.

- The majority of PC employees say they feel valued, but the morale question elicited lower responses. A minority (44%) of faculty state that morale in their location is high compared with 50% of classified and about two thirds of management.
- Trust varied between employee groups. A small majority (55%) of classified staff say there is trust between their group and management. For faculty, it was slightly under a majority (47%) who believe there is trust between faculty and management. However, the biggest gap is in trust between the college and the district office. At Porterville College, only 21% of employees state that there is trust between the college and district office. All three employee groups rated this level of trust lowly.
- Buildings and maintenance generally good positive marks from employees. Most questions on building maintenance, atmosphere and cleanliness got “agree” or “strongly agree” ratings of between two thirds and four fifths of respondents.
- The interactions section also showed positive results, with most employees stating that their interactions with other groups are positive or very positive. The lowest ratings came in interactions with managers/administrators, but a majority of these were positive (71% of faculty and 57% of classified).
- Very strong majorities of Porterville College employees say that the environment is welcoming of demographic similarities and differences. These ranged from a high of 90% for gender to a low of 80% for sexual orientation. These majorities are similar across employee groups.
- The questions on communication generated varying responses. Most employees feel they have the information to do their job and that information flows well in their own area. However, more generally, a minority of respondents (43%) state that information flows well throughout the district.
- Employees were more likely to believe that information flows well upward in the organizational structure (65%) than downward (43%).
- While more than 80% of managers and faculty members state that their representatives on governance committees keep them adequately informed, only a bare majority (55%) of classified staff state the same.
- A majority of all employee groups attend department or committee meetings at least once per month. However, a minority of both faculty (48%) and classified employees (33%) participated in staff development activities at least once per semester. The same is true of extracurricular activities (faculty 48%, classified 38%), intercollegiate events (faculty 26%, classified 14%) and community meetings (faculty 49%, classified 20%).
- Responses were mostly positive regarding staff development. However, only 41% of classified staff believe that they have opportunities at the college to learn and grow in their careers.
same percentage of classified staff believes that the college provides encouragement and support for their professional growth and development.

- Overall, Porterville College is viewed as a good place to work. When asked if they would make the same choice again, 100% of management, 89% of faculty and 91% of classified employees said they would. Each of these percentages is the highest in its group among the three colleges and district office (management tied with Cerro Coso).

- While it took some time to get the survey results out to the campus, a couple of groups have been using them for some time. The accreditation steering committee has seen them and the new strategic plan uses this survey. That plan includes four objectives based on the climate survey:
  
  - **Objective 2.2:** The percentage of respondents in the climate survey answering that they agree or strongly agree that there is trust between college employees and the district office (question If) will increase from 20.8% in fall 2011 to 30% in fall 2013.
  
  - **Objective 2.3:** The percentage of respondents in the climate survey answering that they agree or strongly agree that information flows well downward through the organizational structure (question IVg) will increase from 42.7% in fall 2011 to 50% in fall 2013.
  
  - **Objective 3.1:** The percentage of respondents in the climate survey answering that they have participated in staff development activities (question Vc) will increase from 48.5% in fall 2011 to 55% in fall 2013.
  
  - **Objective 5.1:** The percentage of respondents in the climate survey answering that they attend community meetings such as service clubs, intersegmental educational meetings with K-12 or university staff, etc., at least once or twice per semester (question Vf) will increase from 46.3% in fall 2011 to 50% in fall 2013.

The current plan is to conduct this survey every three years, but in order to have comparison results in time for the next district strategic plan, our next cycle will be in the fall of 2013. After that, it would be fall 2016, 2019, etc. Most questions will likely remain the same for consistency, but some changes are possible.

Again, the survey results can be found [here](http://www.portervillecollege.edu/research). Other survey reports, as well as demographic information and other research reports can also be found at the Porterville College research web page at [http://www.portervillecollege.edu/research](http://www.portervillecollege.edu/research).

Questions, as always, are welcome. You can contact the research office at [mcarley@portervillecollege.edu](mailto:mcarley@portervillecollege.edu).