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Climate Survey Findings Prioritization Employee Survey Fall 2024 Research Brief #246

College of the Canyons

Institutional Research, Planning, and
Institutional Effectiveness

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Table of Contents

Figures.....	1
Tables	1
Introduction	2
Background	2
Methodology.....	2
Results.....	4
Priority Levels Selected for each Finding Area.....	4
Priority Levels of Key Finding Areas by Employee Groups.....	5
Open Responses for Focusing Efforts	8
Open Responses for Progress Made.....	10
Summary Findings.....	14
Recommendations	14

Figures

Figure 1. Proportion of Survey Respondents (n=259) vs. College Employees as a Whole (N=1,565)	3
Figure 2. Priority Levels for each Key Finding Area (All respondents)	4
Figure 3. Prioritization levels by Employee Groups	7

Tables

Table 1. Response Rates by Employee Group.....	3
Table 2. Common themes for Responses to thoughts on Focusing Efforts.....	8
Table 3. Common themes for Responses to Progress Made	10
Table 4. Common sub-themes within Positive, Mixed and Negative Responses	11

Introduction

Background

In Spring 2024, College of the Canyons partnered with the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) to co-design and administer College of the Canyons Campus Climate Engagement Survey aimed at helping the college to understand its strengths and areas for improvement regarding campus climate and employee engagement. The results¹ of the Campus Climate Engagement Survey were released to the campus community on May 31, 2024.

To continue making significant strides in enhancing campus climate based on the key findings from the Spring 2024 Campus Climate Engagement Survey, the COC leadership team in partnership with IRPIE office created a brief survey to gather additional input aiming to identify areas where the community believes immediate efforts should be focused and to develop targeted action plans. This report will cover the findings from the Climate Survey Prioritization Employee Survey administered in Fall 2024.

Methodology

An online survey via SurveyMonkey invitation link was emailed to the individuals in the employee groups who were included in the Spring Climate survey, and was open for data collection between October 23, 2024, through November 4th, 2024. For all adjunct faculty in the distribution list were sent the survey, including those instructors who were not assigned a course in Fall 2024. Two reminder emails were sent.

The survey contained questions asking employees to rank the priority level for each key finding area (listed below), and the respondents' employee classification. In addition, two open-ended questions asked about further comments on where leadership should focus its efforts, and comments about progress made since spring 2024.

1. Overall Campus Climate
2. Overall Campus Experiences
3. Employee Engagement
4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Efforts
5. Institutional Effectiveness
6. Leadership Effectiveness
7. Psychological Safety

Analyses are based on proportions of respondents that selected each priority level for each key finding area. For open responses, comments were coded into emerging themes to categorize the sentiments that were conveyed. Following the [Guiding Principles of IRPIE](#), the identity of respondents and implicated parties are redacted while always maintaining the general sentiment of the comments. Redactions were made where there was a reference to identifying information pertaining either to the respondent or the individual that was the being referred to in the comment. Most redactions were of specific names, followed by titles of positions held by fewer than 2 individuals. All open-ended responses are available upon request from IRPIE office.

¹ For additional context please refer to [the RP Group Report](#) or the RP Group [abbreviated presentation](#) at the Board of Trustees meeting on 9/11/24

Table 1 shows the overall response rate and disaggregation of response rates by employee groups surveyed. The overall survey response rate was 17%. A total of 89 full-time faculty completed the survey resulting in 39% responses rate. A total of 88 classified/confidential professionals completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 26% for this sub-group. A total of 49 adjunct faculty completed the survey with a response rate of 5%. Given that the denominator includes non-teaching faculty, in fall 2024, there were 584 adjunct faculty teaching, using this as the denominator would yield a response rate of 9% for adjunct faculty. A total of 33 administrators completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 34%.

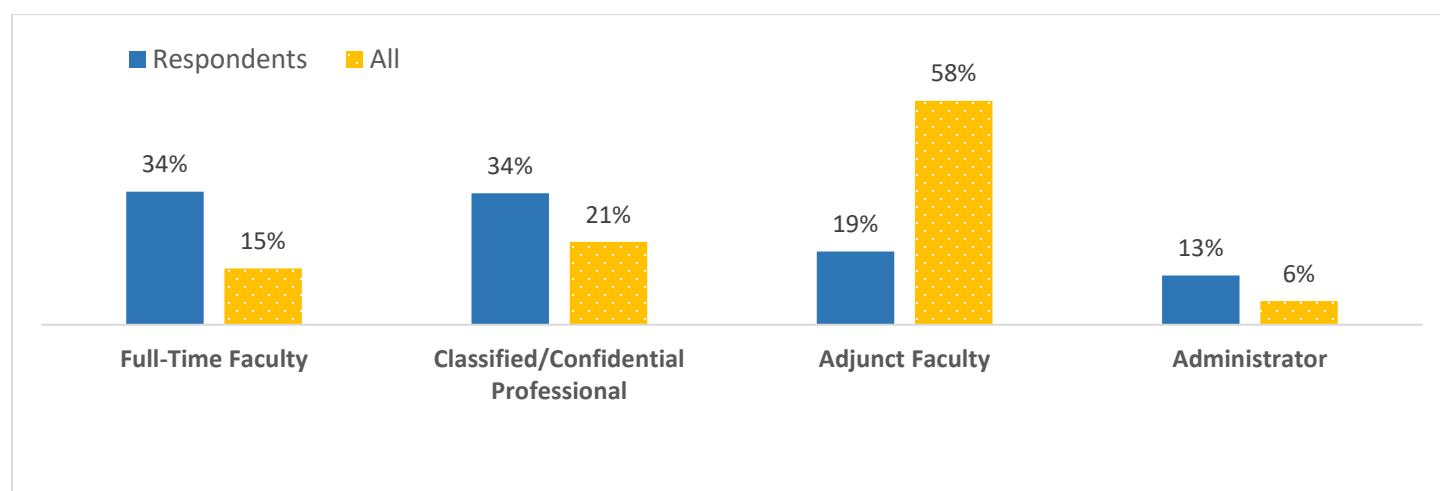
Table 1. Response Rates by Employee Group

	Total Fall 2024	Survey Respondents	Response Rate
Adjunct Faculty	906*	49	5%
Classified/Confidential Professional	335	88	26%
Full-Time Faculty	228	89	39%
Administrator	96	33	34%
Total	1,565	259	17%

*Includes non-teaching faculty in fall 2024

Additionally, when considering representation among respondents vs. proportion that each employee group makes up out of all employees, there is a higher representation for full-time faculty, classified/confidential professionals, and administrators compared to their overall proportion at the college. Full-time faculty made up 34% of the survey respondents while representing 15 % of all employees, conversely, the adjunct faculty were underrepresented in the survey, comprising 19% of the respondents while making up 58% of employees (see Figure 1 for details).

Figure 1. Proportion of Survey Respondents (n=259) vs. College Employees as a Whole (N=1,565)



Results

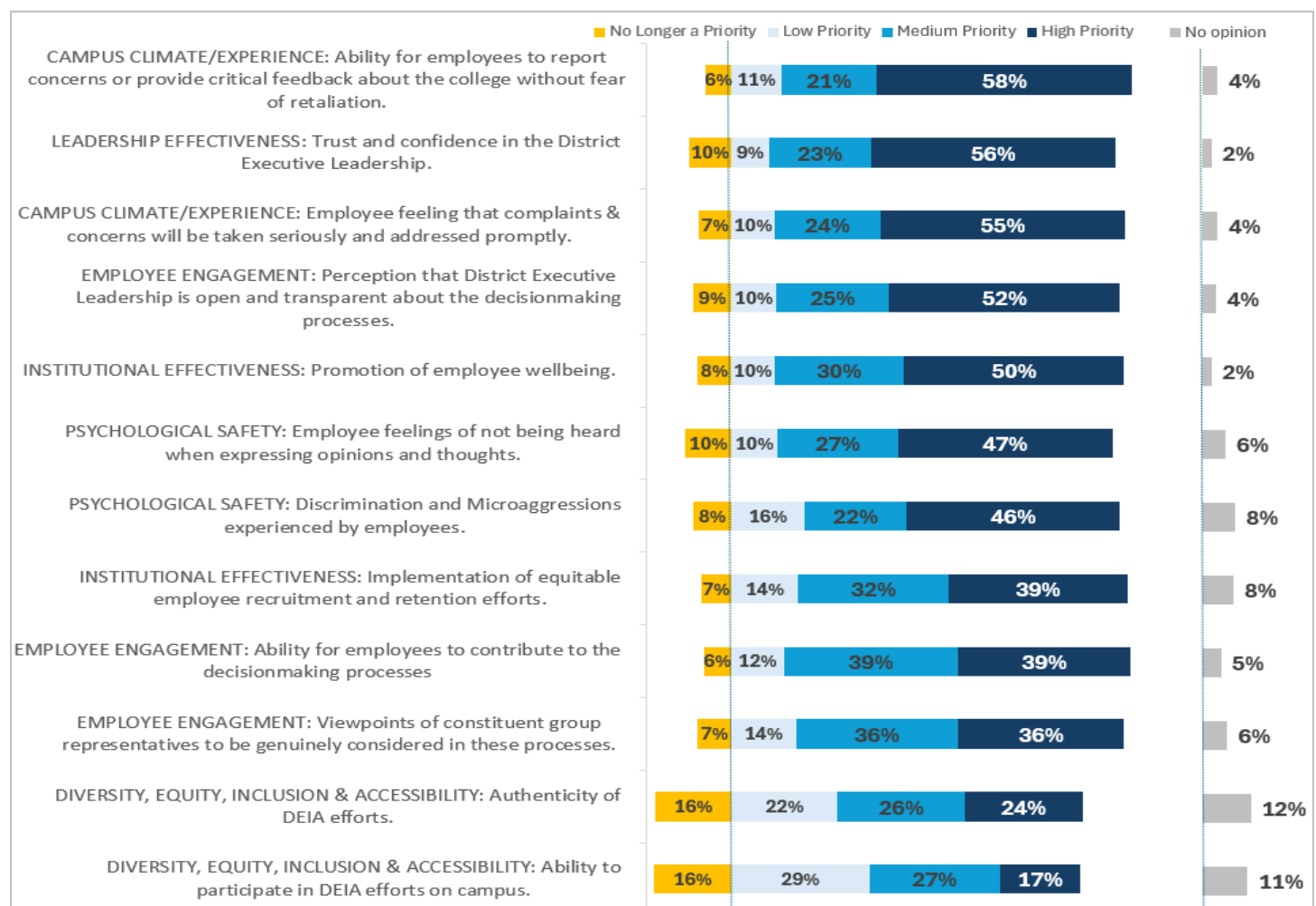
Priority Levels Selected for each Finding Area

COC employees were asked to rank the priority level for each Key Finding area and five response alternatives were provided:

- No Longer a Priority – Matters that have been resolved or are no longer relevant.
- Low Priority – Issues worth addressing but not pressing.
- Medium Priority – Important issues, though not necessarily urgent.
- High Priority – Critical issues that require immediate follow-up.
- No Opinion – If you feel you cannot judge the priority of an issue.

Figure 2 provides the results of the selected priority levels sorted by highest to lowest proportions of 'High Priority Level' associated with each finding area. The Finding area with the highest proportion of 'High Priority' ratings was Campus Climate/Experience: Ability for employees to report concerns or provide critical feedback about the college without fear of retaliation' with 58% of respondents selecting it as high priority (60% when No opinion is excluded). This was followed by the key finding area of Leadership Effectiveness: Trust in confidence in the District Executive Leadership with 56% selecting high priority (57% with No opinion excluded).

Figure 2. Priority Levels for each Key Finding Area (All respondents)



💡 CAMPUS CLIMATE/EXPERIENCE and LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS are the areas of Highest Priority (over 55%)	💡 CAMPUS CLIMATE/EXPERIENCE: Employees feeling that complaints & concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly and EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT Perception that district Executive Leadership is open and transparent about the decision-making processes are areas with 52% to 55% selecting it as Hight Priority .	💡 INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS Promotion of employee wellbeing had exactly 50% of respondents selecting it as 'High Priority' .
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💡 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ability for employees to contribute to decision-making, and INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS Equitable Recruitment and Retention are areas with the highest selection as Medium Priority (32% - 39%)	
	the highest selection of No Longer a Priority (16%)
	the highest selection of No Opinion (16%)

Priority Levels of Key Finding Areas by Employee Groups

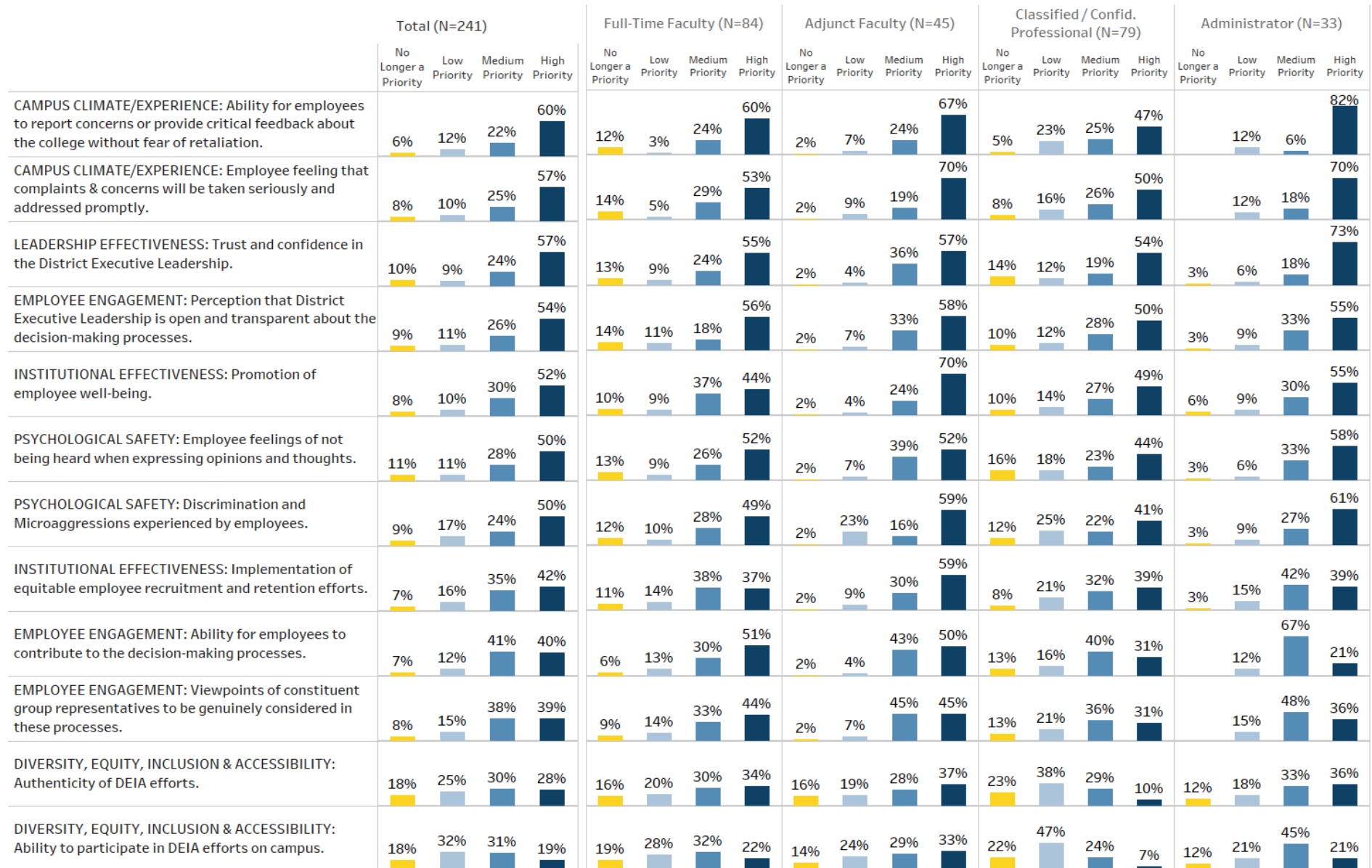
The responses were further disaggregated by the employee category to assess the variability of perceptions across employee groups. The results are shown in Figure 3 which is sorted by the overall high priority proportions excluding 'No opinion' responses from the denominator. These results are also available in an interactive visualization that can be accessed [here](#).

- **Full-time faculty:** The highest priority among full time faculty was given to the area related to Campus Climate/Experience, trust in District Leadership and its transparency.
- **Adjunct Faculty:** Adjunct faculty group ranked Campus Climate/Experience and trust in District Leadership and its transparency slightly higher than full-time faculty. The highest priority for this group was promotion of employee's Campus Climate/Experience. Adjunct faculty placed higher priority on the ability to participate in DEIA efforts on campus as compared to full-time faculty. This group also prioritized psychological safety concerns higher than full-time faculty group.
- **Classified/Confidential:** The highest priority for Classified Professionals were given to trust and confidence in District Leadership (54%) followed by Employee Engagement and Campus Climate/Experience. They placed lower priority on DEIA efforts and the ability to participate in them.
- **Administrators:** Administrators place highest priority on Campus Climate/Experience and Leadership Effectiveness. The area with the highest proportion of "No longer an Issue" was DEIA area for this group.
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Ability for employees to report concerns or provide critical feedback about the college without fear of retaliation was the highest priority overall (60%), and the highest priority for Administrator's group (82%) followed by the Adjunct Faculty (67%), whereas lower proportions of Classified/Confidential Professionals scored it as high priority (47%). Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) efforts saw varied levels of priority, with adjunct faculty and administrators rating the authenticity of DEIA efforts as more important.

💡 **Campus Climate/Experience** and **Leadership Effectiveness** were the key areas that had the **highest** priority scores among all respondents and across all employee groups.

Figure 3. Prioritization levels by Employee Groups



Open Responses for Focusing Efforts

Survey respondents provided 141 open-ended responses regarding their thoughts on where the leadership should focus its efforts to further improve campus climate and employee engagement. The qualitative analysis of the responses revealed several themes, the same comment can be coded under multiple themes if it conveys a variety of sentiments. The themes that have emerged with more than three comments and the number of times they were mentioned are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Common themes for Responses to thoughts on Focusing Efforts

Theme	N of Responses
Improved communication / transparency / respect (from leadership, within departments, about new administration, with SCV community, etc.)	43
More opportunities for employee input	24
Improved psychological safety / trust / employee wellness	15
Address existing complaints / improve methods of addressing issues	14
Increase DEIA efforts	7
Training and team building	6
Hiring processes	6
Student success / enrollment / student-centered	6
Specific employee group (adjunct faculty, short-term, etc.)	4
Improve load assignment / scheduling / offerings	4
HR - related	4
Improve follow-through of projects / efforts	4
Other (three or fewer answers per theme)	22

Improved communication / transparency / respect at various levels was the top area that the respondents felt the focus should be directed to improve campus climate and employee engagement, followed by the desire to see *more opportunities for employee input* as well as *improved psychological safety / trust / wellness*, and *addressing existing complaints*. These areas were mentioned more than 10 times in the open-ended responses.

Sample Comments **regarding Improved communication / transparency / respect (from leadership, within departments, about new administration, with SCV community, etc.):**

"Keep employees informed on the decision- making process so that we don't have to get all of our updates from the media."

"It is ridiculous to think that the climate of the college would change overnight; however, I am seeing and experiencing change. I am seeing more transparency, I am seeing more events on the camps that bring all stakeholders together, I am seeing more of my peers, and I am seeing change... but we have a long way to go. I am still seeing issues of accountability and nepotism not being handled, I am still seeing people who have been hurt in the past and feel that HR is not supporting them. I am still seeing that there is hope- and know that with a strong student and faculty driven leadership, we will succeed."

"Inclusiveness would be a good start. In my years on this campus, I have rarely felt as I were treated equally. Occasional kind statements and parties don't make equality. We need, as part time faculty, to BE included. Many of us feel that our deans and department chairs are not supportive..."

"I think they are doing a good job at feeling transparent, and receptive to problems that were ignored. I think now the District needs to take that feedback, figure out what is actionable, what is not, why, and discuss frankly with the groups what is being done now, this year, and future to address what was brought to you. Doesn't have to be detailed, but letting us know you heard, remember, and planning keeps optimism alive."

"I think continuing to open up communications between different groups on campus will be one of the most helpful things. And information sharing is key so that employees have a better understanding of what is happening throughout the college. For instance, regular updates from the executive and board levels about important decisions made that week/month would be nice to receive, especially since so many survey respondents didn't know much about the board."

"District communication is still something that should be worked on. Employees are reporting they are still feeling they are not receiving information on what is occurring in the district as a whole."

"Continue to support events and efforts like the wellness program which help bring folks from different areas of campus together in a positive and friendly way. Honor the work of the campus committees and remain transparent in decisions, especially those related to budgets."

Sample Comments regarding **More opportunities for employee input:**

"Including faculty and staff in decision making process regarding students' needs. Continue offering opportunities to connect with leadership. Opening day was a good example. Would much rather continue to have panels to ask questions and hear input from multiple viewpoints vs long power point - one sided presentations."

"Improvement is needed in ensuring there is equitable treatment, input, and decision making between faculty and classified professionals. The sense of hierarchy and entitlement of the faculty is sometimes astonishing. Enabling this type of behavior at any level should not be encouraged or tolerated."

"I think leadership needs to listen to those of us on the ground and needs to help make things happen. It should be the leadership's priority to do their best to understand all viewpoints and make a real effort to meet the needs of campus employees."

Comments regarding **Improved psychological safety / trust / employee wellness:**

"I still don't want to talk to anyone on this campus out of fear. I have a lot of PTSD from being bullied and since I am [color], I really fear that my thoughts and opinions still won't matter."

"I believe that all of these are still a high priority. If I were to rank one as top, it would be psychological safety of employees."

"The Psychological Safety concerns are wrapped into the other priorities. For example, you can't address "employee feelings of not being heard when expressing opinions and thoughts" if you don't address "employee feeling that complaints and concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly" and "viewpoints of constituent group representatives to be genuinely considered in (these) processes" and "authenticity of DEIA efforts."

"It is evident that the campus is experiencing a divide. It feels like an important time to offer and encourage employees to engage with one another to provide an opportunity to heal. Classified has felt more psychological safety, although Administration shared that they are now experiencing psychological safety. There needs to be an understanding of why certain Administration feel that way."

Among OTHER categories with three or fewer comments, the topics were: Highlighting COC excellence, Board elections, Improved evaluation processes, AI, Work-life balance, Equitable compensation, CCC improvements, College structure, Fewer emails, Less focus of DEIA.

Open Responses for Progress Made

A total of 147 open-ended responses were analyzed about the progress made since the 2024 spring survey results were shared with the college community. The following themes emerged (in order of highest frequency to lowest): *there's been progress, no change, no progress, and it's too early to assess.*

Table 3. Common themes for Responses to Progress Made

Total Responses	147
There has been Progress	87
There has been No Change	27
There has been No Progress	23
Too Early to Assess	8

The most common theme among responses was that “**progress** has been made”. Sample quotes below convey this sentiment.

“This may just be the fact that I am now personally more knowledgeable about campus since the survey results were released and sparked a lot of different conversations on campus, but it feels like more employees are willing to speak up and are expressing more of an interest in getting involved in different areas on campus, which is nice to see.”

“There is now greater openness regarding departmental agendas and meetings, fostering collaboration and transparency across the campus. There are established specific times for staff to address their concerns, ensuring that everyone feels heard and supported.”

“There has been a considerable amount of progress made to address the issues from the last Climate survey. The efforts are greatly appreciated. I immediately saw that the administration was being transparent and wanted to communicate directly with the employees. It was much appreciated that the new interim President came around the office to see how we are doing and for the first time that happened made me feel appreciated and cared for. I also see that many people are being included in meetings that they never were before. I feel overall it has become a safer and open space where people can speak their mind and contribute. But there is still work to be done.”

Comments indicating “**no change**” conveyed mainly neutral or mixed sentiment, with 13 responses indicating no valence. Mixed responses (8) outnumber clear positive or negative reactions, suggesting that for some respondents perceptions remain unchanged or uncertain. For instance:

“The changes have not affected my day-to-day work duties, and I still love my job.”

“There is some progress being made. Until we know who is elected for the BOT, I don't see any significant change occurring. Unfortunately, the secret agendas among executive leadership continue.”

Additionally, about a quarter of the responses shared the theme that “**no progress** has been made”, sample quotes below are representative of this sentiment.

“I don’t know what’s actually been done. It seems like the campus has just been in a state of upheaval and change. Changing people doesn’t mean actual change.”

“I don’t know firsthand of any progress that has been made, although people seem to be hopeful and excited about the leadership change.”

Finally, the fourth broad theme among open responses was that it was “**too early** to make assessments” of any progress that would have been made since the release of the results. The quotes below represent samples of these responses.

“I have not observed any significant progress. While there has been substantial discussion about change, and I acknowledge that it has been a relatively short time since the last survey, it seems that the new leadership on campus is not markedly different from the previous leader.”

“A major transition in leadership was made and some efforts to be more transparent have stemmed from the new leadership. Too early to really see an impact or notice real results from the changes made.”

 Largely, **acknowledgement of progress** stands out as the most commonly emerging theme.

Another categorization of the responses used the broad themes of *Positive, Mixed or Negative Responses*. Positive responses were the most common, followed by mixed responses which indicated progress, but also noted a need for either more work or time. Within each of these broad categories, subtopics emerged which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Top 3 Common sub-themes within Positive, Mixed and Negative Responses

Positive Response	62	Mixed Response	42	Negative Response	23
Employee Voices/Engagement	21	Lingering Fear of/Distrust in Executive Leadership	14	Unsure/Negative Feelings About Future	8
Transparency / Collaboration / Inclusion	20	Long way to go/more work to be done	12	Authenticity	4
Hopeful	10	Unsure/Negative Feelings About Future	12	Lack of Clarity/Confusion/ Uncertainty	3

Most **positive** comments were related to *increased employee engagement, transparency/collaboration/inclusion, and hope*. Sample quotes for each sub-theme are provided below:

Employee Voices/ Engagement

“...I feel engaged and optimistic we are headed in the right direction. Healing will take time, but we are going in the right direction as long as we don't get complacent. It will be important to educate and include our new Board

members regarding the campus climate, so they understand where we have been and where we are headed as a campus..."

"The atmosphere feels more engaging and I feel like steps have been taken to move in a direction of trust and transparency where conversations are welcomed."

"The change in leadership is definitely felt as a positive move in my department. I see more efficiency and creativity because we no longer are limited to one individual's vision. We are free to think out of the box and feel we are no longer limited in our goals."

Transparency / Collaboration / Inclusion Mentioned

"The college is doing a great job to make changes to include all employee groups and be transparent on decision making. This does not happen overnight but is headed in the right direction. Change is hard but can be excellent for employees and the college overall."

"I am pleased with the pace at which changes have been made to address climate concerns. I have been concerned that the climate survey would be weaponized and not interpreted as ONE source of qualitative data, albeit a rich and powerful source of information. I appreciate and applaud our interim president's efforts to address immediate concerns and to be thoughtful in planning next steps in a collegial, respectful, authentic manner."

Hopeful

"I am a recently hired [position]. So I was not aware of how much tension there was with the college leadership historically. But I've seen my colleagues who have been here longer reinvigorated by this survey. The atmosphere at my first opening day event (fall 2023) was very different than the enthusiastic and hopeful atmosphere at the fall 2024 opening day."

"I feel that there is an overall sense of relief among most constituents on campus. There is a lot of work to do but we are moving in the right direction!!"

"Everyone seems happier and safer now. Employees are happier, and happier college employees serve students better..."

Of note is another sub-theme of improved *Executive Leadership Interaction* (with 8 positive responses). These comments are highlighted below:

"Positive changes have been made by executive level leadership to become more interactable with the campus community as a whole."

"Positive changes have been made by executive level leadership to become more interactable with the campus community as a whole."

While under the 'positive' and 'negative' theme, comments more directly had a valence, in the 'mixed' comments, the comments tended to include both positive and negative sentiments. Additionally, in 'mixed' comments respondents indicated that while significant progress has been made, they were still overcoming previous distrust and fear. There is still work that needs to be done to build confidence and trust among employees. Additionally, lingering uncertainty about the future during the survey administration period highlighted the need for continued improvement efforts.

Below are samples exemplifying these responses of mixed valence:

Lingering Fear of/Distrust in Executive Leadership

"The engagement with staff and faculty has been great. I feel that I can say more without fear. While the fear is not completely gone, I feel more comfortable expressing my opinions."

"Some progress made in _____ and very happy with new leadership but still toxic and corrupt environment lower down"

Long way to go/more work to be done

"It is obvious that management is now making an effort, but the culture of the campus must change and that takes effort and commitment of management over a long period of time."

Unsure/Negative Feelings About Future

"A lot of change but it's a little early to say whether or not it has been effective. Anecdotes suggest it has been positive from individuals I've heard who now have access to WFH when they previously were unable to. Opinions and complaints are now taken seriously. As a whole, college wide? Again, too early. With a Board Election coming up it feels unstable still."

Negative responses were the least frequent among all responses about the progress made. These comments highlighted uncertainty about future, concerns about authenticity and lack of clarity. Sample responses are:

Lack of Clarity/Confusion/ Uncertainty

"None Seen. A lot of uncertainty on Campus. Projects are stalling. Key people in all levels are leaving. This is not a good look."

"From my perspective, not much progress. We are in a holding pattern, and no one really knows what the long-term vision for the college is anymore. We only know that it's not the same as it was 6 months ago. In addition, there's a huge amount of negative energy surrounding the board of trustees elections. It's exhausting. I don't fully understand the decision to wait to begin the search for a new president..."

"I believe progress is being made, but not everyone might agree with the decisions that have been made over the summer. I think it would be helpful to hear about what other steps are being taken regarding other parts of the survey. BIG changes have been made in top leadership, but there are also issues within departments and divisions that need to be resolved. For example, what progress is being made regarding conducting a 360 review for managers? "

Authenticity

"I have not seen a significant shift since the spring of 2024. Superficial changes have been made, but the core appears to be the same".

"I hear a lot of talk but don't see much real action."

Summary Findings

- **CAMPUS CLIMATE/EXPERIENCE and LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS** are the areas of Highest Priority (over 55%)
- CAMPUS CLIMATE/EXPERIENCE: Employees feeling that complaints & concerns will be taken seriously and addressed promptly and EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: Perception that district Executive Leadership is open and transparent about the decision-making processes are areas with 52% to 55% selecting it as High Priority.
- INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: Promotion of employee wellbeing had exactly 50% of respondents selecting it as 'High Priority'.
- The level of priority for this area varied by employee groups: more administrators, adjunct faculty, and full-time faculty indicated that *Reporting concerns without fear of retaliation* was ranked as top priority area for all respondents as a high priority, in comparison to classified professionals.
- The authenticity of DEIA efforts was rated variably across groups: the adjunct faculty and administrators placed greater emphasis on this key finding area than other groups.
- Enhanced communication, transparency, and respect across all levels emerged as the top focus area for improving campus climate and employee engagement. This was closely followed by a strong desire for increased opportunities for employee input, greater psychological safety, trust, employee wellness, as well as resolving existing employee complaints.
- For open responses toward views of changes since Spring 2024 Climate & Engagement Survey results, *progress* emerged as the most frequently emerging theme, with comments having both positive and mixed sentiments.
- Positive progress sentiments were most closely linked to the themes related to *increased employee engagement, transparency, hope and improved Executive Leadership Interaction*.

Recommendations

Upon review of the results of the Campus Climate Engagement Survey Prioritization Employee Survey:

- Focus immediate future efforts on areas which 50% or higher respondents rated as 'high priority'.
- Consider conducting on-going assessments of progress checks allowing for more time and potential impacts to be realized and observed.

Implications

The Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office collects information on how data and research conducted assist the campus community in making evidence-based decisions. In light of this, we ask that requestors, and/ or members of any department/area that utilize the data, provide action implications for each report. Using the following [Action Implication Form](#), please report actions and/or decisions that emerge from the data and findings presented in this report.

Once completed, action implications will be made available upon request.

For questions, or more detailed information on this research brief, contact Svetlana Deplazes, Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst at svetlana.deplazes@canons.edu or Preeta Saxena, Ph.D., Director Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at preeta.saxena@canyons.edu.