



**NC STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

## **PACE CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY**

An initiative of the Belk Center at NC State

706 Hillsborough Street | Raleigh, NC 27603

# Ventura College

Ventura, California

## **PACE Qualitative Report**

PACE Climate Survey for Community Colleges

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### **Conducted**

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## QUALITATIVE SUMMARY REPORT

PACE Climate Survey respondents were given an opportunity to submit comments about perceptions on their successes and barriers in their roles at the institution. Of the 198 Ventura College (VC) employees who completed the PACE Climate Survey, 137 respondents (69.2%) provided open-ended comments.

### 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: Teamwork and Collaboration

**Insights:** Respondents frequently mentioned strong collaboration across teams, supported by open communication, shared responsibility, and a clear focus on student success. Many comments spoke positively about working with colleagues across departments and disciplines, as well as the role of supportive leadership in creating an environment where ideas can be shared and developed. Respondents also highlighted the importance of trust, mentorship, and access to resources, noting that these factors help teams work effectively together and contribute to positive outcomes for students.

### Exemplar Comments

*One example would be our response to a change in legislation that affected the area I lead. I had funding from the state; I had the full support of my then supervisor; most important of all I had the full commitment and significant talents of the department chairs and the lead faculty within the departments.*

*I mostly feel successful when I work with faculty from different disciplines. That is where the diverse opinions and experiences come into to play, especially when discussing student success d teaching. Our institution works mostly in silos so when we bring those individuals from the silos together and have meaningful conversations, we learn so much.*

*I have felt most successful when I am part of a small, committed team working in an open, creative, nonjudgmental atmosphere. The best work happens when people feel safe to disagree without fear that a policy debate will be escalated into a report to the union or an executive team. In those settings, everyone has a clear role, participation is intrinsic rather than compliance driven, and the group can focus on solving real problems. Thoughtful planning for interaction matters: facilitators who design for full participation, notice who is not speaking, and make room for different communication styles. I also feel successful when the work is clearly connected to improved learning for students or better institutional processes, not primarily driven by funding or optics. Trust increases when teams have time to bond through retreats, off campus sessions, or longer blocks that include unstructured conversation. Productive meetings rely less on slideshows and more on hands on approaches like poster work, jigsaw activities, and collaborative drafting that make ideas visible and shared.*

## 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:** Respondents describing barriers to executive leadership performance frequently pointed to instability in leadership roles, lack of transparency, and inconsistent processes that create confusion and delays. Many comments reflected a culture of fear where concerns about retaliation or unaddressed unprofessional behavior discourage open communication. They also noted gaps in accountability and follow-through, contributing to a perception that feedback is not meaningfully acted upon. Across responses, these challenges were often linked to lower morale, burnout, and reduced effectiveness in supporting students.

### Exemplar Comments

*Cultural and leadership factors significantly impact workplace growth, morale, and psychological safety. Frequent administrative turnover without clear communication about reasons or transition plans creates instability. Constant leadership changes make it difficult to build consistency, trust, and long-term direction, directly affecting staff confidence and organizational progress. There is also a lack of consistent accountability for bullying and unprofessional conduct. When inappropriate behavior is not addressed, it signals tolerance, undermines psychological safety, and discourages open collaboration. A culture of fear is evident, with many employees feeling they must “walk on eggshells.” Staff are often hesitant to raise concerns, question decisions, or address problematic behavior due to fear of retaliation. When people do not feel safe speaking openly, issues remain unresolved and morale declines. Additionally, concerns raised by students often appear to receive little follow-through, reinforcing the perception that feedback does not lead to meaningful change. While diversity and inclusion are emphasized, true inclusion requires space for differing perspectives.*

*We need steady and competent leaders individuals who lead with clarity, integrity, and consistency, especially in times of uncertainty. Steady leadership builds trust; competent leadership drives results. We also need kindness and grace. Leadership is not only about strategy and execution; it is about how we treat people along the way. When leaders lead with empathy, patience, and humility, they create cultures where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to do their best work. Grounded, transparent, accountable and kind leaders inspire confidence while nurturing community. Stop with the heavy hand...*

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## PRIORITIES

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

### CODE: Executive Leadership Performance

**Insights:** Respondents discussing Executive Leadership Performance frequently emphasized the need for stronger, more consistent leadership practices. Many comments recommended improving leadership stability and longevity, along with building stronger relationships by actively engaging with employees and understanding the needs of students, staff, and faculty before making changes. Respondents also highlighted the importance of listening to employee feedback and following through with meaningful action. Several comments called for clearer accountability, including holding individuals responsible for harmful behavior and establishing consistent expectations for professional conduct. Respondents also recommended strengthening collaboration and trust across departments through more inclusive practices and shared governance. Across responses, employees emphasized that improving communication, transparency, and workplace culture would help boost morale, retention, and the institution's ability to effectively support students.

### Exemplar Comments

*Really listening to all employees and actually implementing the positive changes they say they are going to make/want to make.*

*Consistency and longevity within management rolls, both at the college and in the District as a whole. It's been a revolving door of management leadership. While some change is to be expected, ours is extreme. Sometimes its managers being promoted only to retire within 5 years, other times management leaves after only working for a short amount of time. This has a trickle down affect that adversely impacts our students, community, and those looking to work here (ie who we are able to attract for hiring pools).*

*Leadership needs to focus on holding individuals accountable for actions detrimental towards colleagues and students. Certain individuals understand that they can get away with their actions and this cycle is perpetuated. The campus climate and culture begins with strong Leadership.*

*Political climate ICE issues in the community Economic issues students and the community are facing Leadership retention + Dean retention Potential financial barriers the college may face*