

Two Campus Climate Surveys (CCS) were administered at Victor Valley College: the first in Fall 2010 (CCS 2010), the second a year later in Fall 2011 (CCS 2011). The purpose of the surveys was to formally assess VVC workforce members’ perceptions of the prevailing attitudes, standards, or environmental conditions related to shared governance operations and our institutional effectiveness—a/k/a our “Campus Climate.”

CCS 2010 provided general information about prevailing attitudes toward, and standards of practice for, shared governance and institutional effectiveness. We learned what aspects were positive and, more importantly, which aspects of the climate were in need of improvement. In CCS 2011, we further probed aspects of climate deemed problematic according to both CCS 2010 results and ACCJC visiting team recommendations from 2005 and 2010 regarding the levels of civility, respect, and trust that characterize the VVC work environment. Below are key themes emerging from a preliminary analysis of CCS 2011, offered to spur dialogue and inform action.

NON-PARTICIPATION. Over 900 email invitations were sent to all VVC workforce members urging their participation in these important, accreditation-related activities. Completed surveys were submitted by 199 individuals for CCS 2010, and 234 for CCS 2011. For those who did participate in 2011, 52% indicated “I have not attended any shared governance committees during the last 6 months.” Furthermore, there is a recurring pattern of respondents not having an opinion or not knowing something about VVC’s practices.

PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS CLIMATE ARE MIXED. The highest number of respondents view campus climate as “Fair.” However, the overall pattern of responses indicates mixed perceptions with basically $\frac{1}{3}$ of respondents perceiving the climate as either “Good,” “Fair,” or “Poor” (Figure 1). While this “rule of thirds” is helpful in the visual arts for creating appealing compositions, in the context of campus climate it points to unappealing conditions: *There is an absence of a clear, cohesive, shared vision of the prevailing conditions that constitute VVC’s campus climate.* These mixed perceptions signal a need to create and compel a clear, cohesive, unified, positive

view of a work environment that is focused on fulfilling high quality standards as an educational institution.

How do you view VVC's campus climate at this time?

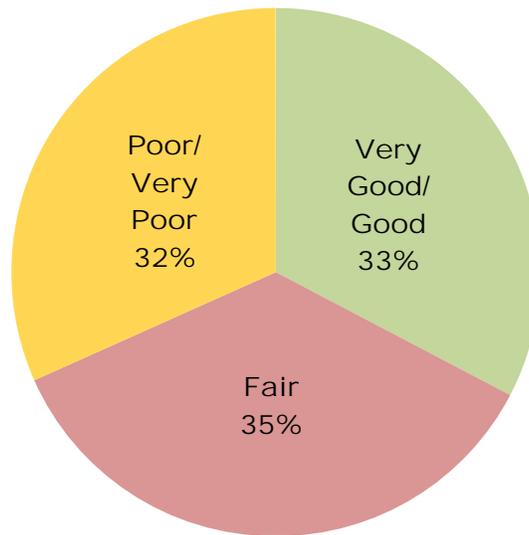


Figure 1

CIVILITY, RESPECT, AND TRUST SHOW SILO EFFECTS. A majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item, “VVC’s campus climate is characterized by a high level of trust and civility” (57% on CCS 2011; 77% on CCS 2010). This compound item was separated in CCS 2011 to differentiate results. Responses revealed that *trust not civility is the problem:* Respondents indicate the presence of civility and respect in interactions within and across departments by staff, faculty, and managers/administrators. Trust

towards staff and faculty is perceived as usually present by a majority of respondents within departments, but not towards their managers/administrators. Perceptions of trust outside of one’s department show declines, particularly for managers/administrators (Figure 2). *A lack of trust occurs in organizations when communication across work units is poor or nonexistent, often giving rise to misaligned objectives and inefficient operations—a silo effect.*

Additional findings further point to this *silo effect*: Dialogue on student learning and institutional effectiveness occurs very often or regularly *within* departments (57%), *but not across departments* (38%). Broad-based dialogue about continuous quality improvement of student and institutional learning is good practice. To be consistent with accreditation standards it must include all perspectives—every member of the campus workforce has a role in accomplishing our mission and, thus, has valuable input to provide as we discuss improvements.

efforts will require broad-based involvement across campus and may be leveraged to promote more participation in shared governance activities.

Perceived improvements to business practices that support institutional effectiveness are evident. However, it is not clear what impact those improvements have had on campus climate—arguably because of the mixed perceptions about climate. Still, continuing to make improvements is a good idea.

Problems with shared governance practices that persist will benefit from focused action as planned after CCS 2010—some of which is currently in process. Further analysis of CCS 2011 will guide those efforts and facilitate effective solutions, such as

- re-tooling shared governance structures and work systems;
- ensuring regular and widely disseminated meeting notes; and
- cultivating a meeting environment that respects multiple perspectives and welcomes vigorous dialogue about student learning and institutional effectiveness.

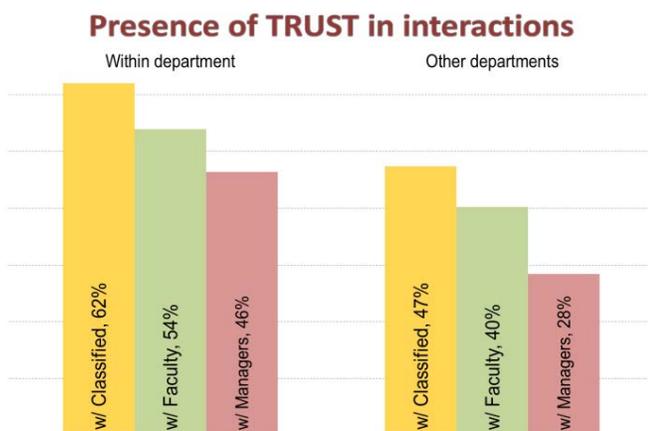


Figure 2

BUSINESS OPERATIONS HAVE IMPROVED. SHARED GOVERNANCE HAS NOT. Perceptions are improving on 14 of the 27 items (52%) relating to practices previously rated as “deficient” by respondents on CCS 2010. Examples of areas that still need significant improvement include such things as interdepartmental workflow; outcomes assessment; employee evaluation, discipline, and development; and management support and encouragement of employees. Perceived deficiencies in shared governance practices are generally the same as those noted in CCS 2010. Specific improvements are needed in the areas of keeping and disseminating committee meeting records, conveying constituency issues and concerns at meetings, and respecting the viewpoints of others—particularly in decision-making and campus-wide planning efforts.

Fortunately, shared governance operations are perceived as better than they were 5 years ago on both surveys, and a majority agree or strongly agree that “*levels of respect, civility, and trust on campus would increase by improving VVC's shared governance operations.*” Hence, broad, campus-wide support can be anticipated for actions that focus on improving shared governance structures and operations consistent with findings on both campus climate surveys.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION. Campus climate at VVC is marked by non-participation of workforce members in governance activities, and a non-cohesive vision for the state of the college’s prevailing attitudes standards, or environmental conditions. Current educational master planning

“An effective institution maintains an ongoing, self-reflective dialogue about its quality and improvement... (that) institution-wide dialogue must be at the heart of the self-evaluation process for the college community to gain a comprehensive perspective of the institution.”

-ACCJC, “Introduction to the Standards”