

## ACC Employee Climate Survey 2020

### Qualitative Analysis of Comments Question

The Employee Climate Survey 2020 included one open-ended question: ***What is the most important issue affecting ACC employees this year?*** There were 1,100 comments with content to be analyzed. This report provides a summary of these comments. Comments indicating “don’t know” or “not applicable” were not analyzed. Representative comments have been copied verbatim below to illustrate some of the key themes.

The comments analyzed are consistent with the findings of the quantitative analysis of the Employee Climate Survey reported separately and provide some additional context and rationale behind the quantitative responses.

The single most important finding of both analyses, as well as the results of prior year employee climate surveys concerns communication. Communication affects each issue surfaced in survey respondent comments, and can potentially improve perceptions regarding topics as diverse as pay and adapting to change. Employees seek better communication from top down and between and among departments at ACC, and they want a way to surface communication from bottom to top. As the college becomes larger and more complex, communication becomes more elusive, and more formal structures are required to facilitate information flow. Currently, employees do not believe the structures necessary for adequate communication throughout the college are in place. This contributes to lack of consistency in procedures and employees feeling they are not a valued part of the college community.

The specific topics mentioned most frequently in the comments addressed pay, the college’s administration, procedures and practices, supervision, physical facilities, faculty issues, students, organizational culture, communication, workload and staffing needs, professional development and career advancement, adapting to change, equity and inclusion, technology resources. The table below indicates the key topics that surfaced in the comments.

**Topics Mentioned Most Often by Survey Respondents**

<b>Key Topic</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pay, Cost of Living	241	22%
College Administration	161	15%
Procedures/Practices	157	14%
Supervision	142	13%
Physical Facilities	129	12%
Faculty Issues	108	10%
Students	104	9%
Organizational Culture	99	9%
Communication	96	9%
Staffing	82	7%
Professional Development & Career Advancement	77	7%
Adapting to Change & Reorganizations	77	7%
Equity, Inclusion	68	6%
Technology Resources	55	5%
Other Topics	45	4%
Commuting & Traffic	33	3%
<b>Total Respondents Providing Comments</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>---</b>

**Pay**

A large group of respondents (241 out of 1,100, 22%) believe pay or the increasing cost of living is an important issue for ACC. Overall, employees feel pay is not keeping up with the increased cost of living in the Austin metro area. Respondents noted the high cost of housing, particularly near ACC campuses where employees work, as well as increasing taxes and health care costs.

*The pay is not rising fast enough to meet the demands of changing cost of living and more and more employees are being pushed out further and further away from their campus which significantly impacts rest, quality of life, and satisfaction of job.*

*I feel that my pay is not sufficient to meet my family's needs, and that I may have to look for new opportunities.*

Many of those respondents indicating pay is a key issue for employees suggested that adjunct faculty pay was too low. To retain good adjunct faculty, these employees seek access to health insurance and related benefits, as well as more job security from semester to semester.

*Adequate compensation, benefits and professional development opportunities for long-term, well-educated, highly trained adjunct faculty who do the bulk of teaching at ACC.*

Several respondents specifically mentioned challenges relating to traffic and commuting (33 out of 1,100, 3%), including “brutal commute times”, the lack of reliable public transportation, the need for hourly employees to have access to a bus pass, lack of parking. Respondents suggested possible solutions might include campus to campus shuttles, telecommuting, flexible work schedules, “paring up with Lyft and Uber”. Employees noted the negative impact of increased commute times on quality of life and effort to balance home and work life. A few employees recommended fitness centers at each campus to support employee health and wellness.

### **College Administration**

Many respondents commented on the college administration (161 out of 1,100, 15%). Numerous respondents suggested that the college organization was “top-heavy” with too many administrators. With the many layers of management, decisions were being made without input from faculty or staff who were responsible for implementing the decisions. Without adequate input, some decisions resulted in practices which negatively impacted students, faculty, and staff.

The many layers of management contributed to the lack of information shared with employees below upper management levels. As noted elsewhere in this report, respondents suggested that more communication is needed from upper management downward to faculty and staff; communication is also needed from faculty and staff upward through the organization to influence and improve decision making.

The many layers of management, challenges of information sharing and communication, and perception that decisions are made at the highest levels without adequate input from employees on the front lines contributed to respondents reporting they were not appreciated and supported. Without the input of some front-line employees, decisions impacting students may result in unanticipated consequences and decreased student success.

Several respondents emphasized the need for employee input and the resulting benefits. Two examples are provided below.

*I think ACC leadership would be surprised how much student affairs staff understands the student, and how much the students inform student affairs staff of their needs. Working as a team to support the student could be a huge pivot point to launch us into the next level of student success and completion. Faculty and student affairs working together, intake staff, faculty and students, advisors, faculty and students, completion counselors, faculty and students, success coaches, faculty and students, ACC listening to this tier because students actually express their needs through this department a lot. Connections are what students need.*

*... Often times, decisions are made at a higher level or senior level without consulting the bottom of the ladder - the ones who do the work. Sometimes people just want to be in the know and included -- that their voice is heard and acknowledged. That's true collaboration.*

Consistent with concerns regarding supervisors, respondents requested more communication and transparency among administrators, middle management, and lower level employees regarding new initiatives and policies, as well as more employee input into decision making. Respondents suggested administrators adhere more carefully to the “servant leadership” guidelines that ACC implemented some years ago, and work to actively demonstrate the values identified in board policy.

In summary, employees seek administrators who listen to input from employees closest to the issues at hand, who model ACC values, and who demonstrate servant leadership. These are the traits of administrators that employees feel they can trust.

### **Procedures and Practices**

A large group of respondents (157 out of 1,100, 14%) commented on issues pertaining to procedures and practices. Employees reported challenges with procedures and practices associated with purchasing, hiring, testing centers, access to bookstores and cashier services. Procedures and practices in these specific areas and generally were described as inconsistent across campuses and departments, bureaucratic and overly complex, inefficient, subject to constant change, and excessively time-consuming. Employees felt new procedures were implemented too quickly and without adequate employee training.

Some changes in procedures resulted in hardships for students, as well as faculty and staff. In addition, one respondent noted, “Decisions made at the SVC and HBC don't always take into account what is really happening.”

A few respondents indicated that the college was growing too fast and becoming more complex. This may have contributed to respondents noting that it was difficult to find the correct person to address an issue, and that various departments were not responsive.

*ACC is so big that sometimes it's difficult to know who to contact. I've been sent on a goose chase several times trying to figure out who is the person to solve a problem.*

Specific procedures and practices that caused frustration for multiple respondents included:

- Limiting the number of bookstores throughout the district.
- Limiting cashiering services throughout the district.
- Cuts in Testing Center hours for our students.  
*On the one hand, we promote initiatives to improve student success. Then we tell them they can only have a certain number of exams per semester. One of the most important tools we have used to help students succeed is to parcel out material in smaller, more easily digestible chunks by giving more tests per semester. This is not fair to students!*
- Inconsistent hiring practices and lack of written human resources policies.
- Adjunct faculty staffing process is challenging.
- Business Services Department purchasing process is bureaucratic and procedures are constantly changing.

*...bureaucratic and time consuming policies and procedures with accounts payable—i.e. contract approval for minor purchases or services. These slow down work flow and create friction and micromanagement between units.*

- IT infrastructure and processes are difficult to navigate, and procedures change often. *Changes within college-wide IT making acquisition and retention of technology assets (both hardware and software) far more difficult and burdensome on the employees requiring those assets.*
- Need for better cleaning and maintenance by Campus Operations at some campuses.
- Inconsistent application of procedures across departments and across campuses, including different hours of operation for various student and administrative services.

Numerous respondents suggested that the college improve communication regarding procedures through the supervisor chain of command as well as across departments and campuses. Employees identified the need for clear and timely communication of changes to policies, procedures, and practices. If employees knew what the new procedures were, they would be more likely to follow them. One person noted the difficulties in processing all the emails received daily, which would might include information on new procedures. This respondent suggested an “announcements” webpage for employees that would provide this information in one easily accessible location.

*I provide an "Announcements" page for my students which has the emails I've sent along with general reminders or information. I'd love if the College did something similar, that way I could go to their announcements page & see any emails or information I missed.*

## **Supervision**

A large group of respondents (142 out of 1,100, 13%) identified supervision as an important issue for employees. Bullying and harassment at all levels of the college surfaced as a key theme in these comments. One respondent suggested that a culture of disrespect was fostered at the highest levels in the organization. Respondents mentioned supervisor bullying and tolerance of harassment, and the creation of hostile work environments in some departments. Departments most likely to be specifically mentioned as challenging work environments were Information Technology and Business Services.

*Threat of replacement, demotion or reassignment at whims of leadership without regard to contribution and competence of staff; Failure to provide clear guidance on expectations - unspoken demands.*

*Extremely [sic] toxic work environments from administrative superiors with no oversight, consequences, or support for employees who are harassed and bullied.*

*The service center is under hostile work environment and is extremely disorganized. We need assistance and guidance from the college to improve work efficiencies and so the employees [sic] at this center can feel safe and comfortable in the work environment.*

Respondents identified lack of supervisory and interpersonal skills as one factor contributing to poor management and the growth of hostile or demotivating work environments.

*Bad managers, people don't understand the groups they oversee, fail to adequately support them and generally don't know enough to do their job job [sic] properly. They create more problems than they solve.*

Faculty and staff respondents suggested several approaches that might strengthen supervisor leadership skills and potentially improve departmental work environments. Employees identified a need for more communication from their supervisors about new initiatives and policies, and to be included in departmental decision making. Respondents requested constructive feedback from supervisors to aid them in performing their jobs. They also recommended training programs for supervisors and upward evaluation programs to support development of strong managerial skills.

### **Physical Facilities**

Many respondents indicated that one or more aspects of ACC's physical facilities were an important issue for employees (129 out of 1,100, 12%). Important issues for employees included: the impact of regionalization on students, faculty, and staff; need for office and instructional space; need for more parking and healthy, affordable food options at each campus; campus maintenance issues and moving to new campuses; safety on campus.

### ***Impact of Regionalization on Students, Faculty, and Staff***

Respondents suggested that the move toward regionalization of the college district, in combination with the building of new campuses, has resulted in hardships for students and employees. Specifically, students' access to testing centers and cashiering services has been limited. Respondents indicated both students and employees were affected by the closing of bookstores at some campuses, and the lack of healthy and affordable food options. Some respondents suggested that more employee input was needed prior to making decisions associated with regionalization, so that the impact of the decisions on large groups of employees and students could be addressed. One respondent suggested that services used by students be available at campuses which are within a CapMetro ride of campuses that do not have these services.

*For me, it is the regionalization of services. I work at EVC and have seen services (food, cashier, etc) stripped from this campus and placed at priority campuses (ie. Highland). EVC is neglected physically and their [sic] are no resources available to students/faculty who do not have a car or even more than 10 minutes time in order to go get services (HEB, restaurants, etc are not in walking distance and there is complicated bus service to reach other campuses).*

*Loss of student services, particularly in the "non-hub" campuses. Restricting testing center hours and usage, losing the bookstores, and unaffordable/healthy food options have created a greater burden on students AND faculty alike.*

*... I have seen our students get very frustrated when they learn that they can only buy books at only a few campuses or see a cashier to get help with understanding their account at a few campuses*

### ***Space Needs for Employees and Instruction***

Many respondents identified lack of space as a concern. Respondents mentioned the need for office space for staff, adjunct faculty and full-time faculty. One respondent noted lack of office space resulted in employees in the same department not being located together. Others reported a general lack of workspace as well as the lack of office space for new employees. Consistent with recommendations addressing the issue of traffic and long commute times, one respondent suggested that departments lacking adequate office space allow employees to work from home on specified days.

Respondents identified the need for more classroom space, and space for clinical, industrial, and other workforce program instruction. Some respondents were concerned that classroom space associated with their departments would be lost due to different approaches to course scheduling. Respondents noted the need for meeting space at some campuses, and the need for more student spaces.

### ***Parking***

Respondents noted the continuing need for more parking throughout the college district, particularly at the Eastview, Northridge, and Highland campuses. Some respondent comments indicated dealing with the lack of parking was stressful. As noted earlier in this report, respondents proposed numerous solutions for addressing parking and transportation issues districtwide that would benefit both employees and students. One respondent suggested temporary parking was needed adjacent to buildings to facilitate loading and unloading of work and teaching materials.

*...No loading/unloading zones provided for employees, students, & visitors to use when arriving with gear, supplies, or other items that require heavy lifting or multiple trips. Once you're at your destination with everything you need, everything's great! I love ACC. Getting there though often seems unnecessarily difficult.*

*I'm teaching at Eastview this semester and this is my first semester ever teaching here. The parking situation is absolutely atrocious. While it is the closest campus to my full time job, I will never teach here again just to avoid the stress of trying to find faculty parking.*

### ***Food Services***

There were more comments addressing food services than safety or moving in the current employee climate survey. Comments indicated that having healthy, affordable food options for faculty, staff, and students on campus or within a very short walk of campus would improve the teaching and learning environment. This may be because access to acceptable food services removes one of the many stress factors for both employees and students, or signals the college's caring philosophy to employees and students.

*The food service options are woeful. Simon's Cafe that once existed at RGC was great, and perhaps such isn't realistic, but even HLC's is inadequate. Is it too much to ask that fresh coffee*

*(espresso?) be available at every campus? Wasn't that a necessity (!) back when you were a student?*

*So far as wellness is concerned - what would be most appreciated is healthier and higher quality food options on campus.*

### ***Move to New Facilities and Maintenance of Older Facilities***

A few respondents noted they are looking forward to their departments moving to new facilities. Other respondents perceived that efforts directed to new construction have been made at the expense of the older campuses. These respondents reported that older campuses needed more maintenance and cleaning support; neglecting these functions resulted in older campuses becoming less attractive to students.

*You all neglect the older campuses, Highland gets all that's [sic] new and nice.*

*...Older campuses are falling apart and students don't want to use the resources there because of it.*

### ***Safety***

Several respondents identified safety and security as an important issue. Respondents noted that ACC's campuses are open to the public, "which has inherent risks". In addition, some campuses have reported criminal activity nearby. Respondents suggested increased lighting in parking lots was needed, as well as disaster preparedness for situations including an active shooter on campus. The survey was conducted in February 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic was identified as a threat to public health. Even in February, a few ACC employees sensed the potential for the coronavirus to impact ACC.

*Safety. ACC operates its facilities openly, which has inherent risks, and needs a better organized and effective police force.*

### ***Faculty Issues***

Respondent comments on faculty issues surfaced a variety of themes (108 out of 1,100 respondents, 10%) including heavy faculty workloads, need for more full-time faculty positions, and request for better treatment of adjunct faculty in terms of job security, in addition to the pay issues noted earlier in this report. A few respondents suggested that the administration was "encroaching upon faculty purview under the auspice of student success and engagement", however, no respondents reported specific examples or situations of infringement on academic freedom to clarify this perception.

#### ***Heavy Faculty Workloads***

Many respondents noted the heavy workloads for department chairs, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty, and the increasing administrative responsibilities required of those in teaching roles.



*The department chair jobs in some areas have overwhelming workloads. A department chair may be responsible for dozens of adjuncts, in addition to managing full-time faculty, a myriad of administrative duties, and is also expected to teach*

*I cant juggle teaching and all the participation in college activities. It's too much!*

*Every year it is becoming harder and harder to teach, be involved in committees and Senate and my Department and still have enough time to be innovative and prepare for my courses and provide students with timely feedback on their work.*

*Too many new initiatives and extra work given to faculty without removing previous requirements or giving more (release) time to do them.*

### **Treatment of Adjunct Faculty**

Of the many comments addressing treatment of adjunct faculty, there was one respondent who indicated great satisfaction being an adjunct professor at ACC.

*As an adjunct professor, I'm quite pleased with my work with ACC and have no real issues. Thank you!*

All the other comments regarding adjunct faculty described negative aspects of the position and a shared observation that adjunct faculty were not treated well at ACC. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the primary factor in treatment of adjunct faculty is the perceived low pay and limitations on access to benefits. Respondents also identified the lack of job security as a critical indicator of the treatment of adjunct faculty.

Important characteristics of the adjunct faculty position which impinge on the adjunct faculty member's job security included: the practice of full-time faculty bumping adjunct faculty from a course section assignment when the full-time faculty member's section is cancelled or the full-time faculty member seeks an overload assignment; last minute course section cancellations without replacement assignments; and the challenges of obtaining Multiple Semester Term Appointment (MSTA) or Highest Priority to Hire (HPTH) status.

Respondents mentioned several other challenges that contributed to adjunct faculty not feeling appreciated and valued for their contributions: access to instructional support and resources such as office space, conveniently located copiers, computers; opportunities to connect with other adjunct faculty as well as faculty within their department.

*Lack of certainty of having a job for adjunct. MSTA is optional for many departments. Adjunct can devote all their talents and energies to the mission of the college for decades and still be cut loose at any time, despite stellar performance and evaluations. Very Discouraging.*

*Policy of "bumping" of adjunct class assignments by full-timers who are so bad that anyone who reads ratemyprofessor.com would never enroll for their classes. This affliction of teachers who are paid the least reflects the class prejudice of the college as a whole.*

*The administration likes the Ad Campaign "ACC is for Everyone!!" When we talk to adjuncts, we say the reality is "ACC is for Everyone -- Except for Adjuncts."*

*There is no sense of campus or college community. Even as a seasoned teacher, it always feels as if I am just coming and going from one place to another. I don't know anyone, because as an adjunct I am re-assigned to different campuses constantly.*

*Adjunct instructors are paid and treated like stepchildren, especially with regard to shifting loads and responsibilities. I'm not an instructor, but I know of the plight of these underpaid and under-appreciated professionals....*

### **Need for More Full-Time Faculty Positions**

At the nexus of the two themes – (1) heavy faculty workloads, and (2) the struggle of adjunct faculty for job security and access to resources to perform their job – was a clear admonition to hire more full-time faculty.

*I feel it is having enough full time faculty to do the work we need to do. We have so many adjuncts (who turn over quickly or don't share the same initiative) and more and more work is given to full time faculty who already have so much on their plates. It would be great to see more full time positions added so that we could better spread out the workload and perhaps have time for personal development / implementation of new ideas.*

### **Students**

There were many respondents who mentioned students in their comments (104 out of 1,100 9%). Topics mentioned most often included the need to focus on students and student success, the diversity of ACC's student population, and the challenges of teaching dual credit students.

### **Focus on Students and Student Success**

Many respondents stated their interested in maintaining the focus on students and supporting them to attend classes, successfully complete their courses, persist to the next semester, and complete their program of study. They specifically mentioned these student outcomes in their comments, and urged the college to keep students "at the forefront" of our efforts. A few acknowledged that at times ACC administrators and departments sometimes forgot this key tenet of the college's mission.

*We, as a staff, need to make sure we are always keeping students at the center and forefront of everything we do*

### **Diversity of ACC's Student Population**

Even more respondents thought "ensuring quality, consistency, and efficiency" in educating and supporting an increasingly diverse student population was a key issue for employees. Respondents identified many characteristics of student diversity and the need to support students experiencing challenges as a result of this diversity, including hiring more bilingual employees.

Examples included:

- The growing numbers of Hispanic/Latinx students, and challenges of language and citizenship issues for some of these students.
- Students who identified as LGBTQ+.
- Non-traditional students, including part-time students, and students who are working one or more jobs while attending college or seeking employment while enrolled.
- Students with limited access to affordable, reliable transportation to and among ACC campuses.
- Students experiencing mental health issues.
- Students struggling to meet basic needs such as food and housing.
- Students who are not adequately prepared for college-level coursework.
- Increasing numbers of dual credit students.
- Increasing numbers of students whose primary language is Spanish, Chinese, or another language.

*...Personally, I think I can continue to improve my communication techniques with our students - things like continuing to be sensitive to students' individual situations, respectfully navigating tricky conversations regarding matters of citizenship and undocumented students, and expanding my knowledge of our student base and the issues they face...*

Several respondents mentioned the need to address equitable outcomes for students. Respondents suggested “reviewing, fostering and realizing equity in our workplace, classrooms, and future offerings to our students”. Respondents were also sensitive to the loss of instructional, student support, and business services at campuses in traditionally underserved communities.

*Disproportionate distribution of resources. Campuses serving traditionally underserved communities are run down, have few technology resources, and seem to be left to fall apart.*

*...The disparity in the quality and care of the campuses across the district is striking, especially those campuses that primarily serve students of color. EVC and RVS are shameful. They are both dirty, in disrepair, and technology and classroom resources are embarrassing.... The quality of the facility impacts employee morale and the quality of the classroom experience...The mood difference between students at RVS versus HLC is striking; same faculty, same course, same material. Just the room is different. It changes the class climate and the way students engage with the material.*

A few respondents observed incivility of an increasing number of students and suggested that faculty and administrators should hold students accountable for their performance and behavior.

*...The student must be responsible for their actions, also. That message to students is often missing...*

In an attempt to address both the perceived decline in college enrollment and concomitant increase in student diversity, a few respondents suggested that the college work to improve the enrollment process

so it is easier to navigate for both traditional and non-traditional students. Respondents also suggested increased communication was needed across the college so all who support students could better inform them of program options and available support services.

### ***Challenges of Teaching Dual Credit Students***

Numerous comments addressed the overall declining enrollment of traditional students and increasing enrollment of dual credit students. A few respondents perceived a financial impact of this dynamic: “Regular students must pay tuition. Dual credit students do not.” This results in fewer financial resources for updating technology and for campus maintenance.

Respondents described two primary challenges of teaching dual credit students: some high school students are not prepared for the rigor of college-level courses; and some high school campuses have limited resources to support learning activities of college-level students and their faculty. Respondents suggested that the college better support faculty so they could enable students to be more successful.

*...More time should be spent working with campuses and supporting faculty than booking more campuses and throwing faculty in there live [sic] a canary in coal mine to abused by students who don't understand the demands of college work and the HS staff who resent them from being there, taking over the classrooms and asking for environments that are conducive to college teaching...*

### **Organizational Culture**

A number of respondents reported the culture of ACC was an important issue for employees this year (99 out of 1,100, 9%). One respondent who discussed the college’s culture and morale appeared to be happy with the organization, stating “I am proud to be an ACC employee.” All other comments on this topic specifically cited poor employee morale as a key issue, identified characteristics of the college’s internal environment that contributed to low morale, or noted suggestions describing what the college could do to improve morale among faculty and staff.

One respondent summarized the issue of morale by noting, ACC has “an organizational culture that is marked by a scarcity mindset, distrust, and an inability to see/value employees”. Respondents observed rifts between administrators and others, between faculty and staff, and between staffing table and hourly employees. Comments indicated faculty wanted more input into decision making and sought more respect from college administrators; staff wanted more respect from faculty; and student affairs staff wanted more opportunity to use their deep knowledge of student issues in improving decision making.

Respondents perceived the college was moving away from its mission and values, and noted a decrease in the servant leadership demonstrated by college administrators. Similar to respondent comments discussed elsewhere in this report, employees reported communication was lacking regarding initiatives and changes in procedures and policies, opportunities were limited for input on decision making, and

supervisors at all levels were perceived to condone “a culture of disrespect and bullying”. One respondent noted “a general cultural malaise” characterizing ACC’s organizational culture.

*... there is a big emphasis on faculty all the time. I think that ACC does not promote or truly listen to other staff who serve students in ways that students are actually talking about what they need. Another issue is there is a divide between faculty and staff, staff and faculty this divide is not everyone however it is there in general.*

*Hourly Employees are treated like they do not matter*

*...We used to talk about servant-leadership, and I really believed it. It doesn't feel that way now...There is too much of a disconnect between the administration and faculty. College feels more like a corporation than a college.*

*I can't speak for all employees, but this year I have struggled to feel as though the college cares about me or my well-being as an employee. This is the first year I feel worn down and defeated.*

*The administration does not seem to get along and therefore the trickle down effect affects all employees... Faculty and staff should support and encourage each other and I have not felt that in many years...*

Numerous respondents made suggestions to improve employee morale at ACC. These included:

- Be respectful of others.
- Build “bridges between silos in the matrix structure”.
- Create a “sense of togetherness or purpose”.
- Enable faculty and student affairs staff to work together more: “working as a cohesive team does matter to the student”.
- Create “a climate of collaboration, connection, and caring at ACC”.
- Facilitate more team building throughout the college.
- Demonstrate appreciation for employees’ hard work.

One respondent suggested that employee morale would improve with greater support for front line employees from the administration.

*... Front line employees spend more time here at work than at home and our priority is our students, always. Being on the front lines, is high stress and high reward. Front line employees see and know what is needed to help our students and ourselves be most successful. The support and understanding from the executive tier would energize and empower immensely.*

## **Communication**

A large number of respondents identified communication as an important issue for employees (96 out of 1,100, 9%). This topic was mentioned in different ways within most of the issues identified in respondent comments presented in this report.

Respondents reported the perception that employees with ACC tended to work in silos, with limited access to information. Consistent with comments addressing college administration and supervisors, information was not always clearly, concisely, and accurately transmitted to lower level employees through ACC's many management layers. Several respondents expressed an interest in getting better information on new initiatives and decisions that affected all parts of the college.

*There are a large number of high priority initiatives on going and communication on their status and priority needs to be better. We are still working in silos and don't understand how other departments are working.*

Respondents noted that faculty and staff needed up-to-date information about programs, services, and procedures so employee "efforts are not needlessly duplicated (or done wrong)", so employees do not end up "feeling upset or left out of conversations that affect them", and everyone can advise students so that they are not "having to go to more than two offices for help".

*The uncertainty that comes from the fallout of the changes that ACC is making with regards to the importance of certain campuses and how they fit into or don't fit into the vision that is being created by what feels like a handful of people is uncomfortable. The lack of communication behind what, why, when and how creates a real sense of abandonment leaving employees to fill in the blanks. None of that echoes success*

As noted elsewhere in this report, respondents specifically requested more timely information regarding changes in procedures and practices, particularly in Information Technology and Business Services.

*... Specifically, support groups like the business office, purchasing, and IT need to better understand their clients who they should be focussed [sic] on supporting versus meeting the desires of an audit for an award which means nothing to the rest of us.....*

## **Staffing**

A number of respondents described issues pertaining to adequate staffing (82 out of 1,100, 7%). Many respondents reported having heavy workloads; others recommended additional faculty and staff positions would be the best way to address the heavy workloads throughout the college.

### **Workload**

More than half of the comments addressing staffing discussed heavy workloads and the need for more staff as a result of the college's growth over the last several years. Additional staffing needs were specifically identified in the following areas:

- Facilities and building maintenance.
- Administrative support for instructional units.
- Student-related offices and testing centers.
- Service-based facilities such as the campus mailroom or copy room.
- Human Resources.
- Business Services.
- Academic Guidance (advising/counseling) and clinical counseling services.
- Libraries.

The impact of heavy workloads on individual employees included potential for lower quality work, increased stress and threats to employee health, and more challenges in accomplishing the work itself.

*... One person can only do so much in a day and have it be at the level of quality needed to keep our students around.*

*Having enough resources and staff to do the job effectively. Some departments or units don't have as much as others but are expected to perform and produce results yet do not get more help which only stretches the employees more and more. That is not sustainable or helpful for employee self care and for a healthy work place environment.*

*Many departments are under staffed, like HR and purchasing, and it prevents them from offering top of the line customer service to our internal customers. Consequently, our jobs are much more difficult because other departments cannot do their job...*

### **Challenges of Filling Vacant Positions**

While workloads were increasing, organizational units experiencing turnover reported challenges “attracting, retaining, and promoting top talent”. This contributed to further increased workloads on employees remaining in the departments.

*Multiple vacancies in departments that are not getting filled in a timely manner, causing more workload on other employees in the department that are stressed already*

*...Loss of so many long term employees that knew how to do things effectively because upper level management has come in and without understanding the culture of ACC, they have changed so much that it is no longer a good place to work...*

### **Too Many Contractors in Staffing Table Positions**

Several respondents reported concern with the number of contractors being hired by ACC. Employees reported that the hiring of contractors contributed to higher turnover, and the loss of long time employees with extensive institutional knowledge. This resulted in a cadre of newly hired contractors with limited knowledge of higher education and a lack of existing employees who might be able to share critical institutional knowledge needed for work projects.

*Loss of full-time jobs to temporary, contract labor. This creates an environment of quick turnover, low buy-in. Leadership positions at the highest levels are given to contractors, while full-time employees are not even given the opportunity to apply. Institutional knowledge is being lost at an unprecedented rate.*

## **Equity and Inclusion**

Related to staffing and other topics, a large number of respondents mentioned equity and diversity as an important issue for employees (68 out of 1,100, 6%). Respondents noted the need for increased efforts to improve equity and diversity at ACC, and for the need to integrate equity into our processes and practices. Some respondents reported they have experienced discrimination relating to age, race/ethnicity, or gender. Other respondents described feelings of reverse discrimination in hiring decisions.

Several respondents suggested the need to increase awareness of equity issues related to hiring of faculty and staff. Several respondents indicated that the college's "actions about equity and Inclusion [were] not matching the rhetoric". Respondents noted that the college administration lacked a Chief Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Officer (this position was created by the college and filled in July 2020); all recent applicants for positions in Information Technology were male; and there was a lack of diversity among college administrator and faculty positions.

*Diversity of staff and the need to change the college culture to become inclusive.*

*... I think equity and diversity is important, but that we have not adequately defined was diversity is....*

## **Professional Development and Career Advancement**

A large number of respondents identified opportunities for professional development and career advancement as an important issue for employees (77 out of 1,100, 7%).

Respondents reported a lack of adequate professional development opportunities, and the need for more faculty to have access to pedagogical training. One respondent suggested that professional development be available to aid faculty in better understanding the various challenges ACC students regularly experience, such as food and housing insecurity.

*\*The college offers a wide range of pedagogical training opportunities. But some disciplines really struggle and beg for support with professional development related to the content of their class work. The world may not have changed much for English instructors, but that is not true of science, IT, and business disciplines...\**

Other training topics for employees in all positions included team building, customer service, advanced computer skills, responsible financial investing, and training tailored to work performed in specific



departments. Respondents also suggested a coaching program for supervisors, and training to help employees maintain satisfactory job performance. Respondents recommended a comprehensive onboarding program for new employees, similar to what has been developed for faculty, along with a mentoring program for both new staff and new faculty. Respondents indicated that an onboarding program, such as brief video training, was needed for new part-time staff.

Respondent comments on career advancement overwhelmingly noted the overall lack of advancement opportunities and career pathways for employees, including adjunct faculty seeking full-time faculty or staff positions. Some employees recommended promotion policies and hiring for some positions from within the college, structured career pathways, and allowing employees to use experience to fulfill educational job requirements.

*...I would be thrilled if ACC gave me an opportunity to not only teach on CE side, but gave me a chance to teach on the credit side AND helped with me obtaining a Master's degree so I could be hired full time. ...*

### **Adjusting to Change and Reorganizations**

Many respondents noted that adjusting to change and reorganizations at ACC, and the fast pace of change at the college, were critical issues for employees (77 out of 1,100, 7%). These respondents acknowledged the need for the ACC community to adapt to a changing environment. One respondent noted that “we are no longer a small college and that change is necessary for continued work for our students and student success”.

Respondents identified several significant changes impacting employees: tremendous growth of the college in recent years; faculty and staff moving to new facilities; regionalization; services and academic goals realigning to better serve students and the community; changes in ACC leadership. They specified particular requirements for successful change management and identified the consequences of poorly managed change.

### ***Requirements for Successful Change***

In order to successfully implement changes at ACC, the college needs strong change management and collegewide communication regarding the changes, and a commitment to change that permeates the institution. This requires that all employees know and understand “the direction the college intends to go”. Employees recommended:

- Administrators “solicit input from faculty and staff prior to making major decisions”.
- Adequate time be allocated to implementing changes.
- Rationale and plans for change be communicated throughout the institution.
- Training be provided for all changes.
- Departments work together to plan and implement strategies to support changes.

- Processes be aligned to better support new goals and approaches, such as integrating the Academic Master Plan, Discipline Assessment Cycle, and staff and faculty evaluation processes so they work together synergistically.

### ***Impact of Too Much Change***

Many respondents suggested that college administrators be aware that too much change at once may result in employees feeling "change saturation" or "initiative fatigue", and the disruption of primary college functions. One respondent noted, "As an organization, we must be mindful that the volume of operational change does not negatively disrupt our organizational effectiveness in serving students as we work further into the Guided Pathways framework." Respondents suggested that the college community needs time to think about how to be more innovative, and how administrators, supervisors, and managers might implement those changes.

### ***Impact of Inadequate Change Management***

Respondents identified numerous pitfalls attributed to inadequate change management and the associated lack of timely, accurate communication and accelerated pace of implementation.

- More work created for lower level employees.
- "Lack of coordinated efforts for moving through change".
- Inability to "adequately determine success of a given initiative".
- Departments not able to carry out normal business operations.
- Employees bearing "the brunt of student confusion and frustration" regarding new rules.
- Challenges to creating the high-quality solutions required to support the changes.
- Potential erosion of trust within the ACC college community, particularly regarding the impact of changes on issues of equity and opportunity.
- Decreased morale. "The lack of communication behind what, why, when and how creates a real sense of abandonment leaving employees to fill in the blanks."

*There is so much change happening so quickly and the communication from top down is not always clear or timely. In some situations, this prohibits departments from effectively carrying out the business of the college. This has been especially the case regarding the purchasing department.*

### **Technology Resources**

A number of respondents indicated that technology was an important issue for employees (55 out of 1,100, 5%). Numerous respondents noted the antiquated systems and workflows at ACC and the need for more current information technology and support, and an enterprise approach to streamlining systems. Respondents identified challenges with Ellucian Colleague, hardware systems out of alignment with Adobe software applications, poor student experience using BlackBoard on mobile devices, inefficiencies inherent in eHire and eStaffing, and difficulties in navigating ACC's website. Respondents noted the need for a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and indicated "The most

important issue affecting ACC employees this year is making time for our new ERP system.” Another respondent noted the new technology, including Salesforce and Box, was already being deployed.

*...We also have antiquated programs that run so slowly that we have time to make coffee while we wait.*

*I believe dated systems and workflows like Ellucian and purchasing are negatively impacting the college and our ability to serve our students. It's time for ACC to take an enterprise approach to streamlining administrative systems to better support our mission and employees. Our bureaucratic processes should support our employees, rather than our employees supporting our bureaucratic processes.*

Other technology-related topics important to employees included:

- Access to accurate student data, and receiving data about students, programs, faculty, and other topics shared in timely and digestible ways.
- The need to invest in technology to facilitate communication among colleagues (e.g., Webex, Skype), and to enable remote access to resources.
- Attention to cybersecurity.
- A lack of support from Information Technology due to the large number of projects being shepherded by the Information Technology department.
- The need for students to have greater access to computers, computer labs, and wifi.

### **Other Noteworthy Comments**

Climate surveys have the potential to serve as tools of environmental scanning through respondents' comments. As noted elsewhere in this report, several respondents presaged the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on ACC. Other issues for ACC to watch carefully in the future included: national and local politics, legislation on higher education, gun control, food and housing insecurity in our communities, and the competition from online learning platforms.

*...The Udemys, EdXes, Courseras, etc., are creating fierce competition to the traditional brick and mortar educational institutions, when the Apples, IBMs and Teslas announce that degrees are no longer necessary for many of their job openings. Maybe degrees and certificates will eventually be necessary if those employees want to advance in their careers, but many potential students are now looking for the fastest, cheapest, most convenient ways to pick up SKILLS...*