

CSU Channel Islands: Employee Campus Climate Fall 2022

Office of Institutional Research

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Background and Development

CSU Channel Islands administered the [HERI Staff Climate Survey](#) in [2018 and in 2020](#). This extensive survey took over an hour to complete, months to analyze, and years to digest the resulting reports. In response, President Yao authorized CSUCI to develop an in-house climate survey. Based on insights gleaned from the HERI surveys, the in-house survey was designed to focus on topics of immediate relevance while remaining quick to fill out and analyze. In 2022, Dr. HyeSun Lee, CSUCI Professor of Psychology, was supported by Dr. William DeGraffenreid, Laurie Nichols, William Nutt, Dr. Kaia Tollefson, and Dr. Matthew Zivot in creating this in-house climate survey.

Development Timeline

- March - April 2022 – Cross-divisional team formalized proposal and developed list of potential topics
- May 2022 – [Proposal presented to campus and topics voted on during two town halls](#)
- Summer 2022 – Dr. Lee conducted a literature review on selected topics and established a bank of potential survey questions
- September 2022 – Dr. Lee and Dr. Zivot conducted 9 focus groups with 49 employees from across the university to expand questions and clarify their wording
- October 2022 – Dr. Lee conducted validity and reliability testing
- November – December 2022 – Survey containing half of the questions distributed to all stateside and auxiliary CSUCI employees
- February 2023 – Fall survey results will be presented to campus and used for strategic planning
- Spring 2023 – An additional report detailing the results of campus climate validity and reliability testing will be distributed to campus
- Spring 2023 – Second half of questions will be used in the next administration of the climate survey

Survey Design, Response, and Analysis

The Fall 2022 Campus Climate survey contained 14 demographics questions, 58 climate questions for staff and administrators, and 80 climate questions for faculty and chairs. These climate questions were all on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. In response to the topic survey in May 2022, these questions were designed to measure employee's feeling recognized, being able to perform meaningful work, autonomy, feelings towards CSUCI as an organization, effective

supervision and leadership, relationships with colleagues, and sense of the campus commitment to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).

Both groups of respondents were also asked one open-ended question, “Pick a question where you felt strongly about your answer, either positively or negatively. Please tell us why you felt that way as you were answering the question.” While the exact number of employees is a number that changes daily, CSUCI had about 690 non-faculty employees combined across Stateside and Auxiliary in Fall 2022, about 420 faculty, and about 310 student employees. The survey was taken by 160 faculty, 342 staff and administration, and 30 student employees, resulting in a response rate of around 50% for staff and administrators, 38% for faculty, and 10% for student employees. It took respondents a median of 12.5 minutes to complete the survey, with 70% of respondents completing in less than 20 minutes. Two hundred and sixty-three respondents provided some answer to the open-ended question.

The raw survey data were only accessible to Dr. Zivot, who made the aggregate quantitative data available to CSUCI employees in [this dashboard](#) (OnceCI>Surveys>Campus Climate Survey). For the following analysis, questions were reverse coded so that the most negative answer equaled 1 and the most positive answer equaled 5. As for qualitative responses to the open-ended question, Dr. Zivot read through all open-ended responses multiple times, coded them for critical concepts, and collapsed these codes into larger themes.

Climate Questions

Staff and Administration

For staff and administration, the highest scoring questions were “I care about the future of CSUCI” with 91% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree, “I am consistently treated with respect by my student worker colleagues” with 91% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree, and “My current supervisor treats me with respect” with 85% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree (see Figure 1).

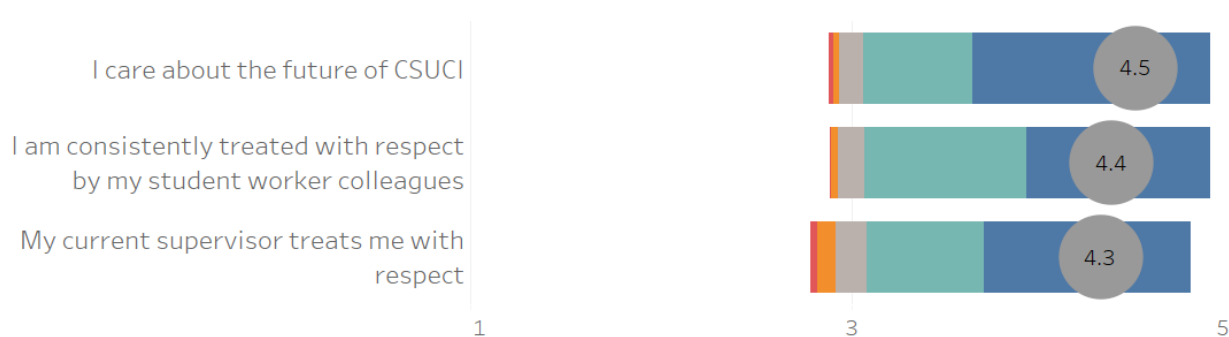


Figure 1: Highest scoring staff and administration responses

For the most part, staff responded to questions about direct supervisors very positively, with respondents saying that their current supervisor is ethical (83% Agree or Strongly Agree), are committed to DEIA (80% Agree or Strongly Agree), cares about them (80% Agree or Strongly Agree), and trusts them (81% Agree or Strongly Agree).

Looking at the lowest scoring questions for staff and administration, it clearly stood out that many respondents feel overwhelmed by their current workload, with 48% of respondents either Agree or Strongly Agree. After that followed a series of questions about executive leadership (i.e., cabinet members: president, provost, and other divisional vice presidents), with 31% of respondents Disagree or Strongly Disagree that they effectively communicate goals, strategies, and policies relevant to their unit, department, or division. Similarly, 21% of respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that executive leadership provides guidance and ensures follow through on major initiatives (see Figure 2).

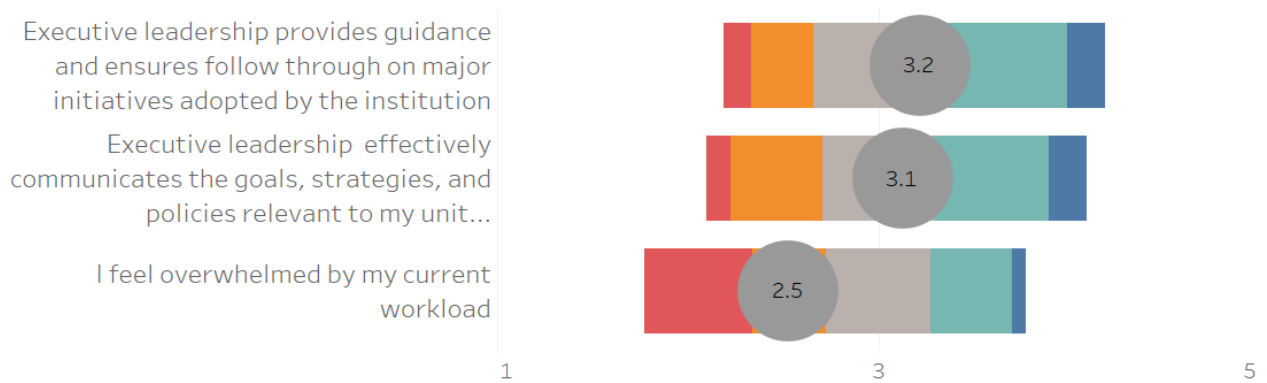


Figure 2: Lowest scoring staff and administration responses

In general, there was a proximity or hierarchy gradient of staff and administrators' feelings of being valued and respected. Respondents felt more respect from the colleagues they work with more closely, with 76% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by staff colleagues, 59% Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by faculty colleagues, 56% Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by administrator colleagues, and 48% Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by executive leadership.

There were many notable between-group differences in survey responses. Compared with all other staff and administrators, respondents from the Division of Student Affairs were more likely to report that they feel "Expressions of thanks and appreciation are common in my division" (71% in Student Affairs vs. 41% in other divisions Agree or Strongly Agree). When comparing Administrators and Senior Administrators to all other non-faculty employees, administrators were more likely to report that they "Feel valued and respected by their administrator colleagues" (72% of administrators vs. 51% of non-faculty employees Agree or Strongly Agree) but were also more likely to report feeling "Overwhelmed by my current workload" (63% of administrators vs. 42% of non-faculty employees Agree or Strongly Agree).

Faculty

For faculty, the highest scoring questions were (once again) "I care about the future of CSUCI" with 85% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree, "I have autonomy over how I do my work" with 91% of

respondents Agree or Strongly Agree, and “My chair treats me with respect” with 82% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Highest scoring faculty responses

For faculty, questions about their chairs were generally responded to very positively, with respondents saying that their chair is ethical in day-to-day practices (80% Agree or Strongly Agree), are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (81% Agree or Strongly Agree), are approachable and responsive (80% Agree or Strongly Agree), and trusts them (75% Agree or Strongly Agree).

Looking at the lowest scoring questions, many faculty feel that they don’t have sufficient resources to accomplish their service requirements or support students. Forty-three percent Agree or Strongly Agree that they “Feel overwhelmed by service requirements” and 49% Agree or Strongly Agree that they “Feel overwhelmed by work outside of the classroom to help students”. Additionally, 45% of faculty reported that they either Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that their “College/school leadership creates an environment of trust” (see Figure 4).

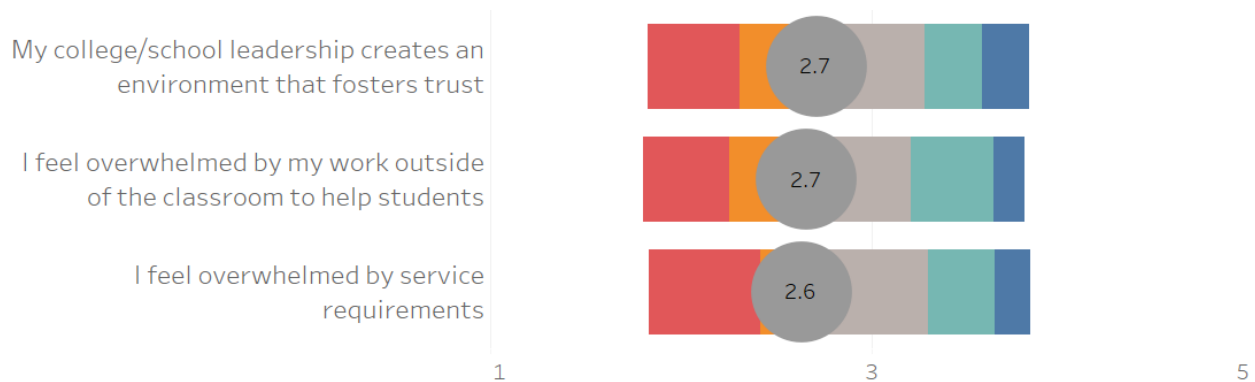


Figure 4: Lowest scoring faculty responses

As with staff and administrators, there was a gradient of faculty feelings of being valued and respected. Respondents also felt more respect by colleagues who are typically closer (literally or hierarchically), with 83% of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by staff colleagues, 81% Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by students, 42% Agree or

Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by administrator colleagues, and 34% Agree or Strongly Agree that they feel valued and respected by executive leadership.

Looking at group differences, certain groups of faculty reported bearing a heavier burden of supporting students. When asked whether they “Felt overwhelmed by their work outside the classroom to help students”, 54% of White faculty Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they while 43% of faculty of other races Agreed or Strongly Agreed. Similarly, 60% of Female faculty Agreed or Strongly Agreed while 36% of faculty of other genders Agreed or Strongly Agreed. Additionally, relative to other faculty, full professors did not think that “Executive leadership demonstrates practices that are consistent with the stated values of the institution”. Seventy-nine percent of full professors disagreed with this statement compared with 33% of other faculty members.

Open-Ended Responses

Staff and Administration

Responses to the open-ended question both emphasized and provided nuance to the quantitative survey data. For staff and administration, over 40 respondents spoke about feeling overwhelmed or under-resourced to complete the work asked of them. Most spoke directly about feeling unable to complete all the tasks that were asked of them, especially when asked to fill in for a vacant position on top of their primary job. For instance, a respondent who strongly agreed that they were overwhelmed by their current workload said, “In the last year our office has lost multiple full-time employees but we have not filled a single vacancy. I have continued to serve as a “team player” by picking up responsibilities from those vacancies and bouncing around from one interim role to the next, but this has contributed greatly to my work-related stress and the uncertainty of my future here at CI.” However, some respondents who disagreed that they felt overwhelmed by their workload mentioned the impact of their supervisors, saying for instance, “My supervisor supports my work and is always encouraging. I don't think I would have continued as long as I have at CI if my supervisor wasn't as great as he is. He gives us the autonomy to get things done the way we want to and steps in if we ever need assistance.”

Tied for the second most frequent reflections in staff and administration's open-ended comments were 20+ reflections on senior leadership. Many of these comments were related to communication of information and ability to effectuate change. One employee wrote that, “I often feel that administrators do not fully understand what it is that staff does on a daily basis and I have often felt undervalued or forgotten. I am consistently working past five, I work myself into the ground at times, and then leadership fails to recognize or appreciate this effort.” Expanding on sentiments about workload, some expressed that the resources provided by leadership did not match the goals that they set, such as “The big ideas come from up top, and trickle down to us to make miracles happen with the limited resources we are given.”

A similarly popular topic for reflection by staff and administration was the University's DEIA focus, but there was much less consensus on how this impacted the campus climate. Some respondents took pride in the DEIA work being done on campus, for instance saying, “I'm not saying that I think execution of DEIA efforts is happening perfectly or even smoothly, or that commitment to those efforts is evenly demonstrated across divisions. But I am confident that CSUCI's faculty, staff, and administrators as a whole are more genuinely committed to DEIA matters than I have seen in any other place I've worked.”

Others felt that, while important, the University's DEIA work was a distraction during a time of multiple crises, such as this employee who said, "The DEIA work should be done but planned for when the campus is at full capacity with employees and time can be carved out to dedicate work towards this effort. Asking people to spend time working on DEIA initiatives when their workload is already high just isn't sustainable for DEIA success." Finally, others felt that the University's DEIA work created a chilling environment for employees of particular ethnic backgrounds or political beliefs, such as this employee who said, "I feel the strong drive toward equity, inclusivity, and diversity is overpushed and jammed down my throat. I agree that everyone should be welcomed, respected, and be able to find their place, but I also feel that my freedom to hold onto my own values, to express my own values, and to hold opposing opinions is ever encroached upon and endangered. This is not the America I grew up in and defended in the military." The survey questions also reflected this spread of attitudes. When staff and administrators were asked whether CSUCI's DEIA work was creating "a workplace welcoming to all", 16% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed, 57% Agreed or Strongly Agreed, and 27% Neither Agreed nor Disagreed.

Faculty

Faculty expressed similar concerns in their open-ended comments, although perhaps through a different lens. Faculty respondents' most common topic of reflection was senior leadership (over 25 comments). Many long-standing faculty expressed the sense that the founding University ethos and environment has been lost, paired with a lack of understanding or caring for this loss on the part of senior leadership. This is well represented by the faculty member who wrote, "from the president on down, none of the higher up administrators have any institutional knowledge or memory, and they act as if this information is toxic. As a result, we have had a lot of floundering and redirection away from our clear and excellent founding values, towards a muddy mediocrity." For lecturers, while they overall reported a more positive experience of campus climate than other faculty members in the climate survey questions, a few noted that administrators do not acknowledge the social and economic disparities that exist within the University despite their focus on DEIA work. One lecturer summed up this sentiment up by reflecting on administration's commitment to equity: "Until the administration addresses the inequities in pay across all lecturers both with respect to other lecturers and especially with respect to tenure-track pay I can not answer this in a positive sense. The ultimate truth in equity in employment comes down to salary. The vast discrepancy between salaries of all comparisons is inequitable."

At least twenty faculty members also expressed concerns about their workload, especially the balancing of teaching, research, and service requirements. One faculty member reflected that, "The teaching expectations are too high in terms of the number of students we are expected to teach compared with the guidance that today's students need; the push to online teaching combined with encouragement to meet each student where they are has radically increased faculty workload." A few faculty noted how workload is unevenly distributed depending on tenure-track status, department, or demographic characteristics. One faculty wrote, "I am still an untenured faculty member, and I have not been set up for success at CI. Instead, I have been given constant new course preps (nearly every semester), and have only once been able to teach two sections of the same course in a semester," while another commented, "I feel service is not valued for faculty. This is true for RTP evaluation and otherwise however if service is not done the university cannot move forward especially when BIPOC voices are

needed. Cultural taxation is real but would be better accepted if service was valued for promotion as equally as teaching and scholarship.”

Survey Construction

In addition to reflecting on the content of the survey, some respondents provided feedback on the survey construction itself. Some respondents commented that a back button would have helped them give better answers and answer the open-ended question, while others noted errors in the terms we used for our gender demographics question. Additionally, a few respondents expressed offense at some of the demographics questions that were asked.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this survey showed that employees have a strong, across-the-board desire for CSUCI to succeed into the future, which is a clear strength of our campus. These sentiments were exemplified in the comment, “As a faculty member and donor to the campus, it is important to be a part of building an institution that will outlast me. CI is my legacy in many ways.” Respondents fear that this goal may be impeded by an overwhelming workload paired with an insufficiently articulated vision to guide how employees should make use of their limited resources.

As to the survey itself, for which this was its first administration, it is too early to draw any conclusions. While we met our initial goals of high participation, expedient reaction times, and meaningful results, the real test is whether campus continues to show its trust by participating in future surveys, whether decision makers address the concerns expressed in the surveys, and that more and more employees feel that CSUCI is a place where they can use their knowledge and expertise to improve the futures of our students and community.

On a personal note, I am thankful for your participation and your suggestions. The survey will try to implement most of these in future survey administrations. For those we don't, I am aware both of the inadequacy of language and categories to capture our complex individual lives and our desire for privacy from our employers and state agencies. My only hope is that future efforts made to improve campus climate for all, but especially our historically marginalized colleagues, outweighs the harm done in our asking these imperfect and intrusive questions.