



RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Report

Santa Ana College Classified Employees' Communication Survey Results, Spring 2014

April 2014

Background

To ensure open communication exists among staff, Santa Ana College implemented an online survey in 2012 and invited full- and part-time classified staff to participate. Two-thirds of the 352 classified responded. Management was directed to review the results and feedback with their staff.

Two years later, the college is reassessing the issue to see if improvements have been made. In March 2014, Dr. Martinez invited classified staff (both full- and part-time) to participate in the same online survey instrument. One hundred eighty-six (50% of 370) classified staff responded to the survey and their feedback is as follows. Responses from the prior survey are referenced throughout the report to assist in comparing current and past performance.

Summary of Findings

Generally, feedback was comparable, or more positive, to that of 2012:

- Classified staff expressed feeling moderately more comfortable about speaking up and expressing their views (62% “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” compared to 2012’s 56%) and the College maintaining open and honest communication (64% vs. 58% on the last survey). Similarly, slight increases in feelings that the College disseminates information in a timely manner were expressed (68% vs. the previous survey’s 65%).

In several other areas, ratings increased significantly over those expressed in the 2012 survey:

- Immediate supervisor keeps staff informed and the College communicates a clear vision (+12 percentage points); the College encourages classified staff to engage in dialogue regarding budgeting, planning, and program review (+11 percentage points); kept informed by the College and dissemination of information by immediate supervisors in a timely manner (+9 percentage points).

- Decision-makers are encouraged to read the many comments that respondents share (that may or may not specifically address communication issues) that should be acknowledged and addressed to promote a better working environment.

Respondents contributed many comments (both relating to communication issues and not) that should be addressed in order to improve working relationships and morale among classified staff at SAC; those comments are included in this report in their entirety. Some of the most frequently expressed issues are:

- Prevalence of abuse of work schedules and managers' inaction to remedy.
- Feelings that management/administration does not truly value input from the classified staff and that, while shared governance is encouraged, in theory, practically classified staff is discouraged from being involved in decision-making at the College by workload and staffing constraints that make time away from the department impossible. Respondents express that their suggestions to improve delivery of services to students are not taken seriously, and that they are not invited to contribute to decision-making activities that affect their departments. These comments are supported by agreement with the statement "the College encourages staff to participate in shared governance committees" remaining unchanged since the 2012 survey.

Detailed data (comparisons between 2014 and 2012 responses) and comments (in their entirety) follow.

Detail of Findings (A Comparison of 2012 and 2014 Surveys)

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strong Disagree	Unknown/ Not Applicable
Employees feel safe to speak up and express their views. 2012 2014	17% 19%	39% 43%	20% 16%	24% 22%	1% 0%
The college does a good job of keeping employees informed about matters that affect them. 2012 2014	19% 24%	46% 50%	24% 12%	11% 14%	2% 2%
My immediate supervisor does a good job of keeping employees informed about matters that affect them. 2012 2014	34% 35%	29% 40%	16% 11%	21% 14%	1% 1%
The college encourages employees to participate on shared governance committees. 2012 2014	22% 22%	47% 48%	21% 17%	10% 13%	10% 10%
The college encourages employees to engage in dialogue regarding budgeting, planning and program review processes. 2012 2014	17% 15%	41% 54%	26% 15%	16% 16%	8% 9%
The college communicates a clear vision of the future. 2012 2014	16% 25%	45% 48%	25% 16%	14% 11%	3% 3%
The college communicates with employees openly and honestly. 2012 2014	15% 15%	43% 49%	26% 19%	16% 17%	5% 2%
The college disseminates information in a timely manner. 2012 2014	16% 17%	49% 51%	23% 20%	12% 12%	3% 3%
My immediate supervisor disseminates information in a timely manner. 2012 2014	29% 35%	35% 38%	18% 17%	18% 10%	1% 2%

Additional comments, concerns and/or experiences at SAC that respondents shared
(*transcribed verbatim*)

1. I find it very distressing that projects and major changes to the campus occur without any or very little input or knowledge of the support staff. It is very distressing and is getting worse by the minute.
2. As of 03/18/2014 the Admissions Office is down two people with no replacements. Move on a little later in the year and the Admissions Office will be down two more people. This department will very soon be down four people and no alleviation of the workload in sight!
3. Admission & Records is the frontline of the college and they aren't appreciated by management campus wide. All other offices may close their doors to attend yearly BBQ and other events but Admissions remains open. Throughout the years we've had positions that haven't been replaced and staff has retired and work has just been reassigned to others. Employees work under stress.
4. The President's office does not set a standard for excellence or an example for staff. They are disingenuous at best. It is very disappointing.
5. It has, once again, been months since we had a staff meeting in my area. Even when we did have meetings, they were quick 30 minute meetings in which we might find out a few things, but never really had time to thoroughly discuss the many operational issues that plague our area. Worse, training is haphazard, with at least some people completely left out, so nobody is on the same page with how we are supposed to proceed, and our students suffer for it. My biggest issue is that our supervisor does nothing to stop employee absenteeism, tardiness, or failure to report absences. People arrive whenever they wish, leave whenever they wish, and take extra long lunches without having to report the absences or experience any repercussions. But if we tell our supervisor that this is happening, we get a shrug, or our concerns diminished because "it's really not that bad." The same people who are consistently absent or tardy are also the ones who are the most discourteous (or even downright abusive) to their co-workers. But since our supervisor doesn't see it, nothing is done to try to mediate the situation. I also have very little faith in our President and Vice-President. From where I sit, I see a lot of emphasis on giving the school a makeover (and a rather ugly one in some areas, like the gym), without any regard for how this place will actually function, or any thought to the community surrounding us. Worse, there seems to be a deep disconnect between how our leadership thinks this college is running and how Classified staff really feel. Morale is low in the department I work in, and in other departments I have talked with. We feel overworked, our managers are making bizarre staffing decisions (like paying for more coordinators but not having the people we really need to handle the actual work in this office), our students are constantly angry with us because we're too overburdened to get them the assistance they need in a timely and effective manner, and we're generally stressed out all the time. I used to take pride in being able to say I worked at SAC, but now I'm just sort of apathetic. My other serious issue is with how construction updates are disseminated. A last-minute announcement the afternoon before major changes happen is not adequate and is an incredibly poor way to keep us informed. Worse, over the past year when the work extended beyond the projected deadline, rather than keep us informed and send an email letting us know that the project completion was running later than anticipated, or updating the web page showing the map and anticipated dates... there was just silence. Complete and utter silence. When we emailed to

ask what was going on, we were rather condescendingly told to look at the map... which hadn't been updated! Can anybody honestly expect us to feel as if we are kept informed when things like that happen? Also, since I'm on a roll... what is up with grounds crew doing major work like running the lawn mowers and air blowers during times when there are lots of students and staff walking about? Or with huge piles of leaves and grass cuttings being left in the middle of walkways? Shouldn't that work be done before most people start arriving on campus?

6. Three positions were open and the decision was made to fill only one at this time. The other two need to be filled as the extra workload placed on other staff is too much.
7. Staff are often treated as servants. Their input is unwelcome and strongly discouraged. For example, when a faculty member is chosen, a staff member from the department should be on the hiring committee - not a division staff member, but a department staff member.
8. There is a continued issue about classified employees serving on committees. While people are technically allowed to serve, managers often prevent people from actively serving by assigning project due dates that make it difficult for them to be gone.
9. I know you may not have the time to read a lengthy essay, that's why I'll try to be as brief and simplistic as possible. 1- Dean does not communicate immediate issues that affect the office, nor address issues that affect directly the students for that matter. Example: over a month ago I suggested a procedure for lack of established manner in one issue pertaining serving students. He agreed that it was a problem, however turned away and did nothing to solve the issue. Now I am getting students complaining because of the lack of solution. I brought it to Dean's attention again and still nothing was done to fix it. He constantly ignores issues and takes the hiding ground rather than confronting matters when they arrive. 2- Tardiness and absenteeism are an ongoing and really stressful problem in the department. With the exception of five employees out of sixteen, staff comes in whenever they please, at the time they feel like it, without calling or reporting their absences in an e-form. Dean has been aware for years now, and despite that the problem is much worse widespread now, he chooses to ignore and walk away. If he doesn't see it, it doesn't exist, and lets everybody go their merry way. The only ones suffering are the ones being here on time and the ones who report their tardiness and absenteeism. Suffering not because they are honest, but because everybody else work less hours, even 5 to 10 hours a week per employee. He has indicated to employees who had brought this problem to his attention, that he does not have time to monitor and does not want to delegate (for whatever reasons), and basically that he does NOT KNOW how to handle the problem. (I thought a manager's job includes looking for ways to fix problematic areas in the department). The fact of the matter is that the chronic, unreported tardiness and absenteeism are getting out of control. Problems that contribute to the low morale in the department. Interesting is the fact that the most outrageous offenders are the most rude and unsympathetic people in the department. 3- Dean had been informed that only two to three out of seven employees who should be responsible to answer the phones are doing it. He has said that a way to deal with it is to assign one or two people a day to answer the phones and that way we will know who is lacking. Well, that is really nice in theory, but that was over 3 months ago and we are still waiting for a solution that can result in fairness and a better student service. Many calls go unanswered because the problem has not been resolved. I doubt it ever will. 4- No meetings since September 2013. During those meetings only issues pertaining to laws and changes in administering our programs, which is nice and necessary; however, no departmental problems were addressed.

- If we ever tried to bring something up, we were shut up immediately. I think that our Dean is a very sweet person, but sweetness alone in a managerial position does not cut the cake.
10. Administrators and managers do not make classified staff feel important or vital to this college's daily activities. If one day, every single classified employee called in sick or was involved in a strike, this college would fall. No Bookstore, no Library, no Admissions, no Computer Lab. Not a very cute picture is it? What are you going to do...have faculty run these areas? I really don't think that the students would be too happy about that and isn't that the claim around this district...we are all here first and foremost for the students? There has always been too much "lip service" about classified being included and communicated with. So many know that this is just not truth. For those that "kiss up to" their managers, they are the ones that seem to reap the benefits. When you voice an opinion that seems to be against the majority...you are slammed for it. There have been way too many staff fired or let go or laid off because of false information attained by managers and or administrators. And the employee usually does not fight since they are too paranoid to step up and fight for themselves. This kind of behavior and those that are involved with this kind of situation **HAS TO STOP IMMEDIATELY**. We, as classified staff work very hard for years on end without a lot of acknowledgement for jobs well done. As much as you all have tried to paint a pretty little picture of how fabulous classified have been treated at this college...the truth is the complete opposite. We feel like we are treated as step-children who are only here to "support" faculty and administrators. What is up with that??
 11. Anytime my manager comes out of a division or management meeting, she pulls our team together and disseminates any information that affects/pertains to us. I believe this is very effective. It may disrupt the workflow of the day but if you put it off, it may never come up again. Attending the Take a Break with the President is super informative and Dr. Martinez shares freely all she can about college and district happenings, she is very easy to talk to and share with.
 12. Managers must be willing to manage. Co-worker problems brought up by employees in the office need to be taken seriously and immediate action should be taken by the manager. Situations become worse when the manager is hesitant about handling the problem right away by trying to avoid any conflict which causes high levels of frustration and stress for the other employees in the office. Managers need to set boundaries for employees who continually fail to follow the rules; the employees should be confronted and held accountable for their bad work habits, when the manager fails to follow through it effects the rest of the employees in the office in a negative way. Managers need to communicate regularly with their staff not just once in a while.
 13. CEC employees are still required to pay for staff parking every year yet parking continues to be a major problem on this campus (morning and evening hours)and it gets worse every year (No parking available due to the skatepark area and too much of the general public that comes to hang out at the park, having already to compete for spaces with CEC students we now also have to compete with Godinez. Godinez has there own parking structure yet their students and parents use our back lot, plus we run the risk of flying baseballs and dings from those students. Is there a way than we can get staff parking spaces?
 14. How is it that the same people are asked to serve on a variety of committees time after time?
 15. Classified employees are provided many different opportunities to hear the latest information, engage in communication with faculty and administration, participate in shared governance and support the success of our students. Those that complain about the lack of communication, have declined to get involved at any level.

16. Employees seem to come and go as they please, leave early, arrive late with no consequences no cards turned in. This same arrogant, dishonest behavior is also done by managers. Why does this continue to happen?
17. Managers believe their are empowered to make policy changes in their department without consulting with other managers. These leaves the front line Classified staff to work out issues with other offices.
18. Employees who have expressed their opinions or dissatisfaction with a current or proposed policy, district or departmental, are penalized with fewer hours and/or with less desirable hours. We have been told, "We don't have to give you hours. You are at-will employees." This DOES NOT encourage employees, who need their jobs, to speak up and/or participate in any governance or decision-making opportunities the college may offer.
19. Changes in the workplace is not always communicated in a timely manner and seems that only faculty are allowed to know about changes until they deem necessary to inform classified employees.
20. There is practically no room for growth and supervisors don't do anything to encourage or mentor employees to move forward in their careers. It is a negative work environment. I have personally seen employees who behave in a very disrespectful, unprofessional manner toward others and are not disciplined properly. There is almost zero communication.
21. Superficial storefront attempts at open dialogue will never cover the avalanche of non-communication, nor will communicating with a select few.
22. The college has been rebranded in a sense, but it still lacks vision and direction from the top. Departments do not work together.
23. The communication between management and staff is a huge concern that needs to be addressed and required immediate resolutions. A good example of this is the email that we received from Dr. Martinez on 3/27/14 in regard to the incident on campus on 3/25/14. Whether it was gun shots or engine backfired, for our safety, an alert should have gone out to all staff and students immediately after the incident. Unfortunately there was no communication on this at all. In my department, the communication between a manager and the Staff is virtually non-existence. The manager does his own things and the staff does their own things, so oftentimes students got stuck in the middle with confusion and frustration. It is very difficult for staff to work and serve our students when the communication is not there.
24. There seems to be a lot of wasted funds on landscaping versus building safe classrooms/buildings. We tear down a nice brick wall and replace it with plants that require lots of water and maintenance. Preparing for the 100 year celebration has really gotten out of hand.
25. I think we should start having professional development classes/workshops. Thank you.
26. I would do anything for SAC's future, it' a pleasure to work here. Our president is the best.
27. Allow us to be more involve when comes to engage in dialogue regarding budgeting, planning and program review processes.
campus safely issues
28. Suggestions and views from classified employees are dismissed and discredited. And whenever the suggestions and views are to the administrators advantage they take full credit. Employees also do not feel safe to speak up and express their views in fear of retribution. Classified staff is not engaged in dialogues regarding planning and program review process that directly affect them. Communication is on as-needed basis and there is no active discussion. As a result, decisions and implementations that were made do not benefit the

- district, the operation, the students and staff. No transparency. The college as a whole encourages participation to shared governance but not the managers and supervisors.
29. You seem very concerned how we perceive the manner in which you give out information as if your goal is to be transparent. Transparency can never exist as long as sensitive, personal, confidential, and or material of a classified level exists. Who determines how information is classified and when and how that information is disseminated? If the highly paid management of this college and district are responsible for the dissemination of such information, how can we, as classified staff, really know and trust the true timeliness? True, there are some open forums with the President or brown-bag lunches and various committees throughout campus which give us the opportunity to receive such information. However, attending such events or meetings is considered a privilege. Most employees in my office cannot freely attend college functions. If we are able to attend with permission, we are viewed as if we do not have enough work to do. Our office never closes during business hours. Additionally, I know the college must hire full-time faculty for accreditation requirements. However, why is it when classified staff retire they are not replaced? Examine my office; you will find people have retired and their positions have either not been replaced with the same positions or the positions are eliminated entirely. Lastly, the nature of our work has changed over the years, but the pay grade has remained the same for the past 20 years. Why do managers not promote reclassification? You should send out a survey asking us how Administrators manage, treat, and promote their workers.
 30. No one seems to care and ask the employees or students and just make decisions on things that will directly impact both with no care on either. The college has gone through a major make over and looks horrible. There's trash and weeds everywhere.
 31. An anonymous online comment form might be a good idea.