

**Kern Community College District
Workplace Culture Town Hall Focus Groups
Faculty
Fall 2024
Report on Town Hall Focus Group Results**

Introduction

In spring 2024, newly appointed Kern Community College District Chancellor Steven Bloomberg requested a districtwide qualitative survey of the workplace culture within the district. The Office of Institutional Research and Reporting collected 423 anonymous responses from employees across Kern CCD. The survey was done to explore levels of trust, behaviors, practices, and norms within Kern CCD. The overarching themes that emerged from this culture analysis were 1) Communication, 2) Policy, Processes, and Procedures and 3) Top-down culture.

In response to the qualitative survey, Chancellor Bloomberg organized a series of town hall focus groups with both classified and management across the district. Faculty town hall focus groups will be conducted in August 2024 as the fall term begins. Each town hall focus group was scheduled for one hour and was conducted for either classified or management. Each town hall focus group was held in person, at specific locations and an invitation was sent out to all members of each constituent group to attend.

Chancellor Bloomberg led the town hall focus groups. He started each meeting with a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted “new leadership and new opportunities” and focused on “making KCCD a place people want to work.”

Dr. Bloomberg presented five themes that emerged from the climate culture qualitative survey and stated that these themes will be a focus for Kern CCD moving forward, 1. Leadership Development, 2. Communication, 3. District-wide Collaboration, 4. Updated Policies and Procedures, and 5. Improved Culture (hiring, initiatives, etc.)

1. **Leadership development.** Leadership was one of the top concerns that came out of the qualitative survey and is being actively addressed by Chancellor Bloomberg. There will be mandatory training for all management within the district. Topics that will be addressed include implicit bias training, evaluation, positive discipline, multi-generational workforce, communication, and a variety of other tools that can help facilitate management to be better leaders. Also, plans are being formulated to address professional development. A plan will be announced for the whole district that is deliberate in addressing the gaps of professional development.

2. **Communication** was another overarching theme. Employees feel communication throughout Kern CCD is not adequate. The lack of communication contributes to the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability. According to Chancellor Bloomberg

“Communication is one of the most important expectations that I have.” He assured those in attendance that “strategies will be put into place to help throughout the district to address the breakdown of communication.”

3. **District Wide communication.** There are opportunities for collaboration every day. Creating plans to work together and collaborate throughout our district to help our students.

4. **Updated policies and procedures.** For example, the hiring process is insufficient when we are losing candidates due to lengthy hiring times. The district will work to find a way in which to streamline the process and make it more efficient.

5. **Improved culture (hiring, initiatives, etc.).** Chancellor Bloomberg addressed issues of culture and the need to create an organization which makes those in the organization feel empowered.

After presenting the five themes he plans to improve across Kern CCD, Dr. Bloomberg presented specific issues for each constituency group, some of which addressed the specific issues that appeared in the Culture Survey. The last slide consisted of the top 15 leadership objectives (shown below) in which Chancellor Bloomberg led a discussion on leadership objectives, communication, “Points of pain”, and health and wellness.

TOP 15 LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES

1 Recognize Achievements: Regularly and publicly celebrate both individual and team successes.



2 Cultivate Empathy: Actively engage in understanding and supporting the emotional needs of team members.



3 Enhance Communication: Ensure all communications are clear, open, and frequent, promoting a culture where every voice is valued.



4 Empower Through Autonomy: Trust team members with decision-making and encourage their growth with mentorship opportunities.



5 Respect Personal Time: Uphold a balance between work and personal life, respecting off-hours and break times.



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6 Promote Diversity and Inclusion: Create an environment that values and utilizes the varied strengths and backgrounds of all team members.



7 Combat Toxicity: Do not tolerate toxicity - ever. Tackle negative behaviors head-on and swiftly. Stay consistent.



8 Develop Quiet People: Enable quieter team members to contribute in ways that suit their strengths.



9 Mentor and Guide: Provide ongoing training and mentorship to both leaders and team members.



10 Share Success: Maintain transparency about organizational goals and share the fruits of success.



11 Be Present and Engaged: Actively participate and connect in team interactions, showing genuine interest and involvement.



12 Foster Innovation: Create a supportive space for new ideas and reward innovative contributions.



13 Manage Workloads: Prevent burnout and keep a sustainable work pace.



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14 Cultivate Thoughtful Leadership: Continuously refine your leadership approach based on feedback and introspection.



15 Lead by Example: Demonstrate the behaviors and work ethic you expect to see in your team.



“Top 15 Leadership Objectives” from LinkedIn post by Justin Mecham (April 7, 2024), https://www.linkedin.com/posts/justinmecham_great-leaders-are-built-by-habit-these-are-activity-7179092379419783170-4x3/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Findings

This report explores the critical themes of communication culture, environmental landscape, and operational functions within the Kern Community College District (Kern CCD) through the lens of Faculty across the district. Three main themes emerged from the faculty town hall focus groups: Culture of Communication, Environmental Landscape of Kern CCD, and Operations and Functions. These themes reveal systemic challenges that hinder organizational effectiveness.

Communication Culture

The first theme of culture of communication encompasses both toxicity and communication practices. The discourse of faculty communication is a hindrance to every process, department and stakeholder within Kern CCD.

Toxicity

The perceived prevailing atmosphere of toxicity within the Kern CCD has become a pressing issue for faculty members. As one participant noted, “For the last five years have run into a roadblock to have these conversations (retaliation, bullying)...never encountered this level of toxicity from a district before” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). This environment is exacerbated by leadership dynamics, with one faculty member stating that it includes “a conflict of interest” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). Faculty expressed feelings of vulnerability, with one remarking, “I have a target on my back” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). Many faculty are afraid of retaliation if they speak up.

The faculty’s concerns point to a leadership culture that fosters bias, “the reality of it is, the type of leadership that we have, they want people like them. It is unfair and it is bias” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). This environment has led to frustrations over operational inefficiencies. One faculty member said, “there is a gross amount of incompetence” (Faculty, Cerro Coso), while another added “there is no policy, procedure or guideline. Discrimination when it comes to equity issues” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). The climate of hostility is starkly evident in personal experiences shared by faculty, “deeply held anger...African American colleagues have swastikas drawn on their cars...faculties using racial slurs...retrograde issues with discrimination and LGBTQ and ethnic discrimination” (Faculty, Porterville). One faculty member noted, “being one of the very few African Americans on campus, I have a different viewpoint. When I wore my natural hair, they let me know I looked unprofessional” (Faculty, Porterville). The feelings of racial discrimination were mentioned more than once throughout the town hall focus groups.

Barriers to open communication were also highlighted, particularly regarding human resources, “there is a big roadblock with human resources. People don’t speak up because they are scared” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). Issues of racial discrimination further complicate the situation, as illustrated by the statement, “I see a lot of racism...especially in hiring practices...I notify HR and nothing gets done” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). Furthermore, the lack of accountability mechanisms

creates additional challenges, “when you do not give checks and balances...there are no checks and balances. It gets really challenging; it gets hard, and there are missed out on opportunities of advancement” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). The prevailing “top-down management” style (Faculty, Bakersfield) discourages faculty from voicing their concerns, “If you are the one to speak out, you are outcast; retaliation happens” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This has fostered a culture of silence, where many faculty members express reluctance to engage, “I have had several faculty say nope, not joining that we have that culture” (Faculty, Bakersfield).

Tragic consequences have resulted from the ongoing toxic environment. Faculty recounted a toxic situation that was perceived as being dealt with poorly. reflecting on the failures of leadership within the situation, one faculty member described a climate that felt “drunk on power...and ethics complaints got filed” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Reports of misconduct were reportedly mishandled, “the report came out and went to the district office...It was sent to the president at BC and that is where it was for over a month” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The absence of timely action left faculty feeling despondent, “we got an email... it was the report from an investigator...My heart broke when I got this report” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The way in which toxic situations on campus have not met the expectations of faculty.

Concerns regarding the overall toxic climate have led to perceived multiple retirements and resignations, “I wanted to share that there are departments and areas where people have retired and resigned where there is toxicity. HR has been notified” (Faculty, Bakersfield). In seeking improvement, faculty expressed a desire for more constructive communication, “we would be happy to hear the Why if it wasn’t punitive or was not scolding” (Faculty, Bakersfield). In response to these troubling realities, the Chancellor has urged a more compassionate approach, stating, “We have to humanize each other” (Porterville campus).

Communication Practices

Effective communication within the Kern CCD is a significant concern among faculty members. Many express feelings of isolation, with one stating, “I have worked here for 10 years...work in silos” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This disconnect is further illustrated by a faculty member who remarked, “I feel kept out of the loop” (Faculty, Bakersfield). There is hope for improvement, as another faculty member noted, “I hope we can work on that (communication)” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Interaction among faculty from different divisions is lacking, with a desire expressed for more opportunities to connect, including in-person interactions “would benefit climate to be here more” (Faculty, Porterville). The frustration extends to a lack of clear communication regarding student services, “I can’t get a straight answer and would provide services the students need. It affects our jobs and how we do our jobs. For input, it does not matter what we say as they have already made their decisions... it creates a negative environment, and hard feelings” (Faculty, Porterville). Communication between departments and divisions is essential for faculty.

Faculty have called for greater involvement in decision-making processes, specifically advocating for “greater commitment to have regular district-wide meetings” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The inconsistency in management training and evaluation practices has also raised concerns, “management, training should be standardized... It depends what department you are in for how evaluations are done, harming the faculty every time” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The speed of decision-making often leads to frustration, as one faculty member stated, “One of the biggest issues we have is we go too fast. It bypasses all the stakeholders... I would love to see us not go so fast...” (Faculty, Bakersfield). An example of this haste was highlighted when a “\$250 thousand for a Banner conference” then the software was suddenly switched to another vendor (Faculty, Bakersfield). Faculty felt like communication was lacking and that they were left out of the decision-making process.

Concerns about micromanagement are prevalent, with faculty feeling they are under constant scrutiny, “we feel like we are constantly being watched. We are always questioned about what we are doing, we are always questioned about the schedule we have in our computer program” (Faculty, Porterville). This lack of trust impacts morale, “this brings our morale down as we feel we are not being trusted... we are adults and we know what we need to do and we do it” (Faculty, Porterville). The sentiment was echoed by another faculty member who commented on feeling constantly observed, “to have someone always watching us, they often are looking at us through a microscope” (Faculty, Porterville). Faculty feel that when they are micromanaged, their roles are negatively impacted.

Structural changes within departments have also contributed to confusion. “Department offices basically gone, dean, program manager, secretary, mailboxes, copies, as of August... Our dean is told you will move over to this building, now our dean is gone” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The shift in leadership has led to conflict, “this has caused conflict and hard feelings. No department for students to come anymore and interface” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Further frustrations arise when management does not provide clear explanations for delays. Faculty also feel stifled in their ability to advocate for their needs, “sometimes we come to the table, and sometimes there are things we have as goals and a particular administrator will say you cannot even use that even though it is in the contract” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The lack of awareness about ongoing issues is evident, “sometimes in that growth process we don’t know what is going on” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The complexities of HR processes further complicate communication, “whenever there is HR things, there are a lot of things behind the scenes and sometimes individuals are not telling you everything, and it can go back and forth” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Without clear communication and transparency, faculty feel that they are not included in decisions.

Despite these challenges, there have been signs of improvement, “there has been some improvement with your Zoom conversations (online forums) and the BC president” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Feedback from faculty indicates a desire for continued dialogue, “It is appreciated, I am hearing a lot of feedback” (Faculty, Bakersfield). However, many feel that transparency is

lacking, particularly regarding decision-making processes, “giving the why for a decision, I am relatively new, not even tenured yet, but I have never seen that happen here” (Faculty, Bakersfield). As another faculty member emphasized, “the why has to be shared” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Faculty feel like Kern CCD is lacking transparency when making decisions.

Ultimately, the prevailing sentiment reflects a desire for improved communication, as highlighted by the repeated assertion, “we grow in silos” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The lack of knowledge about whom to communicate with contributes to this issue, “we grow in silos because we do not know who to communicate with” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Unfortunately, when explanations are provided, they can often be negative, “sometimes when the why is shared with us, it’s sometimes shared that we are bad and that is why” (Faculty, Bakersfield), with one faculty member bluntly stating, “The why is we suck and our students are not succeeding” (Faculty, Bakersfield).

Reflection on Culture of Communication

The issues of toxicity and faculty communication are not easy to fix. With this cultural reset, Kern CCD is working to strengthen communication and reduce toxicity throughout the whole district and to fix the “pain points” that are causing communication to break down.

Environmental Landscape of Kern CCD

The second theme of environmental landscape of Kern CCD encompasses both infrastructure and safety. The issues of infrastructure and safety impact communication and culture throughout Kern CCD.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure within the Kern Community College District presents significant challenges that impede faculty effectiveness and service to students. One faculty member from Cerro Coso expressed a fundamental frustration, “our biggest barrier for serving students is our organization.” They emphasized their desire for growth, stating, “I really want to grow” (Faculty, Cerro Coso) but noted an “inability” to do so due to systemic issues. Communication is a major obstacle impacted by infrastructure, particularly given the geographical spread of the campuses, “one thing that impedes our communication, we are across five campuses” (Faculty, Cerro Coso) a faculty member explained, adding that while “we are shrinking in enrollments, we are growing in administration” (Faculty, Cerro Coso). This growth in administration, without corresponding faculty involvement, leaves many feeling sidelined, “people not being involved as much as they should in processes that they should” (Faculty, Bakersfield).

Physical infrastructure also suffers from a lack of functional planning. A faculty member from the Delano campus remarked on the beautiful building that lacks practicality, “the lack of functional planning is very frustrating” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This sentiment is echoed by a

faculty member from Porterville College, who reflected on a disconnect between flashy technological advancements and their actual impact on teaching, “everything is super flashy, but things are taking away from what they do” (Faculty, Porterville). The introduction of new equipment has further complicated matters. Concerns were raised about the placement of projectors in classrooms and the overall inadequacy of communication regarding infrastructure upgrades, “not enough communication... projector in the wrong place” (Faculty, Porterville College). Faculty felt that their input was not sought or considered with the design of classrooms in which they teach.

Another faculty member reminisced about a lost resource, “when I got here, we had a faculty lounge area that was centrally located... it gave the opportunity for people from different divisions to interact” (Faculty, Porterville). This space, which included a couch and refrigerator, was lost during a conversion about 20 years ago. The Chancellor described it as “a quiet gathering space,” highlighting the missed opportunities for collaboration that such spaces provide. Collaboration remains elusive in this environment. One faculty member stated, “we need space for collaboration” (Faculty, Porterville), explaining that “our flex day, there is not space for that” (Faculty, Porterville). They acknowledged the existence of silos but stressed the importance of having a place “to gather at a table together” (Faculty, Porterville). Faculty want a place to collaborate.

The lack of access to essential resources is also concerning. A faculty member pointed out, “there is a huge issue with keys” (Faculty, Porterville), noting how this impacts their autonomy and ability to perform their duties effectively. Additionally, the staffing shortages have hindered operations, “not having the proper staff to do our job efficiently... we have a spot that has not been filled for three or four years” (Faculty, Porterville). Overall, the rapid growth of the college and district has led to a sense of disorientation among faculty, “sometimes we grow so quickly and don’t know where we fall in the infrastructure” (Faculty, Bakersfield), underscoring the need for a more coherent and supportive organizational framework.

Safety

Safety concerns emerged as a significant issue among faculty, highlighting the need for improved security measures across campuses. One faculty member from Porterville expressed appreciation for the administration but emphasized a crucial concern, “I appreciate our administrators a lot... the one concern I want to bring up is safety.” The faculty noted that while the Amber box system is a positive step, “what we have been requesting for the last couple of years is the ability to lock our doors” (Faculty, Porterville). The urgency of this request is underscored by their teaching schedule, “I teach a class that goes late at night; if there is a strange person walking around, I want to be able to secure my building” (Faculty, Porterville). If faculty do not feel safe, they cannot effectively do their jobs.

In addition to these concerns, another faculty member addressed specific safety issues within science and lab environments, “we have double issues with safety in science and lab” (Faculty, Porterville). The faculty pointed out a problematic change, “Instead of locking from the lab, they switched the lock to the classroom side. They became basically useless as we can't keep anyone out” (Faculty, Porterville). These comments reflect a pressing need for more effective safety protocols and infrastructure that prioritize the well-being of both faculty and students.

Reflecting on Environmental Landscape of Kern CCD

When looking at the culture of Kern CCD it is important to reflect on how infrastructure impacts culture. Kern CCD services students across 24,800 square miles and has campuses which are several hours drive from each other. Creating collaboration requires deliberate planning and action to unite stakeholders on every campus. It is imperative for the district to support faculty and address and take safety concerns to heart.

Operations and Functions

The third theme of operations and functions encompasses policy and process, hiring and retention, pay and professional development and training. The ins and outs of everyday functions impact communication, culture, and morale throughout Kern CCD.

Policy and Procedure

The connection between communication and policy and procedures is evident in the challenges faced by faculty. One faculty member observed, “we have had so much turnover, musical chairs, that we sometimes lose the process along the way. The people stepping into the role don't know what to communicate out” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This highlights the disruptive impact of frequent changes in leadership on effective communication and procedural consistency. In the role of department chair, the burdens of administration were evident, “In my role as chair, we are overburdened, but there has to be a better way. The forms come back again and again” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Such frustrations reflect the inefficiencies in existing processes, as noted in various issues related to forms, “the exception forms, the repeat class form...the forms and all the issues such as not putting California after Bakersfield” (Faculty, Bakersfield). These issues are not just affecting faculty chairs, but faculty and students alike.

The procedural delays exacerbate these challenges, with one faculty member reporting, “Six months backlog, 24-week turnaround. More times than not, I have to send a follow-up at the six-month mark” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The complexity of processes leads to unnecessary work duplication, as seen in the counseling office, where staff remarked, “It seems we are doing double the work” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This inefficiency can have significant consequences for students. For example, “If it is a two-year process to get an academic renewal, it will take more than two years” (Faculty, Bakersfield), illustrating how procedural bottlenecks can hinder student progress.

Concerns about the timely communication of student grades were also raised, with one faculty member noting, “I have personally received emails to confirm student grades...I would hate for students to miss out on opportunities or have their process delayed” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This highlights the critical intersection of timely communication and student success. Additionally, the current reliance on paper forms rather than digital systems complicates evaluations, “there are so many programs that can be used to evaluate those courses, but we are doing everything by paper and pen” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Issues such as the summer grade roll—which only occurs once—further exemplify institutional practices that do not serve our students well. Though summer grade roll being one time is common practice in education, when grades are not submitted or accessible in Banner, they are not included on a student’s transcript. As expressed by a faculty member, “the grade roll is another issue that mirrors that,” highlighting a systemic oversight that affects students’ academic progress.

Another faculty member emphasized the need for increased involvement in decision-making, stating, “In the decision-making process, I noticed on committees there are a lot of vacancies, but a lot of faculty to fill them” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This underscores the importance of engaging faculty more actively in committees to enhance institutional processes.

The historical context of these challenges cannot be overlooked. One faculty member noted, “we have had in our department over the last 15 years that we never got a report back on... process at BC has been so broken for so long” (Faculty, Bakersfield). The absence of documented processes leads to assumptions that procedures are being followed, which is often not the case, “when processes and procedures are written down, then there is the assumption that people read them” (Faculty, Bakersfield). Moreover, faculty expressed frustration about the lack of adherence to established processes, “process/policies/procedures should be followed (in the past and in some instances currently, they are not), or if there are barriers we should have an open participatory dialogue to revise them” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This call for transparency and dialogue is essential for improving processes. In summary, addressing the gaps in communication and procedural adherence is vital for fostering a more efficient and student-centered environment.

Hiring and retention

Concerns surrounding hiring and retention practices were raised, particularly regarding representation and procedural integrity. A faculty member from Cerro Coso noted a significant gap in the hiring process, “on the hiring committee, there was no dedicated EEO representative” This lack of oversight can lead to questions about equity and fairness in hiring. Furthermore, issues with HR and grievances related to screening committees and minimum qualification requirements have contributed to mistrust in the current hiring procedures. A faculty member from Bakersfield remarked, “HR, grievances, and issues about screening committees and minimal qualification requirements also hurt the hiring processes and trust in using the current procedures.” Kern CCD needs to show that hiring practices are equitable and fair to gain trust with faculty in the district.

There are concerns about the qualifications of leadership within the district. As one faculty member pointed out, “most of the deans at BC become deans because of necessity” (Faculty, Bakersfield), highlighting a lack of intentionality in leadership development. They also noted that “there is no continuous retraining mechanism” (Faculty, Bakersfield) which can hinder effective leadership and support for faculty. These insights underscore the need for a more equitable and transparent hiring process, along with ongoing training for leadership roles.

Pay

Issues of equity and compensation have become increasingly prominent among faculty across campuses. One faculty member from Porterville expressed concern about the disparity in compensation, “there is a difference in how BC is compensated than what we are here at PC. They are compensated better; it is not equitable.” This inequity is further illustrated by the stark contrast in pay for coaches, with one faculty member noting, “90k vs. 24k compensation for coaches from different locations” (Faculty, Porterville) highlighting significant disparities within the district.

Adjustments for counselors have not kept pace with those for adjunct instructors, “adjunct instructors were given a raise, but counselors were not” (Faculty, Porterville) leading to feelings of undervaluation among staff. As a Porterville faculty member noted, “they don’t feel valued,” which underscores the broader implications of pay equity on morale and job satisfaction. These comments reflect a pressing need for a reevaluation of compensation practices to ensure fairness and equity across the Kern CCD system.

Professional Development and training

Concerns about professional development and training were voiced by some faculty members, particularly regarding the accessibility and organization of these opportunities. One faculty member from Porterville College noted, “Professional development is flex day, and it’s all administrative,” indicating a disconnect between administrative focus and faculty needs. Many faculty members express frustration with the funding process for conferences. One explained, “when we see a specific conference we want to go to, sometimes these don’t pop up until a week or two before, and we try to get funding to go but can’t get the funding” (Faculty, Porterville). The requirement to submit requests “30 days ahead of time” (Faculty, Porterville) often leads to missed opportunities. “There is no process for us. It gets lost in translation, and then we can’t go to the conference” a faculty member from Porterville emphasized.

The process for obtaining funding can feel cumbersome, “we have to hunt people down to help us go” (Faculty, Porterville), another faculty member stated, illustrating the difficulties in securing support for conference attendance. Historically, there have been “different pots of money at different times” (Faculty, Porterville) leading to inconsistent access to funding. One faculty member from Porterville suggested, “It would be ideal to have someone on each campus to just do that (help with funding for conferences).” While funding may sometimes be secured, the challenge

of finding coverage for classes remains, “we get the funding, but we have to find our own coverage” a faculty member from Porterville explained, adding another layer of difficulty.

On a more positive note, a faculty member from Bakersfield pointed out that “the corrective progressive action included in the contract was a good thing,” noting that it was implemented about six years ago. However, the faculty observed that “it was like they didn’t have training” (Faculty, Bakersfield) indicating that while policies may exist, their practical application and staff training may still need improvement. These reflections suggest a need for more streamlined processes and dedicated support for faculty development, ensuring that faculty can effectively pursue growth opportunities without bureaucratic hindrances.

Reflecting on Operations and Functions

There is a misalignment of policy and procedure that is impacting faculty. The need for written documentation with fair practices throughout hiring, pay, and professional development are all areas which Kern CCD needs to continue addressing.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the insights gathered from faculty, it becomes clear that the ultimate goal remains the well-being and success of our students. One faculty member aptly noted, “what you are doing is outstanding,” highlighting the commendable efforts being currently made. However, there is an urgent need to enhance the communication processes that include students in decision-making.

Students often feel like “the last afterthought” (Faculty, Bakersfield) in institutional changes, such as the recent bookstore modifications. A faculty member emphasized, “have you asked the students? I feel like that is probably our biggest area of improvement” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This sentiment resonates deeply, especially when we consider that miscommunications can have significant repercussions on student experiences. For instance, one student believed that taking 12 units constituted full-time status due to financial aid requirements, unaware that she needed 15 units to graduate on time. (Faculty, Bakersfield). This example underscores the critical need for clear, accessible information that supports students’ educational pathways.

At the heart of these discussions is a shared commitment: “We all care about our students and their well-being” (Faculty, Bakersfield). This collective dedication must drive our efforts to reform decision-making processes and ensure that the voices of our students are prioritized. The challenge remains to transform our institutions so that they reflect not just the number of enrolled students but to truly see each student as an individual with unique needs and aspirations. By fostering inclusive dialogue and making informed decisions that take students’ perspectives into account, we can create an environment where all students, and all employees, can thrive.