

Recommendation 1: Campus Climate

The college should create a campus climate that embraces open, candid dialogue that embodies a culture of respect, civility and trust to improve institutional decision making, planning and effectiveness. (Standard I.B.1; Standard III.A.1.d, III.A.4, III.A.4.c.; and Standard IV.A.2, IV.A.2.a, IV.A.3, IV.A.5)

Since West Los Angeles College's 2006 self study and visit, our college has created college strategies that promote an open campus climate and foster a culture of respect, civility and trust. Our college identified specific actions to address this recommendation.

Team-building activities include the annual Leadership Retreat, held in November, that draws participants from faculty, staff, students and administrators. The Fall 2007 retreat, held at Pepperdine's West Los Angeles Graduate Campus, drew 103 participants who engaged in small-group discussions to imagine West's future. The results of those efforts are summarized at

http://www.wlac.edu/planning/leadership_retreat/F07%20Leadrshp%20Rtrt%20Report%2011508formatted.pdf

| [Add retreat results/outcomes.]

The Fall 2008 Leadership Retreat, "Moving into the Fast Lane," achieved full capacity at 110 participants in a few weeks after the initial announcement and featured speakers from California Community Colleges who shared how they achieved excellence in their college's technology strategic plans, basic skills, online counseling and other student services and teaching to the iPod generation. Participants were surveyed after the retreat to determine what strategies they had learned from their breakout sessions and which could be adapted to their teaching, services or offices. [Add link to survey results.]

Added to traditional events such as the Fall Festival and Law Enforcement Career Fair have been the enhanced Welcome Week activities, organized by the Associated Students Organization, Transfer Week and other activities, such as the Presidential Election Teach-In of October 29, 2008, that promote a community of learning. In Fall 2008, the college actively participated in the selection of the mascot for its athletic teams.

The most noteworthy strategies have been the numerous approaches to enhance communication, through the college website and the now well-established monthly Administrative Council/Divisional Council meetings, attended by 40-50 leaders of the college. These meetings promote information-sharing across all divisions of the college, including the President's Office, Academic Affairs, Student Services, Administrative Services, the sheriff and plant facilities. Being well-informed from a college-wide perspective helps leaders function and problem-solve collaboratively and knowledgeably.

| Dr. Rocha holds an open hour [cite schedule], a time when anyone may speak with him about any topic or concern. [examples]

The college community now knows to expect the president's weekly message, "From the President's Desk," on Monday morning, delivered in an email blast. With its "Quote for the Week," the message includes topics that range from the notice of a Plenary Session of the College Council, asking for "advice and counsel" and the "fullest possible input" as the president sought to submit a balanced 2008-09 budget to the District Office (April 3, 2008), discussion on teachable moments in the current international and national budget crisis (October 13, 2008), to a special thank you to a particular group of employees at the college whose effectiveness was noteworthy. At monthly meetings of the AFT Faculty Guild and the College Council, full budget information is shared, fostering trust, cooperation and transparency.

Two examples of how the proven mutual agreement on the consultation process enables the college to meet its challenges in a timely way is the Facilities Master Plan, first presented to the College Council on February 7, 2008, and the Budget Omnibus Action Proposal of spring 2008 to address a reduction of at least \$1.5 million and to submit a balanced budget as required to the District. For of these significant actions, the governance process began with either a Town Hall or a plenary session of the College Council, attended by a good number of faculty, staff, administrators and students, followed meetings of the college president with leaders of the Academic Senate, the AFT Faculty Guild, the AFT Classified Build and the College Council. These meetings resulted in mutual agreement on the specific consultation meetings with constituency groups, such as the Academic Senate, the AFT Faculty Guild, Divisional Council chairs, the Joint Administrative Council and Divisional Council, the Work Environment Committee for the Facilities Master Plan and the Budget Committee for the Budget Omnibus Action Proposal, insuring broad information-sharing and participation in discussions. By the time these proposals were voted on by the College Council, both were approved by consensus with suggestions from the consultation meetings having been heard, received, considered and often incorporated into the original proposal. Such a systematic and open information-sharing consultation with constituencies and their leaders characterizes real rather than ceremonial policy recommendations that yield successful outcomes for the college.

<http://www.wlac.edu/collegecouncil/minutes/ccmin030608.pdf>

<http://www.wlac.edu/collegecouncil/minutes/CCdrftmin6-5-082.pdf>

In Fall 2008, the college also considered the Comprehensive Transportation Plan Bond Funded Pilot Program to Increase College Access and Reduce the College Carbon Footprint. After presentations by the District's consultants to the College Council and the AFT Faculty Guild and discussions and action by the Guild and the Academic Senate, the Council unanimously approved to recommend the plan to the college president at a special meeting held on October 16, 2008. [mtg. minutes]

Added to its network of functioning standing committees, the president formed the Building Program Management Committee, which meets once a month and provides frequent communication about all of the college's construction plans and changes, paths of travel and shuttle routes, with the goal of lessening the negative impact resulting from building activities.

As part of the increased effort to keep students informed and to seek their input, the college president and the vice-president of Student Services held a meeting with the Associated Students Organization (ASO), followed by a question-and-answer period to ensure that multiple student perspectives are considered in construction decision-making. [minutes of this mtg.]

Agendas of campus-wide committees are advertised to all faculty, staff, administrators and student leaders to ensure broad participation in the governance process. When "hot topics," such as the Fall 2008 budget crisis have arisen, the president sends out additional communication and has responded to the issues in campus-wide meetings.

The response rate to the Fall 2008 Campus Climate Survey, which includes both quantitative and qualitative measures, was excellent. Out of 216 regular and adjunct faculty, 135 completed the survey, for a response rate of 62%. Sixty of the 142 classified staff responded, for a response rate of 42%. Administrators had a response rate of 100%, for an overall response rate of 56%. The top four items with the most favorable evaluation include:

- The current campus climate is marked by civility;
- As compared to two years ago when West underwent its comprehensive self study, the campus climate has improved;
- Meetings on campus (committees, workshops, Town Hall meetings, etc.) are characterized by openness; and
- Collegiality is valued and promoted at West.

The bottom four items with the least favorable evaluation include:

- I feel that I can voice my opinion(s) and viewpoint(s) freely;
- In meetings and other venues, complaints or criticisms are valued/listened to;
- If I disagree with the prevailing idea(s), I still feel that I am respected;
- The current campus climate is marked by trust.

Therefore, while many respondents feel that they are "welcomed and part of a team," that "The students are nice and appreciate the chance to learn," and that one can "feel the positive energy and creative ideas to increase enrollment" as well as "feeling a sense of calmness, steadiness and forward direction," there are still issues, as indicated above, that West will look at in the context of continuous organizational improvement; that is, an on-going process of evaluating how we're doing, and where we can improve." One of the changes which may lead to improving trust are suggestions for increasing camaraderie and social time. Because West has not had a dining commons, opportunities at other

colleges for gatherings outside of committee meetings are difficult and occur occasionally for birthdays, for example. Finding out about others' interests, their background, regardless of their "political or leadership status" status on campus may build faculty, staff and administrative connectedness beyond the professional work environment.

As West grows, and with the college president setting the tone of respect and modeling expected behavior, meetings are generally free of acrimony and finger-pointing. Town meetings, written reports, regularly scheduled consultation with faculty leaders and other constituencies, information-sharing and accessibility continue to promote and sustain inclusiveness and transparency at West. In such a climate of improved relations and communication, collaboration and cooperation prevail, leading to a successful resolution of issues through effective policies and decisions for our institution. At the same time, the Fall 2008 Campus Climate Survey suggests that the college needs to look at ways to promote trust that goes beyond civility among various groups.