

2018 Student Campus Climate Survey: Qualitative Results



Spring 2018

Executive Summary

El Camino College administered a campus climate survey to students in Spring 2018. This was part of El Camino's continued efforts to cultivate a welcoming and inclusive campus environment for all students to support their learning and achievement. This report summarizes the results from the section of the campus climate survey asking students to identify areas in which they believe the College is doing well, as well as areas in which they believe the College could improve. Of the 1,633 students who completed the survey, 984 (60%) provided one or more responses with respect to El Camino College's strengths, while 963 (59%) students provided one or more areas in which they believed the College could improve. Key findings include:

- The most common perceived strengths of the college include: the general campus environment, quality of resources/support offered by the college, the variety and quality of academic programs, faculty who care about student success, and the campus life that promotes a sense of belonging.
- The most common areas for improvement include: campus cleanliness and use of space for students, quality, options and affordability of campus food, greater availability and offerings of classes, greater access to services and resources available on campus, and more faculty members who care about students and are highly knowledgeable and effective in their work.

Introduction

As part of the campus climate survey, open-ended questions asked students to identify El Camino College's strengths and areas for improvement:

- Please list up to three things that ECC is doing well ('WELL').
- Please list up to three things that ECC can do to improve ('IMPROVE').

Methodology

The comments were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. This involves identifying common themes that emerge from an initial analysis of a subset of comments from both the student and employee campus climate survey. This approach allows for determination of themes that could be comparable across the two groups. Sub-categories for each theme were also developed to explore variations that exist within each theme. These themes and sub-categories were then used to code the rest of the open-ended responses. It is important to note that one response can uncover more than one theme.

Students and employees identified a wide range of areas students believe are strengths of the College, along with areas for improvement. The following sections report the five most common themes of the responses with respect to areas in which students believed El Camino College is doing well and where they see opportunities for improvement.

Results

What is El Camino College Doing Well?

Of the 1,633 students who completed the survey, 984 (60%) provided one or more responses with respect to the ways in which El Camino College was doing well: 76 students listed one response, 109 students listed two responses, and 799 listed three responses. These responses were aggregated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the students’ perceptions about the College’s strengths, for a total of 2,691 responses. Many of the responses yielded multiple themes and subcategories. Table 1 provides a summary of the five most common themes.

The most common response types from students indicate that the College is making progress in its continued efforts to provide excellent educational programs and quality services that foster student learning and success. Two of the most common themes that emerged point to students’ satisfaction with the quality of the academic and student support programs offered by the college. They also report that many of their counselors and instructors support student learning. Students also feel generally safe and welcome on campus; events and activities hosted by the campus foster a sense of belonging for students. These responses suggest that El Camino College is attaining its mission and reflects some of its values.

Table 1. Top Five Strengths

Theme (% of Total Responses ¹)	Summary
Campus (24%): 1 Clean & Safe Environment	El Camino College provides a clean and safe learning environment. <i>The college campus is generally clean and provides a safe learning environment. The police presence on campus makes students feel safe. The College provides adequate space for students to study (e.g., computer labs), and the students are satisfied with the College’s efforts to modernize the campus.</i>
Resources/Support (22%): 2 Quality Student Resources/ Programs	El Camino College offers students a variety of excellent support programs and resources. <i>Students are satisfied with the various student support and services programs offered at the College (e.g., Library & Learning Resources Center, FYE, EOPS, CalWORKs, Puente, HTP, KEAS, TOP, and the Writing Center). Other programs that strengthen students’ experiences at ECC include tutoring, counseling, financial aid assistance, and transfer services. Few responses also identify the Special Resource Center, the Warrior Food Pantry and the Health Center as strengths of the College.</i>
Academics (18%): 3 Quality Educational Opportunities	Students receive quality education at El Camino College. <i>Students believe El Camino College provides quality education with various academic programs from which they could choose. The academic programs offer a variety of classes that help fulfill students’ academic needs and allow them to attain certificates or degrees. Students identify a range of programs with which they have been satisfied,</i>

¹ This report only focuses on the top five themes; therefore, the percentages of total responses do not add up to 100%.

Theme (% of Total Responses ¹)	Summary
	<i>which include, but are not limited to, child development, computer science, ESL, fire academy, mathematics, physics, sociology, and STEM.</i>
Faculty (12%): 4 Caring Instructors & Counselors	El Camino College instructors and counselors care about their students. <i>El Camino College provides students quality faculty members, both instructors and counselors, who care about the students and their success. Instructors support student learning and are flexible in offering office hours. Counselors have been helpful in advising students.</i>
Campus Life & Culture (7%): 5 Welcoming Campus with Numerous Student Activities	The El Camino College campus is a welcoming environment that promotes a sense of belonging. <i>El Camino College provides a welcoming and friendly environment for all students. The campus holds various events and activities for different groups of students and provides clubs that students can participate in and feel a sense of belonging.</i>

Other themes that emerged from students' comments about the College's strengths (for a sum of 13% across the themes) include:

- Diversity of the student and staff population
- More available parking spaces with two additional parking structures
- Employees who are friendly and helpful

What Can El Camino College Do To Improve?

Of the 1,633 students who completed the survey, 963 (59%) provided one or more responses with respect to the ways in which El Camino College could improve. 183 students listed one area for improvement, 174 students listed two areas for improvement, and 606 students identified three areas for improvement, for a total of 2,349 responses. Table 2 summarizes the five most common themes that emerged from students' responses.

Table 2. Top Five Areas for Improvement

Theme (% of Total Responses ²)	Summary
Campus (28%): 1 Cleaner and Upgraded Facilities with Increased Security at Night	El Camino College campus can be improved with cleaner restrooms, controlled temperature, updated facilities, greater police presence and lighting at night, more areas for students to congregate, eat, rest, and study, and better sustainability. <i>Although the campus is the most common theme in students' response with respect to El Camino College's strengths, it is also the most common theme when identifying areas for improvement. Students would like cleaner facilities (particularly the restrooms) and more areas where students can congregate, eat, rest, and study. Some students also identify a</i>

² This report only focuses on the top five themes; therefore, the percentages of total responses do not add up to 100%.

Theme (% of Total Responses ²)	Summary
	<i>need for repairs of classrooms/facilities (e.g., doors, elevators) and better temperature control (e.g., A/C and heating). Students are also concerned with campus safety at night and request more police presence and improved lighting in the areas by the parking lots. Several students also report the need for a more sustainable campus (e.g., recycling).</i>
2 Food (19%): Better and Affordable Options	El Camino College students would like access to greater and healthier options of food available on campus that are also affordable. <i>Students desire a greater variety of quality food (e.g., options that reflect the diversity of the student population, organic and healthy) that is also affordable for them.</i>
3 Academics (18%): More Class Availability and Student-Centered Pedagogy	El Camino College students struggle finding available classes that they need, and thus would like greater availability of classes, with pedagogy that meet students' different learning styles. <i>Students would like to see more availability and offering of classes, a greater diversity of faculty members, and implementation of instructional practices that meet their different learning styles and motivate them to learn. Few students also pointed out a need for a more efficient process of class registration.</i>
4 Resources/Support (13%): Greater Access to Resources/Support Programs for Students	Given the high quality of support services and programs available, El Camino College students would like to see an expansion of these programs so that more students can benefit from them. <i>El Camino College provides quality services and support programs for its students. Students believe their experiences with the resources and support programs would improve with greater availability and accessibility to the services offered on campus (e.g., longer or more counseling appointments, longer hours at the library, writing center, and labs, more tutors available for help). Students also request more assistance in ensuring that they can receive financial aid (e.g., through more advertised information about financial aid or scholarship opportunities, improved processes and services from the financial aid office).</i>
5 Faculty (7%): More Compassionate/Knowledgeable Faculty	El Camino College students would like more faculty (including counselors) who empathize with student needs and are highly knowledgeable about their work (e.g., course material, college requirements, and services). <i>Students desire not only a greater number of faculty members to increase accessibility to them (both counselors and instructors), but also faculty who are student-centered. With respect to counselors, students report having received conflicting information from counselors. Based on their interactions, they believe their experience with counseling would improve with greater counselor knowledge that is better aligned to areas such as transfer, degree/certificate, or graduation requirements. With respect to instructors, students would like teachers who care about the diverse needs of students and can effectively help them engage with the content of the courses.</i>

Many of the themes identified as strengths are also identified as areas for improvement. For example, while many students are satisfied with the physical campus, others indicate a need for updated or repaired facilities (e.g., doors, elevators), a cleaner campus, particularly the restrooms, greater security especially for evening students, more areas for students to congregate, eat, study, and rest, and

greater campus' sustainability. Given the quality of the academic programs, resources and support programs, events and activities, and faculty members, students would also like greater accessibility to them, particularly for specific groups of students (e.g., international students, evening students, older students). Another common theme points to students' desire for access to greater and healthier food options that are also affordable.

Other notable comments about areas for improvement include issues around the following:

- Parking enhancements (more parking machines, parking for evening students)
- More frequent communication from College advertising academic programs, student support programs and resources (e.g., financial aid opportunities) as well as events and activities
- Greater frequency and diversity of activities and events offered on campus
- More opportunities for student success (e.g., internships) and access to services for marginalized students (e.g., evening students, older students, international students, LGBTQ+, students with a particular political affiliation)

Recommendations

- The college is viewed as having a strong network of support systems. However, not all students feel it is available for them. The college should work to develop services that can be offered to all students, either through alternative methods or more coordinated efforts to reach the whole student population.
- The College should explore alternative methods for sharing information with students, including available student support resources, college activities, financial aid, and even counseling information.
- The College can implement a sustained campaign to train faculty members to become more service-oriented. Students want to feel that faculty care about their success, but also as regular points of contact, faculty need to be informed of resource options available to students.

Conclusion

El Camino College students identified various strengths of the College, along with a range of areas in which the College can improve. Overall, students are satisfied with the quality of academic and support programs, and would like greater availability of the programs (e.g., longer counseling/library hours, more instructors, more class offerings) and equal opportunities for specific groups of students to access resources (e.g., international students, evening students).

Since the administration of the survey, several initiatives have addressed some of these concerns. For example, the College is working to provide greater lighting on campus. The College has also sought to improve students' dining experience; in the past year, the College has provided students access to a food truck on campus, cafes serving Peet's Coffee, and has changed the food vendor to provide affordable and greater food options. Recent efforts also include enhancing lighting to help evening students feel safer and expanding support services to all students. Students' suggestions for improvement continue to be valuable in the College's mission to make a positive difference in people's lives.