

El Camino College

2021 Student Campus Climate Survey

Qualitative Report



Executive Summary

This report is a supplement to the 2021 Student Campus Climate Survey quantitative report released on February 2022. By incorporating students' comments, this report provides context to have a better understanding of the quantitative results of the survey. The table below provides key highlights from the qualitative survey results.

<i>Overall Experience</i>	El Camino students feel welcome, and valued at El Camino. Generally, they have a positive view of their experiences with ECC.
<i>Physical Environment & Safety</i>	Students feel safe at ECC, although more lighting and security cameras would improve night safety.
<i>Campus Life & Activities</i>	Student outlook is largely dependent on their interactions with faculty, staff, and fellow students.
<i>Services & Resources</i>	Students who receive services are satisfied, but there are many students who do not know some services are available, do not know how to access services when they do know about them, or cannot get through, even when they do know how to access them.
<i>Diversity & Inclusion</i>	When students have negative experiences, it is often due to a perceived lack of empathy coming from a college employee. This includes both staff and faculty.
<i>Classroom Instruction</i>	While the convenience of online learning has helped some students, distance learning has not been beneficial for everyone.
<i>Mental Health, Food Insecurity & Housing Insecurity</i>	ECC serves as resource for students' fundamental needs, especially in regards mental health.

Methodology

Students were asked the following seven open-ended questions to gain more insight into aspects where El Camino was performing well, and aspects where the institution needs to make improvements.

1. Please list up the three things that ECC is doing well.
2. Please list up to three things that ECC can do to improve.
3. To what extent do you think El Camino provides a quality education in a remote environment?
4. What could El Camino do to better support you while we are in a remote environment?
5. Please share any feedback (positive or negative) about your attempts to get services.
6. Please share any personal or academic challenges that may have impacted your educational experience.
7. Use this space to add any other comments or suggestions about your experience with El Camino.

Altogether, there were 1,445 answers from 494 students in response to these questions. Additionally, students who said they had experienced a negative interaction they believed was due to a difference in race, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, religion, national origin, age, disability status were invited to share further information about their experience(s).

The qualitative analysis of the survey questions was conducted using Qualtrics text analysis features to code responses into themes and establish sentiment scores for each response. Themes across all open-ended questions are associated with the findings of the survey quantitative results to provide context, where applicable.

Survey Findings

This qualitative report follows the same format as the Student Campus Climate Survey organization based on the questions that informed the development of the survey instrument.

Overall Experience

Students indicated having a positive experience with El Camino overall, with 95% indicating the college was welcoming and 93% indicating they would start their college experience at ECC again, if they had to.

There are multiple reasons students appreciate El Camino. Many responses center around the **length to which ECC goes to support students**. Special programs like EOP&S, Honors Transfer Program, and the Special Resource Center provide support, guidance, and counseling to help students navigate college. The Warrior Pantry received several mentions for being a resource for students' most basic needs. Academically, ECC was commended for the ease with which the college transferred to online education in the midst of COVID-19 and for having supportive faculty.

"The professors are great. I love the programs. And the counselors there are amazing!"

"Warrior Pantry is the best. Their assistance in time of need has overwhelming put a positive impression of the ECC caring to their students. Another thing, is the library. The ability of offering free hotspots and laptops has helped students succeed. Lastly, many of the counselors were very caring and helping me decide what I needed to take to succeed."

However, these positive feelings were not universal. While students who interacted with counseling and other services generally came away with positive attitudes, **many students have difficulty navigating the resources**.

"It is very confusing/difficult to get in touch with counselors/staff; often times I am not sure who I am supposed to reach out to and then I get bounced around from department to department."

"Often I find that emailing a staff/faculty member or student worker and asking a question results in them telling me to email someone else or giving me the link to a website that I already saw. It is frustrating to go on a wild goose chase when I need the answer to a question."

While many students had positive things to say about their professors and the staff, **the experience was dependent on the extent to which students felt the employee was an ally** in their educational journey.

“My professor changes my whole experience. And I think students can agree that something matters a lot is the professor.”

“Received assistance from some in various departments and not from some in various departments. Bottomline (...) it varies who was contacted. Some staff are caring and helped, some are not accessible.”

Physical Environment and Safety

Students feel safe navigating El Camino College **due to the presence of public safety**, as well as the **inclusive climate** that has been developed at ECC. Over 90% of students indicated feeling safe on campus during the daytime, though less felt safe at night (68%). Overall, the campus is easy to navigate, however, there are **opportunities to train employees to properly answer questions when the occasion arises**.

“Creating a positive, safe, equal opportunity learning environment.”

“Make campus safe at night (after dark).”

Suggestions for improving after dark safety include **additional lighting in dark areas** and installing **security cameras** around campus and in parking structures.

Campus Life and Activities

Students indicated feeling **greater connection to ECC compared to 2018**, with almost 80% indicating they feel a part of the wider ECC community. This is especially true for people in special programs, but it may also reflect the efforts the college has made to increase touchpoints for students who are not part of special programs through the use of tools like Canvas, ECC Connect, and Meta Major support teams.

“El Camino has many inclusive programs. El Camino has many first year programs that are beneficial.”

“As a part of the South Bay Promise Program, I’m immensely grateful for the aid I’ve received and I also understand how transformative the aid and scholarships that the school provides to its students can be. I believe that the ways in which I am dissatisfied with El Camino are largely the product of my own experiences rather than a culmination of any failure on the institution’s part. I’ve appreciated the opportunities for engagement and involvement with my campus even throughout the pandemic.”

Diversity and Inclusion

Students overwhelmingly believe that El Camino College strives to respect and support its diverse population of students. Students were asked about support for specific groups and each resulted in greater than 90% positive ratings.

“Very diverse student body and encouraging expression of diversity.”

“Clubs/groups are accessible for students who are of different genders, ethnicities and more. They seemed to be supported and welcomed by staff and students on campus.”

Some students did have negative experiences they perceived were due to issues around diversity. **Some students indicated other students made them feel unsafe** due to being approached or comments made that were sexual in nature. **Others indicated feeling singled out and treated differently by professors or staff.** Some students stated instructors were not willing to accommodate their disabilities. Yet others indicated hearing derogatory comments made about some diverse population. While the high rate of students stating ECC supports various groups would indicate these are isolated and not pervasive instances, it does show there are areas for education and improvement at ECC.

“I feel as though the Special Resource Center needs to do more in the way of ensuring that faculty is as aware and accommodating of the needs of their disabled students as the SRC is.”

“Well, although the teachers are respectful about everyone’s upbringings and appearances; Some may degrade us for struggles.”

Services and Resources

Most students are able to find the support they need from ECC and 85% of students could identify a faculty or staff member at the college they could turn to for support. **The move to the online environment has opened up new avenues of access**, which has helped some students receive services that were difficult to reach before.

“Accessing counselors when in need has been really easy and helpful when I had questions with my academic path.”

“Overall I had great professors who would listen and provide solutions for me. They were very understanding and pointed me in the right direction. I also had many counseling appointments because of FYE, and they were always very understanding and extended a helping hand.”

However, this experience was greatly dependent on the ability to access the resources. The online environment did not work for everyone.

“Some of the times for resources provided were not flexible or filled up too quickly. Better advertising of the services could help as well as any changes to them.”

"It is hard to reach a counselor and make an appointment. I was unable to schedule an appointment online for a very long time. I emailed the counseling email address and I would only receive automatic replies until I emailed a Humanities advisor directly and let them know that the scheduling portal was not working. No one was able to answer the phone when I really needed to talk to counseling- for academic and transfer planning."

Classroom Instruction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the on-campus activities and offerings at El Camino ceased during the Spring 2021 semester when the survey was administered. Many students were able to transition to the online environment. **Students who liked the transition would like to see online opportunities continued and expanded.** Sixty-nine percent of students indicated they preferred to take classes in an online or hybrid environment. They appreciate services like the computer/hot spot loan program, as well as the convenience it provides and the reduced transportation and parking expenses. However, the **quality of education was still dependent on the instructor's ability to engage students and facilitate interactions.** Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicate having no close personal connection with another individual at El Camino College.

"I honestly love the remote environment. It allows me to juggle multiple things and still be able to go to school and earn a degree!"

"I have found remote education to be relatively mixed when it comes to quality, varying greatly from teacher to teacher. In my experience, the teachers who emphasize student engagement through written class discussions and/or turned on video cameras have the most successful, while those that don't tend to be more difficult to get through. While most classes are successful in this category to at least some level, others either aren't engaging enough for students to want to participate or simply don't have a focus on it at all."

However, **there were other students who did not thrive taking online courses.** Being online may have been detrimental to their learning style, or they might not have had an environment that supported online education. Additionally, proctoring software hindered some students.

"With a 7-year old and a 3-year old, it's impossible to take a proctored exam without being interrupted."

"The quality of each asynchronous class for me has depended on how much the professor facilitates the exchange of ideas between students."

"OPEN UP CAMPUS IN THE FALL"

Food Insecurity, Housing Insecurity and Mental Health Issues

Students spoke highly of Warrior Pantry and Health Services, with particular emphasis on the college's Mental Health resources. Twenty-one percent of students responded they had used Warrior Pantry services. Student Health Services was not emphasized in the development of the Campus Climate Survey, but Mental Health Services was mentioned several times as a positive resource. There were a **small number of comments related to housing insecurity directly.**

"Warrior Pantry is the best. Their assistance in time of need has overwhelming put a positive impression of the ECC caring to their students."

"I have used the drive-up food pantry- awesome! I'm so glad you offer this!"

"I had mental issues like depression for years, it just flared to the surface during the pandemic. Thanks to the telemental counseling I've recently started I feel way better. It was the first time having someone listen to my feelings."

"Thank you for providing extensive mental health services during this time."

Conclusions

- The qualitative comments supported the conclusions found from the quantitative report.
- Students feel safe, welcome, and valued at El Camino.
- El Camino students generally have a positive view of their experiences with ECC.
- Student outlook is largely dependent on their interactions with faculty, staff, and fellow students.
- Students who receive services are satisfied, but there are many students who do not know some services are available, do not know how to access services when they do know about them, or can-not get through, even when they do know how to access them.
- When students have negative experiences, it is often due to a perceived lack of empathy coming from a college employee. This includes both staff and faculty.
- While the convenience of online learning has helped some students, distance learning has not been beneficial for everyone.
- ECC serves as resource for students' fundamental needs.

Recommendations

- El Camino should continue to offer courses in multiple modalities to accommodate different learning styles and life circumstances. El Camino needs to be able to meet the needs of its diverse student body by offering courses the way students need to take

them. It also needs to continue offering training so instructors can maximize their knowledge and experiences gained during online instruction.

- El Camino should publicize more widely and consistently the services available to students. The college can also develop more creative means to provide services to students from impacted areas.
- El Camino should work towards ensuring all students have a positive connection or resource on campus. Although students will continue having negative experiences, working to ensure they also have positive experiences can help navigate better those challenging instances.
- El Camino should continue to fund and promote resources to meet students' basic needs, including training staff to direct students towards resources for physical/mental health, the Warrior Pantry, the Warrior Closet, and housing resources.