



# Employee Campus Climate Fall 2025: Assessing Change in Communication, Discrimination and Respect

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## Background

CSU Channel Islands administered its campus climate survey for employees at the end of the Fall 2025 semester, with a focus on perceptions of senior leadership, relationships with supervisors and chairs, the capacity to impact and accomplish work, and feelings of recognition. This in-house designed survey opened on December 1, 2025, and closed on January 2, 2026. This same survey was administered in Fall 2022 and the goal of repeating questions was to assess whether efforts to improve climate have been successful and should be continued or have not been successful and need to be revised. The survey topics were identified by university employees as most critical for tracking and improving as determined by a campus survey in Spring 2022. Aggregated climate survey responses are available to all employees on [OneCI](#) (the Tableau server), while this report will point out some highlights of the 2025 results and where there had been the biggest topics of change between 2022 and 2025. These topics were established as coherent groups of questions during the validation portion of the survey development process. For more information about the survey development process, see the [Fall 2022 Campus Climate Survey Report](#).

## Survey Design, Administration, and Analysis

The survey was distributed through email to all CSUCI employees (staff, faculty, administrators, and student assistants; both California State and Auxiliary employees). The survey was conducted anonymously, with respondents asked (but not required) to provide basic demographic and employment information. All respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences during the *past twelve months* and all questions but the final, open-ended question were on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Respondents who identified as faculty were asked somewhat different questions (e.g., about their “department” rather than their “area,” about the “Provost” rather than the “Vice President,” and about their Chair and Dean). After completing the closed-ended questions, respondents were prompted with this open-ended question: “Pick a question where you felt strongly about your answer, either positively or negatively. Please tell us why you felt that way as you were answering the question.”

There were two changes to survey administration this year. This is the first year that the survey was offered in both Spanish and English. The Spanish version of the survey was made as a translation from the English version, and the translation was completed by Dr. Antonio Jiménez Jiménez. This initial

translation was then back-translated into English by Dr. Stephen Clark, and the back-translation was checked against the original English version. Any discrepancies in the translation were reviewed with Professor Jiménez Jiménez who made any necessary corrections. Second, two in-person opportunities to complete the survey were provided to the Facilities team (one morning and one evening). These opportunities consisted of bringing tablets, coffee and donuts to the Facilities Services Work Center. The goal in this was to ensure the survey reflected the experiences of all employees, even those who do not spend the majority of their workday at a computer.

Overall, 301 employees responded to the survey, for a response rate of 15% of faculty, 27% of staff (excluding student employees), and 37% of administrators. This represents an overall decrease in response rate of 15 percentage points relative to the Fall 2024 administration of Campus Climate Survey. Potentially reflecting the efforts to include Facilities, the number of responses from Business and Financial Affairs (BFA) was the only university division to increase or stay stable over this period. Given that the survey responses reflect a smaller proportion of employees, there is more uncertainty about how to generalize the results back to the whole campus. Additionally, this decreased response rate may in itself be a reflection of a more negative campus climate. Individual survey responses were only visible to Matthew Zivot, the Chief Data Officer (and report author), who coded the open-ended responses for themes, and designed and maintains an internally accessible [Tableau dashboard](#) of the aggregate survey results. The analyses below exclude student employees, whose conditions of employment are very different from other employees.

## Climate Questions

### All employees care about CSUCI; staff and administrators feel overwhelmed, faculty call for a stronger vision

Mirroring results when the survey was first administered in 2022, the highest scoring question among all employees was to the prompt “I care about the future of CSUCI.” Ninety-three percent Agreed or Strongly Agree with this statement. For staff and administrators, the lowest scoring question was also the same as in 2022, with 58% of respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing that they feel overwhelmed by their current workload. These two sentiments are likely to be connected. Twenty-three percent of all open-ended responses from staff discussed the state of their workload, the resources that they have to accomplish it, and the impetus to persist in the face of limited resources. One staff member wrote:

*Feeling overwhelmed with my workload sometimes while school is in session. For a while [my department] is understaffed, we need more [staff] to cover areas as the university continues to grow. We need step with automatic gradual increase to feel appreciated as an employee although I always give my best service to CSUCI because I care about the growth of CSUCI,<sup>1</sup>*

while another staff member commented:

*I do believe that most people at CSUCI care about each other and the work they are doing to support students. I think that unfortunately they might care to the point of sacrificing themselves.*

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes are presented exactly as typed into the open-ended response, except where the report author replaced a specific reference (e.g., to a person or department) with a more general reference to preserve the anonymity of the respondent

*Without proper infrastructure to support automated processes, staff burn out trying to support students and completing their tedious administrative work on top of that,*

and an administrator wrote:

*At the moment, our staffing makes it challenging to fully meet students' needs. Given the support needed for my staff and students, I have been stepping in to support them. While I'm committed to doing that as needed, it inevitably pulls time away from the leadership, planning, and development work I expect of myself in this role. I have high standards for the impact I want to make, but the current workload often forces me into long days and reactive problem-solving, rather than the proactive, strategic work needed to reach those goals.*

Many staff and administrators want the university to succeed as an agent for good in its community and its students' lives, but are concerned that in the face of layoffs and reduced resources, this desire is pushing them to an unsustainable relationship with their work.

Driven by decreasing attitudes towards executive leadership, faculty no longer reported that feeling overwhelmed about service requirements and work helping students outside the classroom was the source of their greatest dissatisfaction, as they had in the 2022 survey. Instead, in the 2025 survey, faculty felt most negatively about executive and their colleges leaders' ability to establish goals, communicate them, and guide their departments to achieve those goals. Forty-five percent of faculty respondents Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that executive leadership "effectively communicates the goals, strategies, and policies relevant to my unit/department/division," 40% Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed that "executive leadership provides guidance and ensures follow through on major initiatives adopted by the institution," and 39% Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed that their college or school leadership, "has a clear view of where my department is going and how to get there." Open-ended responses indicate that these sentiments, too, are connected to faculty's care for CSUCI's future: 24% of faculty open-ended comments referenced workload and resources, and 22% referenced senior leadership (and often about communication of vision). One faculty member connected shared governance in goal setting to advancing the institution:

*Admin shows little interest in truly talking with faculty, and don't seem to have a sense that their ideas might actually help move us out of our current crisis. In a multitude of different ways, the message communicated is that they know what's best and they'll determine how we move forward. We're just along for the ride. That's not how we move our institution forward.*

While another faculty member wrote about the content of institutional goals and messages:

*The direction of the university communicated recently by university leadership, beyond enrolling more students and balancing the budget, is not very inspirational or emotionally engaging. Their communication is about survival not improvement of our services and teaching. Terms such as "our value proposition" sounds transactional, similar to "return on investment" and does not seem to inspire greatness and personal accomplishment. In my opinion, the university needs to focus our efforts on attracting students to our campus to channel their passion to discover a*

*career that contributes to and makes a positive difference in our Ventura and Santa Barbara County communities.*

Faculty, too, want a successful institution for the university’s students and community. They also want their leadership to engage with them to develop and deliver a clear message about how to accomplish that.

## Faculty see improvements in their college’s leadership but find their work less fulfilling

When comparing faculty responses in 2025 to their responses to the same questions in 2022, the overall picture is one of little change (see Figure 1). The areas that showed the biggest improvement are work flexibility and attitudes towards their college leadership. Regarding work flexibility, faculty reported both an increase having “support for a flexible work schedule” (84% Agree or Strongly Agree in 2025 compared with 77% in 2022) as well as an increase in “the in-person environment helps me to do my work effectively” (68% Agree or Strongly Agree in 2025 compared with 60% in 2022). Regarding responses to questions about college leadership, improvement largely took the form of fewer Disagree and Strongly Disagree answers and more Neither Agree nor Disagree answers. For instance, faculty reported an increased in their perception that their “college/school leadership (e.g., associate dean, dean) is an effective decision maker” (24% Disagree or Strongly Disagree in 2025 compared with 40% in 2022). Notably, even though this area showed marked improvement, there were only three mentions of deans in the faculty open-ended comments and two of them were to report that there has been such turnover in the position within their college that it was difficult to respond to these questions. Also, there were sharp differences in attitudes towards leadership depending on whether the faculty member was lecturer or a tenure/tenure-track professor. For instance, 21% of lecturers Agreed that “My college/school leadership...considers my opinions or ideas” (none responded Strongly Agree), whereas 50% of tenure/tenure-track professors Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this question.

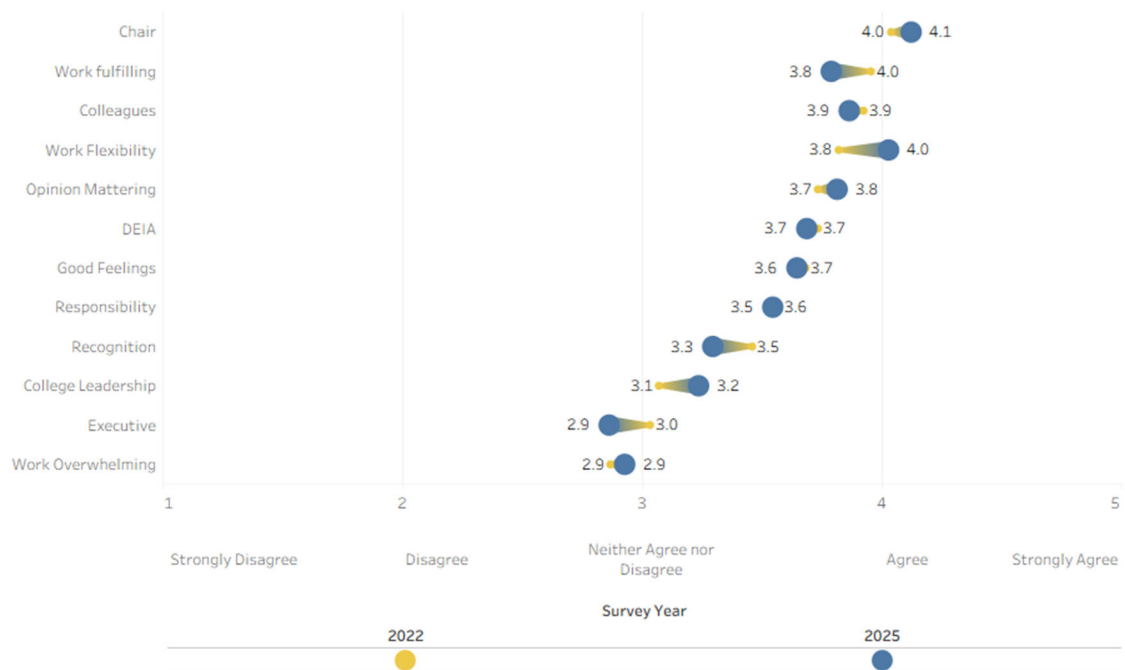


Figure 1: Change in faculty responses

The areas that faculty respondents in 2025 report a decrease relative to the same questions in 2022 regard whether they find their work fulfilling and feelings of recognition for their work. Regarding faculty who reported that their “work at CSUCI is fulfilling” in 2025, there were fewer Strongly Agree responses (29% in 2025 compared with 35% in 2022) and there were more Agree responses (47% in 2025 compared with 43% in 2022), so this change may reflect differences in strength rather than valence. Regarding recognition, the questions that showed the greatest decline regarded faculty recognition by their colleagues. In 2025, 45% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly Agree that their “colleagues recognize my accomplishments in scholarly/creative work” compared with 59% of respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement in 2022. Similarly, 55% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly Agree that their “colleagues recognize my accomplishments in teaching” compared with 66% of respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this statement in 2022. While a few open-ended responses that addressed the perceived lack of recognition for teaching and research excellence, they were largely directed at administration rather than colleagues, such as the faculty member who wrote:

*I don't feel that effective teaching is valued here at CI. There are few recognitions and no adjustments for those of us who do really stellar teaching or support of students (we don't have the time or energy to promote ourselves either).*

## **BFA staff feel overwhelmed and let down by division and executive leadership**

As mentioned in the Survey Design, Administration, and Analysis section, a concerted effort was made to provide our Facilities staff an opportunity to participate in the survey that they may not have had in previous cycles. While we cannot isolate Facilities respondents in the data, it is noteworthy that BFA is the only university division to show a level number of respondents where all other divisions decreased. Additionally, assessment of campus climate from BFA staff showed a much larger decrease across all question groups than was shown by staff in all other divisions. Because data collection differed somewhat for BFA staff, and because their responses looked so different from other staff, they will be reported separately.

Compared with responses in 2022, BFA staff respondents rated their work experience substantially worse on almost every dimension (see Figure 2). The largest decreases were in perceptions of executive leadership, positive feelings about their work at CSUCI, and finding their work overwhelming. Regarding executive leadership, 21% of BFA staff in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that, “executive leadership...takes actions to resolve emerging challenges,” compared with 51% in 2022. Similarly, 21% of BFA staff in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that “executive leadership...provides guidance and ensures follow through on major initiatives adopted by the institution,” compared with 51% in 2022. Regarding positive feelings about work, 46% of BFA staff in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they, “have a strong sense of belonging at CSUCI,” compared with 76% in 2022. Perhaps tying these themes together, 64% of BFA staff in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they “feel overwhelmed by their current workload,” compared with 33% in 2022. While many employees across the university’s divisions expressed feeling overwhelmed by their workload in light of layoffs and staff turnover, this sentiment was raised several times explicitly by BFA staff. One staff member wrote:

*Facilities took a huge hit in the recent reduction in work force efforts compared to other divisions on campus. While we have a reduction in students, we have had an increase in square footage that we are asked to maintain...This leads to the feeling of not being respected for the work we do to keep this campus operational.*

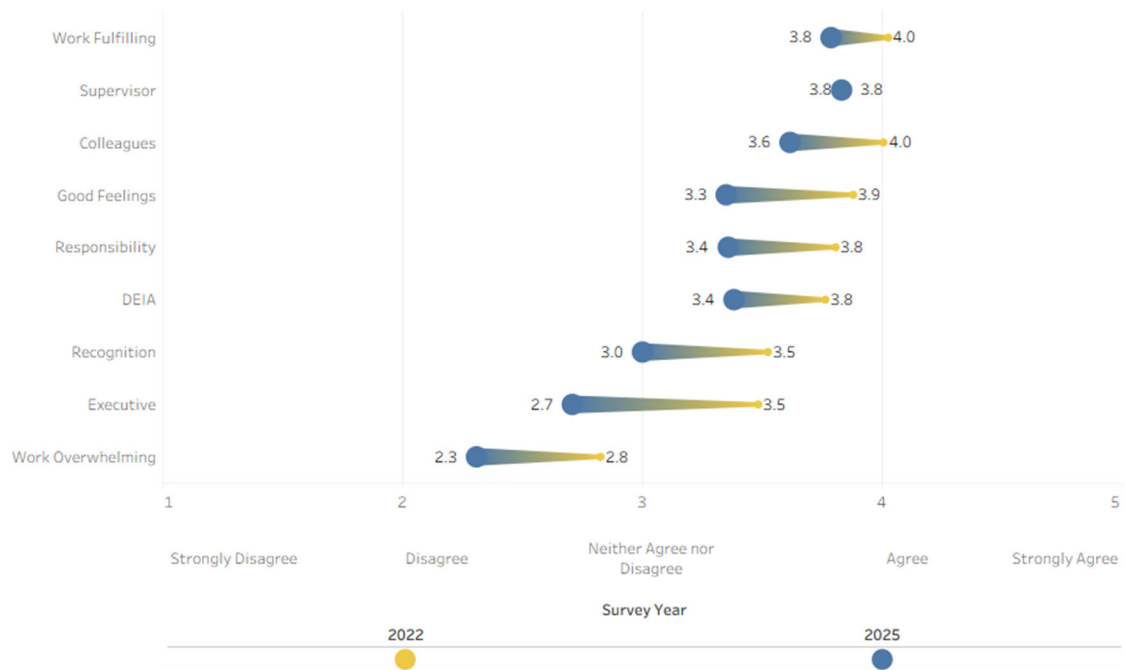


Figure 2: Changes in Business and Financial Affairs staff responses

### Staff outside of BFA are largely unchanged, but feel less positive about their supervisor and colleagues

Looking at the responses of staff in all other university divisions, there was a slight decrease in their assessment of campus environment across the board (see Figure 3), with the Strongly Agree responses in 2022 shifting to Agree or Neither Agree nor Disagree responses in 2025. The biggest decreases were in perceptions of supervisors, fellow colleagues, and control that employees had over their work. Regarding experiences with supervisors, 60% of non-BFA staff members in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their “current supervisor creates an environment that fosters trust,” compared with 67% in 2022. However, the number of people who responded Strongly Agree to this question decreased by about 13 percentage points.

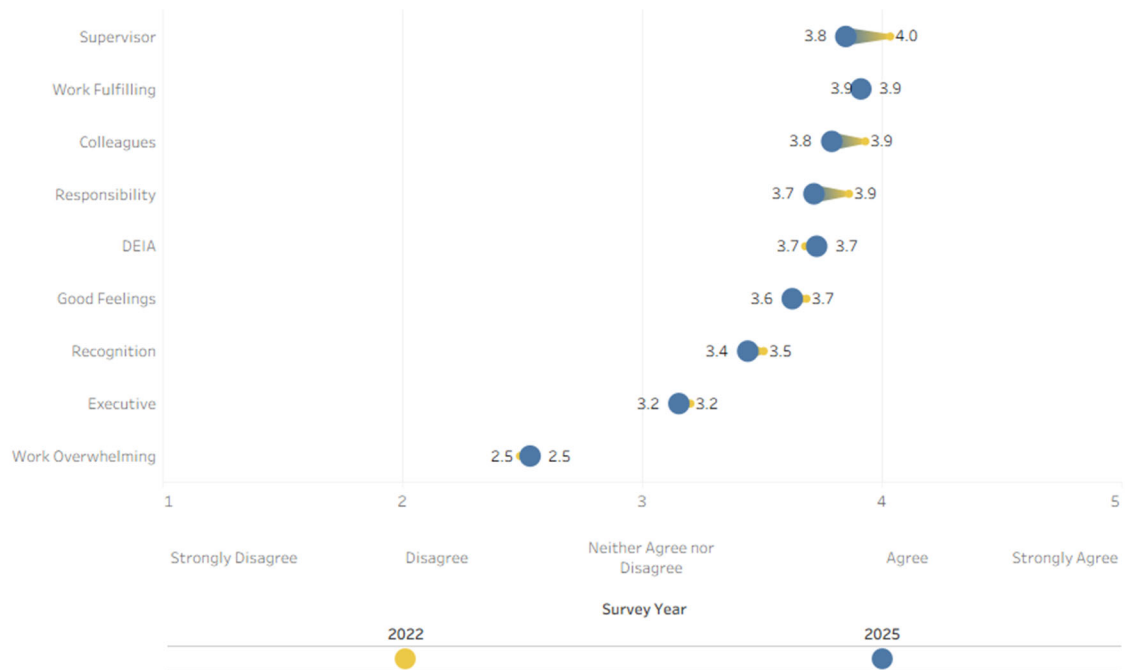


Figure 3: Changes in non-BFA staff responses

Regarding experiences with colleagues, 66% of non-BFA staff members in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that “people care about each other in my unit/department/division,” compared with 78% in 2022. Looking at the amount of control that respondents report having over their work, 65% of non-BFA staff members in 2025 Agreed or Strongly Agreed that their “unit/department gives me opportunities to express my opinions towards decisions that affect my work,” compared with 79% in 2022. This change is reflected in the open-ended comments, which had been largely positive towards immediate supervisors in 2022 but were now more mixed. While one staff member reflected on the support they receive from their supervisor, saying:

*While I do feel overwhelmed with my workload I know my unit/dept/supervisor and colleagues will help me. I just have to let it be know that I need the help, that part is what i have to work on. I do not ask for enough help sometimes,*

another staff member wrote about working in an environment without trust, saying:

*I feel pretty strongly regarding the questions asked about my supervisor and department. My feelings tend to be negative about these topics because it does not feel like a team environment and I do not feel trusted or that others can trust each other. Nothing feels team oriented in my department/area within the division which is important to me,*

while another reflected the problems of having over-stretched supervisors, saying:

*My supervisors respect me and feel that I do a good job, but they are too busy or don't think about showing it very well. I should be in a higher job classification, which has been acknowledged for a year or two, but nothing has been done about it. I'm fed up.*

This sentiment, that supervisors back-filling the work of team members takes away from their ability to supervise and lead, was directly echoed by the administrator quoted in the first Climate Questions section.

## Open-ended Responses

Overall, 120 respondents (40%) provided a response to the open-ended prompt. When asked to reflect on a question where they felt strongly about their answer, responses were notably similar regardless of whether the employee was staff, faculty, or an administrator (Figure 4). Thirty-seven percent of those who provided feedback wrote about the burden of their workload and their lack of resources. Examples of these responses are in line with quantitative findings and are provided above in the first part of the Climate Questions section. Twenty-nine percent of those who provided feedback spoke to their attitudes towards senior leadership, and 21% wrote about their experiences of collegiality on campus.

	Staff		Faculty		Admin		Other		Student Assistant		Grand Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Workload and resources	26	33%	14	34%	3	23%			1	20%	44	32%
Senior leadership	15	19%	13	32%	4	31%	1	50%	2	40%	35	25%
Collegiality	13	17%	9	22%	3	23%					25	18%
Supervisor Support	13	17%	2	5%	1	8%			2	40%	18	13%
Toxic work	11	14%	3	7%	2	15%	1	50%			17	12%

Figure 4: Top 5 topics in 2025, by campus role

A regularly occurring theme when discussing senior leadership is the critique that they are not creating the necessary spaces for difficult conversations in difficult times. One respondent wrote:

*Any time that we are critical of the campus climate, administrators take it personally and we are immediately shut down. If the executive leadership team actually cared about the employees they would take accountability for their mistakes and have regular honest conversations with us about how we can work together,*

While another respondent expressed a similar sentiment, saying:

*Communication is lacking in [my division]. Administrators are not aware of issues that employees face. No follow up or long response times to issues and then no real action taken. This brings moral down.*

Where the impact that respondents reported of their immediate colleagues had on their work experience was largely positive in earlier surveys, responses were more mixed in 2025. Reflecting on the impact of a helpful supervisor, one respondent wrote:

*I am grateful everyday for the team I am with along with my supervisor. I truly believe they make every work day better and adds value to the work we are doing. It leads better to collaboration, open discussion, and more within our space.*

While in contrast, another respondent wrote about how campus role and power hierarchies can cause conflict:

*This position many (though not all) faculty members take of feeling that they have the knowledge and expertise to question other departments' work extends beyond my area. Faculty feel entitled to ask*

*questions about how any department is run and the campus treats this as normal. I can only imagine the uproar among faculty if non-faculty administrators or staff posed similar questions about how faculty run their classes or departments.*

Comparing open-ended responses in 2025 to those given to the same questions in 2022 (Figure 5), the top two themes are effectively the same. In 2022, there were many responses about the university’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts, both praising them as moving towards a more just society and condemning them as generating a more divided society. Even though there were still the same amount of climate questions in 2025 that dealt with DEIA, very few people reflected on them in their open-ended responses. Similarly, several faculty respondents in 2022 wrote with sadness about how the university is pivoting away from its founding educational philosophy. This was not nearly as strong a concern in 2025, but it’s impossible to say whether that is due to changing sentiments, a changing faculty population, or just a decreased faculty response rate. In contrast, a greater proportion of respondents wrote about a toxic work environment that they were experiencing in 2025 than did respondents in 2022. Exemplifying this sentiment, one respondent wrote:

*I don't trust a lot of my colleagues, there have been a lot of complaints, drama, behind the scenes gossip in my department, that results in not knowing who you can trust and paranoia. It's an uncomfortable environment that affects everyone. Because once you think everything is okay, it isn't.*

	Staff		Faculty		Admin		Other		Student Assistant		Grand Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Senior Leadership + Communication	23	31%	31	34%	6	22%	5	42%			65	31%
Workload and resources	24	32%	20	22%	13	48%	1	8%	3	60%	61	29%
DEIA focus	17	23%	14	15%	5	19%	1	8%			37	18%
Educational philosophy + Respect for history	3	4%	22	24%	2	7%	1	8%			28	13%
Pride	8	11%	5	5%	1	4%	4	33%	2	40%	20	9%

Figure 5: Top 5 topics in 2022, by campus role

## Conclusions

Overall, survey respondents expressed a strong desire for CI to succeed, but also almost as strong an experience of burnout. The open-ended comments connected these two sentiments, calling for additional resources, control over their daily work, and desire for leadership with clear and inspiring vision. The expressed decrease in staff control over work is troubling, since that was a regular focus of suggestions made by Critical Learning Collectives (CLCs) in response to earlier climate surveys. While some surveyed areas have improved modestly and some have declined since 2022, there was very little change

overall, and most of that change seemed attributable to personnel rather than structural changes. For instance, no one cited a new program or policy as a driver of their campus experiences in their response to the open-ended question.

One potential interpretation of the results is that any structural gains made in campus climate since 2022 have been offset the uncertainty and negative feelings generated by cross-campus layoffs announced in June 2025, and groups on campus that bore the brunt of these layoffs (e.g., lecturer faculty and facilities staff) show greater declines in their assessment of campus climate than respondents as a whole. Additionally, the university unexpectedly changing President in the summer of 2025 may have also led to a sense of uncertainty that was still impacting the campus climate at the end of Fall 2025.

On the other hand, it seems that efforts to incorporate recommendations stemming from CLCs have slowed down, stalled, or even reversed course. To take a few examples from [a CLC recommendations progress report](#), in response to a request for “spaces in which faculty, staff, and administrators' concerns, needs, and suggestions for improved efficiencies and effectiveness can be freely discussed, evaluated, and shared with campus leaders,” the report cites the continued existence of CLCs, the President’s Operational Effectiveness Collaborative, CI Connect, and community forums. If these were genuinely useful tools to address this set of concerns, these tools have not persisted to the present. Indeed, the CLC Recommendations & Progress webpage’s timeline ends in 2024. Similarly, in response to a request to “study and identify possibilities for flexible working arrangements that have the greatest potential for equity across roles (e.g., work from home, 4-10 schedules),” the report cites the implementation of the Summer Flex program in 2024. This program, however, was not continued in 2025 even though assessment indicated that it did not negatively impact operational experience and no replacement effort has been attempted. While there have been divisional efforts to share information and build community, such as a regular Division of Academic Affairs newsletter and [semesterly kick-off events](#), or regular [DSA staff meetings](#), these efforts do not appear to be percolating up to an improved sense of climate at the university level, or offsetting campus-wide feelings of uncertainty and lack of control over work.

If the previous organizational structures were not providing meaningful spaces for employees’ needs to influence campus policy and procedure, executive leadership should communicate that explicitly and those structures should be replaced. Certainly, CLCs and POECs are not in themselves requirements for CSUCI to show care for its employees and to provide them with enough control over their work to make completing it manageable. However, there needs to be some form of explicit mechanism for employee perspectives and needs to influence university goals and processes. Lacking such mechanisms, it is likely that perceptions of campus climate and survey response rates will continue to decline.