AHC Climate Survey Focus Groups
Final Report
Waypoint Coaching and Consulting
November 28, 2018

Background: In 2017, Waypoint Coaching and Consulting suggested that AHC carry out a Climate Survey to use as a baseline prior the kick off of LEAP, a new cross-functional mentoring initiative designed by an internal team led by Waypoint. The Climate Survey helped get a reading on participants' perceptions of Engagement (do they want to be and stay at AHC) and Enablement (do they have what they need to do their best work.)

In April, 2017, Korn Ferry carried out the Climate Survey and prepared the summary findings that suggested that AHC dig deeper in certain areas of interest in order to better understand the results. Specifically, the survey highlighted such AHC strengths as 1) Commitment to high quality education, 2) High alignment with AHC's strategy and vision of student success, 3) Support for learning and development, and 4) LEAP mentoring.

Opportunities for improvement included: 1) Performance management, 2) Training, 3) Constrained resources limiting collaboration, and 4) Trust and confidence in Sr. leadership.

Deb Humphreys, Waypoint, collaborated with Paul Murphy, VP Institutional Effectiveness, to design, carry out, and interpret results of these Focus Groups.

Focus group sessions were organized by constituency group and participants were randomly selected for the groups. Dr. Murphy used Random.org (online software) to randomly select employees to be invited. Lists of active employees were used for the randomization; because some part-time faculty may not be actively employed during the time of the focus groups, a short interest survey was forwarded to all part-time faculty to assess interest in participation – nine employees responded.

After the randomized lists were generated, invitations were sent via Doodle, an online platform that allows invitees to select the day and time or to opt out. The invitation process also ensured anonymity regarding lists of invitees. The leadership of each constituency group was also invited to participate in the first session on Thursday, October 18.

Below is the final count of employees invited, those who responded to the invitation, those who responded "yes" to attend, and those that responded "no". Overall, 222 invitations were sent to the five constituency groups with a 64% response rate (36% ignored the invitation). Sixty-three (65% of respondents) indicated that they would participate, though only 70% of those who responded "Yes" actually attended a focus group.

Employee Group	# Invited	# Responded	% responded	Responded "Yes"	Responded "No"	Attended	% of Yes Attended	% of Capacity Attended
FT Faculty	80	36	45%	20	16	13	65%	43%
PT Faculty	45	9	20%	7	2	6	86%	60%
CSEA	66	30	45%	21	9	16	76%	53%
Management	17	12	71%	9	3	4	44%	40%
Confidential/Supervisor	14	9	64%	6	3	5	83%	50%
Total	222	96	64%	63	33	44	70%	49%
Leadership Group*	10					3		30%

*The leadership group invitation was extended to two members from each of the five constituencies. No RSVP was requested

Holly Costello, IE professional, assisted Paul in identifying, sorting, and inviting these randomly invited participants to the appropriate constituency's group. She also masterfully planned the logistics.

Focus Group Logistics:

Each group was held in L-215, a quiet, smaller room above the Learning Center with movable, comfortable chairs arranged in a circle. Deb facilitated each group as part of that circle while her co-workers, Charles Feltman or Carol Courcy, captured data. Three more senior VP's also participated in an informal focus group in order to contribute their input, get initial findings, and to experience the process.

Ground rules (Respect Confidentiality, Full Participation, and Give Space) were posted as were each Focus Group Question.

A total of four questions were addressed one at a time. Participants were reminded in the opening remarks, that their individual remarks were confidential and that the summary results will then go to Dr. Walthers and Paul Murphy first, and then shared with the Leadership Team. The current plan is for participants to expect to hear a results summary and proposed follow-up actions at the next All Staff Day.

Final Focus Group Questions

1) From your own experience, what are you most proud of about your affiliation with AHC?

1B) What has been the impact on you?

2) To what extent are your own professional development needs being met by AHC?

2B) What can be done to enhance that experience?

3) In what ways can Top Leadership better inform you about potential and current changes?

3B) What is the impact on you when you are not informed?

4) Recognizing Student Success as the key AHC Vision, what ideas do you have to best assure meeting that vision?

4B) (for non-faculty groups) In what ways can you personally support this?

Focus Group Process:
Each group experienced a similar process that:
Introduced the facilitator and note taker
Reinforced confidentiality
Followed a common process for each group
Identified data owner as Dr. Walthers and Paul Murphy
Included a common script that identified the purpose, ground rules, and next steps

Examples of responses to the Focus Group questions are located in the Appendix

AHC Focus Group Conclusions and Recommendations

The cross constituency Focus Group data provides an opportunity for AHC Top Leadership to confirm the college's foundation of strength and to get to the core of some underlying tension between top leadership and other constituencies. Turnover among higher level leadership and deans has led to confusion, lack of consistency in effective communications, shared governance, and allotment of funds for professional development. The unintended consequence is an emerging fear that AHC's vison and core value of Student Success may not be the top priority. Top leadership is the target of frustration and diminishing trust, especially with respect to two critical trust elements, care (having others' interests in mind) and sincerity (say what mean and mean what you say.)

The many changes and perceived lack of effective communication channels about these changes have further impacted healthy conflict management practices campus wide. There appears to be a shift away from trusting shared governance, collaborative problem solving, and robust communication processes. Because normal priorities may need to change, some make assumptions about the reasons why. These misinterpretations suggest that information is not accurately communicated and filtered down. While communication systems may be in place, they are not always practiced impacting another trust element, reliability (keep promises, commitments.)

The challenge now is to recognize the full impact of rapid change, improve communication systems, own the impact of these changes, reframe them as opportunities to slow down and reflect on what is possible, and begin to take visible steps to rebuild trust.

More constructive approaches to addressing current conflict and rebuilding trust include the opportunity to adjust leadership styles to engage rather than alienate, take a broader perspective, and recognize diverse constituency needs. It is also time to reevaluate how information about change gets disseminated to all levels and to those without desks, computer access, and time to read emails. Along these same lines, constituency groups need to accept their roles in disseminating information, addressing rumors, and helping to prioritize the flow of information to their members.

Focus Group data further provides tangible opportunities to rebuild trust in order to reengage the AHC faculty and staff community to work with, rather than against creative problem solving. Our proposed recommendations are focused on building a Culture of Trust (Trust at Work, 2018). Conditions that support a Culture of Trust include:

1) Shared purpose: clear understanding of why AHC exists

2) Transparent decision making throughout ACH constituencies

3) Empowerment to participate in decision making

4) Investment in people

5) Consistent recognition of effort and excellence

Strengths Related to the Current AHC Culture of Trust

1) Shared Purpose

Focus Group participants across constituencies clearly **care** about AHC, its mission, and commitment to student success. Many are from the surrounding community as well as having been former students. Many take personal responsibility for introducing their community to the many AHC opportunities and benefits. They demonstrate care toward the community as well as to the students. This is one area where most take initiative to make a difference and advocate for AHC.

> *Recommendations:*
> *1) Leadership can reinforce this by hosting community events on campus to demonstrate this AHC pride and deep connection*

2) Show more visible sympathy and concern when a community incident impacts students at AHC- get involvement to plan an appropriate response. For instance, when appropriate, personally connect with the student who experienced the loss.
3) Bring attention to multiple-generation AHC families. You have three generations of families on campus now
4) Provide more visibility and resources to Community Education

2) Transparent Decision Making and Empowerment to Participate in Decision Making

While shared governance is in place now, it is not being practiced in a way where some who were involved in earlier recommendations like candidate selection reviews, see their thumbprint on final decisions. Also, information and decisions are not getting filtered down. There were many references made to wanting to know the "Why" of decisions, not just the what. Changes can be better accepted when there is involvement as well as background given on why this decision was made or not made. Folks also want to have a feedback loop when they offer input.

Recommendations:
1) Don't assume that information is getting filtered down by committee members to constituency members
2) Make full involvement from all constituency members the norm
3) Start out with helping those involved in candidate selection understand "why" their recommendation was not accepted
4) Do not assume that committee members know the full process of why and how final decisions are made
5) Clarify roles and responsibilities of decision process
6) Build in the decision making process as part of on-boarding new AHC faculty and staff

3) Investment in People

Being proactive about people development and wellness can demonstrate AHC's commitment to student and employee success. This success can only happen when administrators, faculty and staff are encouraged to take advantage of ongoing current development opportunities. Keep in mind that any culture has spoken and unspoken rules. While development is expected, many believe that they cannot take advantage because they are not allowed to leave their desk. Another assumption is that if a top administrator is hired, they must already be ready for the job. Onboarding is a proactive approach to better assuring success.

Todays' work force expects to have flexibility to allow for outside needs, health and wellness. Consider more visibility for this and model it. Workers follow the behavior of their bosses.

Recommendations:
    1) Be visible about the importance of professional development
    2) Be clear and consistent bout money allotted for development
    3) Get deans onboard with consistent messages about the importance of supporting development
    4) Reinforce the importance of competency development in areas outside of field
    5) Send a message that it is expected for managers to support professional development, mentoring
    6) Make sure that all constituencies understand that LEAP is inclusive- focus on collaborative learning
    7) Consistency in Onboarding all levels is an opportunity to save time, resources, and energy. Onboarding administrators, faculty, as well as staff can demonstrate your investment in people. This is also a way to utilize your current talent in a way that acknowledges their expertise and experience.
    8) Outstanding leadership starts with robust self-awareness. Do not assume that your top leaders have had the opportunity to build this awareness. Consider leadership development coaching
    9) Recognize the opportunity for and availability of New- Leader Transition resources to accelerate the new leader and team's productivity and bond

4) Consistent Recognition of Effort and Excellence

Some Focus Group participants were eager to share their thoughts and ideas for AHC improvements. They seemed hungry for someone to listen. There are indeed ideas out there to save money, time, and to assist students and newcomers.

    Recommendations:
    1) A suggestion was offered to have a cost saving contest where good ideas offered that result in saving time or money will earn a prize or token. Employees have more ownership to changes if they feel part of the solution. Have some fun with this.
    2) Rebuilding trust can include valuing ideas and encouraging greater participation in decision making.
    3) Be more aware of the many initiatives around campus and follow progress and results. Recognize these as soon as noticed.
    4) There are many silent heroes on campus who go out of their way to help students (change a tire, get food, encourage, walk them to where they are trying to go.) Perhaps interview some students or ask for stories to make public. It is a way for those not having direct contact with students at work; understand how they do in fact contribute to student success.

Proposed First Steps

1) Thank Focus Group Participants and let them know what to expect next at All Staff Day or sooner.

2) Identify, name, and communicate the anchors (what is not changing?) What can folks trust to ground them for future change?

3) Consider top leadership group focus group to get their perspective on same questions- completed 11-28.

4) Explore a New Leader Transition Process (Waypoint Coaching) to help accelerate the new leader's acceptance and integration.

5) Build top leadership self-awareness and development support through Waypoint leadership development coaching. Effective leadership starts with building self-awareness.

6) Review and adjust the communication process effectiveness. Focus on the "WHY. "Don't assume others filter down information.

7) Address Lompoc's lack of leadership/decision makers. Folks are stuck in not having authority there.

8) Model and encourage others to engage in wellness practices on and off campus. Be creative, proactive, and visible about this to avoid burnout and pent up frustration.

9) Spread the word about the importance of the feedback loop in restoring and building trust.

10) Check for consistency in professional development resources and time allocation across departments, levels, positions.

11) Consider having weekly VP Office hours.

12) Invite and recognize campus wide improvement ideas.

13) Consider an "opt in" communication system to provide updates and news to those who want it (include part timers)

14) Use agendas at key meetings to be sure important info is shared with all rather than side conversations.

15) Find opportunities to offer thanks to staff and leadership at all levels.

16) Celebrate the steps that you have already done to increase organizational and self-awareness by having the courage to slow down, listen, and act.

17) Consider the opportunities to build on what you have begun, by strengthening trust among leadership and direct reports. See separate document outlining Waypoint's coaching and programming options.