

PACE - Personal Assessment of the College Environment

Executive Summary

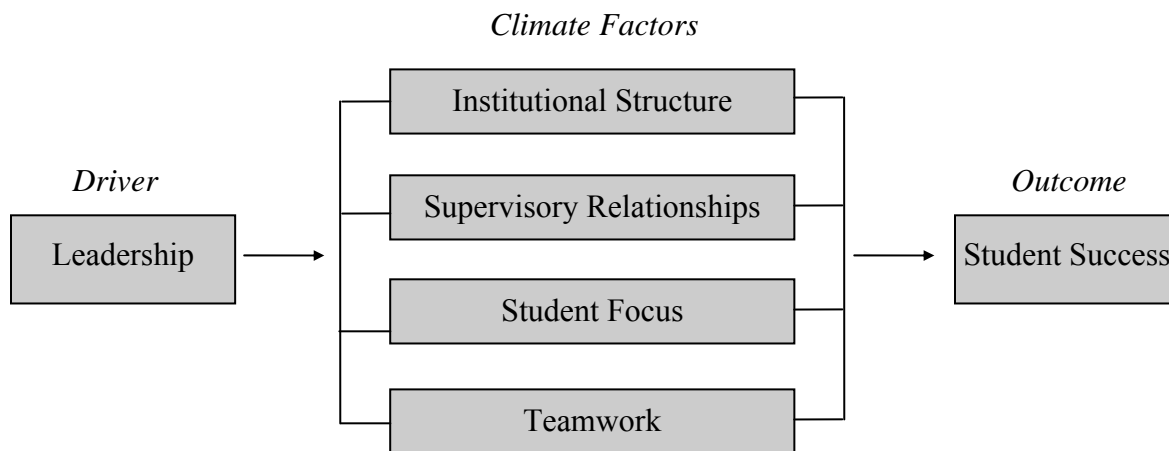
June 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2008, the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey was administered to 1,438 employees at Joliet Junior College (JJC). Of those 1,438 employees, 371 (25.8%) completed and returned the instrument for analysis. The purpose of the survey was to obtain the perceptions of personnel concerning the college climate and to provide data to assist JJC in promoting more open and constructive communication among faculty, staff, and administrators. Researchers at the National Initiative for Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness (NILIE) and representatives of JJC collaborated to administer a survey that would capture the opinions of personnel throughout the college.

In the PACE model, the leadership of an institution motivates the Institutional Structure, Supervisory Relationships, Teamwork, and Student Focus climate factors toward an outcome of student success and institutional effectiveness.

Figure 1. The PACE Model



NILIE has synthesized from the literature four leadership or organizational systems ranging from coercive to collaborative. According to Likert (1967), the Collaborative System, which he termed System 4, generally produced better results in terms of productivity, job satisfaction, communication, and overall organizational climate. The other systems were Consultative (System 3), Competitive (System 2) and Coercive (System 1). In agreement with Likert, NILIE has concluded that Collaborative (System 4) is the climate to be sought as opposed to existing naturally in the environment. Likert discovered that most of the organizations he studied functioned at the Competitive or Consultative levels. This has been NILIE's experience as well, with most college climates falling into the Consultative system across the four factors of the climate instrument.

Of the more than 120 studies completed by NILIE, few institutions have been found to achieve a fully Collaborative (System 4) environment, although scores in some categories may fall in this range for some classifications of employees. Thus, if the Collaborative System is the ideal, then this environment is the one to be sought through planning, collaboration, and organizational development.

Employees completed a 46-item PACE instrument organized into four climate factors as follows: Institutional Structure, Supervisory Relationships, Teamwork, and Student Focus. They also completed a Customized section designed specifically for Joliet Junior College. Respondents were asked to rate the four factors on a five-point Likert-type scale. The instrument was specifically designed to compare the existing climate at JJC to a range of four managerial systems found to exist in colleges and to a Norm Base of 45 community colleges across North America. The information generated from the instrument has been developed into a research report that can be used for planning and decision-making in order to improve the existing college climate.

The PACE instrument administered at JJC included 55 total items. Respondents were asked to rate items on a five-point satisfaction scale from a low of “1” to a high of “5.” Of the 55 items, none fell within the least favorable category identified as the Coercive range (rated between 1 and 2). Eighteen fell within the Competitive range (rated between 2 and 3). Thirty-six fell within the Consultative range (rated between 3 and 4), and one composite ratings fell within the Collaborative range (rated between 4 and 5).

At JJC, the overall results from the PACE instrument yield an overall 3.26 mean score within the low Consultative system. The Student Focus category received the highest mean score (3.58), whereas the Institutional Structure category received the lowest mean score (2.82). When respondents were classified according to personnel classification at JJC, the composite ratings were as follows: Administrator (3.28), Campus Police, Facilities, Food Service (3.22), Clerical (3.33), Faculty (3.35), Professional (3.11) and Support (3.15).

Overall, the following have been identified as areas of excellence at Joliet Junior College.*

- The extent to which I feel my job is relevant to this institution's mission, 4.07 (#8)
- The extent to which my supervisor expresses confidence in my work, 3.93 (#2)
- The extent to which I am given the opportunity to be creative in my work, 3.77 (#39)
- The extent to which my supervisor is open to the ideas, opinions, and beliefs of everyone, 3.75 (#9)
- The extent to which this institution prepares students for further learning, 3.72 (#37)
- The extent to which this institution prepares students for a career, 3.70 (#35)
- The extent to which students receive an excellent education at this institution, 3.67 (#31)
- The extent to which student ethnic and cultural diversity are important at this institution, 3.64 (#18)
- The extent to which faculty meet the needs of the students, 3.60 (#17)
- The extent to which students are satisfied with their educational experience at this institution, 3.58 (#42)

*Customized questions were not included in this listing.

The following have been identified as areas in need of improvement at Joliet Junior College.*

- The extent to which information is shared within this institution, 2.38 (#10)
- The extent to which open and ethical communication is practiced at this institution, 2.45 (#16)
- The extent to which decisions are made at the appropriate level at this institution, 2.53 (#4)
- The extent to which this institution is appropriately organized, 2.55 (#32)
- The extent to which a spirit of cooperation exists at this institution, 2.56 (#25)
- The extent to which I am able to appropriately influence the direction of this institution, 2.65 (#15)
- The extent to which institutional teams use problem-solving techniques, 2.65 (#11)
- The extent to which this institution has been successful in positively motivating my performance, 2.77 (#22)
- The extent to which I have the opportunity for advancement within this institution, 2.90 (#38)
- The extent to which my work is guided by clearly defined administrative processes, 2.90 (#44)

Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide comments about the most favorable aspects and the least favorable aspects of JJC. The responses provide insight and anecdotal evidence that support the survey questions.

*Customized questions were not included in this listing.