



2025 Campus Climate Listening Sessions

Report

Renton Technical College

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Introduction

Background

RCW 28B.10.147

[RCW 28B.10.147](#) requires that higher education institutions in Washington “conduct a campus climate assessment to understand the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the learning, working, and living environment on campus for students, faculty, and staff.” The assessment should be completed at least every five years, and results should be utilized to inform professional development. In addition, higher education institutions must “conduct annual listening and feedback sessions for diversity, equity, and inclusion for the entire campus community during periods between campus climate assessments.”

Campus Climate and Data Equity Committee

The Campus Climate and Data Equity Committee was created under the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DEIC) to organize efforts to fulfill the RCW requirements. The team is led by the Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Members of the committee include both faculty and staff.

Methodology

Listening sessions were conducted in both small and large groups. The small groups were organized with a focus on the following population experiences:

1. Student Experiences
2. Faculty Experiences
3. Staff Experiences

A Zoom open forum was also conducted with all members (employees and students) from RTC invited.

The small group listening sessions took place via the Zoom online platform in April and May 2025, each lasting 90 minutes. These sessions were filled with volunteers who signed up on a first-come, first-served basis, with a maximum of 15 participants per group. In contrast, the all-college open forum, held in May 2025, had no participant limit and was also conducted via Zoom and lasting 90 minutes. All sessions were facilitated by an external partner, [Be Culture](#).

Overtime-eligible employees were compensated for overtime, where applicable. Adjunct faculty received a one-time payment for their participation, while students were provided with a \$50 gift card. Participation in all sessions was voluntary. Translation services in Spanish and Vietnamese were available upon request.

Key Findings by Be Culture

Below is a summary of findings produced by Be Culture.

Be Culture has offered the following observations for reflection and consideration in decision-making related to the campus climate and to assist with effective implementation of the [Be The Place Strategic Equity Plan](#). The Listening Session process was not designed to produce statistically valid quantitative results; therefore, the observations are not intended to reflect responses or sentiments that were more frequent than others. Nor are they intended to be a comprehensive restatement of the full notes taken across all sessions.

The observations list is a result of Be Culture's assessment on the topics that have particular relevance to the campus climate and Be The Place implementation process based on comments that: a) communicate perspectives from the margins of the system that are at risk of being overlooked, b) have the potential to have an outsize effect on decisions, and/or c) reflect significant opportunities to address issues related to climate and culture at RTC.

Observations:

- Participants' awareness and cohesion about RTC's purpose and culture expectations seemed to have increased since the prior year's Listening Sessions.
- Participants expressed significant positive sentiment about the intentions and/or expectations that the college has a responsibility to live into the purpose and culture expectations articulated in the Be The Place Plan.
- Concerns persist (and in some cases have intensified) about the college's ability to follow through on its intentions as articulated in the Be the Place Plan due to the pressures from the national socio-political climate, significant financial constraints, and pockets of low trust in leadership's commitment to operationalizing the changes necessary to be successful.
- Appreciation was expressed for some of the leadership's more visible actions to reinforce the Be The Place expectations, including the response to the "Dear Colleague" Letter, Equity Symposium, and launch of the Unity Center.
- Participants — particularly students — often described RTC's campus climate more positively than their experiences at other institutions of learning or workplaces. However, some still expressed frustration that RTC is not fully living up to its own mission, vision, and stated values.

- This reflects what can be described as an “Aspiration Gap”: A disconnect between the pace and depth of change expected by the college’s leadership and the urgency or expectations of those living the day-to-day experience.
- College leaders may feel the institution is making reasonable progress toward culture development in support of its values.
- Participants, however, compare current realities not just to other institutions, but to RTC’s own articulated aspirations — expecting faster, deeper, or more visible change.
- In this gap, even well-intended efforts may be perceived as insufficient or performative if they don’t match the lived urgency of students, faculty, or staff — especially those with marginalized identities.
- Of the key words defining campus climate, “welcome,” “safe,” “respected,” “unsafe,” and “unsupported,” examples of concerns shared by participants tended toward issues of disrespect, even as other issues were also expressed.
- When participants shared positive sentiments about being supported to express their identities, concerns, and opinions, they tended to tie the support to individual supervisors, support staff, and instructors rather than expressing the belief that the college, as a whole, is supportive.
- Perceptions that faculty and staff, including those in leadership positions, are not being held accountable consistently, undermine trust in leadership and in working relationships, especially across departments and teams.
- Concerns persist related to the “family environment” at RTC resulting in favoritism, unfairness, and lack of accountability.
- Participants were readily able to name resources they accessed and seemed clear about where to find additional supportive resources if necessary.
- Suggestions/recommendations drawn from Listening Session responses.
 - Increased communication and information-sharing (often described as transparency) regarding decisions, especially related to program and/or staffing changes. Include information about why recommendations and/or suggestions are not implemented as well as how the changes relate to Be The Place expectations (i.e., programs that contribute more funding to the college and technical vs. general education.)
 - A clear process for students, faculty, and staff to express concerns and know that the concern was duly considered and that accountability resulted. This process must assure the college community that there will be no retribution and/or retaliation for dissent and/or reporting behavior inconsistent with articulated expectations.

- Expand processes for physical and psychological safety at the college that may result from people coming to the college uninvited, responses to uninvited college visitors, and inappropriate (potentially bullying) behavior of some faculty and staff.
- Clarify expectations about DEI as it relates to decisions made on campus, including budget and project prioritization.
- Continue and expand support (and promotion) for culture-building activities (including affinity groups, clubs, events, and prioritized spaces) for students to connect with one another and reinforce connection to the mission, vision, and values of the college.
- When determining space allocations on campus, prioritize the ability for faculty (including adjunct), staff, and students to gather together informally.
- Address concerns about adjunct professors feeling undervalued and treated in ways that are inconsistent with the college's expressed values.
- Clarify intentions and an activity plan for faculty and staff retention.
- Expand and clarify ways that faculty (including adjunct faculty) and staff can access professional development and resources to decrease burnout.
- Improve, standardize, and systematize onboarding processes for faculty (including adjunct) and staff.
- Address concerns that hiring processes and decisions can be unclear, and/or unfair.
- Increase the levels of maintenance and cleanliness in those places on campus where they are lacking.

Recommendations

RTC campus stakeholders hold appropriately high expectations of the institution, particularly as we implement the Be The Place Strategic Equity Plan. While there is a strong belief that RTC's values align with equity and inclusion, there remains skepticism about the college's ability to fully realize its strategic goals—the aspiration gap.

As a result of the 2025 Campus Climate Listening Sessions, two new recommendations have emerged. These were identified, discussed, and formally put forward by the Campus Climate and Data Equity Committee based on their review of the session findings:

1. Intentionally focus efforts to provide **adjunct faculty support and care**. This may include reviewing processes related to:
 - a. Adjunct faculty onboarding
 - b. Adjunct faculty training
 - c. Adjunct faculty professional development
 - d. Adjunct faculty resources
2. Promote **leadership development** amongst leaders of all levels on campus. Strong, confident, and knowledgeable leadership is essential to building a solid institutional foundation. We seek leaders who can make informed decisions, lead with clarity and integrity, and foster a culture of mutual support—both in how they lead others and how they support one another as a leadership team.

The Committee also recommends continued progress on the recommendations from the 2024 Campus Climate Listening Sessions, as outlined below:

1. Continuously audit **spaces to ensure the environment is welcoming** and comfortable for students and employees. This may entail RTC investing in:
 - a. Proper heating, cooling, and air ventilation of all classrooms, offices, and shared spaces.
 - b. Staffing to ensure clean and organized spaces.
 - c. Well-appointed furniture and culturally relevant décor.
 - d. Equipment that meets the basic needs of classroom and/or office functions.
 - e. Lighting in dark areas that promote safety and security.
 - f. Hang out spaces for students to study, relax, or collaborate with others.
 - g. Accessible spaces inside, outside, and online.
2. Facilitate **professional development for faculty** to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster a culturally responsive sense of belonging in the classroom. This may include:
 - a. Regular trainings for faculty.

- b. Accountability system to ensure best practices are occurring.
- c. Awareness of resources to help students.
- 3. Create **clear, differentiated processes for handling interpersonal conflict vs. conduct vs. complaints** at RTC that are easy-to-follow. This may entail investment in:
 - a. User-friendly systems or processes where individuals may confidentially report their concerns with information securely stored.
 - b. Training to objectively handle conflict.
 - c. Promotion and broad communication of the processes.
 - d. Tracking mechanism to ensure resolution.
- 4. Review **policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs)** with an equity lens to clarify expectations. A commitment to the following would be necessary:
 - a. A prioritization process to review critical policies to improve equity at RTC.
 - b. Training on how to review policies and SOPs with an equity lens.
 - c. Regular prompts to review policies and SOPs, particularly outdated ones.
 - d. The creation of standardized documentation of SOPs.
 - e. Communication of a clear path through the approval process.
- 5. “Relaunch” **RTC’s internal SharePoint site** as a hub for communications, documents, and information. This may include:
 - a. Training on how to navigate and use SharePoint for all employees.
 - b. Branding of the site for a cohesive, user-friendly experience.
 - c. Broad communication of the site and resources available.
- 6. Conduct **events or workshops to promote cross-collaboration and relationship-building** to break down siloes and communication barriers at work. This may include things like:
 - a. Leadership workshops
 - b. Peer-to-peer mentoring
 - c. Onboarding buddies/cohorts
 - d. Affinity groups

To accelerate progress on these recommendations, it is advised that each be assigned to a relevant shared governance body. This approach serves two key purposes:

- 1. It will distribute the work among a broader group, enabling faster implementation by leveraging existing organizational structures.
- 2. It will promote shared accountability and collective responsibility, helping to break down departmental silos and encouraging cross-functional collaboration toward common goals.

The chairs of the Committee will compose project plans for each recommendation to be executed by the assigned shared governance body.

Conclusion

Feedback reflects a clear awareness of the Be The Place Strategic Equity Plan, along with general support for its goals and expectations. However, there is a consistent call for improved execution—particularly in the pace and depth at which meaningful change is realized. This feedback suggests strong alignment between the RTC community and the college’s strategic vision, which is encouraging. At the same time, it underscores the high expectations our community holds—a shared desire to accelerate action and implement recommendations with greater urgency to ensure accountability.