DATA SCIENCE & ANALYTICS

CULTURAL WORK ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT
FORUM RESPONSE ANALYSIS
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Salt Lake Community College

Diego Pliego | Fall 2022

SUMMARY: CULTURAL WORK ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT FORUM RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Background & Methodology:

From May through June 2022, SLCC partnered with an outside consulting firm, Zilo International Group, LLC., to implement a Cultural Work Environment Assessment (CWEA). They interviewed 88 employees and published their findings on July 15, 2022. Following this assessment, faculty and staff were given a chance to review the findings from the Zilo CWEA report and were invited to attend a forum in September 2022 to share their feedback. At the forum, President Huftalin asked staff and faculty to respond to two questions:

- What are 3 to 4 takeaways you take from these data?
- What could we immediately act upon to solve?

After the forum, the Data Science & Analytics team was asked to analyze responses to the second question. We looked at the comments that were shared by employees at the CWEA forum in September to identify immediate actionable items that the college should consider moving forward.

Six actionable items were identified (listed here in descending order by frequency of mentions):

1. Increased accountability for AD, VP, and other leadership roles (76)
2. Having DEI specific training (33)
3. Providing additional support for women and people of color (19)
4. Reviewing job descriptions to match wages and workload (19)
5. Increasing collaboration across the college (18)
6. Having a better process for filing employee grievances (12)

FULL REPORT: CULTURAL WORK ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT FORUM RESPONSE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

During the 2021 Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation visit, some employees expressed dissatisfaction with the SLCC workplace environment during an open forum. In response to feedback from NWCCU, the Executive Cabinet and Faculty and Staff Leadership partnered with an outside consulting firm, Zilo International Group, LLC., to conduct the Cultural Work Environment Assessment (CWEA). Zilo met and interviewed 88 SLCC employees from multiple departments and divisions across different employee types (FT, PT, adjunct instructors, etc.) and demographics. Zilo published their findings on July 15, 2022.

Following the Zilo assessment, faculty and staff were given a chance to review the report and were invited to attend a forum in September to further discuss the findings and share feedback. At the forum, President Huftalin presented two questions to attendees:

- What are 3 to 4 takeaways you take from these data?
- What could we immediately act upon to solve?

Faculty and staff that attended the forum in person and online were able to share their thoughts and feedback using Menti, a web-based polling software used in the presentation. The open-ended responses shared by attendees were anonymous and recorded for further analysis.

After the CWEA forum, Data Science & Analytics (DSA) was asked to analyze the responses to the second question. Using thematic analysis, we looked at the open-ended responses to identify key actionable items that the college should consider moving forward.

METHODOLOGY

The comments made by attendees at the CWEA forum using the web-based polling software were collected in an Excel file, which was later shared with the DSA team for analysis. The responses were reviewed, recurring themes were identified and recorded, and a concept map was created based on these recurring themes. The concept map was used to create thematic codes that were uploaded into Dedoose, an analytic software used to thematically code qualitative data. The thematic codes closely followed the items in the concept map, but some codes were added, and others were excluded to better make sense of the data. Each comment was reviewed and assigned different codes based on what it was they were discussing. The topics were then sorted by frequency.

DATA ANALYSIS

First, a concept map was created to depict the relationship between the original Zilo findings and emergent themes from the analysis of the CWEA forum comments. Actionable items were then assigned to these salient themes, with specific recommendations from forum attendees branching from these items. Next, the themes from the concept map were used to create thematic codes in Dedoose. The thematic codes were organized into three layers:

1. Root code
2. Parent code – housed under Root code
3. Child code – housed under Parent code

Following the code creation, the responses from the CWEA Forum were uploaded into Dedoose for analysis. Each response from the CWEA forum was treated as distinct and given a unique ID within Dedoose. There were originally 308 comments, but a total of eight "test" responses were omitted from data analysis. The 300 responses were individually reviewed and given codes based on the theme that most closely represented their response. If a response exhibited multiple themes, multiple codes were attached to it based on those themes. If a response discussed topics not relevant to the CWEA forum, or if the content of the response did not make sense, then the response was not given any codes.

We then looked at code application to identify which themes were discussed most frequently based on the number of times the code surfaced in the comments. These counts of child-code frequency were then imported into Tableau and bar charts were created from these data.

RESULTS

The concept map assisted in making sense of the comments from the forum included four main sections (with number of items in each section provided):

- Original recommendations from Zilo (8)
- Overarching themes bridging Zilo recommendations and forum comments (2)
- Actionable item categories derived from forum comments (9)
- Subcategories of specific actionable items (36)

Figure 1. CWEA Forum Concept Map
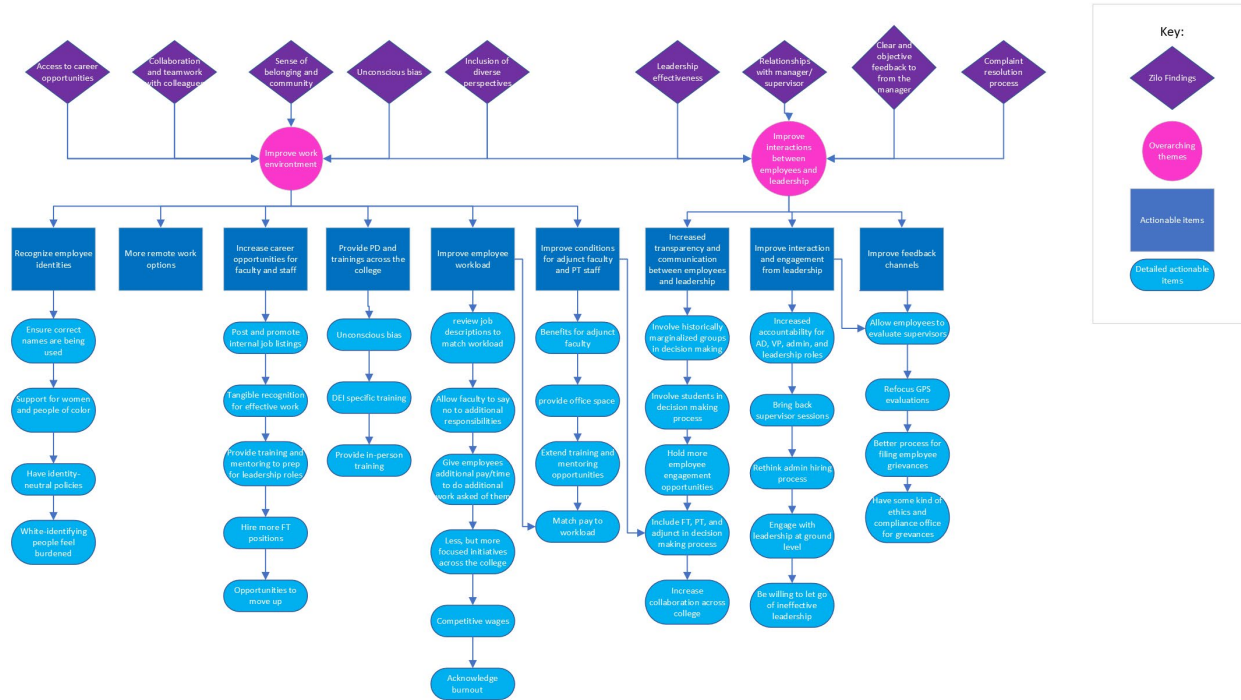
Note: The diamonds represent the original recommendations from Zilo, the circles represent the two overarching themes that bridge the Zilo recommendations and forum comments, the squares represent general actionable categories from forum comments, and the pills represent subcategories of specific actionable items.

Overarching Themes Bridging Zilo Recommendations and Forum Comments

In order to connect the recommendations from the Zilo report to the CWEA forum, we grouped the Zilo findings into two distinctive root categories. These two categories were also reflected in the feedback from the forum, which indicates a correlation with the Zilo results:

1. Improve work environment (IWE)
2. Improve interactions between employees and leadership (IIBEL)

These two categories were used as the main root-code for all the thematic codes that were used in this analysis. Figure 2 shows the total number of specific action items mentioned by parent-code which were calculated by counting the application of the child-codes under these two main categories and are displayed in descending order.

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Figure 2. Parent-Code by Total Number of Specific Action Item Child-Codes
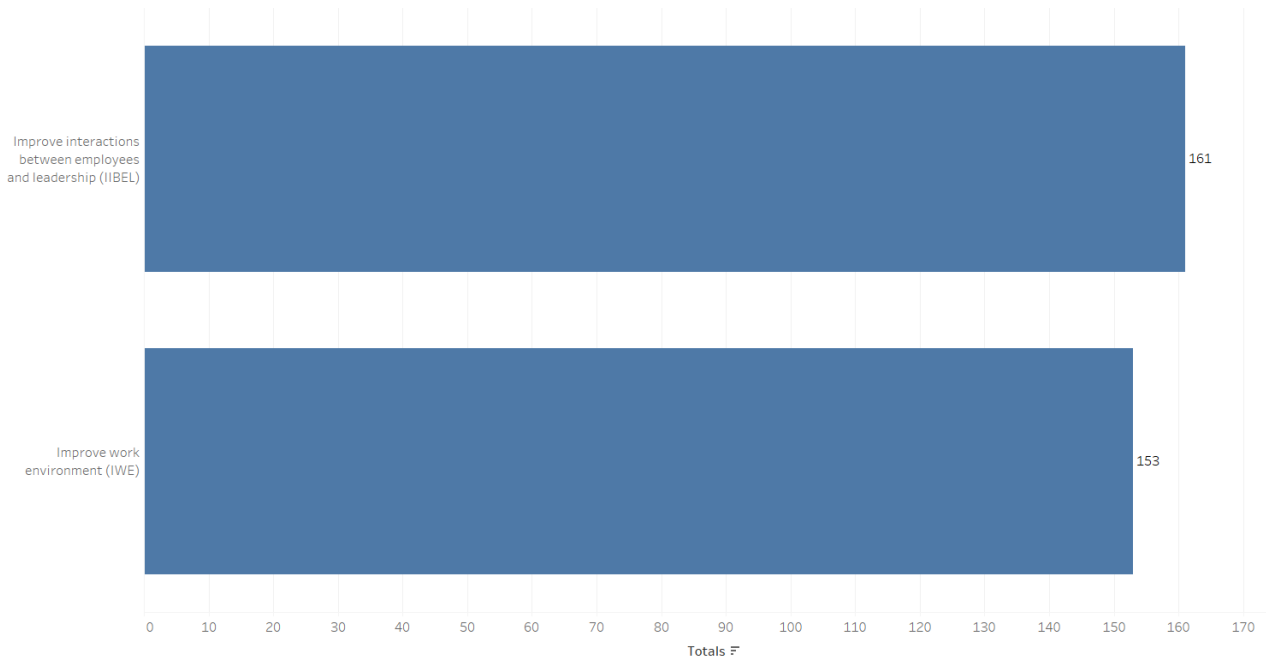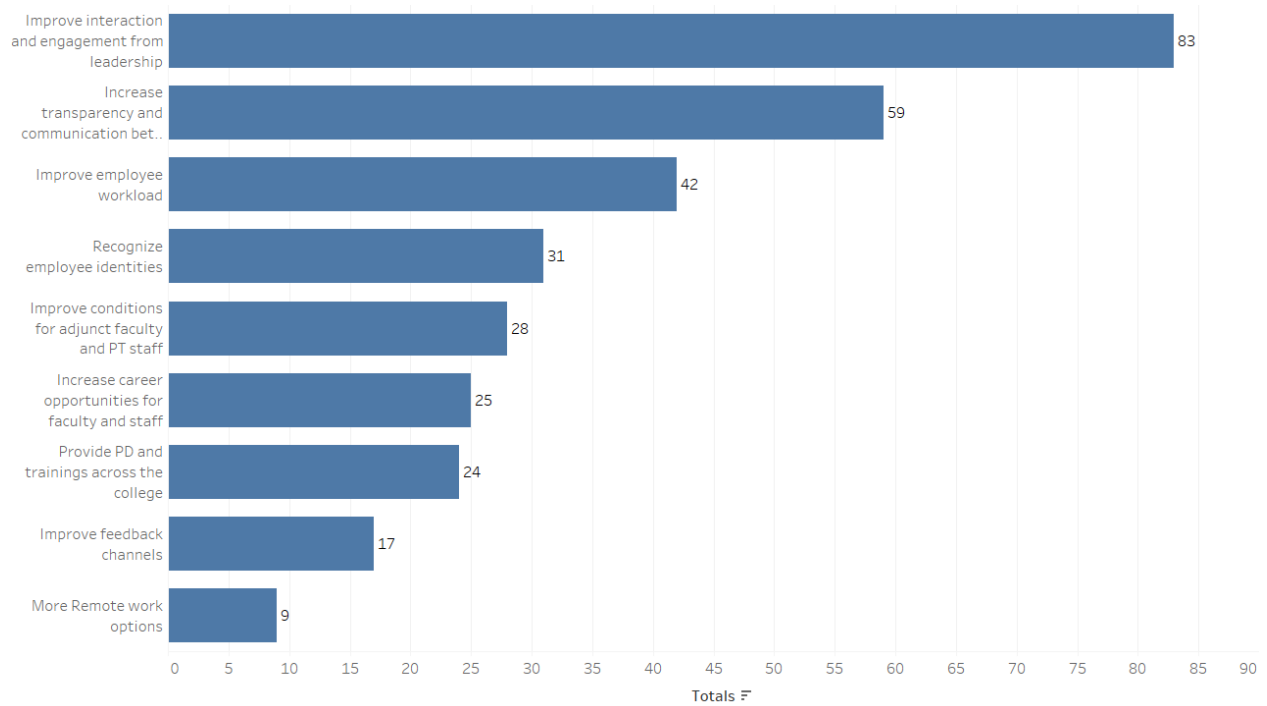

General Actionable Categories

Next, we analyzed the responses for more specific themes. Nine general actionable categories were created with the parent code they are nested within provided:

1. Recognize employee identities (IWE)
2. Provide more remote work options (IWE)
3. Increase career opportunities for faculty and staff (IWE)
4. Provide PD and trainings across the college (IWE)
5. Improve employee workload (IWE)
6. Improve conditions for adjunct faculty (IWE)
7. Improve transparency and communication between employees and leadership (IIBEL)
8. Improve interaction and engagement from leadership (IIBEL)
9. Improve feedback channels (IIBEL)

Figure 3 shows the total counts for each of the different general actionable categories based on how frequently their corresponding child-codes surfaced in the analysis of the forum comments.

Figure 3. General Actionable Categories by Total Number of Specific Action Item Child-Codes


Specific Action Items

Finally, we created child-codes, or subcategories, within those general action categories. Overall, a large number of specific action items were suggested by forum attendees. However, there were six items that stood out among the responses:

1. Increased accountability for AD, VP, Administration, and other leadership roles (IIBEL)
2. Review job descriptions to match wages and workload (IWE)
3. Pushback to DEI initiatives (IWE)
4. Provide DEI specific training (IWE)
5. Have a better process for filing employee grievances (IIBEL)
6. Increase collaboration across the college (IIBEL)

Figure 4 presents the child-codes in descending order based on the number of times that those specific codes were mentioned in the CWEA forum responses.

The following section provides more insight into the child-codes. Some child-codes were given more attention based on the prevalence of total responses the corresponding specific action item received.

Figure 4. The six specific actionable items in order of most frequently mentioned.
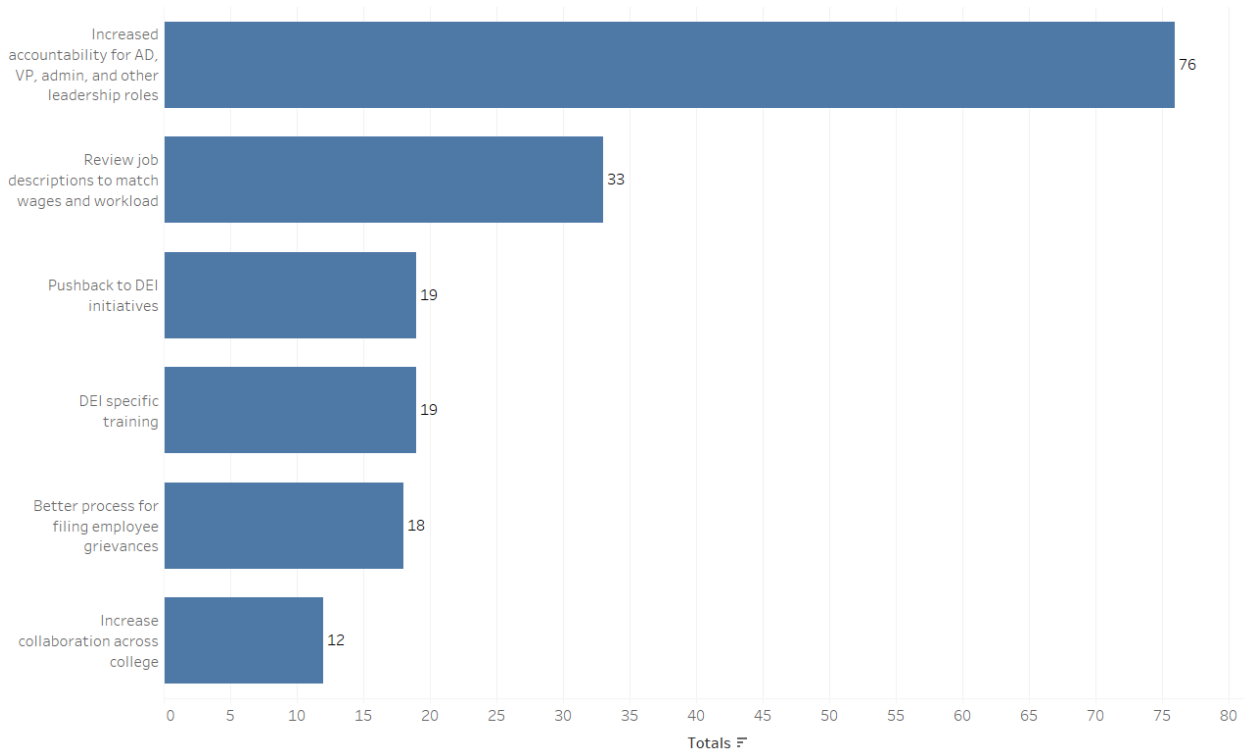
"Increased Accountability for Leadership Roles"

Increased accountability among leadership roles was the single most mentioned topic in this analysis, and as such, it received more attention than the other actionable items. There was plenty of variation within this child-code playing on the theme of what "increased accountability" looked like among the forum participants. Many of the responses centered around how leadership is evaluated across the college. There were several that felt that the evaluation process should include ways for employees to provide their input in a safe environment.

- *"Directors and leadership need to **have a yearly evaluation from staff that is protected** to be able to support staff from bad leadership, and a way to support directors/leaders to learn and grow."*
- *"**Hold administration to the same evaluation standards as faculty!!!** I'd much rather have my AD spend time with me to really know what I do rather than asking me to complete unnecessary busywork."*
- *"**Enact evaluations for administrators that include feedback from their employees**, with this feedback being anonymous such as the student feedback of faculty."*

Not only was there a desire for employee involvement in the evaluation process, the idea that leadership could interact with and learn from those who work below them came up often.

- *"Recognize that leadership has much to learn from those on the front lines."*
- *"**Have administrators spend more time on the ground floor.** Really understand what is happening in our offices rather than what is just reported up to them."*
- *"**Administrators and leadership should connect more with their staff/faculty** instead of dismissing them. Take more time to individually connect with those under you!"*

Several responses called for having a better understanding of leadership roles and responsibilities across the college.

- *"Create an administrator handbook so everyone knows what they do."*
- *"Clearly defined college-wide stratification that defines leadership and administration levels in a concrete manner."*
- *"**Have job descriptions for senior leadership so we know what they do.**"*

There were several responses that called for letting go of ineffective leadership and leadership models across the college.

- *"Don't ignore this survey and **DO SOME HOUSE CLEANING**. Senior leadership is failing us (And yes, I am aware who senior leadership is)."*
- *"**Get rid of bad leaders**. Sometimes it seems like they just get moved around instead."*
- *"Look for ways to decentralize traditional hierarchical administrative structures."*

"Review job descriptions to match wages and workload."

The notion of reviewing job descriptions and ensuring that pay matched expectations was the second most common item brought up in the responses. Several responses asked to either reduce the workload or offer competitive wages for employees across the college

- *"**Reduce staff hours/workload**. Seriously. Case managers all have 400+ students [even] though best practices are accepted to be 300-350 MAX, preferably LESS."*
- *"[Provide] equitable pay. Some do service for no extra pay while others take extra classes for pay."*
- *"Review work loads and job descriptions for clarity."*
- *"**Reevaluate pay for employees** (expectations vs pay – it doesn't work)"*

While this item focused on employees across the college, there were several comments specifically aimed at improving the workload and wages of adjunct faculty and part-time staff.

- *"**Pay adjuncts more**! Give them more training."*
- *"Give PT employees the same benefits as FT, even if it can't be insurance, but opportunities to participate in all trainings, programs, raises, etc…"*

Additionally, several comments called for giving employees the time, compensation, and resources necessary to accomplish the additional responsibilities they are given.

- *"**Allow faculty to have more reassigned time** to work on important initiatives and inclusivity efforts. Avoid requiring faculty to take on heavy workloads to do DEI work."*
- *"Revise the reassigned time policy so faculty can do the work we are needed to do- don't be so limited with it."*

"Pushback to DEI initiatives."

While there were plenty of responses seeking additional support for women and people of color, there were several responses from employees that felt their needs were overlooked in favor of diversity, equity, and inclusion, or, they felt burdened by DEI initiatives. There were many responses seeking to get rid of identity affirming practices in favor of identity-neutral practices.

- *"I feel like **I am more discriminated against as a white person now**, with fewer opportunities than ever, fewer scholarships, fewer promotions, [and]less pay."*
- *"Take POC out of the equation. Hire based on qualifications, not color or gender."*
- *"**Make me feel like I belong.** I am quiet in meetings sometimes when I have opinions that vary from what is tossed around as inclusion. As a male employee and a religious person, I feel I cannot speak against what is being pushed on me."*
- *"Don't assume all white people are prejudiced! I feel like the topic is being shoved down my throat until I am about ready to gag on the whole conversation."*
- *"I hear fellow colleagues (white) are burned out on this subject. I don't know what to do, but make mandatory professional development courses."*

Despite the pushback to DEI initiatives, it is important to highlight that there were several responses specifically asking for more support for women and people of color. Suggestions ranged from pay increases to shifting hiring practices to ensure marginalized and underrepresented people had more opportunities at SLCC.

- *"Change hiring practices **to be more inclusive of diverse experiences**."*
- *"Search advocacy in hiring is not enough. Many institutions add quantified percentages or points for candidates having overcome barriers of their diverse identities. If they meet the criteria, their identities matter MORE to SLCC than publications."*
- *"Give all women and POC a raise, bonus, or stipend that white men don't get to partially close wage gaps, and thank [them] for [their] resilience."*

"Have DEI specific training."

Having professional development and trainings focused on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion was the next most frequently discussed actionable item. Responses suggested offering these trainings and professional development at employee, departmental,

and college-wide levels. It is important to note that several responses brought up the need to address unconscious bias in professional development and trainings.

- *"Roll out **unconscious bias training** at the departmental level."*
- *"Ask departments to assess practices for equity, inclusion, and manageable/sustainable workload."*
- *"Mandatory JEDI training"*
- ***"Require training on inclusion, diversity, and bias**."*
- *"Offer collegewide required diversity and equity training series."*

"Better process for filing employee grievances."

Many responses brought up how the process of filing employee grievances needs to be reworked. These responses included improving employee protections and ensuring anonymity, having a dedicated ethics and compliance office to handle the grievances, and having follow up and accountability throughout the process.

- *"Act on individual faculty concerns regarding their ADs rather than requiring action wait until all faculty in that department file complaints."*
- *"To **simplify the reporting process**, we should implement a centralized employee reporting process."*
- ***"Many institutions are utilizing their Ethics and Compliance Hotline** as a 'Helpline' – a one-stop support and reporting resource that helps direct individuals to appropriate resources, and to keep administration and leadership informed of concerns."*

"Increase collaboration across college."

As part of improving the experience for employees, several comments mentioned the need to increase collaboration among employees, departments, and with leadership across the college.

- *"Develop better collaborative shared governance processes for making decisions within departments and programs. Reduce the power of individual supervisors while increasing their accountability."*
- *"[We need] **cross-division collaboration** – learning about & from one another."*
- ***"Support collaboration**; stop saying we can't because of some technology."*
- *"Creating opportunities for people from different departments to interact."*

CONCLUSION

Both the Zilo CWEA assessment and the CWEA forum gave college employees an opportunity to reflect on potential actions it could take to immediately address issues found across the college. This report aimed to organize the responses from the CWEA forum to

present the most salient and specific actionable items. The findings from this report identified items that can be addressed to improve the work environment and improve the interactions between employees and leadership across the college.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the responses gathered at the CWEA Forum, the actionable items that SLCC should focus on, in order, include:

- Increase accountability of leadership across the college
    - Involve employees in the evaluation process of leadership
    - Have leadership engage with employees at all levels
    - Clearly define roles and responsibilities of leadership positions
    - Let go of ineffective leaders and leadership models
- Review Job descriptions to match wages and workload
    - Competitive wages
    - Allow enough time to accomplish additional responsibilities
    - Adjunct faculty and PT staff challenges should be addressed
- Address pushback to DEI initiatives
    - White employees expressed feelings of disenfranchisement and discomfort
    - Provide additional support to women and people of color
- Provide DEI specific trainings
    - Address unconscious bias
    - Offer more JEDI trainings at employee, departmental, and collegewide levels
- Increase collaboration across the college
    - Create more opportunities for collaboration between departments and teams
- Improve the process for filing employee grievances
    - Simplify and centralize the grievance process, possibly through an Ethics and Compliance department