In December 2008, the Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) survey was administered to 496 employees at Las Positas College (LPC). Of those 496 employees, 153 (30.8%) returned the instrument for analysis. LPC responses were compared to a Norm Base of 65 other climate studies. The entire 55-page report is available for download from the Institutional Research and Planning web-site. The first Research Brief, “Overall Ratings and Comparison to Norm Base” showed the overall results indicate a healthy campus climate and that LPC ratings were higher than the Norm Base. The second Research Brief in the series showed that while groups differ by classification there is general agreement as to the relative strength of each factor with the notable expectation of the Customized Factor. Administrative employees consistently have the highest ratings and Full-time Faculty consistently have the lowest ratings. Future areas of focus for the College should be issues related to Institutional Structure as well as the Customized Factor. The third Brief in the series showed that there is much overlap among groups in terms of top areas of priority (survey items that received low means). By a large margin the highest area of priority for Classified, Full-time and to a lesser extent Part-time Faculty is not having enough time to fulfill shared governance or non-instructional obligations. The fourth Research Brief showed that staff employed for greater number of years have lower satisfaction ratings on all factors and confirmed Student Focus Factor to be the highest rated and Institutional Structure as the lowest.

Summary Points

- The majority of people think information dissemination and discussion/question/answer sessions are better uses of Town Meeting time than the promotion of events or small break-out discussions/dialogues.
- The majority of people think the Town Meeting should stay as is (1st Town Meeting/2nd hour free time to attend other meetings/accomplish other tasks).
- Half of respondents felt the 1 hour Town Meeting was enough time to accomplish the agenda
- When asked about the 2nd hour of Town meeting 31% thought is was enough time to accomplish tasks.
- The large number of respondents who either had no opinion either way about Town Meeting is a surprising finding which might warrant further inquiry.
- It is possible that the negative comments often heard about Town Meetings are not universally held but rather the opinions of a vocal minority.

PACE Model, Survey Instrument

The PACE model is divided into four climate factors: Institutional Structure, Supervisory Relationships, Teamwork, and Student Focus and evaluated across 4 levels: Coercive (least desirable/lowest function), Competitive, Consultative, Collaborative (most desirable/highest function). Additionally, 8 customized questions regarding campus climate were added to create a Custom Factor. We also added 7 questions to evaluate the Town Meeting. Respondents were asked to rate the various climate factors through their specific statements on a five-point scale from a low of “1” to a high of “5.”

Effective Use of Town Meeting Time

Figure 1 shows staff ratings of the effectiveness of four common Town Meeting uses. Nearly half of respondents felt the Town Meeting is most effective when used for: Information Distribution (Program Review, Accreditation, Faculties, Mission Statement, President’s two year agenda, RAW website demonstration), and Campus Discussion, Question and Answer Sessions (Mission Statement, Facilities, SLO, GE Philosophy, Core Competencies, Retention Strategies) with 48% and 49% Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with the statement: “Town Meeting is most effective when used for…”

Small group break out discussions/dialogue and Promotion of Events have the lowest ratings with 27% and 31 % agreeing with the statement. Thirty-two percent Disagree/Strongly Disagree that Promotion of Events is an effective use of Town Meeting time compared to 24% Disagreeing/Strongly Disagreeing that small group break out sessions were an effective use of Town Meeting time. While roughly equal numbers of people agree with those uses of the Town Meeting time, more people disagree with using Town Meeting for promotion of events.
A somewhat suspiring finding is that 29-42% of respondents Neither Agreed nor Disagree and another 8-10% did not respond to the questions. Given the negative impression of Town Meeting based on the anecdotal evidence, the fact that there may be a certain amount of apathy regarding the content of Town Meetings is unexpected and might deserve further inquiry.

**Figure 1: The Town Meeting is most effective when used for:**

- Information Distribution: 48% Strongly Agree/Agree, 29% Neither Agree nor Disagree, 14% Strongly Disagree/Disagree, 8% N/A did not Respond
- Promotion of Events: 32% Strongly Agree/Agree, 29% Neither Agree nor Disagree, 14% Strongly Disagree/Disagree, 7% N/A did not Respond
- Campus discussion, question and answer sessions: 49% Strongly Agree/Agree, 27% Neither Agree nor Disagree, 14% Strongly Disagree/Disagree, 8% N/A did not Respond
- Small group break out discussions/dialogue: 24% Strongly Agree/Agree, 42% Neither Agree nor Disagree, 29% Strongly Disagree/Disagree, 8% N/A did not Respond

**Town Meeting Format:**

Figure 2 shows the responses to the Town Meeting format question. The majority of respondents feel Town Meeting should stay as is (1st hour town meeting/2nd hour free time to attend other meetings or accomplish other tasks). Twelve percent think it should go back to 2 hours and 18% feel that is should not be held at all.

**Figure 2: The Town Meeting Should:**

- Not be held at all: 18%
- Go back to 2 hours with break out option: 12%
- Did not respond: 7%
- Stay as is: 63%

**Figure 3: The 1-hour Town Meeting is enough time to effectively accomplish the agenda.**

- Strongly Disagree/Disagree: 16%
- Did not Respond/Not Applicable: 6%
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 28%
- Strongly Agree/Agree: 50%

Figure 3 shows the responses to the question evaluating the efficacy of the 1-hour Town Meeting. Half of the respondents Agree/Strongly Agree that the 1-hour Town Meeting is enough time to effectively accomplish the agenda while 16% Disagree/Strongly Disagree. Another 28% Neither Agree nor Disagree. The fact that half of respondents feel the 1-hour format is enough time is in conflict with the fact that the 1-hour Town Meeting usually runs over 1 hour.
Figure 3 shows the responses to the statement: The 2nd hour of Town Meeting is enough time to accomplish other tasks/meetings. Thirty-one percent of respondents Strongly Agree/Agreed while 17% Strongly Disagreed/Disagreed. While respondents feel that the 2nd hour of Town Meeting is enough time it does not explain the fact that the 2nd hour of Town Meeting is usually cut short due to the 1st hour running overtime. Perhaps the shortened time is still sufficient time. Another explanation is that respondents go beyond 4:30 to meet or accomplish other tasks. Forty-one percent of respondents Neither Agree nor Disagree while another 11% chose the options Did not Respond/Not Applicable. Over ½ of respondents either have no opinion or experience with the 2nd hour of Town Meeting. This could be because many people do not participate in the 2nd hour of Town meeting.

Conclusions
The majority of people think information dissemination and discussion/question/answer sessions are better uses of Town Meeting time than the promotion of events or small break-out discussions/dialogues. This does not mean that the Town Meeting should never be used for those purposes. It simply means that most people prefer to use Town Meeting time for information dissemination and question/answer sessions. The number of people who neither agreed nor disagreed with the use of Town Meeting time is surprising and is a potential area of further investigation. It is possible that the negative comments often heard about Town Meetings are not universally held but rather the opinions of a vocal minority.

The majority of people think the Town Meeting should stay as is (1st Town Meeting/2nd hour free time to attend other meetings/accomplish other tasks). Twelve percent think is should move back to 2 hours and 18% think it should be eliminated.

Half of respondents felt the 1 hour Town Meeting was enough time to accomplish the agenda however, this conflicts with the fact that the 1-hour Town Meeting usually extend beyond the allotted 1-hour time.

When asked about the 2nd hour of Town meeting 31% thought is was enough time and 17% felt is was not enough time. Interestingly, 41% Neither Agree nor Disagreed while another 11% did not respond/NA.

The large number of respondents who had no opinion either way about Town Meeting is a surprising finding which might warrant further inquiry.