



# **Institutional Effectiveness Report to the Planning, Accreditation, and Student Success (PASS) Committee**

## **Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan**

**February 2025**

# 2025 INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (I.E.) REPORTS TO THE PASS COMMITTEE

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The 2025 series of Institutional Effectiveness Reports to the Planning, Accreditation, and Student Success Committee highlights districtwide initiatives aligned with the district's four main strategic goals and supports a culture of data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement. The tentative schedule for 2025 quarterly reports is outlined below:

**1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, February 2025 (Strategic Goal #1: Culture): Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, May 2025 (Strategic Goal #2: Student Access): Districtwide Dual Enrollment System**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, August 2025 (Strategic Goal #4: Economic and Workforce Development): Building an Economic and Workforce Development Ecosystem**

**4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, November 2025 (Strategic Goal #3: Closing Equity Gaps): Equity Efforts Across the District**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The first 2025 Institutional Effectiveness report to the PASS Committee aligns with the District's Strategic Goal #1: *Instill a culture that values diversity, students, our communities, collaboration, and the success of each employee*, and presents a detailed overview of VCCCD's Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan. This plan is grounded in organizational development and culture research and data collected to inform training and support the needs of leaders, staff, and faculty across the district.

The four main components of the Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan are shown below:

## **Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan:**



This professional development and training plan is designed to support organizational development and culture at the Community Colleges of Ventura County, and to make significant strides in efficiency, performance, overall health, and positive work environment. Results from early implementation of the Leadership Essentials Training Series Pilot showed positive outcomes such as increases in morale and motivation, team cohesiveness, and managers who were better prepared to conduct performance evaluations. Additionally, a Districtwide Training and Organizational Development Guide is slated to be released in the Spring of 2025 with a curated list of self-guided and instructor-led trainings available to all employees.

# INTRODUCTION

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The 2025 series of quarterly Institutional Effectiveness reports to the Planning, Accreditation, and Student Success Committee presents selected initiatives across the district aligned with strategic goals. The overall goal of the I.E. reports to the PASS Committee is to present data and initiatives across the district to develop and strengthen a data-informed culture for decision-making and continuous improvement. As outlined in Phillips and Horowitz's (2019<sup>1</sup>) *Creating a Data-Informed Culture in Community Colleges*, the continuous improvement cycle has four stages: assessment, planning, implementation, and progress monitoring. The previous series of I.E. reports to the PASS Committee from the 2023-2024 academic year (and available through the [VCCCD Institutional Effectiveness website](#)) highlighted data aligned with the four main districtwide strategic goals, and represented the "assessment" stage of this cycle. The 2025 series of reports represent the "planning toward implementation" stages of continuous improvement and present planned initiatives building from the data and assessment.

The first 2025 report to the PASS Committee aligns with the District's Strategic Goal #1: *Instill a culture that values diversity, students, our communities, collaboration, and the success of each employee*, and presents a detailed overview of VCCCD's Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan. This plan is grounded in organizational development and culture research and data collected to inform training and support the needs of leaders, staff, and faculty across the district. The planned Human Resources initiatives outlined in this report include new employee onboarding; leadership development; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and general professional development and compliance training.

# BACKGROUND

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Organizational development focuses on improving an organization's capabilities by connecting people, strategies, processes, and systems to cultivate a work culture that attracts, develops, and supports its employees at all levels and in all phases of the employee lifecycle. At VCCCD, this means making meaningful improvements, including but not limited to, trainings which help to promote excellence in the delivery of the

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips, B.C. & Horowitz, J.E. (2019). *Creating a data-informed culture in community colleges*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

VCCCD mission, values, and strategic goals which support the holistic success of students and the evolving needs of our community.

While making meaningful improvements like these has always been a part of VCCCD's goals, in 2024, the VCCCD Human Resources team established the new position of Director of Training & Organizational Development. This position was designed to foster a positive and productive work environment and to ensure that the District's workforce is equipped with the skills and capabilities needed to thrive and to serve students and the surrounding community. In the initial year of this role, the Director worked to understand needs and gaps throughout the District and began to design, implement, and oversee various initiatives that will enhance the efficiency, performance, and overall health of VCCCD. The Director also started an examination of the strengths, opportunities, and aspirations of the District and its leaders.

To make significant advancements in efficiency, performance, overall health, and positive work culture within the District, a systems approach is required to measure progress made within the system. A myriad of factors influence the capabilities and practices of employees and leaders, as well as the organizational cultural norms at each College and at the District Administrative Center, and within departments, divisions, and teams. Norms in practices within a particular team, including those of the team leader, greatly affect the efficiency, performance, and health of that team, and are likely to have broader implications for teams with which that group interacts, as well as for the entire organization. A thorough assessment of these factors is necessary to attain a full picture of organizational needs and to develop an effective plan for enhancement and growth.

## Organizational Development Culture Change

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Leadership expert and former professor at MIT Sloan School of Management, Edgar Schein, described culture as having three distinct layers: one layer that is visible to others and includes behaviors, norms, practices, documents and other artifacts, which is the surface level; another that includes values, beliefs, philosophies, unwritten norms and rules that inform what happens on the surface level; and, at the deepest level, unconscious or taken-for-granted beliefs and values that drive and influence thinking, feelings, and actions (Schein, 2010<sup>2</sup>). He described the second two layers as less visible in nature and not always congruent with the behaviors and other artifacts observed. In some cases, this may mean that an organization may espouse one thing which may be evident in policies or values statements, but its practices and priorities may not be

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<sup>2</sup> Schein, E. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

aligned with what is stated. This may also mean that while employees may display certain behaviors, for example in the presence of people in certain positions of authority, if their underlying values and beliefs are not truly aligned with those behaviors, they may display contradictory behaviors in other work settings or even try to undermine a cultural change effort.

Naturally, the personal values and beliefs held by leaders in an organization may also determine whether the specific practices the organization wishes to see implemented are ultimately carried out. When an individual manager, for example, does not personally believe that an espoused organizational value or behavior is important, this can result in a misalignment between their work practices and the institutional philosophy. They may not personally exhibit this value or behavior nor ask their team members to do so. To compound this misalignment, if those who wish to advance cultural change efforts do not realize the practices either, they wish to see change haven't changed or, worse, if they are aware but fail to intervene, there is a strong risk of the misaligned behaviors continuing. Then, other managers see there is no accountability for changing behaviors and don't see the need for their team's behaviors to change, thereby sustaining subcultures that are not in alignment with the organization's ideologies.

Thus, at the root of any endeavor to enhance the efficiency, performance, positive work culture, and overall health of an organization lies *values and beliefs*—and ensuring congruence between those of the institution and those of the leaders and employees who work within it. Clarifying (and updating, as needed) and then expansively communicating organizational values and beliefs, as well as mission and vision statements aligned with these values and beliefs, begins to reset the standards for model behavior through the lens of the institution, for how employees and students interact and give and receive support, how leaders work with their teams, and how work priorities should be built. An updated strategic plan—and campus strategic plans crafted to advance the goals of the District's plan, along with unique priorities at each location—further convey and integrate the critical essence of the institution's values, beliefs, mission and vision, and outline the specific strategies the organization will implement to demonstrate its firm commitment to them.

## Districtwide 2035 Strategic Planning Initiative

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Senior leaders aspiring to achieve cultural transformation recognize that strategic planning is a critical component of organizational development, as it sets the overall direction and goals of the organization and provides a framework for implementing changes and improvements within an organization to achieve its desired future state. It also involves defining the mission, vision, and values which then guide the development of specific goals and strategies. Because a revisit of districtwide values and beliefs has

not been orchestrated since the last district strategic planning process prior to the launch of the 2021 strategic plan, and because there has been significant turnover in District leadership, including the role of the Chancellor and several Vice Chancellors, College Presidents, and Vice Presidents, there is opportunity to engage in the process of creating a new strategic plan. This process provides valuable insights into current and future priorities and ultimately helps to ensure alignment between the District's values, aspirations, and goals and the practices of those meant to carry out its values and its major strategies.

Spearheaded by the Chancellor's Office and facilitated by external consultants, our District's new 2035 districtwide strategic planning initiative kicked off in September 2024 with a Planning Commission of college and district representatives, including the District's Director of Training & Organizational Development, participating in their first meeting in late October. The first several months of integrated planning have been focused on reexamining the District's values, vision, and mission statements to explore and clarify shared values and intentions around our support of students, employees, and the Ventura County community. Listening sessions with various groups of stakeholders have begun and will extend through Spring 2025 to harness more critical insights to include in the formulation of these components of the plan. An environmental scan and review of internal and external data relevant to the initiative will also be conducted. The initiative timeline includes a final plan review and approval in June of 2025.

This renewed set of districtwide values and beliefs, along with updated VCCCD mission and vision statements and a new long-term strategic plan for the District, will serve as the foundation for organizational development efforts for years to come, will highlight developmental needs and inform training plans, and will reveal the behavioral norms and practices that are needed in our workforce and our leaders to demonstrate our VCCCD values and achieve our collective goals.

## ModernThink Employee Perception Survey

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Culture and climate assessments are another key component of organizational development. When conducted routinely, these surveys provide valuable insights into an organization's current culture and the employee experience, show trends and changes to employee perceptions over time, and allow leaders to identify strengths and areas of opportunity to better align their organization's culture with strategic goals and drive positive changes to enhance the work environment, employee engagement and retention, and overall health and performance. Many studies have shown the importance of employee engagement and retention on student success as well as the overall culture, health, and performance of higher education institutions.

ModernThink is a management consulting firm that has worked with over 1,200 colleges and universities and has deep understanding and expertise in workplace quality, organizational culture, and employee engagement in higher education. VCCCD contracted ModernThink to administer surveys measuring organizational dynamics and perceptions districtwide in 2019, 2022, and 2023. In the most recent administration, 601 faculty and staff responded across the district resulting in a 32% response rate. The core survey consisted of 10 main/core categories with 4-7 questions in each category. In addition to the core survey, there were questions about the “faculty experience” asked only to faculty and a custom category with 6 questions asking about confidence in district leadership.

The ModernThink core survey categories are listed below:

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Confidence in Senior Leadership
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Faculty and Staff Well-Being
- Job Satisfaction and Support
- Mission and Pride
- Performance Management
- Professional Development
- Supervisor/Chair Effectiveness

In Spring 2024, a consultant from ModernThink presented the results of the Fall 2023 Employee Perception Survey to District and College leadership and at Town Hall meetings at Moorpark College, Oxnard College, Ventura College, and the District Administrative Center. Senior leaders at each College were then asked to continue discussions about the results and create plans for improvement. Broadly speaking, opportunities for growth and improvement included, but were not limited to, new employee onboarding, professional development, and leadership training. The survey results can be viewed via the [VCCCD ModernThink Employee Survey Results Dashboard](#). Many of these opportunities for improvement reflected in the ModernThink survey responses echoed data, feedback, and aspirations collected through other forums over the past year, including:

- Challenges in the workplace culture expressed by classified staff during the District Classified Professional Development Committee (DCPDC) event in Spring of 2024.
- Developmental needs expressed by campus representatives during DCPDC meetings.
- Needs assessments conducted by campus Professional Development (PD) Committees in 2024.
- Observations and complaints fielded by the District Human Resources team.
- 1:1 Interviews conducted with leaders and employees about developmental and support needs.

Additionally, It is important to note that within the past year, VCCCD gained two new College Presidents and several new Vice Presidents which can impact the culture of the college campuses and the departments within them. And, since the ModernThink survey results weren't presented until Spring 2024, and campus plans to address these results were formulated in the Fall of 2024, some employee perceptions may have already changed since much of this data was collected. Other planned responses to the survey data may be in the early stages of implementation based on this timeline. Districtwide Human Resources plan is outlined in the next section.

## DISTRICTWIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

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The District's investment in districtwide training and organizational development provides new opportunities to begin to shift the VCCCD culture in ways that place greater value on diversity, student success, the economic health of our communities, collaboration and partnerships, and the success of each employee—all goals of our 2021-2027 strategic plan. To make meaningful progress toward these aims and realize improvements in the areas identified from the ModernThink survey and additional assessments (described in the previous section) as areas of growth, four initiatives shown below have been prioritized for development in the 2024-2025 academic year.

### **Districtwide Human Resources Professional Development and Training Plan:**



## Districtwide New Employee Onboarding

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In the ModernThink category of professional development, onboarding processes to prepare new staff and faculty to be effective were specifically identified in the survey as an area in need of significant improvement. After several months of development, in late 2024 the District Human Resources department launched a pilot of a new employee onboarding system (NEOGOV Onboard) and an accompanying guide to equip supervisors in effectively onboarding their new employees. Feedback from the pilot during the first quarter of 2025 will be utilized to enhance the Onboard system and the guide for supervisors to ensure that these tools are valuable enhancements to new employee onboarding and help prepare employees to be successful. The pilot is currently conducted with new classified employees (and their supervisors) and will be expanded to include new faculty and management staff by the end of the 2024-2025 academic year.

## Districtwide Leadership Development

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To begin to address low positive and high negative scoring items in the ModernThink categories of Performance Management, Faculty & Staff Well-Being, Communication, Collaboration, and Confidence in Senior/District Leadership, the District designed and piloted a new Leadership Essentials Series last Fall consisting of three trainings. VCCCD leaders in an array of positions across all three colleges and the DAC participated. Based on survey responses and additional data collected, these trainings were designed to begin to address the following specific areas in need of attention:

- Deepening trust, teamwork, and positive relationships between leaders and their team members, as well as within and across teams and departments.
- Enhancing communication and feedback processes, including creating spaces for open communication and challenging traditional ways of doing things.
- Providing more opportunities for employees to share suggestions and ideas and be actively engaged in decision-making.
- Showing genuine interest and concern for employee well-being.
- Regularly recognizing employee contributions.
- Improving performance management processes.
- Valuing diversity and inclusion and fostering a greater sense of belonging.

### Leadership Essentials Series Pilot

Three leadership trainings were piloted in the **Leadership Essential Series** in Fall 2024, their details are outlined in the following table:

Leadership Essentials Series		
Training (3.5 hours each)	Description	Date & Participants
<b>Leadership &amp; Management Basics</b>	<p><b>Content included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fundamental differences between leading and managing.</li> <li>• The importance of fostering high employee engagement in higher education.</li> <li>• Research-based ways to enhance engagement and performance through relationships and effective communication practices with team members, such as coaching and providing feedback.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Date:</b> September 19, 2024</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> 28</p>
<b>Introduction to Performance Management &amp; the Classified Evaluation Process</b>	<p><b>Content included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of continuous, year-round performance management and how to make the connection between performance management and Districtwide and College strategic plans.</li> <li>• Distinguishing between job skills, performance goals, and development goals.</li> <li>• Writing clear and measurable goals.</li> <li>• Knowledge of VCCCD performance management guidelines for classified staff.</li> <li>• Learning the Claim-Evidence-Impact (C-E-I) method of writing evaluation narratives.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Date:</b> October 17, 2024</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> 27</p>
<b>Team Building &amp; Development</b>	<p><b>Content included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The characteristics of a high-performing team based on workplace research.</li> <li>• Insights into how to develop these characteristics.</li> <li>• Building a climate of strong trust with your team; fostering a team environment where employees genuinely feel a sense of belonging, suggest new ideas, ask for help when needed, and speak up about concerns and mistakes.</li> <li>• Boosting recognition and appreciation of team members.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Date:</b> November 14, 2024</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> 19</p>

\*Note: Some VCCCD leaders participated in more than one training.

A three-part evaluation plan was implemented to assess the experience, key learning, and initial application of what participants learned from each of the trainings in this Leadership Essential Series pilot.

1. A “Delta/Plus” live evaluation at the conclusion of each training to get immediate participant feedback.
2. A formal evaluation survey conducted immediately following the training to gauge satisfaction and self-reported gains in knowledge.
3. A follow-up survey at least a month after the training to understand how information and practices from the trainings have been applied.

Participant evaluations from these trainings showed the pilot of this Leadership Essentials Series was successful and provided valuable insights for enhancing these trainings as they are rolled out to additional supervisory staff in Spring 2025. Key insights pertaining to the evaluations included:

- All respondents from each training said they would recommend the training.
- All respondents from each training rated the overall quality of the training as “excellent” or “good,” found the training engaging and interactive, and felt they could apply some learnings to their role as a supervisor.
- Almost all respondents across the three trainings said the training format should remain in person (rather than virtual).
- Nearly half of respondents said the trainings were too short.
- Suggestions for enhancement echoed by multiple training participants included:
  - Making the trainings longer to provide more time for discussion, practice, reviewing scenarios, etc.
  - Incorporating the trainings into a long-term leadership cohort program.
  - Lowering the class size to 18-20 participants (rather than 25-27).
  - Creating a lending library for participants to check out the recommended books.
  - Following up trainings with regular communications containing leadership tips.

In follow-up surveys administered at least a month after each training to gauge to what degree leaders implemented learning from the trainings and the impact this has had on their team, respondents shared that they’ve seen a “*boost [in] morale*” and an “*improvement in motivation*.” Participants were able to better prepare and conduct performance evaluations and stated that they have been more “*involved and knowledgeable about what is going on in the department*” and have been able to “*foster a sense of cohesion within [their] team*.”

### **Next Steps in Leadership Development**

Moving forward, the Leadership Essentials Series trainings will be lengthened and offered to supervisory staff again in Spring 2025. A “lending library” of books recommended in trainings will be established, and training class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 20 participants.

The Leadership Essential Series will also be considered for inclusion in a multi-month leadership development cohort program. This leadership development cohort program will be designed to support VCCCD employees in an array of roles in growing their leadership capacity and competencies.

In addition, to further enhance performance management processes and provide supervisors with insights and tools to address issues of low performance in their departments, two FRISK (Facts, Rules, Impact, Suggestions, Knowledge) trainings were provided by AALRR (Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo) in Fall 2024; and all supervisory staff across the District were required to attend. There is also an upcoming Effective Labor Relations training for Deans, Directors, and Administrators. This labor relations training is designed to enhance abilities to collaborate with classified and academic unions, and to learn best practices for communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution to build trust and foster a productive workplace. On-going management trainings from LCW (Liebert, Cassidy, and Whitmore; a labor, education, and employment law firm providing trainings to Southern California Community College Districts) continue to be offered.

## Districtwide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

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The District's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee created an EEO Plan for 2024-2027 which was required by and submitted to the State of California last summer in accordance with the California Code of Regulations, Title 5. This plan was also approved by the VCCCD Board of Trustees and contains dozens of strategies the District will now carry out over three years to improve practices related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Strategies will include the expansion of a formal diversity program, ensuring nondiscrimination policies and procedures are clear on the District's website, recruitment strategies to reach a broad audience, and new diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging related training opportunities for all employees, among others. These efforts address lower positive responses on the ModernThink survey related to the District having "clear and effective procedures for dealing with discrimination."

# Districtwide Professional Development and Compliance Training

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## **Comprehensive Mandatory Employee Trainings**

As providing a safe and secure, quality environment for our students, faculty, staff, supervisors, managers, administrators, and guests is of utmost importance, as is meeting our legal and regulatory obligations, our mandatory training program for all employees was reviewed and modified in the summer of 2024. This new comprehensive set of required annual trainings was launched late last summer in Keenan SafeColleges, and leadership at each campus took an active role in ensuring completion of these trainings by their employees through the Fall of 2024. Employees in all classifications will be required to complete these mandatory trainings every year going forward (and some trainings every two years), and the requirements will be modified according to any changes to laws and regulations.

## **Self-Guided and Instructor-Led Trainings**

The District is leveraging the California Community Colleges' LMS (Learning Management System), Vision Resource Center (VRC), in new ways to support employee growth and development. While the VRC has more than 5,000 learning modules available to all employees, a curated list of self-guided learning opportunities (e.g., Accessibility, Canvas, Microsoft Office, AI) has been compiled and will be made available to all employees in Spring 2025.

New VCCCD instructor-led trainings are also available to all employees starting in Spring 2025 to help meet developmental needs. Most of these opportunities are now being tracked in the Vision Resource Center as well, so employees can better manage their professional development plans and see their training completions on their VRC training transcript. These instructor-led trainings will cover areas such as stress management, strengths identification, and technology use. These curated, self-guided and instructor-led trainings will be communicated in Spring 2025 to all employees across the District through a new **Districtwide Training & Organizational Development Guide**. Employee teams may also choose to engage in new team-building opportunities offered through the Training & Organizational Development division, including Real Colors® and CliftonStrengths®.

## CONCLUSION

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This first I.E. report to the PASS Committee in the 2025 series highlighted the addition of a new Districtwide Human Resources position, Director of Training and Organizational Development, and the HR Professional Development and Training Plan. This plan addresses VCCCD Strategic Goal #1, *Instill a culture that values diversity, students, our communities, collaboration, and the success of each employee*, is grounded in research, and is based upon ModernThink employee survey responses and additional data collected by Human Resources. The purpose of this HR plan is to support organizational development and culture at the Community Colleges of Ventura County, and to make significant strides in efficiency, performance, overall health, and positive work environment. Four main components comprise the Professional Development and Training Plan: new employee onboarding; leadership development; diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and general professional development and compliance training. Already bolstering the effectiveness of this plan, positive outcomes have been shown from evaluative processes in the Leadership Essentials Training Series pilot.

The next Institutional Effectiveness report to the PASS committee will be presented in May 2025, and will highlight the new Districtwide Dual Enrollment System. This report aligns with VCCCD's Strategic Goal #2, which focuses on student access.