



# SBCTC Guidance

*Campus Climate Assessments*

## Table of Contents

[SBCTC Guidance 1](#_Toc99548124)

[Table of Contents 2](#_Toc99548125)

[Campus Climate Assessments within CTC’s 4](#_Toc99548126)

[1. The Requirement 4](#_Toc99548127)

[2. Objectives 4](#_Toc99548128)

[3. Deadlines 4](#_Toc99548129)

[3.1. Initial Deadline 4](#_Toc99548130)

[3.2. Frequency 4](#_Toc99548131)

[4. The Campus Climate Assessment Instrument 5](#_Toc99548132)

[5. Process for selecting or developing an instrument 5](#_Toc99548133)

[6. Requirements for an instrument 5](#_Toc99548134)

[6.1. Content 5](#_Toc99548135)

[6.2. “In-house” instruments 5](#_Toc99548136)

[6.3. Commercial or prepared instruments 6](#_Toc99548137)

[6.4. Consortia 6](#_Toc99548138)

[7. Inclusion, Accessibility and Support 6](#_Toc99548139)

[8. Outcomes 6](#_Toc99548140)

[8.1. System-wide Outcomes 7](#_Toc99548141)

[8.2. College-level Outcomes 7](#_Toc99548142)

[Stakeholder Input: CCAs and Listening/Feedback Sessions 8](#_Toc99548143)

[Students 8](#_Toc99548144)

[Approaches & Methods 8](#_Toc99548145)

[Access & Inclusion 8](#_Toc99548146)

[Utilizing Data 9](#_Toc99548147)

[Communication & Care 9](#_Toc99548148)

[Faculty 9](#_Toc99548149)

[Accountability 9](#_Toc99548150)

[Collecting Data 10](#_Toc99548151)

[Utilizing Data 10](#_Toc99548152)

[Access & Inclusion 10](#_Toc99548153)

[Care 10](#_Toc99548154)

[Diversity and Equity Officers 10](#_Toc99548155)

[Student Survey Tools 11](#_Toc99548156)

[Employee Survey Tools 11](#_Toc99548157)

[For more information on CCAs, please contact: 12](#_Toc99548158)

## Campus Climate Assessments within CTC’s

### The Requirement

In May of 2021, the Washington State Legislature enacted Senate Bill 5227 relating to diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism at institutions of higher education. Included in that Bill (section 3) is the requirement for all colleges to conduct campus climate assessments (CCAs) and campus listening and feedback sessions.

This paper is intended to provide initial guidance on the implementations and administration of the CCAs and listening and feedback sessions. This paper does not include guidance on specific content of CCAs or listening and feedback sessions, or on the analysis of data and application of findings.

As an appendix to this paper, the SBCTC has provided a list of commercially available CCAs that the SBCTC has determined meet the expectations and requirements of the Bill. This does not constitute a recommendation of any provider or instrument, nor does it preclude colleges from selecting another commercial instrument or service, or developing a CCA ‘in house’.

### Objectives

When selecting or developing instrument(s), colleges should ensure that the content of the instrument meets the objectives of the legislative requirement. In other words, will the results: *clarify the current state, of DEI in classrooms, common areas, offices and meetings, libraries and support services, and – if offered at the college – residential accommodation.*

In addition, CCAs ***may*** include application that evaluates “prevalence of discrimination, sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation on and off campus” in addition to “student, faculty, and staff knowledge of campus policies and procedures addressing discrimination, sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation”.

Finding from CCAs must be submitted to the SBCTC and published on college websites in accordance with section 3(4) of the Bill.

### Deadlines

#### Initial Deadline

Note that the language of the bill states that colleges will be required to report on findings or progress beginning July 1, 2022. If colleges have completed CCAs before July 1, 2022, they may report findings.

#### Frequency

Note that the language requires that a suitable CCA must be completed at least every 5 years. If a college has an existing schedule that is more frequent than that, then there is no need to change. The language of the bill is not intended to encourage colleges to reduce or limit the frequency of administering their CCA. If a college administers separate CCAs to students, staff, and/or faculty, there is also no requirement to administer these CCAs at the same time or at the same frequency, as long as the minimum five-year cycle is being met.

### The Campus Climate Assessment Instrument

The State Board will not mandate a specific instrument, but does provide a list of suggested existing commercial CCAs for students, staff and faculty that the SBCTC feels meet the requirements and expectations of the Bill (Appendix). There is no requirement for colleges to use any of these examples; the list is solely intended to provide options in accordance with section 3(1)(b) of the Bill.

A college may decide if a single instrument is appropriate for students, faculty, and staff, or they may use different instruments. If different instruments are used for different groups, each instrument must meet the requirements for consultation and frequency of implementation as described in the bill.

As described in section 3(5), the SBCTC may require colleges to repeat their CCA. Colleges that have concerns about the design or implementation of their CCA are encouraged to reach out to the SBCTC.

### Process for selecting or developing an instrument

Per section 3(2) of the Bill, colleges should note the requirement to consult with faculty, students, DEI officers, and staff in the development or selection of an instrument. If a college intends to use an existing instrument, or select a commercially available instrument, this process must still take place. Colleges are encouraged to document the consultation process, its findings, and outcomes.

### Requirements for an instrument

#### Content

* + 1. Regardless of whether an instrument is developed in house, is a commercially prepared tool, or a combination thereof (e.g. a commercial instrument with additional questions developed in house), and regardless of whether an instrument is intended for students, faculty, or staff, or a combination thereof, all instruments ***must*** include content that ensures “student and employee attitudes and awareness of campus DEI issues”, however defined, can be evaluated and understood.
    2. Instruments ***may*** include content that evaluates “prevalence of discrimination, sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation on and off campus” in addition to “student, faculty, and staff knowledge of campus policies and procedures addressing discrimination, sexual assault, harassment, and retaliation”

#### “In-house” instruments

Colleges that have developed or intend to develop an ‘in house’ survey instrument may do so. However, this does not negate the requirements of section 3(2) to consult with faculty, students, DEI officers, and staff, whether developing a new instrument or evaluating an existing one.

#### Commercial or prepared instruments

Colleges may elect to use commercially available instruments, but should evaluate these instruments to ensure they meet the expectations of the Bill outlined above. Again, the use of a commercial CCA does not negate the requirements of section 3(2) to consult with faculty, students, DEI officers, and staff. Appendix A provides a list of instruments that have been evaluated by the SBCTC and deemed to meet the expectations and requirements of the bill. ***It does not constitute a recommendation of any provider or instrument.***

#### Consortia

Colleges may opt to form consortia to purchase and implement a single instrument, whether commercially prepared or developed by one or more of the consortia colleges. However, each college in such a consortium must still meet the requirements of section 3(2) to consult with their faculty, students, DEI officers and staff. This consultation may not be done collectively.

Colleges opting for a consortia model must also publish and submit findings that reflect the outcomes from their own college. While consortia or peer group findings may also be published, this is independent of the requirement for individual colleges to submit findings to the SBCTC and to publish findings on their websites per section 3(4) of the Bill.

### Inclusion, Accessibility and Support

Colleges should consider strategies that:

* Ensure ***all*** students and employees are appropriately informed in a timely manner of the administration of the CCA and how to participate. This includes meeting any accessibility, technology, or other support requirements that might otherwise limit any student’s or employee’s awareness and understanding of the CCA.
* Ensure the administration of the CCA does not exclude ***any*** participant because of accessibility, technology, or other support issues. Colleges are encouraged to communicate and administer the CCA in multiple languages if appropriate for their students, staff, and faculty.
* Ensure that the participation of students under age 18 (excluding emancipated minors) includes appropriate parental consent in accordance with federal Regulation [45 CFR 46.408](https://www.govregs.com/regulations/45/46.408). If using a commercial instrument, note that some providers require that students under age 18 are excluded.
* Ensure that participants are adequately informed of support services available should participation in the CCA cause discomfort or trauma.

### Outcomes

#### 8.1. System-wide Outcomes

* + 1. By December 31, 2024, the SBCTC will prepare a report for the legislature that includes, at a minimum, a summary of results of the completed CCAs. Wherever possible, colleges are encouraged to conduct their climate assessments by July 1, 2022. In order to be best positioned to use their findings to inform their DEI strategic plans and professional development training.
    2. Additional system-level reporting of outcomes of the CCAs and listening sessions is not required by the bill. However, additional reporting may be requested by appropriate system councils or commissions. Requests for additional reports will be addressed through existing processes for conducting system research.

#### 8.2. College-level Outcomes

8.2.1. Beginning July 1, 2022, colleges must submit reports of findings, excluding raw data, from CCAs and listening sessions to the SBCTC.

8.2.2. Colleges must also publish the results annually on the college’s public website, of either the CCA, the listening sessions, or both.

* Be sure to remove all identifiable information and be mindful of protecting the identities of extremely small student and faculty groups.
* Colleges are encouraged and expected to be as transparent as possible when posting findings on their public websites.

8.2.3. Colleges are encouraged to use their CCA findings to inform the development of their DEI strategic plans and professional development trainings.

### Stakeholder Input: CCAs and Listening/Feedback Sessions

Soliciting stakeholder feedback and centering student and faculty perspectives are meaningful practices in providing effective and supportive learning and social environments. From October through early November 2021, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges sought feedback from stakeholder groups regarding campus climate assessments (CCAs) and listening/feedback sessions, two components in Senate Bill 5227 “Diversity in Higher Education” to inform the Board’s guidance to colleges in our system.

#### Students

Noted below are ideas and suggestions for the administration of assessments and listening sessions from current and former students, as organized into four themes.

##### Approaches & Methods

Students voiced appreciation for multiple methods for gathering input. They see value in student leaders encouraging participation among their peers and are open to options for compensation. There is concern that certain students—student leaders, for example—may be recruited to participate in listening sessions which may not provide diverse representation of the student body.

* Like the mixture of survey and focus groups
* Invest in community organization or current students to train and deliver the sessions.
* A third party to facilitate sessions could disrupt the power dynamics
* Utilize student leaders to encourage participation
* Incentives don’t have to be monetary – work with students on different options
* Do not cherry-pick which students will participate in listening sessions

##### Access & Inclusion

In addition to ensuring that students with disabilities, including those who use assistive technology, are able to fully participate in surveys and feedback sessions, colleges should also consider students who speak languages other than English and be mindful of cultural communication styles.

* ESL is important – not only do some students struggle with understanding and answering questions in English, but their answers can be misinterpreted because of cultural bias
* Multilingual surveys and focus groups in different languages are important; multicultural competence for analysis is necessary
* Sessions could meet in communities (like Spanish language speakers, or other commonality)

##### Utilizing Data

Students appreciate the opportunity to share their lived experiences through storytelling and narratives. Using qualitative information to put quantitative data into context will be important, as well as informing students on how the college will use its information and toward what outcomes and goals.

* Qualitative surveys are more effective – tell the stories behind the data (which may conflict with quantitative data)
* Sessions should include opportunity for student input on what needs to be accomplished and how to hold decision makers accountable
* Clarify how results will be used for college change *and* system change

##### Communication & Care

Students are concerned that care is taken to respect the time and labor of those who participate in campus climate surveys and feedback sessions. Clear communication before, during, and after these activities will help students to understand the overall purpose and significance of their voices in the processes. Colleges should be mindful of what students may experience as they engage in surveys and feedback sessions and be able to skillfully manage questions and conversations which may activate emotional responses.

* Students have survey fatigue; offer creative solutions to survey fatigue. Like do 10 questions every few weeks
* Have a committee to follow up and analyze *with* students. Students can reach out separate from their responses (Communicate a process)
* Cultivate a culture of care; possible activating (triggering) experiences, considering after-care, resources
* Call the listening and feedback sessions “engagement sessions;” include follow-up sessions
* Communicate to students the importance of the work, that it is bigger than themselves (“changes are for future students”)

#### Faculty

In conversation, many faculty members stressed the importance of colleges being accountable to students by ensuring clear communication about campus climate assessments and listening/feedback sessions as well as implementing plans to utilize the data collected from students to inform DEI strategic plans and institutional strategic plans. The list below offers additional considerations from faculty:

##### Accountability

* Respect students’ experiences, expertise, time, and energy by using collected data for action
* Communicate to students why their input is being sought and how it will be used

##### Collecting Data

* Be cautious of leading questions and bias in questions
* Qualitative data is important; elevate students’ voices for storytelling; get the real story behind numbers/quantitative data

##### Utilizing Data

* Code the data for themes

##### Access & Inclusion

* Allow ways for staff to assist different student groups in filling out the campus climate assessment/survey, particularly students who speak languages other than English
* Support immigrant and refugee populations—colleges should be proactive in reaching out to these groups (and other student populations such as those with disabilities)

##### Care

* Provide aftercare and resources for students—the process of answering assessment/survey questions and/or participating in listening/feedback sessions may activate (trigger) some individuals

#### Diversity and Equity Officers

Diversity and Equity Officers (DEOs) are experienced experts who serve as their colleges’ foremost resources for designing, implementing, and evaluating equity and inclusion efforts. Other considerations from DEOs are noted below:

* In order to effect structural/systemic/institutional change, it will be most effective for colleges to identity and use a conceptual equity and/or anti-racism framework as a foundation for their work related to 5227 and 5194; work backward to anchor outcomes and measures to the framework
* Administrators, faculty, and staff at each college ought to center DEOs and other DEI leaders at their institutions to inform approaches to the elements in bills 5227 and 5194
* Collaborate with DEOs in selection and implementation processes for the campus climate assessments and listening/feedback sessions

Appendix

(List of suitable existing instruments)

The following survey instruments are considered suitable for CCAs under the expectations of the bill. This list does not constitute an endorsement of any instrument, nor is it exclusive – colleges may develop in-house CCAs, or opt for other existing tools, as long as the requirements of the bill are clearly met. This list may be amended to add additional instruments, or to remove existing instruments if they are subsequently found to not meet the expectations of the bill.

#### Student Survey Tools

[**CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement)**](https://www.ccsse.org/)

Note that, to meet the expectations of the bill, the CCSSE must include the race and ethnicity pilot survey.

* CCSSE base survey - [CCSSE 2017 Sample [PDF]](https://www.ccsse.org/aboutsurvey/docs/CCSSE_2017_sample.pdf)
* CCSSE R&E questions - [Additional Items Catalog [PDF]](https://www.ccsse.org/join/docs/Additional_Items_Catalog.pdf)
* CCSSE provides breakout reports by race and other demographics - [CCSSE - Cohort Data](https://www.ccsse.org/survey/reports/2021/reports.cfm)

[**Diverse Learning Environments Survey**](https://heri.ucla.edu/diverse-learning-environments-survey/)

[**HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey**](https://www.hedsconsortium.org/heds-diversity-equity-campus-climate-survey/)

[**Hanover Research DEI Survey**](https://f.hubspotusercontent00.net/hubfs/3409306/2020-Higher-Education-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Student-Survey.pdf)

Note this link takes you to a summary report so you can see survey content areas – not the instrument itself. Hanover does not include students under the age of 18.

[**National Assessment of Collegiate Campus Climates**](https://race.usc.edu/colleges/)

From the link, scroll down the page to the NACCC section for links to content areas and FAQs.

[**SoundRocket DEI Survey**](https://soundrocket.com/services/what/#higher-education-studies)

#### Employee Survey Tools

[**PACE (Personal Assessment of the College Environment)**](https://pace.ncsu.edu/pace-climate-survey/)

Note that, to meet the expectations of the bill, the PACE racial diversity subscale should be included.

[**HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey**](https://www.hedsconsortium.org/heds-diversity-equity-campus-climate-survey/)

[**SoundRocket DEI Survey**](https://soundrocket.com/services/what/#higher-education-studies)

### For more information on CCAs, please contact:

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