

Special Action Team (SAT) Campus Engagement Summary

In October and November 2024, the Special Action Team (SAT) conducted listening sessions, surveys, and received input from Chico State employees, partners, and stakeholders. Feedback from these sources reveals a complex mix of anxiety about the unknowns of restructuring, an appreciation for our existing strengths, and a desire for a more collaborative, equitable, and student-centered university.

With limited time and a charge from the Provost to deliver recommendations by mid-December, the team utilized Google *NotebookLM*, a generative AI/language model tool that helps users analyze and process information from multiple sources to assess feedback from our campus community. Data from all 17 listening sessions (including summary notes from SAT members and transcripts from all sessions ($n=279$)), two surveys ($n=114$), and feedback provided to SAT in the way of prepared documents, statements, or shared reports were analyzed using *NotebookLM*. SAT used the following prompt for all data sources: “What key points and themes emerge from the sources?”. The prompt generated five sets of common themes across the data. We reviewed the five sets of common themes *NotebookLM* found and summarized these as general takeaways.

Access to NotebookLM is currently restricted to personal Google accounts only.

Strengths of Existing Programs

Participants frequently emphasized the strengths and achievements of their respective units:

- **Hands-on Learning and Experiential Opportunities:** Hands-on learning opportunities, including internships, field experiences, and community engagement were seen as key strengths.
- **Faculty Expertise:** Strong faculty expertise was consistently identified as a key strength across departments.
- **Strong Programs:** Units consistently highlighted their successful programs, pointing to accreditation, high placement rates, and national recognition.
- **Existing Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Several units highlighted their existing collaborative efforts with other departments and colleges.

Student Needs and Experiences

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of keeping student needs and experiences at the center of any restructuring decisions:

- **Understanding Evolving Student Needs:** Participants highlighted the need for increased flexibility, mental health support, career preparation resources, and a strong sense of community.
- **Providing Holistic Support:** Participants called for a more holistic approach to student support, including adequate academic advising, mental health services, financial assistance, and support for diverse student populations.

- **Improve Advising and Support Services:** Participants identified challenges with current advising and support services, particularly for online and distance education students.
- **Enhance Career Preparation and Connections:** Participants emphasized equipping students with the skills and experiences needed for career success.

Desire for Collaboration and Efficiency

Participants desired a more collaborative, efficient, and equitable university structure:

- **Enhanced Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity:** Participants identified several barriers to collaboration, including administrative hurdles, lack of resources, and siloed departmental structures. Suggestions for improvement included streamlining processes and procedures, providing resources and incentives, and improving communication.
- **Improve Administrative Efficiency:** Participants called for streamlining procedures, reducing duplication of efforts, and investing in technology to improve efficiency.
- **Promote Equity:** Participants called for fair workload distribution, equitable resource allocation, and representation of diverse perspectives in decision-making.

Anxiety and Uncertainty Regarding Restructuring

Our analysis revealed a pervasive sense of anxiety, uncertainty, and distrust among faculty and staff regarding the restructuring process:

- **Lack of Clarity and Transparency:** Participants repeatedly voiced frustration with the vagueness of the Provost's charge letter that informed the work of the SAT and the lack of clearly defined goals for the restructuring process articulated by that letter and SAT representatives.
- **Fear of Negative Impacts:** Specific concerns included potential job losses, program cuts, loss of unit identity, disruption of existing successes, and negative impacts on morale and campus climate.
- **Lack of Articulated Vision and Rationale:** Participants repeatedly asked questions about the ultimate purpose and desired outcomes of the restructuring process.

Additional Themes

Feedback from listening sessions, surveys and other sources revealed additional areas for improvement:

- **Accessibility:** Students are seeking increased accessibility across campus, including accessible furniture, universal design in courses, and more resources to support students with disabilities.¹ Participants also highlighted the need for mixed modality in course offerings, including maintenance of in-person classes and a bolstering of hybrid and online course offerings and programs.

¹ While a diversity of constituents across Chico State participated in SAT data collection through surveys and listening sessions, SAT recognizes a clear lack of participation by students. It is recommended that the Provost engages directly with students in the Spring 2025 semester.

General Takeaways from the SAT Campus Engagement Summary

- **Collaboration and Support:** Participants expressed a need for greater collaboration between departments and units, increased communication and support from faculty, and more personalized spaces on campus.
- **Funding and Resources:** Participants highlighted the need for increased funding and resources to support student learning, including library resources and staffing levels.
- **Reorganization and Restructuring:** The feedback suggested several areas where reorganization and restructuring could improve the university's functioning, including clearer communication channels, greater flexibility in staffing, and a re-evaluation of faculty workload expectations.