

Student Campus Climate Executive Report

Spring 2026

Essex County College

THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, PLANNING, AND ASSESSMENT

Key Findings

- In Spring 2025, ECC students reported a statistically significant drop in campus climate for virtually every Campus Climate indicator, while in this Spring every Campus Climate Indicator improved in scores.
- In Spring 2026, the average percentage of agreement bounced back from 73.6% to 80.3%.
- The Campus Climate Index Score increased by 1 percentage point.

Introduction

The Essex County College (ECC) Student Campus Climate Survey is administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning, and Assessment (IEPA) annually each spring semester. This year's survey was opened on March 17th, 2026 and closed on April 19th, 2026. The purpose is to gauge the students' feelings of safety, acceptance, and their sense of value within the ECC community. The survey is apart of the ongoing effort of improving the every-day experience for students.

Methodology

The survey was distributed through Qualtrics. The target population was any ECC student who was enrolled in the Spring 2026 semester. The survey was sent out to 5914 students and 346 responses were received, yielding a 5.9% response rate. As per the *ACCESS TO SUCCESS: Strategic Plan FY2026*, Goal III has the following targets for FY2026:

- Increase the percentage of employees reporting they "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" by 2 percent in fiscal year 2026, over the prior year for the following statements:
 - ECC provides sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse population (Employee and Student Campus Climate Surveys)
- Increase the Campus Climate Index Score on the Student and Employee Campus Climate Surveys by 2 percent in fiscal year 2026, over the prior year

A full copy of the FY26 ACCESS TO SUCCESS: Strategic Plan can be found on the college's website.

Over the past year, ECC has been implementing new programs and resources for students in the effort to increase the agreement to the statement above. The Campus Climate Index Score is calculated by taking the scores from the first 10 questions asked in the Matrix tables and averaging them to give a score between 0 and 100, with 100 being the most positive score. The survey was made up of a few multiple-choice questions, agreement and satisfaction Likert scales, and an open-ended comment section.

Results

The first set of multiple-choice questions aimed to understand the demographics of the respondents. Women were overrepresented and men underrepresented in this sample when

compared to the college average. Black students were overrepresented in this sample with the other racial categories represented accurately. The majority of respondents were continuing students (76%). Respondents were asked how long they have been attending the college: 47% reported attending for less than a year, 31% reported attending for 1-2 years, and 22% reported attending for 2 years or more.

The first set of ten questions in the matrix tables determine the Campus Climate Index Score, and overall campus climate. See Table 1 on the following page:

Table 1: Overall Campus Climate

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Agree (2025)		Agree (2026)		Percent Change
	n	%	n	%	
I feel safe at Essex County College	284	87.7%	277	89.1%	1.4%
There are sufficient support resources available	243	75.0%	251	81.0%	6.0%
I believe my differences are embraced and valued	250	77.2%	257	82.6%	5.5%
Discrimination is not tolerated at ECC	254	78.4%	261	85.0%	6.6%
Harassment is not tolerated at ECC	265	81.8%	263	85.4%	3.6%
ECC works hard to prevent discrimination and harassment from happening	245	75.6%	239	77.3%	1.7%
Racial and cultural differences are celebrated at ECC	273	84.3%	271	87.7%	3.4%
I feel a sense of community and belonging at ECC	244	75.3%	243	78.4%	3.1%
Campus police and security protect us from harm	256	79.0%	255	83.3%	4.3%
ECC provides sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse population	261	80.6%	260	84.1%	3.6%

When compared to the year prior, every statement saw an increase in scores from the previous year. The statement with the biggest increase in agreement was “Discrimination is not tolerated at ECC.” (6.6% change). Last year every score was decreased from 2024. These scores are not quite back up to where they were in 2024, but there is improvement from 2025.

The statement with the highest score is “Racial and cultural differences are celebrated at ECC” (87.7% agreement). The least agreed statement was “ECC works hard to prevent discrimination and harassment from happening” (77.3%). This suggests that although ECC does a good job in celebrating our varied student body, it could make more of an effort to prevent discrimination and harassment. This statement still did increase from last year but there is still room for improvement.

As per the *ACCESS TO SUCCESS: Strategic Plan 2024-2029*, there is a goal to increase the Campus Climate Index Score by two percentage points. This score increased by 1 percentage point from 80.1 in 2025 to 81.1 in 2026. Therefore, the goal was not achieved during this year although progress was made. ECC also had a target in the strategic plan to increase the score for the statement “ECC provides sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse population” by 2 percentage points. This statement saw an increase by 3.6 percentage points in scores from the previous year, therefore the college exceeded the goal for this year. For this statement specifically, it is even higher this year than it was in 2024 (83.7 in 2024).

The second matrix table in the survey was aimed to understand the academic engagement of the students. See table 2 below:

Table 2: Academic Engagement

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Agree (2025)		Agree (2026)		Percent Change
	n	%	n	%	
I feel valued by my professors	244	75.3%	245	82.8%	7.5%
I have sufficient access to academic support services	239	73.8%	247	83.2%	9.4%
Professors respond to emails or phone calls promptly	219	67.6%	217	74.1%	6.5%
I have at least one faculty member that I view as a role model	189	58.3%	189	64.7%	6.4%
I feel valued by my classmates	193	59.6%	206	70.3%	10.7%
Faculty, staff and administrators respect student's opinions and thoughts	210	64.8%	233	79.3%	14.4%
Faculty, staff and administrators are genuinely concerned about my well-being	207	63.9%	224	76.7%	12.8%
I think faculty, staff and administrators treat students fairly	216	66.7%	220	75.3%	8.7%
I believe students at this school respect each other	235	72.5%	240	81.9%	9.4%
ECC treats all students equally	231	71.3%	232	79.2%	7.9%
Faculty and staff work proactively to remove barriers to success for diverse student populations	229	70.7%	238	81.2%	10.5%

Similar to the first section, when compared to the year prior, every statement saw an increase in agreement, with all statements having an increase of over 5 percentage points. The largest increase in agreement was for the statement “Faculty, staff and administrators respect students’ opinions and thoughts” (14.4% increase). The statement with the highest level of agreement was “I have sufficient access to academic support services” (83.2% agreement). This suggests that the student experience when it comes to academics have improved across the board. ECC should continue these successful efforts. The statement that was the least agreed on was “I have at least one faculty member that I view as a role model” (64.7% agreement) which suggests that this could be an area of improvement to focus on.

Respondents were asked if they took classes at the West Essex Campus in West Caldwell and 20% of them reported yes (n=68). The participants that reported yes were then asked about their experience on that campus. See table 3 below:

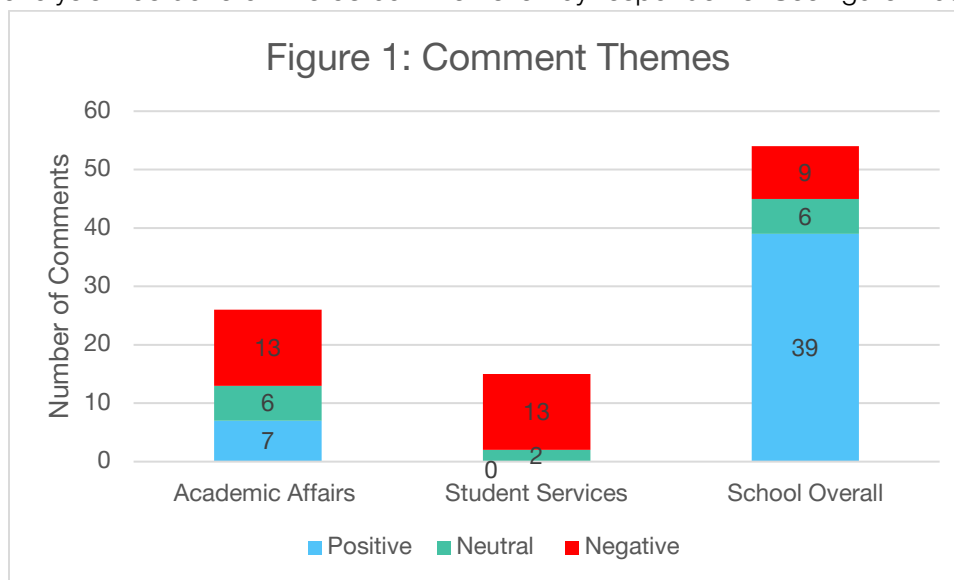
Table 3: West Essex Campus

Please rate your satisfaction on the following aspects of your experience	Satisfied 2025		Satisfied 2026		Percent Change
	n	%	n	%	
How satisfied are you with the variety of programs offered at the WEC?	43	89.6%	44	86.3%	-3.3%
What is your level of satisfaction with the timing/scheduling of the courses?	42	87.5%	42	82.4%	-5.1%
How satisfied are you with the campus facilities?	43	89.6%	42	82.4%	-7.2%
What is your level of satisfaction with the study areas (i.e. Information Commons/lounges)	43	89.6%	48	94.1%	4.5%

What is your level of satisfaction with the One Stop Center – staff and services?	42	87.5%	42	84.0%	-3.5%
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Overall, the satisfaction for this campus has decreased when compared to the year prior for every statement except the study areas. This suggests that ECC should focus on creating a better campus climate for the West Essex Campus specifically.

An analysis was done on the 98 comments left by respondents. See figure 1 below:



Negative themes (35.7%) included issues with rudeness/poor treatment, disorganization and lack of communication. Positive themes (46.9%) included love for specific instructors and staff members, appreciation for the school overall, and how ECC has improved their lives. Neutral comments (14.3%) were light suggestions for improvement and experiences that were both positive and negative. A theme that was present throughout the different areas were issues with rudeness and poor treatment across the college (20.4%). This has been an ongoing issue for the college, as rudeness made up 16.5% and experiences with unprofessionalism made up 7.2% of comments in the previous year's campus climate report.

Conclusion

Overall, ECC has made strides in improving the campus climate for students. There is still improvement to go to increase the Campus Climate Index Score by 2 percentage points instead of 1. Areas of improvement include creating a better environment at the West Essex Campus, addressing issues of unprofessionalism and rudeness, and greater efforts to prevent harassment and discrimination. ECC could also improve on the one-to-one relationships between students and faculty. ECC was successful in raising the score for "ECC provides sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse population", achieving the target for Goal III.