**Summary of the Cornerstones of Governance Survey**

**York County Community College**

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Every five years, since 2004, York County Community College has conducted a “Cornerstones of Governance” survey to assess how well the five Cornerstones of governance are being implemented by College Council and college leadership. The five Cornerstones, including Vision, Trust, Empowerment, Communication, and Accountability, are described in significant detail in the Constitution of the YCCC College Council. The aim of the survey is to assess how well employees think that the governance structure is serving the needs of the college.

The survey questions have remained the same for all four surveys: 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2018. At the beginning of each section of the survey, respondents read the paragraph from the Constitution that describes that Cornerstone. Respondents respond to five to eight statements related to the Cornerstone by ranking each statement on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being “disagree” and 4 being “strong agreement”. All respondents also had the opportunity to write in personal comments at the end of the survey. Rankings were averaged, and the averaged rankings are what are discussed in this document. The rankings are similar to the way that grade point averages are calculated: 4.00=A, 3.67=A-, 3.33=B+, etc.

Overall, the lowest rankings on the survey were in 2004, whereas the highest rankings were in 2009. Compared to 2009, the 2014 ranking generally declined, and likewise, 2018 rankings generally declined compared to 2014, but never returned to the 2004 lows. This is true for 70% (21/30) of the survey questions. In the remaining nine survey questions, 2004 was the lowest for eight of those questions, with some modest variation from the general pattern in the latter three surveys.

Within each Cornerstone, one to three statements varied from the general pattern described above. The most notable difference was in the Communication Cornerstone. In 2004, respondents gave the highest ranking (3.27) on being “comfortable using the Public Folders, the college web site, and YCCC e-mail as a communication tool”. That has declined steadily on all three subsequent surveys, with 2018 having the lowest ranking at 2.94. This might be because Public Folders and SharePoint don’t exist anymore, giving employees less access to shared information. The myYCCC portal is in use now, as well as the regular web site and virtual web pages. Cloud-based file sharing system exists as well, but user knowledge of this option varies wildly, and protocols for usage are not apparent. Overall, this decline in comfort with electronic communications is the equivalent of a grade declining from a B to a B-, which is a small change overall.

With regard to the actual values of the rankings, it is difficult for the average reader to know if the numerical differences between are significant or not. In some cases, the numbers are very similar, as for questions 4 and 5 in the Accountability Cornerstone. Statement 4, “I know who to go to with questions and concerns” shows rankings of 2.78, 3.12, 3.11 and 3.14 on the four surveys. Clearly the three latter values are very similar, indicating that the ranking has not changed from 2009-2018, but it is somewhat better than 2004. Likewise, statement 5, “I know who to go to with new initiatives and new policy recommendations” show rankings of 2.25, 3.00, 2.98 and 2.98. Again, the three latter values are very similar, indicating that the ranking has not changed from 2009-2018, but is somewhat better than 2004.

From 2014-2018, there were five rankings that improved, anywhere from 0.03 to 0.09 in ranking, which is much less than the 0.33 that it would take to make an equivalent move from a C+ to a B-. So while there is some small improvement, it would not change a student’s grade.

From 2014-2018, there were 25 rankings that decreased. The majority of those (13/25) were less than 0.33, making them small decline that would not change a student’s grade. Of the remainder, eight were the equivalent of declining from a B to a B- (0.33, 0.48, 0.48, 0.54, 0.59, 0.60, 0.62, 0.69). Only four were the equivalent of declining from a B to a C+ (0.73, 0.89, 0.92 and 0.93). These four topics are:

1. My department has a strategic plan that supports the College’s long-range strategic plan. (-0.73) Vision Cornerstone
2. My division has a strategic plan that supports the College’s long-range strategic plan.

(-0.92) Vision Cornerstone

1. Recommendations and decisions from committees, divisions, departments, and individuals are consistently implemented. (-0.89) Empowerment Cornerstone
2. Lines of accountability and responsibility at the College are documented. (-0.93) Accountability Cornerstone

These four topics are at the heart of the purpose of YCCC’s shared governance structure. Employees want to see a vibrant strategic plan that reflects the important activities in each area, and reflects the experiences and ideas that rise up from each employee through the governance structure, into the strategic plan and then get implemented as meaningful change which will ultimately translate into more success for our students. In their written comments, employees discuss their dismay at the way that their ideas have little formal opportunity to be considered to contribute to student success.

Overall, YCCC employees give a C+ rating to the governance structure, with most rankings in the C to B- range. We are doing a fair to good job of running our shared governance system. The encouraging news is that the average rankings are never lower than the C range, and some are up in the B to B+ range. Clearly there is more that can be done to improve the governance system. As College Council looks at this data, it should consider what kind of governance system will encourage YCCC to grow in a direction that helps students the most.