



# **Kern Community College District**

## **District Wide Decision Making Survey**

Fall 2013

Report on Survey Results

### **Introduction**

As a means of investigating how well the district wide decision making process is working and how well it is understood by college and district leaders at various levels, the Kern Community College District employed a District Wide Decision Making Survey in September 2013. The survey was conducted online and was sent to all current and former members of District Consultation Council, including the past four years of membership. We also surveyed each of the three college's main participatory governance committees, called College Council at Bakersfield College and Cerro Coso Community College and College Learning Council at Porterville College. A total of 60 people completed the surveys, a small group, but reasonable given the small sample size. Given the small size of the sample, demographic information was not collected. The full survey instrument can be found as Appendix B starting on page 11

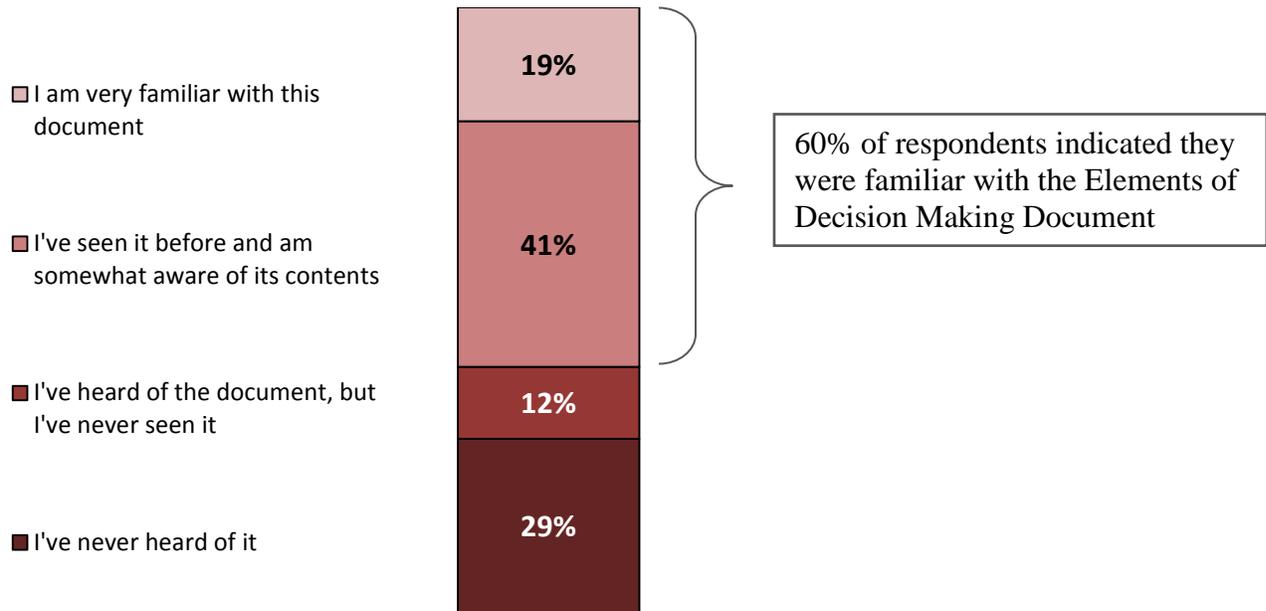
The results of this survey will be provided to District Consultation Council for their review during mid to late fall 2013. That group will discuss next steps for continual improvement of processes and documents.

### **Survey Results**

The survey instrument was fairly short and divided into three sections. The first few questions asked about familiarity with the document "Elements of Decision Making" that is used to describe the district wide decision making process within the KCCD along with questions assessing the back and forth communication patterns among representatives to college and district governance committees and the constituency groups they represent.

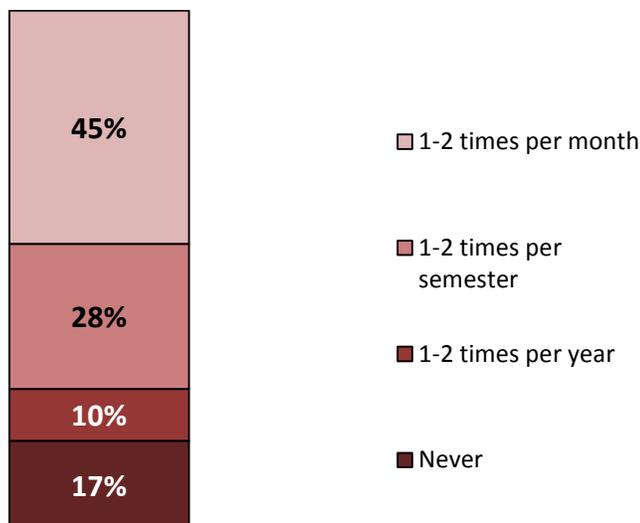
As can be seen from the following chart, about 3 out of every 5 respondents had at least some familiarity with the Elements of Decision Making document, with 41% being somewhat familiar with its contents and another 19% stating that they were very familiar with it. However, almost a third of respondents had never heard of the document at all.

**Figure 1: How familiar are you with the document Elements of Decision Making which describes decision making roles and processes in KCCD?**

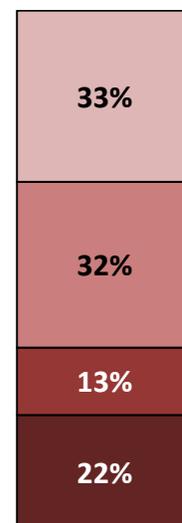


The next two charts depict information about the two-way communication process between representatives of various constituency groups and their constituents. Figure 2 shows how often survey respondents say they communicate with their constituents about district wide decision making. The most common response (45% of respondents) was at least 1-2 times per month. Figure 3 shows the other side of the communication issue—how often constituents communicate back to their representatives. About a third each say 1-2 times per month and 1-2 times per semester.

**Figure 2: How Often Have You Communicated Back With Constituency Groups About District Wide Decision Making?**

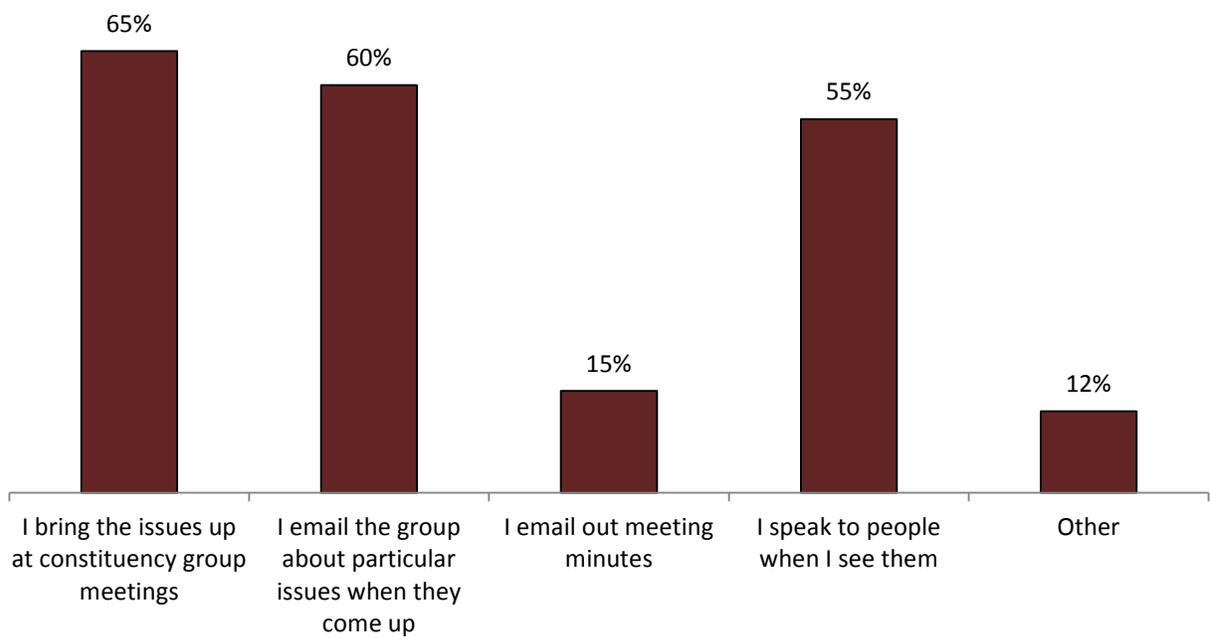


**Figure 3: How Often Have You Received Feedback from Constituency Groups About District Wide Decision Making?**



Another question asked more specifically about the methods of communication used by representatives of constituency groups. Respondents were asked to select all of the methods they used to communicate with their constituents. Figure 4 below provides the results of that question. More than half of respondents bring issues up at meetings, email the group about particular issues, and/or speak to people as they see them. Only 15% email out meeting minutes. Of the small number of respondents who selected “other”, there were no two responses alike. Other methods of communication included constituent newsletters, updates on a campus portal site, and sharing at union meetings. It is also important to note that most respondents (68%) utilized more than one of these methods of communication, and 43% used three or more.

**Figure 4: Methods of Communicating Back With Constituent Groups Regarding District Wide Decision Making**



The next four questions gauged respondents understanding of and opinions on the decision making roles of five constituency groups, along with collective bargaining agreements. For the understanding question, a don't know option was not provided because a person should know whether they believe they understand something or not, but for the other three questions, respondents were allowed to respond as to whether they agreed/disagreed along with don't know.

The highest level of understanding was reported with regard to the roles of academic senates (90%) and collective bargaining agreements (80%). Nearly two thirds also stated that they understand the role of District Consultation Council and district wide committees. About half stated that they understood the roles of the two smaller groups, Chancellor's Cabinet and Chancellor's Administrative Council. See Figure 5 below.

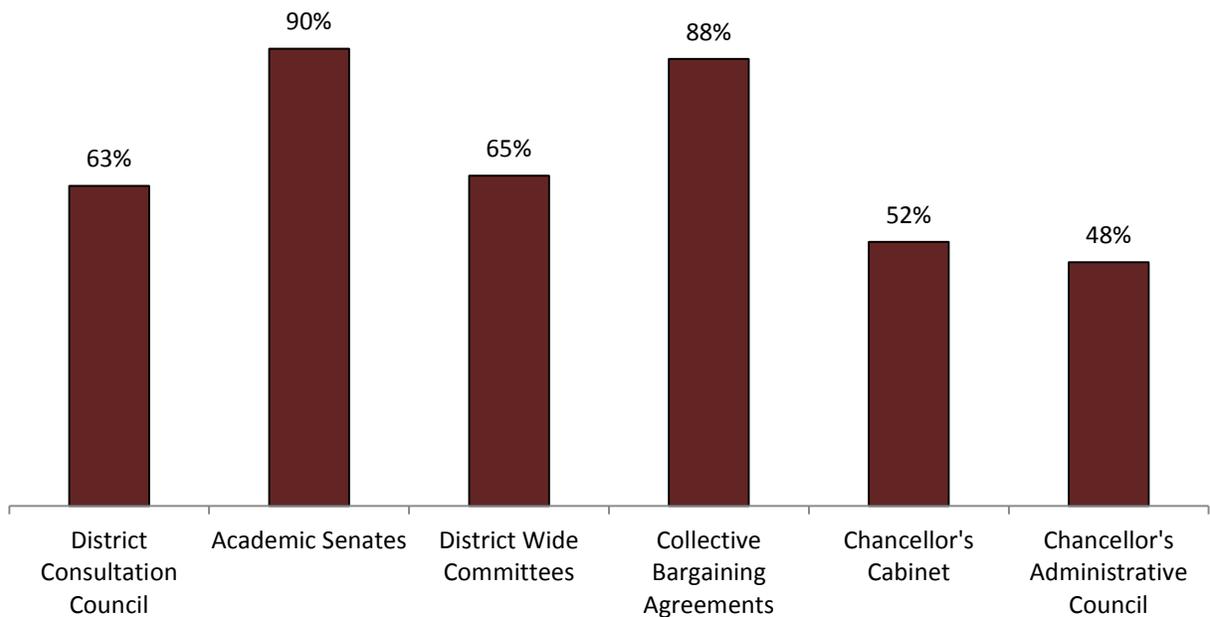
A lack of knowledge is reflected in the other three questions (Figures 6-8). These questions asked about whether the group's role is appropriate to good decision making, whether the group's role was being carried out effectively, and whether the respondent felt input to that group

was valued. For four of the six groups listed, nearly half or more than half of respondents answered don't know to two of the three questions. These results are presented in the stacked bar charts below.

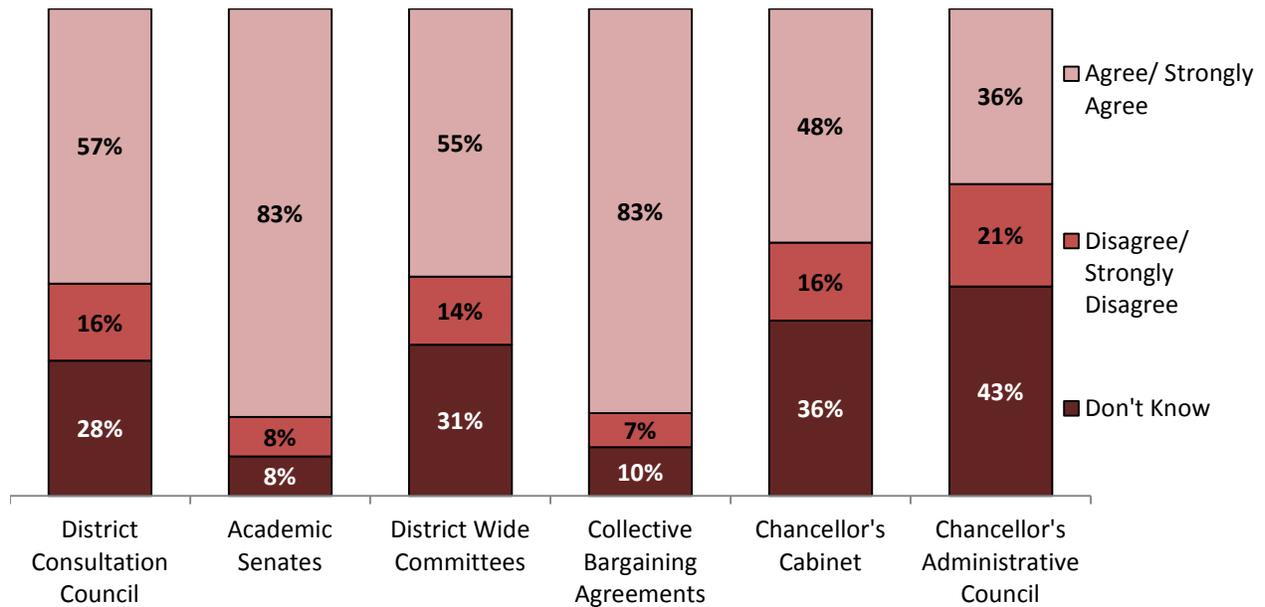
Of those who did answer, responses varied. More respondents agreed than disagreed that each group's role is appropriate to good decision making for all six groups, with the responses being very positive for the Academic Senates and collective bargaining agreements and somewhat less so for other groups. When asked whether the group's role was being carried out effectively, responses were more positive than negative for the Senates, district wide committees, collective bargaining agreements, and Chancellor's Cabinet. Respondents were evenly split between positive and negative for the Chancellor's Administrative Council and more negative than positive for District Consultation Council.

Results were less positive when asking about input and feedback received by these groups. Only the Senates and District Consultation Council had more positive than negative responses, the latter barely so.

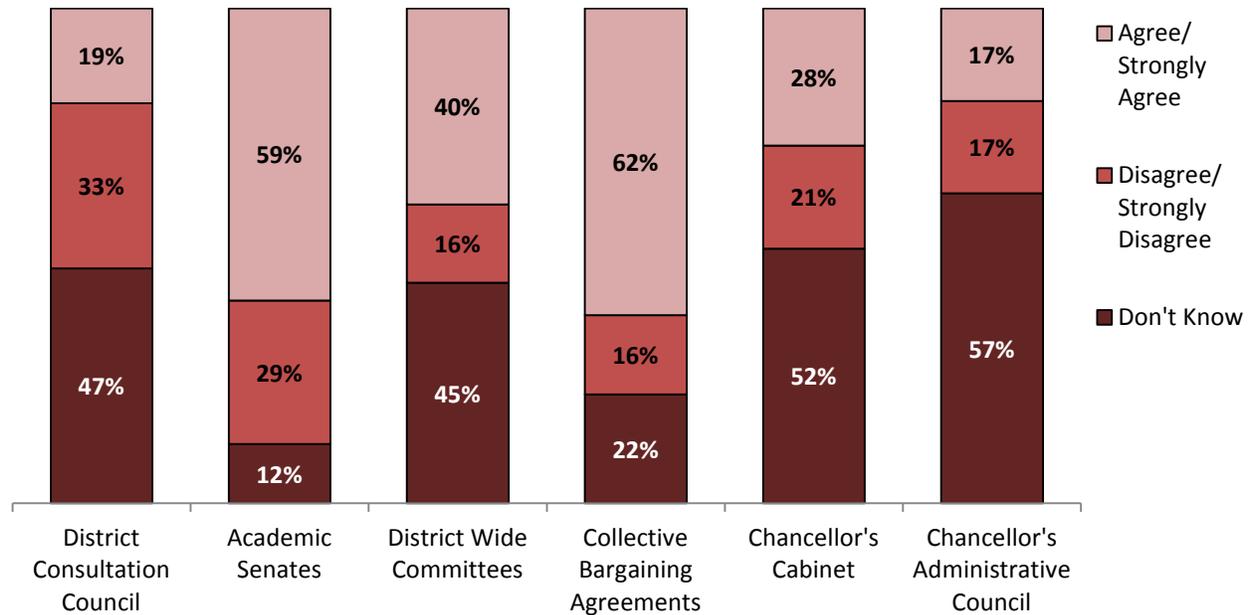
**Figure 5: I Understand the Role of This Group (or document) in District Wide Decision Making (% Who Agree or Strongly Agree)**



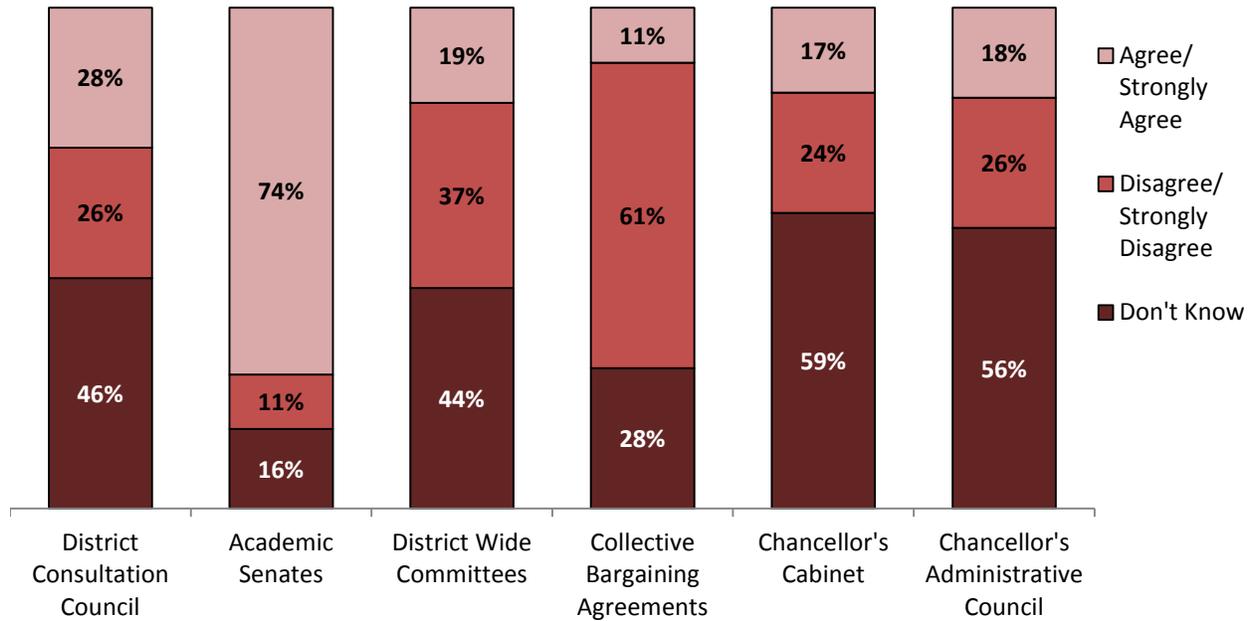
**Figure 6: The Role of This Group (or document) is Appropriate to Good Decision Making**



**Figure 7: This Group's (or document's) Role is Currently Being Carried Out Effectively**

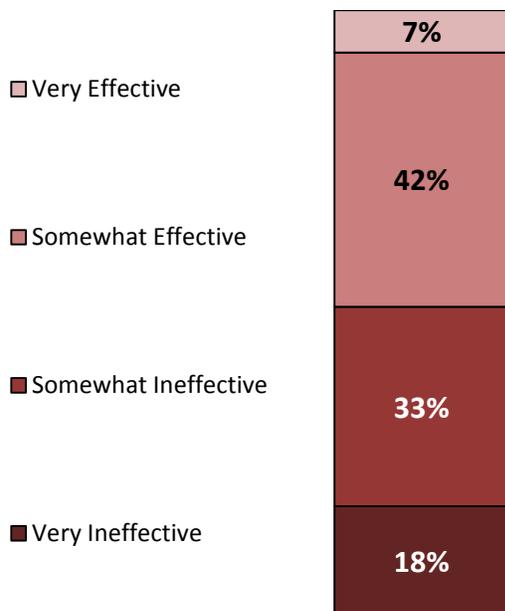


**Figure 8: I Feel The Input and Feedback I Provide This Group (or document) Is Valued**



Next, the survey asked an overall question as to how effective respondents thought the decision making process was overall (see Figure 9 below). Responses were split roughly down the middle. A plurality of respondents (42%) answered that it is somewhat effective. These, combined with an additional 7% who considered it very effective, comprise about half the respondents. The other half thought it was either somewhat (33%) or very (18%) ineffective.

**Figure 9: Overall, How Effective Is the District Wide Decision Making Process**



Lastly, the survey asked one open-ended question; “Please share any additional thoughts you have on the district wide decision making process.” A total of 25 respondents shared comments. These are provided verbatim as Appendix A, beginning on page 8. Here we show only a summary of topics that emerged multiple times in those comments.

<b>Comment Category</b>	<b># of times mentioned</b>
Centralization of decision making	6
Consultation Council Meetings Cancelled	4
Communication problems	3
Need for Academic Senate coordination	3

### **Next Steps**

This survey is merely the first step toward analyzing and improving the decision making process in the Kern Community College District. The sample here is small and given that those surveyed are among college and district leadership groups, the lack of knowledge on some questions is instructive. The results of this survey will be presented to District Consultation Council during the fall 2013 term. That group will discuss what changes may need to be made to improve, knowledge, communication, and decision making in the KCCD.

## Appendix A: Responses to Open-ended Question

### 10. Please share any additional thoughts you have on the district wide decision making process.

#### ID Comment

Timely communication if any from the district office is ineffective and non existent.

3 Trainings for committee memebers would be nice.

4 Recommendations made by Academic Senate are ignored or arbitrarily overturned without clear explanation of why the recommendations were changed.

6 Agenda and minutes of District Consultation Council should be posted in a location that is accessible to all employees. I am unaware of the role/purpose of Chancellor's Administrative Council and how it differs from Chancellor's Cabinet. There is very little information that is shared directly from District Wide Committees, Chancellor's Cabinet and none that I know of from Chancellor's Administrative Council.

7 I am very concerned that the consultation cabinet did not meet last year on a regular basis. I am concerned that there is no district-wide budget committee to review and provide feedback to consultation cabinet on the district budget. I am concerned that major distirct priorities and decisions are sometimes not discussed at consultation cabinet.

9 Do questions 5-8 refer to the document or to a committee to which I belong? My committee is not listed and I am not familiar with the document so I am not sure how to answer questions 5-8

13 The big decisions follow a resonalbe process, but small decisions (changing forms, which IT task should have priority, etc) seem to get made without appropriate consultation with staff at the colleges.

15 Wha dO you mean by "District wide"? Do you mean, how effective is the decision making process at all levels? If this is what you mean, then I would say its effective. But maybe you're asking how effectively decisions are made at the district level...? If so, they often seem to be made in ways that impact students without a clear understanding of how students and the college they attend.

16 1. Consultation Council is cancelled too often to be effective. 2. There needs to be a way for the Senates to develop a coordinated voice for faculty on academic matters on district wide issues. 3) There is too much "managing" of information. We worry about what might prove controversial, but the attempt to control information leads to false rumors, suspicion of motives, and poor understanding.

17 Too many decisions which affect the colelges are determined at the district level, rather than at the college level.

18 I couldn't find space to share more. I'm dismayed with the centralization and micromanagement of district headquarters. It actually makes more work for those left on the campuses to do district tasks.

**ID Comment**

I do not believe most at the district level intend to make decisions maliciously, however I think when district administrative opinions differ from individual campuses and/or faculty I feel that too often the district usually trumps the smaller entity. What is perhaps even more concerning is the often lack of rationale that is either offered from the district

23 and/or communicated effectively to the campuses and faculty.

24 What District wide decision Making process.

1. Make senate district-wide. 2. Stop over-riding decisions. 3. Many still don't know what "Achieving the Dream" actually is. 4. Hiring practices have deteriorated when committee decisions have been over-riden in favor of less qualified candidates. If HR and mgmnt are aware of and sometimes perpetuating these practices, then we have nowhere else to turn except an outside agency or office.

25

Currently, I do not feel informed on any level from my constituency group. Nothing is shared and we are not asked for feedback. However, my job allows me the opportunity to gain the necessary information.

27

Encouragement from the chancellor to district and college leaders that input from those that are doing the day to day work is to be valued is always appreciated.

28

I don't have an answer for item 9. If "I don't know" was a choice, I'd select that one.

35

The decision making process in our district is that we talk. No one listens. Then the chancellor tells us what we are going to do.

37

We haven't had a District Consultation Council meeting in a while. If you don't use this committee it loses it's ability to work as a team. This is really your melting pot of management, faculty, students, and classified. If you look at the intent of Participatory Governance - this is the big kahuna...

39

Authority and responsibility are not aligned. Structure is over designed and restrictive. One size fits all is prohibitive. Level of decision making is not appropriate to the level of the position. Decisions take a long time to get made which leads to peronnel performance and organizational performance deteriorating. The whole decision making strucutre needs to be opened up, discussed and redeveloped to promote our values and priorities-- innovation, accountability, flexibilty, responsiveness.

41

1) Vice-chancellors layer counters KH study of reducing layers between chancellor and students. 2) District Consultation Council (DCC) can only fulfill its role if it meets frequently. Reps on DCC feel valued (and the employee groups they represent) if DCC meets regularly. Chancellor shows how much she values employees by how much time she is willing to carve out of her schedule for DCC to meet.

47

The district seems to operate as though the Colleges are merely branch campuses. The Colleges are not permitted to be autonomous and substantive decision making authority is centralized at the district level. This issue is a well discussed matter at BC, where prevalent joke is that the campus deans are really glorified secretaries and the President's cabinet members have no power to make decisions, impact change and provide the leadership they were hired for.

53

The process is convoluted and hinders my ability to do my job.Veto ability is given to people at the District who know little of education or student needs.An anonymous person outside of the college will stop progress on work and we are left to find out if a form has changed or a word has been re-defined.Progress stops, and often for a reason

56

**ID Comment**

that either should be the purview of the College President or could have been easily taken care of if it had been communicated

57 The perception many employees have is simple: it doesn't matter what the document says. The chancellor and board of trustees make all of the decisions.

58 in areas where I don't know about the group effectiveness(specifically at the district) it is because I don't know what they do, nor do I have information regarding their activity. This communication could be resolved with monthly or quarterly reports to the college committees-specifically college council - who could communicate the information to their constituents.

60 The District's processes seem to be designed to constrict the autonomous processes and decision making authority of the College. The Colleges are treated as "branch campuses" rather than independent academic institutions that should have substantial decision making authority. District controls EVERY college decision, resulting in campus leadership's actions being constricted & thwarted. Truly unfortunate. Does not promote good decision making. Stifles innovation, leadership and progress.

## Appendix B: Survey Instrument



# Elements of Decision Making Evaluation Survey

As part of an ongoing effort to improve processes and procedures throughout the Kern Community College District, we are initiating an evaluation of the district wide decision making process. The roles of the groups involved in the decision making process are described in a document called Elements of Decision Making. A link to that document is provided below.

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions about the process used to make decisions that affect the district as a whole. Note that this survey is **completely anonymous**.

[Link to Elements of Decision Making Document](#)

**1. How familiar are you with the document Elements of Decision Making which describes decision making roles and processes in KCCD?**

- I've never heard of it
- I've heard of the document, but I've never seen it
- I've seen it before, and am somewhat aware of its contents
- I am very familiar with this document

**2. How often have you communicated back with constituency groups you represent about district wide decision making?**

- 1-2 times per month
- 1-2 times per semester
- 1-2 times per year
- Never (skip question 3)

**3. In what ways do you communicate with constituency groups you represent regarding district wide decision making? (select all that apply)**

- I bring the issues up at constituency group meetings
- I email the group about particular issues when they come up
- I email out meeting minutes
- I speak to people as I see them
- Other (specify)

**4. How often have you received feedback from constituency groups you represent about district wide decision making?**

- 1-2 times per month
- 1-2 times per semester
- 1-2 times per year
- Never

**5. I understand the role of this group (or document) in district wide decision making**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. District Consultation Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
b. Academic Senates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
c. District Wide Committees	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
d. Collective Bargaining Agreements	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
e. Chancellor's Cabinet	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
f. Chancellor's Administrative Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

**6. The role of this group (or document) is appropriate to good decision making**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a. District Consultation Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
b. Academic Senates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
c. District Wide Committees	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
d. Collective Bargaining Agreements	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
e. Chancellor's Cabinet	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
f. Chancellor's Administrative Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

**7. This group's (or document's) role is currently being carried out effectively.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a. District Consultation Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
b. Academic Senates	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
c. District Wide Committees	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
d. Collective Bargaining Agreements	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
e. Chancellor's Cabinet	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				
f. Chancellor's Administrative Council	<input checked="" type="radio"/>				

**8. I feel the input and feedback I provide this group (or document) is valued.**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
a. District Consultation Council	<input type="radio"/>				
b. Academic Senates	<input type="radio"/>				
c. District Wide Committees	<input type="radio"/>				
d. Collective Bargaining Agreements	<input type="radio"/>				
e. Chancellor's Cabinet	<input type="radio"/>				
f. Chancellor's Administrative Council	<input type="radio"/>				

**9. Overall, how effective is the district wide decision making process?**

- Very Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Somewhat Ineffective
- Very Ineffective

**10. Please share any additional thoughts you have on the district wide decision making process.**