

Climate and Culture in Higher Education

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The University of Texas of the Permian Basin College of Education administered the Organizational Culture Inventory® (OCI®) and the Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® (OEI) to 15 of its members in an effort to identify and proactively enhance the productivity of the college. The OCI was used to assess its ideal culture in terms of espoused values (what should be expected of members) and its current operating culture in terms of behavioral norms (what is expected of members). The OEI was used to assess the factors and conditions that drive or shape UTPB College of Education Ideal's current operating culture and effectiveness. The impact of these factors and UTPB College of Education Ideal's operating culture on outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels was also measured using the OEI. Results along these outcomes—which have implications for long-term effectiveness—provide an indication of the necessity for organizational development and change.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PERMIAN BASIN

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB) is a comprehensive, regional, master's granting institution in Odessa, Texas. Currently, UTPB has about 6,500 students, made up of early college high school students, dual-credit high school students, undergraduate and masters students. There are five colleges at UTPB: Arts & Science, Education, Nursing, Business, and Engineering.

UTPB is a satellite campus of The University of Texas System made up of (9 universities and 6 health institutions). UTPB is governed by a 10 member Board of Regents and was last accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in April of 2010. UTPB celebrated 40 years of existence as a public institution of higher education in 2013. Located in the Permian Basin of West Texas (Midland/Odessa area, adjacent to Interstate-20), UTPB was originally founded as an upper-level institution to provide coursework for junior and senior undergraduate students and graduate students. The move to include freshmen and sophomores occurred in 1991; however, a large number of junior and senior level students continue to transfer from local community colleges. As such, UTPB continues to thrive as a regional institution, expanding course offerings, particularly in an online format, to serve international and local students.

The five distinct components previously mentioned, College of Business, College of Engineering, College of Nursing, College of Education and College of Arts & Sciences, house 9 departments with 26 major areas of study. UTPB has been approved by the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) to offer 31 initial certifications and 3 supplemental certifications. In Texas, no public institution of higher education (IHE) can offer an undergraduate degree in "Education." Therefore, initial certification

candidates earn their degrees through the College of Arts and Sciences in no more than 120 semester credit hours (SCH), in compliance with Texas legislation.

The College of Education is comprised of two departments: Educational Leadership and Counseling and Curriculum and Instruction (EL & C) and (C&I). EL & C is made up of two advanced level program options: Educational Leadership and Counseling. C&I is made up of both teacher education at the initial and post-baccalaureate levels in addition to four other advanced level programs, namely Professional Education, Bilingual/ESL Education, Reading, and Special Education. Courses for the unit are delivered face-to-face in the Mesa Building or online using Canvas as its platform. In total the College of Education has approximately 750 students.

Beginning in the fall of 2010, UTPB began looking for service providers to expand its online education. The service provider selected to support UTPB in this endeavor was Academic Partnerships (AP), a Texas-based for-profit organization. At the beginning of the collaboration, AP researched various existing institutional programs. Upon identifying seven they believed had the greatest expansion potential, AP provided recommendations and assistance in course development and delivery. Marketing services were also provided for those seven programs. Three of the seven identified programs, Educational Leadership, Special Education and Bilingual/ESL, are within the College of Education. Each of these three programs are at the advanced level.

Individual faculty and program coordinators in each of the areas agreed that by moving in this direction enrollments had the potential of increasing. With increased enrollments, there is more support for hiring faculty. In addition to existing teaching faculty and open lines, there is a pool of adjuncts available to teach program courses and instructional support available through a company called Instructional Connections. Instructional Connections supports the college by providing support in the form of qualified professionals who grade assignment submissions, coach students, and support course delivery. This support is supervised and coordinated under the direction of faculty assigned to teach a given course.

Beginning in 2008, a search for a new Dean was initiated. No hire was made. During the 2009-2010 year, administration appointed a tenured faculty member from the unit to serve as Interim Dean. A national search and an internal search for a Dean did not result in a hire. In 2010-2011, a former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UTPB served as Interim Dean for the College of Education. In August of 2011, a search resulted in a new Dean starting. Within 9 months of his start, he was diagnosed with brain cancer and left the university to receive treatment. He died four months after, devastating the College of Education. Another Interim Dean from the College of Education was put into place until another search could be conducted. Summer of 2012 saw the hire of another Dean. This Dean stayed until May 2016, when he departed for a more prestigious position at another university. Another search was held, and a new Dean was again hired in August 2017. This Dean also lasted one year. A search is currently underway, with an Interim Dean again serving until a hire is made.

RESEARCH

In the fall of 2015, a submission was made to the campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gain approval to conduct the study. It was reported to the IRB that this study would use the Organizational Culture Inventory and the Ideal Culture instrument published by Human Synergistics to determine the current operating and ideal cultures of the College of Education and, perhaps, the university by extension. The surveys would be used to measure the 12 cultural styles in terms of behaviors they promote and their impact on the college and university. With consideration for the collective perspective of those interviewed, the investigator would identify and profile the various organizational culture typographies; and the investigator felt confident in the maintenance of confidentiality because findings would be reported in the aggregate. Approval for the project was granted by the IRB.

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin College of Education administered the *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) to 15 of its members in December 2015. The OCI was used to assess its ideal culture in terms of espoused values (what *should*

be expected of members) and its current operating culture in terms of behavioral norms (what *is* expected of members). The OEI was used to assess the factors and conditions that drive or shape UTPB College of Education Ideal's current operating culture and effectiveness. The impact of these factors and UTPB College of Education Ideal's operating culture on outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels was also measured using the OEI. Results along these outcomes—, which have implications for long-term effectiveness—provide an indication of the necessity for organizational development and change.

In the fall of 2015, data were collected in an attempt to analyze the current, operating, and ideal cultures of the College of Education at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. Fifteen faculty members were surveyed. All 15 returned the survey regarding the “Current Culture”, with a response rate of 100%. Twelve participated in the survey collecting data on the Organizational Effectiveness Inventory (OEI), with a response rate of 80%; and 8 completed surveys providing data on the “Ideal Culture,” with a response rate of 67%. It was reported that many of the faculty did not realize there were three different analyses and assumed the reminders they were receiving were for the survey or surveys they had already completed. Demographics for the participants can be found in Table 1.

A healthy culture is one that motivates members to challenge themselves by establishing goals and encourages them to reach those goals; one that is motivational and encourages others to find fulfillment in their work; one where co-workers are supportive of one another and help each other to grow and develop in positive ways; and one where there is sensitivity, cooperation, and positive, friendly interaction. These constructive aspects of climate are labeled in the *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) as: achievement, self-actualizing, humanistic-encouraging, and affiliative.

The *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) also identify two other areas of organizational operations, passive/defensive and aggressive/defensive. Passive/defensive culture traits are identified when organization members simply “go along” with people to maintain somewhat pleasant relationships; when others conform or fit and blindly follow policies and procedures without consideration for what may be more effective; when employees are dependent on being told exactly what to do by those in positions of authority; and when employees and leaders “fly under the radar” in an effort to avoid being blamed for negative outcomes. These passive/defensive aspects of climate are labeled in the *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) as: approval, conventional, dependent, and avoidance.

Aggressive/defensive culture traits are identified in organizations when others are critical and point out mistakes, gain status by being critical, and dismiss ideas when they are perceived to have even minor flaws; when organizational members are forceful, aggressive, and controlling in an effort to gain power; when employees compete and operate in “win/lose” frameworks that encourage employees to do anything to look good; and when employees operate with unrealistically high goals and work long hours chasing perfectionism. These aggressive/defensive aspects of climate are labels in the *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) as: oppositional, power, competitive, and perfectionistic.

FINDINGS

The overall findings of the *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI®) and the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*® (OEI) were better than the Historical Average of similar organizations, indicating an alignment with a Constructive ideal culture.

As measured by the OEI, UTPB College of Education Ideal's results are:

- **Better than average** in the area of **Articulation of Mission** (the extent to which the organization's mission is clearly defined, illustrated by members, communicated by management, and understood by employees).

- **Better than average** in the area of **Customer Service Focus** (the extent to which members believe that they are responsible for identifying and satisfying the needs of customers or clients).

In turn, UTPB College of Education Ideal's results are equal to or better than the Historical Averages for 28 of the 29 structures, systems, technology, and skills/qualities that were measured. Specifically, UTPB College of Education Ideal's most favorable scores are in the areas of:

- **Goal challenge**, in terms of the extent to which goals are "fairly challenging" rather than too easy or too difficult.
- **Feedback** (from the job), in terms of the degree to which carrying out their jobs directly provides members with information about their performance.

UTPB College of Education Ideal's least favorable scores are in the areas of:

- **Interdependence**, in terms of the degree to which members must make decisions and cooperate with others in order to carry out their jobs.
- **Use of rewards**, in terms of the likelihood that good performance will be noticed and reinforced in positive ways (i.e., "positive reinforcement").

UTPB College of Education Ideal's current operating culture was assessed in terms of the behaviors that are required of members to "fit in and meet expectations." Based on the descriptions provided by its members, UTPB College of Education Ideal's current operating culture is characterized as (from strongest to weakest):

- **Constructive**; which involves expectations for members to interact with people and approach tasks in ways that will help them to meet their higher-order needs for satisfaction and growth (includes norms and expectations for Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging, and Affiliative behaviors).
- **Passive/Defensive**; which involves expectations for members to interact with other people in cautious and tentative ways to protect their own security (includes norms and expectations for Approval, Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance behaviors).
- **Aggressive/Defensive**; which involves expectations for members to approach tasks in forceful ways to promote their status and security (includes norms and expectations for Oppositional, Power, Competitive, and Perfectionistic behaviors).

The current operating culture is very low in terms of the amount of agreement among members regarding the behaviors that are and are not expected. In terms of specific styles, UTPB College of Education Ideal's operating culture is described as:

- **Humanistic-Encouraging** (Constructive), which involves expectations for being supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with one another.
- **Achievement** (Constructive), which involves expectations for setting challenging goals, establishing plans to reach those goals, and pursuing them with enthusiasm.

Overall, the largest discrepancies between UTPB College of Education Ideal's current operating culture and the ideal culture are in the Aggressive/Defensive cluster. In particular, the largest cultural gaps are in the areas of:

- **Oppositional** (Aggressive/Defensive), which involves expectations for opposing the ideas of others, pointing out flaws, and making "safe" decisions.
- **Perfectionistic** (Aggressive/Defensive), which involves expectations for avoiding all mistakes, keeping track of everything, and working long hours to attain narrowly-defined objectives.

The gaps between the ideal culture and the current operating culture are likely due, at least in part, to the nature of UTPB College of Education Ideal's mission and philosophy, structures, systems, technology, and/or skills/qualities.

The OEI assessed UTPB College of Education Ideal's effectiveness at the individual, group, and organizational levels along criteria that influence long-term performance. Thus, results along these outcomes provide an indication of the necessity and urgency for change in the areas of culture and causal factors. UTPB College of Education Ideal's scores are equal to or better than the Historical Averages for

12 of the 12 outcomes that were measured. Specifically, UTPB College of Education Ideal's most favorable scores are in the areas of:

- **Role clarity**, in terms of the extent to which member receive clear messages regarding what is expected of them.
- **Intention to stay**, in terms of the extent to which members plan to remain with the organization.

UTPB College of Education Ideal's least favorable scores are in the areas of:

- **Organizational-level quality**, in terms of the extent to which members believe the organization provides high quality services and products to external clients.
- **Departmental-level quality**, in terms of the extent to which members believe that services provided by their own sub-unit (either to internal or external clients) are of the highest quality possible.

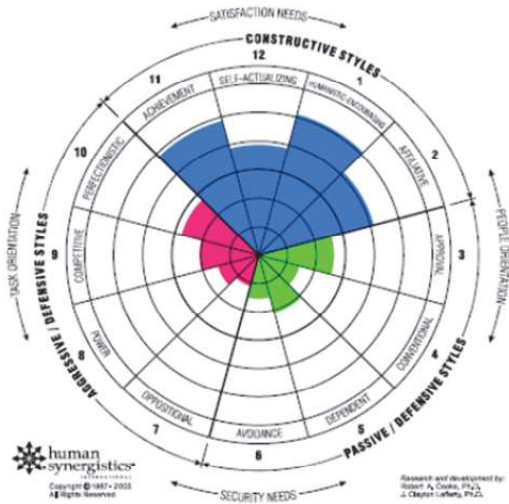
**TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENT GROUP**

TOTAL	CURRENT	OEI	IDEAL
Age			
30-39	2	2	1
40-49	2	1	1
50-59	5	4	1
60 or over	5	4	1
Prefer not to respond	1	1	4
Gender			
Female	9	6	4
Male	5	5	2
Prefer not to respond	1	1	4
Ethnic Background			
Asian	0	0	0
Black or African American	0	0	0
Hispanic	4	4	2
White/Caucasian	8	6	4
Other	1	0	0
Prefer not to respond	2	2	2
Education (Highest Level)			
Master's degree	2	2	0
Doctoral degree	10	8	5
Other	1	0	0
Prefer not to respond	1	1	3
Years with Organization			
1 to 2 years	1	1	0
2 to 4 years	5	4	2
4 to 6 years	1	1	0
6 to 10 years	0	0	0
10 to 15 years	2	2	0
More than 15 years	3	3	2
Prefer not to respond	2	1	4

FIGURE 1
CURRENT OPERATING CULTURE VERSUS IDEAL CULTURE

All Respondents

Current Operating Culture



Ideal Culture

