



College of Alameda President Search Campus Listening Session

October 5, 2026

12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Purpose

A Listening Session was conducted at College of Alameda on October 5, 2026, to gather input from faculty, staff, administrators, and students to inform the College's search for its next president. Participants were invited to share their perspectives on the key issues and opportunities facing the College, leadership qualities and characteristics needed in the next president, and distinctive strengths of the College that should be considered in recruiting and selecting its next leader.

In preparation for this session, Chancellor Gilkerson met with the College of Alameda community on September 28, 2026, to inform them of the leadership transition and the process to be undertaken to identify a new president. She shared the following overview of the Presidential Search Process, to be launched with the Campus Listening Session.



Overview

This briefing summarizes Listening Session participant responses to guiding questions regarding the **key issues facing the College, leadership qualities, and institutional challenges and opportunities** that should inform the search for the next President of the College of Alameda.

Participants: 33 (21 in person | 12 via Zoom)

Facilitator: Dr. Helen Benjamin, HSV Inc.

While participants expressed a broad range of perspectives, several consistent themes emerged: the need for a president who can **lead effectively through transformational change; strengthen trust, communication, and collaboration; advance student success; deepen community engagement; and honor the distinctive identity and culture of College of Alameda**. Participants also emphasized **fairness, transparency, cultural competence, servant leadership, and a sustained commitment to the College**, particularly during a period of significant change across the District.

I. Key Issues Facing the College – Priorities for New President

Participants identified 5 key issues facing College of Alameda that present priorities for a new president.

Advance Student Success and Enrollment Growth

Student success was consistently cited as the institution's top priority.

Desired areas of emphasis include:

- Strengthening student success pathways
- Improving scheduling processes
- Expanding transfer opportunities
- Growing Career Technical Education (CTE) programs
- Improving enrollment and retention
- Increasing student engagement and involvement
- Supporting diverse student populations

Stakeholders stressed the importance of maintaining a student-centered approach in all institutional planning and decision-making.

Lead the Transformation Plan and Organizational Change

Participants identified successful implementation of the Transformation Plan as a critical priority for the next president, including a number of areas of focus:

- Implementation of the Transformation Plan
- Organizational restructuring and staffing alignment
- Facilities planning and modernization
- Accreditation compliance and institutional effectiveness
- Enrollment management and growth
- Program review and strategic planning
- Alignment of district initiatives and pathways

Stakeholders further emphasized the need to guide the institution through change while preserving the college's distinctive identity and strengths.

Strengthen Facilities and Institutional Infrastructure

Participants identified several operational priorities that require executive attention:

- Departmental and program facility needs
- Facilities Master Plan implementation
- Ongoing facility and infrastructure improvements
- Resource allocation aligned with institutional priorities
- Support for accreditation-related operational requirements

Participants underscored the need to ensure that the College's physical infrastructure supports student success, employee effectiveness, and long-term institutional goals.

Strengthen Community and Shared Governance

A focus on meaningful engagement across all constituencies was emphasized, including several key priorities:

- Strengthening shared governance
- Building trust across the institution
- Creating opportunities for broad participation in decision-making
- Re-engaging employees and strengthening campus culture
- Supporting collaboration across faculty, staff, students, and administrators

Participants expressed a desire for a president who can unite the college community and promote collective ownership of institutional goals.

II. Desired Leadership Characteristics

Four sets of leadership traits emerged as most important to Listening Session participants:

Transparent, Trustworthy, and Authentic

Across stakeholder input, a number of strong leadership traits were noted:

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|------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▪ Transparency | ▪ Honesty |
| ▪ Integrity | ▪ Visibility and accessibility |
| ▪ Accountability | ▪ Consistency |

Participants expressed a strong desire for a leader who communicates openly, follows through on commitments, and builds trust and confidence through actions. Related qualities—including servant leadership, humility, respect, and genuine engagement with the college community—were also identified as essential to effective presidential leadership.

Strong Communicator and Active Listener

Stakeholders identified **communication** as one of the most important competencies for the next president. They listed a number of desired communication traits:

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| ▪ Active listening | ▪ Ability to build consensus |
| ▪ Open and honest communication | ▪ Courage to address difficult issues |
| ▪ Emotional intelligence | |

Participants consistently expressed the need for a president who listens first, communicates clearly and candidly, seeks to understand differing perspectives, and engages all constituencies in meaningful dialogue, particularly when addressing challenging or potentially divisive issues.

Relationship Builder and Community Connector

Stakeholders said the next president should **build strong, trusting relationships internally and externally**. Desired attributes include:

- Approachability, compassion, and empathy
- Collaboration and fairness
- Cultural competence and respect for diverse perspectives
- Ability to navigate differences constructively
- Ability to unite people around shared goals

Stakeholders seek a leader who fosters trust, strengthens teamwork, builds common ground, and creates a welcoming, inclusive community united around the College's mission.

Visionary and Strategic Leader

Participants expressed a strong desire for a president who **balances strategic vision with practical execution** and can lead the College effectively through change. Leadership capabilities noted as important:

- Systems thinking and strategic planning
- Innovation and adaptability
- Resilience in navigating change
- Sound, timely decision-making
- Ability to translate vision into action
- Ability to lead effectively through significant change

Stakeholders also emphasized a leader who recognizes and draws upon institutional expertise, empowers others, and practices shared leadership rather than centralized decision-making.

III. Professional Experience and Skills

Participants identified several experiences and professional competencies as important preparation for leading the College successfully:

- Senior-level leadership experience in higher education
- Accreditation knowledge and experience
- Enrollment management experience
- Experience leading organizational change and transformation
- Demonstrated knowledge of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Understanding of workforce development and community partnerships
- Strong business, financial, and operational leadership
- Experience working within complex organizations and shared governance environments
- Knowledge of current higher education trends, policies, and emerging issues
- Demonstrated adaptability in responding to changing institutional needs

Overall, stakeholders seek an experienced and adaptable higher education leader who understands the complexities of community colleges and can effectively navigate institutional, educational, and policy change.

IV. Institutional Strengths and Strategic Opportunities

Distinctive Institutional Strengths

Stakeholders identified several strengths that distinguish College of Alameda and should be highlighted in the Presidential Profile:

- Strong, community-centered culture
- Dedicated employees and engaged students
- Small, close-knit campus that fosters connection and collaboration
- Strong employee commitment and retention
- Welcoming, inclusive, and safe campus environment
- Opportunities for personalized student engagement and support

Participants emphasized that the College's smaller size is a distinctive asset, fostering strong relationships, a sense of community and belonging, and sustained employee commitment while creating opportunities for continued institutional growth.

Strategic Location and Community Connections

Stakeholders identified College of Alameda's distinctive island location and strong community connections as significant strategic assets with considerable potential for growth.

Opportunities include:

- Leveraging the College's unique island location and community identity
- Strengthening partnerships and pathways with local schools, including the on-campus high school
- Deepening relationships with community, business, and civic partners
- Expanding workforce development opportunities
- Growing biotechnology, CTE, and other high-demand programs
- Increasing the College's visibility and presence throughout Alameda and the broader region

Participants emphasized the opportunity to build on the College's location, relationships, and proximity to local schools to strengthen educational pathways, expand community and workforce partnerships, and increase the College's regional impact.

Future Opportunities

Stakeholders identified significant opportunities to strengthen College of Alameda's distinctive identity, expand its reach, and position the College for future growth and innovation.

Key opportunities include:

- Positioning COA as a destination institution
- Expanding workforce, career-focused, and emerging programs
- Growing enrollment through strategic outreach and partnerships
- Strengthening business, industry, and community partnerships
- Expanding grant, research, and external funding opportunities
- Advancing sustainability initiatives
- Attracting, developing, and retaining talented employees
- Fostering innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking

Collectively, these opportunities reflect a desire to build on COA's existing strengths while expanding its visibility, responsiveness, and impact in the communities it serves.

Conclusion

Stakeholder feedback reflects a strong desire for [a president who can lead College of Alameda successfully through transformational change while strengthening trust, transparency, collaboration, and institutional unity](#). Participants seek a [student-centered and community-focused leader](#) who can advance enrollment and institutional growth, engage and empower employees, champion shared governance, and advocate effectively for the College.

At the same time, stakeholders see the presidency as a compelling and meaningful leadership opportunity. College of Alameda offers the [advantages of a small, close-knit and diverse college community; dedicated employees and engaged students; a distinctive island location; and strong connections to the communities it serves](#). Its size and culture create opportunities for a president to be visible, accessible, and personally engaged—and to make a tangible difference.

The next president will have the opportunity to build on these strengths while helping shape the College's next chapter. [For a leader who values community, collaboration, and the opportunity to translate vision into meaningful institutional change, the College of Alameda presidency offers the opportunity for significant and lasting impact.](#)