



DRAFT

Brand Research + Preliminary External Findings

De Anza Brand and Attitudinal Research

Why?

- External perceptions may not always match our self-understanding; research surfaces the gap
- Foundation to strengthen brand awareness, enrollment, or community partnerships
- Provides data for strategic decision-making: communications strategy, resource allocation, and operational decisions
- Better positioned to align programs with workforce and community needs
- Establishes a baseline we can measure against — making future investment and progress visible

Components of the Research

Discovery & Stakeholder Alignment

- Economic Scan and Data Review
- High Level Communications Audit
- 2 large interactive session with college stakeholders, small group conversations

Community Perception Study

- Quantitative survey
- Data analysis and Report (complete with findings and recommendations)

Interviews

- Up to 15 Interviews with current students, staff, industry, community partners and members

Student Journey

- Experiential Admissions Review
- Enrollment Process Review

Schedule

Workshops

In person

May 20 | MLC 101

Session 1: 9–11:30 a.m. | [Register](#)

Session 2: 1–3:30 p.m. | [Register](#)

Virtual

May 28 | Zoom

2-4 p.m. | [Register](#)

Group Interviews

May 21

External Brand Sentiment Review

Brand Sentiment Analysis – What It Is (and Isn't)

What It Is

- A synthesis of external, third-party sources
- A diagnostic of where strengths are visible, where the record is thin, and existing liabilities
- A foundation for formal brand research — identifying the questions that need to be answered

What It Isn't

- Statistically significant: Not a representative sample
- A complete picture: Keyvoices are missing, such as including career students, noncredit learners, and Spanish-speaking communities
- Final or complete recommendations

Top Line by Channel

Reviews

1,600+ reviews

- Faculty quality and transfer outcomes: top-rated across every platform
- Class availability: highest-frequency negative signal
- Counseling and campus social life: consistent secondary negatives



News Media

Two tracks

- Positive: transfer rankings, Aspen Prize, PE renovation
- Critical: DEI controversy, federal targeting, housing, leadership instability
- Critical track carries substantially more national reach

Rankings · Awards
Campus investment

DEI · Federal targeting
Housing · Leadership

Social Media

Organic ✓ Official ✗

- Student-generated TikTok and Instagram content: overwhelmingly positive
- Limited organic reach across channels
- Prospective student discovery channel is functionally unmanaged

Student content:
Transfer · Campus ·
Athletics

Institution: no consistent
presence in any channel

Student and Employee Reviews

Niche · Rate My Professors · Yelp · Glassdoor

What reviewers praise

- **Faculty quality:** accessible, caring, and well-regarded across all platforms
- **Transfer outcomes:** UC/CSU rates are the primary and credible identity claim
- **De Anza Promise:** free tuition + VTA SmartPass specifically praised
- **Campus beauty**
- **Quarter system flexibility**
- **Employee satisfaction:** Glassdoor 4.6/5 — 23% above sector average; 97% recommend

What reviewers criticize

- **Class availability:** top negative signal across every platform — STEM waitlists documented on Niche, Yelp, RMP, Reddit
- **Counseling access:** appointments booked 2+ weeks out; inconsistent advice
- **Social life:** lowest-rated dimension (3.1/5 on Rate My Professors)
- **Administrative friction:** parking, financial aid processing, bookstore
- **Credential identity:** alumni reluctance to foreground De Anza in professional settings (La Voz, June 2025)

Media Coverage and Reputational Issues

External news coverage · 2023–2026

Positive coverage isn't always reaching the target audiences. Critical coverage is.

Positive Coverage

- Aspen Prize eligible — 4th consecutive cycle (Mercury News, Nov. 2025)
- 2025 Pathway Champion, top transfer rankings (Mercury News, Oct. 2025)
- \$53M PE complex renovation (Mercury News, July 2025)
- AI fraud detection tool shared statewide (EdSource, Sept. 2025)
- Highest CA transfer rates; Learning Communities cited as key driver (EdSource, 2023)

Critical Coverage

- Tabia Lee DEI case — covered by Newsweek, Fox, Breitbart, Compact, Inside Higher Ed. No institutional counter-narrative; De Anza's most significant single reputational liability.
- Trump FY2026 budget cites De Anza's Guided Pathways grant in \$121M in higher ed cuts (CalMatters, May 2025)
- FIRE public letter: awards ceremony audio alleged to have been muted to suppress student criticism (Aug. 2024)
- Libs of TikTok ICE raid post — 300k+ views; federal targeting pattern ongoing since Jan. 2026
- McClellan Terrace: 94 families displaced; 4 San José Spotlight articles + editorial; Cupertino council opposed
- Presidential transition: Torres on leave, 3rd in two years; La Voz covering; accreditor-visible pattern

Cross-Platform Sentiment Themes

Patterns that appear consistently across multiple platforms

Transfer as Primary Identity

MIXED

Students choose De Anza strategically. Instrumental and transactional, not aspirational. Effective for enrollment; fosters limited long-term loyalty.

Class Availability

NEGATIVE

Highest-frequency negative signal. STEM waitlists documented across Niche, Yelp, RMP, College Confidential, and Reddit.

Faculty & Academics Strong

POSITIVE

Consistent top-rated dimension. Faculty quality is the most frequently praised attribute across every platform.

Campus Life Deficit

NEGATIVE

Lowest-rated dimension on Rate My Professors (3.1/5). 'Don't go here for a college experience' recurs across Niche and Yelp.

First-Year Engagement Gap

MIXED

'It wasn't until the end of my first year that I decided to make the most of my experience.' Appears in ~46 Yelp reviews. A brand activation problem.

Employee Satisfaction

MIXED

Glassdoor 4.6/5 — strongest external signal in the dataset; 97% recommend. The Spring 2025 Campus Climate Survey tells a different story: 43% faculty climate rating, 9% transparency score among part-time faculty.

Competitive Perception

How De Anza is positioned relative to peers in the external record

De Anza vs. Foothill

Differentiated by culture, not quality

- Students see Foothill as more suburban and easier for class access; De Anza as more competitive and diverse
- College Scorecard: Foothill graduates earn \$11,500 more after 10 years
 - The most significant competitive data point in the external record — currently receives no public attention

De Anza vs. West Valley

De Anza seen as more academically serious

- "It's not a floater school like West Valley" — appears in 10 Yelp reviews
- Organic competitive positioning by students themselves, without institutional prompting
- An authentic brand asset De Anza doesn't actively leverage

De Anza vs. Community College Generally

Consistently outperforms tier expectations

- Quora alumna: "the best experience I had with any University or College"
- Student TikTok content, transfer records, and Glassdoor scores all support an above-tier positioning
- De Anza does not yet claim it beyond transfer

Awareness Gaps

Topics significant to De Anza's mission with little or no third-party coverage



Career Training Programs

Almost no third-party coverage. Programs not generating student reviews on career platforms or employer testimonials in media.



Noncredit & Workforce Development

No third-party coverage despite this being a growing strategic priority and a key differentiation opportunity.



Learning Communities Outcomes

Cited favorably in EdSource and student reviews, but no sustained third-party reporting on student outcome data.



International Student Experience

~1,100 enrolled students; minimally represented in English-language review platforms. A significant unheard voice.



Alumni Voice

No alumni association, alumni press presence, or alumni social community identified. UC Berkeley/UCLA transfers are not amplifying De Anza's brand.



Employer Voice

No employer testimonials, partnership announcements, or hiring manager commentary in the external record outside Glassdoor.

Strategic Implications

Six priority areas based on external sentiment findings

Expand the Brand Narrative Beyond Transfer

Connect De Anza to Silicon Valley outcomes, not just UC admission. Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, DJ Patil — none present in the external brand record.

Establish a Leadership Communications Protocol

Third transition in two years. The information vacuum each time shapes perceptions for donors, accreditors, and faculty. Develop a standard protocol now.

Address Counseling Access as an Urgent Brand Issue

Highest-frequency negative signal across every platform. Communications should not claim more than students actually experience.

Make Social Media a Priority Channel

Limited reach across channels. Organic student content is positive and underused. Build a student ambassador program and amplification strategy.

Activate Positive Coverage in Community Channels

Aspen Prize, Pathway Champion, PPIC rankings reach higher-ed insiders but not enrollment audiences. Amplify into AI-indexed channels.

Treat Internal Climate as a Brand Risk

Spring 2025 Climate Survey is publicly available: 43% faculty climate rating, 9% transparency rating (part-time faculty). These numbers are findable.