

## [Name of Two-Year Institution] Student Focus Group Protocol Latina/o Student Transfer

### Possible Target Population/Groups

Latina/o students who intend to transfer

### Focus Group Purpose

[Name of Institution] is conducting a series of focus groups with students and employees on our campus(es). Our objective is to build understanding of the kinds of experiences that [Latinas/os] who intend to transfer perceive are critical in the community college as well as the kinds of challenges they face. What we learn can be very helpful as [Name of Institution] works to serve its students more effectively.

### Focus Group Outcomes

**Outcome 1:** Understand Latina/o students' educational goals at two-year institutions, whether transferring to a four-year institution is one of those goals, and perceptions about experiences that help them achieve their community college goals and transfer to a four-year institution.

**Outcome 2:** Understand students' awareness and use of policies, programs and initiatives at two-year institutions related to student transfer.

**Outcome 3:** Understand what works or what doesn't at two-year institutions to support student transfer.

### Focus Group Outline

Each focus group will comprise the following activities:

- Meeting overview
- Consent forms
- Participant introductions
- Questionnaires (e.g., demographics forms, survey items, etc.)
- Discussion
- Summary
- Thanks (and stipends, if used as incentives)

Approximate Total Time                      75-90 minutes

### Focus Group Prompts (Pre-Discussion)

1. **Introduce facilitator:** Hello, my name is [Name of Facilitator]. I work for [Name of Institution].
2. **Explain purpose of focus group:** “[Name of Institution] is interested in learning more about your reasons for pursuing a college education, your academic goals, and your perceptions about experiences that help you to achieve your community college goals.”

- 3. Explain desired outcomes and how information gathered will be used.** [Name of Institution] will prepare a report that captures your voices and major themes of this conversation. [List any additional ways the information will be used or disseminated]. However, you will not be identified by name.

**NOTE:** *At this time, the facilitator can read aloud the outcomes provided in this protocol.*

- 4. Explain consent forms and request signatures:** Because we will be recording (and videotaping, if applicable) the focus group conversation, we are required to ask that you sign a form that stipulates your consent. Participation is absolutely voluntary.
- 5. Describe facilitator role:** My role as facilitator is to:
- ask questions and keep the group on track, and
  - explain that we'll be moving through the material fairly quickly, even though people might have more to say about a topic.
- 6. Describe participants' role:** Each participant is expected to do the following:
- share experiences and opinions, both positive and negative;
  - participate in discussion and fill out response forms as requested; and
  - offer advice to college leaders about steps they can take to promote Latina/o student engagement and transfer.
- 7. Audio taping/videotaping/note-taking:**
- Video and audio recording are for the purposes of gathering information to help [Name of Institution] make improvements in its processes for students; writing a report to the college; using video clips in presentations and workshops; and, if applicable, for college leaders to share with faculty and staff to help identify improvement strategies.
  - No names will be used in the report. If you are wearing a name tag or, or any other identifiers, please remove them.
- 8. Logistics:**
- 90 minutes maximum
  - Arrangements for water and restroom break
  - Other?
- 9. Ground rules:**
- One person speaks at a time; no side conversations.
  - No one person dominates; everyone will have a chance to be heard.
  - There are no right or wrong answers; the discussion is about your experiences at this college; what we learn will help not only this college but others as well to improve their work with students.
- 10. Questions:** Now, are there any questions before we get started?
- 11. Verify that all students fit the criteria established for the group:** Before we begin, I would like to verify that each participant meets the established criteria for this focus group. [All students must be over the age of 18. You may add additional criteria below as necessary.]

- Is there anyone who is under the age of 18?
- [Do you identify as Latina or Latino?]
- [Do you intend to transfer?]

**NOTE:** *If someone does not fully meet the criteria or does not fit the target group for participation in the focus group, the facilitator should explain why s/he cannot participate, thank the student for his/her time and give the individual a gift card in appreciation, and courteously escort him/her from the room.*

**12. Ensure that questionnaires and consent forms have been signed and submitted:**

Was there anyone who did not receive, complete, or submit a consent form or questionnaire? [Ensure that all have been submitted before continuing.]

**13. Introduction of participants:** As we go around the room, I want each participant to state their name, number of credit hours earned, course of study, if determined, primary academic goal; and organizational affiliations, if any.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

**Outcome 1: Understand Latina/o students' educational goals at two-year institutions, whether transferring to a four-year institution is one of those goals, and perceptions about experiences that help them achieve their community college goals and transfer to a four-year institution.**

**Q1: Why did you choose this college? Location? Cost? Academic reputation? A particular program?** Is it because a family member or friend went to this college? Other? Is this the first college you've attended? If not, what brought you here?

**Q2: What are your goals in college? Finish? Graduate with degree or certificate? Transfer? Other?** Have they changed since you started? If so, what (or who) caused you to change your mind? How long do you plan/expect to be here to reach your goals?

**Q3: Since you've been at this college, have any of your instructors or counselors or others who work at the college explained their expectations for you and other students at the college?** If so, describe what you think those expectations are. Expectations to complete courses? To earn a degree or certificate? To transfer and continue your education?

**Q4: When did you decide that you wanted to transfer? Before you started at this community college? Since you've been at this college? What made you decide that you want to transfer to a four-year school?** Did any particular individuals influence your thinking about whether to transfer? Someone at the college? Friends? Family members? High school teachers or counselors? Others? What specifically did these individuals say or do that led to your decision to transfer?

**Q5: How important is transferring to a four-year college or university to you? Why? Explain your answer.**

**Q6: Do you plan to earn an associate degree before you transfer? How many of you plan to transfer before you earn a degree?** [**NOTE:** *State out loud the number of students who indicated Yes/No for both questions so we can capture on audio*]

*recording.*] Explain what led to the choice you've made. Did you talk with anyone who encouraged you to either earn a degree at this college before transferring or to transfer before earning a degree?

- Q7:** For students who are still unsure about transferring, what will help you decide for sure whether or not to transfer? More information? If so, what information do you need? *[NOTE: They might talk about financial uncertainty, not knowing whether they can handle it because of the need to work and family responsibilities, etc. The facilitator will need to prompt some possible challenges if they do not volunteer them.]*
- Q8:** At this time, do you have any concerns about whether you'll have enough money to pay for the college you want to transfer to? If so, how will you deal with that?
- Q9:** At this point, as you prepare to transfer, do you feel supported in your decision to continue your education? From family members? Friends? Employers? Others?
- Q10:** Do you have a particular four-year college/university in mind where you intend to transfer? How did you decide on that school? If not, what information do you still need that will help you decide where to transfer?
- Q11:** Have you decided on a specific program that you'll transfer into at your selected college/university? If so, did someone help you make that decision? If yes, who was that—someone at the community college? Someone at the college/university you plan to attend? Family members? Friends? Others?
- Q12:** If you already know where you plan to transfer, have you met with anyone at the college/university where you plan to transfer? If yes, how did that meeting come about? Did you contact the college/university directly? Did someone at the community college help you connect with someone at the college/university? If you have met with someone at the college/university where you plan to transfer, what is that person's role? What was the nature of your conversation with that individual?
- Q13:** Do you currently have a plan showing you what courses you need to take while at this college before you transfer? If so, did you put that plan together yourself or did someone at the college help you with the plan? If someone helped you, who was it?
- If you have a plan, does it show you the courses you need to take at the college/university you'll transfer to? If yes, did someone help you put together that combined plan? If no, what steps do you need to take in order to know what courses to take next after you transfer?*
  - If you answered "No," who helped you? Family members? Community members? Friends? Other? Yourself? [NOTE: If they put together the plan themselves, ask them how they got the information to help them put together the plan.]*
- Q14:** At this point, do you know which of the community college courses you've taken will transfer to the college/university you will transfer to? All the courses? Some of the courses? Not sure?
- Q15:** At this point, how confident are you that you have everything in place to transfer to a four-year school? On a scale of 1–5, (5 being extremely confident, and 1 being

**extremely unsure).** Explain your answer. What else do you think you need to learn or do in order to be prepared to transfer?

**Outcome 2: Understand students' awareness and use of policies, programs and initiatives at two-year institutions related to student transfer.**

- Q1:** Is there a particular office or individual at the community college that you meet with periodically about issues related to transferring? If so, who or which office? To your knowledge, does the college have a specific office or advisor who works with students who want to transfer to a four-year college or university?
- Q2:** Are any of you currently enrolled in both the community college and the university you'll be transferring to at the same time? If so, how did you learn about this opportunity? If not, did anyone at your college ever tell you that you had the option of taking courses in both institutions at the same time?
- Q3:** At this college, are there particular programs, activities, or groups that you participate in that are specifically designed to help students transfer? Are there any that you've been told are specifically for those [Latina/o] students who plan to transfer?

**Outcome 3: Understand what works or what doesn't at two-year institutions to support student transfer.**

- Q1:** When you think about your discussions with college staff members about transferring, how satisfied are you with the advising and support you've received at your college? What has worked for you in that process? What has not worked for you?
- Q2:** How satisfied are you with the help you received in developing a plan with a goal of having credits transfer to the college/university?
- Q3:** Would you agree or disagree with the following statements: ("yes" or "no"?)
- a. "This college clearly communicates transfer requirements to current students and prospective transfer students."
  - b. "This college routinely creates opportunities for transfer students to voice opinions about the transfer process and describe their own experiences."
  - c. *[NOTE: The facilitator may wish to ask representative students to explain their answer, especially in instances where one or two students give a different answer than the majority of the participants.]*
- Q4:** Right now, as you get ready to leave this college and transfer, is there any additional support that this college could provide that would help you successfully transfer?
- Q5:** When you think about your experiences at this community college as you've prepared to transfer to a four-year college/university, what experiences have been most helpful to

you as a [Latina/o] transfer student? Is there any additional help or support you wish the college had offered you to help you prepare to transfer?

**Q6: Advice to student:** If you were giving advice to a friend who was planning to attend this college about what the student could do to be successful here, what advice would you give about transfer?

### **Summary & Close**

**Q1:** Right now, what's the single most important factor that is keeping you moving toward success at this college?

**Q2:** On a scale of 1–5, (5 being extremely confident, and 1 being extremely unsure), how confident are you that you can stay and complete your academic goals? Explain your answer.

**Q3:** Thank you.

**Q4:** Ensure that consent forms have been collected (and hand out stipends, if used).