

## Valencia College Focus Group Guide: Academic Initiative Review (AIR) Supplemental Learning (SL):

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A print version of this document will be provided at the facilitator training and it contains:

1. This overview
2. The Discussion Guide
3. The Participant Details Handout to be handed out at the end (copies will be provided)
4. A Notes Template for the write up of the report and for note-taking

\*\*Note: This guide is only for facilitators and recorders (not for participants)

**Facilitator – Primary Role:** Introduce the purpose (i.e. program improvement – document aspects of the student/faculty/staff experience), set the ground rules (i.e. comments will not be linked to names), guide the conversation to cover the topic areas – delve deeper as appropriate (using questions like: “Tell me more about ....” “What might be an example of that...” “If another community member were to ask you about x, what would you tell them...?”) Take notes as possible, but maintain eye contact as clearly as possible. See related notes and reminders later in The Discussion Guide.

**Recorder – Primary Role:** Listen. Take notes to include non-verbals and changes in tone – like sarcasm or humor – facilitators may not be able to capture that level of detail. At the very end ask any unanswered questions or questions regarding unexplored ideas at the invitation of the facilitator (we will not have time to break, confer, and reconvene the participants.) If the activity results in a product (like a map, writing on the board, or participant activities) take a cell phone photo. Document anything that assists in evaluation the participants’ thinking process, this include exchanges between participants like “I agree” or “I don’t see that.”

**Results and Intended Use** (to be completed by the project director or planning team): Briefly describe the ways the focus group data and the analysis discussion will fit within your timeline and your teams’ own plan for using the data that we will be gathering – connected to the goals for this initiative. We want to better tell the story of the partnerships – how data collection is being provided and then used within the initiatives at the college.

The results from the focus groups will be both college-wide and campus specific. They will be used by the AIR | SL Data Team and contribute to the analysis towards the AIR process. The results will be reported in the August LLC meeting and used more widely in decisions being made about the program.

### **Background of Participants and Purpose of the Conversations:**

The participants are Valencia College students who will have experience with Supplemental Learning (SL). Participants are being selected by Deans of Learning Support in collaboration with staff on their respective campuses. The AIR evaluative process is being conducted to evaluate when and under what conditions the SL program is most effective, while AIR members will identify and recommend possible next steps for the program, grounded in the data and evidence-based effective practices.

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## Discussion Guide

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### **Goals and Research Questions:**

The goal of these focus groups is to get a better understanding of:

- 1) The student experience of the Supplemental Learning (SL) program.

### **Research Questions:**

- 1) How are students experiencing Supplemental Learning (SL)?
- 2) How has SL been implemented in their courses?
- 3) What is the self-reported impact of SL in students?
- 4) What are the strengths and areas to strengthen, from the student perspective?

### **Introduction:**

- Begin on time and thank participants in advance for their time.
  - Introduce yourself and the role of any other note takers in the room.
  - Discuss your role as the facilitator explaining the need for frank and honest feedback and that the information is confidential (ask participants to complete the waiver to audio record for accuracy of the data).
  - Explain aspects of the process telling why are we leading these conversations and what will happen with the information (i.e. to determine what will be used to start the conversations at Valencia College).
  - Stress that this is not an evaluation of individuals or processes at the college.
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### **Establishing Context:**

- **Their Perspective**

Respondent Introduction (first name) and write on both sides of name card.

### **Objective #1**

- **Document how participants ...**

...are experiencing Supplemental Learning (SL) and the self-reported impact of SL on students.

- 1) If someone from outside of the college asked, how would you define Supplemental Learning?
- 2) Please share an example of an experience you had with SL that first comes to mind. Why did that example come to mind?
- 3) What did you learn during your SL experience, if anything?
- 4) Looking back, do you do anything differently as a result of the SL experience?

Follow-up Prompt: Did it change you? How do you know?

### **Objective #2**

- **Reflect on the effectiveness of ... Supplemental Learning (SL)**

- 5) If you were to write a guidebook that a faculty member would read before teaching an SL course, what would you want them to know?
- 6) What are the important elements needed for SL?
- 7) What if the guide was for students who are assigned to courses as Supplemental Instructors – what would you want them to know?
- 8) What are the important steps student Supplemental Instructors should take?
- 9) What are the strengths of the SL experience?
- 10) What are areas to strengthen?

### **Wrap Up**

- **Any follow-up questions raised by note takers...**

- Ask if there is anything else they would like to add.
- Give them "Participant Details Handout" (with pens)
- Let them know they can leave after completing it and thank them for their time.

## Participant Details Handout

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### AIR Supplemental Learning (SL) Focus Groups

Please take a few minutes to share additional information about yourself that will be helpful in informing this work at Valencia College.

- What is your first name?
- Select the campus where you completed your SL courses (the majority)
  - East
  - Lake Nona
  - Osceola
  - West
  - Winter Park
- Which options best describe your role(s) at Valencia. (select all that apply)
  - A full-time student in an SL course. How many times: \_\_\_\_\_
  - A part-time student in an SL course. How many times: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Student in an SL course. How many times: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Student providing SL tutoring. How many times: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Work Study: How many years: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Staff (not Work Study): How many years: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Did you take SLSI 122 The New Student Experience?  
If yes, which semester?
  - Fall 2014     Spring 2015     Summer 2015
  - Fall 2015     Spring 2016     Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your program of study and desired major?
- What are your career/academic goals?
- Please check here if you are willing to have us contact you in the future: \_\_\_\_\_
- If so, please include the best e-mail account to reach you: \_\_\_\_\_

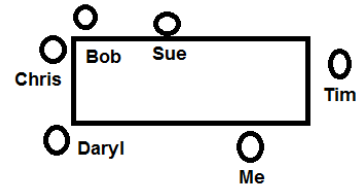
Please include any other comments that you wish to share, here... (or on the other side)

Thank you for your time today.

## Notes Template (in Word)

**Document Their Responses**

**Tip:** Consider drawing the table shape and noting something for each person (her name, the color of his shirt). This makes note-taking easier - you can link specific comments to each person.



1. If someone from outside of the college asked, how would you define Supplemental Learning?
2. Please share an example of an experience you had with SL that first comes to mind. Why did that example come to mind?
3. What did you learn during your SL experience, if anything?
4. Looking back, do you do anything differently as a result of the SL experience?

Follow-up Prompt: Did it change you? How do you know?

5. If you were to write a guidebook that a faculty member would read before teaching an SL course, what would you want them to know?
6. What are the important elements needed for SL?
7. What if the guide was for students who are assigned to courses as Supplemental Instructors – what would you want them to know?
8. What are the important steps student Supplemental Instructors should take?
9. What are the strengths of the SL experience?
10. What are areas to strengthen?

## Wrap Up

- **Any follow-up questions raised by note takers...**
  - Ask if there is anything else they would like to add.
  - Give them "Participant Details Handout" (with pens)
  - Let them know they can leave after completing it and thank them for their time.

**Do you see any overall themes and or are there conclusion you can draw?**

**Do you have any suggestions for us if we use these questions again?**

*Research questions to keep in mind:*

1. How are students experiencing Supplemental Learning (SL)?
2. How has SL been implemented in their courses?
3. What is the self-reported impact of SL in students?
4. What are the strengths and areas to strengthen, from the student perspective?

**Afterwards:** If time permits discuss / debrief after the session. Capture any additional notes from the session and send all notes to the Assistant Director, Learning Assessment by email.