

## Valencia College Advising: Title V

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 title of the East Campus Title V grant is “Strengthening Academic Advising and Transfers”. One of the main areas of focus for this grant is to develop a discipline-based advising model and assist students to transfer successfully after graduation. Recognizing the importance in the student voice in the process, the grant has a specific benchmark of conducting student focus groups on transfer experiences to develop an advising curriculum during the first year of the grant.**

**This will fit within the Title V timeline because we have not yet begun the conversation with faculty regarding the new discipline-based advising model. The information from these focus groups will be used to inform both faculty and advisors of how students understand and perceive the advising process and the transfer process. As this grant has multiple avenues to assist students in their goal of successful transfer, this work will be shared across departments on the East Campus.**

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

The participants are students of Valencia College who may or may not have knowledge of transferring to another institution after graduation. Participants are selected from the divisions of Arts and Entertainment, Business and Social Sciences with 15+ credit hours and are seeking an AA degree. The Title V Leadership Team is conducting research to learn where students experience roadblocks or are confused about the advising and transfer process.

## Discussion Guide

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

The goal of these focus groups is to:

- 1) Improve the transfer process for students
- 2) Develop a discipline-based faculty advising model

### **Research Questions:**

- 1) How do students believe the transfer system works?
- 2) What are the roadblocks or barriers to getting assistance?
- 3) What should the role of faculty be in advising students?

### **Introduction:**

- Begin on time and thank participants in advance for their time.
- Introduce yourself and the role of any other notetakers 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.
  1. Tell us about your plans after graduating from Valencia College.
  2. How much time/effort do you think it takes to transfer to another institution?

### **Objective #1 (Improve the transfer process for students)**

- **Document how participants understand the transfer process** (see notes template for follow-up)
  3. When do you plan on transferring?
  4. Have you taken any steps to prepare to transfer?
  5. Do you know the process for transferring to your first choice institution?

### **Objective #2 (Develop a discipline-based faculty advising model)**

- **Reflect on factors that influence seeking assistance** (see notes template for follow-up)
  6. What is most important to you when getting Academic Advising?
  7. Please share an example of an experience you have had getting Academic Advising. Was it helpful?
  8. What would make you interested in going to your faculty member for Academic Advising?
  9. When thinking about other students at Valencia, how do you think they seek advising?
  10. What one word comes to mind when you think about faculty advising students?

## Participant Details Handout

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### Advising: Title V 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?
  
- List the roles you have had at Valencia. Include previous and current roles. (Include student or employee designations)
  
- How long have you been at Valencia? Designate length in each role . (i.e. 3 years student with 1 year workstudy, 2 years career staff)
  
- 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?
  
- How many credit hours have you completed towards your degree?
  
- 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...

Thank you for your time today.

## Notes Template (in Word)

**Document Their Responses**

1. Tell us about your plans after graduating from Valencia College.
2. How much time/effort do you think it takes to transfer to another institution?
  - How confident are they?
  - Any uncertainties?
3. When do you plan on transferring?
  - Do they tell how?
  - Do they have a specific or vague estimate for graduation?
4. Have you taken any steps to prepare to transfer?
  - What terms do they use?
  - Do they refer to resources at Valencia or other institutions ...?
5. Do you know the process for transferring to your first choice institution?
  - Any concrete? (We can...)
  - Any abstract? (Help with...)
6. What is most important to you when getting Academic Advising?
  - Was convenience a factor? Was personal connection a factor?
  - What kind of expectations do they have? (I want to...)
7. Please share an example of an experience you have had getting Academic Advising. Was it helpful?
  - What impact do they report that this had?
  - What specific question/problem was answered...?
8. What would make you interested in going to your faculty member for Academic Advising?
  - For specific information?
  - For other reasons?
9. When thinking about other students at Valencia, how do you think they seek advising?
  - Any differences reported?
  - Any barriers?
  - Any changes needed?
10. What one word comes to mind when you think about faculty advising students?

**Wrap Up**

- **Any follow-up questions raised by notetakers...**
  - 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.

**Any overall themes and conclusions? Suggestions if we use these questions again?**

*Research questions to keep in mind:*

1. *How do students believe the transfer system works?*
2. *What are the roadblocks or barriers to getting assistance?*
3. *What should the role of faculty be in advising students?*

**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.