

Facilitator and Note Taker Guide

- SGA Students
- Students
- Prospective Students (HS) – some change to protocol
- Parents – some change
- Non-enrolled Adults – some change

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The purpose, timeline, and research questions for our evaluation

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Taking the Pulse Regarding Higher Education - Regional Plans and Perceptions

Results and Intended Use

At Valencia College we would like to understand the ways that potential students are thinking about higher education. Where is education as a priority; where does it fall in the priority set; what is the endgame; and are they planning for now or later? We would like to document their perception of opportunities related to college and any barriers they face. Can we strengthen our services to match the need of what's happening right now in Central Florida (the local economy)? We will be using these results for strategic planning and more specifically in Student Affairs planning, in addition to the creation of the next college campaign.

Push has an ongoing relationship with Valencia College and will be using this data to learn about the prospective student's overall perspective of higher education or college in the current learning environment. We hope to ask direct and actionable questions that lead to meaningful insights and inform us on their attitudes, experiences, expectations and motives for college, thereby helping us to better tell the Valencia College story and enroll students in the college. The development of the research questions, focus group questions, and analysis will be informed by Push, Rumbo and Valencia College. The results will be influential in how we speak to these audiences, how we market to them and how we can strengthen our service offerings.

Background of Participants:

Currently enrolled students are the focus of this set of focus groups. The participants in these focus groups / surveys will be prospective students, parents of prospective students, currently enrolled students and faculty/dept. heads at Valencia College.

Goals:

We aim to:

- Understand what potential students' are thinking about higher education now and once they join us in order to better understand their needs and desires for college and strengthen our messaging to clearly show how Valencia addresses those needs.
- Understand how people are feeling right now and where education falls in their priority set. What challenges or obstacles do they face? What are opportunities?
- Understand the attitudes and beliefs of those that are influential to the prospective students' decision. What are their perceptions of student beliefs and experiences? Understand what approaches they believe to be necessary to create and maintain safe, innovative and engaging student experiences.

Overarching Project Research Questions

1. What are participants' interests and needs related to college attendance?
2. What challenges or obstacles do they face? What are opportunities?
3. How do / can our approaches and services match those needs?
4. Which attitudes and beliefs influence the decision to enroll? Related plans?

Focus Group Template [Type information needed and then use in the session to take notes]

Project Name:

Taking the Pulse Regarding Higher Education - Regional Plans and Perceptions

Facilitator Name:

E-mail:

Note Taker Name:

E-mail:

Date:

Start Time

End Time

Location:

How many attended:

Who – students, staff, faculty:

Topic:

Summary of the session (1-2 sentences): _____

Main observations? (4-5 ideas here) _____

This document 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 note takers (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...?”) Maintain eye contact as clearly as possible. Invite the note taker at the end - to ask any questions or follow-up. See related notes and reminders later in The Discussion Guide.

Note Taker – Primary Role: Listen. Take notes to include non-verbals and changes in tone – like sarcasm or humor – to add to transcript. At the very end ask (a) any unanswered questions or (b) questions regarding unexplored ideas. **Take a screenshot so you have names matched with faces.** 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 includes exchanges between participants like "I agree" or "I don't see that." Be prepared to get (ask for) the transcript link, save it as a txt. File in Notepad, open it in Word, save it as a Word document, edit it and add in anything from your notes.

Discussion Guide

Set up:

- Prior to session Note Taker asks Host if its set to record / transcribe
- Enter the online space early
- Facilitator, Note Taker, and Host should all be "co-hosts"
- Note Taker reminds Host / Facilitator in advance to click "record"
- Note taker watches "lobby" – clicks "admit"
- Watch the chat box – agree on how to handle comments / questions there
- Have participant details survey link for use at the end, paste into chat
- Take a screenshot of the room to note faces with names
- Figure out how to refer to people in the session and your notes.

Introduction:

- Begin on time and thank participants in advance for their time.
- Introduce yourself and the name and role of any other note takers in the room.
- Stress that this is not an evaluation of individuals or processes at the college.
- Read the statement

The statement that must be read by the facilitator:

Welcome everyone it looks like everyone is here, but we may have a person pop in late. Recording will be used to take notes, not shared publicly [click record]. The college is interested in your educational experiences in Central Florida and plans related to this, in part to recognize and expand effective strategies for supporting students.

You do not have to answer questions asked if you are uncomfortable and you can step away at any time. As you know we are video recording for easier note taking, and the videos may be shared within the project team, but they will not be shared publicly. No worries if you have a technological problem, log back in when you can. IF I call on our and your microphone cuts out I may not know, so I will look at you and you can nod. If you have to mute your microphone because of noise at home or step away because of this, we understand – no need to ask or excuse yourself.

We don't often have free flowing conversations like this online at the college so please feel free to listen and respond to each other and know that we have less than an hour – we really want to hear about your opinions. The goal is to have a conversation, sharing ideas and experiences. Your responses will not be shared in connection with your name.

I am the moderator and I am here to guide the conversation but I will not be participating or sharing my opinions.

Do you have any questions?

Questions and Outline for Notes (in Word)

Document Their Responses

Objective A: Higher Education Beliefs:

1. Please tell us your first name and share one reason for staying in college.
Take a moment to think of your answer and I will ask the question again. [pause, repeat, when you do gently ask a specific person to reply, then listen - then "Thank you – anyone else want to jump in?" Warm them up, let them get to know each other's voices, it will go faster after this.]
2. Thank you – how about reasons for leaving college? [Why might you or someone you know leave?]
3. What are your college plans through 2021 [this time next year]?

[How many are planning to stay in school? Postpone? – Tell me more.]
4. How are you making your decisions about what you will do?
5. Where are you learning about your options after Valencia college? [For example are there specific people or resources?]
6. If you plan to continue in school after Valencia College, where do you plan to attend and why?
7. If you have plans other than continuing with your education, what are they [your plans for the future]?
8. Other than the COVID-19 impact, if you could change anything to make your experience better, what would it be?

Objective B: Valencia Beliefs

9. Some colleges advertise in order to get students' attention. What have you heard about Valencia College?
10. Where did you learn this – or who told you?
11. How have your beliefs about the college changed since the pandemic [COVID-19] began, if at all?
12. Many Valencia College classes went online in March 2020 and jobs did too – did yours? What was your experience?
13. Would you take classes online for college in the future if possible? Why or why not?
14. What makes you hopeful for the future? What makes you uneasy [worries you, scares you]?

15. What are your top two priorities for selecting a college?
16. Should people should go to college? [Tell me more.... Why?]
17. Why do you think they should go to Valencia College – or not?
18. As we close, I am interested in how you feel or think about you next steps related to education.
[pause] Can you tell us - in one or two words?

Ask your note taker / observer what they would like to add / ask / if anything was missed?

Do you have anything else to add?

Wrap Up

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

- If you are a note taker please share questions that were not answered, questions or ideas that emerged that should be asked, ask for clarifications on the notes.
- Paste in the "Participant Details Survey" link
- Thank them for their time and let them know you will stick around for questions they are welcome to go, watch the sign-offs.
 - Get transcript from host (several hours after the session)
 - Review notes, finish / clean transcription
 - Connect with partner as helpful
 - Add page numbers, a heading (copy and paste from Protocol)
 - Fill out protocol - summarize, note themes, review questions and answers
 - Return it with the transcript document, also
 - Other?

Afterwards: If time permits discuss / debrief after the session – both facilitator and note taker. Capture any additional notes from the session and send all notes to Laura Blasi by email – lblasi@valenciacollege.edu.

Tip – Keep screenshot with notes to match faces with names