

Valencia College Leadership Academy Student Focus Groups – Summer 2012

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

A print version of this document will be provided on Friday 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 template for the write up of notes afterwards
5. A template with the six questions and probe to use if it is helpful in the discussion

Facilitator – Primary Role: Introduce the purpose (i.e. program improvement – document aspects of the student experience), set the ground rules (i.e. comments will not be linked to student 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 student were to ask you about x, what would you tell them...?”) Take notes as possible but maintain eye contact as clearly as possible.

Recorder – Primary Role: Listen, take notes including 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 question regarding unexplored ideas at the invitation of the facilitator (we will not have time to break, confer, and reconvene the students.)

Afterwards: Send notes to facilitator (e-mail) by Tuesday if possible. (If time permits discuss / debrief after the session.) All will receive a copy of the final report to see the results and next steps from our work together.

Background of Participants: Students at Valencia College that have self-identified for this Academy and have completed 3 of the 4 components of the program, after being engaged in 3 days of activities including a community service project and structured leadership and personal development curriculum through presentations, projects and lunches.

Research Questions:

- 1) How is the Leadership Academy experience described by students?
- 2) Do the themes* of the Leadership Academy surface in their group conversations?
- 3) How are the themes and their related vocabulary or ideas evident in the discussion?
- 4) What has been the impact of the Academy – as reported by students?

* Leadership, Career Development, Personal Development.

Discussion Guide

Introduction:

- Provide your name and thank them in advance for their time
 - Role as interviewer – need for frank and honest feedback, information confidential, etc.
 - Aspects of the process i.e. why are we interviewing, what will happen with the information
 - Stress that this is not an evaluation of the staff members
- We're here to find out about your experiences in THE SUMMER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY.

Establishing Context:

- **Their Story**
 - Respondent Introduction (name)
 - 1. How did you learn about the Academy?
 - 2. Why did you participate?

Objectives:

- **Document what students learned (see the notes template for probes)**
 - 3. What are some of the greatest challenges leaders face that were discussed this summer?
 - 4. What is your most powerful memory from the Academy experience?
- **Reflect on the impact (see the notes template for probes)**
 - 5. What might you do differently over the next year as a result of this experience?
 - 6. Did this experience have any impact on the way that you will interact with students and staff?

Any questions raised by recorder...

- **Wrap Up**
 - Ask if there is anything else they would like to add?
 - Thank them for their time.
 - Hand out the “Participant Details Handout” (will be provided with pencils)
 - Ask them to leave it on the table and before you leave them alone with this
 - Let them know they can go home afterwards

Participant Details Handout

(Handout to be completed by participants at the end of the session –if they would like to)

- What is your first name?

- How long have you been a student at Valencia?

- What is your 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 through.

Please include any other comments that you wish to share, here...

Thank You for Your Time Today

Report Template (in Word)

Document Their Responses

- 1. How did they learn about the Academy?
- 2. Why did they participate?
 - Did they arrive with goals or a plan?
- 3. What are some of the greatest challenges leaders face that were discussed this summer?
 - What terms do they use?
 - Do they refer to specific speakers?
- 4. What is their most powerful memory from the Academy experience?
 - Any concrete? (We went to the homeless shelter...)
 - Any abstract? (I was inspired...)
 - How do they describe the Service project?
- 5. What might they do differently over the next year as a result of this experience?
 - Do they report changes?
 - What kind of changes?
 - Do they indicate they now have goals or plans?
 - What impact do they report that this had?
 - Any problems surface or changes needed?
- 6. Did this experience have any impact on the way that they will interact with students and staff?
 - Have they built relationships?
 - Do they plan to stay engaged?

Any overall themes and conclusions?

Suggestions if we have additional focus groups or use these questions next year?

Research Questions to Keep in Mind:

- 1) *How is the Leadership Academy experience described by students?*
- 2) *Do the themes* of the Leadership Academy surface in their group conversations?*
- 3) *How are the themes and their related vocabulary or ideas evident in the discussion?*
- 4) *What has been the impact of the Academy – as reported by students?*

* Leadership, Career Development, Personal Development.

<p>Six Focus Group Interview Questions and Notes Template</p>	<p>Date Location Begin Time End Time Facilitator Recorder Number in Group Group Name / Topic</p>	<p>Any other details about the participants as the session begins?</p>
<p>Introduce yourself and read the introduction. <i>[Note: As you take notes stick to initials and write up your notes using them. Below you will find space for “notes” – these may be short phrases or questions that you want to return to as you go along.]</i></p>		
QUESTION	Notes	PROBE
<p>1. How did you learn about the Academy?</p>		<p><i>[Probe: “Why did you participate?”]</i></p>
<p>2. Thinking back to the speakers you listened to – what are some of the greatest challenges leaders face <u>that were discussed this summer?</u></p>		<p><i>[Note: You may need to clarify to refocus on the Academy and not on opinion.</i></p> <p><i>You can say “Please talk to each other as you answer this question...”]</i></p>

QUESTION	Notes	PROBE
<p>3. What is your most powerful memory from the Academy experience?</p>		<p><i>[Follow-up needed:</i></p> <p><i>“How about the Community Service project? What was it like....</i></p> <p><i>“How did it relate to the topic of Leadership? Personal Development?”</i></p> <p><i>You can also ask: “What is one thing that you experienced or learned about in the Academy that was the most valuable for you?”]</i></p>
<p>4. What might you do differently over the next year as a result of this experience?</p>		<p><i>[Probe: You may need to ask for an example]</i></p>

QUESTION	Notes	PROBE
<p>5. Did this experience have any impact on the way that you will interact with students and staff members at Valencia in the future?</p>		<p><i>[Note: We are looking at whether or not they built relationships and if they imagine themselves engaging others – and how.]</i></p>
<p>6. Then say: “I want to invite my colleague _____ to ask any additional questions....”</p>		

Finish with a thank you—

**Provide “Details Handout” and pencils and explain that it is optional
And will be collected from the table and that they may go home – there are no further leadership events.**