Valencia College
Student's Use of LifeMap Student Handbook

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 Student Affairs Team will use this information to determine what to publish the 2017-2018 LifeMap Student andbook, which has a publication date of May 2017.

Background of Participants and Purpose of the Conversations:
The participants are Students of Valencia College who may or may not have the LifeMap Student Handbook. Participants are selected from Faculty recommendation and possibly from college-wide survey. Student Affairs are conducting research to learn how students use the LifeMap Student Handbook, the content they would like to see in the Handbook, and the format of the Handbook.

Research Questions:
1) How do students use the Lifemap Student Handbook?
2) Which content in the Lifemap Student Handbook is most useful?
   a. Life, Career, and Educational Goals (6-18) [coded green]
   b. Academic Learning Support and Resources (32-44) [coded blue]
   c. Calendar with reminders/tips personalized by number of credit hours, registration dates, and withdraw deadlines (Nov. 112-123) [coded orange]
3) What is the best format and timing for students to receive important information?

Goals:
The goal of these focus groups is to get a better understanding of:
1) Determine what content is useful for students
2) Determine the format students prefer (paper or electronic)
3) Determine their use of the handbook
4) Determine the knowledge of the handbook (did they even know we had one?)
5) Determine how they would like to receive a handbook each year (how do we let them know about it?)
6) Determine how else to notify them of specific policies and regulations

prepared by Sonya Joseph, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, Nichole Jackson, Assistant Director, Learning Assessment & Laura Blasi, Director, Valencia Institutional Assessment

Discussion Guide

Introduction:
- o Begin on time and thank participants in advance for their time.
- o Introduce yourself and the role of any other notetakers in the room.
- o 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).
- o 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).
- o Stress that this is not an evaluation of individuals or processes at the college.
- ▪ Include here any statement that must be read verbatim that defines an aspect of the research.

Establishing Context:
- ▪ **Their Perspective**
  Respondent Introduction (first name) and write on both sides of name card.
1. Tell us about when you first acquired a Lifemap Student Handbook.
2. How much of the handbook have you used?

Objective #1
- ▪ **Document what participants know about the Lifemap Student Handbook…** (see notes template for follow-up)
3. What did you find most useful about the handbook?
4. Sort the pages you have in front of you into two groups—those that you would use on your left and those that you would not use on your right. There is no requirement that they be equal size groups. Please leave them spread out at we take photos of your selections. Tell us why you chose the ones you would use. Tell us why you chose the ones you wouldn't use. Do any of the pages you chose have tips on the bottom? Are these useful?
5. Do you know what makes up the beginning, middle, and end of the handbook?

Objective #2
- ▪ **Reflect on the effectiveness of information sources available to students…** (see notes template for follow-up)
6. What is most important to you about the way information is communicated?
7. When did you find out about college policies and procedures?
8. Sort the pages you have in front of you into two rows—those that you would more likely reference in a hard copy handbook on top and those that you be more likely to refer to if they were digital. You can stack pages that are alike on top of each other. What digital tools would you prefer to use to access this information on the pages you chose for your bottom row?
9. When thinking about others at Valencia, how do you think they get important information?
10. What one word comes to mind when you think about Valencia resources available to new students?

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

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Participant Details Handout

Student's Use of LifeMap Student Handbook Focus Groups

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

- o What is your first name?

- o List the roles you have had at Valencia. Include previous and current roles. (Include student or employee designations)

- o 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)

- o Did you take SLS1122 The New Student Experience?
  If yes, which semester?
  - ☐ Fall 2014   ☐ Spring 2015   ☐ Summer 2015
  - ☐ Fall 2015   ☐ Spring 2016   ☐ Summer 2016
  - ☐ Fall 2016   ☐ Spring 2017   ☐ Summer 2017

- o What is your program of study and desired major?

- o What are your career/academic goals?

- o Please check here if you are willing to have us contact you in the future: _____
- o 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.

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Notes Template (in Word)

Document Their Responses

1. Tell us about when you first acquired a Lifemap Student Handbook.
   - Did you ever have one?
2. How much of the handbook have you used?
   - How confident are they about using the handbook? Any uncertainties?
3. What did you find most useful about the handbook?
   - What sections did they find most useful?
   - Do they tell how effective some portions are?
4. Sort the pages you have in front of you into two groups—those that you would use on your left and those that you would not use on your right. There is no requirement that they be equal size groups. Please leave them spread out at we take photos of your selections. Tell us why you chose the ones you would use. Tell us why you chose the ones you wouldn't use. Do any of the pages you chose have tips on the bottom? Are these useful?
   - What terms do they use?
   - Do they refer to the website?
5. Do you know what makes up the beginning, middle, and end of the handbook?
   - Any concrete? (It has a calendar in the middle…)
   - Any abstract? (I can look up what I need…)
6. What is most important to you about the way information is communicated?
   - Was speed a factor? Was timeliness a factor?
   - What kind of expectations did they have? (I wanted to…)
7. When did you find out about college policies and procedures?
   - What impact do they report that this had?
8. Sort the pages you have in front of you into two rows—those that you would more likely reference in a hard copy handbook on top and those that you be more likely to refer to if they were digital. You can stack pages that are alike on top of each other. What digital tools would you prefer to use to access this information on the pages you chose for your bottom row?
   - Do they explain what would be better about a digital tool?
   - Do they mention ways to have both hard copy and digital options?
9. When thinking about others at Valencia, how do you think they get important information?
   - Any differences reported?
   - Any barriers to students getting information?
10. What one word comes to mind when you think about Valencia resources available to new students?
    - Do they name the resource after describing it?

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

Research questions to keep in mind:
1. *How do students use the Lifemap Student Handbook?*
2. *Which content in the Lifemap Student Handbook is most effective?*
3. *What is the best format and timing for students to receive important information?*

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.

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