



## **Texas Pathways Institute #6:** *Teaching and Learning in a Texas Pathways Framework* **Student Focus Group Discussion Guide**

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### **Outcomes for the Student Focus Group Advance Work**

1. To understand the learning experiences of students.
2. To understand what motivates students to engage in their learning.
3. To understand how faculty and peer relationships impact student learning.
4. To understand what motivates students to engage in academic support services, and what types of barriers hinder access to these services.

Each college will conduct one student focus group with 7-12 students. Leadership teams will share the insights from the student focus group with their Pathways coach and use the information to inform the college's Action Plan at the Texas Pathways Institute on November 14-16 in Dallas, Texas.

### **Selecting Students for the Student Focus Group**

**Required:** All Colleges - Cadres 1+, 1, 2, and 3

- Recruit a purposeful sample composed of: (a) students who are enrolled in workforce programs, and (b) students who are enrolled in academic transfer programs.
- Recruit students to capture a broad array of instructors.
- Recruit a diverse group of students for this focus group (race, age, gender, etc.).

### **Conducting the Student Focus Group**

- Facilitate the student focus group either in person or virtually based on available resources.
- Utilize the focus group facilitation guide (pages 2 and 3).
- Utilize questions from all five sections from the Student Focus Group Questions (pages 4-5 highlighted in blue).
- Synthesize what you learned and identify key themes to share with your college's Leadership Team in the Student Focus Group Report.

### **Timeline for Advance Work**

**September 2:** Pathways Leads Orientation Webinar (Recording will be posted on the [Texas Pathways Institute #6 event page](#).)

**September 7:** Pathways Leads receive advance work package by email, including: (a) Student Focus Group Guide with Student Focus Group Questions, (b) Consent Form for Students, (c) Profile Sheet for

Students, and (d) Student Focus Group Report Template. This advance work package will be posted on the [Texas Pathways Institute #6 event page](#).

**September 7 – October 31:** Recruit targeted students, conduct focus group, and synthesize what you learned from the students on the Student Focus Group Report template. One report will be created and submitted for students.

**November 7:** LAST DAY TO SUBMIT FOCUS GROUP REPORTS. Upload Student Focus Group Report to TSC's Document Center on the [Texas Pathways Institute #6 event page](#).

Determine project management timeline with input from the Pathways Leadership Team (see table below).

	9/2	9/5-9/9	9/12-9/16	9/19-9/23	9/26-9/30	10/3-10/7	10/10-10/14	10/17-10/21	10/24-10/28	10/31-11/4	11/7
Orientation Webinar											
Receive Advance Packet & Logistical Planning w/IR											
Recruit Students											
Recruit Faculty											
Conduct Focus Groups											
Synthesis of Student Responses => Complete Report Template											
Synthesis of Faculty Responses => Complete Report Template(s)											
Upload Focus Group Reports to Document Center											

## Conducting The Student Focus Group Sessions

### A. Preparation

As participants enter, the coordinator should:

1. Ask participants to sign in
2. Ask participants to sign Consent Form For Students
3. Ask participants to fill out the Profile Sheet For Students

### B. Overview of Student Focus Group Discussion

As focus discussion begins, the facilitator should:

1. Introduce him/herself
2. Explain the purpose of the focus group
3. Confirm that participants have signed the consent forms and reiterate that participants may stop participating at any point. Be sure to provide each participant with a copy of the consent form and you keep the signed form.
4. Describe his/her role:
  - To ask questions and keep the group on track and on topic
  - Keep the discussion moving so that all topics are explored
  - Allow everyone to participate even though some people might have more to say about a particular topic; all voices matter
5. Describe participants' role:
  - To share experiences and opinions, both positive and negative
  - Explain that there are no right or wrong answers
  - Explain that everyone should equally participate in the discussion, however students are not required to answer every question
6. Explain logistics of discussion:
  1. 90-minutes maximum
  2. Arrangements for refreshments
  3. Cell phones turned off
7. Explain ground rules:
  1. One person speaks at a time; no side conversations
  2. No one person dominates; everyone will have a chance to be heard
  3. There are no right or wrong answers; the discussion is about participants' experiences
8. Introduce notetaker and if applicable, audio/video operators. Explain purpose of recording/notetaking:
  - For the purposes of highlighting "student voices" at the college
  - Explain that no names will be used in reporting
  - As the college representative, show appreciation for time, honesty, and authentic conversation
  - Invite questions from participants

## C. Student Focus Group Discussion

### Facilitator Tips:

The goal of these conversations is to hear from as many different students as possible to obtain a rich description of how students learn at your institution.

Remind participants of the value of differing points of view:

- Does anyone see it differently?
- Are there any other points of view?

Probes (questions to elicit more detailed responses):

- Would you please explain further? Tell me more about that.
- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- Would you say more?
- Is there anything else?
- Please describe what you mean.
- Does someone have a similar/different experience?

*[Starting on the next page is a bank of objectives and questions which can be used to form your discussion guide.]*

## Student Focus Group Questions

Required Topics	Questions
Educational Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Please introduce yourself and share why you decided to attend this college.</li> <li>▪ What is your educational goal? (e.g., Upgrade skills for a promotion? Learn new skills to prepare for career change? Certification? Degree? Transfer?)</li> <li>▪ Describe how or when this college provided you with a plan to achieve your educational goal?</li> <li>▪ What does this college do well that enables you to learn new skills and/or the knowledge you need to make progress toward your educational goal?</li> </ul>
Learning Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How would you describe your best courses? What happens in them?</li> <li>▪ Thinking about your courses at this college, describe an experience where you were totally engaged in the class. Did you notice a difference in your learning of the material compared to other classes where you did not have this type of experience?</li> <li>▪ How do you typically try to reach/communicate with faculty when you need to contact them?</li> <li>▪ In your experience at this college, how do faculty take steps to meet the learning needs of students?</li> </ul>
Faculty and Peer Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In what ways have relationships with faculty assisted you in learning the course materials?</li> <li>▪ What things do faculty do that helps you feel like an important member of the college's learning community? What steps would you recommend faculty take to build a relationship with you?</li> <li>▪ How do you form relationships with other students in your courses? How important are peer relationships in assisting you in learning the course material? What steps could faculty take that would enable you to better learn from your peers?</li> <li>▪ Have you ever participated in a study group at the college?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, was it helpful? Why or why not?</li> <li>○ If no, why not?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Academic Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have you ever participated in academic support services at this college such as tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing or math labs, etc.?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, who suggested it? Was it helpful? Why or why not?</li> <li>○ If no, why not?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ What steps could faculty or the college take to help you understand what types of academic support services are available?</li> <li>▪ How could faculty or the college make it easier for you to utilize the academic support services available at this college?</li> </ul>
Student Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is one thing you would improve at this college to help students succeed in their classes?</li> <li>▪ What advice would you give a friend or family member planning to attend college on how to be successful in college?</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experiences learning at this college?</li></ul> |
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