**Spring 2015 Focus Group Summary – Sessions Open to All Students**

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| Common Themes – Challenges/Barriers | # of 6 |
| Transition to college (introduction/welcome to college) | 6 or 6 |
| Course availability | 6 of 6 |
| Counseling (communication and access) | 5 of 6 |
| Personal finances | 5 of 6 |
| Access to college information | 5 of 6 |
| Choosing educational/career goal | 5 of 6 |
| Work/life/school balance | 5 of 6 |
| Instructor expectation and communication | 5 of 6 |
| Understanding financial aid | 4 of 6 |

**Participant Demographics**

*Gender*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | Percentage | College-Wide *(Fall 2014)* |
| Male | 17 | 36% | 44% |
| Female | 30 | 64% | 56% |
| Total | **47** | **100%** |  |

*Ethnicity*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | Percentage | College-Wide *(Fall 2014)* |
| Hispanic | 16 | 34% | 32% |
| White | 20 | 43% | 42% |
| Asian | 2 | 4% | 6% |
| African American | 5 | 11% | 7% |
| Filipino | 3 | 6% | 4% |
| Unknown | 1 | 2% | 1% |
| Total | **47** | **100%** |  |

*Day/Evening Status*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | Percentage | College-Wide *(Fall 2014)* |
| Day (includes students taking both day and evening) | 45 | 96% | 81% |
| Evening | 2 | 4% | 14% |
| Total | **47** | **100%** |  |

*Age*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number | Percentage | College-Wide *(Fall 2014)* |
| 19 or less | 10 | 21% | 28% |
| 20 to 24 | 20 | 43% | 41% |
| 25 to 29 | 6 | 13% | 13% |
| 30 to 34 | 5 | 11% | 6% |
| 35 to 39 | 1 | 2% | 4% |
| 40 to 49 | 2 | 4% | 4% |
| 50 + | 3 | 6% | 4% |
| Total | **47** | **100%** |  |

**Spring 2015 Focus Group Summary – Sessions Open to All Students**

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| **Common Themes – Challenges/Barriers** | **What knowledge and/or action strategies would you share with future first-year students to help them overcome the identified challenges?** | **If you could be college president, with control of the budget, what would you change in order to address the identified challenges?** | **What is currently being done that is effective?** |
| **Transition to college (introduction/ welcome to college)** | * Before anything else, set up appointments with financial and academic counselors * Take the assessment/placement test * Take math and English * Take counseling class/personal development class * Have a plan/Know what you want to accomplish (AA, transfer) * Go online and look at major requirements (Assist.org) * Take the orientation (online or in person) * Walk around campus/find classes before class starts * Use catalog * Don’t be afraid to ask questions * Ask other students/Make friends * Go to main office * Talk to Career Center * Find a mentor who has been through it * Plan for the worst/Start early/Make a plan B * Be open-minded * Talk to your teachers * Visit ratemyprofessor.com * See/visit therapist on campus * Research traffic * Build a personal relationship with your computer * Don’t show up on the hour be at least 15 min early * Realize you are going in as a new student facing the same challenges | * Hire more counselors * Offer online counseling * Personalized online forum for students that has catalog with course descriptions, what each course is, what is completed & what you need to take * Offer general in-person orientation sessions for all students * Technologically savvy counselors * Ice cream and welcoming party * Create mentor system * Create ‘Welcome to College’ what to do checklist/Step by step pamphlet (what to do each semester)/Fact sheet of FAQs * Mandatory 1 credit ‘success’ class for beginning students * Add notation to syllabus (regarding campus policies) * Information booths around campus * Directional assistance/more large maps of campus/directional signs/ copies of maps around campus * More info about Student Services * More mental health resources and referrals to mental health resources * Give military spouses and dependents priority registration (recognition) | * Counselors when available * Effective programs like EOPS * Week of Welcome * Parking permits come quickly * Grace period without ticketing to get your permit * Freshman academy (priority registration) * Campus Therapist * Directional maps * Mental Health Counselors in VA Center |

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| **Course availability** | * Don’t miss registration date * Don’t wait until last minute (to register) * Waitlist, show up/crash class, talk to teacher, be attentive * Sign up for programs that give priority registration * Take other classes first to get priority registration status * Plan out your entire school strategy for more options and to see bigger picture * Look at past schedules, compare them with classes you need and when they’re offered * Pray * Be open minded about class time/flexibility (evening, early morning) * Put classes in queue (WebAdvisor) so at registration time, just hit enter * Have multiple options (time) of same class in queue * Get your general education done in chunks * Communicate with department chair or dean * Check Cuyamaca’s offerings | * Hire more faculty * Offer more sections of impacted classes * Combine waitlists from GC and CC to open a new section * (Schedule) popular classes in bigger classrooms/Outdoor classrooms * Write governor/senator to fund an increase of face to face classes * Increase amount of time that WebAdvisor gives to register before logging out * Provide registration notification over texts/phones * Let students know which classes fill up quickly * Offer classes needed to graduate more frequently * Look at classes with large waitlists/conduct survey on WebAdvisor (like a suggestion box) for new course sections * Change registration priority for those with higher GPA (and one semester away from graduation) * Fix WebAdvisor (cookies) when multiple screens are open | * Hybrid classes * Helpful to have past schedules online to determine frequency of course offerings * Teachers are good * Having night classes is effective * Helpful when sections are added |
| **Counseling (communication and access)** | * Find a counselor you trust that gives you accurate information, then see the same counselor and get to know him/her * Ask three different counselors to determine the accurate answer * Assist.org | * More counselors so students don’t feel rushed * Make it easier to schedule an appointment to see a counselor * Create more programs for diverse students * During Week of Welcome have counselors more available to hand out brochures and help students figure out what courses to take * Hold workshops/trainings for counselors * Assign specific counselors to students | * Umoja |

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| **Personal finances (books, supplies, tuition)** | * Start working * Be aware of timelines for FAFSA * Sign up for all the scholarships you can get (look online) * Apply for Pell Grants * Don’t be dumb with your money * Don’t buy new books – rent/used * Buy books early * Return books for money * Live at home with parents * See financial counselor both on/off campus | * Make more funds available * Create part time jobs on campus * Make scholarships well-known * Add BOGW and FAFSA to orientation * Allow use of earlier textbook editions * Book sales on campus * Match prices to Ross Books * Offer workshop about cost of attending | * Professors that let students know an older version of textbook is ok * Ability to buy books with undispersed funds in Bookstore * List of costs in Financial Aid * Financial Aid options/ BOGW * EOPS |
| **Access to college information** | * See/get to know a counselor * Ask questions * Look online for answers * Take initiative/start early/don’t wait until last minute * Read flyers around campus * Use study center * Attend workshops * Get to know the people that work there (college) and make connections * Get it in writing/send emails and keep them * Be prepared for problems | * Organize items on website for easier navigation * Provide better online resources * Change (counseling) appointment policy, model it after tutoring and make the reservation system online (computer based scheduling) * More info about services for students * Text info about services to students (open app) * Broadcast campus radio in cafeteria * Educate/retrain faculty and staff so they know services available; cross training * Friendlier attitude (from staff/faculty) * Make teachers offer 5 minute tutorial on services available on campus first couple minutes of classes * Make teachers hold Ice breakers first couple minutes of classes * Develop mentor or buddy systems | * EOPS * Updated Blackboard * Health center Info tables outside of Health Services * New GC website * Office hours * Tutoring Center |

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| **Choosing educational/ career goal** | * Finish general education classes first and from that identify interests/Start out broad and stick to one you want * Go to Career Center and take assessment test * Visit Transfer Center * Take personal development class (Counseling 130) * Meet with counselor and be assertive about what you want to accomplish and demand/ask what is required to complete in a certain timeframe * Choose a career based on what you enjoy, not money * Research the salary of careers * Have a plan or goal that you are working toward * Be dedicated * Expect to grow up and mature * You’re on your own * Be serious, don’t close doors * Experiment with your interests * Internship, volunteer or shadow someone in career interest * Attend workshops on careers * Take green/blue sheets from counselor * Visit assist.org * Study for placement test * Take placement test * Career Fair (campus) * Take a personality test * Mix up classes to avoid taking all difficult classes together * Be mindful of homework load | | * Require students to take general education classes first * Hold workshop that features hands-on information about classes in departments to help students choose what to take for GE * Require placement testing * Encourage, inform students of career interest inventory at Career Center * Make career assessment available on web page and make sure it’s accurate * Create a newsletter regarding changes of transfer prerequisites * More counselors * Online/virtual counseling * Make blue/green/white sheets from counseling easier to understand and widely available, including online with a detailed link to those sheets * Host Career fair earlier in the semester and expand time of the fair * Advise counselors to be more involved/ hands on * Hold orientation before semester starts * Workshops/Introduction to career fields through guest speakers in that field/industry * More healthcare preview meetings * Get rid of some of the GE requirements * Accept more units or courses from other campuses/more lenient about what’s accepted from other schools * Publicize that Cuyamaca College classes are included on transcript as well. | * Center * Career Center interest inventory * Career Fair * Information tables during first week of school (week of welcome) * IGETC * Efficiency of Admissions and Records office | |
| **Work/life/**  **school balance** | | * Introduce yourself/let your teachers know about your health problems/communicate with professor * Contact DSPS * Bring your own food * Don’t procrastinate * Live by the planner/alarms/calendars on phones * Be more organized * Set aside everything and prioritize * Set aside social life * Don’t take too many units * Prepare for educational growth and separation from family * Separate work, life and family * Talk with others about it * Heartfelt hugs * Go to EOPS or guidance counselor to stay motivated * Use counseling and the mental health counselor on campus * Time management with homework * Exercise/eat right | * Special absence policy for people with disabilities * Change absence policy for instructors to get substitutes * Conduct surveys (in cafeteria) every couple months to see what people want * Bring a nutritional specialist to campus * Get rid of the entire cafeteria * Make financial aid meal cards available for use at all food venues on campus * Hold open tutoring sessions * Hold open advice sessions * Group circles to talk about personal problems * Hugs * Make known about therapist on campus * Add more therapists; including a few religious therapists * Peer Mentors * Open more classes that allow students to bring kids * Advertise/let students know of resources available on campus * Bring community resources to campus * Make instructors aware of resources available on campus * Have sleeping pods | * DSPS * Really nice people work in cafeteria * Fresh fruit offered in Market * Financial Aid meal cards * New mental health counselor |

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| **Instructor expectation and communication** | * Visit Ratemyprofessor.com * Develop a relationship with your instructor * Go to the instructor and let them know you are struggling * Go to office hours * Email instructors * Tutoring * Preview the textbook and see what material you may know/need to know * Form a study group * Check the instructor’s expectations/read syllabus * Get a group of students and talk to Dean of department | * Have a student liaison for each department * Offer more tutoring * Tutors/TAs inside the class * Offer two week refresher course of what you need to know/something similar to Veteran’s Upward Bound at other schools (quick prep courses to help get students up to speed) * Hold teacher evaluations at end of semester/during final exams in every class, every semester * Faculty evaluation is not accurately measuring the effectiveness of the teacher; Students prefer ratemyprofessor.com because students can be more honest * Make it easier to hold faculty accountable for actions * Form committee that oversees student/professor conflict, offers mediation * Offer ongoing cycle of professional development/workshops for faculty * Ensure faculty regularly review syllabi * Make them (faculty) cognizant of mature students * Require teachers to give extra credit | * We have good faculty at GC * Highly ranked college, proud of quality of education and low cost * Not all faculty need professional development * Professional development offerings for cultural competency * Faculty are helpful when you can get to them * Workshops (math, tutor, calculators) * Syllabus * Some professors are flexible * Evaluations of professors * Instructors are up to date (current in field of study) |
| **Understanding financial aid** | * Attend a financial aid workshop * Make appointment with a financial aid counselor * Call help center * Go to the bookstore * Check WebAdvisor for award * Sign up (for financial aid) by January for fall classes * Be proactive, start early and keep checking/Come to financial aid office before school starts | * Hire more financial aid counselors/people in student services * Improve description on the webpage * Flexibility in who financial aid is given to/getting financial aid back once lost * Send emails to students with FAFSA information * Bulletins on campus to remind of key dates and process * Automatic notification of FAFSA for books in the Bookstore | * Updated FAFSA * Customer service/ compassion of people working in the Financial Aid Office * Fundamentally it is sound |