**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
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| **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
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| **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 centerInfo 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
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| **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)
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| **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
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