Community Conversations Organizer’s Guide: Overview

Community Conversations: A Core Public Engagement Strategy

This Organizer’s Guide was created by Public Agenda, a national partner of Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count. Achieving the Dream is a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students.

Achieving the Dream’s mission is to improve results for the nation’s community college students. Reaching out to and engaging critical stakeholders within the college campus and in the surrounding community is one important dimension of this work. When done well, public engagement builds understanding, support and new partnerships that can help students meet their goals with greater success.

This Organizer’s Guide offers principles, practical guidelines and carefully crafted materials that can help colleges successfully include community dialogue into the mix of their engagement activities. These principles, guidelines and materials are drawn from a number of sources. First, they reflect Public Agenda’s 30 years of experience as a public opinion and civic engagement organization. Second, they are a product of the collective wisdom of Achieving the Dream’s national partners, including many of the nation’s pre-eminent experts on community colleges and social change. Finally, they have benefited from—and will continue to do so in subsequent editions—the many pioneering community colleges that are doing the real work of Achieving the Dream.

We would especially like to thank the community colleges who took part in the pilot engagement project with Public Agenda in 2005-2006, and whose valuable insights and contributions to the development of these materials are greatly appreciated. Thank you very much to the Alamo Community College District in San Antonio, TX; Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, CT; Jefferson Community College in Steubenville, Ohio; Norwalk Community College, in Norwalk, CT; Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, FL, and Valencia Community College in Orlando, FL.

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SECTION 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

This section begins by explaining how community conversations can be integrated into your college’s Achieving the Dream efforts. It provides an overview of Public Agenda’s community conversation model, which has been adapted for the Achieving the Dream initiative. Finally, it describes the outcomes of several past applications of community conversations in a variety of settings.

Engaging the Community through Dialogue

Dialogue can be a powerful tool to aid colleges in their community and stakeholder engagement efforts on behalf of their Achieving the Dream work. Of course, it is not the only strategy colleges can employ in this regard, but it is an important approach that can powerfully complement and lead to other engagement strategies and activities, including the following:

- Broad-based advisory committees and task forces.
- College-community partnerships with businesses, libraries, K–12 systems and many other community-based organizations and institutions.
- Policies and practices that promote transparency.
- Focus groups and surveys (which are related to, but not identical with, these dialogue practices).
- Effective, user-friendly communications.
- Community-friendly practices (“customer service” orientation).
- Service learning and other ways in which students and community intersect.
- Creative strategies to bring the community onto the campus and the college population into the community (field trips; art events, cultural festivals and the like; community service programs and events; volunteer programs).

This Organizer’s Guide will help community college leaders engage their communities in a powerful way through dynamic, productive community conversations about helping students succeed.

These dialogues can raise awareness about community college activities and issues, open up new lines of communication between the college and community and spawn new ideas, initiatives and partnerships that will help more students succeed.
Public Agenda’s Community Conversations Model

Public Agenda’s approach to community dialogue involves several key principles and guidelines that can be applied flexibly to different settings.

Each of these areas is described briefly in the pages that follow and is discussed in detail in various sections of this guide.

Local, Nonpartisan Sponsors/Organizers
Community colleges will be most successful recruiting diverse participants and creating powerful follow-up to community conversations if they enlist the help of other community-based organizations and institutions. A community coalition, in other words, is generally the most effective sponsoring and organizing entity for community conversations.

Diverse Participants: Beyond the Usual Suspects
True community conversations should include a cross section of the community, not just the professional community and a few well-known concerned citizens. Our aim here is to include average citizens as well as experts and professionals and to ensure that all groups and stakeholders are represented and heard from.

Dialogue in Small, Diverse Groups with Trained Moderators and Recorders
A genuine exchange of views can best occur in small diverse groups, with well-trained nonpartisan moderators to facilitate the dialogue and recorders who document the proceedings for effective follow-up.

The Power of Choicework
Public Agenda has developed a Discussion Guide for use by community colleges called “Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve.” The Discussion Guide is organized around giving people alternative ways of thinking about an issue, or what Public Agenda refers to as “Choicework,” an exceptionally effective way of providing citizens with a structure for engaging in an issue with which they may have little experience.

Forum Follow-Up
It is important that these community dialogues be part of a process, one that feeds success for community college students. If they are only single meetings that come and go, with no discernible connection to the life of the college, its students and the community, then they will have been of little value. Thus, a major focus of this guide and of any training that Public Agenda might provide is follow-up and the relationship between community dialogues and action aimed at helping more students succeed.

Picturing a Community Conversation
Each community conversation should be a significant community event. Typically, each will have somewhere between 60 and 120 participants. The session begins with a meal, followed by welcoming remarks by the conversation’s sponsors; organizers then divide participants into groups of about 12 to 14 people.
Each group should be as diverse and representative of the community as possible. The small group discussion is designed to take about two hours; the entire forum will take about four hours.

The basic structure of an evening community conversation is as follows:

▶ 5:45 – 6:30  Registration, Dinner
▶ 6:30 – 6:50  Introduction (large group)
   Welcome, purpose, overview. Brief presentation of key Achieving the Dream data points and instructions for breaking into small groups.
▶ 7:00 – 8:50  Small group discussion
   Groups of 12-14, each with a trained moderator, recorder and prepared discussion starter materials
   7:00  Overview, introductions, ground rules
   7:10  Presentation/discussion of Choicework materials
   7:50  Interim Summary on Common Ground, Disagreements, Questions and Concerns
   8:00  How can the college and community work together to make headway on tonight’s topic
   8:30  Prioritize Action Ideas
   8:40  Next Steps
   8:50  Finish, participants fill out survey
▶ 9:00 – 9:20  Closing (large group)
   Recorders share highlights from each group
   Group discusses plans to follow up on the conversation

Outcomes of Past Community Conversation Initiatives

Outcomes of community conversations are as varied as the communities and the issues themselves. In every case, real change is the result of strategic follow-up to community conversations that builds effectively on the momentum and goodwill generated by the dialogues.

The outcomes for your local college and community will depend on your advance planning for follow-up, the ideas and insights that emerge from the conversations and the ways in which the college, the partner organizations and individual participants take advantage of the process. Following are a few examples of outcomes from past community conversations:
Community-Level Outcomes

The Heritage School, East Harlem, New York City
This public high school with a focus on the arts held a community conversation about how to boost parental involvement. As a result, parents continued to meet around three themes—communication, supporting students academically and involving the community—to tackle the issue. Other outcomes included hiring a translator for newsletters and events to include the many Spanish-speaking parents in the school; creating art and computer classes for parents who said they wanted to better understand how to help their children; expanding the school-business connection with internships. Additional community forums on a variety of topics were subsequently held.

San Jose, California
Community conversations began in San Jose as a way to help revise the district’s strategic plan but became institutionalized as an annual form of community outreach and involvement. Results of initial focus groups and community forums resulted in steeper graduation requirements, annual school report cards and annual “climate reports.” A second wave of six neighborhood-based forums attracted an average of 150 participants each. The district has become committed to the process, creating a Department of Public Engagement.

Bridgeport, Connecticut
After an initial community discussion, a coalition of organizers, led by the local education fund, has continued the dialogue at more than 20 schools in the district. Working with district- and school-level officials, the coalition has sponsored school-based discussions on a variety of topics, including parent involvement, school safety and race in education. The coalition eventually plans to reach every school in the urban district in the coming years.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi
As a result of its first community conversation, which was the first education event encompassing all five of the region’s districts, several local clergy formed a group to focus on education issues. One of the members now also serves on the board of the local education fund that sponsored the meeting. The education fund applied successfully for a grant to increase parental involvement in math and science education, citing the community conversation experience in the application, and the lead moderator at the forum is chairing the project. School board members from the five districts involved in the original forum have created a meeting structure for the first time. The community has also held subsequent community discussions about the role of race in education.
Statewide Outcomes

Property Tax Reform in New Jersey
A New Jersey citizens’ group called the Coalition for the Public Good organized a major statewide “Citizens’ Tax Assembly,” a two-day event based on the community conversation model. The Citizens’ Tax Assembly brought together almost 100 diverse “delegates” from every county in the state to engage one another in a dialogue on possible approaches to tax reform.

The Coalition for the Public Good produced a report on the assembly and took their recommendations directly to the New Jersey Legislature in a set of special hearings. Later, an additional statewide follow-up assembly was held in which the same delegates reassembled to continue refining their recommendations and to tackle the issues in more detail, and several regional forums have been conducted as well. Currently, the coalition is working to influence the findings of a new task force recently created by the state legislature to consider holding a property tax constitutional convention.

Essential Education in Nebraska
The Nebraska State Board of Education was looking for a way to allow a cross section of residents to weigh in on new recommendations they had developed called “Equitable Opportunities for an Essential Education for All Students—Recommendations for Nebraska Public School Districts.” Selected districts across the state facilitated Choicework-type forums with more than 370 parents, students, educators (teachers, principals and superintendents) and members of the general public, overall representing roughly 25 districts.

The state board learned that Nebraskans have an expansive vision of the educational opportunities that should be available to all students and that their views were generally consistent with the board’s recommendations. Consequently, the board was able to adopt the new recommendations, confident that they had received real feedback from the people who would be most affected by the new regulations and that the process reflected true consultation with the public.
SECTION 2: CREATING THE SPONSORING COALITION AND PLANNING TEAM

Section 2 explains the first step in organizing a community conversation initiative—the creation of a Sponsoring Coalition and a Planning Team.

Part 1: Creating the Sponsoring Coalition

Although your community college is taking a leadership role in this effort, community conversations work best if they are presented and run by a Sponsoring Coalition of local institutions and organizations.

Doing so gives the initiative broader reach into the community and communicates that the conversation will be open to multiple interests and viewpoints. It brings a greater variety of skill sets to the proceedings. And wider sponsorship opens up possibilities for long-term partnerships and follow-up.

Sponsoring Coalition

What Does the Sponsoring Coalition Do?

• Publicly sponsors the series of community dialogues.
• Members should balance one another to present a nonpartisan sponsoring umbrella.
• Members should balance one another with respect to skills, knowledge, networks and the like.
• Often includes some active and some passive members—the latter can exist as an advisory council.
• Main responsibilities: Contribute staff and resources to the Planning Team.

Who Should Join the Coalition?

The Sponsoring Coalition comprises the community college and several community partners who collectively lend their names and general support to the endeavor. Sponsors host the conversation process and bring to the effort a variety of resources, including contacts, credibility and special skills. Finally, the Sponsoring Coalition creates and lends people to the Planning Team, which actually makes the conversations happen.

As a community college, you might consider approaching the following potential partners:

• Local employers (especially those who hire community college graduates) or the Chamber of Commerce.
• The local K–12 public school district and/or local four-year colleges.
• A local chapter of the Urban League, the YMCA, religious institutions, a social service organization and the like.
• Local government officials.
• Respected active citizens.

TIP

Use a variety of methods to recruit sponsors, and keep in mind that a personal invitation is often the best.

TIP

Think as well about informal “leaders” who may not have a title or an official position but are respected and trusted in their community.
The more diverse and representative the Sponsoring Coalition is, the better the participation at your conversation is likely to be.

It takes some extra planning up front to bring a good mix of community interests on board, but it is worth the time to make this a true community effort. It’s a good idea to consider some “unlikely” partners: people and organizations of different experiences, backgrounds and maybe political leanings. Co-sponsors do not have to agree on politics or education policy, as long as they agree that community dialogue is an important way to help tackle community challenges. It’s critical to think about who will be able to implement the action ideas that emerge from the conversation and to involve them from the beginning.

Explaining the Initiative to Potential Sponsors

When approaching potential co-sponsors, it’s best to be ready with a brief and straightforward “pitch” that explains the purpose of the community conversation and why you are hoping they will want to get involved. Your “talking points” might include the following:

- You are organizing a community conversation about helping community college students succeed.

- It is based on a model of public engagement developed by the organization Public Agenda, which has been used in hundreds of communities. The model is carefully designed to be:

  ✓ inclusive, going beyond the “usual suspects” to include a true cross section of stakeholders and community members.

  ✓ productive, with trained moderators and recorders working with small groups of diverse participants, using carefully prepared discussion materials.

- The conversation is an integral part of the work you are doing through Achieving the Dream to close achievement gaps on your campus. You intend to use the results to refine policy, build support for the college and its students and forge new community relationships and partnerships.

- Explain the community conversation initiative in a way that will make sense to the people you are talking to—in other words, that will relate to their personal background or their organization’s mission or goals. Help them see how their involvement in the process can enable them to further the work they are already doing, as well as contribute to the college, its students and the community overall.

- When talking to local employers or the Chamber of Commerce, for example, you can explain how a successful process will lead ultimately to better-prepared potential employees—and that a community that sees its local businesses getting involved in the community’s potential as a whole is more likely to support those businesses in the future.

It’s important that members of the Sponsoring Coalition understand this isn’t a typical public relations event. Make sure they are comfortable with the idea that this is an open dialogue and not about selling predecided solutions.
Part 2: Creating the Planning Team

Perhaps the most important task of the Sponsoring Coalition is the creation of the Planning Team, which is responsible for the actual work of organizing the community conversation. Generally, the Planning Team comprises members of the Sponsoring Coalition organizations and individuals recruited to the effort for their specific skills and backgrounds. It should be a diverse group of individuals who are interested in the project and willing to commit the time necessary over the next few months to make it happen. The Planning Team should include people with access to and credibility with various important segments of the local population, including those who are typically uninvolved in or excluded from local decision making.

Important: Colleges are sometimes tempted to take on the lion’s share of work themselves, particularly those with a public relations or community relations department. It is very important to create a true team of people from within and outside of the college who will take responsibility for various aspects of the work involved. Both your conversation and your long term possibilities for follow-up work will benefit.

Planning Team

What Does the Planning Team Do?

- Usually about 12 members drawn from Sponsoring Coalition and, in many cases, additional members who have been recruited because of their interest, expertise, stature, contacts or resources.
- Makes major strategic decisions, including topic selection and addition of local themes/questions, forum location, media policy and so forth.
- Spearheads communications efforts (in coordination with workgroups) such as developing talking points, promotional materials and media guidelines.
- Creates workgroups to manage the various components, drawing from its ranks and recruiting additional people as needed to get the job done.
Who from the College Should Be on the Planning Team?
You may have a “community relations officer” of some kind, and it will likely make sense to include that person. Beyond this, whom might you recruit to the initiative? What about students, not just as participants but as members of the Planning Team? What about faculty—full-time and adjuncts? Might any of your trustees enjoy this kind of project? Are there active citizens who have worked with you in the past on community initiatives who might be strong Planning Team members?

It is a helpful practice to designate someone as the primary liaison and coordinator for the Planning Team. And it usually makes sense to divide the responsibilities among five main workgroups (see “Community Conversations Organizers Chart,” next page) so that no one person or organization bears the entire burden. Each workgroup should also have someone play the role of liaison.

Recommended Meeting Schedule
All members of the Planning Team should try to meet regularly—probably once a week—to make sure planning stays on track and to give the workgroups an opportunity to share their progress with the whole group as well as voice questions and concerns. It’s up to the individual workgroups to decide how often they need to meet to keep up momentum.
Community Conversations
Organizer’s Chart

The following chart summarizes the relationship and responsibilities of the various organizers and workgroups.

Logistics Workgroup
▶ Handles all pre-event and day-of-event logistics for the community discussion(s), including location, food, equipment, registration (working with Participants workgroup) and so forth.

Participants Workgroup
▶ Should be composed of diverse members with knowledge of, and standing in, the various sectors of the community you wish to recruit.
▶ Develops and implements recruitment plan.

Moderator/Recorder Workgroup
▶ Recruits and plans training for moderators and recorders.
▶ Plans and manages moderating needs for all opening and closing plenary sessions, which should be tightly coordinated with the Logistics workgroup.

Communications Workgroup
▶ Creates basic communications tools and products.
▶ Manages media relations.
Follow-up Workgroup

- Ideally, will have community action, community college system and research backgrounds/capabilities.
- Responsible for preparing action opportunities for participants prior to initial forum (for instance, making people aware of organizations and events relevant to the forum’s theme), organizing follow-up task forces that forum participants can join and so forth.
- Also responsible for creating a postforum summary report and postforum communications with participants.
- It is strongly recommended that Follow-up workgroup participants be protected from most of the previous organizational “heavy lifting” (yet still be familiar with the nuts and bolts of the proceedings). This will ensure that the members are fresh and ready to go forward with the follow-up as soon as the event is over.
SECTION 3: STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

This section discusses a number of strategic decisions that the Planning Team needs to grapple with:

- Choosing and customizing the topic.
- Defining “community” for the purposes of this conversation.
- Are you planning a single community conversation or a series?
- Will your community conversation be monolingual or multilingual?
- What can you do to make it possible for everyone who wants to attend to be able to attend?
- Will you invite observers, and if so, whom?
- Will you involve the media, and if so, how?
- Are there critical strategic considerations unique to your situation?

Choosing and Customizing Your Topic

A critical task for community conversation organizers is to select and frame the topic for discussion. Included in this tool kit is a discussion framework that Public Agenda has developed and carefully tested called “Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve.” It employs a Choicework approach, inviting people to consider several ways to address a particular community concern or need, which is a great way to get the conversation going.

Because this topic has been carefully pretested and is available in video as well as in print format, you may want to start with this discussion module before developing your own. However, it’s up to you to decide whether this topic will work for you.

The major components of small group discussions include the following:

- Overview, introductions, ground rules, watch video.
- Part 1: Choicework dialogue on “Success Is What Counts.” (See appendix 1 to review the print version of the “Success Is What Counts” Choicework discussion framework.)
- Interim summary: common ground, disagreements, questions and concerns.
- Part 2: (as an example) “How can the college and community work together to help all community college students succeed?”—or whatever part 2 question you want to develop.
- Next steps.

Customizing Your Discussion Guide

The “Success Is What Counts” discussion framework is meant only to get the conversation going, and there is plenty of room to customize the discussion to cover issues that are important to your college and community.
The material can be customized by developing specific “probes” (questions that moderators keep in mind and ask during the small group discussion) that can explore how a larger theme of the discussion relates to a given college’s specific situation and concerns.

An even more powerful way to customize the materials is to design a subsection of the dialogue that addresses the specific concerns of a given college. This is usually done as a “part 2” following initial discussion of the framework.

Examples of part 2 discussion topics for Achieving the Dream colleges:

- “How can the college and the community do a better job of working together to help more students succeed?”
- “How can the college and the K–12 community work together to make sure more students are prepared for college-level work?”
- How can we more fully engage our busy students in their education and help them develop a true love of learning?”
- “Our Town Community College is about to implement a new initiative to help more community college students succeed. We’d like to tell you about it, get your feedback and see if there are ways you’d like to participate.”

In this way, the conversation will combine materials that have been tested in focus groups (that is, the Choicework) with enough customization to make sure each college can adapt the proceedings to best fit its situation and goals. We believe that balancing both these elements (pretested materials and customization) offers the best recipe for successful conversations.

**Defining “Community” for the Purposes of This Conversation**

An important early step in your planning concerns the size and composition of the community you wish to engage.

One question here has to do with the scope of the community you are engaging. Will the conversation be based in a neighborhood around a single college or campus, within a single town, or around a region with several campuses?

Small- and medium-size communities can have successful communitywide forums, although local organizers who begin communitywide often want to follow up with more local, neighborhood-based conversations. In large urban centers, it may make more sense to plan a series of neighborhood-based forums, in order to narrow the scope to a level that average residents can relate to. There is no one way to think about this. Rather, it is something that you should decide for yourselves based on your goals and your knowledge of the local culture.

Another question concerns how you conceive of the community members and stakeholders you wish to include. The Participants workgroup section is concerned primarily with helping you think about whom to invite and how to do so effectively. Please turn to that section for further thoughts and guidelines on this crucial subject.
**SECTION 3: STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

Are You Planning a Single Community Conversation or a Series?

A related consideration is whether you want to plan a single conversation and then pause to assess how best to follow-up or, alternatively, arrange a series of conversations from the start.

If you are interested in the series idea, there are a few options to consider. One is to apportion several full-scale conversations over a predetermined period of time. Another is to organize one full-scale conversation and then hold several smaller, “satellite” conversations; this will provide some scale to your effort, allow you to reach specific sectors of the community and keep your workload manageable. (For more information and detail on the question of multiple forums, see section 9 of this guide.)

Will Your Community Conversation Be Monolingual or Multilingual?

In many cities and towns across the country, non-native English speakers or those with limited to no English are a large and vital part of the community. It is very important to the success and overall credibility of your initiative that you make provisions for involving those community members. This is especially important for Achieving the Dream community conversations if your data analysis has shown that there is an achievement gap between ESL (English as a second language) and other students and you are targeting their achievement as part of your initiative.

While multilingual forums present some challenges, they are not insurmountable.

Structuring the Conversation to Include Non-English Speakers

To begin with, you will have to decide whether to organize discussion groups by language—in which case you will need to provide a bilingual moderator and recorder (who have participated in the moderator/recorder training)—or have non-English speakers mixed in with the others but provide translators for each small group.

Mixing non-English-speaking and English-speaking participants in the same group offers the greatest diversity. On the other hand, having same-language groups eases the flow of conversation for English and non-English speakers alike. In our experience, local organizers have most often chosen to provide simultaneous translation during the opening and closing plenary sessions and to create one or two non-English-language breakout groups so that non-English speakers can experience a free-flowing dialogue. Whichever approach you choose, make sure

- you have enough translators and bilingual moderators.
- participant materials are translated.
- interpreters are available during the opening and closing plenary sessions, either at the front of the room or at the table with the non-English-speaking residents.
What Can You Do to Make It Possible for Everyone Who Wants to Attend to Be Able to Attend?

Of course, you’ll want the conversation to be held in a well-known, accessible location that people will feel comfortable visiting during whatever time of day the meeting takes place. What else can you do to make it possible for virtually everyone to attend? Can you, for instance, provide some assistance for participants with transportation and/or with child care?

Of course, there are limits to how far organizers can go to make things accessible. Time and money can be factors. Depending on the facility, there may not be appropriate space for child care. But these are questions you will want to think about.

Will You Invite Observers, and If So, Whom?

Observers might be education or community leaders such as K–12 superintendents, college presidents and other senior members of the college’s administration; town council members; mayors; and others who will attend the discussion groups to listen and observe the proceedings but not participate actively.

This is not to say that such people should necessarily be observers rather than regular participants; rather, it is an option that might be preferable for you or for them. In some instances, a controversial public figure could become a distraction if the group focuses more on that person than on the issue under discussion, and it may be best for that person not to be present. In other cases, public figures have felt comfortable staying in the background and just listening. Authorities and leaders rarely get to hear from a broad cross section of the community in great depth. In still other cases, local leaders have participated effectively in the discussions and everyone seemed perfectly comfortable with it.

You might consider asking one of the observers to speak briefly at the closing plenary session, sharing his or her perceptions of the session. And you should definitely plan to meet with observers after the event and include them in your plans for follow-up.

Will You Involve the Media, and If So, How?

Occasionally, a local media outlet has acted as a co-sponsor of a community conversation and is therefore part of things from the beginning. But more typically, organizers need to decide if they want to involve the media and how. Also, you must be prepared to respond to the media if they become interested in your project.
In general, media coverage of community conversations has been very positive, so unless there are specific reasons to assume the media will be hostile, you do not need to be overly anxious about bad press.

The most important issue related to the media is how to protect the quality of the conversations. Participants who see the press in attendance may feel less comfortable expressing themselves or advocating a position. One way to handle this is with a simple ground rule that reporters usually agree to abide by:

*Reporters may report what they hear, but they may not attribute quotes to individuals unless they speak to that person following the meeting and the person agrees to be quoted.*

If the media are present under these conditions, the moderator should inform the group at the outset. The same ground rules that you lay out for reporters can also be applied to “bloggers,” should you have any who wish to attend and blog the discussion, either during or after the event.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **How do we get media coverage for our community conversation?**
   - Alert the media about the conversation through a press release or media advisory.
   - If you decide, you can also invite reporters to cover the conversation itself.
   - Ask a member or members of the Sponsoring Coalition to write an opinion piece for the local newspaper calling attention to the issue and the upcoming conversation.

2. **What if a news article isn’t accurate or gives the wrong impression?**
   - Make every effort to provide reporters with the most accurate, up-to-date information possible, and try not to have too many people in contact with reporters. In fact, you might think about designating a “spokesperson,” someone who will be the main point of contact with the media.
   - Nevertheless, mistakes do happen. If one does, be sure to call the reporter or editor and ask to have the misinformation corrected. Even if the paper doesn’t publish a correction, it will hopefully not repeat the mistake in any future stories.
Are There Critical Strategic Considerations Unique to Your Situation?

The strategic questions and considerations we’ve discussed so far are almost always important themes for Planning Team discussion, regardless of the college or community. But your institution or community may be subject to unique dynamics that you should be aware of and prepare for.

For example:

- Are there hot button issues on campus or in the community that are liable to emerge? If so, how can you prepare for them?
- Is it election season, and if so, is that a factor to take into account?
- Are there racial or other social tensions in the community or on campus that should be thought through?
- What is the perception of the college in the community? Are there any particularly challenging community leaders or groups that will need special attention?
- Are there any special opportunities that the community conversation could help you take advantage of? For instance, perhaps a new community foundation has formed or a new school board has been elected. Including such stakeholders as co-sponsors could be a good way to build new relationships.
SECTION 4: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Section 4 provides an overview and timelines for many of the practical, nitty-gritty tasks that must be accomplished, from drawing up a budget to recruiting and training moderators. While many of these will be handled by one of the workgroups, it’s a good idea for everyone on the Planning Team to understand the entire process.

Budget and Funding

The following list may help you create a budget for the forum(s). Many communities have received in-kind donations from community organizations or local businesses for some of these items, such as space, food or printing expenses. You should designate one or two individuals from the Planning Team to develop an overall budget as well as budgets for each workgroup.

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Mailing/Printing Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conversation Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of the Participant Guide and additional materials, copies of the Moderator/Recorder Guide, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET: $_________
List of Planning Tasks

This list should help you get started—add to it as needed. Tasks are presented in roughly the order in which they should be addressed. Detailed information on these tasks and other practical considerations are included in the sections in this guide relating to the five workgroups.

- Choose a date(s) for the community conversation(s).
- Choose/customize topic.
- Decide on the scope of the community (neighborhood, town, regional, etc.).
- Select the conversation site(s) and make arrangements for food and equipment.
- Recruit people to serve as moderators and recorders.
- Develop a list of potential participants and observers.
- About four to six weeks before the conversation, invite participants and observers. Ask them to respond at least two weeks before the date of the event.
- As the date nears, follow up written or e-mailed invitations with telephone calls to all participants, especially those who may be difficult to involve, ensuring participation of a diverse cross section of stakeholders.
- Assign confirmed participants to small discussion groups so each group represents the diversity of the total.
- Determine if media coverage is desired, and if so, develop a communications and media outreach plan.
- If possible, provide copies of the Participant Guide to confirmed attendees before the conversation(s), but plan to have them available at the forum.
- Conduct moderator training two to five days before the forum.
- Follow up on the community conversation in a variety of ways.
- Other:
Planning Team Timeline

You should start planning and working on your community conversation at least two months in advance, preferably three. This sample timeline is meant as a rough guide to help you schedule your planning activities.

Ten weeks before the forum
- Solidify sponsors, get Planning Team in place
- Define community, choose forum topic
- Decide on media and observer policy
- Create workgroups for the various planning responsibilities (logistics, participants, moderators/recorders, communications, follow-up)
- Workgroups begin their tasks

Eight weeks before the forum
- Planning Team meets as needed to coordinate and monitor progress of subcommittees

Six weeks before the forum
- Mail invitations to participants and observers (roughly four to six weeks before forum)
- Recruit moderators/recorders
- Confirm logistics: location, food, equipment

Three to four weeks before the forum
- Additional participant recruiting to assure a diverse participant group, as needed
- Planning Team meets as needed
- Begin initial contact with media (optional)

Ten days to one week before the forum
- Moderator/recorder training session held
- Follow-up/reminder phone calls to participants
- Additional participant recruiting to fill in weak spots, as needed
- Continue follow-up with media (optional)
- Finalize equipment, food, logistical needs
- Plenary and closing session plans in place (who will welcome, handle questions about follow-up and so on)

Day of forum
- Hold community conversation
- Debrief next day with moderators and organizers

One to two weeks after the forum, Follow-up workgroup meets
- Creates summary report, compiles questionnaire results, creates recommendations memo and presents to Planning Team for approval
- Mails letter to participants, shares report with appropriate parties, media and the like
- Reviews additional next steps as determined by Planning Team, such as discussion of plans for next forum (if appropriate)
SECTION 5: LOGISTICS WORKGROUP

Sections 5-9 are devoted to the workgroups that the Planning Team should form to make sure there are people responsible for the various tasks that need attention. This section deals with the Logistics workgroup, which handles the “nuts and bolts” tasks of organizing the community conversation, such as

- selecting a location for the community conversation.
- coordinating the meal and meal-related needs.
- ensuring that all necessary equipment is arranged and in place on the day of the event.
- day-of-event coordination, including
  - registration of participants.
  - making sure all equipment is in place for plenary and small group meetings.
  - providing general support and troubleshooting to other workgroups.

Selecting a Location for the Conversation(s)

The conversation can probably be held at the college itself unless there’s a good reason to hold it somewhere else. You’re looking for a location that is welcoming, not particularly controversial and relatively easy to find and travel to. Additionally, the location must be able to handle the space needs of a broad-based community conversation, with

- a dining area for up to 100 to 125 participants.
- a large room (can be the same as the dining area or different) for the opening and closing plenary sessions.
- breakout group rooms that are easily and quickly accessible and can accommodate about 12 to 18 persons each. Such rooms must be able to have seating arranged in a circle or semicircle.
- enough restrooms in the building for all attendees.
- appropriate space and personnel if child care is to be provided.

Providing Meals

Offering a meal before the conversation begins is a great way to set a relaxed and friendly tone and carries symbolic weight as people who may be on different sides of an issue or from different parts of town break bread together. You may be able to find local merchants or civic groups willing to donate food or utensils or volunteers who will offer to serve or clean up.

We have also seen some colleges use students and faculty from the culinary arts department to prepare and serve the meal. This is a great way to involve students in the process and to show off their skills to the community.
Equipment Checklist for Community Conversation

Very little special equipment is needed for a typical community conversation. The following checklist, however, will help you plan for what you do need.

Registration
- Long rectangular table and chairs for staff
- Registration or check-in sheets to track who has arrived
- Blank sheets for walk-ins to jot down contact information
- Name tags for participants, name tags for staff, pens, markers and so on
- Other

Dining area
- Tables for serving food
- Tables and chairs for eating
- Plates, forks, knives, napkins, garbage cans and so forth
- Other

Central discussion room (may also be used for one of the small group discussions)
- Podium and microphone
- Flip chart, markers, masking tape (or self-stick flip chart)
- Optional: Seating, if more than one speaker
- Optional: PowerPoint set up, if a brief presentation is to be made at opening and/or closing plenary sessions
- Other

Breakout rooms
- Printed participant materials
- TV monitor and VCR if using video discussion starter
- Flip chart, markers, masking tape (or self-stick flip chart)
- Movable chairs set up in a circle, semicircle or horseshoe
- Other

TIP
Make sure someone is present to troubleshoot any audiovisual equipment you will be using.
Day-of-Event Coordination

**Main Room and Breakout Rooms**
The first and most basic responsibility is to check that the plenary room setup is adequate, with enough seats for the expected crowd to see and hear everything and microphones and audiovisual equipment as needed.

Although the Moderator/Recorder workgroup should be checking to make sure everything is in place in the breakout rooms, you may want to coordinate with its members to make sure everyone knows who is bringing what to the event. Make sure all audio/video equipment is working and that each room has a flip chart and pens.

The rooms should ideally be set up in a horseshoe or semi-circle shape. (Each location is different of course, but you should try to get as close to this as you can.)

**Registration**
A registration table should be set up where participants enter the building. At the table, they should receive a Participant Guide and name tag indicating their small group assignment. Make sure there are friendly and enthusiastic people at the registration table able to answer basic questions about the community conversation. And someone should inform participants where the meal is taking place.

A task that the Logistics workgroup and the Participants workgroup can share is assigning preregistered participants among the breakout groups.

Occasionally, people complain that they are not in the same group as their friend or spouse. Explain to them that the purpose of the conversation is to listen to and learn from people they might not normally interact with and that the conversations are usually richer when this is the case. But if they insist, it’s fine to accommodate them.

Members of the Logistics workgroup can help on the day of the event by troubleshooting as needed.

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**TIP**
A note on walk-ins: It’s always possible that you’ll have some people who are not preregistered (and thus assigned to a specific group) but wish to participate. Assuming you are not approaching your location’s maximum capacity, the best way to handle walk-ins is to distribute them randomly among the small discussion groups.
SECTION 6: PARTICIPANTS WORKGROUP

Part 1 of section 6 will help you think about whom to invite and how best to go about inviting them. You will also find some suggestions on how to include and welcome community members who don’t speak English.

Part 2 explains the material you will need to provide participants at the event. A sample Participant Guide and Participant Survey are included.

Part 1: Whom to Invite and How to Gain Participation

Whom to Invite

We recommend an invitational, or mostly invitational, community discussion. Why? In our experience, extending a personal invitation is the best way to ensure the most representative and diverse group possible. An invitation that is extended by someone who is a friend, a respected local leader or another trustworthy source is far more likely to engender a positive response than a general announcement viewed on a bulletin board or in a newspaper. The diversity generated from well-thought-out and targeted invitations is also helpful in preventing “single issue” advocates or the most strident voices from dominating the proceedings.

Achieving the Dream conversation participants should include a wide cross section of the community’s general public along with students, faculty, administrators, community leaders and any and all “voices” and stakeholders who would want to be represented and/or have important roles to play in the success of the college and its students. This is a good place to make use of your alumni—get them involved!

We recommend you consider recruiting the following:

- The general public, aiming for a demographic spread that roughly reflects the overall community.
- Parents/guardians and spouses of community college students.
- Current community college students and alumni.
- Four-year college students (recent high school graduates, transfer students and the like).
- Community college faculty and administrators.
- K–12 educators/school administrators/guidance counselors.
- Four-year college administrators, guidance counselors and/or faculty, if there are any nearby.
- Local employers, especially those who might be in a position to hire young people from the community.
- Community leaders, such as
  - local government officials.
  - community-based organizational leaders, particularly those in workforce development programs and who serve low-income communities and/or populations of color.

TIP

Sending out personalized invitations and making phone calls help you target your prospective participants, and open the group to more than just the “usual suspects”—that is, those people who show up at every public meeting on your issue.

TIP

Ask your Sponsoring Coalition to provide you with names and contact information for people they would like to invite. Send those people letters inviting them on behalf of the organization who suggested them.
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ORGANIZER’S GUIDE

• Local employers, especially those who might be in a position to hire young people from the community.
• High school students (11th and 12th graders only, as younger students have a more difficult time participating in a group of adults).
• Others: ____________________________________________.

Guidelines for Successful Recruiting

• Make special efforts to reach out to people who tend to be **uninvolved** and who represent the **diversity** (ethnically, economically, politically) of the community.
• **Over-recruit** those participants least likely to come. For example, you should probably not over-recruit full-time faculty, but you might want to over-recruit adjunct faculty and non-English-speaking members of the community.
• Consider involving **students** through appropriate classes. For instance, a political science or education professor might offer class credit if his or her students get involved in the community conversation as organizers or participants.
• Even though this section is organized around groups that should be represented, each person should be **invited as an individual**, bringing his or her own points of view, rather than purely as a representative of a group.
• Invitations should come from **personal contact by credible sources** within subcommunities. A respected senior citizen is often an effective person to invite other senior citizens to attend, and a student will often be the best person to invite other students.
• In addition to personal outreach, it is a good idea to send **written invitations**. This helps people feel they are being included in something special.
• Communicate that the meeting is **different**—more interesting, engaging and welcoming than most public forums or meetings.
• Also communicate that the meeting **matters**, which may mean talking about why it is so important to improve results for local community college students and that the sponsors and organizers are going to use the results to improve policies and support new initiatives to help community college students succeed.
• Setting up a web site about the conversation is a good idea. Many colleges found this as an easy way for participants to RSVP for the event.
• **Track progress** as you go, and make adjustments to hit your recruitment targets.
• Send a **confirmation letter or e-mail** to participants to confirm their attendance. The letter should reinforce the time and place of the conversation and should also include clear directions to the location as well as instructions regarding child care provision (if applicable).
Recruiting Non-English Speakers

One of the first questions organizers should ask when they begin to recruit participants is whether there are non-English-speaking populations within the community that ought to be represented, and if so, how best to include them in the discussions. (See section 3 for more detail on multilingual conversations.) Invitations and the Participant Guide, for instance, should often be translated into your community’s dominant second language, whether it’s Spanish, Chinese, Creole or something else. (This tool kit does contain some materials in Spanish.)

Moreover, it makes sense to have as a member of your sponsoring and/or organizing committees someone with ties to the non-English-dominant community you are interested in, someone who can inform the planning process and help with grassroots outreach to recruit people to the upcoming conversation(s). Such personal outreach is important to successful recruitment in general, but it is critical here. The more welcome you make people feel, beginning with the invitation, the more likely they are to attend. This means, for example, phone calls to potential Latino participants by a Spanish speaker.

When potential participants hear about the community conversation frequently and in myriad contexts, they will be more likely to participate. Generating a “buzz” through the media will help with this and can be even more powerful when it’s supported by word of mouth, flyers and advertisements.
Sample Participant Recruitment Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Target #</th>
<th># Invited</th>
<th># Accepted</th>
<th># Still Needed</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino community members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happens if we are not getting enough representation from some important groups that should be at the forum?
   Track progress, increase invitees and try new strategies. Ask those who have agreed to attend to bring a friend from that community. Think about why you are having trouble attracting those individuals—what is keeping them from attending? Then try to address those obstacles directly. Think about targeted media (radio/press) ads.

2. We’ve posted advertisements in the newspaper and sent out letters. How else can we reach people?
   Try to get people where they socialize—for example, at neighborhood clubs, shops, churches, sports leagues, hair salons and community centers. Perhaps someone from your workgroup can distribute flyers at these locations and remain there to answer questions about the process.
Part 2: Participant Materials

The Participant Guide
Appendix 1 contains the text of the “Success Is What Counts” Participant Guide, which we also provide you as a separate Participant Guide. To customize your Participant Guide, you can simply place a cover page and introduction over the guide that is provided; alternatively, you may prefer to create something more elaborate.

The cover can be as simple or elaborate as you wish and as resources allow; in the past, groups have added their logo, the title, time and place of the event, a list of sponsors and so on. You may want to add (here or in accompanying materials) a brief introduction about the college, a note about the Achieving the Dream initiative, a few well-chosen data points about your students and a statement about your commitment to acting on the results of the conversation.

The Participant Survey
In addition, all participants should complete a Participant Survey before they leave. These are completed at the end of the closing plenary sessions. Data from the surveys allow you to assess the event and plan for future community discussions. See Appendix 2 for a sample Participant Survey.

Foreign Language Materials
If you have decided to hold a bilingual forum, you will need to coordinate the production and distribution of a translated Participant Guide. Public Agenda has copies available in Spanish of the print and video versions of the “Success Is What Counts” discussion materials as well as the Participant Survey and Moderator/Recorder Guide.

Other Materials
Other materials you might consider including in a packet for participants are an agenda to the event and the names of sponsors, organizers and moderators. However, we suggest keeping these packets relatively clutter-free or some people may feel overwhelmed.
SECTION 7: MODERATOR/RECORDER WORKGROUP

Part 1 of this section will help you understand how to select, train and support the moderators and recorders for each of the breakout groups.

Part 2 discusses the role of the “host,” or master of ceremonies, who will lead the opening and closing plenary sessions at the event itself.

Part 1: Managing Moderators and Recorders for the Breakout Groups

Recruiting Moderators

We can’t stress enough how important it is to focus on recruiting good Moderators (and Recorders). Moderators play a key role in the community conversations and have a very large impact on the experience. We have occasionally encountered people with a great deal of facilitating experience who do poorly in this type of setting and those with no experience who do very well. Thus, while the following guidelines can help you to select moderator trainees, the most important qualifications—“people skills,” the ability to think on one’s feet and a real interest in supporting an open, inclusive dialogue—should be kept in mind regardless of a candidate’s background on paper or other “political” considerations.

Depending on how many moderators you will need for your event (1 each per small group of 12 to 14 people), you should recruit a few extra people who are willing to attend the training and the event as alternates. It’s always possible that you will have an influx of walk-ins and will need to form an extra discussion group, or someone may have a last minute family conflict or emergency and won’t be available to moderate on the day of the conversation. Also, as you may plan to hold more than one conversation, you will want to have enough trained local moderators who can serve in those future conversations. Finally, some people prefer to co-moderate or co-record, so you can double these functions in a couple of instances if you wish.

You will need moderators with the following skills, knowledge and background:

- Group facilitation skills/experience, especially in working with diverse groups and with the general public (as opposed to working only with professionals).
- Ability to create an environment in which it is safe and comfortable for people to express their views.
- Ability to help participants articulate the reasoning, experiences and values supporting their positions.
- Ability to play devil’s advocate and challenge people (in a friendly, civil way, of course) to consider alternate viewpoints.
- Comfort with and ability to manage group conflict.
- Ability to take a nonpartisan moderating stance.
- Nonpartisan credibility. Some people may be able to moderate in a nonpartisan manner but, because of past associations, will not be viewed in that light by members of the group.
• Some general familiarity with community college and education reform debates, although expertise is not required. This attribute is less important than the others.
• Some diversity. Ideally, the moderator team overall will roughly reflect the demographics of the community, so it is often a plus to have some diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and the like among the moderators.

Moderators have been drawn from the following backgrounds:

• Businesspeople, including trainers and consultants.
• Social workers and others in community service.
• Qualitative researchers.
• Therapists and counselors.
• Mediators and people trained in conflict resolution.
• Educators, including those in higher education (although faculty and administrators from the community college should not moderate unless they are comfortable with criticism and can stay nonpartisan and open to all views).
• Clergy, including pastoral counselors.

Recruiting Recorders

The recorders also play a crucial role and should be carefully selected and trained. Recorders must be able to quickly summarize the main points in the discussion and write them legibly enough for all to see. Like the moderators, they must also be nonpartisan, trusted to record all ideas, not just those they agree with.

Ideally, recorders will attend the moderator/recorder training session. If recorders are not able to attend, they should be fully briefed and should meet with their moderators prior to the community conversation to clarify roles and tasks, create a sense of teamwork and avoid last minute confusion.

If a recorder is unable to attend the moderator/recorder training, it is important that he or she be supplied with a guide and be fully briefed on the following:

• The purpose of the community conversation.
• The structure of the meeting and the recorder’s role.
• Exactly what recorders are expected to do at each phase of the session.
Organizing the Moderator/Recorder Training

It is important that anyone who serves as a moderator or recorder for the community conversation attend the training session. This is critical for moderators. If a recorder is unable to attend, that person can be carefully briefed later on.\(^1\) Let them know why they are being asked to serve as a Moderator or Recorder and what the community conversation is all about.

The training should take place three to seven days prior to the conversation. This will allow enough time for the training to “sink in” and for moderators/recorders to familiarize themselves with the procedures and guide, but not so much time that the information is no longer fresh.

The training is usually scheduled from 8:00 to 2:00 or 9:00 to 3:00, with a short lunch break. We strongly advise you to schedule trainings during the day, rather than after work or on Friday afternoons. There is a lot of material to practice and absorb, and it is very hard for trainees to focus after a full day of work. You’ll likely get some push back when you tell people the training takes about five hours, but stand firm! In the end, this much time is needed to make sure they are confident and well prepared. You’ll need a room that can accommodate a trainer, the moderators/recorders to be trained and any observers who might wish to attend. The room should be set up to resemble a breakout room at the actual community conversation. Chairs should be arranged in a circle, semicircle or horseshoe. If you have more than 20 or so people attending, you may need two rooms.

You will also need the following:

- Two flip charts with paper and pens.
- VCR setup with TV.
- Moderator/Recorder Guide and any additional handouts you wish to provide.
- Lunch and refreshments.

\(^1\) Public Agenda typically provides this training as part of an overall package of technical assistance.
Coordinating the Moderators and Recorders at the Conversation

In addition to recruiting and setting up the moderator training, the Moderator/Recorder workgroup should ensure that all moderating/recording essentials are in place at the event, including the following:

- Extra copies of the Moderator/Recorder Guide.
- Adequately sized breakout rooms, with enough seats properly configured (in circle, semicircle or horseshoe shape, not classroom style).
- Extra discussion starter materials, including copies of the Participant Guide, any handouts or posters that might be employed as conversation aids and, when appropriate, videotapes or other audiovisual materials.
- VCR/TV setups if using video discussion starters.
- Flip charts, markers, masking tape (self-sticking flip charts are ideal).
- Other: ________________________.

See Appendix 3 for a basic version of the Moderator/Recorder Guide for the “Success Is What Counts” discussion framework. Public Agenda can also provide you with a Spanish-language version of the guide.

Part 2: Managing the Opening and Closing Plenary Sessions and the Role of the Community Conversation “Host”

The community conversation opens and closes with plenary (whole group) sessions that sandwich the breakout dialogue groups. Each plenary session is about a half hour in length.

The opening plenary session is devoted to welcoming participants, giving them an overview of the proceedings, providing them with basic information and background and offering some words of encouragement. You might consider asking a current or former student to make a few remarks to set the tone.

The closing plenary session is for brief, efficient reports from each breakout group, information on follow-up activities, thanking participants and making sure participant surveys are filled out.

While numerous people may be involved in making remarks at the opening and closing plenary sessions, it’s a good idea to have a master of ceremonies, or “host,” as the main facilitator. The host is often a lead member of one of the sponsoring organizations, a lead member of the Planning Team or a prominent member of the community who is good at this kind of thing. Try to choose someone charismatic and energizing.

A detailed Host Guide providing guidelines to managing the opening and closing plenary sessions may be found in Appendix 4.
SECTION 8: COMMUNICATIONS WORKGROUP

This section will focus on the external relations tasks the Communications Workgroup will need to accomplish.

Communications & External Relations

Your Planning Team as a whole will have decided how much focus you want to place on media relations and other kinds of communications. At the very least, you’ll need to develop some basic pieces that you can use in a number of ways.\(^2\)

There are three fundamental communications tools you will find useful:

- A set of talking points to help you explain the initiative.
- A flyer that explains the purpose of the community conversations and gives basic information, such as when and where it will take place.
- A “pitch letter” to explain the event to potential partners and allies.

You can build on these to create more materials as needed.

The talking points should convey factual information about the conversation as well as the intent behind it. These should be distributed to everyone on the planning and sponsoring teams, to help them talk about the event.

A basic flyer should provide a succinct, visually appealing presentation of the event that you can use to generate interest and “buzz” as well as recruit participants.

Finally, a pitch letter should contain everything in your talking points, but in a more personal manner. Depending on its recipient, the letter should be tailored to focus on why you think whoever is receiving the letter should be interested in participating, donating food, observing the conversation and so forth.

You can also consider creative ideas to get messages across, such as the use of T-shirts, bumper stickers, coffee mugs and ads on local restaurant menus.

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2. KSA-Plus has developed various communications materials for the Achieving the Dream initiative that may be helpful to you as you develop materials for community engagement.
Online Communications

You may want to consider if there are ways to use a community Web site, perhaps that of the community college, to create an interactive means of communication about the conversation and its aftermath.

The Media

Media relations were covered as one of the strategic considerations discussed under section 3, and members of this workgroup should review that discussion. It will be your job to implement any decisions by the Planning Team as to media relations.
SECTION 9: FOLLOW UP WORKGROUP

In our experience, almost everyone who attends well-organized, well-run community conversations comes away feeling that the experience was exciting, refreshing and extremely valuable. The vast majority feel that there was not enough time and that more people ought to be involved in the dialogue, and everyone wants to see the conversations lead to real results in their community.

These are major strategic questions that the Planning Team overall needs to address. The job of the Follow-up workgroup is to make sure that ideas on follow-up are considered from the beginning and to implement the follow-up plan as it develops. As noted earlier, we recommend that at least some members of this workgroup be “protected” from the nuts-and-bolts tasks of putting on the first community conversation, so that they can save their energy to ensure effective and robust follow-up.

Section 9 offers guidelines for follow-up, organized around two main areas:

• Linking community dialogue to meaningful action by the college and the community.
• Expanding and institutionalizing the dialogue process.

Linking Community Dialogue to Meaningful Action by the College and the Community

Some practitioners of dialogue believe that it should not be used as a problem-solving exercise—that doing so exacerbates power dynamics and the immediate stakes of the conversation, jeopardizing an honest, insightful, self-reflective exchange of values and ideas. Other, more action-oriented and pragmatic types believe words alone are meaningless and tend to view a detailed action plan as the sign of a successful meeting.

Public Agenda has staked out a middle ground on this question. We suggest that community dialogue is best used to promote mutual understanding and communication about a shared problem and to identify general ideas and directions for solutions. Thus, the dialogue builds a solid foundation for action, but detailed action planning is best handled in a follow-up stage.
In practice, this means that community sponsors and organizers should think early on about how to create the conditions for effective follow-up to their forums. At the very least, they are advised to:

- Provide a summary report to all participants.
- Report results to decision makers and, when possible, convey decision maker response(s) back to participants.
- Disseminate the results in other ways, such as online and through media channels.
- Suggest ways that participants who are so inspired can stay involved, such as joining organizations dedicated to some aspect of the topic at hand and helping with future community conversations.
- Pick at least one issue or problem raised during the conversation to address concretely and specifically in your follow-up. This could be something you are already working on or something new. Let participants know you will be addressing the issue/concern and invite them to help, if appropriate.

Beyond these basic steps, organizers can consider the following:

- **Creating action task forces** to plan and promote specific policies or new initiatives based on important directions for action that emerged from the community conversation.
  
  o For instance, the idea of creating a closer partnership among the college, the K–12 system and a community-based organization may have emerged as a hot idea in the conversation. A task force could be formed to create an action plan with representatives from each of those institutions plus volunteers from the community conversation. Or perhaps the idea emerged of creating a community foundation to support special initiatives to provide support for low-income community college students. A task force or study group could be formed devoted to researching and promoting such an initiative.

- **Continuing and expanding** the dialogue that was begun in the community conversation on the Internet or through a newsletter.

- **Providing needed information:** One category of outcome produced by this community conversation process is to identify questions people have, areas where they want more information. For instance, they may have questions about college policy or practice, how the college is funded, what student achievement data says or how other colleges have solved certain problems. There are often items here that are easy to respond to, and the college and organizers should do so after a community conversation—it is an important sign of good faith on the part of the organizers and shows participants that someone is addressing their questions.

- **Convening a leadership session** to react to some of the results of the deliberations. For instance, a college leadership team and/or trustees board could meet following community conversations and issue a response, and/or a meeting of community leaders could do the same.
• **Conducting a focus group** to better understand some of the areas of disagreement that were identified at the meeting and how you might help people work through them. This can lead to new ideas for future forums and other kinds of community action.

• **Taking advantage** of the fact that many people simply want to help in any way they can after a community conversation and may be open to volunteering or raising money for the college and its students. It is important to capitalize on this energy and motivation as quickly as possible—after all, most of us lead busy lives, and good intentions are easily “overtaken” by the events of daily life.

• And so on. There is, of course, no single right way to do this. The question is, what would be a good approach for your college, community partners and community?

### Expanding and Institutionalizing the Dialogue Process

Whether you planned a single community conversation or a series (see section 3, “Strategic Considerations”), as you reach the end point of a phase of dialogue work, you’ll want to think about how and when to use dialogue in the future. Following are some of the questions you’ll want to think about.

**What Should the Second Series Be About?**

You might hold a second round to delve further into a specific issue identified by participants as important. This was the case in a New York City K–12 forum where the original topic was standards: Subsequent discussions were held on parental and community involvement.

Even if you have convened small workgroups designed to get more specific about areas of common ground and action ideas, people still often want to

• work through important areas of disagreement that were identified. These issues may not have been resolved in the original series. (Note that sometimes important disagreements among participants need to be worked out. At other times there may be a disagreement between the participants and some college policy.)

• reconsider some facet of the conversation once a crucial piece of missing information is obtained that people said they needed.

Remember, it makes sense to hold a forum only on a topic about which people feel a sense of urgency and where there are important community issues to work out. What did you learn about this from your first series of community conversations?

Remember as well that Public Agenda has discussion frameworks prepared on various education issues that could be useful to you in your follow-up work. If you choose a topic other than ones we have materials prepared for, you’ll have to develop a way to frame the conver-
sation and get the discussion started. This is something you might try to do yourselves, or you might want to see if you can get some outside help. For example, Public Agenda offers a one-day workshop on framing issues for public discussion.

Keep in mind:

**Choose a topic** that is of strong interest to both the community and the college.

One way to get at this is to make a list of discussion topics that relate to issues on the college’s agenda. Then make a list of the topics that relate to the concerns of average parents, students and community members. The overlap between the two lists is a good place to look for first conversation topics—if you choose a topic that is of strong interest to both the college and the community, more people will be motivated to engage in the process.

**Choose an issue** where public input and involvement can make a real difference.

For instance, if a new statewide policy will be affecting community college funding the day after your forum, it may not make sense to use that topic, as the discussion could immediately become outdated. On the other hand, if the college is in the process of developing new plans for creating a more diverse faculty, then public input and involvement can have very direct payoffs.

Remember that it’s possible to customize the topic somewhat to take local issues into account.

Specific probes and questions can be built into the moderator and participant materials to help people engage in themes that may not be in the video.

**Who Should Attend?**
Do you want to delve deeper with the original participants, expand to new participants or try to combine new people and veterans? It can be tricky to hold a second forum on the same topic with both veterans and new participants. It’s not impossible—you can, for example, keep the veterans in their own discussion groups—but it does add a layer of complexity.

**Where Should It Be Held?**
This question is especially important for regional meetings, but it can be worth a little thought with respect to any site. Were the space and location adequate? Would changing the location make it easier to recruit certain participants and/or be important for symbolic reasons? For example, in Cobb County, Georgia, which is a large school district, the steering committee decided to rotate the locations, both to encourage participation from different parts of the county and as a gesture to indicate that the sessions were open to everyone.
Who Is Going to Organize It?
Is the original steering committee intact? Is everyone on board for round two? Would a partially or wholly new steering committee make sense at this point? Are there individuals from groups that were underrepresented at the session who might be invited to participate? At the very least, you should think about how the more enthusiastic participants from the last forum might play a role in helping with the next one.

Who Is Going to Moderate It?
Do you have the moderators you’ll need for a second series? Might your moderators benefit from a brief “tune-up training” as they prepare for a new topic? Do you need to, or want to, train new people or draw on moderators from outside your community?

What Were the Weaknesses Last Time, and How Can You Address Them?
No one needs to tell you that public engagement is challenging and every session will have had its strengths and weaknesses. How would you assess yours? What can you do to be more successful next time? What new strategies might be employed?

Do You Want to Experiment with the Formula?
Related to the last topic of improving on the formula is revising it to better suit your needs and those of your community. For example, aiming for about 100 participants from across your community is not essential. You may decide that it makes more sense to hold a series of three smaller, neighborhood-based forums over a six-month period.

This is not a suggestion to depart from the fundamental principles that we have found to be essential, such as
• striving for a broad, diverse group of participants “beyond the usual suspects.”
• working in small, moderated groups.
• providing some structure to the conversation, so people have a place to start and the most experienced and expert among them don’t end up taking over. Discussion materials generally work best if they involve choices and are presented in a clear, nonpartisan, jargon-free manner.
• maintaining a nonpartisan, inclusive and open sponsorship and atmosphere.

Should you decide to change the formula, please feel free to bounce your ideas off of us. We may have tried something and failed already, and you might as well hear about that sooner rather than later. That said, we have every reason to believe that you can improvise on the approach in ways that work well for your situation, and we look forward to learning from any experiments you conduct.

Good luck!
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Participant Guide
Appendix 2: Participant Survey
Appendix 3: Moderator/Recorder Guide
Appendix 4: Host Guide
Appendix 5: Spanish Language Materials
Appendix 6: Sample Invitations
APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO HELP ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ACHIEVE
PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve

Community colleges serve a wide variety of students with a wide variety of goals. For example:

• They offer a first step into higher education, often the best step for students who can’t afford tuition at a four-year college or who don’t have the necessary grades

• They are an option for students who prefer to stay close to home

• They provide marketable job skills to both recent high school graduates and older students who want to upgrade their careers

Like all community colleges, our college has some students who are struggling. In other words, we have some achievement gaps—and we want to do something about them. Our goal in this dialogue is to think about how the college and community can work together to close achievement gaps and help all students succeed.

We’ll begin by describing three areas that the college and community could focus on to achieve these goals:

• Making sure students are able to do college-level work

• Helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

• Ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

Of course, each of these approaches to student success may be of value. And you may have other ideas to add. But, it’s also important to set some priorities so that we can put our resources to the best possible use.

We’ll begin by reviewing these three approaches in greater detail. Which do you think is likely to have the greatest impact on student success, and why?
Approach 1: Focus on making sure students are ready to do college-level work

For a variety of reasons, too many community college students arrive without a solid enough academic foundation. With adequate preparation, these students are better able to take advantage of the educational opportunities the college has to offer, and less likely to be thrown off course by the pressures in their lives.

Therefore, we should do things like:
• Strengthen remedial education and tutoring to help struggling students catch up
• Support improvements in K-12 education and the transition from high school to college
• Offer English as a Second Language programs for non-native English speakers

Those who like this approach say,

“With many students arriving at community college without the academic skills and attitudes it takes to succeed, it’s critical to make sure they’re ready for college-level work.”

But others say,

“The college has a big enough task providing a quality education once students arrive. It’s not practical to expect it to make up for things students should have learned before they get there.”
Approach 2: Focus on helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

Community college students tend to be busy people with busy lives. Most have jobs, many have children, and few have a great deal of money. As a result, there are many pressures in their lives that can make it difficult for them to stick with their studies and meet their goals.

Therefore, we should do things like:
• Ease the burden on lower-income students by providing scholarships and childcare
• Encourage employers to allow flexible work schedules to help students balance college and work
• Mentor students who need support and guidance in managing the challenges in their lives

Those who like this approach say:

“By helping community college students cope with the pressures that can derail their studies, we can increase their chances of success.”

But others say:

“These are adult college students who need to take responsibility for their personal lives, however complicated they may be. The college should keep its focus on teaching and learning.”
Approach 3: Focus on ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

The most important thing we can do to promote student achievement is provide a quality educational experience, one that is challenging and engaging, and gives students the skills they need to meet their educational and career goals. If we do that, we’ll be able to help every motivated student to succeed.

Therefore, we should do things like:
- Raise academic expectations and standards
- Train faculty in effective teaching strategies, including those that help less successful students
- Invest in up-to-date technology

Those who like this approach say:

“Having high academic expectations for students and providing them with a rigorous and engaging course of study is the key to student achievement.”

But others say:

“Community colleges serve many different kinds of students, and we shouldn’t assume that all of them need or want an equally rigorous academic experience. Some have more immediate and practical goals.”
Helping All Students Succeed

Recap

Approach 1: Focus on making sure students are ready to do college-level work

Those who like this approach say,

“With many students arriving at community college without the academic skills and attitudes it takes to succeed, it’s critical to make sure they’re ready for college-level work.”

Approach 2: Focus on helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

Those who like this approach say:

“By helping community college students cope with the pressures that can derail their studies, we can increase their chances of success.”

Approach 3: Focus on ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

Those who like this approach say:

“Having high academic expectations for students and providing them with a rigorous and engaging course of study is the key to student achievement.”
APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT SURVEY

SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO HELP ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ACHIEVE
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve

Location: ______________________________ Date: __________________________

This survey will provide more information on your views and feedback on how to make future meetings more successful. Please hand it in before you leave.

Please indicate the small group you were in: ________________________________

1. Do you have any additional thoughts about today’s topic, something you didn’t say earlier and would like to say now? If so, what is it?

2. Is there any information or data you feel would be useful to you as you continue to consider today’s discussion topic?

3. How should we follow up on today’s meeting? (Please select your top two ideas for follow-up.)

   - more discussion on today’s topic (Any particular subtopics?)
   - more discussions like this in different parts of the community (Any particular locations?)
   - discussion of a different issue (Any particular issues?)
   - community action (What kind?)
   - Other (Please explain.)

4. Compared with most other group discussions or public meetings you’ve attended, was your group today more diverse than usual, less diverse than usual or about the same?

   - more diverse
   - less diverse
   - about the same
   - not sure
5. Can you think of any specific groups or individuals who did not attend today’s meeting who you think would like to be invited in the future? If so, please list below.

Throughout today’s discussion, how often did you:

6. decide something was more complicated than you originally thought?
   - Never  ☐ Once or twice  ☐ Three or more times  ☐ Not sure

7. hear arguments against your position that you thought were good?
   - Never  ☐ Once or twice  ☐ Three or more times  ☐ Not sure

8. Did you find your moderator to be
   - very helpful  ☐ somewhat helpful  ☐ not very helpful
   Comment (optional):

9. How often have you attended Community College Events in the past?
   - This was my first time  ☐ 1 - 3 times  ☐ 4 - 8 times  ☐ 8 or more times

10. Overall, what did you like most about today’s meeting?

11. What did you like least about today’s meeting?

12. Do you have any suggestions for improving the meeting format?
[Questions 13-17 are for research purposes only]

13. Please indicate the category that best describes your main occupation:
   - [ ] Full-time community college faculty
   - [ ] Part-time community college faculty
   - [ ] Businessperson
   - [ ] Current community college student
   - [ ] Community college alumni
   - [ ] Community college administrator
   - [ ] K–12 educator or administrator
   - [ ] High school student
   - [ ] Homemaker
   - [ ] Clergy
   - [ ] Retiree
   - [ ] Other (please specify)

14. Are you a family member of a community college student?
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Yes

15. Are you of Hispanic/Latino descent?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

16. How would you describe your racial background?
   - [ ] White
   - [ ] African American
   - [ ] Asian or Pacific Islander
   - [ ] Native American
   - [ ] Other: _________________________________

17. Would you like to be kept informed about follow-up activities?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

If you said “Yes” to question 17, please fill out the contact information below. You may tear it off and hand it in separately if you wish so your earlier answers remain confidential.

- Name: _____________________________________________________________
- Address:____________________________________________________________
- Phone(s):___________________________________________________________
- E-mail address, if available:__________________________________________
- Comments?__________________________________________________________
APPENDIX 3: MODERATOR/RECORDER GUIDE

SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO HELP ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ACHIEVE
MODERATOR/RECORDER GUIDE

Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve

Overview

About This Guide

This guide was designed by Public Agenda to be used in conjunction with the print and video dialogue materials titled “Success Is What Counts: How Can We Help All Community College Students Succeed?”

The dialogue materials present several alternative approaches to the topic, different ideas for people to weigh and talk about, or what Public Agenda calls “Choicework.” This is an effective way to give regular citizens a structure for engaging a complex issue. It allows people to sort through competing values, trade-offs and practical challenges. And because it is presented in clear, jargon-free language, the structure allows virtually anyone to participate and find his or her own voice in the conversation.

This guide will help moderators and recorders understand their roles and lead them through the discussion process step by step.

Goals

The primary goal of community conversations is to create a productive dialogue among a broad cross section of community members that will

• open up lines of communication between the community and the community college.

• share ideas and perspectives about how best to help all community college students succeed and close any achievement gaps that might exist. In doing so, we will work specifically to identify areas of common ground, clarify disagreements and identify questions and concerns.

• brainstorm and prioritize the ways in which the college and the community can best work together to help all students succeed.

Moderating Tasks and Objectives

On the most basic level, the task of the moderator is to make sure the participants in the small group discussions understand what (at any given time) they are supposed to be talking about—so that the discussions stay focused and on schedule. Beyond this, their job is to make the conversations as participatory and productive as possible.
A successful moderator is comfortable with the goal of an open dialogue without a preset conclusion. It is essential to the credibility of the dialogue that moderators be neutral as to the substantive outcomes of the conversations and avoid appearing biased. The moderator does, of course, have an agenda with regard to the process of the session—to facilitate a civil, constructive dialogue among diverse members of the community who do not often communicate. But it is not their goal to lead anyone toward a “correct” answer. If you do not feel you can be objective, if you feel you could get defensive or impatient with “wrong answers,” this is not a role for you to be playing.

In general, moderators should be familiar with the meeting materials, the local college and the issues it is trying to address, but they need not be experts. We encourage a natural, straightforward style of facilitation, since elaborate or “workshop”-like techniques can come across as gimmicky and/or intimidating in this setting. Moderators are like skillful hosts who keep the party lively without themselves becoming the center of attention. Their primary objectives include

- making sure a point is well understood by everyone in the group.
- helping participants explain why they feel the way they do—for instance, have they had particular experiences that have led them to their current views?
- pointing out contradictions and tensions among different ideas being discussed.
- bringing a new voice into the discussion to enrich what is being said.
- occasionally summing up and (re)focusing the discussion.
- introducing important arguments that are being overlooked to see what people think.

Other important moderating objectives:

**Creating an environment where people are comfortable expressing ideas.**
These sessions are carefully designed to foster an environment in which people can honestly explore their thinking and that of others and engage in constructive and stimulating dialogue about an important public concern. The moderator can contribute by establishing a relaxed but focused tone for the session and modeling honest and straightforward, yet civil and respectful communication.

**Not allowing individuals or subgroups to dominate the discussion.**
Especially early on in the discussion, a major goal of moderators should be to involve as many people as possible. This doesn’t mean making everyone participate equally but, rather, it involves creating a situation where everyone has an opportunity to do so and occasionally checking with people who have not spoken to see if they have anything they’d like to add to the discussion.

Two typical challenges in this regard are (1) the dominant personality, who will talk at such length or with such force that less aggressive members of the group fade into the background; and (2) those with greater experience and expertise (such as the educators in the room) who simply have more fully formed views and can talk at greater length.
Moderators should not feel the need to police these issues too tightly. A common mistake of novice moderators is to jump in too quickly if someone appears to be “getting out of line.” In our experience, it’s best to let things play out a bit and allow the group to react and deal with the individual or situation without interference—which is usually all that is needed. But moderators may need to intervene from time to time to keep the conversation open, constructive and accessible to everyone. The ground rules you’ll set for the discussion (more on this later) will help you do this.

**Helping people examine their own views, understand the views of others and communicate effectively about the issues with diverse members of the community.**

In postmeeting surveys, most participants state that they had heard views against their own position that had merit and that they reconsidered one of their own positions at least once. Moderators can facilitate these outcomes by looking for ways to encourage people to examine their views, to articulate and explain them more clearly and to hear the views of others and perhaps respond to them.

**Clarifying, and moving forward, the local “state of the debate” on the issue at hand.**

Again, the aim is not to achieve perfect consensus. Rather, it is to facilitate a positive and stimulating conversation among equals that allows views to be articulated and examined. In this way we hope the dialogue will clarify

• areas of common ground.
• important disagreements that will require continued dialogue.
• questions and concerns that deserve further attention.
• ways in which the community can act together on behalf of students and schools.

**A Note on Group Conflict**

Beginning moderators are often anxious about too much conflict. We find instead that groups often strive to minimize their conflicts and reframe them as areas of common ground. This can artificially conceal real tensions that may need attention. It is important, therefore, that moderators take an accepting attitude toward group conflict and disagreement, an attitude that communicates, “This is normal and useful to understand.” Moderators should look to neither agitate disagreements nor shy away from them, but rather to help the group **identify and clarify** areas of conflict and disagreement. If the group as a whole wants to focus on a particular conflict, moderators should help participants make as much headway as realistically possible in a short discussion.
The Recorder’s Role

Throughout the small group session, recorders will make notes of the discussion on flip charts, freeing moderators to concentrate on managing the flow of conversation.

The recorder’s job is a crucial one: to record the major points during the small group discussions. While the recorder is not expected to write everything that is said word for word, he or she should try to capture the essence of the main points being made by each participant.

It is especially important to record not only each person’s position (“I’m for such and such”), but each person’s thinking (“I’m for such and such because...”).

It is equally important that recorders do their best to keep their own views out of the way and record the proceedings as faithfully as possible.

Some practical tips:

• You will be working on a flip chart so the group can see the document you are creating. On the first sheet, be sure to identify which group you are recording and number the pages as you go.

• Do not bother with people’s names; just record their perspectives and ideas.

• Write as large and legibly as you can without slowing down.

• You can occasionally ask the group or moderator to clarify a point if it is unclear to you or if things have moved too quickly.

• Ideally, you’ll be able to remove each finished page and tape it onto a wall so the participants can see the pages when they are ready to summarize their conversation. But some rooms don’t have walls that work for this, and it’s important not to miss anything, so if you can’t get the sheets up on a wall, simply flip them over as they fill up and keep writing.
Structure of the Small Group Discussions

Most community conversations begin with a light meal, followed by welcoming remarks. Afterward, organizers separate participants into small, diverse groups of 12 to 14 to view the video and discuss the topic at hand. Each group should be as diverse as possible, not only demographically but with respect to the different roles and relationships relative to community college students. The entire small group discussion is designed to take a little less than two hours.

It is the moderator’s responsibility to manage the small group discussions. There are two major phases, each with several components:

60 minutes **Part 1: General Discussion of Helping Community College Students Succeed**

- Group orientation/introductions/ground rules
- Video discussion starter and discussion
- Interim summary: common ground, disagreements, questions/concerns

50 minutes **Part 2: How Can Our College and Our Community Do a Better Job of Working Together to Help Students Achieve Their Educational and Career Goals?**

- Brainstorming ideas for action and collaboration
- Prioritizing the ideas
- Identifying next steps

The remainder of this guide will work you through each section of the conversation in detail.
DETAILED MODERATING PROCEDURES

Part 1: General Discussion: “How Can We Help All Community College Students to Succeed?”

This first discussion item uses the “Choicework video” as a starting point. The procedure for handling this phase of the small group discussion follows:

A. Introduction

Moderator makes a few brief, opening remarks, explaining
• who you are and what your role is.
• why we are meeting (reinforcing what was said in the opening plenary session).
• what’s going to happen in the small group.

B. Group Introductions

Have a brief round of introductions. We recommend making a seating chart so you know who is sitting where as you manage the discussion. Note if someone is a faculty member, a parent, an employer, a student and so on. This will help you manage the conversation, especially early on while you’re working to get everyone involved.

*Note: If a recorder has not been prearranged, you’ll need to find a volunteer.*

C. Ground Rules

Cover any simple ground rules you might want to apply to the discussion. For example, you might say something along these lines:

• “Let’s all work together to keep the conversation on track and to make sure everyone has an equal chance to speak.”
• “We want this to be a session where people feel free to express their views and where they can consider the views of others. It’s okay to agree with others, and it’s okay to disagree as well. We just ask that you disagree with ideas, not with people. In other words, let’s keep this constructive and avoid getting personal.”
• “Are we ready to get started?”

D. Introducing the Choicework Materials

It helps to introduce the video along these lines:

“To help us get the conversation started, we’re going to watch a short video that presents three contrasting ways of looking at how best to help community college students achieve their educational and professional goals.”
“After we watch the video, I’m going to ask you which view is closest to your own, and we can start talking about it. You may also have other ideas that aren't on the video, and we can talk about those as well.”

Refer participants to their Participant Guide in case any of them want to follow along with the written text, but do tell them they can just watch the video—the written text is merely for those who like to refer to it.

Then roll the video. The Participant Guide is reproduced on the following four pages, after which you’ll find guidelines for getting the discussion going after the video.
Success Is What Counts: A Community Conversation to Help All Community College Students Achieve

Community colleges serve a wide variety of students with a wide variety of goals. For example:

• They offer a first step into higher education, often the best step for students who can’t afford tuition at a four-year college or who don’t have the necessary grades

• They are an option for students who prefer to stay close to home

• They provide marketable job skills to both recent high school graduates and older students who want to upgrade their careers

Like all community colleges, our college has some students who are struggling. In other words, we have some achievement gaps—and we want to do something about them. Our goal in this dialogue is to think about how the college and community can work together to close achievement gaps and help all students succeed.

We’ll begin by describing three areas that the college and community could focus on to achieve these goals:

• Making sure students are able to do college-level work

• Helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

• Ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

Of course, each of these approaches to student success may be of value. And you may have other ideas to add. But, it’s also important to set some priorities so that we can put our resources to the best possible use.

We’ll begin by reviewing these three approaches in greater detail. Which do you think is likely to have the greatest impact on student success, and why?
Approach 1: Focus on making sure students are ready to do college-level work

For a variety of reasons, too many community college students arrive without a solid enough academic foundation. With adequate preparation, these students are better able to take advantage of the educational opportunities the college has to offer, and less likely to be thrown off course by the pressures in their lives.

Therefore, we should do things like:

- Strengthen remedial education and tutoring to help struggling students catch up
- Support improvements in K-12 education and the transition from high school to college
- Offer English as a Second Language programs for non-native English speakers

Those who like this approach say,

"With many students arriving at community college without the academic skills and attitudes it takes to succeed, it’s critical to make sure they’re ready for college-level work."

But others say,

"The college has a big enough task providing a quality education once students arrive. It’s not practical to expect it to make up for things students should have learned before they get there."

▸ OPTIONAL MODERATOR PROBES

- Will this choice have a major impact on the students who are struggling most? In other words, will it help us close achievement gaps? Why?

- How well is our community college doing with this choice today? What are the college’s strengths and weaknesses in this area?

- Is this choice missing anything that is absolutely critical to student success?
Approach 2: Focus on helping students deal with the pressures in their lives

Community college students tend to be busy people with busy lives. Most have jobs, many have children, and few have a great deal of money. As a result, there are many pressures in their lives that can make it difficult for them to stick with their studies and meet their goals.

Therefore, we should do things like:
- Ease the burden on lower-income students by providing scholarships and childcare
- Encourage employers to allow flexible work schedules to help students balance college and work
- Mentor students who need support and guidance in managing the challenges in their lives

Those who like this approach say:

“By helping community college students cope with the pressures that can derail their studies, we can increase their chances of success.”

But others say:

“These are adult college students who need to take responsibility for their personal lives, however complicated they may be. The college should keep its focus on teaching and learning.”

OPTIONAL MODERATOR PROBES

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Approach 3: Focus on ensuring a rigorous and engaging academic experience

The most important thing we can do to promote student achievement is provide a quality educational experience, one that is challenging and engaging, and gives students the skills they need to meet their educational and career goals. If we do that, we’ll be able to help every motivated student to succeed.

Therefore, we should do things like:

• Raise academic expectations and standards
• Train faculty in effective teaching strategies, including those that help less successful students
• Invest in up-to-date technology

Those who like this approach say:

“Having high academic expectations for students and providing them with a rigorous and engaging course of study is the key to student achievement.”

But others say:

“Community colleges serve many different kinds of students, and we shouldn’t assume that all of them need or want an equally rigorous academic experience. Some have more immediate and practical goals.”

OPTIMAL MODERATOR PROBES

• Will this choice have a major impact on the students who are struggling most? In other words, will it help us close achievement gaps? Why?

• How well is our community college doing with this choice today? What are the college’s strengths and weaknesses in this area?

• Is this choice missing anything that is absolutely critical to student success?
E. Getting Started after the Video

After the video, begin by explaining to people that they’ve just heard three different ways of looking at how to help community college students succeed and that we want to get things started by asking them which approach is closest to their own thinking. Ask for a show of hands: “How many lean more toward one? How many lean more toward two? How many lean toward three?”

Then begin to ask people why they leaned one way or the other, and you’re off and running. **Be sure to start with non-educators—a parent or two, a student, an employer—then bring in the voice of one or more educator.**

Our real aim here is to get the group thinking and talking together about how to help community college students succeed and any other related issues. If people are talking only to you as the moderator and not to one another, it can be helpful to connect their points so they can react to one another a bit. For example, if you were discussing the video, you might invite a proponent of Approach 1 to respond to a comment made by a champion of Approach 3 to help the group get the idea that it’s okay to react to one another’s statements.

F. Interim Summary

After the Choicework phase of your discussion, take 10 minutes or so to work with the group on the three summary questions listed below for this first phase of the conversation.

**Recorder:** If you haven’t done so already, put up on the walls three flip chart pages labeled “Common Ground,” “Disagreements” and “Questions/Concerns.” (We recommend putting them up from the beginning, to save time and because they can be helpful along the way.)

Explain to the group that you’ll be covering all three summary topics in a limited amount of time, and encourage everyone to focus. Then begin with number one (although you might start jumping around to the different pages as the discussion unfolds).

- In our conversation about helping community college students succeed, have we discovered any common ground? What do we agree on or have in common?
- What were our important areas of disagreement—the things we would have to keep talking about to work out our differences and move ahead?
- What are the questions and concerns that need more attention? Are there issues about which we need more information?
Tips for Managing the Interim Summary

- Important: You should briefly “process” each suggestion by a group member to make sure most people are comfortable with having it go up on one of the charts. For example, ask, “Does everyone agree that was an area of common ground?” before putting it up on the chart. If the issue can’t be resolved quickly, it can become a question for further discussion on the “Questions/Concerns” chart.

- It is important to discourage people from introducing new material here—the task is to sum up the previous conversation, not begin a new one.

- This is one place where you can introduce your own observations, as can the recorder. For example, if the group is missing a point of disagreement that you recall clearly, you might say, “I seem to recall some disagreement about ______. Is that accurate?”

- We don’t need 100% agreement to list something as “common ground,” as long as most people (about three quarters or more) agree. Minority views can usually be noted under “Questions/Concerns.”

Part 2: How Can Our College and Our Community Do a Better Job of Working Together to Close Achievement Gaps and Help All Students Succeed? (Or whatever Part 2 question you decide upon)

G. Brainstorming Solutions and Strategies

After the interim summary, you’ll make the transition to part 2, about solutions and strategies for closing achievement gaps and helping all community college students succeed.

Recorder: Start a new sheet on the flip chart, with this section’s title at the top. At this point people will be warmed up, and a simple transition will move you along. For instance:

“We’ve been talking about different approaches to helping students succeed. Now, we’d like people to end the discussion by focusing on where we should go from here. To do this, we’d like you to address the following question:

“How can our college and our community do a better job of working together to close achievement gaps and help all students succeed?”

Ask recorder to put on flip chart:

With five minutes remaining in this section, prioritize the list of actionable ideas—see next section for procedure.
H. Prioritizing Actionable Ideas

First, tell the group that you’d like each person to choose three ideas that he or she favors most. First, give the group about a minute to consider the list (let everyone know that this is how much time they will have), then ask each person to write down the number of his or her three favorite proposals. (If someone has only one or two favorites, that’s fine.)

Second, go quickly around the table asking each delegate to give the number of his or her three favorite statements. (The recorder should make a star on the flip chart beside each statement as it gets a vote.)

Third, after each person has announced his or her three, step back and look at the board. Pick the three with the most stars as the group’s initial consensus—these will be the ones that are reported in the closing plenary session, along with the areas of common ground, disagreements and questions/concerns and next steps.

The final 5 to 10 minutes are for the “next steps” discussion.

I. Next Steps

In the final 5 to 10 minutes, work with the group on the theme of next steps, or “How should we follow up on today’s conversation?” Tell them this final section will be organized around two questions—one on steps for individuals to follow up on the discussion and one on how the community conversation process as a whole should move ahead.

Note: If time is too short, skip the first question and use only question two.

(Recorder: Put questions on new flip chart page.)

1. Is there anything that you as individuals might do, or do differently, as a result of today’s conversation?

2. What would you like to see happen to follow up on today’s conversation?

As needed, you can stimulate their thinking on question two by asking:

• Are there any particular aspects of today’s subject that we need to come back together and spend more time on? (If so, what?)
• Are there other subjects that we should be discussing besides today’s?
• How can we include more people in the conversation? Would that be a good idea?
• (Assuming this is the case) There were several strategic ideas in the last part of the discussion where there was a lot of common ground. How can we build on that?

Be sure to remind people how important the final large group meeting is: That’s where everyone will have a chance to hear from the other groups and will talk as a large group about the best way to follow up this community conversation.
Note: As people return to the large group meeting place, work with your recorder to get your notes in order for the recap presentation, which will cover the following items from the part 1 interim summary and the part 2 discussion:

- Areas of common ground.
- Areas of disagreement.
- Questions/concerns.
- Actionable Ideas (three highest priorities).
- Next steps (to follow up the forum).
Moderator’s Time Chart

Part 1: General Discussion

60 Minutes

After group introductions, show the video discussion starter and begin.

Time: _____ to _____ Group orientation/introductions/ground rules (10 minutes)

Time: _____ to _____ Video discussion starter and discussion (40 minutes)

Time: _____ to _____ Interim summary: common ground, disagreements, questions/concerns (10 minutes)

Part 2: How Can Our Schools and Our Community Do a Better Job of Working Together to Make Progress on the Issues We Discussed Today?

50 Minutes

Time: _____ to _____ Brainstorming ideas for action and collaboration (30 minutes)

Time: _____ to _____ Prioritizing the ideas (10 minutes)

Time: _____ to _____ Identifying next steps (10 minutes)
APPENDIX 4: HOST GUIDE

SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO HELP ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ACHIEVE
SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: HOST GUIDE

The Host’s Role
The main tasks that the host must manage are convening and facilitating the opening and closing plenary sessions and explaining to the participants what to expect during the course of the evening.

I. Moderating the Opening Session

Often, the person acting as the evening’s host is either a member of the Sponsoring Coalition or a member of the Planning Team. The host should be carefully briefed about how many people, such as honored guests, will be speaking before the breakout sessions begin, special plans for follow-up that should be mentioned at the opening session and/or closing session and other points that need to be covered. Either an outline or a detailed script should be prepared to make sure all critical points are covered. The following overview will help you work out your own opening session:

• **5 minutes:** Welcome, statement of purpose and a few words of gratitude and encouragement for the participants.

• **10 minutes:** Brief presentation about the community college and its history, mission and challenges, including a few well-chosen facts drawn from Achieving the Dream data analysis to create context for the discussion (basically, about achievement gaps the college seeks to address).

• **10 minutes:** Nuts-and-bolts overview of the session.

_Nuts-and-Bolts Overview_

After the host has welcomed everyone to the event and the few speakers have made their addresses, it’s time to explain the flow of the evening. The basic message is, “Now that you’ve been welcomed and have some idea why we’re here, I’m going to tell you how we’re going to accomplish our goals tonight.”

It is generally useful to emphasize the following points—although if earlier speakers cover some of them, you can edit. Use whatever language works best for you, of course, and leave yourself 10 to 15 minutes.

• “We’ll be moving into small groups in a few minutes, where the real work of the session will take place. You’ll notice that on your name tag is a [number, letter, color...]. That tells you which group you’ll be going to. [Give directions as needed.] In each group you’ll find a cross section of your community, a moderator [or moderators] who will help keep the conversation moving along, a recorder to keep a record of the major points being made and a 10-minute video that will help you get the discussion started.”
• “The goal is to have an honest exchange of views among a diverse cross section of the community on the important topic of helping community college students succeed. Through this community conversation, we will identify areas of common ground, as well as those areas where we disagree or need more information. We do not expect to arrive at a perfect consensus or a complete action plan at the end of one meeting, but we do think we can take an important step toward greater consensus and toward developing ways of working together that can help the college and its students succeed.”

• “We’re hoping for a dialogue that’s frank and honest and that’s also positive, constructive. We urge you to take the time to listen to one another, try to understand one another’s points of views and, if you disagree, to disagree with ideas, not with individuals. Most of all, enjoy yourselves and make the most of this opportunity to learn from one another.”

• “After your small group discussion, we’ll all come back together for a short ending session here to compare notes and talk about follow-up and where we go from here.”

• “If you have any questions about the session, your moderator will be able to help you with them—or talk to anyone whose name tag reads ‘Staff’.”

II. Moderating the Closing Plenary Session

Welcome the group back together and assure them that this final session will move quickly and involve two items:

1. Brief reports from each group.
2. A few closing remarks from a representative of the community college (assuming the host is not a college representative him- or herself) to thank participants and speak briefly about whatever follow-up is planned.

Reporting Out

It’s your job to facilitate the reporting-out process, whereby the recorder or moderator of each group reports back the highlights of its discussion once the small groups are over.

All small group discussions follow the same four-part structure:
• A general discussion of basic choices surrounding the topic.
• A summary that identifies
  o areas of common ground.
  o areas of disagreement.
  o questions and concerns.
• An action-oriented discussion.
• A process to prioritize action items and a short discussion of next steps.

We recommend that the report-outs cover the following items only:

• Areas of common ground.
• Areas of disagreement.
• Questions and concerns.
• Top three action ideas.
• Next steps for forum follow-up.

We recommend the following procedure for small group reports:

• All recorders and moderators should convene at the front of the room near the microphone, with the appropriate notes ready to go. Remind the audience that these reports will describe a few highlights and that a fuller report on the conversation will be forthcoming.

• Choose one person to begin the reporting (where there are good notes and the person who will be handling the report is confident). This individual will give the most complete report of his or her group’s discussion in some detail (in five minutes or less). Each recorder should identify his or her group before launching into the report.

• Each subsequent group report will add a few highlights concerning similarities or differences from the first report, but go into less detail. In this way, you keep the reports fresh and avoid the tiresome repetition that can take place.

• As the reports are being made, have one of the recorders keep a master list of next steps, so that at the end of the series of reports you, as host, can review the next steps list for the whole group, emphasizing the most common themes.

Make sure that all the notes from the small groups—and especially their report-out notes—are collected for the postforum report that the Follow-Up workgroup will be responsible for.
Closing Remarks

Some closing remarks will be in order by the host, someone from the community college or someone from the Sponsoring Coalition or Planning Team. Basic talking points might include the following:

• Thank the participants for their time and effort in attending the community conversation.

• Emphasize again (as was done in the opening plenary) that notes from the small groups and the surveys will be summarized and distributed to participants. If other follow-up activities are already planned that you are aware of, make sure to let participants know about those as well.

• Optional: If you have a portable microphone or microphone stand stationed in the audience, or if the group is not too large, you can ask if anyone from the audience would like to make any comments. This can lead to some final thoughts about what people thought about the session and where they think the process should go next.

• Again urge participants to fill out and drop off their surveys before leaving. These should have been distributed to participants as they returned from their small groups.
APPENDIX 5: SPANISH LANGUAGE MATERIALS

SUCCESS IS WHAT COUNTS: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO HELP ALL COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS ACHIEVE

A) PARTICIPANT GUIDE
B) PARTICIPANT SURVEY
C) DETAILED MODERATING PROCEDURES
GUÍA DE PARTICIPANTES

El éxito es lo que cuenta: Diálogo con las comunidades para ayudar a los estudiantes de colegios comunitarios a sobresalir

Los colegios comunitarios dan servicio a estudiantes con características diversas que a su vez tienen una gran variedad de metas. Por ejemplo:

• Los colegios comunitarios son un primer paso hacia la educación superior, en ocasiones la mejor alternativa para quienes no pueden financiar cuatro años de colegio, o bien para quienes no tienen las calificaciones necesarias para ser admitidos.

• También ofrecen una alternativa para quienes simplemente prefieren estudiar cerca del lugar en el que viven.

• Además ofrecen capacitación para el trabajo, ya sea para estudiantes recién graduados de secundaria o de “high school” o para estudiantes que se han graduado varios años atrás y que desean actualizarse para avanzar en su profesión.

Como todos los demás colegios comunitarios, el de nuestra comunidad tiene estudiantes que son más exitosos que otros. En otras palabras, existen brechas entre el nivel de desempeño de unos y de otros, y queremos hacer algo al respecto. Nuestro objetivo al iniciar este diálogo es reflexionar sobre las formas en que el colegio y la comunidad pueden trabajar conjuntamente para reducir esas brechas y ayudar a todos los estudiantes a sobresalir.

Empezaremos por describir tres áreas en las que el colegio y la comunidad pueden concentrar sus esfuerzos:

1. Asegurarse de que los estudiantes estén en posición de realizar estudios a nivel de colegio.

2. Ayudar a los estudiantes a sobrellevar las presiones que enfrentan en la vida.

3. Garantizar que el proceso de aprendizaje sea una experiencia enriquecedora y rigurosa.

Cada una de estas áreas o enfoques es importante, al igual que otras ideas que ustedes puedan contribuir. Sin embargo, es importante establecer prioridades para poder utilizar nuestros recursos de la mejor manera posible.

Comenzaremos por revisar cada uno de los enfoques con mayor detenimiento. ¿Cuál creen que tendrá el mayor impacto en el éxito de los estudiantes y por qué?
Enfoque 1: Concentrar esfuerzos en asegurarse de que la preparación de los estudiantes sea suficiente para realizar estudios a nivel de colegio

Por una variedad de razones, muchos estudiantes llegan al colegio sin una base académica sólida. Una preparación adecuada puede permitir a estos estudiantes estar mejor equipados para aprovechar las oportunidades educativas que el colegio les brinda y para evitar distraer sus estudios por las presiones que enfrentan en la vida.

Por eso, debemos hacer cosas como:

• Brindar cursos de revisión y programas de asesoría para ayudar a los estudiantes a fortalecer las áreas en que se encuentran menos preparados.

• Mejorar la educación secundaria (“K-12 education”) y la transición entre la educación secundaria y el colegio.

• Ofrecer programas de inglés como segundo idioma o “programas ESL” para estudiantes que necesitan mejorar su conocimiento del idioma.

A quienes les gusta este enfoque sostienen que:

“Dado que un gran número de estudiantes llegan al colegio comunitario sin los conocimientos ni habilidades necesarias para sobresalir, es de suma importancia asegurarse de que están preparados para aprovechar al máximo su experiencia en el colegio”.

Pero otros sostienen que:

“La tarea que el colegio tiene que cumplir es de por sí ardua. No es práctico esperar que el colegio realice la tarea adicional de ayudar a los estudiantes con conocimientos que debieron haber aprendido antes de llegar al colegio”.

Enfoque 2: Concentrar esfuerzos en ayudar a los estudiantes a enfrentar las presiones que enfrentan en sus vidas

Normalmente, la vida de los estudiantes de colegios comunitarios es bastante compleja. La mayoría tiene un empleo, muchos tienen hijos y solamente muy pocos tienen dinero suficiente. Estas presiones les dificultan mantener la atención necesaria en los estudios para alcanzar sus metas.

Por lo tanto, debemos hacer cosas como las siguientes:

• Ofrecer programas de becas y servicio de cuidado de niños para ayudar a los estudiantes en condiciones económicas limitadas.
• Promover que sus empleadores permitan horarios de trabajo flexibles para quienes quieren estudiar.
• Dar asesoría y acompañamiento a los estudiantes que lo necesiten para manejar sus problemas personales.

A quienes les parece adecuado este enfoque suelen decir que:

“Al ayudar a los estudiantes a manejar las presiones que enfrentan en su vida personal y que pueden distraerlos de sus estudios podemos aumentar sus probabilidades de éxito.”

Pero otros piensan que:

“Los estudiantes de colegio son adultos, por lo que deben de tomar responsabilidad de sus vidas, sin importar lo complicadas que son. El colegio debe de concentrarse nada más en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje.”
Enfoque 3: Concentrar esfuerzos en lograr que el proceso de aprendizaje sea una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora

Lo más importante que tenemos a nuestro alcance es ofrecer a nuestros estudiantes una educación de calidad; una experiencia enriquecedora que los motive a superarse y que a la vez les proporcione los conocimientos y habilidades necesarios para alcanzar sus metas educativas y profesionales. Si logramos eso, podremos ayudar a cada estudiante motivado a sobresalir.

Por lo tanto, podemos hacer cosas como:

- Elevar expectativas y estándares académicos.
- Capacitar a los profesores en el uso de técnicas efectivas de enseñanza, incluyendo aquéllas que permiten ayudar especialmente a los estudiantes con desempeño más bajo.
- Invertir en tecnología avanzada.

A quienes les gusta esta alternativa consideran que:

“Mantener altas expectativas académicas con respecto de los estudiantes y ofrecerles una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora son la clave para que los estudiantes tengan un buen aprovechamiento educativo.”

Por otro lado, hay quienes sostienen que:

“Los colegios comunitarios dan servicio a estudiantes de todo tipo, y no debemos suponer que todos necesitan o quieren una experiencia académica igualmente rigurosa. Algunos tienen objetivos más prácticos e inmediatos.”
Ayudando a Todos los Estudiantes a Alcanzar el Éxito

Resumen

Enfoque 1: Concentrar esfuerzos en asegurarse de que la preparación de los estudiantes sea suficiente para realizar estudios a nivel de colegio

A quienes les gusta este enfoque sostienen que:

“Dado que un gran número de estudiantes llegan al colegio comunitario sin los conocimientos ni habilidades necesarias para sobresalir, es de suma importancia asegurarse de que están preparados para aprovechar al máximo su experiencia en el colegio.”

Enfoque 2: Concentrar esfuerzos en ayudar a los estudiantes a enfrentar las presiones que enfrentan en sus vidas

A quienes les gusta este enfoque sostienen que:

“Al ayudar a los estudiantes a manejar las presiones que enfrentan en su vida personal y que pueden distraerlos de sus estudios podemos aumentar sus probabilidades de éxito.”

Enfoque 3: Concentrar esfuerzos en lograr que el proceso de aprendizaje sea una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora

A quienes les gusta este enfoque sostienen que:

“Mantener altas expectativas académicas con respecto de los estudiantes y ofrecerles una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora son la clave para que los estudiantes tengan un buen aprovechamiento educativo.”
CUESTIONARIO

El éxito es lo que cuenta: Diálogo con las comunidades para ayudar a los estudiantes de colegios comunitarios a sobresalir

Lugar: _______________________ Fecha:________________________

Sus respuestas al cuestionario nos ayudarán a mejorar la forma en que llevaremos a cabo los diálogos con la comunidad en un futuro. Por favor, entréguelo antes de salir.

Por favor indique el grupo pequeño en el que usted estuvo participando: ______________

1. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia adicional sobre el tema que discutimos el día de hoy? ¿Algo que no tuvo oportunidad de mencionar y le gustaría decir? Si es así por favor mencínelo a continuación.

2. ¿Qué información o datos estadísticos podrían serle útiles para analizar el tema del día de hoy?

3. ¿Cómo deberíamos dar seguimiento a la reunión de hoy? (Por favor seleccione dos de las ideas que se mencionan a continuación).

☐ ampliar la discusión sobre el tema de hoy (mencione subtemas específicos)
☐ llevar a cabo más discusiones de este tipo en otras partes del vecindario (mencione lugares específicos)
☐ discutir un tema distinto (mencione qué tema en particular)
☐ acción comunitaria (mencione el tipo de acción)
☐ otra (por favor explique de qué se trata)

4. En comparación con otros diálogos en grupo o reuniones públicas en las que usted ha participado, ¿cómo califica la diversidad del grupo de hoy? (seleccione una de las opciones a continuación)

Usted encontró:

☐ mayor diversidad
☐ menor diversidad
☐ un nivel de diversidad similar
☐ no estoy seguro(a)
5. ¿Qué grupos o personas que no participaron en la reunión de hoy usted considera deben ser invitados en el futuro?

Durante el día de hoy, qué tan seguido usted:

6. Decidió que algo resultó más complicado de lo que usted había pensado
   - Nunca
   - Una o dos veces
   - Tres o más veces
   - No estoy seguro(a)

7. Escuchó argumentos en contra de su opinión, los cuales usted considera buenos argumentos
   - Nunca
   - Una o dos veces
   - Tres o más veces
   - No estoy seguro(a)

8. Dijo algo de una manera distinta de la que normalmente lo haría para evitar ofender a otras personas
   - Nunca
   - Una o dos veces
   - Tres o más veces
   - No estoy seguro(a)

9. Usted considera que el/la moderador(a) de su grupo fue:
   - muy bueno
   - suficientemente bueno
   - no muy bueno

Comentarios (opcionales):

10. En general ¿qué le gustó más de la reunión?

11. ¿Qué fue lo que menos le gustó?

12. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia para mejorar la manera de conducir la reunión?
Las preguntas 13 a 17 serán utilizadas para obtener datos estadísticos únicamente

13. Por favor indique la categoría que describe mejor su ocupación:

- [ ] Profesor, miembro de la facultad del colegio comunitario por tiempo completo
- [ ] Profesor, miembro de la facultad del colegio comunitario por medio tiempo
- [ ] Empresario/ negocio propio
- [ ] Estudiante del colegio comunitario
- [ ] Estudiante graduado del colegio comunitario
- [ ] Personal administrativo del colegio comunitario
- [ ] Personal administrativo o educador de nivel escolar K-12
- [ ] Estudiante de “high-school”
- [ ] Ama de casa
- [ ] Sacerdote o representante de una comunidad religiosa
- [ ] Retirado
- [ ] Otro (por favor especifique)

14. ¿Es usted familiar de un estudiante de colegio comunitario?

- [ ] Sí
- [ ] No

15. ¿Es usted de origen hispano o latino?

- [ ] Sí
- [ ] No

16. ¿Cuál es su origen?

- [ ] Blanco
- [ ] African-American
- [ ] Asiático o de las Islas del Pacífico
- [ ] Native-American
- [ ] Otro: ___________________

17. ¿Quiere mantenerse informado de actividades futuras?

- [ ] Sí
- [ ] No

Si su respuesta a la pregunta 17 fue “Sí”, por favor proporcione sus datos personales a continuación.

Usted puede desprender esta hoja y entregarla por separado si usted lo desea, para que sus respuestas sean anónimas.

Nombre:_______________________________________________________________

Dirección:_______________________________________________________________

Teléfono:_______________________________________________________________

Dirección de correo electrónico (opcional):____________________________________

Comentarios:_____________________________________________________________
GUÍA DETALLADA PARA MODERAR

Parte 1 Discusión General: “Cómo Ayudar a todos los Estudiantes de Colegio Comunitario a Sobresalir”

El primer tema de discusión requiere el Video de Choicework como punto de partida. A continuación se muestra el procedimiento para manejar esta fase de la discusión en pequeños grupos.

A. Introducción

En tu papel de moderador, deberás explicar brevemente:
• Quién eres y cual será tu función
• Por qué estamos todos reunidos (enfatizar lo que se dijo durante la plenaria de apertura)
• Qué tendrán que hacer reunidos en grupos pequeños

B. Presentación de los participantes

Que cada uno se presente. Se recomienda dibujar un diagrama de cómo están sentados los participantes, por que puedas dirigirte a cada persona por su nombre. Toma nota de quién es profesor(a), padre de familia, empleador, estudiante, etc. Esto te facilitará llevar la conversación, especialmente al principio cuando estás tratando de que todos participen.

*Importante: Si no hay alguien designado como secretario(a) para tomar notas de la sesión, necesitas encontrar un voluntario que esté dispuesto a hacerlo.*

C. Reglas de la discusión

Menciona las reglas básicas que quieras que se tomen en cuenta durante la discusión. Por ejemplo, puedes mencionar lo siguiente:

• “Tratemos de no salirnos del tema central de la discusión y de que cada quien tenga oportunidad de hablar.”
• “Queremos que en esta sesión todos se sientan libres de expresar sus ideas y con la oportunidad de escuchar las opiniones de los demás. Es válido estar de acuerdo con los demás, al igual que es válido no estar de acuerdo. Pero es importante estar en desacuerdo con las ideas, no con las personas. En pocas palabras, tratemos de tener un diálogo constructivo, y no lo hagamos algo personal.
• “¿Estamos listos para empezar?”
D. Presentación de los materiales Choicework.

Puede resultar útil presentar el video de alguna de las siguientes maneras:

- “Vamos a ver un video que muestra tres visiones diferentes sobre la manera de ayudar a los estudiantes de los colegios comunitarios a mejorar su aprovechamiento escolar y su desempeño profesional. Este video nos servirá como punto partida para la discusión.”

- “Después de ver el video, voy a hacerles preguntas sobre qué visión es la más similar a la de ustedes, y podemos empezar a hablar de las diferentes visiones. Posiblemente ustedes tendrán comentarios sobre cosas que no aparecieron en el video, y también podremos hablar de ello después de verlo.”

Pide a los participantes que den vuelta a la página ____ de la Guía para el Participante, en caso de que quieran leer el texto del video, pero también es importante indicarles que pueden solamente ver el video. El texto escrito es únicamente para quienes prefieran leerlo.

Empieza a reproducir el video. La Guía del Participante aparece reproducida en las cuatro páginas siguientes. En seguida se encuentran las instrucciones para comenzar la discusión al momento de terminar el video.
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2. Ayudar a los estudiantes a sobrellevar las presiones que enfrentan en la vida.
3. Garantizar que el proceso de aprendizaje sea una experiencia enriquecedora y rigurosa.

Cada una de estas áreas o enfoques es importante, al igual que otras ideas que ustedes puedan contribuir. Sin embargo, es importante establecer prioridades para poder utilizar nuestros recursos de la mejor manera posible.

Comenzaremos por revisar cada uno de los enfoques con mayor detenimiento. ¿Cuál creen que tendrá el mayor impacto en el éxito de los estudiantes y por qué?

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Achieving the Dream
Community Colleges Count
Enfoque 1: Concentrar esfuerzos en asegurarse de que la preparación de los estudiantes sea suficiente para realizar estudios a nivel de colegio

Por una variedad de razones, muchos estudiantes llegan al colegio sin una base académica sólida. Una preparación adecuada puede permitir a estos estudiantes estar mejor equipados para aprovechar las oportunidades educativas que el colegio les brinda y para evitar distraer sus estudios por las presiones que enfrentan en la vida.

Por eso, debemos hacer cosas como:

- Brindar cursos de revisión y programas de asesoría para ayudar a los estudiantes a fortalecer las áreas en que se encuentran menos preparados.
- Mejorar la educación secundaria (“K-12 education”) y la transición entre la educación secundaria y el colegio.
- Ofrecer programas de inglés como segundo idioma o “programas ESL” para estudiantes que necesitan mejorar su conocimiento del idioma.

A quienes les gusta este enfoque sostienen que:

“Dado que un gran número de estudiantes llegan al colegio comunitario sin los conocimientos ni habilidades necesarias para sobresalir, es de suma importancia asegurarse de que están preparados para aprovechar al máximo su experiencia en el colegio.”

Pero otros sostienen que:

“La tarea que el colegio tiene que cumplir es de por sí ardua. No es práctico esperar que el colegio realice la tarea adicional de ayudar a los estudiantes con conocimientos que debieron haber aprendido antes de llegar al colegio.”

PREGUNTAS DE SONDEO PARA EL MODERADOR (OPCIONALES)

- ¿El enfoque o alternativa elegido tendrá un impacto significativo en los estudiantes que tienen mayor dificultad en la escuela? En otras palabras, ¿nos ayudará a cerrar las brechas que existen entre el nivel de desempeño de unos y de otros? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Cuál ha sido el resultado de tomar esta alternativa en nuestro colegio comunitario actualmente? ¿Cuáles son las fortalezas y debilidades del colegio en este enfoque?
- ¿Está faltando algo en esta alternativa que sea absolutamente indispensable para lograr que los estudiantes sobresalgan?
Enfoque 2: Concentrar esfuerzos en ayudar a los estudiantes a enfrentar las presiones que enfrentan en sus vidas

Normalmente, la vida de los estudiantes de colegios comunitarios es bastante compleja. La mayoría tiene un empleo, mucha tienen hijos y solamente muy pocos tienen dinero suficiente. Estas presiones les dificultan mantener la atención necesaria en los estudios para alcanzar sus metas.

Por lo tanto, debemos hacer cosas como las siguientes:

• Ofrecer programas de becas y servicio de cuidado de niños para ayudar a los estudiantes en condiciones económicas limitadas.

• Promover que sus empleadores permitan horarios de trabajo flexibles para quienes quieren estudiar.

• Dar asesoría y acompañamiento a los estudiantes que lo necesiten para manejar sus problemas personales.

A quienes les parece adecuado este enfoque suelen decir que:

“Al ayudar a los estudiantes a manejar las presiones que enfrentan en su vida personal y que pueden distraerlos de sus estudios podemos aumentar sus probabilidades de éxito.”

Pero otros piensan que:

“Los estudiantes de colegio son adultos, por lo que deben de tomar responsabilidad de sus vidas, sin importar lo complicadas que son. El colegio debe de concentrarse nada más en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje.”

▷ PREGUNTAS DE SONDEO PARA EL MODERADOR (OPCIONALES)

• ¿El enfoque o alternativa elegido tendrá un impacto significativo en los estudiantes que tienen mayor dificultad en la escuela? En otras palabras, ¿nos ayudará a cerrar las brechas que existen entre el nivel de desempeño de unos y de otros? ¿Por qué?

• ¿Cuál ha sido el resultado de tomar esta alternativa en nuestro colegio comunitario actualmente? ¿Cuáles son las fortalezas y debilidades del colegio en este enfoque?

• ¿Está faltando algo en esta alternativa que sea absolutamente indispensable para lograr que los estudiantes sobresalgan?
Enfoque 3: Concentrar esfuerzos en lograr que el proceso de aprendizaje sea una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora

Lo más importante que tenemos a nuestro alcance es ofrecer a nuestros estudiantes una educación de calidad; una experiencia enriquecedora que los motive a superarse y que a la vez les proporcione los conocimientos y habilidades necesarios para alcanzar sus metas educativas y profesionales. Si logramos eso, podremos ayudar a cada estudiante motivado a sobresalir.

Por lo tanto, podemos hacer cosas como:

• Elevar expectativas y estándares académicos.
• Capacitar a los profesores en el uso de técnicas efectivas de enseñanza, incluyendo aquéllas que permiten ayudar especialmente a los estudiantes con desempeño más bajo.
• Invertir en tecnología avanzada.

A quienes les gusta esta alternativa consideran que:

“Mantener altas expectativas académicas con respecto de los estudiantes y ofrecerles una experiencia rigurosa y enriquecedora son la clave para que los estudiantes tengan un buen aprovechamiento educativo.”

Por otro lado, hay quienes sostienen que:

“Los colegios comunitarios dan servicio a estudiantes de todo tipo, y no debemos suponer que todos necesitan o quieren una experiencia académica igualmente rigurosa. Algunos tienen objetivos más prácticos e inmediatos.”

PREGUNTAS DE SONDEO PARA EL MODERADOR (OPCIONALES)

• ¿El enfoque o alternativa elegido tendrá un impacto significativo en los estudiantes que tienen mayor dificultad en la escuela? En otras palabras, ¿nos ayudará a cerrar las brechas que existen entre el nivel de desempeño de unos y de otros? ¿Por qué?
• ¿Cuál ha sido el resultado de tomar esta alternativa en nuestro colegio comunitario actualmente? ¿Cuáles son las fortalezas y debilidades del colegio en este enfoque?
• ¿Está faltando algo en esta alternativa que sea absolutamente indispensable para lograr que los estudiantes sobresalgan?
E. Para comenzar la discusión a partir del video

Después de ver el video, comienza a explicar a los participantes que lo que acaban de escuchar son tres visiones diferentes sobre cómo ayudar a los estudiantes de colegio comunitario a sobresalir y que antes que nada nos gustaría escuchar cuál de las tres visiones se parece más a la visión personal que tiene cada uno de los participantes. Píde que alcen la mano quienes se identifiquen más con cada una de los enfoques: “¿Quiénes piensan que su visión se parece más a la primera opinión mostrada en el video? ¿Quiénes se inclinan más por la segunda? ¿Y la tercera?”

En seguida, pregunta a las personas por qué escogieron una u otra, y con esto se motivará la discusión. Asegúrate de empezar con personas que no sean educadores, ya sea un padre de familia o dos, un estudiante, o un empleador. Después ya puedes incluir la opinión de uno o más educadores.

Nuestro objetivo aquí es que el grupo comience a pensar y a hablar sobre cómo ayudar a los estudiantes de colegio comunitario a sobresalir al igual que sobre otros temas relacionados. Si las personas solamente se dirigen a ti cuando están hablando, y no se comunican entre ellos, puede resultar útil el conectar los comentarios de unos con otros, para que reaccionen entre ellos un poco. Por ejemplo, si están hablando sobre el video, podrías sugerir que uno de los que se identificó con la alternativa 1 responda a un comentario de alguien que eligió la alternativa 3 para dar a entender al grupo que está bien tener opiniones sobre la elección de los demás.

F. Conclusiones Preliminares ______ - ______

Después de la sección de Choicework, pide al grupo que trabaje por aproximadamente 10 minutos en las tres preguntas que se incluyen a continuación.

**Secretario(a):** El secretario o secretaria debe colocar en la pared tres hojas de rotafolios con los siguientes títulos: “Opiniones en Común”, “Opiniones en Desacuerdo” y “Preguntas o Preocupaciones.” Es recomendable colocarlas desde un principio, para ahorrar tiempo y porque pueden ser una herramienta útil durante la discusión.

Explica que vas a hablar brevemente sobre estos tres temas y pide al grupo que presten mucha atención. Después comienza con el primero (aunque puede ser que a medida que la discusión avance, tengas que saltar de una hoja a la otra).

- En nuestra conversación sobre ayudar a los estudiantes de colegio comunitario a sobresalir encontramos algunas opiniones en común. ¿En qué estamos de acuerdo?

- ¿En qué áreas hubo opiniones en desacuerdo—los puntos sobre los que necesitamos seguir conversando para resolver nuestras diferencias y avanzar?

- ¿Qué preguntas o preocupaciones deben ser prioritarias? ¿Necesitamos más información al respecto de éstas?
Consejos prácticos para moderar las Conclusiones Preliminares

- Antes de escribir la aportación de un participante en la hoja de rotafolios, es muy importante que el grupo tenga oportunidad de considerarla o “procesarla” para estar seguros que el grupo acepta que se escriba en la hoja. Por ejemplo, antes de anotarla, puedes preguntar: “¿Estamos de acuerdo en que esta es una opinión en común? Si no se llega a un consenso pronto, el asunto deberá incluirse en la hoja de “Preguntas y preocupaciones” para una discusión posterior.

- Es importante que no se introduzcan elementos que no han aparecido en la discusión anterior. El objetivo de esta sección es resumir la conversación anterior, no iniciar una nueva.

- Este es un momento en el que puedes mencionar tus propias observaciones. La persona que actúa como secretario/a también puede hacerlo. Por ejemplo, si el grupo olvidó un punto de desacuerdo, puedes decir: “Recuerdo que hubo un punto de desacuerdo sobre ___________. ¿Es correcto?”

- No necesitamos que el grupo esté 100% de acuerdo en algo para incluirlo en la lista de “Opiniones en común”, en tanto que al menos 3/4 de las personas estén de acuerdo. Las opiniones minoritarias pueden ser anotadas en “Preguntas y Preocupaciones.”

Parte 2: ¿Cómo pueden trabajar juntos el colegio comunitario y nuestra comunidad para reducir la brecha que existe entre los niveles de desempeño de unos estudiantes y otros y ayudar a todos a sobresalir? (O cualquier otra pregunta de la Parte 2 que elijas.)

Después de las conclusiones preliminares, darás inicio a la parte 2 sobre soluciones y estrategias para disminuir la brecha entre los niveles de desempeño de unos estudiantes y de otros y ayudar a todos los estudiantes a sobresalir.

Secretario(a): Comienza una nueva hoja de rotafolios con el título de esta sección. Llegado este momento de la discusión, el grupo ya estará bastante participativo, por lo que sólo será necesaria una transición sencilla, como por ejemplo:

“Hemos estado hablando sobre los diferentes modos de ayudar a los estudiantes a mejorar su desempeño. Ahora, trátemos de concluir el diálogo con una discusión sobre los pasos a seguir. Comencemos por contestar la siguiente pregunta:

“¿De qué maneras pueden el colegio y nuestra comunidad colaborar para disminuir las brechas que existen entre el nivel de desempeño de unos estudiantes y de otros y ayudar a todos a sobresalir?”

Pedir al secretario(a) que lo escriba en la hoja de rotafolios:

Durante los últimos cinco minutos de esta sección, organiza la lista de propuestas siguiendo un orden de prioridades. (La página siguiente incluye el procedimiento para hacerlo).
Propuestas de acción siguiendo un orden de prioridades

En primer lugar, pide que todos los participantes elijan tres ideas que les convenzan más. Permite que por un minuto el grupo lea rápidamente la lista de ideas. Informa al grupo que cuenta con un minuto para hacerlo. En seguida, pide que cada quien escriba en una hoja de papel el número de sus tres propuestas favoritas. (Es aceptable tener solamente una o dos propuestas, en vez de tres).

En segundo lugar, pide que un delegado de cada grupo pequeño diga los números de las propuestas seleccionadas por todos los integrantes de su grupo. (El secretario(a) deberá marcar una estrella “*” a un lado de la propuesta elegida cada vez que esta reciba un voto.)

En tercero, después de que todos los participantes han mencionado cuáles son sus tres propuestas preferidas, toma un momento para ver cuáles son las propuestas con el mayor número de estrellas. Éstas serán el consenso inicial del grupo, y serán incluidas en el informe durante la plenaria final, junto con las áreas de opiniones en común, desacuerdos, preguntas/preocupaciones y los próximos pasos.

Durante los últimos 5 – 10 minutos se realizará la discusión sobre los “próximos pasos” (Ver la siguiente página.)

Próximos pasos   _____ - _____

Durante los últimos 5 – 10 minutos invita al grupo a hablar sobre cuáles pueden ser los próximos pasos o “¿cómo podemos empezar a poner en práctica lo que hablamos hoy?”. Menciona que para esta última sección tendrán que responder dos preguntas: una sobre pasos que tendrán que seguir individualmente y otra sobre la manera en que la comunidad puede continuar el diálogo.

Importante: Si el tiempo es insuficiente, puedes ignorar la primera pregunta y pasar directamente a la segunda. [Pedir al secretario(a) que coloque la hoja de rotafolios]

1. ¿Hay algo que cada quien, individualmente podría hacer o hará de manera diferente como resultado de lo que hablamos hoy?

2. ¿Qué les gustaría ver como resultado de nuestra conversación?

De ser necesario, puedes estimular su participación sobre el segundo punto, con las siguientes preguntas:

• ¿Hay algo en particular de lo que hablamos hoy a lo que necesitamos regresar en algún momento y discutirlo entre todos? Si es así, ¿qué es?
• ¿Existe algún otro asunto que debamos incluir en la discusión además de lo que hablamos hoy?
• ¿Queremos incluir a otras personas en el diálogo? ¿Cómo podemos incluirlas?
• (Sólo si este es el caso) hubo varias ideas en la última parte de la discusión en las que vimos bastantes opiniones en común. ¿Cómo podemos aprovechar estas coincidencias de opiniones?

Debes estar por terminar la sesión a las ______.

No olvides recordarles a los participantes que asistir a la reunión final de todo el grupo es de suma importancia, ya que en esa reunión todos tendrán oportunidad de escuchar lo que los otros grupos discutieron y podrán idear, entre todos, la mejor manera para dar continuidad a este diálogo comunitario.

*Importante:* Mientras los participantes se dirigen a la plenaria, aprovecha para trabajar con el/la secretario(a) para organizar tus notas para la presentación final, la cual deberá incluir los siguientes puntos de las partes 1 y 2:

• Opiniones en común
• Áreas en las que hubo desacuerdos
• Preguntas/preocupaciones
• Propuestas de acción (las tres prioritarias del consenso inicial)
• Próximos pasos

**Programa del Moderador**

____ - ____ Parte 1: Discusión General: “Cómo Ayudar a todos los Estudiantes de Colegio Comunitario a Sobresalir”

Después de que los participantes se presentan, mostrar el video y comenzar la discusión.

____ - ____ Conclusiones Preliminares de la discusión de la Parte 1

____ - ____ Parte 2: ¿Cómo pueden trabajar juntos el colegio comunitario y nuestra comunidad para disminuir las brechas que existen entre el nivel de desempeño de unos estudiantes y de otros y ayudar a todos los estudiantes a sobresalir?

____ - ____ Ordenar las propuestas de acción con base en prioridades

____ - ____ Identificar los próximos pasos

____ Reunión general del grupo

(Es posible que tengas que distribuir cuestionarios en este momento, o posiblemente en el grupo más amplio—confirma con los organizadores).
APPENDIX 6: SAMPLE INVITATIONS
Please Join Us for

A Community Conversation
to Help All Community College Students Achieve

Success Is What Counts!

WHEN: Saturday, April 1, 2006
9:30 – 2:00 (breakfast and lunch provided)

WHERE: Valencia Community College
West Campus Health Sciences Building, Rm 105
1800 South Kirkman Road

RSVP: Department of College and Community Relations
407-582-3338 or go to
www.valenciacc.edu/conversation

Like all community colleges, Valencia has some students who are struggling. In other words, we have some achievement gaps—and we want to do something about them.

We are inviting individuals and organizations who have an impact on our communities’ future to join us to consider questions important to the future success of Valencia students. Our goal is to involve the broadest representation of community members from all the areas we serve in Orange and Osceola Counties.

With your help, this can be a very meaningful dialogue that can help shape Valencia Community College’s educational plans during the months and years ahead. Seating will be limited.

GET INVOLVED! WHILE WE LISTEN!

Cosponsors:
Valencia Black Advisory Committee
Valencia Alumni Association
Central Florida YMCA
RAFMAN Club, Inc.
Diocese of Orlando
Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida

www.valenciacc.edu/dream
Está Usted muy cordialmente invitado a una

Conversación con la Comunidad
para ayudar a triunfar a todos los estudiantes de los Colegios Comunitarios

¡El éxito es lo que cuenta!

FECHA: Sábado, Abril 1, 2006
9:30 – 2:00 (desayuno y almuerzo gratis)

LUGAR: Valencia Community College
West Campus, Edificio de Ciencias de la Salud
(Health Sciences) Aula #105
1800 South Kirkman Road

CONFIRMAR SU ASISTENCIA: Departamento de
College and Community Relations 407-582-3338
ó visite nuestra página:
www.valenciacc.edu/conversation

Como todos los colegios comunitarios, Valencia tiene estudiantes con dificultades. En otras palabras, tenemos estudiantes que no están logrando sus sueños – y nosotros queremos hacer algo para ayudarlos.

Estamos invitando a personas y organizaciones que ejercen una influencia en el futuro de nuestra comunidad a que se unan con nosotros: dialoguemos y consideremos importantes preguntas para el futuro triunfo de los estudiantes de Valencia Community College.
Nuestra meta es involucrar a la mayor representación de la comunidad en todas las áreas que servimos en los condados de Orange y Osceola.

Con su ayuda, éste dialogo puede ser muy productivo y puede ayudarnos a formar los planes educativos de Valencia Community College en los meses y años venideros. Asientos limitados.

INVOLUCRESE! NOSOTROS ESCUCHAMOS!

Co-Patrocinadores:
Valencia Black Advisory Committee
Valencia Alumni Association
Central Florida YMCA
RAFMAN Club, Inc.
Diocese of Orlando
Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida

www.valenciacc.edu/dream
March 20, 2006

Dear (participant),

Our friends at (sponsor name) highly recommended you as an important member of our community who would greatly contribute to an upcoming community conversation on “Helping All Community College Students Succeed.” This will be a gathering of San Antonio area residents, students, educators, community leaders and the Alamo Community College District to discuss closing achievement gaps and improving student results.

The event is a joint project of the Alamo Community College District and its respective colleges—San Antonio College, St. Philip's College, Northwest Vista College and Palo Alto College—along with the following partner organizations:

• San Antonio Education Partnership
• St. Paul United Methodist Church
• Alamo City Chamber of Commerce
• Project Quest, Inc.
• Alamo WorkSource
• San Antonio Independent School District
• City of San Antonio
• Communities in Schools
• San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
• Randolph Metrocom Chamber of Commerce

Your views are valued and your participation is essential so we can have a diverse and productive dialogue that can inform action in the colleges and in the community. We are counting on you to share your knowledge, opinions, and expertise with other neighborhood partners and with our colleges on the best ways to help our students succeed. This will be an informal gathering where a wide variety of community stakeholders can share information and engage in a community discussion.

The event will take place on Tuesday, April 4, 2006 from 5:30-9:15 PM at Fox Tech High School (637 N. Main Avenue in San Antonio). The program will begin with dinner, proceed to a short welcome session, after which we’ll break into small, facilitated group discussions. We’ll close with a summation and a discussion of concrete follow-up actions.

 Reserve your place now for this important community event by calling Mary Frias, Chancellor’s Office, at 210-208-8020 or email her at mfrias@accd.edu.

Help community college students achieve their dreams. We look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely,

Jo-Carol Fabianke
Director, Achieving the Dream