

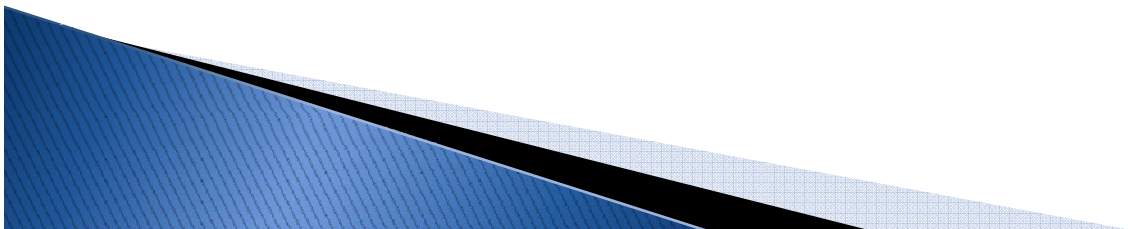
Mixed Methodology for Focus Groups

Presented by:
Tad Pfeifer, Research Analyst
Katherine R. Friedrich, Director, Institutional Research
College of the Mainland

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Introductions



Overview

- ▶ Why student focus groups?
- ▶ Challenges to conducting focus groups
- ▶ Proposed Mixed Methodology
- ▶ Pros and Cons
- ▶ Reporting findings
- ▶ Sample materials

Background information

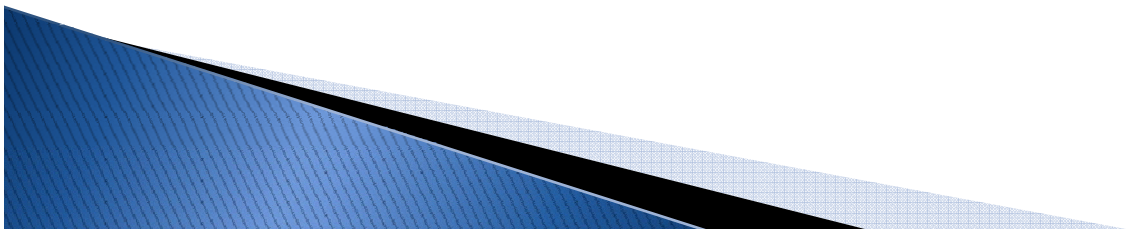
- ▶ Joined the Achieving the Dream Initiative in 2006
- ▶ Focused on understanding and making better use of data to improve student outcomes.
 - Identifying gaps in student success outcomes
 - Diagnosing the underlying cause of these gaps
- ▶ Led to a need to collect both quantitative and qualitative data

Traditional Data Activities

- ▶ Data collection and analyses typically limited to quantitative data only
 - e.g. Course completions, Retention/persistence, awards conferred, survey data
- ▶ Enables us to identify *where* the gaps in student success exist
- ▶ BUT, does not inform us as to *why* the gaps exist

Why focus groups?

- ▶ In order to address gaps in student success outcomes, need to know why they exist
- ▶ Qualitative data, such as that gathered throughout focus groups is more diagnostic in nature



The Challenge

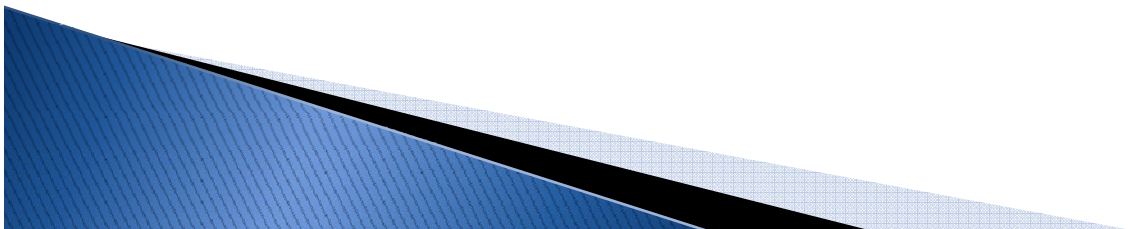
- ▶ By definition, focus groups typically focus on a single issue or question

HOWEVER

- ▶ End users want answers to more than one question

AND

- ▶ Time limits are dictated by class time frames



Mixed methodology

- ▶ Gathering possible questions
- ▶ Designating key discussion questions and non-discussion questions
- ▶ Paring down items
 - eliminating overlap or information that can be found in other places
- ▶ Designating order of questions

Mixed Methodology (cont.)

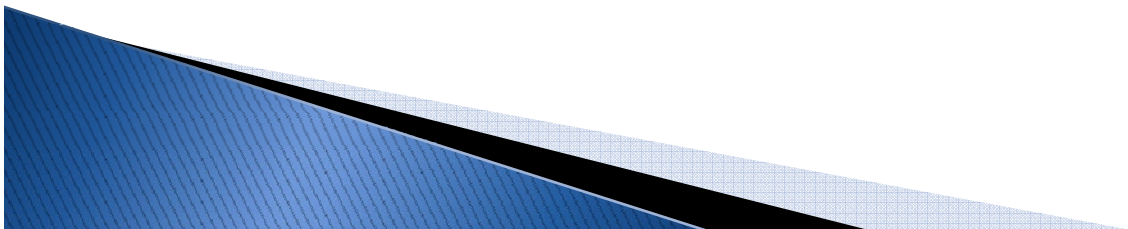
- ▶ Conducting sessions
 - Staff—minimum 2 people
 - Prepare room
 - Introductions
 - Four time segments
 1. Answering written questions
 2. Discussion of answers
 3. Discussion of additional verbal questions
 4. Written comments on any additional feedback

Pros

- ▶ Allows for feedback that students may not feel free to voice amongst peers
- ▶ More data than focus group discussion alone
- ▶ Allows time for students to think about their opinion/responses before listening to others' opinions
- ▶ Multiple staff promotes validation of data

Cons

- ▶ Wording of the items is important as you may get the same answers to different questions that “sound” alike
- ▶ Can result in repetitive data

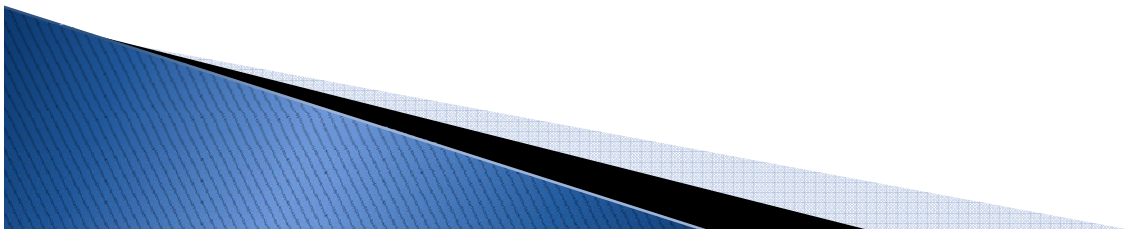


Reporting Findings

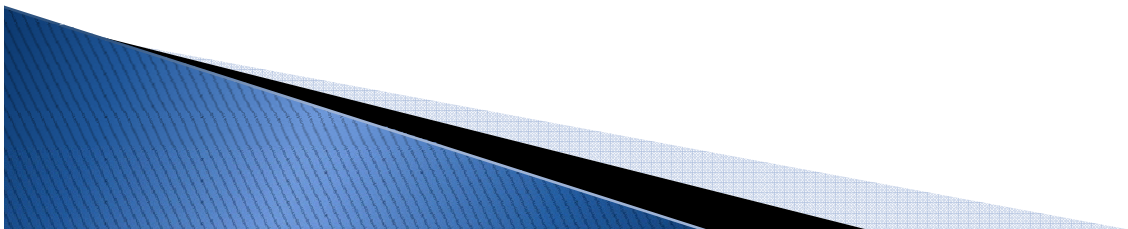
- ▶ For each question
 - What themes or patterns in the responses emerged?
 - Sample responses highlighting these themes
- ▶ Highlight noteworthy comments
 - Statements that really stand out
 - Quotes that represent significant findings/responses
- ▶ Provide full record of responses in appendix

Sample materials

- ▶ [Focus Group Feedback Form](#)
- ▶ [Focus Group Instructions](#)



Questions?



Contact information

Tad Pfeifer

tpfeifer@com.edu

Kathy Friedrich

kfriedrich@com.edu