Let’s Listen:
Using Focus Groups to Improve Student Satisfaction

Jacqueline Strapp M.Ed.
Kishwaukee College
Student Success & Retention Coordinator

Why Focus Groups?

• Allows Students to express satisfaction and dissatisfaction
• Gives administrators an idea of what students value
• Creates a culture of continual improvement and inclusiveness
• Helps administrators develop college strategic plan
Where to Start?

• Use existing data to frame the discussion
  Ex: existing survey results can lead to a more intentional conversation. Kishwaukee College used “Challenges” gathered from Noel Levitz surveys for our institution to act as our agenda topics

• Collaborate with other departments on campus, to generate ideas for additional topics
  Ex: before conducting the focus groups I met with department heads from various areas on campus and asked if they had specific questions that would improve services within their area

• Use random sampling to invite a variety of students that will accurately represent your campus
  Ex:

Encouraging Participation

• Make the process easy
  Ex: Gives students a variety of times, reminders, and incentives. We used signupgenius.com to help send invites, automatic reminders, and track respondents. We also offered free food, college apparel, and raffled off a $100 visa gift card.

• Review Focus Group Moderation tips
  Ex: Find a moderator who can be impartial, non-combative, and defending. Making students feel comfortable to express grievances without the fear of backlash will give you better results

• Encourage faculty to invite students
  Ex: Faculty are always your best resource when trying to improve student participation. Remind faculty that these results will help administrators address common concerns that hinder student success.
Using Your Results

• Make sure your agenda is solution focused

Ex: During our focus groups we asked students “how could the college improve...?”, and “what are your suggestions to create better results...?”, we used this type of questioning to keep the conversations less about complaining and more about finding solutions.

• Once you have the results share them

Ex: It was very effective to meet with each department head individually to share feedback for their area. I set up meetings with each VP and brought the written report as well as video clips from the groups to give them a true account of the student issues, and suggested solutions.

• Inform administrators of follow-up

Ex: We informed the VP’s that we would like to report to the students what steps were taken to address their concerns
High-impact Colleges

Research shows that actively engaged students are more likely to learn and achieve their goals. High impact colleges build support services targeted specifically to student needs.

(Center of Community College Student Engagement, 2015)

We serve the following students:

- Low income
- First-generation
- Students with disabilities
- 215 students
Reframing Mandatory

Reframing “mandatory” from *Punitive* to an *Opportunity*
- Professional & personal growth
- Networking with faculty & peers

Adapting student mindset
- We are preparing them for the real world
- Professional conferences and development are important
- 80% of employers are looking for leadership skills and the ability to work in a team

(National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2016)
Use Technology to Expand our Reach

- Weebly
- Prezi
- Invites & Sign ups through google forms
- Kahoot.it

Any Questions?
Tedra Mewhirter, TRIO Transfer Advisor
tedra.s.mewhirter@svcc.edu
Joe Bright, TRIO Tutoring and Career Advisor
joe.a.bright@svcc.edu
Resources on high impact practices


- Identifying and promoting high-impact educational practices in community colleges. Center of Community College Student Engagement. http://www.ccsse.org/center/initiatives/highimpact/

High Impact Practices for Improving Retention & Success: Motivational Interviewing

Richard C. Rutschman
Northeastern Illinois University
Center for College Access & Success
Member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers
Motivational Interviewing

“Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change. It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person’s own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion.”

From: Miller & Rollnick, Motivational Interviewing, 3rd Ed., 2012, p. 29, Gilford Press.

M.I. Conversations

Involve:

• Spirit of MI (Mindset & Heart-set)
• Core Skills (OARS)
• Strategies to prevent discord (threat), evoke change talk & silence sustain talk
• Four Processes during the Conversation (the conversation steps)
The Underlying Spirit of MI

Spirit of MI: 
*The interpersonal way of being*

- Partnership
- Acceptance
- Evocation
- Compassion
Partnership

Dancing instead of Wrestling

Acceptance

Absolute Worth

Affirmation  Non-Judgmental  Autonomy

Accurate Empathy
Evocation

They are experts on themselves, so show curiosity about their situation and this will evoke their thoughts & feelings.

Compassion

Gives priority to what is best for the other person (beyond co-suffering)

- Expressed with kindness, empathy and action
- Genuinely care about your clients’/students’
- Deliberate commitment to promote their welfare and best interest of the person
Underlying Concepts of MI

- People are ambivalent about change
- Providers who push for change create a relational discord which encourages the person/student to maintain the status quo (resisting change)
- Discord predicts lack of change
- Honoring autonomy by evoking the student’s own change talk will enhance behavior change

Is MI Evidence-Based?

- Literature search found over 230 randomized controlled trials & meta-analysis showed significant effect for MI
- Studies addressed wide range of behavioral problems in addictions, health care, mental health, corrections & education
- Meta-analysis of MI in School showed positive findings (Snape & Atkinson, 2016)
- Using MI in brief encounters of 15 min., 64% of studies showed effect (behavior change)
- Twice the effect size for African Americans, Latinos, and other minority populations*

Core Skills: OARS

O = open-ended questions
A = affirming
R = reflective listening
S = summarizing

It could sound like this:
O, r, r, r, a, O, r, r, O, r, r, r, a, S
(the commas is them talking)

Open-Ended Questions
The answer is more than one word

Affirming
Acknowledge effort, values, skills, strengths...

Reflective Listening
Gives back what you heard, picks out the change talk or unstated emotion or guesses what must be their situation.

Summarizing
Review what’s been said, restates “change talk,” transitions to next steps
Next Steps

- Go to [www.MIforSchools.org](http://www.MIforSchools.org) (Includes PDF’s)

- Sign up for a Beginning MI workshop (ask to be emailed dates: R-Rutschman@neiu.edu).


- Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: a Practitioners Workbook by David Rosengren (2009), Guilford Press.

[www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)
Contact Information

Richard Rutschman, EdD
Center for Student Access & Success
Northeastern Illinois University
770 N. Halsted, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60642
312-563-7156  R-Rutschman@neiu.edu
773-510-6515 cell