

# Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges

## FOCUS GROUP TOOLKIT



This toolkit was produced as part of the Center initiative Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty in Community Colleges, supported by MetLife Foundation.



# Strengthening the Role of Part-time Faculty in Community Colleges: Focus Group Toolkit

The Center for Community College Student Engagement encourages colleges to hold focus groups with part-time and full-time faculty to learn about differences in the faculty and their experience at their college and to complement survey data. Survey responses tell the “what” about faculty’s experiences; through conducting focus groups, colleges will learn the “why.” In addition to gathering specific details about faculty perceptions and experiences, these structured discussions will also help uncover possible strategies to consider for strengthening the role of part-time faculty at the college.

Provided in this toolkit are materials for organizing focus groups and sample focus group discussion guides for faculty. In addition, sample quantitative response sheets are provided to gather basic demographic information, as well as information to complement findings from discussions.

For additional information about how to plan and conduct focus groups, please contact the Center at 512-471-6807 or via e-mail at [initiative@cccse.org](mailto:initiative@cccse.org). The following information can be found in this toolkit:

## Planning Focus Groups

- › Selecting a Facilitator and Note-taker (p. 1)
- › Coordinator and Facilitator Checklist (p. 2)
- › Room Set-Up (p. 3)  
*(For videotaping guidelines, please contact the Center.)*
- › Recruiting Focus Group Participants (p. 4)
- › Invitation E-mail to Faculty (p. 5)

## Discussion Tools

- › Facilitator DOs and DON'Ts (p. 6)
- › Part-Time Faculty Discussion Guide (p. 7)
- › Full-Time Faculty Discussion Guide (p. 13)

## Forms

- › Faculty Consent Form (p. 19)
- › Faculty Participant Profile Sheet (p. 20)

## Analyzing and Reporting on the Discussion

- › Sample Focus Group Report Template (p. 23)

# Selecting a Facilitator and Note-taker

## Overview of Facilitator Role

**The facilitator's role is to guide a discussion** around specific, predetermined subjects in an objective, respectful manner. **The facilitator's greatest challenge** is to be seen by participants as an objective and effective conversation leader. Though the focus group discussion should be recorded to ensure an accurate record of the conversation, and though the facilitator will be accompanied by a note-taker, the facilitator will also be taking notes during the discussion, noting participants' comments and keeping track of the results of "show of hands" votes taken on specific questions.

### The facilitator should be

- › a skilled, objective listener;
- › comfortable and familiar with the group process;
- › able to create and maintain the group's enthusiasm and interest;
- › informed about the college's objectives and desired outcomes from the focus groups;
- › familiar with how to draw information from people to meet focus group objectives and expected outcomes; and
- › able to listen without showing reaction to statements made by participants.

### The following are guidelines for effective focus group facilitation:

- › **Ideally, a facilitator should be an objective person from outside the college or, at the very least, someone who is not known to the participants.** If two colleges are reasonably close together, it's sometimes helpful to trade facilitators, so each facilitator is not working with individuals from his or her own college.
- › Even if the facilitator is familiar with information at the college or recognizes that focus group participants are making inaccurate statements about the college, **the facilitator cannot react to those inaccuracies during the focus group, nor respond to the inaccuracies.** (Accurate information can be volunteered by the facilitator after the conversation ends, if the facilitator feels it is in the best interest of the participants—not the college—to do so.)
- › The facilitator should be able to avoid becoming defensive if a participant criticizes the college. It's actually best if the facilitator is not overly knowledgeable about the issues being discussed. Then the facilitator can truthfully tell participants that he or she doesn't know the answer to questions participants have or doesn't have information about an issue they are discussing.
- › The facilitator should **never** be someone who is a senior administrator or someone who is viewed by participants as being in a position of power in the organization.
- › Regardless of an individual's prior experience as a group facilitator, the individual asked to facilitate focus groups should receive training in how to be an effective focus group facilitator. Facilitating focus groups requires an approach that is different from that of simply guiding conversations.

## Coordinator Role

This toolkit was developed primarily to guide the coordinator. As outlined in the Coordinator and Facilitator Checklist, the coordinator has many responsibilities—from planning focus group logistics to ensuring a smooth session for the facilitator and note-taker.

## Overview of Note-taker Role

### The note-taker should be

- › a skilled, objective listener;
- › able to write or type QUICKLY (Note-takers type notes on their laptops/tablets or write notes by hand—whichever they prefer.);
- › able to pull main points from what they hear (They are not writing a transcript.); and
- › able to identify good quotes and jot them down quickly, then check the recording later for accuracy.

The note-taker will also ensure that participants fill out all forms and response sheets and will compile all the data from those sheets for the final report.

Following the focus group, the note-taker will write up the notes into a report, work with the facilitator to check the accuracy of the report, and finalize it for submission to the college. The note-taker will have the benefit of an audiotaped record to check accuracy of quotes and listen again to any sections of the conversation about which he or she has questions.

# Coordinator and Facilitator Checklist

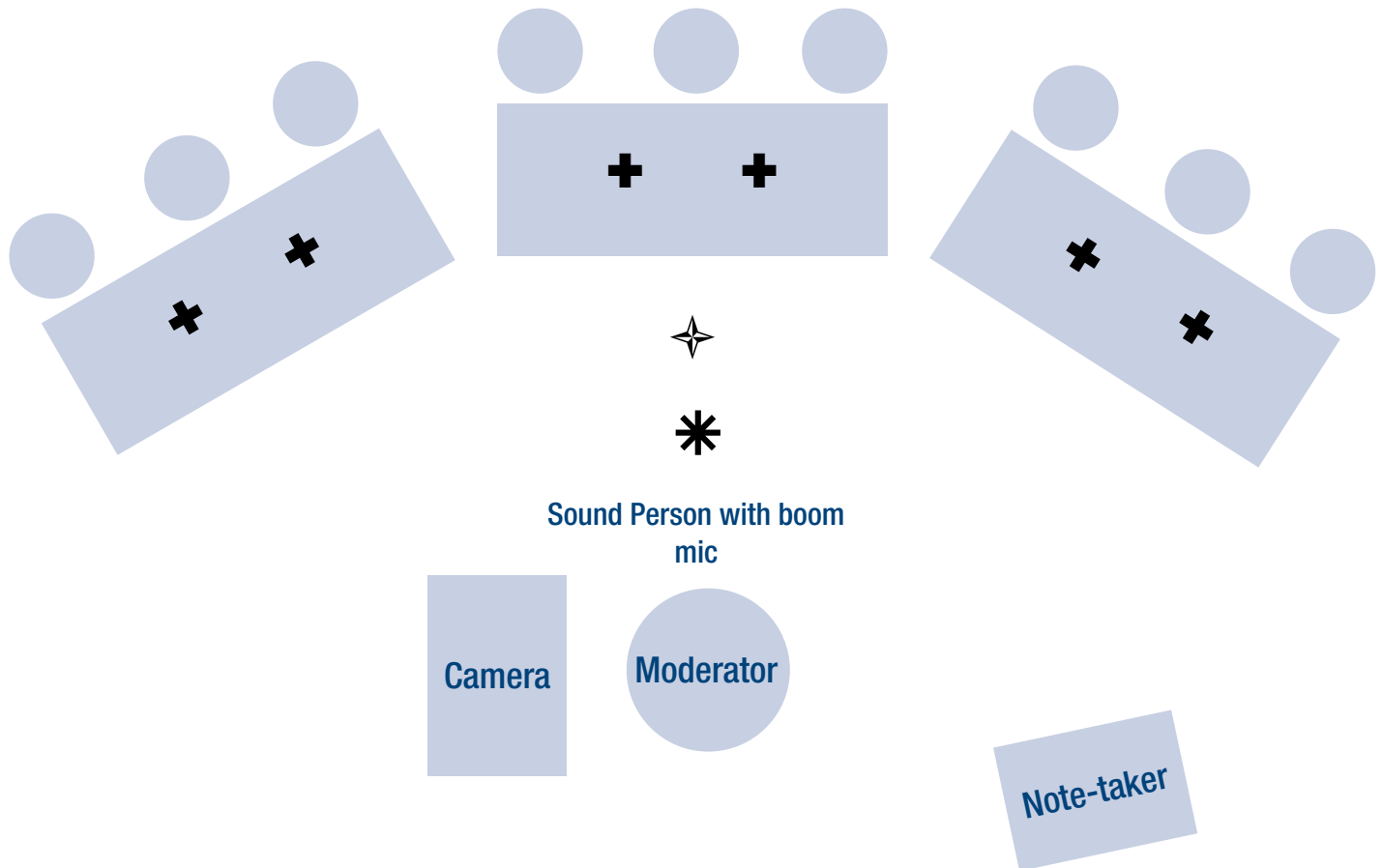
Activity	Coordinator	Facilitator
Arrange times for focus groups	✓	
Arrange for meeting room (see Room Set-Up sheet)	✓	
Identify note-taker for focus groups and video/audio operators, if applicable	✓ or	✓
Identify participants for focus groups	✓	
Contact participants (text, e-mail, and phone)	✓	
Provide refreshments	✓	
Arrange for audio/visual equipment	✓	
Make reminder phone call/text to participants	✓	
Provide incentives for part-time faculty participation (stipend, gift card, etc.)	✓	
Provide laptop for note-taker, if requested	✓ or	✓
Provide name tents for participants (with several markers)	✓	
Provide pens for participants	✓	
Provide two legal pads for note-taker and facilitator	✓	
Distribute consent forms to participants; if videotaping, provide a copy of signed consent form to each participant	✓	
Distribute Faculty Participant Profile Sheet to participants	✓	
Bring facilitator's Discussion Guide		✓
Provide note-taker's template		✓
Provide CD with audio files of focus group discussions for facilitator and note-taker use	✓	

The focus group should be held in a quiet, private room. If the discussion will be audiotaped only, participants should sit comfortably around a round or rectangular table with the focus group facilitator and note-taker. If videotaping, the room should be large enough to accommodate the facilitator, note-taker, video and sound operators, and the refreshments. Suggested audio set-up options include the following:

*Audio Option 1: Boom microphone (\*)*

*Audio Option 2: Table microphones (+)*

*Audio Option 3: Audio recorder, if being videotaped (†)*





# Recruiting Focus Group Participants

**Goal: To gain as accurate a picture as possible of faculty experiences at the college.**

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Through focus group discussions the college will discover information that will help identify steps for improving programs and services. The college will also uncover information that will merit further investigation. The following are guidelines to help your college recruit focus group participants.

1. Avoid recruiting participants from one or two classes or programs or during the same time of day. Even at the same college, part-time faculty who work in different departments report different experiences. It is ideal to hear from a broad cross-section of faculty who teach in developmental and college-level courses, in career programs, and in general education courses.
2. Identify a mix of faculty who will reflect different backgrounds and circumstances. Some part-time focus group participants may be considered specialists, experts, or professionals who are employed by the college part-time but are also employed outside of the teaching role; others may be career enders—retirees from high schools and universities; some are aspiring academics, perhaps finishing up graduate school; and others may be freelancers who are employed in multiple part-time roles at the college. Some part-time focus group participants could be long-term part-timers; others may be contingent part-timers who work from term to term; and some may be aspiring to a full-time position.
3. Look for part-time faculty with varying levels of involvement with the college, from those who are involved in committees and activities outside of class to others who teach classes but have no additional involvement outside of class.
4. The ideal size for each focus group is from seven to 10 participants. This ensures a sufficient number for a good discussion, but not so many that it is difficult for the facilitator to involve everyone.
5. Provide a stipend or gift card for part-time faculty participants. Determine the amount based on what you think will be viewed as a respectful “thank-you” to part-time faculty who are giving their time to participate in these conversations.
6. Be flexible in determining focus group locations and times. If classes are held at various locations, conduct focus groups in places that will be as convenient as possible for attendees. (Colleges with several campuses will benefit from holding focus groups on each of those campuses. It is common that experiences differ for part-time faculty depending upon the campus where they teach classes.) Schedule part-time faculty focus groups both during the day and on an evening or weekend day. These will attract part-time faculty who teach in the evenings and on weekends and have other responsibilities during the day.

## Tips for Encouraging People to Attend the Focus Groups

- › Contact potential participants via phone and e-mail approximately 10–14 days before the meeting. (If possible, send an invitation directly from your college president. This will emphasize the importance of participation and encourage invitees to participate.)
- › Send a text message (We find this to be the best way to reach participants!), call, and e-mail each person the day before the focus group, reminding her/him of the session, providing directions to the location, and confirming attendance. It’s also a good idea to send another message the day of the focus group.

To: [Faculty e-mail address]  
Cc: [If applicable]  
Subject: Faculty Focus Group Discussion at [Name of College]

Dear [Name]:

In continuing efforts to improve student success at [Name of College], your experience and success as a faculty member at [Name of College] is very important to us. Therefore, our leadership team is very interested in learning what we can do to improve our faculty members' experiences—from hiring and orientation to professional development to participation in the college community.

To help us determine what programs and services [Name of College] already has in place that are particularly helpful to you, and also to help us identify ways to improve programs and services, we need to hear from you. To learn about your experiences as a faculty member at [Name of College], we invite you to participate in a 90-minute audiotaped and/or videotaped group discussion with up to nine other faculty members. *(For part-time faculty invitations, add "As a token of our appreciation for your participation, you will receive [insert amount or type of stipend].")*

Details on the group discussion are as follows:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Place: \_\_\_\_\_  
Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

Refreshments will be provided!

Since we are talking with a limited number of faculty, the success and quality of our discussion will depend on the full participation of the faculty who attend. Please contact [Coordinator Name] at [phone number] or [e-mail address] to confirm your attendance.

We look forward to seeing you on [date].

Sincerely,  
[Coordinator Name]

## Facilitator **DOs** ✓

- › Follow the discussion outline and activities, as designed, in a consistent manner from group to group; use the same key questions in each session.
- › Use a neutral yet comfortable and inviting tone of voice and facial expression.
- › Ask questions to clarify participants' points and increase understanding of each point made by participants.
- › Ensure that each participant contributes throughout the conversation.
- › Give people time to think by using pauses whenever needed. Be comfortable with silences.
- › Be respectful of all points of view and instruct those in the group to do the same. (Reminder: This is neither a debate nor an attempt to reach consensus on any issue.)
- › Use plain language! Avoid the jargon used by the college within the “inner circle.”
- › Keep the discussion moving to stay within the specified time frame.
- › End the focus group discussion on time!

## Facilitator **DON'Ts** ✕

- › Guide the participants to preconceived conclusions.
- › Share personal opinions or experiences.
- › Dominate the conversation.
- › Criticize or ridicule anyone's comments or allow anyone in the group to do so.
- › Challenge the accuracy of participants' knowledge or views.
- › Translate jargon or slang terms. (If someone asks what a term means, ask the individual using the term to explain what he or she means.)
- › Interpret participants' comments for the group.
- › Give answers to participants' questions.



## Focus Group Outcomes

- I. Learn more about the needs, perspectives, and experiences of part-time faculty in community colleges.
- II. Understand teaching practices and experiences of part-time faculty.
- III. Understand challenges community college part-time faculty face in their work with students and colleagues and in navigating college practices and processes.
- IV. Learn what institutional policies, practices, and processes promote effectiveness and success for part-time faculty, specifically as they relate to hiring, orientation, professional development, evaluation, compensation, and integration into the college's student success agenda.
- V. Identify opportunities for improvement in addressing challenges facing part-time faculty and in strengthening the role of part-time faculty in the community college.

## Focus Group Outline

Meeting Overview

Participant Introductions

Discussion

Summary & Close

**Approximate Total Time**                      **75-90 minutes**

## Focus Group Discussion

### Meeting Overview

1. Introduce facilitator.
2. Explain purpose of focus group. Focus on improving student success, strengthening the role of part-time faculty at the college, and providing the support faculty need to improve student success.
3. Explain desired outcomes and how information gathered will be used.
4. Explain and request signature on consent forms.
5. Describe facilitator role:
  - › Asks questions and keeps the group on track.
  - › Explain that the facilitator will move through the material fairly quickly, even though people might have more to say about a topic.
6. Describe participants' role:
  - › Share experiences and opinions, both positive and negative.
  - › No right or wrong answers; the discussion is about individual experiences at the college.
  - › Everyone invited is to participate in the discussion.
  - › Fill out Faculty Participant Profile Sheet.
7. Logistics
  - › 90 minutes maximum
  - › Arrangements for water and restroom break
  - › Other?
8. Ground rules
  - › One person speaks at a time; no side conversations.
  - › No one person dominates; everyone will have a chance to be heard.

9. Audiotaping/videotaping/note-taking
  - › For the purposes of gathering information to share with college leaders and for writing a report to the college.
  - › No names will be used in the report.
10. Thanks for taking time to share insights.
11. Questions about focus group in general or about taping?

### Participant Introductions

1. Ask each participant to complete the Faculty Participant Profile Sheet. Discuss specific elements if desired to better understand characteristics of participants.
2. Ask each participant to state the following:
  - › name
  - › how long she or he has taught at this college
  - › teaching field
  - › method of delivery or instruction format: face-to-face, online, or both; day, evening, or both
3. Ask that participants remove name badges or college identifiers.
4. Ask participants to respond to the following questions:
  - › As a part-time faculty member at this college, are you a member of a collective bargaining unit? Is that required or optional?
  - › Do you have a full- or part-time job (at this college or elsewhere) in addition to your teaching job at this college? If so, what is it? How many hours per week do you work at the other job(s)?
  - › Do you currently teach part time at more than one college? At this college, do you currently teach at more than one campus?

### Discussion

**Outcome IV:** Learn what institutional policies, practices, and processes promote effectiveness and success for part-time faculty, specifically as they relate to hiring, orientation, professional development, evaluation, compensation, and integration into the college's student success agenda.

**Outcome V:** Identify opportunities for improvement in addressing challenges facing part-time faculty and in strengthening the role of part-time faculty in the community college.

1. Think back to the beginning of your employment as a part-time faculty member. What were your first contacts like? What were your first impressions of the college?
2. What information were you provided about the college in general, about students, and about employment expectations? What, if any, experiences did the college create for you to interact with other faculty, staff, and administrators?

### Hiring

1. When you applied/interviewed for a part-time teaching position, did you receive a job description?
2. Describe the interview process. With whom did you meet? Did you participate in an in-person interview or was the interview conducted by phone? Did you have more than one interview?
3. Were you given clear expectations about what would be expected of you as a part-time faculty member? If so, by whom? If so, describe in general what those expectations were.
4. Were you required to give a teaching demonstration? If so, please describe what you were asked to present and to whom.
5. Are you explicitly expected to spend time with students outside of class? What about other expectations outside the classroom?
6. When you were initially hired, how far in advance of the starting date of the term did you receive your course

assignments?

7. Following your first term as a part-time instructor (for those who have been teaching part time for more than one term), how far in advance of the beginning of the next term have you received your course assignments?

### **Orientation**

1. After you were hired and before classes began, were you asked to participate in any meetings or orientation activities at the college? If so, were these required or optional? If you participated in anything prior to the start of the term, please describe. Did you attend one session/meeting or more than one session/meeting? What was included in the session(s)/meeting(s)? If you did not choose to participate, please explain. If you participated in any activities, did you receive compensation for your participation?
2. Before classes started, were you offered any help in preparing for your specific teaching assignment?
3. Thinking back to your first few weeks teaching at this college, would you say the activities/meetings in which you participated were helpful or not helpful in your role as a new faculty member? Please explain your response. What was the most helpful aspect of these activities? What was the least helpful aspect of these activities?

### **Professional development**

1. Do you feel adequately prepared for the teaching and learning challenges you encounter? In what ways do you feel prepared? In what ways do you not feel prepared?
2. During your time as a part-time faculty member, have you been invited to participate in professional development activities? If yes, has it been required or optional? If you participated, have you been compensated for your participation? Have you received certification for your involvement in professional development activities? If you have not chosen to participate, please explain.
3. Describe the professional development activities in which you've participated (in terms of content, duration, face-to-face vs. online).
4. How frequently have you been involved in a professional development activity? Once a year? Once a term? Other?
5. In general, how would you evaluate the usefulness of the professional development activities? Are there types of professional development activities that you have found particularly helpful? Are there types of activities that have not been helpful to you at all?
6. As a new part-time faculty member at this college, were you assigned to work with a specific full-time faculty member in your department? If so, how did you work with that individual? For what length of time did you continue to work with this individual? Was it helpful? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways?
7. Is there any specific type of learning opportunity you would like the college to offer for part-time faculty?

### **Evaluation**

1. How would you describe the expectations that this college has for your performance?
2. Who evaluates your performance? Students? Peers? Department chair? Other? In what ways do you receive feedback? In writing? Classroom survey? Face-to-face?
3. Is your evaluation based on specific criteria? If so, what are those criteria? Are there incentives/rewards for meeting those criteria? Consequences for not meeting those criteria?
4. How frequently are you evaluated? Each term? Once a year? Other?
5. Do you find the evaluation process to be helpful? Not helpful? Please explain.

### **Compensation**

1. Is there a salary schedule for part-time faculty that takes into account education, years teaching, and/or other factors?

2. Are there salary increases or other financial incentives tied to your participation in orientation, participation in professional development, participation on committees, additional credentials earned, demonstrated instructional innovation, papers published or conference presentations, or any other specific college-related activities? Please describe how that works.

### **Integration**

1. As a part-time faculty member, are you invited to participate in department meetings? If so, is participation required or optional? If so, how often do you participate in these meetings? Are you compensated for your participation?
2. As a part-time faculty member, do you serve on any college committees or governance groups? Are you invited? Encouraged? Required to participate?
3. As a part-time faculty member, are you invited to participate in any activities designed for entering students? Registration/enrollment processes? Advising? New student orientation? If yes, is it required or optional? If you participate in any of these, are you compensated for your involvement?
4. As a part-time faculty member, are you included in college-wide and/or department discussions where data are shared about student learning and persistence?
5. As a part-time faculty member, are you invited to become involved in any activities related to the college's student success agenda? Strategic planning? Planning, design, and implementation of specific initiatives? Course redesign?
6. Are you invited to share your own expertise in areas that support teaching and learning? If so, in what ways?
7. Do you have opportunities to connect with other faculty within your department and college-wide?

**Outcome I:** Learn more about the needs, perspectives, and experiences of part-time faculty in community colleges.

1. What is the main reason you teach part time at this college? Why did you decide to become a part-time instructor? Did someone approach you about the possibility of teaching here? Did you seek it out on your own? If a full-time teaching position in your field opened up at this college, would you apply for it? Why or why not? Have you previously applied for a full-time position at this college?
2. What do you feel you bring to your role as a college instructor? What makes you an effective teacher (e.g., knowledge/experience in your field, good teaching skills, ability to relate well with students)?
3. How many courses do you teach this term at this college? What courses do you teach? Do you teach any developmental/remedial courses? Prior to this term, how long have you taught those specific courses at this or any other college?
4. If you are currently teaching courses you haven't taught before, what led to your being assigned those specific courses?
5. When you think about the experience you've had so far as a part-time instructor at this college, on a scale of 1-5—5 being "outstanding, and 1 being "not at all what I had hoped for"—where would you rank your experience? Why?
6. In what ways, if any, does your teaching experience here not meet your expectations? In what ways, if any, does your teaching experience here exceed your expectations?
7. From your perspective, what are the most positive aspects of your experience at this college? Give an example.
8. From your perspective, what are the most negative aspects of your experience at this college? Give an example.
9. Do you feel like you belong at this college? On a scale of 1-5, in which 5="I'm an important part of this place" and 1="Nobody knows I'm here," where do you see yourself? Explain your answer.
10. Thinking about your experience at this college, complete this sentence: "This college is like ..."

**Outcome II:** Understand teaching practices and experiences of part-time faculty.

1. What are your expectations for your students' performance? In what ways do you communicate those expectations? Are there college-wide expectations that you communicate to students as well as your own? If students need help in meeting those expectations, how do you see your role in helping them meet those expectations?
2. Describe one of your typical classes. What percentage of the time would you say you spend lecturing? What percentage of the time would you say you devote to students working with other students, in groups or pairs? Do you intentionally structure your class time to incorporate different types of instruction? Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you use technology in your classes? What kind of support do you get/need from the college to help you in your use of technology?
4. To what extent do you build additional academic support into your course requirements, such as supplemental instruction, tutoring (face-to-face or online), skill labs, required study groups, etc.?
5. In general, to what degree do you maintain contact with students outside of class? In what ways? Texting? Phone? E-mail? Through course management software (such as Blackboard)? IM? Social networking site? Informally on campus? Other? How often? For what purposes?
6. Think about a class in which everything is clicking just right. You feel like students are learning, everyone is getting what they need from the class. Describe that class. What's going on? What are you doing? What are students doing? How are people working and learning in that class? What percentage of the time would you say your class measures up to that ideal? When your class isn't operating at your ideal level, what's getting in the way? What are the most important things you can do to reach that ideal? What are the most important things students can do to reach that ideal? What kind of support do you need from the college in order to reach that ideal more often?
7. In what ways do you make efforts to make connections for students outside of class? With other students? With college programs and activities? With support services? How do you learn about services available to students?
8. If a student is falling behind, coming to class unprepared, or skipping classes, what do you do? Do you contact the student? Refer the student to an advisor? Use the college's early alert system? Anything else?

**Outcome III:** Understand challenges community college part-time faculty face in their work with students and colleagues and in navigating college practices and processes.

1. When do you have your first interaction with students each term? During the enrollment/registration/advising/ process? On the first day of class? Other?
2. In what specific ways, if any, are you involved with students before classes begin for a given academic term? Is there any other way you would like to be involved with students before classes begin?
3. At this college, what role do part-time faculty play in advising students? How much of your time would you say you spend advising students? What is the nature of the advising? Course selection? Degree/career paths? Academic struggles? Balancing school with other commitments? In class or out of class? Do you believe you should be spending more or less time advising students? Explain your answer.
4. If/when you meet with students, where do these meetings take place? Faculty offices? Elsewhere on campus? Outside of campus? Are there spaces at the college reserved for part-time faculty to meet with students?
5. What is the greatest challenge you face in meeting your students' needs and expectations? Is there anything in particular that you do to address that challenge?
6. When you need information for your students or materials for your classes, how do you find what you need? Do you know where to go to get what you need? Is it easy or hard to get the information/materials you need?
7. If you run into a problem with a student or any problem related to your teaching, where do you go for help? Is it easy or hard to get the help you need?

8. Are there any challenges in the teaching role at your college that you believe are unique to part-time faculty? If so, what do you believe would help to overcome those challenges for part-time faculty?

### **Summary & Close**

1. Work as a group or individually [possibly use flip chart] and design the “ideal” part-time faculty experience at this college, labeling recommended components.
2. Write down the words participants use to explain their design. Allow 10 minutes for this exercise.
3. What advice would you offer this college and other community colleges about steps they can take to support their part-time faculty with the ultimate goal of helping more students be successful?
4. Thank you and hand out gift cards.



# Full-Time Faculty Discussion Guide

*[Control group for comparison with part-time faculty responses]*

## Focus Group Outcomes

- I. Learn more about the needs, perspectives, and experiences of full-time faculty in community colleges (as compared to part-time faculty).
- II. Understand teaching practices and experiences of full-time faculty, as compared to part-time faculty.
- III. Understand challenges community college full-time faculty face in their work with students and colleagues and in navigating college practices and processes (as compared with part-time faculty).
- IV. Learn what full-time faculty see as the institutional policies, practices, and processes that promote success for part-time faculty, specifically as they relate to hiring, orientation, professional development, evaluation, compensation, and integration into the college's student success agenda.
- V. Identify opportunities for improvement in addressing challenges facing part-time faculty and in strengthening the role of part-time faculty in the community college.

## Focus Group Outline & Timeline

Meeting Overview

Participant Introductions

Discussion

Summary & Close

**Approximate Total Time**            **75-90 minutes**

## Focus Group Discussion

### Meeting Overview

1. Introduce facilitator.
2. Explain purpose of focus group. Focus on improving student success, strengthening the role of part-time faculty at the college, and providing the support faculty need to improve student success.
3. Explain desired outcomes and how information gathered will be used.
4. Explain and request signature on consent forms.
5. Describe facilitator role:
  - › Asks questions and keeps the group on track.
  - › Explain that the facilitator will move through the material fairly quickly, even though people might have more to say about a topic.
6. Describe participants' role:
  - › Share experiences and opinions, both positive and negative.
  - › No right or wrong answers; the discussion is about individual experiences at the college.
  - › Everyone invited is to participate in the discussion.
  - › Fill out Faculty Participant Profile Sheet.
7. Logistics
  - › 90 minutes maximum
  - › Arrangements for water and restroom break
  - › Other?

8. Ground rules
  - › One person speaks at a time; no side conversations.
  - › No one person dominates; everyone will have a chance to be heard.
9. Audiotaping/videotaping/note-taking
  - › For the purposes of gathering information to share with college leaders and for writing a report to the college;
  - › No names will be used in the report.
10. Thanks from your college for taking time to share your insights.
11. Questions about focus group in general or about taping?

### Participant Introductions

1. Ask each participant to complete the Faculty Participant Profile Sheet. Discuss specific elements if desired to better understand characteristics of participants.
2. Ask each participant to state the following:
  - › name
  - › how long she or he has taught at this college
  - › teaching field
  - › method of delivery or instruction format: face-to-face, online, or both; day, evening, or both
3. Ask that participants remove name badges or college identifiers.
4. Ask participants to respond to the following questions:
  - › As a faculty member at this college, are you a member of a collective bargaining unit? Is that required or optional?
  - › Do you have a full- or part-time job (at this college or elsewhere) in addition to your teaching job at this college? If so, what is it? How many hours per week do you work at the other job(s)?
  - › Do you currently teach at more than one college? At this college, do you currently teach at more than one campus?

### Discussion

**Outcome IV:** Learn what full-time faculty see as the institutional policies, practices, and processes that promote success for part-time faculty, specifically as they relate to hiring, orientation, professional development, evaluation, compensation, and integration into the college's student success agenda.

**Outcome V:** Identify opportunities for improvement in addressing challenges facing part-time faculty and in strengthening the role of part-time faculty in the community college.

1. Think back to the beginning of your employment as a faculty member. What were your first contacts like? What were your first impressions of the college?
2. What information were you provided about the college in general, about students, and about employment expectations? What, if any, experiences did the college create for you to interact with other faculty, staff, and administrators? Do you think the experience is different for part-time faculty at your college?

### Hiring

1. Do full-time faculty have a role in the hiring of part-time faculty? If so, what is that role? If not, do you think you should have a role in hiring part-time faculty?
2. When you applied/interviewed for a full-time teaching position, did you receive a job description? Were you given clear expectations about what would be expected of you as a full-time faculty member? If so, by whom? If so, describe in general what those expectations were.
3. Do part-time faculty candidates receive a job description? How are the college's expectations for part-time faculty members communicated to those individuals during the hiring process? Do you know what expectations are communicated to part-time faculty? If so, please describe.

4. Describe your interview process when you were first employed at this college. With whom did you meet? Did you participate in an in-person interview or was the interview conducted by phone? Did you have more than one interview? Is the interview process for part-time faculty the same or different from that of full-time faculty?
5. Were you required to give a teaching demonstration? If so, please describe what you were asked to present and to whom. Is this required of candidates for part-time teaching positions?
6. When you were initially hired, how far in advance of the starting date of the term did you receive your course assignments? What's the practice for candidates for part-time teaching jobs?

### **Orientation**

1. After you were hired and before classes began, were you asked to participate in any meetings or orientation activities at the college? If so, were these required or optional? If you participated in anything prior to the start of the term, please describe. Did you attend one session/meeting or more than one session/meeting? What was included in the session(s)/meeting(s)? If you did not choose to participate, please explain. If you participated in any activities, did you receive compensation for your participation? Are part-time faculty included in these sessions? Invited? Encouraged? Required to participate?
2. Before classes started, were you offered any help in preparing for your specific teaching assignment? To your knowledge, is there any help offered to part-time faculty?
3. Thinking back to your first few weeks teaching at this college, would you say the activities/meetings in which you participated were helpful or not helpful in your role as a new faculty member? Please explain your response. What was the most helpful aspect of these activities? What was the least helpful aspect of these activities?

### **Professional Development**

1. Do you feel adequately prepared for the teaching and learning challenges you encounter? In what ways do you feel prepared? In what ways do you not feel prepared?
2. As a full-time faculty member, are you invited to participate in professional development activities? If yes, has it been required or optional? Have you received certification for your involvement in professional development activities? If you have not chosen to participate, please explain why. Do part-time faculty participate in professional development activities? Optional or required? How broad is the participation of part-timers in your department?
3. Describe the professional development activities in which you've participated (in terms of content, duration, face-to-face vs. online).
4. How frequently have you been involved in a professional development activity? Once a year? Once a term? Other?
5. In general, how would you evaluate the usefulness of the professional development activities? Are there types of professional development activities that you have found particularly helpful? Are there types of activities that have not been helpful to you at all? Are there particular types of professional development activities that you believe would be helpful for part-time faculty?
6. As a full-time faculty member at this college, have you been assigned to work with one or more part-time faculty members in your department? If so, how did you work with that individual? For what length of time did you continue to work with this individual? Do you believe this was helpful for the part-time faculty member? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways?
7. Is there any specific type of learning opportunity you would like the college to offer faculty? Anything you'd like to see that you believe would be of particular value to part-time faculty?

## Evaluation

1. How would you describe the expectations that this college has for your performance?
2. Who evaluates your performance? Students? Peers? Department chair? Other? In what ways do you receive feedback? In writing? Classroom survey? Face-to-face?
3. Is your evaluation based on specific criteria? If so, what are those criteria? Are there incentives/rewards for meeting those criteria? Consequences for not meeting those criteria?
4. How frequently are you evaluated? Each term? Once a year? Other?
5. Do you find the evaluation process to be helpful? Not helpful? Please explain.
6. To your knowledge, do part-time faculty participate in the same evaluation process as full-time faculty?

## Compensation

1. To your knowledge, do part-time faculty receive any additional compensation for participation in activities beyond their teaching role? For professional development activities? For working with or advising students outside of class? For participating on college committees or governing groups? For participating in the design, planning and implementation of instructional innovations aimed at strengthening student learning and success? (Whether or not they know the answer to the preceding questions...) Do you believe part-time faculty should receive additional compensation (either built into their base pay or additional incentives)?

## Integration

1. At this college, are faculty invited to participate in any activities designed for entering students? Registration/enrollment processes? Advising? New student orientation? If yes, is participation required or optional? Are part-time faculty part of these activities?
2. At this college, are faculty included in college-wide and/or department discussions where data are shared about student learning and persistence? Are part-time faculty included in these conversations?
3. At this college, are part-time faculty involved in any activities related to the college's student success agenda? Strategic planning? Planning, design and, implementation of specific initiatives? Course redesign?
4. Are you invited to share your own expertise in areas that support teaching and learning? If so, in what ways? Are part-time faculty invited to share their expertise as well?
5. Does the college provide opportunities for part-time faculty to connect with other faculty at the college within your department and college-wide?

**Outcome I:** Learn more about the needs, perspectives, and experiences of full-time faculty in community colleges (as compared to part-time faculty).

1. What's the main reason you decided to become a community college instructor? Did you teach part-time at this college or another college before becoming a full-time instructor?
  - › If so, for how long did you teach part-time? Were you teaching the same courses you're teaching now?
  - › When you started teaching part-time, did you hope/plan to move into a full-time teaching position? If not, what prompted your decision to apply for a full-time teaching position?
2. What do you feel you bring to your role as a college instructor? What makes you an effective teacher (e.g., knowledge/experience in your field, good teaching skills, ability to relate well with students)?
3. How many courses do you teach this term at this college? What courses do you teach? Do you teach any developmental/remedial courses? Prior to this term, how long have you taught those specific courses at this college or any other college?
4. If you are currently teaching courses you haven't taught before, what led to your being assigned those specific courses?

5. When you think about the experience you've had so far as an instructor at this college, on a scale of 1-5—5 being “outstanding” and 1 being “not at all what I had hoped for”—where would you rank your experience? Why?
6. In what ways, if any, does your teaching experience here not meet your expectations? In what ways, if any, does your teaching experience here exceed your expectations?
7. From your perspective, what are the most positive aspects of your experience at this college? Give an example.
8. From your perspective, what are the most negative aspects of your experience at this college? Give an example.
9. Do you feel like you belong at this college? On a scale of 1-5, in which 5=“I'm an important part of this place” and 1=“Nobody knows I'm here,” where do you see yourself? Explain your answer.
10. Thinking about your experience at this college, complete this sentence: “This college is like ...”

**Outcome II:** Understand teaching practices and experiences of full-time faculty, as compared to part-time faculty.

1. What are your expectations for your students' performance? In what ways do you communicate those expectations? Are there college-wide expectations that you communicate to students as well as your own? If students need help in meeting those expectations, how do you see your role in helping them meet those expectations?
2. Describe one of your typical classes. What percentage of the time would you say you spend lecturing? What percentage of the time would you say you devote to students working with other students, in groups or pairs? Do you intentionally structure your class time to incorporate different types of instruction? Why or why not?
3. In what ways do you use technology in your classes? What kind of support do you get/need from the college to help you in your use of technology?
4. To what extent do you build additional academic support into your course requirements, such as supplemental instruction, tutoring (face-to-face or online), skill labs, required study groups, etc.?
5. In general, to what degree do you maintain contact with students outside of class? In what ways? Texting? Phone? E-mail? Through course management software (such as Blackboard)? IM? Social networking site? Informally on campus? Other? How often? For what purposes?
6. Think about a class in which everything is clicking just right. You feel like students are learning, everyone is getting what they need from the class. Describe that class. What's going on? What are you doing? What are students doing? How are people working and learning in that class? What percentage of the time would you say your class measures up to that ideal? When your class isn't operating at your ideal level, what's getting in the way? What are the most important things you can do to reach that ideal? What are the most important things students can do to reach that ideal? What kind of support do you need from the college in order to reach that ideal more often?
7. In what ways do you make efforts to make connections for students outside of class? With other students? With college programs and activities? With support services? How do you learn about services available to students?
8. If a student is falling behind, coming to class unprepared, or skipping classes, what do you do? Do you contact the student? Refer the student to an advisor? Use the college's early alert system? Anything else?

**Outcome III:** Understand challenges community college full-time faculty face in their work with students and colleagues and in navigating college practices and processes (as compared with part-time faculty).

1. When do you have your first interaction with students each term? During the enrollment/registration/advising process? On the first day of class? Other? Do you think this is the same experience or a different experience from that of part-time faculty?
2. In what specific ways, if any, are you involved with students before classes begin for a given academic term? Is there any other way you would like to be involved with students before classes begin? Is there any other way you

would like to see part-time faculty involved with students before classes begin?

3. At this college, what role do faculty play in advising students? How much of your time would you say you spend advising students? What is the nature of the advising? Course selection? Degree/career paths? Academic struggles? Balancing school with other commitments? In class or out of class? Do you believe you should be spending more or less time advising students? Explain your answer. Do part-time faculty have a similar role as yours in advising students?
4. When you meet with students, where do those meetings take place? Faculty offices? Elsewhere on campus? Outside of campus? Are there spaces at the college reserved for part-time faculty to meet with students?
5. What is the greatest challenge you face in meeting your students' needs and expectations? Is there anything in particular that you do to address that challenge?
6. When you need information for your students or materials for your classes, how do you find what you need? Do you know where to go to get what you need? Is it easy or hard to get the information/materials you need?
7. If you run into a problem with a student or any problem related to your teaching, where do you go for help? Is it easy or hard to get the help you need?
8. Are there any challenges in the teaching role at your college that you believe are unique to part-time faculty? If so, what would help to overcome those challenges for part-time faculty?

### Summary & Close

1. Work as a group or individually [possibly use flip chart] and design the "ideal" part-time faculty experience at this college, labeling recommended components
2. Write down the words participants use to explain their design. Allow 10 minutes for this exercise.
3. What advice would you offer this college and other community colleges about steps they can take to support their part-time faculty with the ultimate goal of helping more students be successful?
4. Thank you.



[Insert College Logo]

## Faculty Consent Form

[Name of College] is conducting focus groups with faculty in order to gain insights into their experiences at our college. Information gathered through the focus groups will be used alongside other data to help college leaders identify institutional policies and practices that will support faculty in their work to help our students succeed.

Your participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary. You can choose not to participate at any time, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with [Name of College].

This focus group will be audio recorded and/or videotaped. Excerpts from focus group discussions may be used in meetings or workshops with college staff members.

By signing this consent form, you agree to participate in one 90-minute videotaped and/or audio taped focus group.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (*please print name*) an employee at [Name of College] have read and understand this consent form and agree to voluntarily participate in this project.

---

Signature

Date

# Faculty Participant Profile Sheet

ALL RESPONSES WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

1. What is your gender?  
 Male       Female
  
2. What is the highest degree you have earned?  
 First professional degree (e.g. M.D., D.D.S., J.D., D.V.M.)  
 Doctoral degree (e.g. Ph.D., Ed.D.)  
 Master's degree  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Associate degree  
 Other
  
3. For how many years have you taught at the college level (full- or part-time, any college)?  
 First year       1-4       5-9       10-19       20 or more
  
4. Please indicate your teaching field: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. What is your current employment status at this college?  
 Full-time       Part-time
  
6. At this college, what is the total number of credit hours you are scheduled to teach during the current academic term (not counting overload)?  
 1-3 credits       10-12 credits  
 4-6 credits       13-15 credits  
 7-9 credits       16+ credits
  
7. At this college, what is the total number of credit hours you are scheduled to teach during the next academic term (not counting overload)?  
 1-3 credits       4-6 credits       7-9 credits  
 10-12 credits       13-15 credits       16+ credits  
 I don't know how many credit hours I'll be teaching next term at this college.
  
8. Before you started teaching at this college, did you teach anywhere else?  
 Yes       No  
If yes, where did you teach? (Check all that apply.)  
 Another community college?  
 4-year college or university?  
 High school?  
 Other? (Please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you currently teach at more than one campus at this college (or college in this district)?  
 Yes (If yes, list the campuses.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 No
10. While you are teaching at this college, are you currently teaching at any other educational institution(s)?  
 Yes       No  
 If yes, where? (Check all that apply.)  
 Another community college?  
 4-year college or university?  
 High school?  
 Other? (Please explain.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, please indicate your teaching load at the other educational institution(s):  
 One course       More than one course
11. At any point in time, has your employment status changed at this college?  
 Yes       No  
 If yes:  
 From part-time to full-time       From full-time to part-time
12. At this college, what classes are you currently teaching? (Check all that apply.)  
 College-level  
 Developmental  
 Both college-level and developmental  
 Please list your classes \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you meet with students outside of class, either informally or through regular office hours?  
 Yes       No  
 If yes, where do you hold those meetings?  
 Your office?       Other campus locations?       Off-campus?
14. What descriptor best characterizes you as a part-time faculty member (if applicable)? (Mark the one that best applies.)  
 "Freeway flyer" (teach at multiple institutions to build desired work load)  
 Teaching to share knowledge/skills used in my employment outside this college  
 Part-time teacher aspiring to full-time teaching position  
 Graduate student gaining teaching experience and income  
 "Permanent" part-time faculty member at this college (5 years or more of employment)  
 Teaching to augment personal/family income  
 Employee at this college in another administrative or staff role  
 Retiree seeking to stay involved in teaching  
 Part-time faculty member who wants only part-time employment  
 Giving back to the college and/or community  
 Other (Please describe.) \_\_\_\_\_

15. What category best describes you? (Mark only one.)

- Black or African American, Non-Hispanic
- White, Non-Hispanic
- Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
- Other (Please specify.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Native Hawaiian
- American Indian or Native Alaskan
- Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander

[Name of College]

## Overview:

[Name of College] conducted focus groups with part-time and full-time faculty to learn more about practices related to strengthening the role of part-time faculty, including hiring, orientation, professional development, evaluation, compensation, and integration into the college's culture and student success agenda. The focus groups were conducted on [dates].

Outcomes for the focus group discussions include:

- › To learn more about the needs, perspectives, and experiences of part-time faculty in community colleges
- › To understand teaching practices and experiences of part-time faculty
- › To understand challenges community college part-time faculty face in their work with students, colleagues, and in navigating college practices and processes
- › To learn what institutional policies, practices, and processes promote effectiveness and success for part-time faculty, specifically as they relate to hiring, orientation, professional development, compensation, evaluation, and integration into the college and the college's student success agenda
- › To identify opportunities for improvement in addressing challenges facing part-time faculty and in strengthening the role of part-time faculty in the community college

## [Name of College] Focus Group Participants

### *Part-Time Faculty:*

Demographic information from Participant Profile Sheets:

- › Gender
- › Ethnicity
- › Highest degree earned
- › Years teaching at the college level
- › Teaching field and courses currently being taught (developmental, college-level)
- › Number of credit hours teaching during the current term
- › Number of participants teaching at more than one campus or college at the present time
- › Descriptor that participants say best characterizes them as part-time faculty (freeway flyer, etc.)

*Full-Time Faculty:* (Note: this will identify whether there are similarities/differences in some of the factors between part-time and full-time faculty)

Demographic info from Participant Profile forms:

- › Gender
- › Ethnicity
- › Highest degree earned
- › Years teaching at the college level
- › Teaching field and courses currently being taught (developmental, college-level)
- › Number of credit hours teaching during the current term
- › Number of participants teaching at more than one campus or college at the present time

*(Note: If participants indicate that they are teaching on more than one campus or at more than one college, indicate that.)*

## Common Themes From the Focus Group Discussions:

*(Note: Indicate whether different or similar themes emerged from part-time faculty vs. full-time faculty – or whether it's a mix.)*

### *From part-time faculty:*

**Example: The college offers opportunities for professional growth.**

Part-time faculty participating in the focus groups agreed that [Name of College] offers a wide array of professional development opportunities, including courses offered on campus, as well as support to attend regional and national community college meetings and conferences.

*(Add illustrative quote)*

**Example: The college has a center with services and resources for part-time faculty.**

From providing information they need to navigate the college to providing teaching materials and spaces for meeting with students, part-time faculty in the focus groups said the Faculty Center offers everything they need to support their teaching.

*(Add illustrative quote)*

### *From full-time faculty:*

Theme...(General statement)

*(Illustrative quote)*

*(Note: In themes, introduce any differences that emerged between online and face-to-face teaching – and indicate anything specific about online teaching in each category if applicable.)*

## Hiring Process

[Name of College] full-time faculty focus group participants described a well-defined hiring process that included interviews with other faculty, a teaching demonstration and an interview with the college president. Part-time faculty pointed to some common elements in their hiring process, but far less consistency in the process.

### *From part-time faculty:*

(General summary statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *From full-time faculty:*

(General summary statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

## Orientation

*(Note: Make note of similarities/differences between full-time and part-time orientation experiences. For example: All full-time faculty indicated that they participated in orientation. While some part-time faculty also indicated that they had attended a “mandatory” orientation, some said they knew about the orientation, but hadn't participated in it.)*

### *From part-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *From full-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)



## Professional Development

(General statement about offerings for both full- and part-time faculty and whether there are specific offerings for part-time faculty. Also indicate whether part-time faculty receive a stipend for participation in professional development activities.)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *About teaching and learning:*

(General statements about teaching and learning at the college – how do they talk about it? Do full-time faculty talk about a college philosophy about teaching and learning and do part-time faculty know what it is?)

### *From part-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *From full-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

## Evaluation

(General statement about the process and whether it's consistent for both full- and part-time faculty. Who evaluates, how frequently, how soon after a person is hired, etc.)

### *From part-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *From full-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

## Integration into College Culture and College's Student Success Agenda

(General statement about the degree to which all indicate part-time faculty are or are not integrated into the college and the ways in which that is accomplished.)

### *From part-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

### *From full-time faculty:*

(General statement)

(Illustrative quotes)

## Other Issues of Interest

List of issues that emerged that were outside of the main focus of the discussion or that were surprising. Include a statement about each issue/topic with illustrative quotes.

## Strengthening the Role of Part-Time Faculty

General statement, such as “All focus group participants talked about challenges that are inherent in the part-time faculty role – from both the faculty and college perspectives, approaches to working with part-time faculty that are showing success, as well as opportunities to strengthen the role of part-time faculty at the college.

(Note: The sections below should be bulleted lists with a summary statement, followed by illustrative quotes.)

### *Challenges:*

- › From part-time faculty:
- › From full-time faculty:

### *What works:*

- › From part-time faculty:
- › From full-time faculty:

### *Opportunities for Improvement:*

- › From part-time faculty:
- › From full-time faculty:

## Questions to Consider for Strengthening the Role of Part-time Faculty

The focus group facilitator who prepares this report can include questions that college leaders can consider based on the themes and information that emerged from the discussion. See the Part-Time Faculty Discussion Guide for examples of the types of questions to consider.