

## **Focus Group Guide**

### **Part 1: Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to attend today's focus group. I am Alex Amos, a student here at Flagler College. I am working with Elseana Panzer, Erica Larson, and Jackie Murphy to gain a better understanding of the current anxiety levels of Flagler College Sophomore students who are attending classes on campus during this time of COVID-19.

Before we begin, I want to make sure you understand your rights as a participant in this research study.

### **Participants Statement of Research and Their Rights**

- The purpose of this study is to help understand the current anxiety levels of Flagler College Sophomore students who are attending in person classes as well as to gain an understanding if the Flagler Saints + Health App provides comfort to students. The focus group should only take 15-30 minutes.
- Your participation in this research is completely confidential. I will not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no identifiable information that is personal will be shared. By doing so your name is in no way linked to your responses.
- This conversation will be recorded for research purposes. Your name or personal information will not be identified on the audio recordings, and confidentiality will be maintained. However, when these audio recordings are heard others may be able to identify you. The audio recordings will be stored in secure locations and deleted as soon as it has been transcribed by the research group.
- I cannot guarantee that all group members will treat the discussion as confidential. However, I am asking each of you to not share or disclose any details about experiences or incidents discussed by others today.
- Your decision to be in this research is completely voluntary and may stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

You should feel free to express your thoughts and feelings without any expectations from me. I am interested in hearing your thoughts and points of view even if those are different from what others in the research group. However, if at any point you feel distressed by anything we are discussing, you are free to leave at any time without any repercussions.

I am going to make every effort to keep the discussion focused and within our time frame. If too much time is being spent on one question I may move on and to ensure that all participants have a chance to express their input and feelings on the subject.

## **Part 2: Rapport Building**

To start off with, could I ask each of you to tell me your current academic year at Flagler College and describe if you have noticed any change in attitude to attending in person classes since the start of the COVID-19 virus?

## **Part 3: Mental Health and Anxiety**

Let's start with a few questions about identifying students who have anxiety from COVID-19

- Do you feel as though your anxiety levels have increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Have you noticed an increase in anxiety levels amongst your peers?
- Do you think Flagler College does a good job of helping students recognize anxiety?
  - If not, how could they do a better job?
- Do you think Flagler College does a good job of helping students overcome anxiety?
  - If not, how could they do a better job?

## **Part 4: Flagler Saints + Health App**

Let's now move to talking about assessing how the app makes students with anxiety feel

- Did you feel like the app was useful when documenting symptoms?
  - If not, how could they improve the app?
- Did using the app lower your level of anxiety due to COVID-19?
- Did documenting your symptoms everyday through the app make you feel more comfortable about attending in-person classes on campus?
- What about the app would you change to make you feel more comfortable about attending in-person classes on campus?
- Do you think that the overall student population is truthful when filling out the app?

#### **Part 5: Effective communication Between Flagler College Administration and Flagler College Students**

Now I would like to talk about your experiences communicating with Flagler Faculty and students. First, I would like you to think about a specific situation where you had anxiety about COVID-19, and being on campus.

- Who would like to share about a time you felt anxiety and how you communicated with the teachers and staff at Flagler College?
  - Probes:
    - Was there anything particularly challenging about your communication with this faculty member? If so, what?
    - Was there anything that went well in terms of communication with this Faculty member? If so, what?
- What are your general strategies or approaches in communicating with students about anxiety?

- Through our survey, we are giving students the ability to speak up and share their feelings about coming back into class after the effects of COVID-19.
- What do you think are the biggest barriers or challenges to communicating well with students about anxiety?
  - Students tend to have a hard time opening up about their feelings of anxiety as well as other mental health issues.
    - Probes:
      - Why? What could have been done to overcome these barriers?
  - In order to overcome these barriers, the stigma that surrounds anxiety and other mental health issues needs to be reduced. If students feel less shame and more comfort about sharing their experiences, it would be easier for them to reach out to someone that could help.
- If you could change one thing about how faculty-student communication about anxiety generally occurs, what would it be?
  - I would change the frequency that students share their feelings about anxiety. As students, there are a lot of outside stressors, but adding a global pandemic on top of that, undoubtedly takes a toll on a student's mental health and anxiety.
- What advice would you give to a new student about communicating about anxiety?

- Advice I would give to a new student, would be to reach out to a professor or faculty member that they feel comfortable with. This would allow them the ability to share their feelings with someone they can trust.

### **Part 6: Debriefing**

All of the results from this focus group will only be reported as a group. The data (personal information) from each individual will never be referred to outside of speaking on the overall patterns of behavior as a whole. If you have any questions, please ask them at this time. It is very important that you not share your experiences with anyone else who might be in this study. You can also reach out to our research team by emailing [epanzer326@flagler.edu](mailto:epanzer326@flagler.edu) for any further questions. Discussing the study could compromise the results, as well as participant confidentiality. We will need to get verbal consent from each participant to not share any of the names or information discussed in today's focus group for confidentiality.

Thank you very much for the time you took today to participate in this focus group.