Before actual discussion began the moderator, Barbara O’Connor, began with a brief introduction discussing the purpose of the focus group. The moderator also went over some simple ground rules for the group.

- We will be tape-recording your comments today. This is for me to review and summarize your thoughts in a report. It would be too hard to try to talk and take notes, so I use a tape recorder.
- This focus group is confidential. Everything you say in this discussion will be kept private. No names will ever be used in my report. It is important to us that you give us your honest opinions.
- To make sure we end the group on time and cover everything we need to, I will move the discussion from topic to topic, and allow everyone an opportunity to speak. I might be asking questions of some of you who don’t seem to be getting enough of a chance to speak.
- There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions and you do not have to agree with one another. We are actually interested in hearing different opinions.

Focus groups are a marvelous research method for generating hypotheses, and the best way to see your problem through the eyes of consumers, voters, citizens, etc. Focus groups are, however, a poor way to test hypotheses. Given the small sample sizes and the heavy influence that a few members can have on a discussion, generalizations about the larger populations from which participants are drawn can be misleading. Ideally, hypotheses generated during focus groups should be subjected to further quantitative tests using experiments, surveys, test markets or conjoint analyses.

**Conclusions:**

1. Participants are very satisfied with the admissions staff and the efforts made by the outreach office at CSUS. Members of the group find our staff to be uniformly pleasant and helpful. They all felt that more interaction with Faculty in disciplines is desired. They also felt that CSUS personnel are the best ones to tell the story of our successes and that we don’t do it enough. They felt that every effort should be made to increase town, gown relationships and faculty should be the primary drivers of that effort.

2. Participants were uniformly positive about the leadership changes at the University. They thought this was the perfect time to be addressing the mission
and the positioning of the University. They encouraged the President to brand the University as a part of the 2010 drive. They felt that the issue of the name of the University was important but not as important as a clear statement about positioning in the community. They cited systemic issues like Community awareness of University success stories, role of the University in Community life in the arts, public policy and planning as bigger issues than what we call the University.

3. Four of the members of the group were CSUS grads. Most have lived in the community for a long time. They felt that Sac. State was what most people thought of when they thought of the University. They also acknowledged the need to include University as a reference. They felt that sports used Sac. State the most consistently and that alumni were most comfortable with that name for the University. They did not feel that it had a negative connotation.

4. The consensus of the group is that CSUS is a bargain price compared to other options considered by graduating high school students. Another strong asset of the University is its attractiveness. They also felt that the quality of the faculty and small classes in a University dedicated to teaching were real assets. Most felt that the school of education needed to update it’s relationship with teachers in the area. They felt that competing private options for credentialing and graduate work were a threat to our education school’s relationship with teachers in the area.

5. The group did not need to be prompted for the academic strong points of CSUS: small class sizes, access to faculty, etc. To make CSUS a true destination campus some of the participants believe we will need a few marquee programs. They felt that we should identify prestigious and highly visible academic programs. The programs respondents identified as the best (e.g., computer science, communications, internships in the capitol, and engineering) are, according to respondents, not well publicized. They felt that marquee programs should be a focus in the 2010 developments. They also felt that remote site campuses should include these programs.

6. The most common complaint about CSUS is the availability of parking. Most participants were speaking from their own personal experiences. They tended, however, to generalize this personal impression to students as well. They felt that development of housing and retail around the University were a great idea and must focus on light rail access to the new developments and better access to the main part of the campus. Some felt that arts facilities must have better articulation with the larger community arts developments. Some expressed interest in a downtown University sponsored arts facility.

7. Most of the participants believe CSUS is the main option for students desiring to, or needing to, remain close to home. Most participants view CSUS as a commuter campus. They favor more student and faculty housing and they caution that CSUS must provide a wealth of university-related activities outside of the classroom as a part of that development.