Before actual discussion began the moderator, Val Smith, began with a brief introduction in which the purpose of the focus group was explained. 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 staff and the efforts made by the outreach office at CSUS. Members of the group find our staff to be uniformly pleasant and helpful.

2. When talking about the process student go through when selecting colleges, most participants seemed more comfortable talking as parents rather than high school counselors. The impression they gave is that high school counselors do very little steering of students. Most often they simply pass on information and general advice to students.
3. High school counselors believe site visits at CSUS are very helpful, and they encouraged CSUS to increase the frequency, availability, and publicity of site visits.

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. Students, they said, are typically impressed with the physical beauty of the campus.

5. The high school counselors needed to be prompted for some of the academic strong points of CSUS: small class sizes, access to faculty, etc. Before CSUS can become a true destination campus some of the participants believe we will need a few marquee programs. CSUS should identify prestigious and highly visible academic programs. The programs respondents identified as the best (e.g., computer science and engineering) are, according to respondents, not well publicized.

6. The most common complaint about CSUS is the availability of parking. Most counselors were talking from their own personal experiences. They tended, however, to generalize this personal impression to students as well.

7. Most of the high school counselors 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 view CSUS as not providing a wealth of university-related activities outside of the classroom.

8. Respondents asked for significant expansion of the dormitory options available to students. With additions to the availability of on-campus housing we could create more of the feeling of a residential community.

9. On the topic of the CSUS name the focus group was of no help. Each member has a different referent for the campus (CSUS, CSU, Sacramento, Cal State Sacramento, and of course, Sac State). The group appeared to illustrate very well the confusion of the name of the campus. Participants, however, do not believe this is a burning issue to them.

10. Many participants believe the best potential for improvement is the CSUS website. The campus needs a virtual tour, some streaming video, and a very good Q&A.