Before actual discussion began the moderator, Ann Reed, 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. (Attachment 1)

Focus groups are an excellent research method for generating hypotheses and the best way to see your problem through the eyes of consumers, users, 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 the 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. They raised the everyday associations – education, the Capitol, trees, the Hornet, Green and Gold – but generally there was the feeling that there was a “sterile, bland and dry” atmosphere portrayed by the University with its black and white cards, state seal and no signature buildings.

2. Everyone in the 15-member group refers to the University as “Sac State” and many think that is fine for the formal and official name, citing Penn State, Cal, CalTech and other universities that prominently use their nickname. Others felt that while the current official name is too much of a mouthful, there should be a more formal name than “Sac State.” One individual from outside the area said it was 15 or more years of living here before she realized that CSUS and Sac State were the same place. No one preferred CSUS as a primary name.

3. Key characteristics used to recommend the University include: beauty of the campus, affordability, gem programs (Criminal Justice, Teaching, Business) and the opportunities a large city and good reputation offer for careers and jobs for graduates. The metropolitan aspect is a selling point, as is being the “gateway” to everything important in Northern California. A large campus with a small campus feel was also a variable valued by many in the group.

4. This was a staff group, which felt that most of the personnel on campus are wonderful, but that the budget has done things to seriously hurt morale and shut the doors on the public, as in Outreach. The biggest issue for this group as a whole was the seriously impersonal and dysfunctional telephone etiquette.
They were very frustrated that knowledgeable people are not answering telephones, that customers and students are transferred multiple times, that offices are not open during regular hours, that telephone number trees instead of real people are everywhere. They believe there should be a policy that an individual cannot be transferred until someone has been located to actually help the person. They feel the current telephone situation leaves the impression that this is a large, impersonal, uncaring place that will give you the run-around. There was also strong consensus from this group that hours of access to the University and its offices need to be extended.

5. The group felt that evening and weekend classes and services were central to a successful, large metropolitan University. They also believe it is necessary to have more housing on and around the campus, as well as shopping, including a full-service bookstore. They believe that good transportation service to the University needs to be upgraded. Entry information kiosks need to be available day and night and revamped as full information centers. There need to be more on-campus activities that appeal to everyone.

6. Parking and inconvenient public transportation were of concern, as was the lack of signage and maps, like mall directories, throughout the campus. There was a consensus that the official map needs to be redesigned from the parking map to the three-dimensional map. They also feel the lack of architectural continuity and a signature building diminish the campus. Finally, the issue of poor academic advising and the need for professional staff to help with student advisement was raised.

7. Positives were: the beauty of the park-like setting, the proximity to the Capitol, being in a “gateway” city, extensive events that include the community in part, and the reasonable cost of the quality education offered. They wanted to see child care extended more to staff and more staff benefits such as discounts on tickets, at the bookstore, etc. and perhaps some access plans for use of the health center. They want to feel appreciated.

8. They believe there should be more major community events like the Olympic Trials and Gubernatorial Debates that bring crowds and attention to the campus. They strongly believe there needs to be more internal and external communications, advertising and promotions. More should be done off campus as well as on-campus promotions. They want more communications tools on campus to keep them informed and think the web is difficult. They want list procs and personal e-mails. One, who is a double alum, said that the only thing she ever gets from the University is the magazine. Also, the car ticketing policy for guests to campus is the most unfriendly thing we do and needs to be revised. They feel that much more needs to be done on campus with students, faculty and staff to communicate and build pride before that can be accomplished in the community.