



A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION FOR [Organization Name]

[by HGSE students – names removed]

Completed for S503 Term Project

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Acronyms
[list removed]

Introduction

Overview

This report serves as a qualitative analysis to inform the city of [the Organization's] work assuring that all [local] students have appropriate support to apply and succeed in college. In collaboration with [the Organization], the research team conducted this research as a means to improve the parent education component of [the Organization's] work to enable parents to best support their children in the college application process. In order to discover what parents already know about the college preparation process and what information about the process they would like to know more about, the research team conducted a key informant interview, as well as focus groups. During the focus groups, the research team also evaluated an informational video created by [the Organization] to provide parents with college-related information. The video was shown to participants as a way to gather their feedback on its usefulness as an informational tool. In this report we summarize our findings and provide recommendations [the Organization] can use to better support parents in their efforts to prepare their children for college.

Context

The number of high school graduates seeking four-year post-secondary degrees has increased steadily from the 1970s to today in the United States. At the same time, the proportion of enrolling students who complete a degree within six years is only 60% (Deming and Figlio, 2016), lower than it was in the 1970s. The evidence suggests that while there is increased pressure on young Americans to obtain higher levels of education, they are less likely to be prepared for the rigor and financial constraints that come along with pursuing an education at higher levels (Bound, Lovenheim and Turner, 2010). For example, recent research points to the importance of remediation classes, so-called “gateway courses”, and early credit accumulation, particularly for low-income and minority students who are more likely to be first generation college-goers (Advancing by Degrees, 2010; Pathways to Improvement, 2013). The issue of college

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affordability is also highlighted by the \$1.3 trillion-dollar student loan debt total, with a disproportionate share of defaulters drawn from low-income backgrounds (2018 Senate HELP Committee Hearing on Student Debt). On the whole, the issue of college access and affordability in the United States is marked by a lack of preparation both on the student side and on the institutional side.

In Massachusetts, state and local governments have devoted considerable interest to the issue of college access and affordability. A seven-year longitudinal study of the 2000 graduating class of [district school] found about 64% of students had enrolled in two- or four- year post-secondary institutions while only 35% of attendees ended up graduating during this time period (Getting to the Finish Line, 2008). Statistics for enrollment and completion also show strong disparities by racial background. For example, 24% and 28% of Latino and Black attendees completed their degree, compared to over 50% for Whites and Asians, and there were also disparities in terms of types of institution attended, with minority students more likely to enroll in two-year public schools, compared to Whites. Recognizing the challenge, [the Program's] initiative was launched in 2008 to increase the number of [local] graduates completing four-year degrees. A comprehensive review of higher education institutions in the [] region both reinforced the findings from the longitudinal study and provided insight into what higher education administrators were doing to address the issues of college access and affordability. In general, institutions of all types were focused on improving and sustaining graduation rates, although often struggling in a context of limited resources.

It is in the aforementioned context that [the Organization] was launched to help low-income students from [local area] graduate with a post-secondary credential within 6 years at a rate equal to their higher income peers. Statistics from [a local school], the largest public high school in the city, highlight the disparity in socioeconomic background. Figure 1 shows the percentage of the class of 2009 who attended and did not complete, or who did not attend college within 6 years, by socioeconomic background. 27% of low income high school graduates never attended a four-

year college, compared to 20% of higher income peers. For high school graduates who attended some college but did not complete, the corresponding figures were 42% for low income students compared to 28% for higher income. Representatives from [the Organization] shared that the [local government agency] has cut funding for remediation classes at four- year institutions, and while they are currently still in place in public 2-years, this is considered tenuous. There is also a lack of data with which to place students into remedial classes, and the exact numbers of [high school] graduates who end up pursuing higher education (as opposed to entering the workforce or remaining economically inactive) are not known. Such contextual challenges were cited as key in understanding the difficulties faced by [the Organization] as they deliver services to low- income families.

Figure 1- Percentage of [high school] graduating class of 2009, by college outcome
[figure removed]

The present report serves as a qualitative analysis in support of [the Organization's] efforts to reach low- income families in [local area]. While largely exploratory in nature, the bulk of the analysis will inform future programming as [the Organization] seeks to coordinate existing resources, design new ones, and develop outreach activities in supporting students and parents in the college application process. A component of the study will evaluate the effectiveness of a short, informational video that was compiled and shown to focus group participants, with the goal of understanding how best to deliver content to parents and how to leverage its use in the overarching strategy. In this way the report not only serves [the Organization's] immediate programming needs but provides information to other community organizations seeking to promote higher education access in the [local] area and elsewhere. The report is structured as follows. We first outline the background and research questions for the study and detail our methods. We follow with our analytic strategy and process for coding the data. We discuss key exploratory findings, as well as those in relation to the utility of the informational videos. We follow this with our recommendations for future programming and evaluation work.

Research Questions

Our group first engaged in a series of phone calls with the coordinator for [the Organization], who shared background research and program documentation to help inform the overarching mission and strategy of the organization. We discussed some preliminary considerations for the study and planned a kick-off meeting at [the Organization's] office in [city] with a community engagement representative and the organization's current evaluation specialist. At this meeting we went into depth about the context of higher education preparation and access for students from [the high school]. Many low-income students graduating from the high school end up enrolling in [local community college], where they may take remediation or preparatory classes with an ultimate goal of enrolling in a degree-granting program.

The primary outcome of the kick-off meeting was the design of research questions that would be used to inform the evaluation study. Our group took the lead in using information gathered from the meeting to design the questions, which were then shared with [the Organization] representatives for comment and edits. A final draft of the research questions was then agreed to, which were then used to design the focus group protocols. Our research questions are as follows:

1. *What do parents already know about the college preparation process?*
2. *What activities would parents most appreciate to better engage them in the use of college preparation resources?*
 - a. *Specifically, what information about the college preparation process would they most like to know about?*
3. *What are the preferred methods to transmit information on college readiness?*
 - a. *What are the focus groups participants thoughts on the [the Organization's] video?*

Methods

Prior to conducting the focus groups, the research team conducted preliminary data

collection, by way of a document review and key informant interviews, that allowed the group to learn more about the strategies [the Organization] has already employed to support parents, as well as suggestions parents have already provided [the Organization] to support other parents. During this review we also learned about the informational videos that could help parents learn more about the college process. Thus, we wanted to evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy, alongside our overall goal to understand how to best prepare parents to support their children through the college preparation process.

However, our primary data collection methodology was through focus groups, in which we interviewed parents to learn more about their needs for support through the college preparation process. As such, we conducted two focus groups that were organized by [the Organization]. To best obtain our data, we utilized a criterion-based selection strategy, purposefully selecting the participants, setting, and timeframe that would allow us to best achieve representativeness, and capture the perspective of low-income parents from the [local high school] (Maxwell, 2005). To recruit parents, the initiative reached out to the [specific] program, as well as [another specific] program, both of which contained low-income students from [local high school] (See Appendix for more information about the focus group sites). The focus groups were held during the evening in both locations to allow for parents to attend after work hours. [The Organization] also provided food and gift cards to compensate parents for their time and any cost that may have been associated with attending the focus groups. The composition of the first focus group consisted of mostly immigrant parents of [local organization] students attending [local high school], as well as extended family members, and a few students from the district. Those who spoke were mostly parents. In total, 15 parents attended. The composition of the second focus group consisted of parents from the [local] Housing Authority site. In total, 6 parents attended.

To answer our research questions, we used a structured focus group protocol that can be found in Appendix 1. We did so because it allowed us to frame our sessions in a straightforward way that generated direct answers to all of our research questions. Our questions were very

targeted, which helped us to stay on focus and to accomplish our goals in each session within a short period of time. We were also able to compare the answers in each session due to the fact that the way in which we asked questions was more or less the same (Maxwell, 2005).

To gather parent opinions on the videos created by [the Organization], we showed an informational video that they made. We collected their responses by recording the focus groups. Two group members took notes during the first session and two other group members took notes after the second session. Although the structure of the focus groups allowed us to gather data relevant to our research questions, it's important to keep in mind that parents who attended the focus groups had children who attended programs in which they received support for college preparation. As such, these parents already had some access to college-related support, and thus, may not have the same college support-related needs as parents who have not had such assistance. Therefore, a limitation of our research is that the data may not reflect the full range of needs that may exist in the parent population in [the city]. Furthermore, we were only able to speak with a small number of parents. Had we conducted additional focus groups, our research may have better reflected the parent population.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the focus groups provided rich information to achieve the evaluation's goal. A hermeneutic approach was used to identify and elicit meanings, patterns and themes that help answer the research questions. This approach generates manifest and latent meanings inherent in qualitative data by a process of coding and labeling. In particular, a thematic analysis was performed allowing for the first stage of analysis to inform further data collection. Based on the steps described by Goodrick and Rogers (2015), the analysis was organized as follows:

First level-open coding

This step involved reviewing information to prepare a first set of themes that the research team

thought might come out from the coding process, to help guide it. An iterative process, there was reflection on what themes might come up during the protocol preparation phase prior to conducting the focus groups. After performing the focus groups, the research team met and agreed on a set of categories that captured what was most salient in the focus groups: financial aid, stress/anxiety about the process, timeline/steps, and means of communication. This broad set of categories was used to unify the coding process, while remaining flexible so emergent themes could be detected when needed.

Second Level/pattern coding

After inductively identifying a set of codes and categories on the first level coding, a second level coding was performed. The source of information for the coding process was the notes taken in the two focus groups. A total of 4 sets of notes were taken during the two focus groups. Two members of the research team coded each set of notes. The notes were assigned to each coder making sure that no researcher coded a set of notes she took. The full set of categories, and each code associated with it is in Appendix 2. The main categories of codes that emerged, and gave support to the conclusions are summed up in Table 1.

The research team met after the coding was done, to identify which themes appeared more frequently and were more relevant to the research questions. A full description of the identified themes is shown in the Findings Section. The final stage of the analysis was the creation of actionable recommendations for [the Organization]. Categories that tied back to one or more of the research questions were used to craft the recommendations presented in the Recommendations section.

Table 1- Categories of codes used for analysis

Category	Description
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Financial aid/paying for college	Discussion on what resources are available to parents to pay for college tuition and college expenses.
Personalized information	The need to know how general information applies to his or her students' particular case, as each student is different.
College Choice	Parents wanted to know what college options exist for their students, and what are the pros and cons of each.
Timeline/Steps	Parents do not know how to prioritize the different actions they should take to support their students through the application process.
Stress/fear	Parents expressed feeling overwhelmed by the amount of preparation needed to successfully support their students through the process.

Findings

The focus groups provided rich data about the complexities facing parents and children in or entering the college-going process, as well as the type of information parents would find useful and how to deliver that information. Further, the data gathered from the parents not only answered our primary research questions, it also gave us a better idea about the emotions that parents confront when completing the college-going process with their children.

What parents already know about the college-going process?

Overall, the parents knew some information about the college-going process. Many of the parents knew some of the basics of the college going process such as taking college admission exams, completing college applications, completing and filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and about the many different deadlines for certain material. Further, some parents knew about multiple places to obtain information concerning the basics of the college-going process. They mentioned that they could, and had, obtained information from high school guidance counselors, college fairs, college visit trips, and the internet. The group recruited through the [specific program] also credited that organization with helping them learn about the college-going process and providing them with information they needed.

"We started looking at colleges. It's very stressful for them [the children]. Thank God for [the Organization] because they give a lot of help. We don't know too much
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about the application process, the FAFSA. It's so much. It's just stressful. But at the end it all paid off."

While some parents were informed on some of the college-going processes, others were not. These groups of parents were uninformed about things such as where exactly to find information about applying to college for their child and the difference between subsidized and unsubsidized loans. A very important finding that should be stressed is some of the parents had misinformation about the college-going process. Some parents spoke incorrectly about the cost of college, how to find backdoors into getting a degree, and about the prices of selective institutions. For example, when talking about how much college costs, one participant noted how much money was needed to pay for college. "It's really big money, like sixty sixty-five thousand dollars a year. You have to give them sixty-five thousand a year." This misinformation was shared with the focus group and those receiving the information did not question what they were told; they accepted it as fact. It should be noted that the first group of parents, those recruited through Upward Bound, seemed to know more about the college-going process than parents in the Workforce group.

[What activities would parents most appreciate to better engage them in the use of college preparation resources?](#)

Despite the overall knowledge demonstrated about the college-going process by the parents, they expressed the need to have more information. One thing mentioned by nearly every parent in the focus groups was the need to know more about paying for college through financial aid and scholarships. While many of them knew about completing the FAFSA and that scholarships exist that would pay for their children to attend school, the parents expressed that they did not know how to find all of the possible scholarships available to their children. One parent noted that she knew a co-worker that paid a man to find scholarships for their child but stated low-income people like her could not afford such measures to find additional money for their children.

Parents also articulated a need for a timeline for the college-going process. As one parent

stated; “It would be great if you could do an outline, something that parents that don’t have kids in college that need to know, what steps they need to do before the kids get into college, I would appreciate that”. Not knowing when their children should be completing typical milestones in the college-going process made many parents feel confused. Some expressed that they would have started the process earlier if they knew about many of the steps in the process. Parents that completed the process with an older child voiced that knowing what and when their younger child should be completing at certain times in the process makes it more manageable because they knew what to expect. One final point communicated by the parents was the need to know how to support their children going through the college-going process. Specifically, they wanted to know how to help their child choose a career path to give them some guidance in how to approach going to college.

[What are the preferred methods to transmit information on college application process?](#)

When asked about the best ways to transfer information to them about the college-going process, the parents mentioned several different mediums would be the best way to get the information, but overall, they wanted to be provided a centralized place to obtain information. It was made clear that parents wanted to receive information from different platforms, although nearly all the parents expressed that electronic communication (e.g. email and text messages) was the best way to contact them with information. Outside of electronic communication, the parents expressed that receiving information pertaining to the college-going process through mail and brochures, as well as through parent clinics and workshops, would be useful. The parents wanted as much information as possible and in many different forms. As for electronic communication, the participants conveyed that being on a listserv that sent out updated information relevant to the college-going process would be valuable. The parents also noted that they wanted a website containing information accessible to them to help them to navigate the numerous resources available for preparing their child for college. They stated that places they frequented, like [specific Organization], would be easy for them to access in order to get information in physical form. Given their schedules, the parents expressed that having information [Org] Evaluation: S513

at this type of place would be helpful. Lastly, they noted that it would be helpful if information was also provided at locations like food pantries and churches.

Parents agreed that they wanted a centralized place to go that provided information they needed. Having a trusted place to obtain information about the college-going process was vital to the parents in order to help their children pilot through the process. However, the parents did not imply they wanted a physical place to get this information. When speaking about a place to attain information, parents alluded to wanting a source to acquire information, not necessarily a brick and mortar building. They showed interest in a place that they trusted and was accessible to them given their schedules.

Finding Fear

One unexpected finding from the parents was how emotional the college-going process was on them and their children. Parents expressed much fear about the process. One fear expressed by every parent at the focus groups was the fear about not being able to pay for college. Parents were constantly worried that they would not receive enough financial aid or save or earn enough money to send their child to college. One parent noted that not being able to send their child to the best colleges made them want to cry. Some parents expressed a lot of confusion and worry about not doing enough, or not being able to meet deadlines for materials that needed completing. There was also much anxiety about how to read and understand everything after college acceptance letters were received. Overall, the parents clearly communicated that the college-going process was daunting and that families exerted emotional energy going through the process.

“...Sometimes it’s stressful. It feels like ‘Oh my God.’ If I can’t help her and I feel, like, helpless because I don’t have that much money to support her to send her to that college and the parents feel really guilty. Like I feel really bad sometimes I feel like [I want] to cry, and you know...so it’s really tough.”

[Analysis of Parent Responses to \[the Organization’s\] Informational Video](#)

Through our analysis of the recordings from the focus groups, we found three themes from parent responses regarding the [the Organization]-created video, which we categorized as the following: video strengths, requested additional information, and preferred video dissemination

method.

Video Strengths

Overall, parents found the video to be helpful in providing foundational information related to the college preparation process. As the videos provided audiences with an overview of higher education institutions, parents found the information related to the different types of colleges to be useful in helping them to prepare for their child's college process. One parent explicitly stated that "the differences between the colleges, two-year, community, four-year, private" was helpful. Another explained that it was helpful because "It gives them [parents] a little bit of everything what to expect".

Parents in both focus groups found the information pertaining to community colleges particularly useful, especially for parents who are just starting out in the college process. For example, one parent commented, "It was so helpful...I didn't know about community college...we just went to...a college fair...but I didn't think about community college". Another thought that the information pertaining to community colleges was helpful because they help students to make college more affordable. She stated, "Being at [local community college], I met maybe about seven students who left there on a full ride to like [local prestigious universities], and I just want you all to keep that in mind when you're thinking about finding free money, because it's not easy when you've got to take out of your pension or your child has to borrow".

Requested Additional Information

Overall, parents enjoyed the video, however they noted that it needed more information. Explicitly, parents wanted more information related to helping them to pay for college. This information could include information regarding scholarships, tuition, loans, deciphering their child's college award letter, as well as financial forms families will need to fill out prior to attending college. Furthermore, parents expressed that they wanted more information regarding strategic approaches that would help their children to afford college. Due to its affordability, one parent expressed, "[kids] need to learn more about community colleges...They need to know more about

what's offered there, like degrees they can get from community college, degrees they can work with, that they can do well with". Another parent stated that "the sad part is...when they graduate, what they're making a year is like \$40,000, that's it. So it's just a name...it's not like they're going to make so much money because they go to college". Reflecting on what parents would need to do to help their children make responsible financial decisions, she commented, "So it's good... for parents to get educated on how to get money... like free money". Parents also stated that they wanted support helping their kids to understand the cost of attending college. Although many parents supported community college as a way to reduce the cost of college, one parent commented that "sometimes kids don't want to go to community college...I am basically trying to figure out, like when to do you get to a point wherein you say...OK I'll go to community college instead of 4 years?". Parents also wondered how they can convince their children that community colleges aren't "a waste of time" or beneath them.

Parents also requested additional information that was not related to finances. One parent commented that they wanted the videos to cover "all the college and all the universities that are in the [state] area...explain the tax benefits, how cheap it would be if [kids] go to their local college". Likewise, the parent noted that it would be helpful for the videos to include the financial difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

Preferred Video Dissemination Method

In relation to the method parents preferred to receive videos, they noted that there were multiple ways in which they'd like to receive them. Specifically, they noted that they would appreciate a Youtube channel that contained all of the videos and emails with links to the videos. Generally, however, parents noted that they wanted a centralized place where they could find links to the videos, as well as other college-related information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings that stemmed from the analysis, there are some actionable steps

[the Organization] can follow to better serve parents and students going through the college application process. These actionable steps can be separated in two broad categories: parent engagement and video contents.

Parent engagement

During the focus groups parents communicated their most preferred ways to receive information and engage with college application support resources. Taking these recommendations into account, [the Organization] should:

- 1. Utilize current resources:** [The Organization] should use existing channels of communication with parents. Parents already connected to institutions and initiatives that offer them student- support resources. [The Organization] can partner with them to publicize its offerings and hold shared workshops or activities, as they are already connected with parents. Examples of these institutions are schools, health clinics, churches, and [local organization]. Moreover, these institutions have their own means of communications with parents. [The Organization] could use them to communicate its activities and resources.
- 2. Develop electronic communication:** Parents mentioned many means of communication that could be used to contact them (to see a full list, please check Appendix 2). Email was the contact method most mentioned by parents in both focus groups; as such, it is a natural next step for [the Organization] to develop their own listserv to send resources to parents. In particular, electronic newsletters might be an interesting option to implement, as participants mentioned other institutions' newsletters as examples of an effective means of communication.
- 3. Use multiple means of communication:** [The Organization] should not refrain from using multiple means of communications when available. In the focus groups, parents expressed that, based on previous experiences, the more means the initiative uses to try to reach them (email, traditional mail, school newsletters, text messages, etc.), the higher the

likelihood that they will get the information. This is a good indication that [the Organization] should diversify its communication strategy to make sure to reach its target population.

- 4. Create a timeline for parents:** The college application process is lengthy and complex, and parents expressed the need for more orientation around the right time to prioritize certain parts of the process. A timeline was explicitly mentioned in one of the focus groups, and it was well received by the participants.
- 5. Create opportunities for parents to share information with each other:** One lesson from the focus groups is that parents themselves have a lot of information and good advice about the process. In the focus groups it was evident that parents were particularly attentive to the advice from parents with older children. At the end of each focus group, parents spontaneously expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share questions and hear from others in their same situation. Therefore, [the Organization] should consider this kind of activity in their planning, as it was an effective way to inform and support parents in the process.
- 6. Engage with parents early:** Many parents communicated that they wished they'd been given guidance to help their child to prepare for college much earlier than their Junior and Senior year of college. Getting this information as early as possible was a major priority. As such, it would be helpful for parents to understand how to best prepare their child for college prior to entering high school. This will allow them to help their child to make the most of their time there, ensuring that they are focused and prepared for college at the end of their high school career.

Video Content

Parents commented that informational videos can play an important role in keeping parents informed about the college application process. The following recommendations apply particularly to video [the Organization] created:

1. **Create a centralized place to access videos.** Parents in the focus groups noted that they would appreciate [the Organization's] videos housed in one location, like a Youtube channel or a website. As such, as [the Organization] finalizes its creation of a website, it would be helpful if it could use this website to also act as a repository for videos related to college that parents could search through to help them in their journey. It could also provide links to videos created outside of [the Organization].
2. **Create videos that cover financial aid and that cover different types of colleges.** The most salient theme that came out of the research was parent uncertainty regarding their child's ability to afford college. As such, they stated that they wanted more information regarding scholarships, tuition, loans, deciphering their child's college award letter, and filling out financial aid forms. Creating separate videos for each of these priorities would be helpful. It would also be helpful to create them with a parent so that the videos will answer parental concerns as best as possible. Lastly, ordering the videos in a way that helps parents to understand when they should begin to approach and prepare for these priorities can help parents to feel ready and less anxious about the process.

Conclusion

Through the research conducted with [the Organization], the research team was able to identify important themes related to parents' current knowledge and perspective regarding the college preparation process, as well as the support they would like to receive in order to best support their children's likelihood of attending and completing college. In terms of current knowledge, parents had some information about the college-going process, like taking admissions exams, completing and filing for FAFSA, and some of the process deadlines. Additionally, some of them knew about resources where they could find this information. Nevertheless, some of the information the parents had was incorrect, and some parents were less informed than others. Even though it was not an initial research question, it was clear throughout the research process that

parents and students expressed fear and anxiety about the college application process. Parents felt like they could not financially support their children adequately, and this caused guilt and stress. In the end, it seems like parents spend a great amount of energy dealing with the emotional distress that the process creates for them and their families.

Regarding the activities that parents would most appreciate to better engage in the process, they mentioned that the most pressing need was more support regarding financial aid and college affordability, as well as the need to have a timeline that would guide them through the process. Parents mentioned that a centralized place to obtain all this information would be their ideal method of information transmission. Parents found the video's information about college options useful and expressed that they would like to see other ones explaining different topics.

Moving forward, [the Organization] should work on parent engagement, as well as improving and extending the videos. In terms of parent engagement, [the Organization] should utilize current resources, develop electronic communication, use multiple of communication, create a timeline for parents, create opportunities for parents to share information with each other, and engage with parents early. Regarding the videos, creating a centralized place to access videos would be helpful. It would also be helpful for the videos to cover financial aid and the different forms of college.

From this qualitative analysis, we have learned that parents have information on the college process and are active in finding resources, but still need guidance around navigating a complex system. [The Organization] is in a privileged position to create synergies between existing resources and families going through the college application process and parents would deeply appreciate it.

References

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Appendix

Appendix I - Official Focus Group Protocol

Topic	Script
Consent	<p>- Good afternoon! We are students from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Today we are working with [the Organization], which is a city-wide effort to get more lower-income students to complete college. [Mention of local Program]. [Small round introducing the four of us and our roles as moderators/note takers]</p> <p>- The purpose of this focus group is two-fold. The first is to help the initiative to discover what parents would like to learn regarding the college preparation process. The second purpose is to provide a space where parents can let the initiative know how to best support them in their child's college preparation.</p> <p>-Before we begin, we want to make sure that you all consent to participating in this this focus group. Your responses to our questions will be recorded for us to accurately capture your feedback, however, your answers will be anonymous. No one will know what answers you individually provided.</p> <p>-If you consent to being part of this focus group, please raise your hand.</p> <p>-Great! We'll now begin the focus group.</p>
Getting to know participants (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could each of you tell us your name, the name and age of your child(ren), and if you are talking to any of them about college plans? <p>Probing questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your children preparing to enroll in college? • How do your children feel about the college preparation process? • How are your children planning to pay for college?
College prep practices/ Information needs (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your experience, what are parents (yourself or others) most concerned or worried about when you think of the college planning process? • Can you tell us what you know about the college preparation process? • How have you learned about the college application process? • What has been your experience in learning about college through [Program]? (How long have you participated? Do you have other children that have been through the program? How did you learn about the program?) • How useful was the information you learned about? • What support is needed to help parents to make decisions about the college preparation process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you need to consider when making decisions about college? ○ What would help you make a decision? • What other information do you, as a parent, believe you need to help your children prepare for college?

	<p>Probing question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you shared this information with your children? If so, how (i.e. did you speak to them about, give them a flyer, show them a website, etc.)? • How much do you think your child knows about applying to college? • What (additional) information do you think your child needs to prepare for college? • What other information do you, as a parent, believe you need to help your children prepare for college? (moving this up) • How often do you discuss college with your children? • Do you know if your child looks for information about colleges? College preparation? • Does your child ask you for information? If so, what kind of information do they ask about from you? • What resources (if any) are you using to help your kids prepare for college? (other [local]-area programs, resources from high school)? • What additional resources would you find useful to help in the college preparation process?
<p>How to share information with parents (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you accessed information on the college preparation/application process? What platform (online, newspaper, etc.) • How accessible was the platform? • What are the most convenient ways for you (or other parents) to access this information? • Are there other ways that your community prefers to get important information? (at your church/mosque, radio etc) • If you were to receive information about college on the platform you say your prefer, how receptive would you be to it? Do you believe you would use the information delivered on this platform? • If you needed support to better understand information about college, where would you go?
<p>(Videos) (20 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the video is useful? • What did you find most useful about it? • Is there anything that stood out to you? • Is there anything about it you would change? • For other videos, what topics should they address? • What other information as a parent do you feel you need?

Appendix II – Thematic coding

Categories	Codes	Sub-Codes
Information	Financial Aid/Paying for College Application	
	Information Need	Student vocational need, Financial Aid, Student college preparation, Choice of major, Forms, Costs
	Timeline/Steps	
	Means of Communication	Mail, Through other programs, An app, Clinics (workshops at health clinic), Churches, Schools, Emails, Listservs, Text Messages, Postcard leaflets, Brochures, Libraries, School Counselor, Calls Fax
	Current Information Access	[Program] (field trip, meetings, workshops), School programs
Experience	College Choice	
	Fear	
	Stress	
Video	Anxiety	
	Helpful	
	College Choices	
	Should list all the schools and benefit of going to state colleges	
	Forms	
	A total breakdown of what there is needed to pay	

Appendix III: Focus Group Sites and Description

[Program 1]

Federally funded, serving students who have 2 of the following: under-represented minority, first-generation, disability.

Grades 9-12, [local high school]

Focus group: ~16 parents from the US, Ethiopia, Haiti, Bangladesh, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, other countries.

Program 2

Program of [local] Housing Authority

All families live in public housing/Section 8

Focus group: ~6-8 parents from Haiti, Bangladesh, Spanish-speaking countries
