

Undergraduate Major – Focus Group Interview Guide – STEM High School Students

STEM high school students: Students identified as STEM students.

Materials: Paper for table tents, sharpies, audio recording, rating sheet for new name for the major, interview guide, follow up contact info sheets, pencils/pens for the name rating exercise.

5:30-5:35 Introduction

Participants enter and select a seat; Cini makes opening remarks.

“Hi, I’m Karen Falkenberg, I work at TILT and I am helping gather data as your focus group moderator. Today, we are soliciting your input on ideas for a new major at CSU; thank you for taking the time in this hour to share your perspectives. Your input will be very valuable in helping shape the conversation about the future.

We’ll keep this pretty informal but as you can see, we will be recording what is said to not have to take a lot of notes while you are talking. Your thoughts are very important and that is what is key to this hour. I’ll reiterate what Cini said about the confidentiality of the data and the opportunity you have to reach out to me personally to set up an opportunity to talk. If you have something you don’t get a chance to share tonight or if you have something to share that you’d rather have said in a private forum, you can call me or email me. If you send me an email, I will aggregate comments and remove all identification information before I send those points on to Cini and the committee. If you’d like to meet privately, I will take notes as you talk and will get those to Cini without your identification. So, any supplemental comments will get to Cini through me anonymously.

Because our time is short, please forgive me if I have to ask you to finish your thought. We want to be sure everyone has a chance to speak over this next hour so I am going to ask you to “share the air”. And, if you see me raise my hand and you are speaking, that will be your cue to finish your thought.”

5:35-5:40 Warm up

“Let’s get started. We will take about 5 minutes in which I’d like you to each introduce yourself by stating your name and something that gives you energy or puts a smile on your face when you are in school.”

XXXXX

“Thank you very much.”

“The format for the rest of our time together will be to spend about 10 minutes on each of 5 questions. I’ll be asking you about your career intentions, your favorite courses so far, how you are thinking of choosing your major and then finally your thoughts about possible course topics and degree names for the new major.”

5:40-5:50

1. Let’s begin by talking about your future; where do you see yourself after you graduate from college?
2. What do you most value about your future college degree?

Probe for intention for college education (get a job, solve world problems)

Probe for why/how they think their courses/major is/are preparing them for their vision.

“Tell me more.”

“What makes you say that?”

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5:50-6:00

3. “Everyone has a course or two that rises to the top as their favorite. I’m curious about what has been your favorite course and why.”

Probe instructional strategies and formats (labs, etc.)

6:00-6:10

4. “Most jobs in agriculture do not involve actual farming. Rather, they support the production and distribution of food. Much of this work depends on understanding the science behind food production. Knowing that, which of the following curriculum topics sounds appealing to you and why?”

- A. Food and food production
- B. Sustainable agriculture
- C. Invasive pests (plant diseases, insects and weeds) and how they affect natural, agricultural and urban systems
- D. Improving food security
- E. How pests impact agriculture and how to manage them
- F. How plants, insects, and microbes function in natural systems

(This question is partly about marketing and partly for designing a curriculum)

6:10-6:20

5. How will you select your degree program?

6:20-6:25

I have one last prompt and then a little pencil and paper exercise. So, if there’s something you’d like to share that I’ve not yet heard, this would be a good time to do that. And, as a reminder, if you think of something later, feel free to contact me.

6:25-6:30

Final exercise: “The department wants to name the new major with a title that is both accurate and appealing. Of the following names which do you find most appealing and why? On the paper in front of you, put an H for High if that name resonates with you, an M for moderate and an L for low.

Potential name of new major	High/Medium/Low appeal? Why?	Alternative name
Agricultural Biology		
Sustainable Pest Management		
Integrated Pest Management		
Plant and Ecosystem Health		
Plant Protection		
Applied Pest Biology		
Food System Protection		
Food Security Studies		