



# Framingham

---

# State University

**OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT**  
**Communication Arts Assessment**  
Completed: *November 30, 2012*

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Communication Arts Survey: Summary of Findings.....	5
Communication Arts Focus Groups: Summary of Findings.....	15
Appendix A: Survey Responses.....	18
Appendix B: Focus Group Transcript Session 1.....	35
Appendix C: Focus Group Transcript Session 2.....	58



**OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT**  
**Communication Arts Assessment: Executive Summary**  
Completed: November 28, 2012

**Purpose**

The Communication Arts Department was interested in two main objectives: having a comprehensive understanding about the academic experience of their graduating students and developing a formal programmatic assessment plan to determine where departmental improvements can be made.

**Method**

Designed to incorporate direct and indirect assessments, an open-ended survey with thirteen questions was distributed to students (N=20) from the department during the 2012 Spring semester. During the same semester, two focus groups (N=22) were conducted with students within the department. To analyze the data, the text from the surveys was converted into a Word document and the focus group video recordings were transcribed. The content from both methods was analyzed using NVivo.

**Findings: Indirect Assessments**

While the focus groups provided only indirect assessments, the surveys also allowed for students to express their perspectives and opinions about the Communication Arts department. Some of the most common themes that emerged are:

- The department has become their academic home
- Professors are the most liked aspect of the department
- Strong sense of loyalty towards their department
- Department is helping to instill the skills necessary for post-graduation success
- Students indicated they would like increased professional networking opportunities

One of the questions presented by the Communication Arts department was the process that students engaged in to choose a concentration within their major. Common themes were that:

- Academic advisers often assisted in the choice of concentration
- Professors inspired interest in the department and specific concentrations
- Participants who consciously chose the Generalist concentration indicated their preference over a specific concentration because of its broad coverage of topics

Academic advising:

- Participants felt that there is a lack of career advising available
- Advisers are unaware of requisite classes and class schedules
- Information regarding graduation requirements could be better presented
- Classes only being offered specific semesters can make graduating on time difficult

**Findings: Direct Assessments**

Faculty members in the Communication Arts department provided the Office of Assessment with a series of key words that would be expected to be present in the responses to those questions in the open-ended response survey. However, because much of the data collected falls outside the Office of Assessment's scope of knowledge, it is strongly recommended that an analysis of this content be

performed by someone with expertise within the Communication Arts field. Based on the keywords provided to the Office of Assessment, there are some very general observations that can be made about how participants responded:

- Their classes instilled the importance of human communication
- Culture defines communication
- Courses improved their group and one-on-one communication skills
- The department has met their creative needs

### **Recommendations**

Based on these surveys and focus groups, some general recommendations for programmatic improvement are listed below:

- Increased professional networking opportunities
- Make detailed information on concentrations more readily available
- Involve department faculty more in post-graduate and career advising
- Professional development for academic advisers
- Have a four- to six-year trajectory for Communication Arts courses and faculty who will be teaching those required courses will help students plan their degree completion in a more timely manner
- Provide clear graduation requirements



## OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

### Communication Arts Survey: Summary of Findings

Completed: November 28, 2012

#### **PURPOSE**

This voluntary student survey was designed to measure actual student learning (direct assessment) and to gather their opinions regarding their satisfaction (indirect assessment) with the Communication Arts department. This data served as a part of the process for developing a formal programmatic assessment plan that will allow for the collection of data and analysis of that information so that departmental improvements can be made to ultimately increasing the academic and professional success of students.

#### **METHOD**

The Communication Arts Department worked closely with the Office of Assessment to design, develop, distribute, and analyze this assessment tool.

#### Distribution method

Thirteen open-ended questions were included in a survey that was distributed to junior and senior students on Wednesday, April 25, 2012. The instructor of record introduced the survey to the students, but was not present in the classroom while the survey was being administered. The Director of Assessment passed out and collected all of the responses ( $N=20$ ). The questions were formatted in a color brochure-type of format and students voluntarily responded to as many questions as they wanted; and as comprehensively as they desired. Upon completion, students were asked to place the survey in an envelope and seal it with a “confidential” sticker that was provided.

In regards to time, it is estimated that it was approximately 30 minutes from the start of the survey to the final participant submitting their responses.

#### Survey questions

The survey questions were designed to be a mix of direct and indirect assessments. Responses to direct assessments should provide the department with a sense of what students are learning – and evaluate the appropriateness and extent of the material learned. Indirect assessments are generally opinion-based questions that ask participants to give their personal opinion.

1. Describe what you have learned about human communication in the Communication Arts courses that you have taken.
2. In your Communication Arts courses, what have you learned about communication and culture?
3. From what you have learned in visual communication, describe and discuss the image below.



a.

4. Describe what you have learned about mass media in your Communication Arts courses.
5. How do you feel the department has met your creative needs?
6. How have your courses helped you improve your oral communication skills?

7. How has your Communication Arts major prepared you for a professional career or graduate studies?
8. What is your concentration?
9. Why did you choose this concentration?
10. When do you expect to graduate?
11. Are you a transfer student?
12. If yes, when did you transfer to Framingham State University?
13. Please provide us with any additional comments.

#### Data analysis

To maintain the confidentiality of the participant's responses as much as possible, the Office of Assessment typed the handwritten responses. Side notes or deletions made are indicated in brackets. Any direct mention of instructor names was deleted. The following pages contain the responses organized by question and participant (P#). For example, responses by P13 are consistent from question to question.

It is important to note that since the Communication Arts Department is primarily interested in the content of the responses, it should be noted that upon "transcribing" the survey responses, spelling and grammar were corrected so as not to deter from what the participant had indicated.

Using keywords compiled by the Communication Arts faculty members, the Office of Assessment used NVivo to generate word frequencies and synonyms.

#### **Demographic Information**

EXPECTED GRADUATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
May 2012	8
Summer 2012	4
December 2012	5
May 2013	3
CONCENTRATION	
Generalist (CMG)	5
Corporate (CMC)	7
Speech and Performance (CMS)	1
Visual (CMV)	4
Visual Media (CME)	2
Unknown	1

#### **Choice of Concentration**

Because the Communication Arts department has keen interest in the process that students use to make decisions about concentrations, some general themes emerged from the analysis:

- Most generalists (4 out of 5) stated they chose their concentration because it was more broad and flexible compared to a specific concentration
- Many participants (8 out of 20) stated that they chose their concentration because they already know what they want to do post-graduation
- One participant stated they chose a specific concentration because it felt like it gave them an advantage over someone in the general concentration

**QUESTION 1:** Describe what you have learned about human communication in the Communication Arts courses that you have taken. (n=20)

KEYWORDS PROVIDED	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Interpersonal communication and dyads	19	Human communication
Verbal codes	8	
Nonverbal communication	5	
Group communication	4	
Interpretation and ambiguity	3	
Linear and transactional models	1	"Although each human is different and we communicate in our styles, there are certain patterns."
Internal noise	-	
Perceptual filters	-	
Feedback	-	
Context	-	
Gender	-	
Construction of reality	-	
Symbolic interaction	-	
Listening	-	
Multifaceted	-	

### Summary of Findings

- Almost all participants (19 out of 20) noted how they have learned the importance of interpersonal communication through Communication Arts classes
- Nonverbal and verbal communication were the most discussed types of human communication
- Group communication was brought up multiple times in regards to the importance of communicating with a small group of your peers
- The importance of successfully being able to interpret other people's communication methods was discussed by several participants

**QUESTION 2:** In your Communication Arts courses, what have you learned about communication and culture? (n=20)

KEYWORDS PROVIDED	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Context	8	"Different cultures communicate differently; and to competently communicate with someone from another culture, one must understand the culture's rules and norms. "
Collectivistic	1	
Implicit and explicit messages	-	
Perceptual filters	-	
Ethnocentrism	-	
Constructivism	-	
High and low context	-	
Globalization	-	

### **Summary of Findings**

- The most common response (16 out of 20) from participants was that culture defines communication
- Some participants (8 out of 20) noted that different cultures communicate via different methods
- One participant mentioned that many countries are collectives, while the U.S. is individualistic

**QUESTION 3:** From what you have learned in visual communication, describe and discuss the image below. (n=20)

KEYWORDS PROVIDED	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Color	12	
Light	10	
Line	5	
Mood	4	
Frame	4	Film/Reel (4)
Edge	3	Borders (3)
Design	3	Pattern (2)
Viewer	3	
Proportion	2	Skewed (1)
Symmetry	2	Balance (1)
Contrast	2	
Shape	2	
Balance	2	
Form	2	
Space	1	
Horizontal	1	
Depth	1	
Foreground	1	"Background" was also used twice
Text	-	
Realism	-	
Stylize	-	
Vertical	-	
Diagonal	-	
Story	-	
Complimentary	-	
Rule of thirds	-	
Tone	-	
Grey scale	-	
Saturation	-	
Texture	-	
Color principle	-	
Composition	-	
Repetition	-	
Unity	-	
Luminosity	-	
Spectrum	-	

### Summary of Findings

- Light was referenced (10 out of 20) to in terms of the spotlight within the image
- The mood was not specifically mentioned; however, terms like "depressing," "dark," and "feelings" were discussed
- The colors of the image were the most discussed aspect

**QUESTION 4:** How have your courses helped you improve your oral communication skills? (n=20)

KEYWORDS PROVIDED	REFERENCED	ALTERNATE USES
Audience	3	
Public	2	
Clarity	2	
Supporting ideas	2	
Organization	2	
Voice volume and pace	1	
Confidence	1	
Delivery	-	
Reasoning	-	
Emotion	-	
Eye contact	-	
Ethos, logos, and pathos	-	
Gestures	-	
Expression	-	
Verbal and nonverbal	-	
Body	-	
Discourse	-	
Message	-	
Interrupters and fillers	-	
Adaptation	-	
Goal and thesis	-	
Introduction	-	
Conclusion	-	
Evidence	-	
Credibility	-	

**Summary of Findings**

- Most participants (15 out of 20) stated that their courses have improved their speech and group presentation abilities
- Some participants (2 out of 20) stated that their courses have improved their one-on-one and small group communication abilities

**QUESTION 5:** Describe what you have learned about mass media in your Communication Arts courses.  
(n=20)

KEYWORDS	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Information	5	
Television and radio	4	
Internet	1	
History	1	
News	1	
Social media	1	
Social, political, and financial forces	-	
Global	-	
Corporations	-	
Nations	-	
Ownership	-	
Media Outlets	-	
Diversity	-	
Voices	-	
Democracy	-	
Digital	-	
Mobile devices	-	
Entertainment	-	
Mediated	-	
Ideology	-	

### **Summary of Findings**

- Participants (5 out of 20) discussed the use of advertising by mass media
- A few participants (3 out of 20) noted how mass media increases human interconnectedness and the ease with which we communicate
- Some participants (5 out of 20) discussed how mass media is one of the main sources of information in today's society

**QUESTION 6:** How do you feel the department has met your creative needs? (n=20)

KEYWORDS	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Projects	3	
Production courses	3	
Freedom	3	"We were allowed to choose our own projects."
Assignments	2	
Creative process	1	
Skills	1	
Expression	-	
Ideas	-	
Performance courses	-	
Portfolios	-	
Resources	-	
Individuality	-	
Discovery	-	
Voice	-	

**Summary of Findings**

- Two participants mentioned that the departmental equipment could use an upgrade
- Two students mentioned that they would like classes to be offered more often
- Most participants (14 out of 20) explicitly stated that the department has met their creative needs
- Some participants (3 out of 20) appreciated the freedom they were allowed in choosing their project and how to present those projects

**QUESTION 7:** How has your Communication Arts major prepared you for a professional career or graduate studies? (n=19)

KEYWORDS	REFERENCES	ALTERNATE USES
Resume	5	
Learners	4	
Articulate ideas	3	
Skill sets	3	
Seminar	3	
Marketable skills	2	
Network	2	
Internship	1	
Base of knowledge	1	
Resources	1	
Career Services	1	
Field	1	
Practical	1	
Portfolio	-	
Workplace	-	
Team	-	
Creative Individual	-	
Theoretical foundation	-	
Creativity	-	
Application	-	
Performance	-	
Opportunities	-	

### **Summary of Findings**

- Many participants (11 out of 19) believe that department specific skills they have developed will translate to post-graduate success
- Some participants (3 out of 19) believe that the Seminar helped to prepare them for post-graduation
- Many participants (7 out of 20) think the major has prepared them for post-graduation by teaching professional skills (i.e. resumes and internships)
- Two participants stated that professors are helpful in providing real world advice
- One participants mentioned that Communication Arts classes offer the most transferrable skills out of all classes

**QUESTION 8:** Additional Comments (n=12)

- Five participants stated that the department provided an excellent experience
- Three participants stated that the professors were the best part of the department
- Two participants mentioned they would like to see better Comm. Arts equipment available
- Two participants mentioned that they would like to see more classes offered more frequently

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This initial survey could be considered a pilot-test for inclusion in a programmatic assessment plan. Because this survey was designed to be discipline specific, the Office of Assessment anticipates feedback from the Communication Arts department in regards to the usefulness of the information gathered and how it will be used to improve the program.



## OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

### Communication Arts Focus Groups: Summary of Findings

Completed: November 14, 2012

#### Introduction and Overview

The Communication Arts department was interested in having a comprehensive understanding about the academic experience of their graduating students. Because much of the data collected in the past has not been formalized, two focus groups were conducted to collect student perspectives (indirect assessment).

Students enrolled in one upper-level Communication Arts course was separated to create two focus groups (N=22) that took place on May 3, 2012. The following chart provides demographic information about the participants:

	GROUP		
	1	2	TOTALS
Class Level			
Freshman	-	1	1
Sophomore	2	1	3
Junior	2	3	5
Senior	7	5	12
Unknown	-	1	1
Concentration			
Generalist (CMG)	9	8	17
Corporate (CMC)	-	1	1
Speech and Performance (CMS)	2	1	3
Visual (CMV)	-	1	1
Visual Media (CME)	-	-	-
Admitted to FSU as a Communication Arts major			
Yes	3	6	9
No	8	5	13
Transfer Student			
Yes	2	1	3
No	9	9	18
Unknown	-	1	1
Expected Graduation			
May 2012	2	3	5
December 2012	4	2	6
May 2013	2	3	5
December 2013	1	-	1
May 2014	2	1	3
December 2014	-	-	-
May 2015	-	1	1
Unknown	-	1	1

## **Communication Arts Department**

Overall, students expressed many positive aspects in regards to the Communication Arts department. Many participants indicated that they felt that the department has become their academic home. Other emerging themes included:

- Professors are the most liked aspect of the department
  - o Professors, as a whole, were described as both engaging in class and helpful outside of class
  - o Professors are invested in personal and professional success of the students
- Participants felt strong loyalty towards their department and often defended their choice of major to others
  - o Classes are interesting and thought provoking
  - o Communication Arts courses offer the most transferrable skills out of all classes taken across campus
- Department is helping to guide students to success post-graduation

Participants expressed some areas of improvement:

- Professional networking: Students indicated that they would like more advice on "how to" network and also have more opportunities to network
- Equipment: The condition and availability of expensive required equipment is a student concern
  - o Some equipment seems old and outdated
  - o It is unrealistic for assigned work to be completed without purchasing your own equipment – since there are only one or two university-owned cameras available to "share" amongst a large class
  - o Purchasing a new camera for one class and then never using it again is an expensive endeavor

## **Choice of Concentration**

Students majoring in Communication Arts are provided the opportunity to choose from five concentrations: generalist, corporate, speech and performance, visual, and visual media. Upon review of the number of students declaring concentrations, most students opt to be generalists. As a result of this imbalance, the Department has asked for information regarding the process that students experience upon declaration of a concentration. Some common themes emerged from the focus groups:

- Academic advisers assisted in the choice of concentration
- Professors inspired interest in the concentration's subject matter in the classroom
- The generalist concentration is more common than a specific concentration for two reasons:
  - o For students who made conscious decisions about their concentration, they felt that the broad and varied nature of a generalist concentration was more interesting than learning about one specific field of study within Communication Arts
  - o For other participants, being a generalist was not intentional. Since there is a lack of initial information available to students in regards to available concentrations, participants are often unaware of available specific concentrations until after they are well into requisite courses for the generalist concentration
- Regardless, there seems to be a feeling of increased flexibility in course and career opportunities in choosing generalist over picking a specific concentration

## **Academic Advising**

Participants expressed strong opinions regarding the process and quality of academic advising. The experience seemed heavily dependent upon how the advisor communicated with the student and the knowledge that the advisor had about completing graduation requirements.

- Overall, participants expressed a feeling that there is a lack of post-graduate/career advising available to Communication Arts students
- Academic advising needs to be more organized and improved upon
  - o Pervasive feeling that advisers are unaware of requisite classes and class schedules
    - This leads to many issues, including registering for necessary courses when they are available to ensure a timely graduation

## **Registration**

The following summarizes the participant's sentiments about the registration process. It is recognized that many of these concerns fall under the purview of the University. However, some of the sentiments expressed can be addressed within the department. Common themes included:

- Available information regarding required coursework seems to be hidden and is difficult to find
  - o Information could be more visible and better presented in a more efficient manner
- Courses only being offered certain semesters can make graduating on time difficult
  - o Schedule conflicts with other classes can make this especially frustrating for students
- Participants expressed a general dislike of assigned classes upon initial enrollment at FSU

## **Recommendations**

Based on the data collected from these two focus groups, the following are some recommendations for improving the student's academic experience:

- Increased professional networking opportunities
  - o Communication Arts specific career fairs could increase networking opportunities
- Detailed information on concentrations could be made more readily available on the Department's website
  - o As soon as a student declares Communication Arts as a major, information/advising sessions on concentrations could be made available
  - o Students attending freshman orientation could be educated about the concentrations available. This could be an opportunity to express the benefits of declaring a specific concentration
- Department faculty could be more involved in post-graduate and career advising
  - o Advisers could present post-graduate/career opportunities to assist in giving students a direction to strive for as their experience at FSU comes to an end
- Academic advisers could receive increased professional development
  - o This could lead to increased awareness of requisite classes, when they are offered, and when students should enroll
- Information regarding what is required for graduation could be made more clear and placed in more noticeable sections of the Departmental website
  - o Creating a checklist and making it available to students and advisers so they can keep track of their progress could be helpful
  - o Although it seems that offering classes more frequently could lead to less schedule conflicts and could decrease student frustration with limited offerings; this may not be plausible. If that is the case, then training academic advisors and creating a checklist to be used during advising could reduce this issue

## APPENDIX A

### Survey Responses

**1. Describe what you have learned about human communication in the Communication Arts courses that you have taken.**

P1: Human communication is crucial. It governs the way that society holds itself and how decisions are formed. Communication can take different shapes, not just in the form of language but through human interaction and response.

P2: What I have learned about human communication in the Communication Arts classes I have taken is that there are millions of different ways to communicate today. From text messages to the TV and e-mail, there are endless amounts of ways for people to communicate with one another. A lot less people are using the mail because e-mail etc. is so much quicker/cheaper. There is also verbal/nonverbal communication.

P3: I have learned that communication plays a huge role in how people live and think. A lot of communication is trying to get a person to think something or trick them into thinking.

P4: Human communication is everywhere. Everyone communicates somehow, someway. Whether it's between friends or families of a different culture they all have norms to communicate with each other.

P5: I have learned a lot about human communication in my previous Communication Arts courses. I have learned how to read a person off of gestures and movements from speech classes. Also, I have learned how to make my words appeal to an audience, when in other cases the topic would be of non-importance to them.

P6: I have learned a lot since I've been in the department. I have learned to present and give speeches effectively as well as be able to read someone's non-verbal cues. Depending on the situation, I have learned the art of articulation to round off my experience.

P7: I have learned that communication is complicated. People have different personalities (passive, passive aggressive, etc.) that make them communicate in their own way.

P8: I feel I have learned a lot. Specifically, I cannot recall, but I learned the significance of body language, tone, and speech. Each has a different importance in communication. I learned how to direct my questions toward certain audiences. For the most part, I feel I got a much better understanding of what communicating means and what it does. I learned from communication to not only learn from the professor, but classmates, too.

P9: There are many forms of human communication:

- Verbal
- non-verbal

are the primary and it is also about how you communicate. I learned a lot about that in my speech class.

P10: What I have learned about human communication is the nonverbal and verbal way of communicating.

P11: I have learned that communication spreads rapidly. For example, if someone tells a friend a story, and that person tells others, that story spreads like crazy, and this can also alter/[illegible] the information being passed. [Diagram included]

P12:

Rhetoric: How to speak about people objects and the world.

Media: How to discuss and talk about media and critique to get the message to mass audiences.

Speech: Learning words and where they derive from to properly communicate.

P13: I've learned...

- The importance of human communication
  - To succeed
- Communicating w/ co-workers/classmates is beneficial to everyone doing well, working together effectively.
- Important to communicate and relate to your audience → no matter who they are and adjusting methods to accommodate different audiences

P14: I have learned a lot about human communication from the courses I have taken. We've practiced with different levels of communication in just about each and every one of my courses.

P15: The human communication that relates to classes taken at FSU would probably be Media/Society/Self, Small Group Communication. Different ways humans react to each other and work with each other.

P16: What I've gained about human interactions or communications is the fact that there are in-groups (similarities) and out-groups (differences) that effect communication. As well as mixed messages from tone, posture, physical contact, etc...

P17: Only class I've taken in the department that talked about human communication was Intro to Speech, where we learned how to present ourselves and talk to a group of people. Other than that, I was a Visual Communication person so most of my classes were media/production of art classes. Some of my Gen Eds covered the topic though.

P18:

- Ethos, pathos, logos
- Dynamics of communication
- Persuasion methods
- Articulation methods
- Argument structure

P19: Although each human is different and we communicate in our own styles, there are certain patterns. If we learn these patterns we can better our communication climate and build a more effective environment for all.

P20: I've learned a lot about human communication through my communication classes. Currently, I'm taking Interpersonal Dialogue w/ [name of instructor] and we talk all about people communicating w/ each other, through words, nonverbal cues, body language, etc. I think Communication Arts majors are naturally in-tune to communication cues anyway.

**2. In your Communication Arts courses, what have you learned about communication and culture?**

P1: The two are intertwined. Communication leads the way in which a society forms culture stems off of the way individuals express themselves and form groups with similar interests/outlooks.

P2: I have learned that people from different cultures communicate in all different types of ways. In one culture it might be rude to stick out your hand for a handshake because that culture could find it offensive. I have learned that it takes time to adapt to certain culture's communication.

P3: Communication is a big role in society. It is everywhere from talking to someone to seeing an ad on television. You can communicate in various ways; photo, picture, video/film, talking.

P4: They go hand and hand; every culture uses communication in some form.

P5: I have learned that communication and culture are major parts of our world. There are many different cultures in our living space, but communication is a factor in all. Communication is one of ways all humans are tied; whether it is through words or gestures. For example, laughter is understood across the world.

P6: Different cultures communicate differently. Whether it is language or the different actions of saying hello like: shaking hands or kowtowing.

P7: In each culture, communication varies. In the U.S., we usually tell a person when we have a problem – but in other places, people do not do that. Also, many countries are collectives while the U.S. is individualistic.

P8: Culture rules communication. Different cultures communicate differently; and to competently communicate with someone from another culture, one must understand the culture's rules and norms. Culture defines communication.

P9: Culture plays a huge role on how people communicate. One word or body movement can mean something different from one culture to the next. This is why it is important to focus on all your methods of body language and communication when there is a language barrier. You have to be patient and accepting and stay focused on the main goal; which is communicating in the best way possible to achieve your goal.

P10: I have learned there are different topics of communication; from media, ads, and word of mouth. What I have learned about culture is that there are different cultures in the world.

P11: I've learned that our culture absolutely relies on communication. As soon as someone wakes up, they are likely to check their phone then turn the TV on while doing their morning ritual.

P12: Everything in a culture is part of communications. Whether it's language or entertainment, people are always changing and communications teaches you how to both go with the courses and make your own.

P13: It changes in every culture

- Methods of communication
- Legality of communication
- Different skills required

P14: Introduction to Visual Communication is the class that has taught me most about culture. M/S/S focused heavily on communication and culture and I have learned most generally that culture impacts the way we communicate in a very large way.

P15: Classes taken at FSU that relate to communication and culture would be Visual Communication, Intercultural Communication, Speech Communication, more. We learned about different ways cultures react; whether it is signs, etc. Other ways in other classes would be that what's normal in American isn't right or allowed in other countries. Such things would be using the sign of [illegible].

P16: That all cultures communicate on different levels; because of morals, values, hierarchy, etc... Customs also play serious roles in how regions, hemispheres interact with one another.

P17: Nothing. My classes were mainly historical and visual design. My Gen Eds mentioned culture.

P18:

- Cultures vary widely
- Different approaches of appealing to various human culture
- Know your audience!

P19: Our culture is largely based on our methods of communication. In order to function as a society, we must interact with each other. In order to interact with each other, we must use varying ways of communication. Our current culture, for example, is very digital. In turn, our society appears to be very isolated.

P20: I've learned a little bit about how different cultures interact compared to how people in the U.S. do, but not very much because I've never taken a communication class geared toward that.

**3. From what you have learned in visual communication, describe and discuss the image below.**



P1: This image uses a strong base of primary colors – red, blue, and yellow; green being a secondary color. The image draws one's eye to the top left where the yellow projects itself in bold color against

the navy blue. Upon that, a black figure stands alone. The image is asymmetrical in balance and uses sketchy forms of line. The subject may be interpreted differently depending on the viewer. Art has no boundaries. It is universal.

P2: The viewer can clearly see that the main subject of this image is the man, due to the bright light shining down towards him. The brightness of the light catches the viewers' eye and the lines that the light form on both sides of the man help bring the viewer's eye to the main subject. The patterns on the top and bottom of this image make it look like this is a cut out part of a film.

P3: The person who is the main focus is slightly off-centered. They are lit from above and are lit with three-way lighting. It would appear that maybe the main focus is talking or presenting to the other character on the right side.

P4: The image above uses many different lines, colors, and patterns.

P5: This seems to be a film strip out of a person's life. The visual is of a person on stage with no audience and only maybe the security guard or a fan. This image can be taken in many ways; it could be saying that even without an audience, the lights' still on me. Or that this is a lonely man's life.

P6: It looks depressing. It looks as if someone is giving a performance and there is only one person in the audience. The colors are very heavy which gives it the impression of being dark.

P7: The image above has a nice contrasting color scheme. The blue and the orange and yellowish-orange flow very nice together. Warm cools are in the front of the scene so they radiant off the paper, while the background is a cool color that draws your eye back to the horizon line. The light beaming down onto the figure reminds me of an alien movie. The figure looks "unhuman" – but that could just be from the abstraction of the artist. He may have meant for that figure to be a human but I totally picture/see an alien. The gradient of colors in the beam is very interesting and immediately grabbed my attention. Then my eye moved to the floating yellow block with the orange box inside; then eventually to the second yellow box with a UFO looking black item inside. The beam with the two boxes creates a triangle. A triangle in any composition is more interesting than the horizon line with the orange half circles grab my attention last but they do drag your eye back to the beam which then keeps your eyes moving throughout the picture.

P8: I have learned how to interpret messages. This image can represent essentially anything the viewer wants. Perception is the key to understanding an image. Bright colors highlight images. This image highlights two people, one much more than the other, but the background the two people are both in is very bright. The body of the main character is skewed to represent a certain feeling when on stage; such as tension with the majority of the body being squished together. The second character in the back is confined in a small box, not being watched. The main character is present for anyone to see which makes him more vulnerable. Color patterns are depicted as well with three main and one color, orange, to pull the piece together.

P9: Seems as though the individual is stuck on stage in front of a crowd with a guarded door and the individual on stage doesn't seem to have much confidence. He/she is stuck in the spot light. Very similar to how some new or old students may feel in some of the classes here.

P10: The image below is graphic design of a person on stage and the audience. The image below represents symbolism.

P11: The image shows a figure on stage with a spotlight directly on it. The blue/purple shows that the room is dark, and there are 4 seats. It looks as though there is a man in the doorway and a projection. The detail is minimal, as there is no shading. The image is also a bit of filmstrip.

P12: [Arrow to general lower blue area] In the spotlight is a man with ambition and determination and every person including this one is being watched.

[Arrows to filmstrip at top and bottom] For presence, poise, and knowledge. I also like the movie reel.

P13: Looks like a man is spotlighted on a stage alone. The colors are vibrant, complementary colors (blue + yellow). The figure (man) is awkwardly shaped, disproportional.

P14: The image below uses primary colors. It is weighted to the left side putting the image off balance. There is a sense of lonesomeness and darkness being portrayed in this image.

P15: This picture contains much color, which is nice. There is an individual in the middle that is all black, but being focused.

P16: First off, it's 2-D. The setting is a theatre of some sort; which can be told by the light on the person on stage. Obviously, it's a stage because the foreshortening line that just allows the chairs to be seen gives a sense of height and depth.

P17: It's a stage and a person is standing in the spotlight. I never took a theatre course here.

P18: There could be many different interpretations to this photograph. Color ranges are blue/orange, complementary colors. Contrast of the shadows. Theme: The presenter who is faced with an empty audience (except one person by the door) and must face his own challenges both in a figurative sense and a literal one.

P19: The "film-like" border around the image creates a horizontal flow. The color blocking creates distinct shapes. There is a lot of negative space.

P20: The yellow/blue is opposite colors on the color wheel. Green is what you get when you mix them. The main figure is in the foreground. The top and bottom borders look like a film reel.

#### **4. Describe what you have learned about mass media in your Communication Arts course.**

P1: Mass media truly affects the world in which we live in and how we make decisions. It is everywhere, constantly driving us. Its early form, media had an impact though it was not expected to have negative undertones. Today, it can be for us or against us depending upon the situation. However, it is extremely important in the process of world and human development.

P2: I've learned that cell phones, texting, e-mail, TV etc. are all forms of mass media. Not only are electronics part of the mass media, but also billboards, posters, and magazines also contribute to mass media.

P3: Mass media is the largest form of communication. From magazines to films, it speaks to most of the world. Television and film are the big money makers

P4: Mass media is everywhere! People use it in advertising every day.

P5: Mass media is everywhere and our biggest source of information. I learned that mass media is everything from the TV, radio, to computers. Media is becoming a key part of people's living styles and can only grow.

P6: Learning about the trends and the different ways media can affect culture and society. Especially with the emergence of social media, everybody has the need to feel connected at all times and I think it makes people more intrapersonal than interpersonal.

P7: I didn't take mass media but I did take Media, Society and Self which taught me that the media glorifies sex and tries to sell you things you don't need; and tries to convince you that you WANT it.

P8: Mass media reflects cultural norms and rules. Essentially mass media depicts society and society look to mass media to direction. It is a cycle we society and culture follow mass media while mass media follows society and culture.

P9: Mass media is changing rapidly and is now the new way to reach people the fastest. Especially for advertisements, the media is the best technique for reaching their target audience. I have also learned how to break down one image on a screen and count out the number of brand names being marketed and what that can do for a company.

P10: What I have learned about mass media is that with the technology that we have today, it is easy for people to stay in touch with what's going on in the outside world.

P11: I have learned that a lot of mass media is extremely biased and that it is best to think about the information presented, rather than taking it for what it is.

P12: Mass media is taking in information about all demographics and targeting them in order to create the largest target audience that will also respond to the information being presented to them.

P13: Advertising is a huge aspect of it. It's a large part of our society. We see/hear parts of mass media every day.

P14: I have learned that mass media includes a lot more than just television and internet. Mass media involves books, newspapers, radio, and many other outlets as well. These outlets impact the way we think, feel and conceive things on a regular daily basis and it is more than important to recognize their influences.

P15: Media/society/self is a class that mass media was talked about. I enjoyed this class because I didn't know a lot about networks, targeted audiences, ratings, etc. before.

P16: Mass media is the key to public opinion and reaction. It's seen throughout the country and the people who put out the information get feedback from each region and from these results can tweak certain stories to certain places. Mass media are the "gatekeepers" of information to the public.

P17: Media, Society, and Self-addressed the history and important case studies in media research. Introduction to Visual Communication also gave an overview of jobs you can have in mass media. I learned about effective ways of persuasion.

P18: Mass media appeals to a mass audience; therefore, the lowest common denominator. Overall, a fairly bleak picture.

P19: Mass media is a very wide ranging topic. It covers the many ways in which the media reaches its public.

P20: I've learned a lot about mass media, especially in Media, Society, Self through writing my content analysis. I had to analyze my findings and make assumptions about mass media. I feel like a lot of my other classes talk a lot about mass media, too, to make theories more relevant.

## **5. How do you feel the department has met your creative needs?**

P1: The department needs to update its production equipment. It deeply saddens me that Introduction to Film production is being pulled from the department. Working in the medium of film builds a strong production base and core understanding/appreciation for the original format of movies. Yes, video is efficient; but it is instant. Working with film creates time, patience, and a level of artistic pride. I strongly encourage keeping a film course as an option. I feel that my creative needs weren't met in that sense.

P2: I definitely feel that the department has met my creative needs. I not only have a better understanding of communication, but I have broadened my knowledge in certain areas such as art, and photography.

P3: I feel like the department met my creative needs pretty well. In production course we were allowed to choose our own projects (to some degree).

P4: I wish the department had better technology to fit the needs of the students. I feel the Comm Arts program deserves a serious upgrade.

P5: I feels as though my creative needs were met in my acting class with [name of instructor] and in my studio production and writing for visual media class with [name of instructor]. In these courses, my creativity needs had no limits, and this is why I agreed to taking their class at 8:30AM.

P6: The three classes that have met my creative needs were: Introduction to Comp, Graphics, Design, Screen and Teleplay, and Small Group Communication. Each course helped my mind think in different ways. In Screen and Teleplay, I ended up writing my own 120 page script about whatever I wanted. Small Group helped me think of different ways to covey our group's message. Computer Graphics helped me learn programs and o my own thing for the projects.

P7: I think for the most part they have met my creative needs except for one that is lacking. I really wanted to learn more about film photography by physically doing it in class, as well as large format. I wish I learned that here.

P8: I would have liked to do more hands-on, but I am a junior and still have time to take a couple of classes I want.

P9: I have had to put together many PowerPoint's, presentations and models. I wouldn't say it was a need of mine that was met, but it challenged me and I learned a lot.

P10: The department has helped me in every way to learn and have first-hand experience with what I can do with my major.

P11: The department met my creative needs by offering advertising/web design/graphic design classes.

P12: I went from antisocial to the Biggest Butterfly. Communication Arts prepared me for human interaction which is more important than anything I could ever have learned. Also better at: [diagram] Art, writing, speaking [drawn lines to] three most important tools in art industry.

P13: I feel it has been successful in most ways. Maybe a lack of "different" classes → such as the Event Planning class in fall! ☺

P14: The department for the most part allowed for my creative need to flourish. Many assignments have been left generally open ended allowing for me to fulfill their requirements in the creative way I pleased.

P15: I enjoyed the creative classes. I took Basic Photography, Graphic Design. It really opened up my mind to do other things. Also Writing for Visual Media was interesting.

P16: I took the Creative Process and Writing for Visual Media; both of them helped to expand my originality.

P17: I advanced my skills in Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign as well as Html5 all thanks to [name of instructor]. Without knowing how to be creative with those programs, I would not have been able to work for my internship. In photography, they teach you all the great past photographers to teach you design and composition of a photograph they also give you plenty of time for practice.

P18: It has met them only halfway, more classes to ramp up the hands-on assignments and there needs to be more presentations.

P19: An array of "workshop" classes and letting us do independent studies.

P20: Yes. I took Graphic Design and Advertising Techniques and in both we were allowed to do projects on whatever we wanted basically (i.e., Photoshop project with specifications but your topic could be whatever you'd want). Introduction to Visual Communication left something to be desired creative wise, but that's probably because it's an intro class.

## **6. How have your courses helped you improve your oral communication skills?**

P1: Introduction to Speech Communications and Effective Speaking were two courses that greatly improved my oral communications skills. I gained more confidence and became more comfortable talking in front of a large group.

P2: I have improved my oral communication skills by taking numerous Communication Arts classes where I have to work in groups with many other students and also engage in many different speeches throughout my time at Framingham.

P3: I took Speech Communication class. That taught us how to make oral presentations. That's about it, besides a couple oral presentations in a class or two.

P4: The courses I took taught me how to prepare better for a speech. I always felt confident speaking in front of others – however, the classes taught me how to organize better and get my points across to my audience.

P5: My Speech Communication class and Advanced Public Speaking course with [name of instructor] were great. I learned to stop my mumbling and speak clear when I thought I already was.

P6: Absolutely, I can turn my Boston accent off when I need to and I do well with speeches and presentations.

P7: I have gotten more comfortable speaking in large groups.

P8: [No response.]

P9: Yes. I feel more confident getting in front of a crowd; or now I at least know I have done it before. I also pay more attention to what I say in order to make my point as clear as possible.

P10: The courses have helped me improve my oral communication skills by learning how to make speeches and how to get my point across.

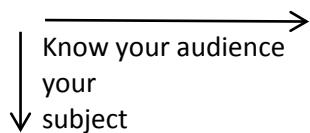
P11: N/A

P12:

Style: moral themes, stylistic devices.

Arrangement: Beg-middle-end and what's involved.

Delivery: How to speak.



P13: I have become more comfortable speaking one-on-one (interviews ... etc.) and public speaking to a group. I am able to identify where I make mistakes when orally communicating. I've learned to write speeches better.

P14: Just about every course requires a presentation(s) or discussion at some point allowing my oral communication skills to grow and flourish and most importantly, improve.

P15: They helped me so much in the process of improving my oral speaking skills. I now feel much more open to talk by myself and with others. Now I'm not afraid to give a speech.

P16: I've learned to draw attention from each part of the room when speaking to get the entire audience's attention. To prepare for speeches, so to be confident and reflect within my presenting.

P17: Lots of group discussion and critiques. Constantly bouncing ideas off others and learning how to effectively correct or suggest ideas to others.

P18: Voice and Articulation. I speak in a much more slower and accurate voice with a deep attention to pitch and tone.

P19: The speaking classes have eased my public speaking tensions by forcing me to practice.

P20: Drastically – especially small group with [name of instructor] (who I'm so sad is not teaching here anymore). That class pulled me out of my shell in terms of presenting and really made me a much more confident speaker.

## **7. How has your Communication Arts major prepared you for a professional career or graduate studies?**

P1: I feel that overall, I have gained the willingness to learn more and improvise with the tools that were given to me. I am able to problem solve quickly. I have also learned that I can be a leader. I have motivation and passion in my major. I will have no problem cooperating with others in a professional career.

P2: I am prepared for a professional career or graduate studies because I know how to succeed working individually or in a group. I know how to go about interviews and how to create a much better resume.

P3: I have edited on a few different editing systems, done photography, and worked with a film camera. These have taught me how to focus and how to frame a shot and also how important lighting is. I wish we had more production classes to learn more about the different aspects of film and video, like audio, lighting and special effects.

P4: It has taught me how to communicate effectively and how to be prepared. The senior seminar course really got me thinking ahead about the whole job search process and how to network and get the job you dream of.

P5: I can speak clear and concise; and I have also learned the language of persuasion which is key in life after college because we will constantly be selling ourselves to companies for work.

P6: It is the most practical major because of the life skills it teaches you. Resume writing, presentations, etc. have all helped me prepare for life after school.

P7: It has given me some really good skill sets of knowing how to work Photoshop, InDesign and Illustration. As well as how to work a DSLR.

P8: [No response.]

P9: Writing, planning, speaking, resources. All these areas I have grown in thanks to this department.

P10: My communication arts major has prepared me for a professional career by using equipment similar to the ones I would use in a professional career.

P11: It has prepared me by giving me the design skills needed to perform a job.

P12:

Professional: resume, cover letter, interviews.

Reading-writing-Art-Speaking: I want to be an event planner and the only way to do that is to graduate from FSU Communication Arts department.

P13: The things I have learned have made me a better communicator. In turn, I was effective in getting the internship I wanted. The internship is going to give me some experience in the field I think I want to work.

P14: The professors have taught and encouraged me to further research my future as well as get the ball rolling on paving the way for that future. They have been both honest and helpful.

P15: Public Relations was a neat class. It opened and broadened my mind to what I want to do.

P16: I feel that after the week with Career Services I'm much more prepared to go for interviews and submit my resume.

P17: They taught me how to make a cover letter and resume in seminar. I had to practice networking in seminar. All my class for the most part had me do some research on companies and look at jobs they offer.

P18: It has given me more confidence in my speaking abilities, and a more expansive view of the world. I believe most of my fellow students should be able to function in a corporate environment.

P19: Seminar was the best preparation ever!

P20: I think a lot of Communication Arts professors (especially [name of instructor]) throw in a lot of common sense and real world knowledge, which is exactly what I need advice with.

## **8. What is your concentration?**

P1: Visual Media Production

P2: N/A

P3: Visual

P4: Speech and Performance

P5: General

P6: UCG

P7: Visual Communications

P8: Corporate

P9: General Communications

P10: Visual media production

P11: Visual communications

P12: Corporate Communication

P13: Corporate Communication

P14: Organizational and corporate communications

P15: Corporate

P16: General

P17: Visual communication

P18: Generalist

P19: Corporate

P20: Corporate

#### **9. Why did you choose this concentration?**

P1: My passion lies in the art of making films. I cannot picture myself doing anything else. It is a career filled with driven, artistic, and passionate people.

P2: N/A

P3: Was interested in it since sophomore in high school when I took a TV production class.

P4: I felt it fit me best for my skills as a student, I was able to take classes such as acting, and public speaking that I really enjoyed going to. I don't fare well with classes you sit and take notes, so this concentration gave me some freedom.

P5: Because I'm interested in so much, I did not want to be limited.

P6: I wanted to be well-rounded and have the knowledge of the department.

P7: I love photography and I explain myself better visually.

P8: Felt it gave me a leg up compared to general. More specific.

P9: It fit me best

P10: I was interested in products and I am more of visual type of student.

P11: I am interested in graphic design

P12: I wanted to be a Media Buyer for an ad firm

P13: Broad – could be applied to any business

P14: I like the broadness and business aspect of the concentration. I have many interests in my major and focusing on corporate allows me to get a general feel for the many things I'm interested in. I could do PR, marketing, advertising, event planning, etc.

P15: I was previously a Business major and switched over. Therefore, I could use my business background.

P16: It covers everything and doesn't really restrict you.

P17: I wanted to focus on web design, photography and graphic design. All areas I want to use in my future career.

P18: I'm honestly still not sure what I want to go into for a career.

P19: [No response.]

P20: I want to go into management, or PR, HR, event planning

#### **10. When do you expect to graduate?**

P1: This May 2012

P2: July 2012

P3: Summer 12

P4: Winter 2012

P5: Fall 2012

P6: Summer 2012

P7: Fall 2012

P8: 2013

P9: Next semester, fingers crossed

P10: Fall 2012

P11: 2012

P12: Dec 2012

P13: December 2012

P14: May 2013

P15: May '12

P16: August 2012

P17: May 20<sup>th</sup> 2012

P18: Summer 2012

P19: December 2012

P20: Spring '13

**11. Are you a transfer student?**

P1: No

P2: Yes

P3: No

P4: No

P5: No

P6: No

P7: Yes

P8: No

P9: Yes

P10: No

P11: Yes

P12: No

P13: No

P14: Yes

P15: Yes

P16: Yes

P17: No

P18: No

P19: Yes

P20: No

**12. If yes, when did you transfer to Framingham State University?**

P2: My junior year (2010)

P7: Well I went to FSU in '08 transferred in '10 then came back last spring semester because art school was too much \$\$\$\$.

P9: I transferred a year ago. This is my second semester here.

P11: Spring 2011

P14: I transferred here from Salem State after my freshman year there. (2010)

P15: 2009-10

P16: 08-09

P19: 2009

**13. Please provide us with any additional comments.**

P1: For the most part, I loved all of my professors!

P3: Better equipment would be very helpful in getting us ready for the outside world. Things are always breaking and it shows in some of our work.

P5: I believe this school has a great Communication Major Program. Also, professors [name of instructor, name of instructor, name of instructor] were essential to my learning experiences.

P6: Great department. Didn't like Introduction to Internet, Media and Graphics.

P9: I have to take drama next semester because nothing is available that fits my schedule. I hate acting. There isn't anything else?

P10: I really enjoyed my major. I had great professors, I learned a lot from them.

P11: I honestly don't see why Visual Communication and Graphic Design aren't merged into the same program. They are essentially the same thing.

P12: I want to come back as a freshman and do it all over again. I wouldn't change this experience for all the money in the world.

P13: I wish I had been required to do an internship earlier! Maybe a junior year internship and senior year internship

P15: I think that FSU Communications department needs to have more classes for your concentration. I enjoyed PR, but I wish other classes were offered.

P16: I'm glad to be receiving a degree in Communication Arts. Social Media is booming: it's for our generation. The upside looks very high for a career.

P18:

Overall

- More focus on interactive assignments
- Increase funding for video equipment
- More focus into real-world applications of communication skills

**APPENDIX B**  
**Focus Group Transcript: Session 1**

FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS FOCUS GROUP

Moderator: Susan Chang

P7: What's on the card?

Mod: That's the name I'm going to call you today. What are we calling?

P9: [name deleted].

Mod: It's really small. It's okay.

P7: I was going to put a little money account...you know, a jeopardy cell.

Mod: A little side jeopardy question? I suck at jeopardy, I can't do that.

P7: As you can tell, I'm already losing the game of jeopardy right now.

Mod: You're already down ten grand?

P7: Yeah.

Mod: Thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it. [name deleted] has agreed to give up some of her class time so that we can get an idea of how the students feel about the Comm. Arts Department. We haven't really done anything like this before and so it's something that the faculty is really interested in learning. One of the best ways for us to gauge that is by talking to all you who have gone through the process itself.

Mod: My name is Susan Chang. Some of you probably saw me on Tuesday, which feels like a million years ago. I'm going to be moderating this session today. You've been chosen to be in this focus group because you are, I think, upperclassmen, right? And you're seniors? And you're all Comm. Arts majors? Yes?

(Participants nod their heads yes)

Mod: Okay, good. We're interested in learning about your experiences in the department. I want to thank you again for volunteering to be here. To compensate for your time, please help yourself to food. In light of transparency, I want to tell you that the session is being video and audio recorded...only for research and transcription purposes. Your names are not going to be used in any reports or documents...public documents. If you want, you can still change the name on your card to something else if you would like. Your professors will not have access to the transcripts and they will never have access to the videos until grades have been submitted to the university. Any identifying information – that includes yours, faculty, course titles specifically...those types of things – will be completely deleted from the final transcripts. So, if at any time you are uncomfortable with the discussion and you don't really want to say anything or don't want to volunteer any information, you never have to...so don't feel like you have to.

Mod: So, at this point is there anyone who would like to call it good and take off?

(Participants all remain in room and no one objects)

Mod: Alright, so I know that most of you probably know each other. You've spent at least a semester together, but if you could go around and tell me your first name, how long you've been at FSU, and when your anticipated graduation is.

P1: (female) I'm [name deleted]. I'm a senior and I'll be graduating in May. What else do I have to say? Oh, I've been here for four years.

Mod: So all four years you've been here?

P1: Mhmm (Yes).

P2: (female) My name is [name deleted] and I've been here for four years as well...and I'm graduating in May.

P3: (male) My name is [name deleted] and I'm a sophomore. Hopefully, I'll be graduating in 2014.

Mod: Okay. Have you been here all two years?

P3: Yep.

P4: (male) My name is [name deleted]. I'll be graduating in December. I have one semester left. And...this is my fifth or sixth semester here. I transferred from UMass Lowell after a year.

P5: (male) My name is [name deleted]. I'm a junior and I've been here all three years. I'm a double major, so I'm probably not going to graduate until the end of next year or probably a semester into the year after that.

Mod: And what's your second major?

P5: English.

P6: (male) My name is [name deleted]. I'm going to graduate in the winter and I've been here all four years.

P7: (male) Should I use my real name or just the name on the tag?

Mod: I only know you as [name deleted].

P7: Okay, my name is [name deleted]. I am a senior...I've been here since 2007. I should be graduating in December. I did take about six months off. I'm a Comm. Arts major.

P8: (male) I'm [name deleted]. I've been here for four years, but I'm not graduating until next May.

P9: (male) I'm [name deleted]. I'm a sophomore and should be graduating in 2014. I've been here for two years.

Mod: And you're a sophomore, you said?

P9: Yep.

P10: (female) I'm [name deleted]. I'm a junior. I've been here for three years and hope to graduate next May.

P11: (female) I'm [name deleted]. I'm a senior. I've been here for two years and I think I'm graduating in July because I have two summer courses.

Mod: So, did you transfer from somewhere?

P11: Yeah, the University of Rhode Island.

Mod: Okay, so just two transfer students then? [name deleted], you're a transfer student and [name deleted] you're a transfer student?

(P4 and P11 both nod their heads yes)

Mod: Everyone else has been here since the beginning?

(Rest of participants shake their heads yes)

Mod: Okay, can you give me a sense of where you live...on campus, at home, off campus, commuting?

P4: Do you just want to go back around the room?

Mod: Okay.

P1: I lived on campus for three years and started commuting this year.

P2: I've lived on campus all four years.

P3: I lived on campus last year, but I'm commuting from home this year.

P4: I've never lived on campus...commuting from home.

P5: I've commuted all four years.

P6: I lived in the dorms for two years and I've had an apartment for the last couple years.

P7: I lived in the dorms from 2007 to 2009 and then when I came back I started commuting from home.

P8: I've lived on campus all four years.

P9: I've lived on campus all two years.

P10: All three I've been here.

P11: I commuted last year and I'm here on campus this year.

Mod: Great. Have you always been Comm. Arts majors?

P9: (shakes head no)

Mod: [name deleted], where did you start?

P9: Nutrition.

Mod: Nutrition, okay. Anybody else?

P8: (raises hand)

Mod: [name deleted]?

P8: I switched this year. I used to be Math.

Mod: You used to be Math? So you went from Math to Comm. Arts?

P8: Yep.

Mod: Anybody else?

P4: At UMass Lowell, I was a Philosophy major.

Mod: Okay, Philosophy to Comm. Arts.

P3: I was an English Secondary Ed major and I'm still in the process of transferring into the Department.

Mod: Okay, so you don't want to teach munchkins anymore?

P3: No, that would not be...fun.

Mod: Okay, anybody else?

P5: I added my English major after the fact.

Mod: You added your English major after...so you were Comm. Arts first and then English?

P5: Yeah.

P1: I was undeclared when I came in.

Mod: Okay.

P11: I was writing at URI, but that transferred to English here.

Mod: So essentially you went from English to Comm. Arts?

P11: Right.

P10: (nods head)

Mod: [name deleted]?

P10: I was undeclared.

Mod: Anybody else come in undeclared?

P6: (raises hand)

Mod: So, [name deleted] tell me a little bit about your process then. How did you go from undeclared to being a Comm. Arts major?

P6: I just talked to my adviser and she put me in the right direction...I got all the paperwork and everything.

Mod: Was your adviser in Comm. Arts?

P6: Mhmm (yes).

Mod: What about you [name deleted]?

P10: Umm...I kind of thought about it on my own. I was taking courses and Math isn't my thing, Science isn't my thing, and I like communicating with people. So, Communications did it...and my adviser helped me a lot. He wasn't in the Comm. Arts Department...he was from CASA. I can't remember his name.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P10: No, the other one. With a ponytail. He's really nice. He guided me through it a lot.

Mod: Great.

Mod: (to P11) How did you go from English to Comm. Arts?

P11: I guess my adviser just helped me a lot with that.

Mod: Was your adviser a Comm. Arts professor?

P11: Umm. I think...it is [name deleted]...the head chair, so I don't know.

Mod: Yeah, he's Comm. Arts.

Mod: Anybody else? Someone went from Math to...

P3: I was English Secondary Ed and I just got tired of writing like a 10 page paper every week in English. That's still technically my major and transferring has been really difficult because my adviser is English though so she doesn't really know everything. I guess I've just been taking my time, but that's been the process.

Mod: Are your advisers assigned to you?

P3: Mhmm (yes).

Mod: I'm fairly new to the campus, so a lot of these things I'm still learning.

P9: (nods head)

Mod: [name deleted], you were nodding your head. Is it a hard process to transfer form one department to another?

P9: Umm...I was Nutrition when I applied here and then I saw all the courses I would have to take and I was like, "hell no." So I switched over before classes even began and it was relatively easy then. Its way easier before, I know, because once you have started classes and everything and you're a semester or two in, you have to have a certain GPA requirement and you have to go through all these different processes. I'm glad I did it before classes even started.

Mod: Okay. So for some of you who have had to make that change...and [name deleted], you said you were a Math right?

P8: (shakes head yes)

Mod: When did you transition?

P8: It was actually this semester that I got into the Comm. Arts department. I started thinking about changing my major last year in the second semester, umm, depending on what happened in the fall. After that I wanted to change my major so I went to [name deleted] and he said that at the beginning of the semester to get the paperwork and fill out the forms to do it, so I did it then.

Mod: So he guided you through the process?

P8: Mhmm (yes).

Mod: So, can I ask you why did you change from Math to Comm. Arts?

P8: Well, I had Comm. Arts as a minor so I was taking Comm. Art courses with the Math ones and I liked them better. I was also struggling with some of my Math classes, so I wasn't...didn't like Math anymore, but I was really enjoying my minor, so that was what made me do it.

Mod: Okay. In your transitions, or in your choice of Comm. Arts, was a future career a reason for taking Comm Arts as a major?

(Participants all remain quiet)

Mod: So you know that when you graduate, you still have bills, right? And those are usually paid with money...

P4: Well, I will say that I originally switched to Comm. Arts because I was going to study Music Business at UMass Lowell and I thought it was something...I decided I didn't want to totally commit myself to that, but I still wanted to have the option. So, I guess when I chose, I did have that career in mind, but that's over with and I'm looking at other things now. I did think it would be useful though.

Mod: So it started you in a direction?

P4: Yeah.

Mod: What about the rest of you? I can kind of relate to this because I was a Pre-Med major when I was an undergrad and then I got a D+ in Intro to Bio and I thought, "Wow, I'm probably not going to help a lot of people with that." So, then I switched over to Communications Studies and my mother was like, "What does one do with that?" So I can totally relate to this feeling of not being sure what you're going to be doing. For me, I didn't think about what I was going to be doing with that particular major. I figured that would kind of work itself out.

Mod: So, are any of you in kind of that same mindset? [name deleted]?

P2: Well, I had an idea that I would work in something like graphic design, marketing, or advertising. I just didn't know what specifically, so I went with Communications. But I knew senior year of high school that Biology, Math, English were not my areas, so it kind of left Communications.

Mod: A little bit more of the creative aspect?

P2: Yeah.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P9: I feel like our major has a bad rap because a lot of people say it's the catch-all major, the easy major that doesn't require a lot of skill and that a lot of people take because they don't know what else...what other major they are going to major in, so they kind of just pick Communications instead of undecided for two years. I'm not going to say I disagree because I do know a lot of people who don't do anything for their Comm. majors and get good grades, but, like, it sets a bad rap because not everyone in it doesn't know what they want to do with their life...some people want to be event planners, some people want to work for media production companies...so it does have a wide range of uses in our society. I just think that people at FSU think that it's kind of useless.

Mod: Because it's too broad? It's not Biology or Chemistry, where you're going to become a Biologist or a Chemist.

P9: Right.

Mod: How many of you have heard that? I have.

(P1, P3, P8, P10, P11 raise their hands)

Mod: What do you think about that? Is it true? If I want to sail through...

P1: I don't think so. We have a lot of classes where the classes are three hours long and they take so much time. I know Production classes – I've never taken one personally because that's not really the direction I want to go in – but, that's a lot of work. I know that's not writing a paper or having to study for a test all the time, but the amount of hours that you have to put into it...and same with graphic design. I've taken classes for that. The amount of effort you have to put into it...it's not as easy as you think it is. If you're not creative, then you wouldn't do well in that class.

Mod: It just wouldn't happen?

P1: Yeah, you would struggle with it.

P10: I think especially in our society today, it's so technological. Like everything is on the internet. There are people that are born book-smart and there are people that are born creative. I think our major is a good mixture of all of that. You can be a genius and be a Comm. major...you can just use that towards the direction that you want to go in. You can be awesome in graphic design and come up with ideas and that's also in the major. I think it's a really good...I like the major because anyone can do it. It's not just a pointless major, especially now.

Mod: Does that reputation bother any of you?

(P1, P2, P9, P10 shake their heads yes)

P10: It's annoying.

Mod: It's annoying?

P10: Yeah.

Mod: So how do you combat that? If someone comes at you and says, "You're just doing that because it's easy."

P7: Well, I just tell them that it's not easy, especially if you're in one of those Production classes. Like especially if it's one of the classes that films a TV show. Now that is intense. Not only do you have to film the show, but you have to plan it out, write the script, get all the characters, commit to multiple days of filming, and then after shooting you have to do post-production, which means that you have to edit the videos, do color correction, endure computer problems left and right, compose the score, and put it all together with almost no time to spare.

Mod: So, it's a lot of time. And that's just for one class, right?

P7: Yeah, for one production class that I took this semester oddly enough.

P9: It's challenging at times because when people ask you're major, you're like, "I'm Communications," and they're like, "Oh." Most of the time I tell them I'm planning on getting my Master's in Speech Pathology and I plan on working with people who have learning disabilities, like myself.

Mod: So, you feel like you have to defend yourself?

P9: Yeah, I do.

Mod: Do any of you feel like you have to defend your major?

(P1, P2, P9, P10 shake their heads yes)

P10: Definitely.

P2: I've had like Biology friends be like, "Oh, you don't understand all the work I go through." And I'm like, "Well, yeah I don't memorize as much as you do probably, but I'm still going to the same school you are."

P9: We still take the same Gen Eds.

Mod: Anybody else? [name deleted], what about you?

P5: Well, I came to school to get an education, not to get a job. I think that's kind of a popular misconception. I mean, I have a good job. I pay for my apartment and I'm paying for my education. I just enjoy learning and it doesn't really bother me if someone has something bad to say about the Comm. Department. I have a concentration...I don't know how many people have concentrations in their majors and how that affects what kind of classes they take and the level of difficulty, but my experience with this Department is that I'm learning the same things as, like, the Psych Department and Sociology Department, as well as the core basis of Communications...learning things that even they don't even get to go into until they get through all of their really technical stuff. So, I feel like I get the best of everything.

Mod: So, why do you think that the Comm. Arts Department has that reputation?

P5: Probably because of the students that take it. I mean, a lot of people...it's an alternative to Liberal Arts or just going Undeclared.

Mod: What do you guys think?

P4: I think he brought up a good point of being here to learn and the difference...because I know that even with the mission of the school, I believe it says critical thinking skills and I think one of the last parts is developing...basically creating students that are ready to go work.

Mod: Right.

P4: Understandably, we're not a research university here or anything, so I think part of that being here to learn versus if you are here as an engineer or if you were in more of a technical field with a set career

path...maybe not having a set career path laid out for you gives it a little bit of a reputation of wishy-washy and...slacker feel.

Mod: Okay, but you guys are comfortable with this broad uncertainty to some degree?

P7: The good thing is that if you end up changing your mind for your college career, you don't have to restart your whole life per se. You would have the chance to continue your life in a different direction and you don't have to restart everything. That's kind of the advantage of being a Comm. Arts major because you have so many ways that you can go in Comm. Arts. When I talk to other people at the school outside the major and I tell them that I'm a Comm. Arts major, they realize how much opportunity I have. See, I can either work in design, promotions, as a video editor...I can do anything...I can do a lot of things in career fields with the Comm. Arts degree that I'll have.

Mod: Whereas, if you're a Chemistry major and you hate molecules...

P7: Well then, you're kind of out of luck.

Mod: Got it. Okay. Do you all have concentrations?

(Participants shaking their heads no)

Mod: How many of you are General...Generalists?

(P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11 raise hands)

Mod: Everybody except [name deleted] and [name deleted]. [name deleted], what's your concentration?

P6: Speech and performance.

Mod: Okay.

P5: Really?

P6: Yeah.

P5: Me too.

Mod: You didn't know that? [name deleted] this is [name deleted], [name deleted] this is [name deleted].

P5: I guess that makes sense since you're in all my classes.

Mod: So, how did you get to a concentration?

P6: The easiest path to graduation.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P5: I liked the classes I would have to take and it's something that interested me in my personal life.  
Mod: Are you interested, [name deleted], in your concentration?

P6: Yeah, I'm interested. That probably sounded poorly. Yeah, I like my concentration.

Mod: And you guys don't have concentrations? I mean, Generalist is a concentration, but you don't have a specific type of concentration? Why is that?

P7: I'm horribly indecisive, for one. Two, actually I couldn't really just stay in one field because one day you might just say, "I hate this." You might just get sick of holding boom microphones all day long and might think that this is a horrible occupation and want to do something else. Or your eyes just can't take sitting in front of a computer all day long and you say, "Oh, I'd like to do something more outside." It doesn't have to be sitting in front of a phone for six hours. It's all about being open.

Mod: So, broad based, opportunities.

P4: Yeah, even within the major, I stayed General because I felt that when I was looking at the courses I felt like I had more flexibility with what to take in order to graduate. If I picked a concentration, I would have had to take...I mean, I have to take specific courses for General, but it would be more specific courses I would have had to take.

Mod: And you didn't want to do that?

P4: Right, I felt like I wanted the flexibility.

P3: Right, yeah...I didn't want to limit myself to...like, I wanted to know a bit about corporate Comm. and about speech performance and get, like, all of it. Even if you're doing General, you can always declare a minor. So, it's not like you're not learning anything specifically.

Mod: Okay. Other thoughts?

P9: Well, I really want to be a speech therapist and I was thinking of declaring Speech Comm. as my focus, but their version of speech here is not, like, the study of language or anything...or audiology or anything like that. It's like speech and performance is great, but that's not really what I want to do so I just decided to stick with General.

Mod: Okay. Any others?

(Participants remain silent)

Mod: So, what do you like the most about the department?

P9: [name deleted].

P5: I second that.

Mod: The professors?

P10: Yeah, because they're so, like, eclectic. Everyone is from different parts of the Comm. major, so like...I don't know, like, when I was taking my Gen Ed. classes, a lot of the professors are very professor-like...they have the suit, they have the...I don't know, it was very boring to me. I wanted to be physically learning, not taking notes, you know? The professors in the Comm. Department are so eclectic...so happy. I don't know if that sounds weird, but they're just more...

P3: More engaging.

P10: Yeah, fun and engaging.

P1: I think they're really approachable too. If you have any questions or need help on something, you don't feel like you don't want to go to their office and talk to them.

P10: Yeah.

Mod: And you didn't feel that from the courses you took for Gen. Eds.? Some of the other professors you've taken?

P1: I don't know. I never went to any of them.

P9: I think there's a definite difference between, like, a student taking a class for a Gen. Ed. because they have to and a student taking a class because it's a part of their major and they want to be there. So, I think that kind of excitement and enthusiasm transfers to the professor, who in turn reflects it back on their students. I don't know, it sounds weird, but [name deleted] is so enthusiastic about everything and I think it's because she knows that we want to be there and we're where we want to be in our major, so she's...

Mod: As opposed to going through the motions?

P9: (shakes head yes)

Mod: What else besides faculty?

P5: Well, I would just add that, as an English major also, all of my professors are approachable. I go and have conversations with them, even if I'm not taking the class with them. So, I mean it's...I don't know how Bio, Chemistry, or Math is or anything like that, but, I mean, I've found the English professors actually more approachable, with the exception of [name deleted]. I mean I've taken classes with two other Comm. professors and I've been here for three years and my first class was, like, a core requirement. I had to take Vis. Comm. and I actually found out last year that the professor who was teaching that class said to a student in, like, graphic design that he hates teaching Vis. Comm., which is probably why my experience in that class was so miserable. And the other professor that I took a class with is not here anymore, but that class, I think I went to eight classes because I couldn't sit through it. I did poorly...it wasn't like I just went in and got a good grade even though I never went to class. I just couldn't handle it.

Mod: So, there's something to be said, I'm hearing from you, that a professor should really enjoy teaching the material...

P5: Yes.

Mod: And that transfers into engaging students and engaging the class overall.

P5: In no matter what department you are in.

Mod: So, this reputation that you heard kind of through the grapevine, it kind of completely hindered your thinking, like, "Well, if they don't even want to be here, then..."

P5: Well, I found that out after I was in the class...it was a couple years after.

Mod: Did that confirm how you felt about the class at the time?

P5: Actually no...I just thought she was an awful teacher. I found out from this student that she's actually a very good teacher, but she just doesn't like teaching that class.

Mod: Okay. Any other experiences?

(Participants remain silent)

Mod: What about things that you don't like so much about the Department?

P7: Well, there was that one time that the Department had some bad equipment to use in the Production classes. This was probably back in my first stint at Framingham State University and it's kind of a resolved problem now, but the problem was that a lot of the Photography classes that I wound up taking, those were one of the classes that would cost you an arm and a leg because you'd wind up paying for your film. I kind of understand that you have to pay for film, but you'd have to pay for your camera and your film.

P5: Yeah, you end up buying a camera, right? For a class that you only take once.

P7: Yeah, but lucky enough the camera I have now has become a huge utility outside of school, oddly enough. Well, it's kind of a necessity because I don't think I would want to say that I only took one class and have this camera sitting around doing nothing.

Mod: What kind of camera? Like a point-and-shoot type of camera or a...

P7: A Sony A230 DSLR Camera.

Mod: I don't know what that is.

P10: It's one of those big ones with the lenses.

Mod: So, it's not one of the ones you could put in your pocket?

P10: (shakes head no) No.

P7: Well you can't really put it in your pocket, but you could put it in a nice case and walk around with it.

P1: I mean you could get a digital one that will cost less because you won't have to buy film.

Mod: Did you all have to buy a camera then?

P1: If you take the class you do. I think they have a few you can borrow, but you can't always take it on the weekend because if someone else needs it.

P4: Yeah, I took Basic Photo last semester and they had two cameras available, but like she said, it's really impractical to use the school's camera because it's difficult to get for long periods of time. If you're really trying to do well in the class you need to have your own camera.

Mod: You need your own...

P1: So, hopefully you have a friend where you can borrow theirs.

P10: The paper is expensive too.

P1: That's true.

P10: I mean, it's a really good class. I like photography so I really wanted to take it and I already had a camera, but half the kids in the class on the first day didn't know that you needed the camera. They thought it was just us working on them or that they would be given one.

Mod: Did you have to buy your own chemicals for developing?

P10: Mine's not film.

P4: It was additional.

P10: Yeah, it was additional. I think you have to.

P5: Actually, thinking back, I remember reading an article in The Gatepost that they were updating something in the Chemistry Department...I don't know if they were revamping some of the rooms. Is that right? Can someone confirm that?

P6: I remember hearing something like that.

P5: It kind of made me angry because at the same time one of my classmates was telling me that he couldn't even have a camera supplied to him for this class...that he would have to buy a camera to take this class. So, yeah we get a bad rap as the Comm. Department, but look at what the school's budget is doing.

Mod: So, do you feel that the Department is getting the short end of the stick?

P7: Absolutely.

Mod: Tell me about that, why?

P7: Well, I think that they don't see it as the attractive major because if you look at the people that come to this school, a lot of them come as the Elementary Education people. So, they have to try to service those people first. It's a matter of, simply, demand because if you look at all the majors coming in, most people being Elementary Ed. majors, they put more money into that than Comm. Arts because that one has more people, therefore, more people you need to service...more effort needs to go into that. If we had as many people in Comm. Arts as in Elementary Ed., then I think it would be a different story, but that's not the case.

P4: I also feel it's understandable to a certain extent. I don't necessarily think it's a good thing, but this school was a teaching school originally and so I think that...I mean, that example was about Chemistry, but I can understand if they're focusing, if Elementary Ed. is their biggest major and what the school is known for pretty much. To a certain extent it is understandable, too.

Mod: [name deleted], you came in as Elementary Ed., right?

P3: Secondary Ed.

Mod: Secondary Ed. Did you come to Framingham because of that?

P3: Not specifically. It was mostly for location, but I did take that into account.

Mod: So, it wasn't the only reason, but it was part of it?

P3: Yeah, I mean knew people who were here already and I had heard good things.

Mod: [name deleted], you said you were going to go to grad school?

P9: What's that?

Mod: You were planning on going to grad school?

P9: Yeah.

Mod: Anyone else going to grad school or thinking about it?

(P2, P4, P5, and P10 raise their hands)

Mod: Any ideas where? Doing what? Studying what?

P9: UMass Amherst because they have a Speech Pathology program.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P10: I want to take a year off after undergrad and work for City Year. It's a thing that goes on in Boston that's like a tutoring, community service thing. I would get really good networking with that and I also don't want to go right from school to school. And I live five minutes from Boston, so I would probably go to UMass Boston for my grad school.

Mod: [name deleted], you said grad school, yes?

P2: Yeah, probably somewhere in Western Mass.

Mod: So, what do you want to...

P2: I haven't figured that out yet. I think it's where I'd get a job and probably focus on that.

Mod: Okay, [name deleted]?

P4: I can't say any specifics because I've changed my mind a lot. I would say being this major has helped me in terms of going to grad school. Especially if I'm going to be most likely working for a year or two before I go to get a better sense, even if my undergrad degree doesn't necessarily directly relate to what I'm doing as a grad student. I feel like it's definitely something that will be useful.

Mod: So, how do you think the Department has prepared you for either grad school or a professional career?

P7: Well, that's a tough one. I would say it's kind of more of a, you have to go and help yourself type of thing, which is good, but it's a double edged sword. Good, because you actually have to be proactive about finding jobs and interviews. Bad, because if you're looking for help you're, how do you say it, S.O.L.

P2: I think that my internships were the things that helped me the most because class time is good, but it's not real world experience. As soon as I started doing internships, I was like, "Okay, I can go get a job now." I feel like I know...because it's scary if you don't really know what people do.

Mod: It feels a little better knowing the real world is what that means?

P2: Yeah.

Mod: [name deleted], what about you?

P8: I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. With the extra year, I just haven't gotten into that set yet to start thinking about it. I've been avoiding it.

Mod: It's okay. It didn't occur to me either. My father...I think it was my senior year last semester, my father said, "What are you going to do after graduation?" I was like, "I don't know." It took months to decide.

P9: I get really frustrated with FSU sometimes because if they had a program where I could have become a Speech Therapist or even major in something remotely close to it, I would, but I don't want to leave the campus or anything because I've made great friendships here, I'm an RA, I have three jobs...so, it's really frustrating to me that they don't have it as a major, but I'm not really willing to leave either, so, I feel that grad school is the only option for me if I want to do what I say I'm going to do.

Mod: So, what about...are internships required for your major?

P10: Not for General.

Mod: Not for General? Okay. But maybe an internship would be...

P9: Yeah.

Mod: A place where you can go.

P9: It's just so much work. I'm probably going to have to take another eight classes before I even think about grad school and then I'm going to be in grad school for two or three years, so, by the time I graduate I'm going to be like 26.

Mod: Be careful with that. I'm a little older than that. Not by a lot.

P9: It's definitely something I'm looking into.

Mod: Alright, so I think that we kind of talked about this, but do you all feel that you are intellectually challenged in your courses? I know that you talked about, specifically, some of the Production courses being very time consuming, but time consuming isn't always necessarily intellectually challenging.

P2: [name deleted] classes are the best ones.

Mod: Because?

P2: She gets your mind working. I mean, professors...a lot of them are good and they're interesting and you can talk and think, but not in the way I have with her classes.

Mod: She really gets you thinking about stuff?

P2: (shakes her head yes)

Mod: [name deleted], you were going to say something?

P3: Yeah, I think...I mean, all the Comm. Arts classes I've taken have been the most interesting. Their more, like, things I would want to talk about in real life. It's not just, like, a lecture that I'll have to write something about for, like, a week. It's something that...they're a lot more stimulating than the other classes that I've taken.

P9: I mean, with every major there are a couple that you could get permanent brain damage and still get an A in, but that's, like, with every major.

Mod: And which are those? No, I'm kidding.

(Participants laugh)

P9: I've taken a couple of them, but it's just...I don't think that discounts the total nature and I don't think that takes away from any of the hard working students that are in it.

Mod: Are you implying that there are a couple of classes in your major that are like that?

P9: (shakes head yes)

Mod: Okay, but that it doesn't generalize to the entire major?

P9: Right.

Mod: Got it. Okay. Yeah?

P5: I mean, I just passed in a paper...two ten page papers, one for each of my English classes that I'm taking this semester, and I applied things that I learned in my Comm. classes to those papers and everyone is like, "You've got to take the English papers seriously, Comm. is kind of just like blah blah..." I mean, we learned about brainwashing in [name deleted] class last week and I put that into a paper that I was writing for studies in the Bible as literature and I think that if I hadn't taken Argumentation and Advocacy last semester then I wouldn't have been able to do that either, so, if I get a good grade on that paper, hopefully, I'd owe that to the Comm. Department, oddly enough.

Mod: Any other attributions? Okay, so let's get to the crayons. There are stacks of paper in front of you on the table here. You'll take a sheet and, using your crayons, what I'd like you to do please is on the right side of the paper, I'd like you to draw how you felt when you first came to Framingham. First day, first classes. Stick figures are fine; this is not an Art class.

P4: What to do with the first?

Mod: How you felt the first time...first day you were at Framingham.

P5: So, that would be like orientation?

Mod: Sure, it's whatever you define it to be whether it be orientation, if you went to Black and Gold, if you didn't show up until you went to classes.

P5: Wait, in the top right-hand corner?

Mod: On the right-hand side.

P5 On the right-hand side?

Mod: Yeah.

(Participants draw on their paper for one minute)

Mod: Then, on the left-hand side, I'd like for you to draw how you feel the Department has helped shaped who you are today. As a student, as an individual.

P9: How you feel about what?

Mod: How the Department has helped shape who you are today.

(Participants draw on their paper for two minutes)

Mod: For those of you who are done, let's kind of... [name deleted], talk to me about what's happening?  
Show us your Van Gogh.

P10: Okay, so when I first got here I'm like a mess. I didn't know what I wanted to do; classes were so...everything was just so intense, like, it was so different and now I'm moving in a direction. I see where I want to go...I see it ahead. I'm not there yet, but I'm moving and I haven't stopped yet.

Mod: What would you attribute that to?

P10: Um, well the Comm. Department in general I guess. I know that this is what this is about, but really, finding a major...

(Someone knocks on the door and wants to know how much longer the room will be occupied)

Mod: About five more minutes.

P10: Being Undeclared, especially for me, was really confusing. And obviously, I was Undeclared because I didn't know where I wanted to go or what I wanted to do. I wasn't really labeled. Being in the Comm. Department gave me a definition and gave me something to look forward to...to prosper for.

Mod: Would you say it gave you a sense of home?

P10: Yeah, definitely.

Mod: How did you get from being Undeclared to being Comm. Arts?

P10: Through classes. I had taken, I think it was Speech Comm. of Korea and she's like...her class is really fun. She had talked to us about the Comm. Department and I was like, "Oh, I should try that out because...I'm communicating." I don't know how else to put it, but her class really helped me with that. And then, the other professors in the major helped me build up to it.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted], what do you have?

P6: Um, on the left, I've got this scared and sad little boy. That was my first day of football at college. And on the right, I have to be determined because I'm not really sure where I stand right now. I'm not really sure if I'm ready for real life right now.

Mod: Are you a football player?

P6: Former. Retired.

Mod: I'm down on the football field four days a week. On Maple Street, because I do boot camp in the morning.

Mod: Let's see... [name deleted], what do we have going on?

P2: So, when I got here, I came here for cheerleading and I thought that I was going to be this amazing cheerleader here. My career lasted two years here and then that was it. This is me now, in my little business suit.

Mod: So, you traded the cheerleading uniform for a monkey suit?

P2: Yeah. I started taking my life a little more seriously, I guess. But I realized, actually not that long ago, that I took all my Gen. Eds. first and I was not really enjoying school, but when I started taking my Comm. classes junior year, when I stopped cheering, so I had more time to commit to them and I was enjoying them more. Then I felt like my life changed because I felt like I was on the right path.

Mod: So, did you kind of feel like when you stopped doing the cheerleading you were more academically inclined?

P2: Yeah, it was hard to do both. I mean, I know with any sport it is. It also helped that I liked my classes too.

Mod: Okay, great. [name deleted], what do we have?

P8: My drawings aren't good, but I was trying to show over here when I was first getting here I was, like, happy and then I didn't like my classes first semester because it was just a bunch of Gen Eds. so it was just transitioning and not sure if making friends well or just not liking classes...that was just first semester, but after that it was fine. And on the other side, it just shows me, like, thinking, enjoying my classes, for one, and using it in my everyday life. My Gen. Eds. I don't know if I'll ever use.

Mod: Do you feel more at home now, then?

P8: Yeah.

Mod: Okay. How many of you feel like Comm. Arts is kind of your home...your academic home?

(P1, P5, P7, P10 raise their hands)

Mod: In all senses of the word, you know? You feel like it's a place you can turn to, people you can count on that will be there for you. Does anybody disagree with that?

(Participants all remain quiet)

Mod: [name deleted], what do you have?

P4: I have, well transferring from UMass Lowell I mostly saw cement and bricks all day, so coming here my first impression was just grass, brown buildings, and sunshine, that this was going to be a pleasant place.

Mod: What, no squirrels?

P4: Yeah, I should have put them in. That was really my first impression, that it was pleasant here. It's quieter here, smaller campus, and I kind of just expected to renew my studies and it would be nothing

too extreme...I could just roll through it. And that's kind of how it's been. On the other side, I have people talking and a door, mostly because I've...not necessarily from the classes, but more from taking initiative to speak with people outside...I find that professors are really willing to...they're really enthusiastic about their material, especially about the things they don't cover in class because it's not the stuff that needs to be included. And then, being able to discuss how they got there and the general value of networking, which I think, not to get into it, is not underscored, in general, in school. But that's something that I've discovered that professors have been willing to talk about.

Mod: Okay. I know we're running short on time, but is there anyone else that wants to share their illustrations?

P5: I just have to swallow my pizza.

Mod: Okay, while you're chewing, [name deleted], why don't you tell us what's going on here.

P11: Alright, this is mine. At first, when I got here I was obviously really happy because the school seemed cool and the people seemed really nice. Then I got stuck with a horrible, horrible roommate and that wasn't fun at all, which caused me to commute, so I didn't have a good first year here. Then it started to get better and now I'm graduating, so...and I sort of know what I want to do, but I'm still not exactly sure.

Mod: Okay. Horrible roommates, we've all been there.

P11: Yeah, I've had like three of them.

Mod: Horrible roommates?

P11: Two horrible, one not-so-bad.

Mod: Third one's a charm. [name deleted]?

P5: Alright, so, when I first got here, this is me and I'm wearing a karate belt and pants and I have a bag of mushrooms and a joint because I smoked a lot of pot and I did a lot of drugs. Then, this is me over here and I'm reading Plato and then there's some stars and there's a bunch of people and they're all thinking, "Derp." That's kind of where I'm at now.

Mod: So, we don't have any drugs now?

P5: No, I don't do drugs anymore and I stopped teaching karate.

Mod: And you stopped teaching karate?

P5: Yeah, it was too much with school and everything...I started getting sick.

P3: That was like a whole other drug.

Mod: So, you were on drugs and teaching karate? And you started getting sick...you didn't think that was because of the drugs?

P5: No, that was...well I stopped taking drugs and continued to teach karate and then I started getting sick. It was, like, a three year time span.

Mod: Got it. I went to UC Santa Barbara, so I'm familiar with the idea of it. Alright, is there anybody else who'd like to share? Burning desire? I'm sorry that we're running out of time. Did you want to, [name deleted]?

P9: I mean I came here...my brother graduated from here too, so I kind of came here in his shadow. He was the Vice President of SUAB and he was like the big man on campus dating the President of SUAB and everyone knew him, so I kind of felt like I was in his shadow. I was kind of in, like, a haze, what if it doesn't work out and what if I don't live up to what I'm supposed to. Now, I kind of feel like the Comm. Arts Department is guiding me towards what I want to do and the professors are kind of like the signs, you know, telling us which way we should go. I don't know, I just feel better about where I am now than I ever have before.

Mod: And you attribute a lot of that to the faculty?

P9: Yeah.

Mod: That's great. Awesome. Anybody else?

P5: (nods head)

Mod: Yeah?

P5: When I first got here and I was just a Comm. major, I could not stand my adviser and I, actually this semester, declared my concentration in Speech and Performance, but I've been taking all my classes that I needed for that concentration up to that point, so it wasn't a problem at all. When I declared my English major, one of the cool things is that I just got my PIN number from my English major and I didn't have to talk to [name deleted] because he's not a good adviser.

P2: I think all the teachers could benefit from a little advising help. I've heard a lot of people struggle with their advisers. They're not bad people, but they don't really know. I've had to go to [name deleted] for a lot of different things.

Mod: Okay.

P7: Yeah, my adviser once made an error that kind of left me in disarray one time. She told me that I needed to take a certain class and that I could take a certain class, but then I showed her my schedule and she said that it would be alright. Then I tried to register and it said that there was a time conflict, so I had to throw my plans out last minute and rearrange everything because she didn't see a time conflict.

P1: Yeah, I never really used my adviser. I kind of just did everything on my own since freshman year. The only thing I got from my adviser was my PIN number because I was Undeclared and I had a Spanish teacher for an adviser and she had no idea what to do. It was kind of unreal.

P10: You kind of just hear from your friends and other students, "Have you taken that class, I need it, so..." Advisers, for Undeclared especially, you're not really guided.

(Knock on door)

Voice from Hall (Voice): Susan?

Mod: Yeah, we're done. Thank you all so much.

Voice: We've lost five people already. They're starting to bail.

Mod: Class isn't over until 6:20. Okay, we're done. Yes, if you could insert your pictures inside your name cards that would be great. I will take those. I do have a stack of cards over on that table over there. If you have any questions afterwards or if there is something that you would like to add, please let me know.

P5: Thank you. That was fun.

Mod: Thanks.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Focus Group Transcript: Session 2**

FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS FOCUS GROUP

Moderator: Susan Chang

Mod: Make sure that I get your informed consent before you all go. You guys go until 6:20, right?

P9: Yes.

Mod: Please help yourself to more food if you'd like. Thank you all so much for being here. I've never met a group that has had so many aliases. This is going to be fun.

P6: Oh, we're supposed to use aliases?

Mod: You can if you want to. Do you want another card or you can fold that over?

P6: You know what, I do...not want another card because I'll just use this one. Sorry.

Mod: How green of you.

P9: So, Susan, if that's really you're name...

Mod: Well, that's what the business card says.

P9: Yeah.

Mod: So, you've all been chosen to be a participant in this focus group because you're an upperclassman I assume – juniors, seniors – and you're all Communication Arts majors? Yes?

P3: (shakes head no)

Mod: No?

P3: No, I'm a minor.

Mod: A minor. Okay, we'll keep that in mind.

P8: I'm a sophomore, is that okay?

Mod: That's fine.

P11: I'm a freshman.

P10: You're a freshman? You don't look like it at all.

Mod: We're interested in kind of learning about your experience with the Department, so I want to thank you for volunteering to be here. To compensate you for your time, please help yourself to some

food, as often and as much as you want. In light of transparency, I have to tell you that the session is being audio and video recorded for research purposes and really only for transcription purposes. Your names aren't going to be used on any reports or public documents. In fact, if you like, you can still change your name if you'd like to. Your professors will not have access to the transcripts, or the videos actually ever, until after grades have been submitted to the university. So they're only going to see the transcripts, which will also be edited to remove any identifying information; not just your information, but anything that might be said about specific courses and professors or things like that. That will be scrubbed out. If at any time you're not comfortable with the discussion or don't want to do something, don't feel like you have to participate. Everything here is voluntary. Is there anyone who would like to call it good for today?

(Participants all remain seated and no one objects)

Mod: Alright. You all know each other right?

(Participants shake their heads yes)

Mod: Can we kind of go around and tell me how long you've been at FSU and when you anticipate graduation. We'll start there. [name deleted]?

P1: I've been here since fall 2008 and hopefully, if things end up panning out the way I want them to, I'll be graduating by the end of the summer. I still have two summer courses to make, so let's hope.

Mod: Okay, great. [name deleted]?

P2: I've been here since fall 2008 and I'll be graduating next month.

Mod: In May?

P2: Yeah.

Mod: I believe that's this month.

P2: It's already May? Wow...

Mod: Surprise! Okay, [name deleted]?

P3: I've been here since fall 2009 because of a transfer and I'm graduating this month.

Mod: And where did you transfer from?

P3: The SMFA.

Mod: Great. [name deleted]?

P4: I've been here since the fall of 2008 and I'll be graduating in two and half weeks.

Mod: Wow, are you all going to be at commencement?

(Participants shake their heads)

Mod: Awesome.

P5: I've been here since fall of 2010 and due to my age and the economy, I'm in no rush to graduate.

Mod: Totally understand that. [name deleted]?

P6: I've been here since winter 2008 and fall 2012 graduating, hopefully. I had taken a semester off in the middle. What was the other question?

Mod: That was it.

P6 Okay.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P7: I've been here since fall 2009 and I'll be graduating in May 2013.

Mod: So, next year?

P7: Yep.

Mod: Awesome. [name deleted]?

P8: I started in fall 2010 and, as far as I know, I'll be graduating in May 2014...if all goes right.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P9: I'm a junior. I'll be graduating in May 2013, if all goes according to plan.

Mod: Have you been here at FSU the whole time?

P9: Oh, sorry...since fall 2009.

Mod: Okay. So, you're not a transfer student?

P9: No.

Mod: [name deleted]?

P10: I've been here since fall of 2009 and hopefully I'll be graduating next spring.

Mod: So, May of 2013?

P10: Yep.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P11: I've been here since fall of 2011 and it would be stupendous if I could graduate by 2015, but we'll see.

Mod: Okay, so it seems we only have one transfer student? Right?

P5: If you can count my marks from 40 years ago then I'm a transfer student.

Mod: I guess...that counts technically.

P5: So, technically I transferred my marks from 40 years ago.

Mod: Okay. I'm interested...so, how did you get to Comm. Arts from being a transfer student?

P3: Well, my major is fashion, so...then I just kind of wanted to do a minor in something. I thought about majoring in Communications and I kind of wish I did actually.

Mod: Why is that?

P3: Because I just kind of like the more broad Communications Department instead of the Fashion Merchandising program, which is mostly like business.

Mod: Okay. Did you all come in declared as Comm. Arts?

(P11, P9, P7, P4, P2, P1 shake their heads yes. P10, P8, P6, P5, P3 shake their heads no.)

P6: I started out Undeclared.

P8: Yeah, so did I.

Mod: How many of you started out Undeclared?

P5: Well, they kind of insisted...I wanted to be a Comm. Arts major, but the administration said that I had to earn the right, so I was accepted as an Undeclared. I had to get grades and do certain prerequisite courses and then apply to be a Comm. Arts major because they said...I think the feeling was that there were so many younger students that apply for it that there were limited openings so I had to earn it.

P6: I had heard...at least what I had found talking to various friends and hearing various stories from various Comm. Arts Departments from Universities just in the area alone, New England schools in general, that all of them have different systems and focuses in terms of one being more business oriented, one maybe being more liberal arts oriented and coming from that perspective I wasn't sure. I wanted to see and hear from people here what it was like and what they were focusing on and from there, that's how I decided to do the major. I was going on a school by school basis trying to figure it out.

Mod: But you came in Undeclared?

P6: Yes.

Mod: And so, when did you declare Comm. Arts?

P6: Sophomore year.

Mod: Who else came in Undeclared?

P8: Me.

Mod: Yeah, [name deleted]?

P8: I just didn't really know what I wanted to do, so I figured I would leave my options open. I thought before coming to college that I was probably going to do Communications, but I wasn't positive, so I didn't want to completely decide. I knew pretty soon after that I was going to do it.

P10: I came in as Fashion.

Mod: You came in as Fashion and then switched over to Comm. Arts?

P10: I hated Fashion.

Mod: So, how did you make that...how did you find Comm. Arts?

P10: Well, it was between Comm. Arts and Psychology, but I just didn't know what I wanted to do because my heart was set on Fashion for five years, I was just like...I just needed a new start. Comm. Arts was more broad and was more interesting so I chose that one.

Mod: Okay. Anybody else come in Undeclared?

P11: Well, I came in wanting to do Comm. Arts, but I wasn't sure which concentration. They just threw me in General rather than...I guess that's just what they do, but I didn't know so when I went on to figure out what courses I wanted to take it was sending me down that path rather than, just kind of tell me I'm in an actual concentration already. I think I'm going to be Media Production...the CME, but I didn't know I had to drop the current concentration and then add another one, so it was like, I don't know...they didn't really let me know about that...I didn't know about that until a few weeks ago when I was going to sign up for classes.

Mod: So, you would rather be in a specific concentration rather than General...which is a concentration, but is much more broad based?

P11: Well, yeah. I just didn't know I was in a concentration. I thought I was just doing whatever until I found out what I wanted to focus on.

Mod: Okay. Any of you have concentrations besides General or are you all Generalists?

P6: Speech and Performance.

P9: Corporate.

P3: My minor is Visual Communications. I don't know if that's a concentration.

Mod: Yeah, that's a concentration. So, how did you guys end up in those concentrations?

P6: It's complicated, but it's more just the focus that I was oriented towards in terms of career choice based on various internships that I've been looking at. It's still up in the air. To be completely honest, it seemed more interesting. I wanted something more focused...I didn't want it too open-ended, but I don't really have a concrete reason to be completely honest. It was just something that interested me slightly more.

Mod: Okay. But you weren't interested in a general, broad perspective? You wanted something that was a little more focused?

P6: Right, I just wanted something a little more focused.

Mod: Okay, [name deleted]?

P9: Same reasons pretty much. I didn't feel comfortable with something too broad and I want to work in a corporate industry, especially Public Relations so Corporate Comm. was like the perfect fit. The whole generalist idea of too light in too many areas just wasn't for me.

Mod: Okay.

P6: I mean, not to...for some people that really works, but for me particularly it wasn't.

Mod: Sure.

P9: Yeah, I need something to focus on. Too broad and I just get lost in it all.

P2: I wanted to do Corporate, but then I decided too late and I would have been here for a whole extra year and...

P9: Yeah, it's hard to get into too if you don't jump in really quick.

P2: It's totally not worth it at all. I ended up subbing in some of my classes because my adviser is a Comm. teacher, [name deleted], so she kind of subbed half my classes for me so I could take what I wanted, but I wish I could have concentrated.

Mod: So, what needs to happen...I'm still fairly new to the campus, so what needs to happen so you would have been able to...

P2: I was already told that it was general...you're going to be taking all these random broad based classes, but I feel like someone needs to push people more to concentrate because it's kind of...no one knows they can concentrate and it's better to.

P9: I feel like I have a lot of friends that have the same experience.

P2: I feel like it's better and easier to get a job. For Comm. majors it's so hard to get a job because it's so broad based. If I was corporate, like you said...

P9: Yeah, there's a lot of people I know that are in the same shoes. They're like juniors and they're looking to do marketing or public relations now and it's just too late. Corporate has a lot of business courses that you have to take. If you're a Generalist, it's so across the board that it's hard to have the time to graduate in four years and still do that. It's something that you'd have to do at the latest, probably, by sophomore year to be out in four years and that's without taking summer courses or anything.

Mod: A lot of you are also Generalists though, right?

(P1, P7, P8, P10 shake their heads yes)

P5: The Chair of the Department...I mean, nobody really knows what to do with older students. I was talking to the Chair about it the other day. I guess there used to be a division or a department or someone and the acronym was ACC and they used to help with career advising for older students and it's gone. So, I get people who tell me, "I don't know what to tell you," or, "Be a Generalist." Nobody can give me any type of information about what to do about a career. I was aged out of the corporate world in my fifties and so I'm scared shitless about graduating in my sixties with all these student loans, but I don't want to be...I want to get re-employed. I want to do something I want to do, not be a voice over IP trainer or whatever I can find a job at to keep a roof over my head.

Mod: Right, right. [name deleted], are you a Generalist?

P4: Mhm (yes).

Mod: And are you happy with being a Generalist?

P4: Um, yeah. I feel like Generalists get a bad rap. People are like, "Oh, you're not driven because you don't have a concentration." I just don't like any of the concentrations. They used to have Broadcasting but they don't have that anymore. I would like to do radio.

P6: I have a number of friends here who have that same exact problem.

P10: To me, business courses are for business...I didn't want to take that.

P2: For corporate, I would have done it, but otherwise it wasn't worth it.

P4: I also wish they had more writing courses...like Writing for Visual Media and Screenwriting, they only have two. I wish they had more.

Mod: In the major?

P4: Yes, like a Writing concentration or something like that. It's very limited and I know that they're combining the two Visual ones soon so that they can have more stuff, but I just feel like those are boring. I don't know. That's why I didn't pick a concentration because I don't really care for any of them.

Another thing that bothers me a lot is that I feel like...I took Seminar and that was a huge waste of time. Huge waste of time. There's a portion of it where they're like, "Okay here's Career Services. They're going to talk to you about getting a job. This is a resume. This is job searching." And then other than that, the whole class is just like nothing. They ask you to read the newspaper and that's all it is. Like, I don't know what I want to do. I don't know what my skills are. I'm unaware of what I can do as a job. I'm applying for jobs and I don't know what I can do for a job. I don't necessarily know what marketing does, I don't know what that is and no one...someone needs to sit down with you and say, "This is what you can do. These are your skills." I think there needs to be...they just don't talk to you about real...

P6: Real world application. I completely agree.

Mod: Who are they?

P4: The professors...the administration. They don't tell you...they need to tell you about concentrations. They need to help you with classes because...fortunately I had friends who knew what was going on and I was able to go online and be like, "This is what I need to take for my concentration. I know what classes I need to take." I have other friends, like [name deleted], who was completely lost and didn't know what classes she needed to take. She ended up having to take ones she didn't know she had to take. People get screwed because they don't realize that there are classes they have to take. The administration needs to tell them what classes they need to take and there needs to be help for students so they know what jobs they can do.

P2: Yeah, specific jobs. Like I don't understand...You just read my mind. I'm literally like looking at jobs and I don't know what jobs I can get with my major. You know what I mean? Like, "Oh, you have this major and know Excel and know Photoshop..."

P6: Especially nowadays, that's terrifying. To be completely honest with you, it's absolutely terrifying. It's that open-ended feeling. We're leaving and its like, what do you do? It's kind of...to me, it's mortifying.

P10: They're just like teaching us what the class is about, but not going beyond that. Like what [name deleted] was saying about how I was almost getting screwed over. In general...I mean, like, I copy and pasted the catalog into a word document so I could take control of my own classes because no one was helping me. You choose two from each category and at the bottom in little writing its like, "Oh, you have to take two extra courses." And I didn't even see that until [name deleted] told me about it.

P11: Yeah, there's like 10 spaces between them.

P10: Yeah, and it's, like, you have to choose two, choose two, choose two and seriously, in little writing at the bottom it's like, "Oh, and two extra courses." And I didn't even see it until [name deleted] told me about it. I had to completely change around my schedule and figure things out so that I would be able to graduate on time.

Mod: But don't you have to see an adviser every year?

P9: Yeah.

P10: Advisers sometimes don't even know what...like, my adviser this year...I mean, great guy, but he

gave me the wrong PIN number. I know it's like a little factor, but...

P2: But you can't do anything until you have it.

P10: Well, yeah, but I mean, compared to what classes to take. You need a PIN number to register and if they give you the wrong one then you could not be able to get into a class you need. So, it's like, you know, the littlest things they mess up on, but how do we trust them on the bigger things. I mean, they're all great people, but sometimes they're just not focused on what we actually need. We need the classes, we need to know how to get jobs, we need to know what we need to...specific things.

P9: I feel like all the information is, like, available though, but they don't communicate well at all.

P6: Bingo...yes, yes.

P9: I've always been an advocate of if you want something and you want it done right, you have to do it yourself.

P10: That's what it is.

P9: My freshmen year, I was super ambitious. I changed my adviser because I didn't like who I had. I switched to [name deleted] because she's wonderful. But like, I went on the website and I dug around and spent the time look and that's why I'm graduating in four years. I just put the work in...and I'm not saying that's like a cop out for like, "Go School," but like maybe during freshmen orientation we should have, like, seminars – like a day-long or not even a day-long...a two hour long seminar – in your major, where they go into depth on all the concentrations and what you can do with them and where you can find the stuff online because I did that all myself and I just lucked out with having a really good adviser. I kept up on it. I did what [name deleted] did and I copied all the information offline and I checked off everything as I went and I really kept on it.

P10: I think that's really what you have to do here. Like, you have to do everything yourself.

P9: Yeah, at Framingham State, you're your own self-advocate. There's great administration and, I'll be quite frank, there's some administrators who just don't do their jobs. It's like, you really fall through the cracks if you're not watching your back. That's like that in any aspect of the world. You just really have to beware.

P1: To add on to what you're saying, it bothers me that only some classes are offered. Most of the introductory classes are in the fall. Granted, they have the new students coming in, but, you know, it's...

P10: If you don't take those then you're screwed for the spring.

P1: If you mess up once...if you can't get into one class then it could ruin you down the road.

P9: It's not even if you mess up either. It's not...if it fills up before you can get into it...

P2: Or if it's just not offered.

P9: I wish...some of the concentrations, I feel...I love Corporate, but the one thing I have against it is that

there's two courses I have to take that were at the bottom of the sheet that...an additional two performance and production courses. Me personally, I'm Corporate. Everything I do is business oriented and I have no interest in doing, you know, acting classes...performance classes. I'd prefer it...the school only has one Public Relations course and it's taught by a traveling lecturer. I feel like they should have two PR courses that get more difficult and they apply the things you learn more to the real world. Maybe the school, through Career Services, establishes a partnership with a Non-Profit in the area where you have to write press-releases for them. I mean, I love PR. That's what I want to do. It kind of sucks that they only have one course, but on the other hand, it's like I have so many diverse Corporate courses that I feel really comfortable going into a job because it's, like, I didn't just study PR, I studied all this too. I would say get rid...I understand what the administration is trying to do...what the Department is trying to do by having the performance courses to try to broaden your resume and your experience, but I feel like that should be optional. They should offer more specifics...and that's a problem that's across the board.

(P1, P2, P7, P10 all agree)

Mod: I just want to make it clear, what do you mean by administration? Who is administration?

P9: I'd say the Department. Whoever makes the call on what we have to take and when we have to take it. There's a lot of courses that...and I know that if you try hard enough and you go to your Department Head, sometimes you can have them sign off and you can sneak by, but that's only on a case by case basis. It should be way more open to where you design your major more, which is saying a lot because our major is very relaxed compared to other majors.

P2: Some of the other majors expect their students...I mean, I'm not saying we're not going to get jobs, but I think it's kind of expected that they're going to get jobs right away. We need more guidance because we're so broad.

P9: They expect us...the school expects us to be adults, but they treat us like children. That's what it comes down to.

P3: When I went to Career Services to, I wanted to change my major from Fashion to Communications and I was going to do it, but they literally told me that the Communications program was not as good and that I should stick with Fashion. They literally told me, "do not transfer," which is unfair to me because I would rather have my degree in Communications instead of Fashion because that's what I want to do, but they literally told that the program was just not as good, so I was, like, "Thanks."

P4: Which is funny because people say that all the time and they don't know that...

P9: There's like three dominant majors on campus.

P2: And everyone can take our classes, that's the other reason that we can never...like, I didn't take any of the classes that I planned on taking all through college. I've taken, like, seven Art History classes and its like, "Are you kidding me?"

P9: I'll say two words that will probably aggravate everybody in here: Gen Eds.

(P1, P2, P3, P7, P10 all agree)

P9: Twelve Gen Ed. courses is just miserable.

P10: I hate them.

P11: Having the freshmen orientation fresh in my mind since it was, like, less than a year ago for me, it's important...it's like...they didn't tell me that I could change the classes that they put me in coming into school.

P9: Oh yeah. They were assigned.

P11: I thought it was, like, set in stone. The classes that I took first semester here...they're worthless to me.

P10: Me too.

P11: Now, I have to...for sciences...there's two requirements for science Gen Eds. One would be, I think, a physical science or something like that – like a Bio or those – and then there's the Chemistry side of it as well, but you need, like, a lab. So, they put me in a Chemistry class that wasn't a lab and, like, I hate Bio and stuff like that – I'm just not good at it – so, I would have rather taken a Chemistry lab course or a Physics lab course, but now because they put me in a Chemistry class first semester and didn't let me know that I could switch, now I have to take a Bio lab course, where I probably wouldn't have had to originally. For someone else, I'm sure the problem would be even more serious if it was a class that actually mattered in the long run. Like, I'll take a Bio lab, whatever...it sucks, but whatever, I'll take it, but for someone else, they might have more serious scheduling problems with that. They don't make it clear that you have control over your classes. Like, even this last semester, because of credit problems that I've had, I wasn't able to sign up until the last section and I have no classes to sign up for. Now I have to get the override sheet from all these teachers and it's just a mess.

P9: It's just so many goals too.

P1: With Gen Eds. I feel we could be done a lot sooner. They honestly drag on.

P9: (shakes head yes)

P10: They screw you over.

P1: I mean, 12 Gen Eds. is way too much and...

P10: If you fail, you have to take it again.

Mod: I kind of want to focus on the Department though. What we really want to learn about today is how the Department has helped you, what it can do in terms of preparing you for a career, graduate school or whatever the case may be.

P9: It's linked into the Gen Eds. though. Like, I won't stick on that. Like, linked into Comm. though, if the school...and I understand the school is a Liberal Arts school, so they offer a lot of Gen Eds., but I feel like they do that because there's not enough course offerings in specific Departments across the board. So, like if we just knocked off six of the Gen Ed. courses, do we have six comparable Comm. classes to fill

that with? I'd say, if they could, even if they lower the Gen Eds. by two and add more courses across the board so that we could take more Comm. courses and specialize in what we want to do instead of just a bunch of science courses and language courses.

P5: The reason I was given about Gen Ed. – but I don't want to talk about that – was that because it's a state college, there were certain state requirements that you be a well-rounded student. So, all the Gen Ed. courses that all of us don't want to take or don't seem to have anything to do with our major, are state required because this is a state college...and funding and whatever. But, me getting into here when I got laid off from my [name deleted] position because it was outsourced to the Philippines, I started studying voice-over work and when I ran out of money, I started crewing for Framingham access TV and I started taking media classes there. I have a friend in my life who's a media teacher in Melbourne Australia and he was, like, "Go into the field that's growing," and I enjoyed it and I thought that I would do that. So, that's why I applied as a Comm. Arts major and they wouldn't even let me do that. I had to come in as an Undeclared and then I had to take so many classes and earn so many grades and write a whole letter about why I deserved to be a Comm. Arts major and get voted on, so it was only last October that I made Comm. Arts and I'm not finding any career direction.

P2: Seriously.

P5: I mean, with advising, it's like, "Okay, you have these Gen. Eds requirements you have to fulfill," but I'm already two years or more, if you stretch it, away from graduation and I'm already scared to death about my loans I'm building up versus if I'm ever going to be employable again. I'm not getting any direction about that and I think that somebody in this college has got to think about older students. We don't all go to school at night. Some of us want to be Comm. Arts majors and I'm getting no feel about what the heck I should be doing except that people think by sticking me into General that maybe I'll have more of a chance to get something. But even Career Services said the other day that I'm one of the very few older students here during the day. That happens to be because that's when they offer the Comm. Arts classes and right now I'm riding on benefits just to keep my mortgage going and I don't have enough money to live on. I'm running into food banks and everything else. I've written more hardship letters to financial aid, who are completely like, "Okay, that's nice, sorry." So, I'm, like, wicked stressed out and I've got an older student focus group last year, which I have the email from because the Chair of the Department wanted to know about it and so does Career Services and they seem to think that we're needy. I'm not needy, but there are issues in my life surrounding just keeping a roof over my head or whatever else I have to factor in to everything here. But I want to feel that somebody can guide me and say, "By taking these courses or heading in this direction there's hope for you to get re-employed." Right now, I'm really scared to death, but it's either that or be unemployed. I've already blown through my unemployment benefits and I'm not getting interviews because of my age, so I'm risking a whole lot to be here. I want to feel like I'm getting some direction and some guidance and I don't feel like I am. I feel like I'm flying by the seat of my pants.

P2: That's the biggest problem.

P1: To go off that, the Comm. Department stresses networking and they don't give us any, you know, way to network. We have to go out and do it on our own. At my internship, I had to meet all the people and do it myself. Whereas, they stress networking, they stress using LinkedIn and things like that, and they don't help us do that at all. There are a lot of distinguished Comm. Arts alum from Framingham. I met with a gentleman this past week for an informational interview, who was an alum of the Department, and I learned a lot, but I had to go and do that on my own. Whereas, if they had contact

information for some of these people who were willing, then it would be a great help to everyone because then they could go out and do it on their own instead of stressing over it.

P3: That's one thing that I just wish this school would change, having contacts in the field. I don't know anybody really that's done a Comm. Arts internship and has gotten a job from it. Not to compare, but my best friend goes to [name deleted] and does Communication Arts there and everybody she knows has gotten jobs or internships in the industry. I just feel like this school doesn't have the connections.

P2 and P9: Yeah.

P3: It's just so hard. I've gone to Career Services because I'm going to be looking for a job too, and I want to work in something more like the Communication Arts industry. They were just like, "You have to look at our one Ram Track thing," and that's all we have.

(P1 and P5 shake their heads yes)

P2: We really need more guidance, like...

P3: [The first portion of this sentence was indecipherable due to background noise]...they were like, "We don't have anything for that."

P9: Ram Track is...

P2: Like, I know what I like to do and I know I can do this and do that, but...

P10: I'm going to be working at Dicks for the rest of my life.

P2: Exactly. I'm going to be a server for the rest of my life.

Mod: [name deleted], can I ask you, are you a Generalist?

P7: I am.

Mod: You are? And why did you become a Generalist?

P6: (whispers) She hasn't talked yet.

P7: (laughing)

P6: Sorry.

P7: It's alright. Sorry, what was your question?

Mod: How did you become a Generalist? Why did you become a Generalist?

P7: Well, they put me in it and then I didn't know I could change, but I do like the fact that it is more broad. I still don't know what I want to do...I don't have a clue, so it gives me more options.

P2: Somebody should be helping you to decide...

Mod: So, here is what I am hearing. I'm hearing that there are a lot of things in terms of advising, providing career advising...anybody going to grad school, want to go to grad school?

(P1, P2, P3, P7, P9, P10 all say it's a possibility)

Mod: So, there's not a lot of guidance that's coming from the faculty in terms of professional development, networking opportunities, and those types of things. Yet, you're all Comm. majors.

P9: Well it's like whatever connections they do have, they're not like...you might have a professor who is like, "Oh, I have a friend in the industry." If you go up and talk to them after class, "Oh, I have a friend in the industry. Here's his contact info." But there's no deep seated connections.

P6: (raises his hand)

Mod: [name deleted], go ahead.

P6: What are you implying?

Mod: No, I'm not implying. I guess I'm a little confused because I'm hearing a lot of negativity, but you're all here. You know what I mean?

P2: Because once you're in, you're in.

P5: I like what I'm studying.

P6: I think that's a very broad assumption to make.

Mod: No, no, no...I'm not trying to make any assumptions. I am here completely...I'm not trying to assume anything, I'm trying to learn. I'm just curious as to, you're all Comm. majors, I'm not really hearing a lot of positivity and maybe that's because we haven't gotten there...

P2: I think it's because we're in a group and we're all saying the bad aspects. I think Comm. is amazing.

P10: Oh, I have fun, yeah.

Mod: I think one of the things I'm hearing is that certainly we could improve on the advisement and professional development networking.

P2: I'm saying, not as a major it's bad, but at the school it's kind of ridiculous and I think I should have gone to another school and I would have been way further in life right now and that makes me sick.

P1: On that, the school makes it impossible...if you did want to switch out of the Comm., the school makes it impossible because of the credit hours. I tried to get into a summer course for Bunker Hill and the Registrar didn't approve it because it's only a three hour course. That's the thing, once you're here, it's really tough to switch majors or even transfer out.

P10: It's like a cult.

Mod: So, you feel like you're stuck here?

P1: Exactly.

P2: Plus, I'd like to get my Masters, but...

P6: I've heard that it's like that across the board. Literally from several dozen people in the Comm. Arts Department. I mean, other departments too, but obviously focusing on here, that pretty much nails it (motioning to P1). I mean, that's a big factor in terms of transferring credits. It's pretty bad and it's gotten worse, in terms of...recently, the system has changed to make it harder, which makes sense since, you know, colleges need to make more money nowadays. It makes sense, but it was already bad enough to begin with and it's just gotten worse, built off of that.

Mod: Okay, I hear you. So, let's kind of switch gears then. What is the Department doing well?

P10: Making us laugh.

(Participants laugh)

P1: If you meet with the professors outside of class, they are extremely helpful...

(P2, P3 P7, P9, P10 all shake their heads in confirmation)

P1: I met with [name deleted] outside of class – she's a travelling professor – and she's unbelievable. She helped me so much and even talking to [name deleted], he helped me out so much too. I feel like the Comm. Arts Department has great professors, it's just not easy to...

P10: Like, they teach the class, you do the class, then they leave and that's it. Like, there's nothing outside it.

P9: Like, you're your own self-advocate. The tools are there. The professors are excellent. If you decide on your own to go up after class and discuss with them, get to know them, in terms of internships, 'Hey, do you know anybody in the industry?' I've found a lot of success that way and I've been fortunate, but there's no centralized section on, maybe, the website where all the connections are listed...like a portal or something where you can go...where the Comm. Arts Department can have structured connections with industry professionals in the area. Like, the internship thing, it's all on your own, but if you choose to do the research, all the tools are there. The professors are awesome.

P11: I think that one of -because I want to start looking into internships for the next couple of years – the things I've noticed backs up what they've said. Even if you're willing to put in the effort, it's like the ways to do it and the means to do it are very mysterious...

(Participants laugh)

P11: No, seriously...I think that's the best way I can put it...

P10: Yeah, everything is hidden.

P11: You're not sure how to go about it. You don't even know who to ask. If you do go ask someone, it's like, "Well, I'm not really sure, but you could go ask this person." So, it's just kind of like...If you do put in the effort you would probably be able to find something, but I feel like it could be made a little easier here.

Mod: That ties into the whole advising process, right?

P11: Advising, I guess, but just organization in general. Ram Track is seriously awful. I mean, just their websites in general are just not put together well. That type of thing.

Mod: But it sounds like if you go to the faculty, they can more or less direct you...

P9: The personal touch is really...

P11: Sometimes.

P10: But as a Generalist, we don't need an internship. We're the only concentration...So, it's...I am ambitious, but if I don't have to do something, I probably won't do it. It's just that I'm not forced and since everything is hidden and I'm not forced, it's harder for me to have that drive to dig through everything to find an internship.

P2: I feel like they give us the attitude that...I mean, that the Comm. Arts is like...I just always feel like we're just looked down on. I mean, okay, professors can be great professors and you can go to them one on one and have great conversations and learn so much and whatever, but in the class or as a whole, I just feel like the classes are like, "Oh, like whatever, we're teaching you this because we have to."

P5: I wish there was some sort of mentoring ability with industry people. I mean the people I know who've spoken to [name deleted]'s class who are in music or news or a lot of different people. Everyone I talked to them and said, "This is my background and this is the stuff I've done and I've only mentioned a couple in here, but I'm scared to death of graduating and finding work. What can you tell me?" And they just say, "Keep on doing what you're doing," which doesn't help me at all. It makes me feel lost, but on the other hand, coming from the perspective from an older student, I could have gone to the BUCDIA campus and gotten a certificate and been out there, but I'm glad I'm here because I have professors who really appreciate older students and they've told me they really appreciate my input. I have a professor who has become a good friend of mine from the year and I've gone to dinner at her house and I've gone to plays with her and she really took me under her wing and I started to blossom with her and I really sort of became an advocate, a Yankee-Rabble-Rouser after I took [name deleted]'s Social Problems class. He wants me to keep in touch with him and sit in on his classes any time and talk to his Social Problems class next year, but I don't really know what to say. I find that the professors that I've connected with here have been supportive and some of them have really taken me in under their wing and it's been fantastic. I couldn't think of any other place I'd want to be because it's helped me into finally stepping into who I wanted to when I was younger, but I didn't have the chance to. So, that's a really wonderful and fantastic side. I'm really glad I'm here and I really love my professors and I love what I'm studying, which is why I'm doing it...because I'm trying to reinvent myself and if I'm going to reinvent myself then in this half of my life, I want to do what I enjoy doing. But, that other piece of it is

that I'm really scared and I'd like to have some mentoring from some industry professionals who can help guide me along the way. I wish the school could develop connections in that respect.

Mod: Okay. I know that I'm looking at the clock, is there anybody that needs to go?

(P2, P3, P10 all say yes)

Mod: So, if you need to leave, please feel free to. Otherwise, I need like 10 minutes because I want to do the drawing exercise.

P2: I can wait 10 minutes.

P3: I have to go because I have a final.

Mod: Okay. Well thank you for being here [name deleted]. I appreciate it.

P3: I just want to say that I don't think it's the professors' fault or anything, but I just don't think we have the tools to help us better.

(P2, P5, P6, P7, P9 all shake their heads in agreement)

P2: I think we all agree on that.

P6: Absolutely, yeah.

P2: I was just going to throw that in. I think everyone in the Comm. Arts...the professors are all unbelievable, personally helpful...

P9: Yeah, that's the reason...

Mod: I want to make this clear. I'm a neutral party. My job is to report back what I'm hearing, so that's why I ask the questions just to make sure I'm hearing what I'm hearing. I understand completely that there can be this feeling of tremendous gratitude for your faculty and on the other hand, recognizing that there's a lot of room for improvement. Do you know what I'm saying? So, that's all I'm trying to do, is to figure out where the room for improvement is, where we need to be better, what we're doing great and that's all that I am doing.

(P3 and P10 leave)

P2: What we're saying is that the professors don't need improvement.

P9: The professors are the reason why I didn't transfer...that and the price of the school, but I think that the professors are excellent.

(Voice from outside calls in)

Voice: Hello? Dr. Chang? Can I come in?

Mod: Yes?

Voice: I have another class coming into the class.

Mod: That's okay. We're good...I think we've got this.

Voice: Awesome.

(P8 leaves room to grab backpack)

Mod: Alright, there are sheets of paper in the middle of the table area here. If you will, take a sheet. So, using your crayons, because when's the last time you used crayons, on the right-hand side of the paper, I'd like for you to draw for me how you felt when you first came to FSU. Whatever you mean by that...orientation, Black and Gold, first day of classes, whatever that means to you.

(Participants draw on their paper)

Mod: We're a very decisive group, so whenever you're ready, on the other side of the sheet of paper, draw how you feel the Department has helped shape you as a student, as an individual, as a future professional.

(P8 returns)

Mod: So, [name deleted], on the right-hand side we're looking for how you felt when you first got to FSU - whatever that means, whether that's orientation, Black and Gold, your first day of classes – whatever that case may be. On the other side, draw how the Department has helped to shape you, as a student, as an individual, as a future professional, as a future grad student. Like a before and after.

P8: So the right is before and the left is after?

Mod: Yeah.

(Participants spend one minute drawing)

Mod: Are some of you ready to share?

P7: Sure. Well, on move in day, it was, like, the most depressing day of my life, so I have tears coming down my face and then right now, it says, "Now what?"

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P9: Well, when I first came in it was kind of, like, a big question mark, like, what's going on? You know, adjusting to college and finding my way around the school and the Department. Now with one year left, I drew a pie chart and filled it in 90%. I feel confident and pretty lucky - and I know that's not for everybody - but I lucked out and hopefully I have an internship coming up. I have an interview coming up and I personally feel pretty secure and grateful for the guidance I sought out in the Department. I feel comfortable. I have one more year left. I'm going to get through it and then on to the real world.

P2: You won't get nervous until senior year.

P9: I know the last two weeks of senior everybody is scared.

P2: I was like this (pointing to paper) until junior year.

Mod: [name deleted], what do you got?

P4: Okay, on my first day of college I was really excited, but I was also really nervous at the same time because I feel weird when I first meet people. And now, I'm just like, "What the hell's going on?"

Mod: So, you're not nervous?

P4: I should have drawn nervousness. I don't think of how the Department shaped me. When I think of college, I think of the people I've met and experiences, more so than classes. I can't think of how my classes have changed me at all. I feel like they're just there. I go, I get some grades, and I leave. That's all I feel about them.

Mod: So, who are these people you've met?

P4: The friends I've made, the enemies I've made.

P6: Well, that's not good.

P4: Well, that's just how I feel. I feel like the things I've been through outside of class more so, have shaped me more than what I've learned.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P6: Oh...bemused to confused.

Mod: Explain.

P6: Um...coming into this, well it's a long story, but I was going to UNH for a semester and I didn't end up finishing the credits. It was for a Clarinet Performance major. A number of factors, including a falling out with a friend and a professor I didn't like that I would have had to have for all four years, caused me to transfer here, among other reasons. I was just sort of confused and sort of cynical. Mostly for financial reasons I transferred here. I had also heard some good things about the program here from some friends. And now, I'm sort of intimidated and, like everyone else, I'm reassured by the fact that I have professors and an adviser that really care. They really do and you can really tell. They're invested in your success. It's really important. I just feel like in terms, without sounding too pretentious, of the larger bureaucracy, I feel like the connection between them and the larger picture, it's hard. I feel like they care, but sometimes they don't really know what to do in the context of the program itself.

(P2 and P9 shake their heads yes)

P7: I feel the same.

Mod: What do you mean by that?

P6: I feel like there is a disconnect between the higher-ups and the faculty.

Mod: Okay.

P6: I think that pretty much nails how I feel about any problem I've had with the program.

Mod: Can I ask why you feel that way?

P6: Um...

Mod: Like, is there an example you could give me?

P6: I wish I could. Um...I may not have explained myself very well, but I feel like even in terms of references and in terms of internships, both my adviser and faculty that I've talked to have given me – and I'm also lucky because my mom is in PR and that helps a lot - but I feel like, they know about references and know about, maybe, certain things that when you go to...and they even give you connections and things like that in some contexts that Career Services doesn't.

Mod: Okay.

P6: Or maybe to put it in a more fair context, maybe they don't have the resources to actually do because they don't have it in place, which can be a problem. So, in other words maybe besides the advisers, the larger program means well, but they don't have the framework in place to actually implement something for the people in the program. So, um, yeah, I'm echoing what everyone else has said. I think there's definitely a passion with the faculty that at least I've had the experience with that's the greatest factor for why I'm still here. You can definitely tell. I mean, students aren't stupid. You can tell when someone at least feels invested in your success and cares and that really does make a difference.

P2: It makes a difference going from a Gen. Ed class to a Comm. class.

P6: Oh, absolutely.

Mod: So, would it be fair to say that you feel like Comm. Arts is your home? Your academic home?

(P1, P2, P4, P5, and P7 shake their heads yes)

P6: Yes.

P9: Absolutely. I'm not ashamed to say I'm a Comm. Arts student either. We kind of get a bad rap on campus compared to the science majors and such, like, oh, it's really laid back, but it's difficult in its own sense.

P1: I feel like Comm. has the most practical use. Comm. teaches you skills that you can use anywhere. You need to learn how to present to people, you need to learn how to...talk. That's one of the things that Comm. does. I think it's the most practical major.

Mod: In terms of transferable skills?

P1: Absolutely.

P11: Without Comm. there is no science or math.

P1: Exactly.

P9: You can develop something, but if you have nobody to market it or communicate a message then who cares?

P1: You can be an extremely talented and smart individual, but you could make a crazy finding in science and then you have to go present it and it just sounds terrible because you've never presented. That's one thing that Comm. does; it teaches life skills. I am proud to say that I do major in Comm.

Mod: Okay.

P2: Just another thing about the professors, it's something I'll carry them with me just because they're really good professors.

Mod: Okay, [name deleted]?

P11: Yeah, so, on this one I did a boat and kind of water because it felt like I was going off, but at the same time it was like I was kind of alone because I was off at school and I didn't know anyone. And then...what was this one supposed to be again?

Mod: How you feel now.

P11: How I feel now? Okay, so, I realize that it's not a bad way to feel like that because that's how it is in real life, at least from what I've gathered, and I kind of have this road thing ahead of me. I'm not really sure where it's going, but I kind of have to figure it out and do it for myself.

Mod: What's the red thing on your head?

P11: That's my hat...to show that I'm pointing forward. I'm not the greatest drawer, but yeah, I don't know...I feel like I do have to just get off my ass and do stuff if I want to go anywhere, so that's kind of my thing.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P8: Um, I'll tell you all a little background before I explain the pictures. I could have gone here or UMass Amherst because I got into both. I picked here because I wanted to be, like, towards the top of the school, rather than in the middle or bottom at UMass. My grades were, like, dead even with theirs and much higher than here. I wanted to be able to do a lot of stuff, but I felt like I would have just been another face in the crowd at UMass, instead of being (air quotations) important (air quotations) here. So, on my right, when I got here, I said, "I'm scared, but I'll give it a go." I had the mindset that I would do really well and I have done really well in classes and I've gotten really involved on campus. I'm an RA

among other things. It's been really fun doing that stuff, so I'm glad to have gotten the experience of everything combined with classes and other stuff. On the left is another horrible stick figure because I can't draw. It says, "I want more skills so that I'm much more confident in myself as a person." I want more Communication skills and I want more from my classes, but I have learned some good things and I am more confident in myself in classes and other things combined. I'm glad I came here instead of UMass.

Mod: So, I kind of heard two things. It sounds to me that you wanted to...you had the confidence that you would do well academically here because of the grades and those types of comparisons, but it seems like you also felt like you would have more personal attention being at a smaller institution?

P8: Yeah.

Mod: Okay.

P8: People seem really nice. UMass is just a big confusion, too many people.

Mod: You'd just be another number, maybe?

P8: Right.

Mod: Okay.

P8: I'd rather do well at a smaller school that's less well known.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P2: I mean, I don't know...this is me in the beginning. This is me until at least junior year. I mean...I was...I cared about...I wasn't saying, "Who cares?" More like, "I know what I'm doing. I'm going to take my classes and I'm going to graduate in four years." I kind of didn't think about what would be after. Here I am now saying, "Where do I go?" I have no idea. I have a job and I'm making money...I'm a server so I'm not making a lot. I mean, I'm making money, but I'm working hard, you know what I mean? I can't do that forever.

P4: Can I just say something on that? That just made me think of something. I've come to realize in the last few weeks that I'm going to school to get a job. When I was a sophomore or whatever, I was just like, "I'm in school," because I've always been in school....I've always been a student since I was a little kid. Now, it's just like, "Oh, this is why I'm going to school...to get this job." That's really scary. I didn't think about that for, like, the first three years of college.

P2: I don't want a sit down job. I don't want one job for the rest of my life. I know that sounds stupid and everyone's like, "Well, that's not a good plan." That's why I don't know where I want to go, because I don't want to have some career where I sit down. That's what I really feel like will end up happening.  
Mod: Did you think you were in school just to learn and be educated?

P4: It's just like my thought process wasn't, like, to get a job. It was just, like...

P9: It was in the moment.

P4: Yeah, in the moment. I have all this to do, I have finals coming up, I've got to write this paper, and then you're like, but wait, what about after that? I have to do something after that.

P6: It's in the back of my mind. I'm too busy to put it to the front...to be like, "Okay, the here and now needs to happen."

P4: Exactly. You get to this point and you're like, "Oh, okay, my finals are almost done and now I have to do something else after that and not just have my summer job, but find an actual career."

Mod: I was very similar to that. I think it was my senior year during my last semester that my father one day said, "You haven't mentioned what you're going to do after graduation." I was like, "So, I have months."

P2: My parents are still asking me and I'm graduating this month.

Mod: [name deleted], what do we have going on?

P1: Um, well, that's me when I was younger...

Mod: You were shorter?

P1: Yeah, but I'm still pretty short. I didn't really know what to do and here's me today. You know, I have an idea, but I still really have no idea what to do. These summer courses are really, kind of, holding me back from what I'm supposed to be doing. I've met a lot of people in a lot of different professions who would be glad to help me out, but I can't do anything about it yet until these courses are completed. I applied to an advertising agency and they expressed interest, but they need to fill the position immediately and I couldn't do it because...

P2: That just happened to my friend.

P4: That just happened to me too.

P1: Exactly. So, that's where I'm at right now. Once I'm done with these summer courses, I'll figure it out, but I've made a lot of connections for myself. You know, hopefully it's not too bad.

Mod: Okay. So, you have more direction than when you first came here?

P1: Yeah, but I'm still kind of in the dark to what exactly I should be doing.

Mod: Okay. [name deleted]?

P5: I kind of did first side and second side. That's me sort of pretty scared about the future, but I'm really excited to be here because I feel like I can finally step into my own. I've been on my own since I was 18 because of family dynamics. I wasn't ever allowed to be who I am creatively...that would have been a threat to my parents and they would always pull the rug out from under me. I had to find any job I could. So, I've had weird things...my first job at 18 was at [name deleted] and they let me go, I don't know why. I was so mortified while I was cleaning out my desk in this huge room and I was so

embarrassed. My boss said, "What, you're still here?" and then he called the police on me. Later, my mom was failing and my boss literally told me – because he got reported for not giving me further training since he would have had to pay me more – "You're mom's not going to die for two or three years so I want you enrolled in school at night." I had to leave [name deleted] and I had had that job for almost five years. So, I had to care-take my mom and it took me two years to get back into the work force. So, I've had a really lousy history in the work force and I've decided to do something that I want to do, so, two is kind of how I felt coming into here, which is this big and pretty unwanted and really unsure. I'm starting to blossom into who I am so there is a big sunny umbrella and there's hope and creativity and stepping into who I am, but then there's still the briefcase with the question mark for the future. I think I would have drawn a lion going like (growling and mimicking a pounce) to the briefcase if I could have because it's sort of those two things. But, because of those experiences I've had in the workforce...I was almost like punished and got into trouble for being a creative person and thinking outside the box. Now, I'm allowed to do that. It's wonderful and it's fantastic, but I'm also scared because I have to think, being an older student and having a home, how am I going to keep everything afloat and how am I going to pay off my loans. That's why it's such a forefront, front burner issue for me I guess I want to say.

Mod: Right.

P5: I love it here. It's a small campus. It feels warm and I kind of hate to think they're going to expand the campus and knock down the trees and put up another dorm because I want to keep it that sort of smaller feel where we have more individualized attention and not grow into, like, a UMass.

Mod: Well, that's what brought [name deleted] here, right?

P8: Yeah.

Mod: We all recognize that as part of the draw for the University. We want to keep that and maintain that.

P5: Good.

Mod: Is there anything else that we didn't cover that you would like to expand upon or clarify? I learned so much in two hours.

P5: I'm glad you had this group.

P6: Maybe you weren't anticipating that.