

**Assessment of UPA  
Focus Group Guide  
January 2007**

(Exact words that focus group moderator will use are in black type. **Instructions to moderator are in red type**)

**First 10 minutes**

**Purpose of the Focus Group:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group discussion today. I'm {person name and title}. I'll be your moderator for this session; {person name and title} will be taking notes.

The purpose of this focus group is to provide information for UPA's periodic self-assessment. This year, the focus of UPA's self-assessment is about the effectiveness of UPA's services, especially regarding decision-making. We wanted to conduct focus group sessions in order to understand the complexity of the issues, which is more difficult to capture with surveys or other assessment methods. You have been asked to participate today, because you are a [Vice Provost, Dean, Director] and are a regular user of UPA's services, information and resources.

**Process:**

In this type of environment, it is important that you express yourself openly. There are no right or wrong answers. UPA wants to know what YOU think. We are tape recording the session in order to ensure accurate in writing up our report. However, your responses will not be linked with your name. The group will be identified as the [Vice Provost, Deans/Assoc Deans, Dept heads, directors] group and comparisons across groups will be made. The information will be kept confidential, with only Joni Spurlin, University Director of Assessment, using the notes from these meetings. Joni has been assigned the responsibility of assessing UPA's effectiveness. She will develop a report from the notes for internal use by UPA. **(Hand out Joni's business cards, if appropriate)**

**If you have any concerns or opinions you would feel more comfortable discussing with someone else, you may contact Karen Helm. (Hand out Karen's business cards)**

**Ground Rules:**

Because we are taping and taking notes, I may remind you occasionally to speak up and to talk **one** at a time so that we can hear you clearly.

Each time I ask a question, there is no need for everyone around the table to respond. However, it is important that a wide range of ideas is expressed. If you would like to add to an idea, or if you have an opinion that contrasts with those that have been aired, that is the time to add to the conversation. You don't have to go in a circle. There is no such thing as "your turn" – it is always your turn.

Again, we are pleased that you have taken the time to help with this assessment. Your opinions will help improve UPA processes.

### Opening prior to questions:

The purpose of this session is to provide UPA will information that will help UPA improve its services. UPA has three overall questions:

- For what purposes do you, as UPA's clients, use its information, services and resources?
- Among all of UPA data, information, and services (existing or needed), which do YOU think should be given highest priority?
- How can UPA improve in order to fit your needs better?

### Participant introductions

1. Let's start by asking each of you to introduce yourself.

### Next 15 minutes - purposes:

For ease of discussion, let's think about what UPA offers. (You were sent brochures last week – see POSTER)

Posted are UPA services listed: **(READ from POSTER)** IR: enrollment reports, graduation rates, faculty and staff data; Assessment services: course, program, university; Accreditation; University wide surveys: first year, sophomore, seniors, alumni, faculty; Planning: strategic planning, enrollment planning, compact planning, and peer comparison data; Tools & Resources: website, definitions, links.

UPA provides data and reports, information, and guidelines via the UPA website. Each of the staff members provides services and consultation with NCSU administration, faculty and staff. Special data and reports are provided. As we talk today, for each question, think about all of these areas.

2. What information or services have you used MOST OFTEN in the past 12 months? (Remember that you do not need to be limited by the brochure or information listed; these are just prompts)  
[Melissa: writes these on flip chart.]
3. For what **purposes** do you use UPA's information, data, reports, or services?  
[Prompt: go back to the list in 2 and ask how they use these – make sure hit all 3 areas of IR, assessment and planning – per brochure/poster]  
[Prompt: When and why do you come to UPA? What information/reports and services do you hope to get? How often?]  
[Prompt: usages might include: enrollment planning, reporting to agencies outside of NCSU, periodic assessment reports, talk to Nancy about questions to ask on surveys]  
[Melissa: write these "Purposes" on flip chart -get as long a list as possible and as detailed as possible – not just "periodic assessment reports" – but "reviewed data

- and worked with Karen for the report due to Provost last year”; other examples: review admissions data and enrollment each day for first few week in the fall in **order to know** how many students are in our program. Worked with Nancy on a survey about housing last year **as part of our assessment efforts]**
4. Given these purposes we have been discussing about UPA, give some specific examples of **decisions** you have made based on UPA data, services, etc..  
[Note taker on this one- do not flip chart this]

Next 25 minutes- critical needs/priorities:

5. Of these purposes (that you use UPA services/information), which would you consider the most **critical or highest priority** to your job duties?  
[Melissa: mark the listed item made above with a \*\*\* to identify the most critical; you can also add to the appropriate lists, if this brings out others]  
[Prompt: How has UPA helped you meet your responsibilities that would have been **difficult** to do without their assistance?]  
[Prompt: What are the top services, reports, or data you can't do your job without?]  
[IMPORTANT PROMPT: Of these purposes, which would you consider the most **critical** to your job duties **for each of UPA's functional areas**? Moderator: make sure get either critical or highest priorities within each area...so that each function role has list of what is critical for that area.]
6. Take a few minutes to consider campus-wide priorities. What do you see as the **key emerging issues in the next 5 years** for which you or NC State will need UPA's service, information, products, reports?  
[Melissa: writes these on flip chart.]  
[Prompt: What are priorities in your areas for the next five years that you will need UPA service, information, products, reports?]
7. Which of the campus-wide priorities should UPA give highest priority? and please describe **how** UPA can assist these priorities in as much detail as possible.  
[Note taker on this one- do not flip chart this]
8. Given this discussion, what advice would you give UPA, on which of its reports, data analyses or services it could **limit or not do**, so that it could meet these critical and emerging issues more effectively?  
[note taker on this one- do not flip chart this]  
[prompt: Are there some reports or surveys or services that could be performed less often?]  
[prompt: what don't you use?]  
[Moderator: don't let them get away with saying "everything" is critical]

Next 20-30 minutes – improvement:

9. How can UPA **improve** its processes, data, reports, or services to better fit those purposes, decisions, and needs you've been discussing?  
[Melissa: writes these on flip chart.]  
[Moderator: point back to the lists on the flip charts]  
[Prompt: Under what circumstances have you felt limited in your decision-making because of lack of data, reports or services that UPA should provide?]  
[Prompt: if they are not talking about UPA's website – ask: are there any ways to improve the website]
10. Consider those who report to you, the decisions they make and the information you need them to provide you. How can UPA services/processes be improved to enable you to make departmental/unit level decision?
  - a. For you, what would be the most useful format for UPA to help at you and those departments or units who report to you? (e.g. Meetings? Seminars? On-line materials?) How often?
11. After all of this discussion, if you had to pick **one**, what would you say is the **one** UPA service or process or report or informational product most in need of improvement? Or ONE service/product UPA should be providing that are UPA is not providing now.  
[Moderator – get “five” that need improvement – or some sublist or priority list – do not want to have all as important]  
[Melissa: writes these on flip chart or make highest priorities with \*\*\* ]

Last 10 minutes – closure:

12. Is there anything we've left out that you'd like to add or discuss?  
[prompt: other concerns? Other ideas?]  
[prompt: Is there anything I should have asked that you would like to comment on now?]  
[Note taker on this one- do not flip chart this]

Thank you very much for participating. This information will be valuable to UPA's improvement efforts. If you have any other thoughts, feel free to contact Joni Spurlin or Karen Helm. (See business cards for contact information)