

# Tool 7: Student Focus Group Discussion Guide

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## Guiding Questions for Student Feedback on Experiential Major Maps

### How to Use This Guide

Student focus groups provide feedback on the look and feel of maps from a student perspective. Include a diverse group of students in focus groups to ensure maps resonate with a wide variety of students.



### General questions (discuss before looking at a sample major map):

- How did you choose your current major?
- Did you pick a major before starting your first year? If so, did you change it to something different later on and why?
- What resources did you use during the process of choosing your major? Which were most and least helpful?
- Were there certain resources that you wish had existed, or that existed but were insufficient, that could have helped you select your major?
- Have you decided on a post-graduation career? How did you choose? Is this different from what you expected when you started college?
- What career planning resources did you use on campus? Which were most and least helpful?
- Do you think your major will be important in your career choice? Why or why not?
- How important are career outcomes for you when choosing a major?
- What information do you remember from summer orientation on choosing a major and making post-graduation plans? What information do you wish you had learned?

### Course requirements section feedback:

- Are there courses we should add or remove?
- What courses help students explore the major?
- What courses help students get hands-on, applied, or project-based opportunities?
- Are there any courses that students usually take too early or too late?

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### Career preparation section feedback:

- What should students be talking about with their advisors each year to help them plan and prepare for life post-graduation?
- When should students meet with career advisors and what should they discuss each year?
- Are there other on-campus support offices or services students should know about?
- How can students work with their major-specific faculty advisor to learn about opportunities after graduation?
- What should students do to build deeper connections with faculty mentors that will help them when it comes time to ask for letters of recommendation, networking connections, etc.?

### Hands-on experience section feedback:

- What types of volunteer opportunities should students seek out to explore this major and be more competitive in the job market?
  - When is the optimal time to volunteer?
  - Where should students look for these opportunities?
  - Are there any quirks specific to this field about how students should prepare and apply for volunteering?
- When should students seek out undergraduate research opportunities?
  - What undergraduate research opportunities should students in this major know about? How do they find them?
- When should students get their first internship?
- What are the most common internship opportunities that students should know about? Where should students in this major look for internships?
- Do students in your major need to get work experience in the summer after their first year? What kind of experiences are typical?
- Do most students in your major follow the same career path? Is it common to go to grad school or get additional certifications before starting a career?
- What are the most common places to find jobs after graduation? Are there any field-specific tips they should know about how to create a resume and apply for jobs?

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### **Global and multicultural experience section feedback:**

- What kinds of multicultural opportunities should we include on the map?
- Which study abroad options should we add to the map? Are there opportunities abroad that students should specifically consider if they are interested in this major or a related career path?

### **Ensuring maps are inclusive for all students:**

- Which 1st and 2nd year activities are most important for transfer students to catch up on in the major, if they can only pick one or two?
- Which clubs and associations are most important for students to join who are coming from nontraditional backgrounds (first generation in college, transfer, adult learners, veterans, etc.) or who are part of an identity group that is underrepresented on campus?
- Are there networking groups specifically for students of color, women, LGBTQ students, and/or students with disabilities in this major?
- Did we recommend any activities on the map that certain groups of students won't be able to access; for example, activities where finances may make it hard for students to participate? How can we make these activities more accessible?
- Are there scholarships or fellowships in this major for students with financial barriers to participating in experiential learning? What should students know before applying?
- What resources (websites, offices, people, meetings) are available for nontraditional students in this major?
- What career preparation opportunities are most important for transfer students in this major?