

Executive Summary

As part of PCC’s commitment to ongoing evaluation and improvement of its First Year Pathways initiative, the UCLA evaluation team conducted 27 focus groups across five pathway programs in order to gather feedback on student experiences with these programs. UCLA team members, consisting of four UCLA doctoral students under the supervision of Dr. Tina Christie, collaborated with Pathways staff to develop focus group protocols and coordinate data collection during the 2013-2014 academic year. Table 1 summarizes these efforts.

Table 1. Pathways Focus Group Summary

Pathway Program	Date	# Focus Groups	# Students
International	October 30, 2013	6	29
XL	February 26, 2014	6	25
Athletes	March 5, 2014	5	17
Design Tech	March 19, 2014	4	23
Ujima	April 21, 2014	6	37
Total		27	131

In addition to themes that emerged for each respective program, the evaluation team also identified a number of trends that were common to three or more of the programs.¹ Table 2 below presents these “overarching themes.”

Table 2. Overarching Themes

Topic	Comment	Program
Pathway Awareness	Students most commonly found out about their respective pathway program during high school, otherwise they found out during PCC orientation.	DTP, Ujima, XL
Priority Registration	Students indicated that their motivation for joining a pathway was to have access to priority registration.	Athletes, DTP, Ujima, XL
Meeting People	Students indicated that one of the main advantages of the summer jams was meeting new people and making friends. They felt like this was important step in the transition from high school to college.	Athletes, DTP, Ujima, XL
Math Jam	The main change students would make to Math Jam was to have shorter hours each day (just the morning or just the afternoon) instead of the whole day.	Athletes, Ujima, XL

¹ Please note that not all topics applied equally to all programs, and therefore not every topic was discussed to the same degree, if at all, across all sets of focus groups.

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College 1 Benefits	Students indicated that the College 1 curriculum was easy, and that the class itself was a friendly and relaxed environment. A number of students in all programs felt College 1 helped them develop their time management skills. A fair number of students across the programs also enjoyed reading <i>Southland</i> .	All
College 1 Workload	Despite positive impressions of College 1, students often felt the course involved time-consuming "busy work." A number of students from Athletes, DTP, and XL also felt there was too much overlap with content they would find in an English class.	Athletes, DTP, Intl, XL
Math Placement Test	Many students felt like they placed too low in Math. Students often indicated that they did not realize the importance of the placement test, and in retrospect, believed they would have prepared differently had they received more specific information. Most students felt like their English placement was accurate, however.	Athletes, DTP, Ujima, XL
Resource Centers	Students found places like the Zone, the IT building, and the TLC to be productive spaces for tutoring and counseling support.	All
Time Management and Academic Planning	Students indicated that this is what they needed the most help with when they started college.	All
Pathways Staff	Students were generally positive about their experiences with Pathway staff, whether they were called counselors or coaches. Students felt comfortable with them and often reported friendly, personal relationships. They found staff to be welcoming, accessible, helpful, and understanding.	All
Social Experience	When students were asked about their social experience at PCC (Athletes, Ujima, DTP), the majority generally felt that the greater PCC community was friendly and inclusive, even if they spent most of their on-campus time with Pathway cohort members.	Athletes, DTP, Intl, Ujima