DirectConnect to UCF
Student Focus Groups

A Qualitative Study
November 2012
Background and Method

- Recommended after Student Panels at 2012 College Access Summit
- 4 Groups of Valencia Direct Connect students
- 2 groups at Valencia (30 and 45 credit hours)
- 2 groups at UCF (first term and second term)
- GPA 2.5-3.0
- Balance of gender and race/ethnicity
- Majors:
  - Business, Accounting, Psychology, Education (50%)
  - Sciences, Nursing, Engineering (50%)
Discussion Guide

- Decision to attend Valencia
- Choosing a Major
- Decision to attend UCF
- Knowledge/Perception of DirectConnect
- Sources of information about DirectConnect
- Valencia role in navigating to UCF
- DirectConnect to UCF Transfer experience
- Fears/Concerns/Suggestions
Decision to attend Valencia

- DirectConnect to UCF was often mentioned not just as a reason to attend but also a benefit.
- Obtain a quality education at a lower price
- Not ready for university rigor
- Was not accepted into UCF as a freshman
- Location and cost
Choosing a Major

- Knew “all their life” what they wanted to be
- Decided in high school
- Bounced around from one major to another
- Knew someone in that major
- Picked based on job opportunities
Decision to attend UCF

For many of the students, the decision to attend UCF preceded the decision to attend Valencia

- Didn’t get accepted to UCF
- Wanted to start in a smaller setting
- Missed enrollment deadlines at UCF
- Started at UCF and found it too challenging
Knowledge/Perception of DirectConnect

- DirectConnect to UCF is well advertised and promoted on Valencia campuses
  - Big yellow signs in hallways on campus
  - Highlighted on web site
  - Information at Orientation
  - Emails
  - Workshops
  - Flyers/pamphlets
  - Radio/TV ads
  - Professors and Counselors told them
  - UCF DirectConnect Office on Valencia Campus
Sources of DirectConnect to UCF Information

- The students who are still at Valencia seemed to assign greater value to the resources available than those who have transferred.
- Answer Center
- Advisors
- Professors
- UCF Office in Building 11 (West Campus)
- Workshops and Lectures
- Transfer Plans
- My Education Plan/LifeMap
Valencia’s Role in Navigating DirectConnect to UCF

- Student who were still at Valencia were more positive than those who have transferred
- Noted that resources are there for them but they have to be responsible for using them
- Students who took charge of their academic path were able to find the resources
- Students who were more passive and more dependent had more missteps regarding pre-requisites and course selection.
Most agreed that the actual process was easy
Students were very impressed with the UCF Orientation process
   Felt welcomed
   Liked being separated into groups by majors
   Had degree audits prepared for them
   Liked dedicated advisor
   Website is informative, liked “check list”
DirectConnect to UCF Transfer Experience

- Students who had transferred found they did not have the course prerequisites they needed
- Larger lecture classes were a challenge
- Have academic support; TA’s were helpful
- Some found the university rigor a shock
- Students noted a difference in social life but were mixed on their interest in that both at Valencia and at UCF
Fears/Concerns

- Missing one detail that prevents transfer
- Being able to cope with bigger campus
- Difference in teaching styles
- Earning lower grades
- Availability of courses to graduate on time
Suggestions

- More rigorous academic preparation
- More specific advising on requirements and guidance on majors
- More computer and online learning experience to prepare for UCF systems
- Interact with UCF students in the same major
- Social connection to UCF while at Valencia