

**DISCUSSION GUIDE: STUDENTS**  
**GENERATION Z IN-PERSON FOCUS GROUP**  
**03/03, 03/05 [EXACT DATE TBD]**  
FINAL VERSION 01 12 15

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND GROUND RULES

- My name is Dave Glantz and I work for Market Connections, a market research firm in the Washington, DC area.
- I will be your moderator for tonight’s focus group discussion. We’ll be here for 90 minutes, on behalf of the Department of Education’s office of Federal Student Aid (also known as FSA), to talk about your impressions of different types of student aid-related information and the way it is communicated to you.
- As I mentioned, what we are doing today is called a “focus group.”

As a **participant**, I’d like you to...

- Participate — I need to hear from everyone
- Speak up (but only one talks at a time)
- Please avoid side conversations
- Address your comments to the group
- Remember that you’re here for who you are, so say what you believe and not what you think others might say
- If you don’t agree with what somebody says, tell us what you think – there are no wrong answers.
- What you don’t know is just as important as what you do know.

As the **moderator**, I can be impartial because I have no vested interest in whether you agree or disagree with the things we’ll be talking about. I try to ensure...

- We get through this discussion guide: there are lots of questions and ideas I’d like to talk to you about, so I have to keep things on track.
- We are audio and videotaping, which is standard practice to help with the accuracy of my report. I also have some colleagues behind the glass, who are involved in this project, and who are interested in hearing your views firsthand.
- Most importantly, everything we discuss is considered private and for internal research purposes only. Our report will not identify individuals by name.
- Do you have any questions?

**0:05**

## II. WARM-UP, DEFINITION OF GENERATION Z

Start by: 0:05  
Finish by: 0:25

elapsed time: 0:20

I would first like to go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves. Please tell me...

- Your first name (or what you like to be called)
  - HS STUDENTS: your intended course of study in college

When it comes to naming different generations, there are terms like “Baby Boomers” and other, more recent, labels to describe younger generations.

- What name or label best describes your generation? (**PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Generation X, Generation Y, Millennials, Generation Z, other name (specify), unsure).
- What, if anything, makes your generation different from someone five or ten years older than you?
- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Do you personally feel like you’ll have more opportunities or advantages in life compared to earlier generations, fewer opportunities or advantages, or will your prospects be about the same?
  - What makes you say that? (**PROBE:** educational, employment, financial opportunities or obstacles)

0:25

## III. GEN Z DIGITAL HABITS

Start by: 0:25  
Finish by: 0:55

elapsed time: 0:30

- What electronic devices do you frequently use? (**PROBE:** smartphone, tablet, laptop, PC/desk top)
- What do you like best about your devices?
- What do you like least about your devices?
- How dependent are you on your devices?
- How many hours a day are you connected to your devices/online?

- How do you feel right now, knowing that you can't check your devices for the 90 minutes it takes to participate in this discussion?
- Are there one (or two) devices you rely on more than others?
  - Which one(s) and what makes you say that?
  - **IF DEPENDS:** What does it depend on?
  - **IF DEPENDS ON THE TASK AT HAND:**
    - What device(s) do you prefer when you're communicating with friends?
    - What device(s) do you prefer when you're looking for information or researching something, such as for a school assignment?
    - Can you describe the type of information you might look for?
- In general, what social networks do you prefer? (**PROBE:** Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Google+, other (specify))
- Are you on social networks mainly to keep in touch with friends, or to look for information, or are you drawn to them for some other reason?
- In your opinion, which social networks are up and coming for you personally? What is the reason?
- In your opinion, which social networks are losing popularity with you personally? What is the reason?

0:50

#### IV. GEN Z COLLEGE FUNDING KNOWLEDGE, INTEREST, CONCERNS

Start by: 0:50

Finish by: 1:30

elapsed time: 0:40

I want to return to the subject of looking for information. In particular, I'd like to talk about the subject of college funding or financial aid.

- **[SHOW OF HANDS]** When you graduate high school, how many of you plan to attend college or university?

- How knowledgeable do you feel about the subject of college funding and financial aid?
- What challenges do you and your family face with regard to college funding and financial aid for you? (**PROBE:** affordability/paying back loans, parents' inability to help financially, how to fill out application forms (FAFSA), other (specify))
- How involved are you in addressing the issue of college funding (**PROBE:** do you generally lean on your parents to know or learn about funding issues and options, do you take the lead on learning about it and passing the information on to your parents, or is it somewhere in the middle?)
- Do you believe your parents want you to be more involved, or less involved, in these issues?
  - What makes you say that?
  - **[SHOW OF HANDS]** Have you or will you consider your family's financial situation before deciding to attend college?
- When it comes down to it, how interested are you in the subject of funding for college?
- **[FLIPCHART]** How would you like to receive information about college funding or financial aid? This can include offline as well as online sources. (**PROBE:** print publications; online/electronic publications; website content; videos; infographics; talks by counselors; texts; social media; messages or alerts on your smartphone or tablet; e-mail; other (specify))
- The Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid provides information to students and borrowers on funding for college or career school, as well as information on federal student loan repayment. If you had the full attention of someone from this office right now, what would you want to ask them? (**PROBE:** What would you want to know or have clarified?)
- **[FLIPCHART]** Where, if at all, have you ever looked for information about funding for college? (**PROBE:** online (search engines; websites; social media sites – specify); colleges; financial institutions (specify banks, lenders); government sources (specify); family or friends; guidance or financial aid counselor; other (specify))
- Let's look at the flipchart. Which of these formats are you most likely to pay attention to?
- In general, are you more likely to prefer online or more traditional sources? **1:25**
  - What makes you say that?

- Does the format you would pay most attention to depend on the type of subject matter or content it covers, or are there formats you prefer regardless of the type of content or message?
  - What makes you say that?
  - Does your preferred format change if the content is very simple? Very complex? What makes you say that?

### Wrap-up

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thanks for coming!

***LEAVE ALL FORMS ON THE TABLE. INCENTIVES AT FRONT.***

**1:30**