

OPC/UPEP STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

BACKGROUND & GUIDELINES

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about your experience with the [Onondaga Pathways to Careers (OPC) program or the Universal Pathways to Employment Program (UPEP)].

My name is _____ and I work for a company called Social Dynamics, an independent research firm located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Social Dynamics is acting as subcontractor to Westat, an independent research firm in Rockville, Maryland who is contracted by the Department of Labor to conduct this interview as part of the evaluation of the Pathways to Careers: Community College Interventions for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities grant program.

As you may know, the purpose of our interview is to get the honest opinions of the students here at the community college. Today, we want to hear your experiences and opinions related to [OPC/UPEP].

Before we begin, I would like to review a few details about our discussion:

- The interview will take about one hour.
- Your participation in today's interview is voluntary. You are free to leave at any time. But we hope that you will stay for the entire session.
- You will be paid \$35 for participating in the entire interview.
- There are no right and wrong answers. We ask only that you provide your honest opinion.
- Your individual comments will be kept private and will not be shared with the college administration or staff.
- We are tape recording the interview so that we don't miss anything important.
- I have a lot that I want to talk about today. So, don't be surprised if at some point I interrupt the discussion to move to another topic. But, don't let me cut you off. If there is something important you want to say, let me know and you can add your thoughts before we change subjects.

- After we conduct several of these interviews, summaries from these discussions will be part of a report we will write. Your name will not appear anywhere in the report.

The interview will last one hour. We will finish around _____.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Student Interview Questions

Today, we're going to talk about the Pathways to Careers, or [OPC/UPEP], program you're enrolled in here at the community college. [OPC/UPEP] is designed to enhance education, career development, and employment services in community colleges for youth with disabilities.

To get started, we are interested in your experience enrolling in [OCC/PSCC]. In particular, we are interested in the assistance you may have received during the application and enrollment phase.

1. What course of study are you pursuing in the [OPC/UPEP] program?

Course of study: _____

2. How far along are you in your [OPC/UPEP] program?

PROBES (if needed):

- When do you expect to complete your credential?
- If you completed your program, what credential did you earn?
- If you left the program, why did you leave?

3. Tell me about any financial aid you are getting.

PROBES (if needed):

- Did you meet with college staff about how to apply for financial aid?
- Did your family talk with you about paying for college? What were their main concerns?
- Is the amount you receive enough that you don't need to work while you attend school?

4. Tell me about the process of enrolling in the [OPC/UPEP] program.

PROBES (if needed):

- How did you first hear about [OPC/UPEP]?
- What were the steps you completed to enroll in the program?
- Did someone, or an agency or office at the CC, help you with this process? If so, who provided the help? How did they assist you? Was the assistance you received helpful? Why or why not?

Family Engagement

The following questions ask about your family and their involvement with your education.

5. Was your family (parents, grandparents, guardians) involved in your decision to attend [OCC/PSCC]? If so, how were they involved?

PROBES (if needed):

- Did they participate in a program orientation with you? Why or why not?
- Did they help arrange classroom or other college related accommodations for you? Please explain.
- Do you discuss your academic goals with your family? Please explain.
- Do you discuss your employment goals with your family? Please explain.
- To what degree would you say the support you get from your family regarding your career goals and employment goals is helpful?

School Support & Class Experience

Next, I would like to ask you some questions about your college experience and the services you can get at [OCC/PSCC].

6. Since you enrolled at [OCC/PSCC], have you received any academic help or assistance?

If NO: What you would do if you needed academic help or assistance at the college?

If YES: What academic help and assistance have you received at the college? What process did you use to obtain this assistance?

PROBES (if needed):

- Did you receive help with school work (e.g. tutoring or study skills development)?
- Did you receive help through the school's office for students with disabilities?
- Did you receive help using the computer lab for course assignments?

7. What types of academic or other kinds of help would you like, but have not received?

Moderator Note: For the following question and throughout, please try to determine when possible if supports or services were provided as a result of participating in [OPC/UPEP] specifically or through the college more generally.

8. Have you received other kinds of support from the college, for example, health care or counseling services, or help with child care or transportation? If so, what have you received?
9. Sometimes students receive accommodations they need to help them be more successful, for example getting extra time for completing assignments or tests, being allowed to provide spoken answers instead of written ones for assignments or tests, completing tests or in-class assignments in a different room, using audio reading materials, or using a computer to take notes or complete tests.

Do you currently have any accommodations in a written plan?

If so, what are they? Do they meet your needs?

Did you take this upon yourself or were you advised by an [OPC/UPEP] staff person?

Experience Interacting with your Instructors

The following questions ask you to reflect on your interactions with your instructors in the [OPC/UPEP] program.

10. Do you feel supported or encouraged by your instructors? Why or why not?

PROBES (if needed):

- Give me an example of a situation in which you asked for information from your instructor related to the class. What information was provided and how did it help you?
- Are your instructors personally approachable? If so, how? If not, why do you think they are not approachable?

Outside of Class

11. What has been your experience interacting with classmates outside of class?

PROBES (if needed):

- Do you ever work with your classmates on course assignments outside of class? If so, how has that gone?
- Do you interact with your classmates or other students at the school socially? Give examples of the things you do with your classrooms at the school socially.
- Do you participate in campus-sponsored activities? Why or why not?
- Do you have a peer mentor or someone who can help you if you have questions or concerns? Give me some examples how this person is helpful to you.

Self-Exploration and Career Exploration

Next, I'd like to discuss two topics: self-exploration and career exploration. Self-exploration is the process of becoming aware of your personal interests, skills and values. Career exploration is the process of learning about career options and requirements to enter a specific job.

12. How were you assisted by college staff in the process of identifying your personal and career goals?

PROBES (if needed):

- During the self and career exploration process, describe how you were able to identify:
 - o Your personal strengths/skills?
 - o Your personality traits (characteristics)?
 - o How your prior jobs relate to your career goals?
 - o Your academic strengths?
 - o Your academic/vocational career requirements?

Individualized Career Planning

13. Did you work with a college staff member to develop a written academic or career plan for you? Please describe this process.

PROBES (if needed):

- Describe the process you used to explore your career goals. For example, did you complete any type of questionnaire or assessment to determine your career interests, skills, and values?
- Do you feel your career options were evaluated thoroughly through this process?
- Was the plan based on your career goals and interests?

14. What strategies and resources did you use to research your career options? How helpful were they?

PROBES (if needed):

- Did you use any resources like the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O*Net, Internet Resources (e.g. monster.com), or resources at the American Job Center? If so, how helpful were they?
- Did you get advice from anyone about career options, for example from parents, teachers, friends, or job supervisors/managers? If so, was their advice helpful?

15. Did you receive information and instruction on some of the interpersonal (e.g. soft) skills that are important to being successful in *your* career? For example, did you learn about communication skills, leadership skills, working with others, being reliable, or being willing to accept responsibility?

Career Preparation

16. What kind of help did you receive from college staff in developing a...

- ...Resume?
- ...Career portfolio?
- ...Cover letter?

17. What activities at the college did you participate in to help you prepare for your career or get a job? For example, did you learn about how to look for a job, research information on certifications and skills in careers that interest you, or learn about any professional networks in careers that interest you?

PROBE (if needed):

- What kinds of job search training did you receive? Was it helpful? Why or why not?

Work-Based Learning Opportunities

The next set of questions focuses on work-based learning opportunities. These include the following: paid and unpaid jobs, internships, apprenticeships, service learning, and community service.

18. Tell me about any work-based learning opportunities you have participated in after enrolling in the college? For example, a paid job or unpaid job or internship, apprenticeship, service learning or community service, on-the-job training, job shadowing, or work-site field trips.

IF NO WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, SKIP TO QUESTION 22.

19. How did these work experiences relate to your career goals?
20. Did you need or request any work-related accommodations? What were they? Were you provided the accommodations you requested?

21. Overall, was your work-based learning opportunity a positive experience? Tell me why or why not?

PROBE (if needed):

- If you could start over, what would you change about your work-based learning experience(s)?
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22. Have you changed your career goals? If so, was it due to any aspect of participating in [OPC/UPEP]?

Challenges

23. Next, tell me about any challenges you have faced with participating in the [OPC/UPEP] program.

24. Is transportation to and from school or other program-related activities a problem for you? If so, in what way?

Self-Advocacy

25. In what ways does your disability affect your school experience?

PROBE (if needed):

- Does your disability interfere with your ability to participate in classroom activities or any programmatic activities?

26. Do you think you are a better advocate for yourself since you've been in the [OPC/UPEP] program? Why or why not?

PROBES (if needed):

- What has the [OPC/UPEP] program done to help you become a better advocate?
- Are you better prepared to ask for what you need? How so?
- Would you feel comfortable advocating for yourself in a job?

Program Follow-Up

27. What are your plans once you complete your [OPC/UPEP] training/certification?

PROBES (if needed):

- Do you plan to begin employment?

- Are you planning to apply the training you've received towards another credential or a college degree program?
28. What aspects of this program do you feel have been the most beneficial to you in regards to your post [OPC/UPEP] goals?
29. What experiences working with the various college support services do you feel have been the most beneficial to you in regards to your post [OPC/UPEP] goals?
30. Have you had any interaction with your local AJC or VR agency? How useful has it been?

Conclusion

31. What, if anything, would you like to see changed or improved with respect to [OPC/UPEP] to better help you in preparing for your career?

Closing

32. Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to tell me about your experience with [OPC/UPEP]?

PROBES (if needed):

- In general, are you satisfied with the help you receive from:
 - o Your classroom teachers?
 - o The office of disability services?
 - o School counseling staff?
 - o Administrative staff?

Thank you very much for participating in this discussion. We have learned a lot about your experiences in the [OPC/UPEP] program.