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Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Wayne E. Wright

University of Texas, San Antonio, wewright@purdue.edu

Sovicheth Boun

The State University of New York at Fredonia, bounsovicheth@gmail.com

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*Conference Report of the National Association for the Education and
Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans*

APPENDIX A

Southeast Asian Student Focus Group Discussions Guidelines for Student Leader Facilitators

Please hold a focus group session with your members prior to NAFEA Conference (Oct. 22-23, 2010). This can be done at one of your regular meetings, or can be done in a separate section with a smaller group of students. It may be helpful to do the focus groups after most students have done the online survey, as the survey will get them thinking and reflecting on these issues. But please don't delay your meeting which should be held at the earliest convenience.

Please take careful notes and prepare a summary of the responses to present at the conference. It is usually best to have one person leading the discussion, and one person taking notes. Be sure to note the number of participants in the discussion.

If possible, please audio record the session, and provide a copy of the recording for us at the conference. Before recording, ensure that all members give permission for the session to be recorded and for the recording to be provided to NAFEA for research and advocacy purposes. Names of participants should not be provided, and students' identities will be kept strictly confidential.

Please guide a discussion around the following 4 areas which will be addressed at the conference:

- Southeast Asian Student Education (K-12): Access, Assessment, and Accountability
- Southeast Asian Language /Culture Programs
- Southeast Asian American Higher Education Access and Opportunities
- Southeast Asian American Communities



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The discussion may focus on the particular ethnic group(s) represented by your organization. [substitute “SEA Students” with “Hmong, Khmer, Lao, or Vietnamese Students”; and SEA Languages with your group’s language(s), etc.]

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Wayne E. Wright at wayne.wright@utsa.edu, or Sovicheth Boun at bounsovicheth@gmail.com.

Suggested Focus Group Questions

The following are suggested questions that can be used to facilitate the discussion. You probably won’t have time to ask all of them, thus please select those you feel are most appropriate for your group. Feel free to modify any of these questions, or ask your own. Try to cover all 4 areas if possible. Encourage students to give details and examples, and use follow-up questions to get them to elaborate as needed.

Southeast Asian Student Education (K-12): Access, Assessment, and Accountability

Did you like school? Why or why not?

How were SEA students treated at your schools?

How well did most SEA students do in your schools?

Did you have any SEA teachers or administrators? If so, how did you feel about them?

Do you feel we need to have more SEA teachers and administrators?

Were you an English language learner (ELL) or limited English proficient (LEP) student?

If so, what assistance did your schools give you to help you learn English?

To help you learn academic content?

What kinds of struggles did you have in school due to a lack a English proficiency?

What can schools do to better serve SEA English language learners?

How often did you have opportunities to learn about SEA history or culture in school?

Should the schools do more to include SEA history and culture in the curriculum?

How do you feel about the state tests you were required to take in school?

How did these state tests impact the teaching and learning in your classrooms and schools?

How do you feel about the use of test scores as the only criterion in making important decisions about things such as grade level promotion, and high-school graduation?

Did you have any SEA friends or classmates who dropped out of school or who didn't graduate due the state tests?

Is there a drop-out problem among SEA students in our schools? If so, what leads to drop out? What can schools or others do to reduce the drop-out rate?

What policy changes could be made at the local, state, or federal levels to help us address these K-12 issues?

Southeast Asian Language and Cultures

How well can you speak, read and write your SEA language?

Do you feel a strong connection between your SEA language, culture and identity?

Do you feel it is important for SEA students to develop and maintain proficiency in their SEA language?

Do you wish you had more opportunities to further develop your SEA language?

What challenges have you faced at home or in the community related to lack of proficiency in your SEA language?

Did you participate in any SEA language programs when you were in school?

Did you get foreign language credit for these classes?

Who taught them?

Where were these programs held? At your school? In the community?

How effective were these programs in helping you develop or maintain your SEA language?

Did you enjoy going to these classes?

Do we need more SEA language programs in schools and the community?

Do you think our SEA language will continue to spoken in the United States over the next few generations?

Does our college have classes in our SEA language?

YES – How popular are they? Who has taken these classes? How effective were they in helping you further develop the language? Are they geared more towards non-native speakers or native speakers? What could be done to improve these courses?

NO – Why not? Would there be enough students to take them if we had them? How can we get courses started on our campus?

What policy changes could be made at the local, state, or federal levels to help us address these SEA program issues?

Southeast Asian American Higher Education Access and Opportunities

What challenges and obstacles did you face in getting into college?

What challenges and obstacles are faced by other SEA students' which prevent them from getting into college?

How much support did you receive from your parents and others to get into and stay in college?

What challenges do SEA students face in college?

What support is available to help students with these challenges?

Do you know of any SEA students who have dropped out of college? What were some reasons why they dropped out?

What policy changes could be made at the local, state, or federal levels to help us address these higher education issues?

Southeast Asian American Communities

What are some of the biggest challenges facing our SEA community?

Do members of our SEA community experience racial or ethnic discrimination?

What have been some of the successes of our SEA community over the past 35 years?

What things can be done to help our communities overcome these challenges?

What policy changes could be made at the local, state, or federal levels to help us address these community issues?