



Student Voices Series Guidebook:

Key Themes & Recommendations from Diverse Populations in Emergency Management & Homeland Security Programs



Introduction

Background

Since September 11, 2001, emergency and crisis management academic programs have drastically increased from 75 to 330¹. Subsequently, emergency management and homeland security programs are experiencing immense growth, however; it is still a relatively new academic discipline. As emergency management and homeland security fields of employment have historically employed individuals who are older, predominantly male, and Caucasian, the composition of academicians teaching these courses based on their knowledge and experience is likely reflective of the composition of the field which is not reflective of demographic trends in the US population. As a whole, [the US is becoming far more diverse](#), especially among Millennials and Generation Z who are just entering the workforce². The demographics of the emergency management and homeland security field are at odds with the fact that those [most vulnerable to disaster](#) are those of low socioeconomic and minority status³. As social vulnerability and resilience rise in importance, along with diversity, equity, and inclusion, mechanisms of teaching and learning must be adjusted to meet the needs of both academicians and students to ensure stability in future approaches to emergency management as a field of employment and academic discipline.

Purpose

The Student Voices Sessions were conceptualized by members of the [Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management \(I-DIEM\)](#) (<https://i-diem.org/>), in collaboration with the [FEMA Higher Education Program](#) (<https://training.fema.gov/hiedu/>), to capture the voices of minority students in emergency and homeland security (EM/HS) programs who felt they were not being supported. Each session was a collective and community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to capturing themes from diverse student groups including students of color, primarily, as well as women, LGBTQ, and those with disabilities that often have a challenging time in academic institutions. This approach is effective for exploring the knowledge and experiences of students to examine not only what students think, but how they think and why they think that way. This further defines diversity, equity, and inclusion issues faced across multiple groups nationally that can positively influence future academic and practical approaches in emergency management and identify opportunities to develop best practices. Each session exposed experiences of inequality, bias, and challenges related both directly and indirectly to their minority status. Their perspective, in addition to known data, serve as a resource to inform the creation of this report and guidebook of key findings and recommendations to provide a roadmap for potential satellite dialogues at college campuses.

¹ Knox, C.C. & Haupt, B. (2020). *Cultural Competency for Emergency and Crisis Management: Concepts, Theories and Case Studies*. Taylor & Francis.

² [What We Know About Gen Z So Far](#) | Pew Research Center (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/>)

³ [At A Glance: CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index](#) | Place and Health | ATSDR (https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/at-a-glance_svi.html)

Methodology

Overview

The goal of the Student Voices Series was to outline solutions that better support diverse students and their journey to academic success in their chosen career field. The series consisted of four (4) virtual student sessions addressing the following key themes:

- Identifying Needs of Diverse Students in EM/HS-focused programs
- Defining Student Experiences in EM/HS-focused programs
- Supporting Students: Identifying Solutions for Barriers to Student Success
- Collaborative Learning: Bridging the Gaps Between Academicians and Students

Key questions related to each theme are outlined below:

Session I:

- What are the key needs for diverse students in EM/HS programs?
- What needs are not adequately addressed in your learning experience?
- What will best suit diverse students to be effective EM leaders?

Session II:

- Have you experienced bias, discrimination, or inequitable barriers in your program?
- How has the current EM landscape influenced your academic and professional progress?
- If you could describe your experience in EM/HS programs in three words what would they be?

Session III:

- What are best practices for teaching and learning for students in EM/HS programs?
- How could your learning experience be improved?
- How do we overcome previously identified barriers for students in EM/HS programs?

Session IV:

- What are the similarities between academician and student experiences?
- How can both collaboratively learn from needs, experiences and identified solutions?

Rationale for Series Approach

Student Voices Sessions serve as a group discussion that capitalizes on communication between students across the United States to generate understanding and insight into the experiences of diverse students in EM/HS-focused programs. Similar to a research focus group, a group interview that capitalizes on communication between student participants to generate data, the Student Voices Sessions are a qualitative approach to academic success across diverse students in emergency management. In such, this approach allows I-DIEM and the FEMA Higher Education Program to systematically collect multiple insights through group interaction and guided discussion that provides anecdotal evidence through student perspectives.

PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES

The Student Voices Sessions were an exploratory, community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that will also be utilized to collect data on key themes relative to diverse student experiences. The sessions were conducted in a semi-structured group interview process was moderated by group facilitators. Notable characteristics of each session discussion included:

- Standardization of questions – Structured protocol versus open-ended discussion
- Number of sessions conducted – amount of focus groups conducted, and the segmentation / stratification of students based on researcher’s main goal.
- Number of students per group.
- Level of moderator involvement – high versus low degree of control / structured interview or discussion questions.

COVERING NEEDS

Research

Research occurred at the project level, and on the individual session level. General level research was required to produce an effective and comprehensive “project design” that articulated the major historical topics, themes, and internal / external experiences of students. The project design prioritized areas of content and created a safe space for student engagement, so that there was a governing logic to the planning for each session. This approach had the value of reducing redundancy and expanding the range of themes that were developed in the project as a whole. This project design served as a standard by which the Student Voices Sessions were evaluated. Secondly, facilitators and sponsors also conducted research at the micro level, for each session that was produced, moving from the general themes that governed the project to develop specific questions for each group session. Students were encouraged to bring themes and topics of their own to the conversation, which accounted for the richness of the session experience.

Session Discussion

Student Voices Session discussions were a conversational exchange. Session facilitators prepared themes and topics that emerged throughout the conversation. For this series, facilitators focused on:

- Identifying Needs of Diverse Students in EM/HS-focused programs
- Defining Student Experiences in EM/HS-focused programs
- Supporting Students: Identifying Solutions for Barriers to Student Success
- Collaborative Learning: Bridging the Gaps Between Academicians and Students

The advantage of this approach is that it provides a full scope of barriers while providing necessary input on actionable solutions, which was essential to understanding student perspectives of EM/HS programs. Session facilitators were well trained to approach student participants sympathetically and with sensitivity [**See Appendix: Training Protocol**] (superb listening skills are essential) and were also able to follow the interview protocol effectively to capture key themes of the project.

Processing and Evaluation

To ensure Student Voices Sessions produced tangible and quality outcomes, the series followed a strong qualitative methodological process. Each session was a recorded discussion that was transcribed, edited and ingested into a digital repository that yielded this final report of series key themes. This consistent process of checking and evaluation results in a high-quality product. The following steps ensured credibility of the process:

The Student Voices Session: Sessions were 60 minutes in length. Student participants were de-identified during transcription to ensure anonymity of response. Upon the completion of the session, facilitators saved and stored each session which were provided to an external transcriptionist for adequate transcriptions without bias.

Transcription: Sessions were conducted and recorded via Zoom. Additionally, Facilitators assigned an additional facilitator to record notes and identify key themes which were also provided for transcription. Digital files were provided to a dedicated transcriber, along with the notes prepared by the facilitator.

Audit-editing: The Project Manager reviewed each minute of every recording to compare it to the transcript to ensure accuracy and literate transcription of the spoken word, eliminating cross-talk, false starts, etc.

Guidebook Development: Once the assigned sessions have been completed and audit-edited for minor errors, the transcripts were developed, along with survey results, into a guidebook. The guidebook was peer-reviewed by I-DIEM reviewers.

Archives: Incorporation of all changes and the final transcript will be archived. There were two forms of evaluation that took place in this process that ensured the quality of the Student Voices Sessions and the project. One, facilitators listened to the discussion following the session allowing him/her to reflect on missed opportunities, ideas for next questions, etc. The second form of evaluation, the audit-edit, was performed by the Program Manger to identify nuances and opportunities for deepening the exchange that informs the quality of the project as a whole.

Results

From February 18 – March 11, 2021, I-DIEM hosted weekly, recorded Student Voices Sessions via Zoom. Sessions were promoted through I-DIEM university partners through the University Partnership Program along with the organization's robust contact list of HBCUs, MSIs, and organizational supporters including academicians and practitioners. Interested participants were prompted to register for each session prior to attendance. Sessions were open to students in emergency management and/or homeland security programs at the associate, bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels. A total of 58 students registered across all sessions with the majority of students participating at the bachelor's level (n=48; 82%). The remaining participants were (n=10; 18%) were associates level students. Students were well represented geographically with student participation from Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, Maryland, Arkansas, California, Colorado, New York, Louisiana, Illinois, and Iowa. Participant names and university affiliations were de-identified to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The remainder of this section will outline key themes from session findings.

Key Themes

PIPELINE PROGRAMS

EM/HS programs need to focus on providing pipeline programs that set students up for success post- graduation. Throughout each of the four sessions participants emphasized the importance of obtaining hands-on experience in the field during their academic training. As employers prefer more experienced candidates, students are at a disadvantage for positions when competing against those with military, fire management, and law enforcement backgrounds who often branch over into emergency management. Participants also spoke highly of confidence, skills, and connections forged through such experiences. One participant explained that their internship with FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division put them in contact with a leader in the field, and through discussions with them they came to better understand what they wanted to do with their career. They also felt that their time on the Youth Preparedness Council pushed them out of their comfort zone and helped them learn leadership. In addition to building student's connections to those within the field, pipeline programs also connect young professionals to the communities they serve. One participant praised how the internship program at their university showed students what they could bring into the field by having Spanish-speaking students work with the local Spanish-speaking population along the US-Mexican border.

Recommendations

EM/HS programs should implement intentional pipeline programs throughout student's education so that students can gain the skills to be competitive in the field, give them opportunities to explore their interests and connect them to the local community.

DIVERSITY AND LEADERSHIP

Lack of diversity in EM/HS programs negatively impacts minority students' sense of belonging and motivation to continue in the field. Imposter syndrome, self-doubt related to the feeling that one does not belong where they are and that their success is due to outside factors rather than their own merits, is commonly reported among minority students. This syndrome is associated with higher levels of [anxiety and depression](#) which can lead to more students leaving their academic programs⁴. Participants expressed how these feelings manifested as part of being a racial minority attending predominantly white institutions (PWI) with the expectation of going into a field with similar demographics. One participant recalled struggling with feeling fraudulent and how the additional stress negatively impacted their motivation to the point where they had to attend classes less often to maintain their stamina to continue with their degree. Even when students do take credit for their accomplishments, they still have to deal with the burden of being perceived as a representative of their race in predominantly white spaces. These feelings can be mixed; there is pride in a visible minority taking on leadership and speaking with confidence but there is also the knowledge that one has to prove themselves more due to that visibility. Alternatively, participants also shared stories of how meeting attentive and supportive

⁴ [Impostor feelings as a moderator and mediator of the relationship between perceived discrimination and mental health among racial/ethnic minority college students - - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28277731/) (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28277731/)

leaders had a positive impact on their confidence and motivation. Believing that someone of experience and note in the field genuinely believes in your skills and abilities is important for students' growth and sense of belonging.

Recommendations

Efforts should be made to provide mental health resources specifically for students of diverse populations. At the core of this recommendation is the desire for support and dedication to student success. These resources should work to lessen anxiety and depression while promoting self-worth and an internal locus of control around their accomplishments.

Programs should focus on providing networking opportunities including opportunities for practical engagement and mentorships by diverse leaders in the field to promote sense of belonging and lessen the burdens of both academic matriculation and progression into the field.

COMMUNICATION & AWARENESS

Students are often frustrated by communication breakdowns with faculty and administrators of EM/HS programs. Participants were repeatedly dissatisfied with the lack of communication which left them feeling less supported and more aimless. A particular point was made of the limited role of advising, with multiple participants stating they had little to no contact with advisors in their undergraduate programs. One student said they did not feel like they received good advising and ended up changing their major multiple times shifting a three-year graduation path into a five-year path. For many, they did not get connected to an advisor until certification for graduation was required.

Another identified theme was communication between professors and students. One student expressed frustration that the professor of a class they were struggling with seemed apathetic to teaching them and would not provide additional resources to help them improve. However, students also expressed positivity over professors that were invested in their success and checked in with students who were failing or whose grades dropped. Some professors were also said to be very "old-school" and stuck in their ways when it came to teaching, which left little flexibility for students who learned differently or needed more attention. These problems were only compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent switch to online learning. This switch was stressful for professors who were still adjusting to using online platforms to share information and students were confused about where to find coursework. This frustration built as different professors all had their different systems for updating work. Difficulty navigating online learning also comes from the student end, as one participant had to get their son to help them figure out the online learning platform and only understood how to navigate it confidently after two semesters. Finally, one participant pointed out how the program at their school did not advertise itself strongly, and they found out about it later in their schooling. They felt that the program could have reached out to more students and explain how it was connected to other fields.

Recommendations

Advising, including information on careers in EM/HS as well as stress management and study skills, should take on a more prominent role in student's lives earlier in their academic career.

EM/HS programs should take steps to assess and train professors for a teaching with cultural competency and to create a culture of flexibility and attentiveness that is supportive of diverse student's backgrounds and learning styles.

Technical support and training should be available to both professors and students and attempts should be made to establish standardized online learning approaches and online learning platforms that are more consistent between professors to decrease confusion.

Programs should advertise themselves strongly and emphasize the field's interdisciplinary nature to gain diverse students' attention to the wide array of futures available to them in the EM/HS field.

RACE AND COMMUNITY

EM/HS programs within predominantly white institutions (PWI) need to encourage the connection between marginalized students on campus and within the curriculum itself. Participants discussed, at length, the differences between attending a PWI versus a historically black college and university (HBCU). Altogether, the participants experienced both types of institutions across multiple academic levels, each with its own challenges and benefits. As stated earlier, participants expressed feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and stress associated with being a minority in a PWI. However, two participants shared that they had both positive and negative experiences of PWIs based on how strongly the institution supported diverse populations. Both had attended PWI's that had on-campus institutes for Black students and culture. One student participated in a minority advising program that had upper-class minority students check in with freshmen every two weeks. Both students looked back positively on these institutions and appreciated how these efforts formed a strong community that they could rely on. They reported more negative feelings associated with the PWI's they attended later in their academic careers that did not make the same resources available.

It is important that supporting diverse populations is not just isolated to specialized institutions and programs but also woven into the curriculum and research done in the emergency management and homeland security programs as well. At less supportive PWI's, students expressed disappointment on how few classes had limited focus on racial and ethnic minority issues and that research regarding those topics was dismissed. Further, they did not feel comfortable discussing their problems with white professors and faculty. Community is not only about people but also the ideas and topics which are discussed and considered important. PWI's that do not provide this support isolate and hurt minority students while also limiting the kind of research and understanding of emergency management that can be reached. As only 11 HBCUs offer EM/HS programs at the bachelor's level, it is highly likely that the majority of students from diverse populations could possibly share this experience.

Recommendations

EM/HS programs within PWIs should create mentorship programs that connect minority lowerclassmen interested in the field with upperclassmen to encourage on-campus peer support systems and communities for students at the beginning of their academic journey.

EM/HS programs within PWIs should encourage the creation of program-specific student groups

based around minority and marginalized identities where students can engage in community building as well as community advocacy by coming together to express their needs and concerns to faculty and administration.

In response, EM/HS programs should provide pathways where diverse populations can comfortably bring their concerns to faculty and express how they think the program can improve and better meet their needs.

Diverse students' perspectives should be included throughout EM/HS programs curriculum and research to prove to minority students that their experience, expertise, and interests are valued and an important part of progressing the field forward.

STUDY-WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Minority EM/HS students struggle to balance many obligations in addition to their work within their academic program leading to more stress and missed opportunities. Financial stress was a strong concern among participants who had to manage to get the most out of their education while also working for food, shelter, and childcare. Time management is a common and necessary part of early secondary education for students; however, in comparison to their white counterpart's minority students overall receive less financial support from their families and thus need to take out more loans and work more during their schooling. Multiple students cited having multiple jobs to pay their way through school and studies show that at above 15 hours a week, [working students' grades are shown to suffer](#)⁵.

Time spent at work or on other obligations such as family and child-care is also less time for internships, taking on extra projects from faculty, and other extracurriculars that build student's resumes and networks. As a result, students with more extracurricular obligations are looked over for opportunities to learn and excel in comparison to their more independent peers. As one student candidly stated, certain students who were able to prove themselves to faculty through taking on additional projects were then given even more opportunities while other students were given "scraps". This can widen racial disparities in these programs as more hands-on opportunities available to students that have fewer obligations outside of academia who are more likely to be white.

Recommendations

EM/HS programs should provide paid opportunities for minority students that allow them to learn and gain valuable experience without sacrificing financial stability.

For students that have tight schedules due to work-life obligations, opportunities to gain as much valuable experience and networking as possible with less time commitment should be made available.

EM/HS programs should provide workshops and other resources on time and stress management for students to help them adjust to the challenges of undergraduate and graduate life.

⁵ [Balancing Work and Learning, 34727.pdf \(issuelab.org\)](#)
(<https://scholarshipsforchange.issuelab.org/resources/34727/34727.pdf>)

Conclusion

As the effects of climate change begin to manifest themselves the need for well-trained, creative emergency and crisis management professionals will only increase. Historically, the backgrounds of these professionals have not matched the backgrounds of those most vulnerable to disaster and there is growing awareness for the necessity of minority perspectives and voices driving the evolution of this young field. The participants of the Student Voices Sessions shared how EM/HS programs too often fail in providing the best support they can to minority students who face a variety of direct and indirect challenges related to their identity. Overall, EM/HS programs need to work harder to make the field a community where minority students can learn, thrive, and innovate. Support means providing minority students with the opportunities get hands-on experience, network with diverse leaders, and explore their research interests in an encouraging environment. Mental health resources also need to be available for students struggling with stress management both of workload and imposter syndrome. Finally, programs have to be aware and make available resources to combat the struggles minority students who lack financial support and time to participate in academia. Though higher education helps to promote justice and movement towards a safer and more equal world it also too often replicates inequitable systems. Solutions for this problem can only come from listening to the voices of minority students and trying to create programs that better support their ambitions.

Limitations

Although the Student Voices Series provided valuable insight into the experiences of diverse populations in emergency management and homeland security programs, the sample of students participants is not widely generalizable to the entire population. Additionally, responses were based on self-reported experiences which introduces potential response bias. Future approaches to the series should focus on increasing sample size for generalizability and opportunities exist to capture specific experiences of diverse populations individually (i.e., women, LGBTQ+, etc.) opposed to collective responses.

Appendix

Training Protocol

Overview of Training (The Student Voices Session Process)

The series process is structured and requires a set process that must be facilitated to ensure success. Overall guidelines include:

Administrative Processes

1. Research and development of session project, first time facilitators and others involved in session projects should seek training to prepare themselves for all stages of the process.
2. In the early stages of preparation, facilitators should establish an appropriate repository that has the capacity to preserve the session data and make them accessible to the public (if applicable).
3. Series sponsors or others responsible for planning the sessions should choose potential student participants based on the relevance of their experiences to the subject at hand.
4. The drafting and development of necessary documentation (session protocol, informed consent, participant agreement, pre- and post-survey, structured interview/discussion guide, etc.)
5. When ready to contact a possible participant, facilitators should send via email an introductory letter outlining the general focus and purpose of the interview, and then follow-up with a return email.
6. After securing the participants agreement to serve on session, scheduled Zoom meeting information will be provided. The facilitator will allot time for exchange of information between facilitator and student reasons for conducting the interview, the process that will be involved, and the need for informed consent and participant agreement. During pre-interview discussion the facilitator should make sure that each student understands:
 - Student Voices Sessions purposes and procedures in general and of the proposed interview's aims and anticipated uses.
 - Students' rights to the interviews including editing, access restrictions, copyrights, prior use, royalties, and the expected disposition and dissemination of all forms of the record, including the potential distribution electronically or on-line.
 - That recording(s) will remain confidential until participant has given permission via a signed agreement.
7. Facilitators should use the best digital recording equipment within their means to reproduce the participants' voice accurately and, if appropriate, other sounds as well as visual images. Before the interview, interviewers should become familiar with the equipment and be knowledgeable about its function.

Equipment

Audio: Use of Zoom platform with functional recording feature. Additional use of a digital recorder to provide back-up recording of each session.

NOTE: It will be beneficial for each student participant to say their name prior to spoken contribution.

Video: Use of Zoom platform with functional recording feature.

8. Student location: Choose a quiet room where you will not be disturbed by other people, television noise, ringing telephones, or similar distractions. Try to avoid talking over the noise of heaters, air conditioners, kitchen appliances, etc. Choose a room that is also well lighted and choose a background that will complement participation in the series.
9. Facilitators should prepare an outline of discussion topics and questions to use as a guide to the recorded dialogue. (Please see Session Training Protocol)

Training Protocol

Pre-Interview

1. Identify your facilitator — Make sure this person is cordial, engaging, and has an enjoyment of conversation.
2. Obtain consent—be sure each student understands why this series is important and what your plans are once the sessions are completed. Make the sessions as professional as possible by scheduling an unhurried, gracious space session with your students.
3. Before the session, test your Zoom recording ability and sound level. Become comfortable with the equipment—be able to locate and use the buttons with ease.
4. Record an introduction.
Example: “This is John Doe facilitating Session one (1) with the Student Voices Session participants on May 2, 1999. This session is taking place virtually on Zoom.”
5. Prepare and take with you a general list of questions or topics that cover the discussion area as thoroughly as possible. Be sure that you have done enough research to ask intelligent, probing questions. You should also be familiar with names and terms that are a part of your narrator’s area of expertise.
6. At the time of the session, be sure to explain again the purpose of the series. Make the student participants feel as relaxed as possible.
7. Begin with simple questions. Be sure to follow the protocol to maintain order and capture relevant themes. Numbered items are primary questions and lettered items are meant to serve as probes if necessary. Go through your list of topics, without interrupting the participants or disturbing the flow of the session.
8. Listen carefully and be prepared to use probing questions (lettered items) when necessary. Be especially alert to the shorthand many people use in conversation. Use follow-up questions to clarify unclear items.
9. After the interview, be sure to review the spellings of names and places that the participants have mentioned. Jot down any information regarding photographs or other materials that your participant has identified during the session and double-check any dates or biographical information that the participant has discussed.
10. Send a thank-you note to participants
11. Consider whether the session should be transcribed and who will do the work — yourself, a volunteer, a secretarial service, or a professional transcriber. Also, decide whether the participant should have an opportunity to review the transcript. Be prepared to audit, edit and proofread the transcript.
12. Think about potential uses for your finished series.

Interview

1. The session should be conducted in a facilitated environment conducive for discussion.
2. The facilitator should record a “lead” at the beginning of each session to help focus his or her and the students’ thoughts to each session’s goals. The ‘lead’ should consist of, at least,

the names of participants and facilitators, day and year of session, interview's location, and proposed subject of the recording.

3. Approximate length of the session is 60 minutes. The facilitator is responsible for assessing whether the participants are becoming tired and at that point should ask whether a facilitated break should be incorporated into the session. Students can discontinue their participation in each session as deemed necessary.
4. Along with asking creative and probing questions (Please see protocol) and listening to the answers to ask better follow-up questions, the facilitator should keep the following items in mind:
 - Sessions should be conducted in accordance with any prior agreements made with participants, which should be documented for the record.
 - Facilitators should work to achieve a balance between the objectives of the project and the perspectives of the students. Facilitators should fully explore all appropriate areas of inquiry with students and not be satisfied with superficial responses. At the same time, they should encourage students to respond to questions in their own style and language and to address issues that reflect their concerns.
 - Facilitators must respect the rights of participants to refuse to discuss certain subjects, to restrict access to the interview, or, under certain circumstances, to choose anonymity. Facilitators should clearly explain these options to all participants.
 - Facilitators should attempt to extend the inquiry beyond the specific focus of the project to create as complete a record as possible for the benefit of others.
 - In recognition of the importance of this series to an understanding of the past and of the cost and effort involved, facilitators and students should mutually strive to record candid information of lasting value.
5. The facilitator should secure a release form, by which the participant transfers his or her rights to the session to the repository or designated body, signed after each recording session or at the end of the last interview with the students.

Interview Tips

1. The session should serve as a dialogue between participants. You are there to record someone else's experiences, not to talk about yourself. The whole point of the session is to make sure the participant shares their own experience and insight. Limit your own remarks to some small talk to make the participants comfortable, and then prompt him or her with questions to guide the discussion.
2. Ask questions which require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Start questions with "why," "how," "where," "what," and "when."
3. Ask one question at a time. Sometimes a facilitator asks a series of questions all at once. The participant usually ends up only answering the first question, and the information that would have been supplied in answering the other questions is lost.
4. Ask brief questions.
5. Don't let periods of silence fluster you. Give participants an opportunity to add comments before you rush him or her off in another direction. Relax and jot down a few notes while our students regroup.
6. Don't worry if your questions are not as beautifully phrased as you would like. When you

fumble somewhat with your questions, the participant realizes that you do not expect him or her to give perfectly composed responses. Be as natural as possible. Listen quietly and carefully and actively. Encourage students with an occasional smile or nod. Do not say things like “yes,” “uh- huh,” and “really” repeatedly. Don’t look bored or disinterested. Maintaining eye contact is vital.

7. Don’t interrupt a student’s experience just because you have thought of a question or because the participant is straying from your planned outline. Jot down your question for later. Be on your toes and remember that your list of questions is only a guide, not a rigid plan. Be ready to ask further questions when your participant offers unexpected information.
8. If your narrator does ramble, wait for a pause and try to pull him or her back to the subject at hand. **Example:** “That’s very interesting. Now before we continue, I would like to find out more about how current flood policy affects your community.”
9. Try to establish your student’s role at important points in the story. This will establish how much of the narrative is based on participant experience and how much is based on secondhand information.
10. Do not challenge accounts that you think are inaccurate. Instead, try to develop as much information as possible, which can be used by later researchers to establish what really did happen. This does not challenge the participant’s account, but rather suggests ways to clarify other stories already in existence. Often the best participatory research material comes from a participant who differs from other sources.
11. Avoid “off the record” information, where your participant asks you to turn off the recording or turn off the recording to tell you a story. When the recording is off, the information being told is immediately lost to anyone but yourself.
12. End the interview at a reasonable time. Smile, thank the participants profusely, and inform participants of the upcoming engagement time.
13. Review the tape afterwards. Even the most experienced facilitator will spot missed opportunities or things he or she might have done differently. Use what you’ve learned to make the session better. When reviewing the tape, remember that there is no such thing as a perfect discussion. Don’t be discouraged by awkward questions or repetition, or if your participants jump from one topic to another. This is how people often recall things. Try to think of the taped session discussion as raw material.

Post Interview

1. Facilitators, sponsoring institutions, and institutions charged with the preservation of the session discussions should understand that appropriate care and storage of original recordings begins immediately after their creation.
2. Facilitators should document their preparation and methods, including the circumstances of the session and provide that information to whatever repository will be preserving and providing access to the discussion.
3. Information deemed relevant for the interpretation of the series by future users, such as photographs, documents, or other records should be collected, and archivists should make clear to users the availability and connection of these materials to the recorded session.
4. The recordings of the sessions should be stored, processed, refreshed and accessed according to established archival standards designated for the media format used. Whenever possible, all efforts should be made to preserve electronic files in formats that are cross platform and nonproprietary.
5. In order to augment the accessibility of the session discussion, repositories should make

transcriptions, indexes, time tags, detailed descriptions or other written guides to the contents.

6. Institutions charged with the preservation and access of session discussion material should honor the stipulations of prior agreements made with the participants or sponsoring institutions including restrictions on access and methods of distribution.
7. The repository should comply to the extent to which it is aware with the letter and spirit of the participant's agreement with the facilitator and sponsoring institution. If written documentation such as consent and release forms do not exist, then the institution should make a good faith effort to contact participants regarding their intent.
8. All those who utilize session discussion material should strive for intellectual honesty and the best application of the skills of their discipline. They should avoid stereotypes, misrepresentations, and manipulations of the narrator's words. This includes foremost striving to retain the integrity of the participant's perspective, recognizing the subjectivity of the session discussion, and interpreting and contextualizing the narrative according to the professional standards of the applicable scholarly disciplines. Finally, if a project deals with community history, the facilitator should be sensitive to the community, taking care not to reinforce thoughtless stereotypes. Facilitators should strive to make the interviews accessible to the community and where appropriate to include representatives of the community in public programs or presentations of series material.

Necessary Documents

Project Overview – Goals, Mission, Aim, Purpose, Background, etc.

Informed Consent

Participant Agreement Form

Media / Content Release Form

Student Voices Session Training Protocol

Structured Interview / Discussion Guide (Number & Letter format – Numbers = Questions; Letters = Probes)