



2022 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Author

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Problem Statement

Over the past several years, Lake Land College has identified a concerning trend with in-district high school graduates. The percent of in-district high school graduates choosing to forego higher education after high school graduation has increased over time. According to data from the National Student Clearinghouse, 45% of the 2019 in-district high school graduating class did not enroll in college in fall 2019. This percent increased to 48.7% for the

| In-District High School Graduating Class | Percent DID NOT Enroll in College Fall after Graduation |
|--|---|
| 2019 | 45.0% |
| 2020 | 48.7% |
| 2021 | 52.6% |
| 2022 | 49.4% |

2020 graduating class and increased, yet again, to 52.6% for the 2021 graduating class (Lake

Land College High School Graduate Reports 2019 through 2022). This is a 7.6% increase within two years, and some of this increase may be due to COVID for the 2021 graduating class. However, this percentage only dropped slightly to 49.4% in 2022 resulting in an almost 5% increase in recent graduating not enrolling in college over four years. The fact that almost 50% of the in-district high school graduating population is choosing to forego college is very concerning.

Objective

Based on this troubling trend, Lake Land College decided to conduct focus groups with current in-district high school students during the fall 2022 semester. The objective for these focus groups was to identify potential barriers or roadblocks for attending college. The College assembled a group of five faculty, the Vice President of Academic Services, and the Director of Institutional Research to develop a focus group plan and questionnaire.

Study Design

After reviewing enrollment data at all in-district high schools, the committee separated high schools into three categories (i.e., small, medium, and large) based on enrollment numbers of freshmen through seniors. Using size and location (i.e., proximity to Lake Land), the committee identified six high schools to participate in the study. Four Pathways classes were also included in the study. Once the schools were selected, the committee generated the questions to be asked during the focus group (See Appendix A for focus group script and questions) as well as outlined the plan for data collection.

Student Sample

The data collection plan involved conducting two focus groups at each participating high school. One focus group included students not planning to attend college after high school graduation and the other focus group included students planning to attend college after graduation. Students could be a sophomore, junior or senior in high school. Focus groups would be recorded and transcribed. It was suggested that each focus group should have a range of eight to twelve students. All focus groups would be held during the fall 2022 semester and would be completed before the Thanksgiving holiday.

During the summer of 2022, the Director of Institutional Research (DIR) contacted the superintendent of each selected school district with a brief letter describing the study. The letter was followed-up with phone calls to describe the study in more detail, address questions the superintendent may have about the study, and identify a contact person at each school. The contact person at each school helped organize the focus groups by identifying student participants, scheduling the date and time, and identifying a classroom or

space for each focus group. The contact person at each high school was offered a \$150 stipend for their assistance with the project.

Of the six selected high schools, four of them participated in the study. Two of the schools were unable to complete their participation in the study and unsuccessful attempts were made to replace these schools. However, one of the larger schools participating offered to make time for their entire senior class to participate. As a result, Lake Land faculty and staff facilitated a total of 24 focus groups within four in-district high schools and four Pathways programs, and 223 high school students across the district shared their thoughts and experiences related to planning for their future. All facilitators were asked to record the five key takeaways from each of the groups and submit these takeaways to the DIR as soon as possible. A summary of these takeaways is provided in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Once data collection was completed, the College used NVIVO software to transcribe the focus groups. A group of three faculty and a staff member then analyzed the data using the following steps. All of the focus group transcriptions were divided into four documents. Each of the four members of the data analysis group received two transcription documents with the following directions. First, they read through the entire documents without taking notes. On the second read through, they began to identify ideas/themes/concepts that began to emerge from the data. During the third read through, they assigned each idea/theme/concept a color and began to highlight passages, words, phrases with the color that supported the idea/theme/concept. They also identified additional themes/ideas during this process, and highlighted the new themes with additional colors. They tracked all of this in an Excel spreadsheet. After completing these steps, they were given the remaining two

transcription documents. Using the codes they developed, they coded the new transcriptions using their identified ideas/themes/concepts, and added any new ideas/themes/concepts from the new transcription documents.

Discussion

After completing these steps, the committee convened to compare and discuss their data analysis results. The lengthy discussion led to a consensus of the six main themes/concepts that emerged from the data. These themes/concepts include:

Theme 1: Cost/Finances/Money/Debt (Financial)

Across all of the focus groups and whether or not students were planning to attend college, one consistent main area of concern identified involved financing and costs. In every focus group, cost was raised as an issue at least once if not multiple times. High school students perceived the cost of college and/or student debt to be a major concern and even a deterrent for attending college. Although a few students mitigated these concerns with the support of financial aid and/or scholarships, the cost of college and the thought of student debt is a clear concern for students.

"I don't want to get stuck with ridiculous amounts of college debt."

Theme 2: Negative emotions related to the future

Another emerging theme involved fear of the future and the unknown. Many of the students expressed doubts about their future in a wide variety of ways. They discussed fears about the ability to cope as well as anxiety and stress related to college. They presented the fear of the unknown, and several from small communities

"I will suck at college."

"The world sometimes can be big and scary."

mentioned the fear of moving from an environment where you know everyone to a world where you know

few if any people and the class room settings are very different. Another fear includes being alone throughout the higher education process (i.e., maneuvering through the system—applying, paying for college, enrolling, succeeding in coursework). Other students mentioned the internal battle—“can I go to college and succeed?”

Other students, mainly in the not planning to attend college groups, reported having negative feelings related to school in general. Some of these students revealed a perception that school is a waste of time or that they do not enjoy school or are ready to be done with school. Similar reasons were provided by students in the planning to attend groups when asked about friends and classmates who decided to skip college after graduation.

Theme 3: Understand future options and related outcomes

It is fairly clear that local high school students, whether or not they are planning to attend college, have a fairly good idea and understand their future options after high school graduation. Across

“There's like four options everyone says either workforce, military, college, or your parent's basement.”

the focus groups students were fairly upfront that their options after high school graduation involve college, the workforce, or the military. Several even mentioned the military as a way to attain a college education. Examples of relatives and friends who took this approach were mentioned. In fact, one student had already planned everything out, was enrolled in ROTC at Eastern Illinois University and planned to use that as well as a scholarship to pay for her college education. She will be the first person in her family to attend college.

Many of the participating students in the planning to attend college focus groups

"I want a better life for myself and financial success and job opportunities."

understand the benefits of having a college education. They identified a number of valuable

reasons for attending college including: making good connections for the future, learning new skills, being able to make more money, having financial stability, having more

opportunities for employment, and needing a college education for the job they want are just a few of the advantages to a college education mentioned.

Although students understand options and do see the benefits of additional education, they do not seem to understand that community colleges offer trade programs such as welding, automotive, construction, etc. They seem to perceive that a trade

“He's encouraging me to go to take a trade school class for six months and get my certificate.”

“I want to go to a trade school for welding.”

school is different than a community college and don't have a good understanding of the similarities between a trade

school and a community college. Several students, at least one from each type of focus group (i.e., planning to attend and not planning to attend college) mentioned traveling out of state to attend trade schools versus attending a local community college.

Theme 4: Influencers of post high school path

The most common response to the question “who has helped you make your decision

“I feel that there is a lot of YouTubers that I watch that talk about how they went to college for some reason and then like after a while, they kind of realized that this wasn't really going to help them in the future. And then they kind of stopped going to college and then started like doing YouTube.”

related to college” by far is parents. Parents seem to have the most influence related to their children's decision to attend college. Other influencers include other family members such as siblings and grandparents as well as educators (i.e., teachers, counselors, coaches). Siblings currently attending or

who have attended college were used several times as examples of people who encouraged college enrollment. Friends, especially those currently attending college were also mentioned several times as encouraging college. One potential negative influence on college attendance that was mentioned a couple of times included social media influencers on YouTube or other social media outlets. It seems some social media influencers may discuss the fact that they do

not use their college education or that they dropped out of college because they didn't see the benefit it would have to their future.

Theme 5: Non-monetary/financial roadblocks

Participating students also offered a number of non-monetary roadblocks related to enrolling in college. Several focus groups, especially those located further away from Lake Land, identified transportation as a concern. Part of the transportation barrier involved the money necessary

"Because like gas prices, I'm sure you who drive can agree that it's even probably hard for people to get to work. I got six dollars in my bank account. I don't know how I'm making it work."

to pay for gas. The other part included reliable transportation and what resources would be needed if their car would break down.

Safety was another concern mentioned by students planning to attend college as a

"School shootings and stuff and certain areas like bigger cities have a higher safety concern."

potential barrier to college attendance. This concerned overlapped a bit with the idea of moving to larger

and/or more heavily populated areas where crime may be more of a concern. Finding safe housing was another concern when moving to a new area.

Housing, in general, was another roadblock. Finding affordable and safe housing in a new area was a concern mentioned by several students. Housing was actually mentioned as an issue that made some students think twice about attending college. Also, students mentioned that many four year universities require freshmen and sophomores to live in campus housing which is perceived as more expensive than apartment living.

Another roadblock involved feeling unprepared for college. In fact, two students in the planning to attend college groups mentioned that high school is not preparing them for college. They felt that their high school was not preparing them enough for college and the workforce at all because the high school allowed them to retake tests and hand in homework late towards the end of the semester and still get credit. They feared this would not be the case in college.

“Like high school, they’re not preparing us well for college, right now. Oh yeah, you can retake this test. Just fill out the form and retake the test. But in college, it’s make or break like they’re not going to have you retake it. I mean, quizzes, maybe, but like the test, its make or break. If you fail, you fail it. You’re not going to retake it. And right now we have three weeks to turn in late work. In college, they won’t let that happen.”

Theme 6: Necessary skills for success

When asked about additional education, training, and/or skills necessary to success in

“And spending money and how to budget. I still feel like it is different whenever you’re just living on your own with your own money, rather than like if I go buy food for lunch. I know that like, I’ll still be able to eat dinner later and stuff, and I don’t have to pay like rent or all those other bills.”

their after high school plans, students identified three essential skills. The first was money management skills. While several students shared the need to be able to manage money and budget to be

“I can’t speak for anyone else, but I have no idea how to manage money whatsoever. “

successful, they also shared that they do not feel prepared for managing money.

Communication skills along with leadership and time management skills were additional areas identified as important for success in the future. One student even mentioned the need to control your emotions as a skill necessary for success. Several planning to attend college focus groups discussed the struggle students have in making decisions, especially in

“Do I even want to go to college and then waste the time and money? When you do it, and then get a degree for it, and then not ever really need it.”

relation to college. Apparently, students struggle to decide if attending college is worth the

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|----------------------------|
| "I'm not sure yet." |
|----------------------------|

 time, money, and other resources necessary to successfully complete an advanced degree, especially if it is not needed or used. Other students just grapple with simply making the decision to attend college or with deciding on a second course of action (i.e., "backup plans").

Recommendations

Based on the data provided and themes extracted, the data analysis committee identified a number of recommendations for the College to consider. In addition, some of the recommendations provided below were mentioned by focus group attendees. The recommendations generated include:

Enhance and expand marketing opportunities:

- Market the College to parents, since parents have such a strong influence on college attendance for their children.
 - Once a month, have an event at a local restaurant where parents can come to hear from College personnel about programs, events, etc.
- Market the College and its "trade" programs to high school personnel. Highlight Lake Land's trade programs, certificates, and short-term training. Show students interested in these employment options that Lake Land has these programs.
- Market to in-district students at younger ages. A lot of the students participating in the focus groups had made the decision to attend college within the past 9 to 12 months. Marketing to students during middle school may sway more of them towards college.
- Dispel the myth that college is always expensive and automatically creates debt. Highlight how reasonable a college education is at Lake Land compared to other options both in and out of state.
 - Do a better job of marketing scholarship opportunities through the foundation to incoming students.
 - Once a month, invite parents to the campus to talk about financial aid and other pertinent topics.
 - Provide financial aid coach/navigator.

- Redirect some scholarship monies away from talented student scholarships to scholarships that are for students who may not have a top GPA, but work really hard and are solid students.
- Market the safety of our campus. Lake Land has a very safe campus environment that should be promoted and shared with the community. Students worried about safety concerns need to feel they are entering a safe environment.
- Expand marketing strategies to include the emotional side. This generation of students doesn't shy away from talking about feelings and the College shouldn't either.
 - College readiness
 - Attitude towards college
 - Increase messaging that in-district community members belong to the Laker family

Enhance the College's website and application process:

- Improve the College application process. Make it easier and more streamlined. Use common language that more people understand (i.e., application instead of "intent to enroll"). Make it easier for dual credit students to enroll again—why should they have to enroll two times?
- Use universal design principles on the College's website and marketing materials. Staff could be trained in best practices for improving user experiences. The vocabulary used is frequently specialized and geared toward college graduates.

Enhance opportunities for current and future students:

- Overhaul high school career day and 8th grade career day events.
 - Find local businesses to "sponsor" the events and provide free lunches so students can attend longer and be exposed to more presentations and careers.
 - Invite local employers to attend and provide presentations on jobs. Have people who work in a career field come and speak at the event to give students the opportunity to hear from them and what they do day to day in their careers.
 - Have a "career fair" for these same employers in the Field House so students can talk with them between sessions and during lunch and breaks.
- Provide more opportunities to interact with in district students in kindergarten through 8th grade.
 - Provide more opportunities for summer college programs.
 - Provide more opportunities for community programs.
 - Provide opportunities for student to spend a day in my lab/office.

- Provide specific academic programming to get community to engage directly with faculty and staff on campus.
- Offer students more options for extracurricular activities (i.e., eSports options, etc.).
- Increase opportunities for dual enrollment courses. These courses are taught by college instructors and provide high school students with opportunities to see how courses are taught by college faculty. It may help better prepare them for college.

Expand and enhance community outreach to enhance and strengthen relationships:

- Use high school flex periods to highlight College programs. Many of the high schools in the district offer flex periods during the day. Lake Land could utilize these “class periods” to send faculty to talk with students about specific programs.
- Attend Regional Office of Education (ROE) meetings and trainings; college personnel could present at the meetings.
- Talk with public transportation providers to explore options for transporting students from various communities to college to attend classes.
- Work more closely with in-district high schools related to dual credit. When it comes to dual credit, more isn’t always better or necessary especially when students know what they want to study. Provide more education and information to high school counselors and teachers about appropriate dual credit courses for specific majors and potential impact unnecessary dual credits may have on a student’s financial aid eligibility, major, etc.
- Develop personal connections between the College and the community.
 - Faculty and students could call potential students to answer questions they may have or to chat about future career goals.
- Public libraries in big cities offer “adulting” workshops all the time for teens—how to save money, invest online, do taxes, do laundry, find an apartment, make a monthly budget. Based on the data, local high school students want that information, too. The College could work with local public libraries and offer similar workshops.

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT AND QUESTIONS:

High School: _____

Total Number of Focus Group Participants: _____

Circle the Group you have: Planning to attend college Not planning to attend college

High School Focus Group Questions:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am the _____ at Lake Land College. I am here today to talk with you about your after high school plans and to identify the factors that have influenced your decisions about your future. I also want to assure you that while we are recording these discussions, Lake Land will not include any personal information you provide at all. All of this information we collect will be analyzed and summarized in aggregate across the all of the focus groups we are holding at various high schools across the district. All information will be kept confidential. Any questions before we start?

To break the ice have everyone...introduce themselves with first name only and identify their class—sophomore, junior, senior, and their favorite hobby/extracurricular activity.

1. What choices do you feel you have for life after high school graduation?
2. What encouragement have you received about attending college?
3. What discouragement have you received about attending college?
4. What are your current plans after high school graduation?
 - a. When did you make this decision?
5. Why are you choosing to not attend college?/Why are you choosing to attend college?
 - a. Who has helped you make this decision and how?
 - b. What has helped you make this decision and how?
6. What additional education, training, and/or skills do you feel you need to succeed in your after high school plans?
7. Why do you feel other classmates are choosing to go to college?
8. Why do you feel other classmates are choosing not to go to college?
9. What do you perceive as other possible barriers to attending college?
10. If there is one thing that Lake Land could do differently to make it easier for you to attend Lake Land, what would that be?

| APPENDIX B | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| School | Group | Total Participants | Concept1 | Concept2 | Concept3 | Concept4 | Concept5 |
| HS1 Group 1 | Not planning | 8 | multiple students showed interest in trade schools | Felt they had a lack of information about scholarships | worry about general education courses | money money money | "pushy" guidance counselor |
| HS1 Group 2 | Planning | 10 | Debt and money biggest worry and barrier | had a great idea about all options open to them for after high school graduation | normal concerns: transportation, debt, moving from small school to large campus, class size | Parents biggest influence on decision to go to college | very positive about Lake Land in general. Know a lot about it and indicated pushed on them |
| HS2 Group 1 | Planning | 8 | Debt was major concern although one student mentioned scholarships | Sophomores had recently made decision to go to college within the past 7 months | Planning to attend because of money and options for career | Indicated a lot of barriers that can be individual to each student: anxiety, change, starting over, making new friends, etc. | More personal touches (communications, discussion with faculty, etc.) from Lake Land would make it easier to go to Lake Land |
| HS2 Group 2 | Not planning | 5 | School is a waste of time | I'm already working and feel it is more valuable to keep working than to waste time and money on school | I don't enjoy school | I'm bad at school | if you have a good work ethic, you'll be fine in the real work just working without going to college. |
| Path1 Group 1 | Planning | 8 | Parents and teachers are biggest encouragement for attending college | Mondy, stability and opportunities are the reason for attending college | Think LLC is doing a good just and couldn't think of anything could be doing better. All had received information from LLC but not too much. | Most made the decision to attend college within the past year. | They wanted to leave Illinois. 5 of the 8. |
| Path 1 Group 2 | Not planning | 9 | This group was mostly seniors and some juniors. They did seem to understand their time in high school is drawing to a close, they did seem to understand they need a plan after HS. Where I see a gap is that this group had done very little of the many steps needed to set up a plan after HS. For example, one stated he was going into the Marines. However, when pressed he had not met with them nor did he know for sure if he would do it. Typically, I think students would have this mapped out more so than that. This seemed to be typical of the groups MO as a whole. | There were several mentions about trade school in this group. I didn't observe a good understanding of trade schools versus Lake Land College. One student stated that trade schools are free, so very little understanding of costs. | Students seemed to view Lake Land College similar to EIU or other state universities. While in many cases this is good, this group didn't seem themselves as coming to "college" at all so it was a detriment. | Most currently worked but did not wish to stay at their current job, such as Walmart, Dairy queen, etc. most understand they need a skill to increase their wages, but they see this coming from apprenticeships or trade school, not LLC. | All stated they have encouragement to go to college. However, it is spoken of by this group as some far away place that is out of reach. |
| HS3 Group 1 | Planning | 9 | The group was adamant and unanimous in their thoughts about face to face and online courses. They definitely prefer face to face. Staying motivated is hard in online. They learned that during COVID. | the biggest issues with college seemed to be money and transportation. | Most of them always planned to go to college. Family (parent or grandparent) and coaches seemed to be the most encouraging. | Several have friends going straight into the workforce and are looking at apprenticeship like opportunities. | They see the benefits of college as having higher paying jobs, better job opportunities, doing what interests them. |

| School | Group | Total Participants | Concept1 | Concept2 | Concept3 | Concept4 | Concept5 |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| HS3 Group 2 | Not planning | 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible barriers for attending college include money, time, concentration, comprehension skills, time management skills and good effort towards the goal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants listed that they have received encouragement from various family members to pursue college and some of their parents want them to do better than they did and go further in life by going to college; they also want to make their parents proud – their guidance counselors have also encouraged them to attend college | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants listed that they have received encouragement from various family members to pursue college and some of their parents want them to do better than they did and go further in life by going to college; they also want to make their parents proud – their guidance counselors have also encouraged them to attend college | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After college, many of these students are thinking of doing trade school or an apprenticeship or even joining the military and using their educational benefits through the military | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Lake Land College could do one thing differently to make it easier to attend the College, it would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Offer monthly payment plans for tuition so it could be paid gradually (money for college was a concern for this group) ☐ Supply textbooks in the courses for free and students could use them during class and then leave them in the classroom ☐ Offer technical classes that are of interest to students (I let them know we do have technical courses they could choose from) |
| Path 3 Group 1 | Planning | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the students have a very clear idea of their future goals, while other students' are very generic. For instance, one student knows precisely what two-year program he's enrolling in this spring here at Lake Land—as well as how long it will take to complete, his job opportunities after completing it, and so on—while another student simply identified “living on my own and going to college.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social skills may be a factor regarding students' future goals and plans. Meaning, the two students who demonstrated superior non-verbal skills and confidently answered questions without being prompted to do so were also the ones who had very clear goals for their future; those who were awkward and quiet, conversely, had generic, vague aspirations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation, internally generated, is a key to success, in their opinion. Students acknowledged the importance of dedication and commitment to doing well in college, and in life as well. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students don't want to waste their time. Put differently, I got the impression that most of the students, while willing to attend college, don't want the next few years of their life wasted on coursework they feel is irrelevant. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways students specifically feel they are in a better position to succeed in college because of their geographic location to campus. The students feel that taking their classes towards high school graduation here at Lake Land makes the transition to taking classes here easier. They believe they have an advantage over those students in the high school, for they are not only unfamiliar with Lake Land's campus, but also less likely to attend classes on this campus. |
| Path 3 Group 2 | Not planning | 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interestingly, mental health and getting a handle on their mental health before enrolling in college was a factor mentioned a few times by more than one student in the focus group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items mentioned when asked about additional education, training and/or skills needed to succeed in after high school plans included time management, dedication, determination (wanting to do something), willpower and recognizing that some people will try to bring you down | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Things Lake Land College could do differently in order to make it easier for them to attend College are: make the application process easier, make it less expensive, further advertise what the College offers (as far as degree programs and options), host Career Days more often, hear from more College graduates who share their stories and how they lived through life, completed their College degree, pros and cons of college experience and how they felt about the whole experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than one student mentioned that if they graduate from high school they will be the first to graduate in their family; several mentioned that if they do go to College and finish, they will be the first one in their families to do so | |

| School | Group | Total Participants | Concept1 | Concept2 | Concept3 | Concept4 | Concept5 |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Path 2 Group 1 | 3 attend 3 not attend | 6 | 1. They have a strong relationship with their pathways teacher and she highly encourages them to attend college. Only 1 of the students has a parent encouraging her to go. The other 5 students don't have parental encouragement or discouragement. Going to college is simply not discussed in their household. | 2. Wanting to earn wages after high school is a big factor with the students not attending college. They feel as if going to college is a "waste of time" because they will spend a lot of money and end up in debt while making less or not much more (they specifically used teacher salaries as an example). | 3. Strong assumption that the only scholarships available to students are athletic scholarships and athletes are the only students who can truly go to college for free. They have this assumption because it's what they see in the high school (peers getting celebrated when earning athletic scholarships throughout the school year). | 4. They all filled out a FAFSA with assistance from their pathways instructor BUT they have no idea what filling out a FAFSA really means. They don't understand they are applying for a state grant and a federal grant and that there could be enough money in grants to pay for tuition and fees at LLC. They definitely have no idea that they could actually have leftover money after tuition and fees are paid. | 5. All of these students would be first generation college students if/when they enroll. They all provided indication that they just don't know how to maneuver the higher education process (application, paying for college, enrollment, succeeding in coursework). They have a fear of being alone throughout the process. Additionally, "change is hard" for them because all they know is to work after they graduate high school. Higher education is a foreign concept to them. |
| HS4 Group 13 | high risk | 6 | 1. These were mainly underclassman (4 freshman or sophomores, 1 junior, 1 senior). The questions were too far out into the future for them. All except for 1 do not drive. So transportation right now is a barrier. Could that change? Yes. But truly none seem to have thought that one through. | 2. When finally nailed down for specifics, one said they want to play football in college and one said basketball in college. Neither are currently on the high school team, they had not spoken to college coaches. One wants to "fish" after high school. The rest didn't even give anything for career goals. SIGH | 3. Only two had jobs of any type...one at McDonald's and one at Sonic I think. So there wasn't even a good gauge for making money at this point. | 4. I would love to get that group to a campus visit and to see the auto program, diesel tech, welding...something hands on and higher wage careers. | 5. It was very hard to get them to speak, one covered his entire face with his sweatshirt each time and the teacher translated. 6. Counselors and the teachers of that program would be EXCELLENT resources for this project. |
| HS4 Group 1 | high risk | 7 | 1. The lack of interest in or planning of their future. a. The most common answer I received was "I don't know." A few of the students even seemed to be borderline apathetic about their future or at least talking about it. Getting them to answer these questions was difficult. b. One student said my conversation with her during the focus group got her to thinking about college, and that's when she decided she wanted to go! Made me wonder if this was the first time she had ever had a conversation out loud with someone about the possibility of going to college? Kind of neat, but kind of sad, too. | 2. A major reason not to go to college—debt. a. I didn't have enough time at the end to fully explain how Lake Land could be very affordable compared to other schools. | 3. One of the answers to the question #6 "what additional education, training, and/or skills do you feel you need to succeed in your after high school plans" was "living off the government" which the student meant that he didn't need to go to college or have any skills, because he would be fine. | 4. Answers to question #8 "why do you feel other classmates are choosing not to go to college" a. Don't want to go to school b. Can put you into debt c. Family not financially stable d. Don't want to go/don't think I need to go e. Already have what I need f. I want to find a different way g. Some in my family already went—I don't need to go just to be better than them | 5. I was touched by the bits and pieces of information I gathered from their home lives as well as their nonverbal communication. For example: a. One student seemed to have pent up anger—at life. b. Another student referred to his biological mom vs his new mom and how his biological mom had a bad life and he didn't want that. Not sure if he was adopted or fostered. c. Lack of eye contact and/or mumbling gave me the impression of very low self-esteem. 6. Perhaps someone from the college could follow-up with the teachers from this group to offer to host the students on campus for a tour/info session, return as a guest speaker, etc. I think there's an opportunity there to be a resource. |

| School | Group | Total Participants | Concept1 | Concept2 | Concept3 | Concept4 | Concept5 |
|-------------|--|--------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| HS4 Group 2 | planning to attend | 8 | Money is an issue for college | These students had plans for college ready - many know where they are attending and what they will be studying | Family encouragement to attend college was a common theme in this group | Additional skills needed after high school for this group included learning to be more independent in life and figure things out on their own | One student mentioned that in his family, he will be the first person to go to college in the states, since he spent part of his childhood in Vietnam where he was born, he is looking forward to it. |
| HS4 Group 3 | 18 planning to attend 4 not planning | 22 | several from this group are graduating in December and will be attending college in January. | Cost is a concern for college | They assume college will be more difficult than high school | This group mentioeed that as far as skills after high school, if you are not very talkative, you need to change that because you'll have to talk in college | This group mentioned that choices they have after high school includes a college that best fits your financial state. |
| HS4 Group 4 | 6 planning to attend; 2 not planning; 2 undecided | 10 | 1. Cost of college is a factor | In relation to discouragement about attending college, this group talked a fair amount about how the discouragement is coming from themselves (internally); battling in their head whether or not it's worth it to go to college, whether they can go to college and succeed | 3. These students felt that as for choices after high school, they could choose what their job will be and how successful they'll be as well as whether to go to college or get a job | 4. This group mentioned that additional education or skills they need to succeed after high school include getting a driver's license, common sense (don't do something stupid), good communication skills, hands on skills, being able to cook for yourself, time management skills and how to handle emergencies | 5. This group mentioned that some YouTube stars they know started college and then stopped because they were able to do well with YouTube; this made them wonder if college is worth it |
| HS4 Group 5 | 3 planning to attend; 1 not planning; 2 undecided | 6 | Barriers for college include transportation, living expenses, food and money | 2. This group has received a lot of encouragement to go to college and participating in TRIO was mentioned as part of this encouragement | 3. Some of this group stated that they are choosing to attend college because they want to do it, not because others have mentioned it to them | 4. Others in the group said that they didn't have a choice to attend college; their parents had already made the decision for them that they would be going; the decision they needed to make was what they would major in | 5. Additional education and skills this group mentioned in order to succeed after high school were keeping their finances in check, saving money, being responsible, being confident and being dedicated |
| HS4 Group 6 | 4 planning to attend 2 unsure | 6 | Parents and teachers are biggest encouragement for attending college | Debt and money is a major concern | Attending college because they will have more career options and won't have to struggle as much in life | students had a good idea of the options available for them after high school graduation. | felt social skills and money management skills are important ones to have |
| HS4 Group 7 | planning to attend | 9 | families and teachers provide the most encouragement for attending college | money and debt are biggest barriers | communication skills are important to be successful | Have good idea that attending college will be beneficial to their future. | feel high school is not preparing them for college. They allow them to retake tests and hand unfinished work in at the end of the semester and this won't be an option in college. |
| HS4 Group 8 | 20 planning to attend; 4 not planning; 1 undecided | 25 | Non planning to attend students were never interested in attending college. No interest. One wants/has an apprenticeship. One trade school | Debt and money is a major concern | Necessary skills for success include social skills, common sense, and perserverence | family biggest influencer of college | Other influences for attending college are higher salaries, better job, financial success |

| School | Group | Total Participants | Concept1 | Concept2 | Concept3 | Concept4 | Concept5 |
|--------------|--|--------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| HS4 Group 9 | 9 planning to attend; 1 not planning | 10 | Cost is an issue | Feel HS is not doing good job preparing them for college | communication skills are important to be successful | Everyone rather take F2F than online classes: For online want live lectures and need a good environment to "take" online courses | Parents and teachers and counselors biggest influencers. |
| HS4 Group 10 | 2 not planning 11 planning | 13 | Students want to receive more information in the mail from Lake Land. They want to see ALL classes that Lake Land offers so they are more informed. Seeing what's offered might give them ideas of other options or choices to consider. I think we need to bring back the printed schedule of classes that we used to mail to every household in the district. They want this this information sooner. I think this would be very beneficial to help them start thinking sooner about choices and helping them see that LLC is a feasible option. I think we assume they know there should be/could be a connection or opportunity to attend LLC, but they haven't made that connection yet. | Parents are very influential. Sending home that schedule helps to promote us to parents, too. | We need to do a better job helping to dispel the myth that college is always expensive and automatically creates debt. Maybe try to offer a lesson plan that could be shared or integrated into an existing course or offer to be guest speaker to a classes. Are we utilizing dual credit classes to convey this? | | |
| HS4 Group 11 | planning to attend | 9 | students seem to be aware of all of their potential choices after high school graduation including living in their parent's basement. | Biggest influences have been parents, teachers, counselors, and friends and coaches | cost is an issue and concern | There seemed to be an even split of those who decided to go to college recently, those who have always known, and those whose parents have encouraged and expected it. | They identified a lengthy list of skills needed to succeed in general |
| HS4 Group 12 | 4 planning to attend; 3 not planning to attend | 7 | 1. These students felt that they are very limited due to finances when we talked about what choices they have for life after high school graduation. | 2. When talking about additional education, training and/or skills they will need to succeed in their after high school plans, they mentioned how to manage money, budgeting, people skills, talking skills, and learning how to do an actual job. | 3. A possible barrier that students were concerned about (this was when I asked the question of other possible barriers to attending college) was fitting in the time to go to school and also to work. | 4. Social media influencers, along with Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk have influenced these students on the idea that maybe college isn't necessary because these people make a lot of money and many did not finish college. | 5. Some of these students have researched what they can do as far as jobs without a college degree. |