

College of Agriculture & Home Economics

Focus-groups Summary Report¹

December, 2006

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¹A complete copy of the report and notes is available online at:
<http://cahe.nmsu.edu:16080/employee/focus>



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December 8, 2006

MEMO TO: CAHE Faculty and Staff

FROM: Lowell Catlett

SUBJECT: College Focus-Group Responses and Open Forum

Attached is a summary of the college-wide focus groups' responses that were collected in November and raw comments recorded from the sessions and online. There are important issues of common concern that need to be addressed. Please take time to review this material and we will discuss it together on December 18.

On Monday, December 18th, I will conduct two discussion sessions with the college faculty and staff. The first session will be on **CENTRA from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.** This is primarily to accommodate off-campus faculty and staff, but anyone can log into the session. I invite all CAHE faculty and staff who are on campus to join me at **2:00 to 3:30 p.m. in the Gerald Thomas Hall Auditorium** for the second session.

I will briefly comment on the following:

- The process for continuing participation in college improvements.
- How to address the top three priorities identified by focus-group participants:
 - Efficiency of business processes*
 - Decision making processes*
 - Communication and collaboration*
- Current action teams:
 - College name review*
 - College-wide meeting planning*
- Quarterly College-wide discussion forum schedule

The remainder of the time will be spent answering your questions and discussing the process for moving our college forward. If you would like to make online comments on the report or the process, you can do so on the "For Employees" page of the College website (<http://cahe.nmsu.edu:16080/employee/focus>).

I want to thank the chairpersons of the Focus Groups for their hard work. I also want to thank those of you who participated in these groups. I am committed to working with you to address the issues you have raised. The real test will come as we jointly develop and implement strategies based on your input. I look forward to working with you in this process to continuously improve the college.

College Focus-group Sessions: Introduction

In July 2006, Dean Lowell Catlett appointed a team of faculty members of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics to direct a participatory process to establish a continuous improvement process for the college. The team determined to involve both faculty and staff members and began by team members convening discussion meetings by invitation during the month of August 2006. These meetings involved approximately 70 faculty and staff members. After reviewing responses, the team decided two issues should be pursued right away. One was to review the name of the college and another was to plan a college-wide meeting.

The team also established an open process designed to give every faculty and staff member in the college an opportunity to register opinions. On Oct. 27, 2006, faculty and staff were invited to register online for one of 21 sessions – 12 face-to-face sessions and nine electronic sessions were offered between Nov. 6 and Nov. 21, 2006. Anonymous comments could be made via text from the registration site. Two electronic sessions were canceled due to lack of participation.

The data in this report reflect as accurately as possible the responses from 19 conducted focus-group sessions and the anonymous comments. Every effort was made to accurately reflect comment, largely through the efforts of Daniel Kim, who attended most of the meetings. Tallying, categorizing, and summarizing comments are imperfect processes. So, the complete listing of recorded comments is available for review at the address below, under “For Employees” on the college web site.

<http://cahe.nmsu.edu:16080/employee/focus>

If you have any concerns regarding this process please register them with a team member.

College Focus-group Sessions:
Major Issues Raised in Round-one Focus Groups

Administrative Structure and Procedures

- Administrative Overhead
- Development Office Effectiveness
- Transparency of Decision-Making
- Recognition of Faculty and Staff
- Integration of Extension and Academic Departments
- Agricultural Experiment Station Effectiveness
- Communication Between Different Elements of the College
- Accountability of Department Heads to Programs and Faculty
- Input From All Internal and External Constituencies
- Efficiency of Business Processes
- Competitive Process in Filling Administrative Positions
- International Involvement
- Name Change
- College-wide Meeting

Teaching, Extension, and Research

- Consistency in the Promotion and Tenure Process
- Making Advising Part of Faculty Load
- Keeping Undergraduate and Graduate Curricula Current
- Zero-Based Budgeting
- Innovative and Competitive Program Development and Support
- Distance Education
- Laboratory Updating
- Communication and Collaboration Among Elements of the College
- Perceived Status and Involvement of Extension and Field Faculty

College Focus-group Sessions:
Major Issues Raised in November Focus Groups

Efficiency of Business Processes

Decision-Making Processes

- Accountability of Department Heads to Programs and Faculty
- Input From All Internal and External Constituencies
- Consistency in the Promotion and Tenure Process
- Competitive Process in Filling Administrative Positions

Communications and Collaboration

- Transparency of Decision-Making
- Communication Between Different Elements of the College
- Communication and Collaboration Among Elements of the College
- College-Wide Meetings

Integration of Extension and Academic Departments

Innovative Program Development

Recognition of Faculty and Staff

Training

Perceived Status and Involvement of Extension

Agricultural Experiment Station Effectiveness

Administrative Overhead

Exploring College Name Change

Distance Education

Zero-Based Budgeting

College Budget Allocation

Making Advising Part of Faculty Load

Keeping Undergraduate Curriculum Current

Development Office Effectiveness

Laboratory Updating

International Involvement

Other

College Focus-group Sessions: Summaries

Efficiency of Business Processes (102 Comments)

The most frequently cited complaints were:

- The length of time it takes to get account numbers established
- Inability to track budgets
- Inability to conduct normal business due slow financial practices
- Increased size of business office doesn't seem to address the problem
- Banner
- Inability to hire people expeditiously (though improvement cited)
- Reduced communications service with elimination of Ag Communications.

Decision-Making Processes (100 Comments)

This area covers *accountability, constituent input, P&T&E process, and competitive process* issues. There was concern that unilateral decisions from the president's level resulted in lack of trust and a culture of silence. Comments included concerns about evaluations, inconsistencies, lack of objectivity and concern for changes that might be taking place. There was particular concern from the field that grassroots input is not sought. Accountability concerns relate to all administrators, not just department heads. Appointments or seemingly arbitrary personnel decisions were cited. Concerns about keeping the extension mission and communicating a common mission were registered.

Communications and Collaboration (94 Comments)

Thirty-seven comments addressed the need for increased transparency and communications about decisions and direction. Thirteen comments addressed the need for or ways to adjust college-wide meetings, even though it was already determined that it would be addressed. Other comments either defined specific communication and collaboration needs or a general dissatisfaction with current communications. Some cite a decline in communications.

Integration of Extension and Academic Departments (47 Comments)

Anti-formal integration comments ran 22 to 10 against pro-formal integration comments. Other comments were less committal, more ambiguous, or more nuanced about details of integration. Communication and collaboration were seen as alternatives by some to formal integration.

Innovative Program Development (32 Comments)

An array of comments dealt with rewarding those who bring in grants, reducing grant-chasing, expanding nine-month appointments, changing foci of programming, credit-hour and work-week issues, and other reward issues.

Recognition of Faculty and Staff (27 Comments)

This issue was addressed with thirteen comments relating to compensation, plus four on awards programs. Other comments related to less formal issues that send negative signals to employees.

Training (26 Comments)

Though it was not a defined area of discussion, this issue arose and was in large part citing deficiencies in training opportunities. The major focus was the need to increase staff and agent training opportunities.

Perceived Status and Involvement of Extension (20 Comments)

Most comments addressed disregard for extension faculty and staff situations, particularly field situations. There were a couple positive comments regarding the extension experience. Comments under categories of business processes, input, P&T, integration and training also addressed special problems perceived by extension and field staff.

Agricultural Experiment Station Effectiveness (18 Comments)

Limitations and need to expand activity were cited. The need for rethinking the direction was cited.

Administrative Overhead (17 Comments)

There were seven comments about IDC relating to the amount and even ex post facto negotiations. The remainder of comments related to overhead in the form of top heavy administrative staff.

Exploring College Name Change (16 Comments)

Even though it was not on the consideration list and it was announced that a group would study a name change, nine pro-, five anti-, and two neutral name-change comments were collected.

Distance Education (15 Comments)

Most comments dealt with our lack of activity and leadership in distance education. Some modes were criticized.

Zero-Based Budgeting (10 Comments)

These comments were largely negative relating to zero-based budgeting being deleterious to county extension programs.

College budget allocation (9 comments)

Concern was registered that budget allocation could become divisive, but other comments called for new flexibility in funding mechanisms.

Making Advising Part of Faculty Load (8 Comments)

Most comments were not pro or con, but dealt with advising issues.

Keeping Undergraduate Curriculum Current (7 Comments)

Each comment was a different idea.

Development Office Effectiveness (5 Comments)

Some comments under training also dealt with the need to acquaint and train faculty and staff on the ins and outs of development activity. Otherwise comments were not negative.

Laboratory Updating (3 Comments)

Lack of support for updating labs was cited.

International Involvement (3 Comments)

One anti-international work, one pro arid lands work, and one pro border work.

Other (31 Comments)

A potpourri of ideas.

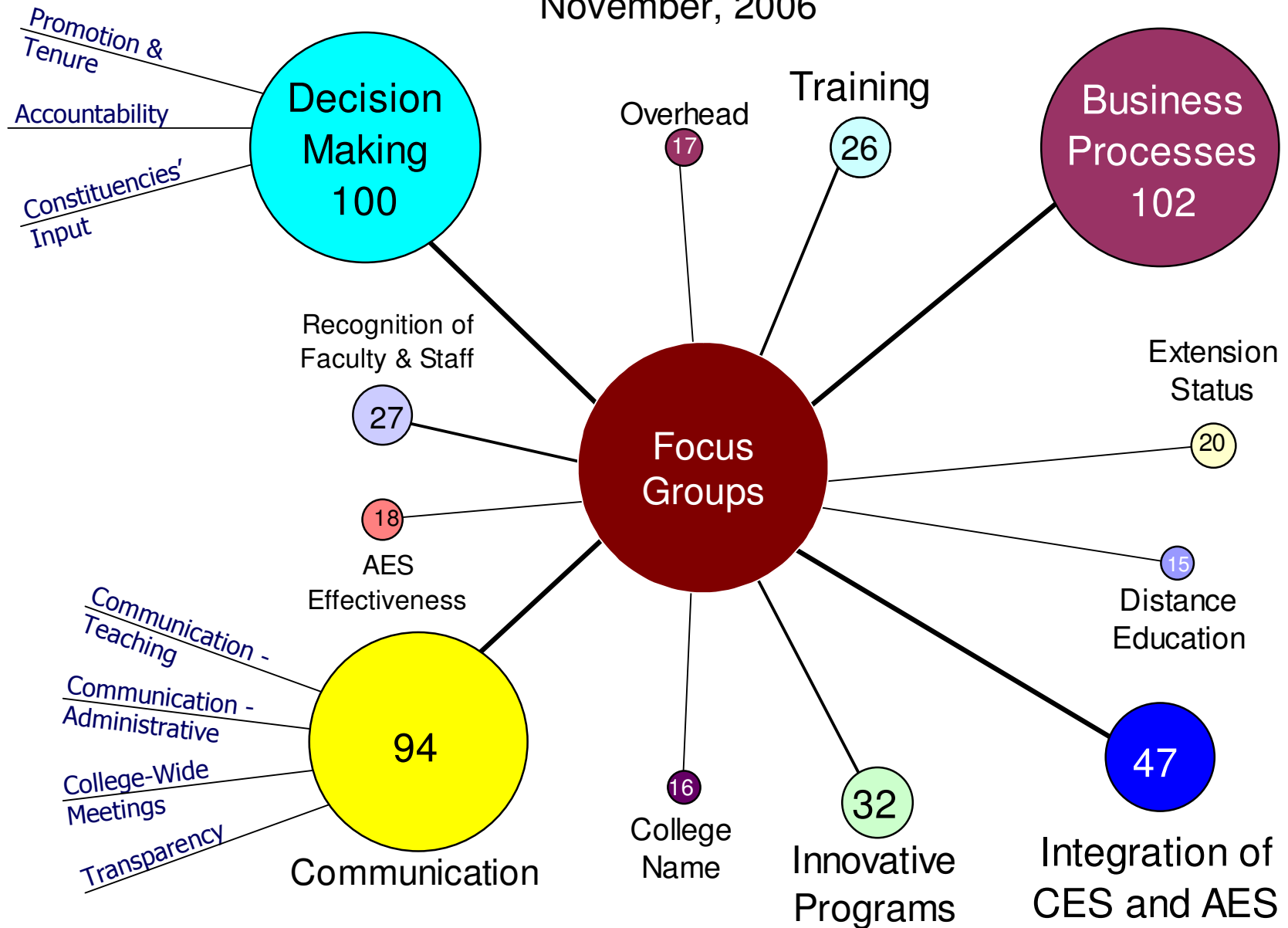
CAHE Focus Group Sessions

November, 2006

| Session | Date | Time | Type | Location | Room | Facilitator | Recorder |
|---------|------------|----------|--------------|---|--------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 11/6/2006 | 10:00 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Jim Libbin | Daniel Kim |
| 2 | 11/6/2006 | 4:00 PM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Greg Blanch | Daniel Kim |
| 3 | 11/7/2006 | 11:00 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Jim Libbin | Daniel Kim |
| 4 | 11/7/2006 | 2:00 PM | Centra | | | Jeanne Gleason | Daniel Kim |
| 5 | 11/8/2006 | 1:30 PM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Jeanne Gleason | Daniel Kim |
| 6 | 11/8/2006 | 4:00 PM | Centra | (Cancelled) | | Greg Blanch | |
| 7 | 11/9/2006 | 10:00 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Dennis Hallford | Daniel Kim |
| 8 | 11/9/2006 | 2:30 PM | Centra | | | John Mexal | Daniel Kim |
| 9 | 11/10/2006 | 10:30 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Greg Blanch (was Jim Libbin) | Daniel Kim |
| 10 | 11/13/2006 | 4:00 PM | Centra | | | Ann Bock | Daniel Kim |
| 11 | 11/13/2006 | 4:00 PM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Jim Libbin (Was Greg Blanch) | Daniel Kim |
| 12 | 11/14/2006 | 1:00 PM | Face-to-face | Santa Fe County Extension Office | | Roberta Rios | Roberta Rios |
| 13 | 11/14/2006 | 2:30 PM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | John Mexal | Daniel Kim |
| 14 | 11/14/2006 | 3:30 PM | Centra | | | Jeanne Gleason | Daniel Kim |
| 15 | 11/15/2006 | 10:00 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Ann Bock | Daniel Kim |
| 16 | 11/15/2006 | 1:00 PM | Polycom | | | Roberta Rios | Daniel Kim |
| 17 | 11/15/2006 | 3:00 PM | Polycom | Las Cruces, Lordsburg, Santa Fe, Clovis | | Ann Bock | Daniel Kim |
| 18 | 11/16/2006 | 3:30 PM | Centra | (Cancelled) | | Jeanne Gleason | |
| 19 | 11/17/2006 | 10:00 AM | Centra | | | Ann Bock | Daniel Kim |
| 20 | 11/20/2006 | 10:30 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Dennis Hallford | Daniel Kim |
| 21 | 11/21/2006 | 10:00 AM | Face-to-face | Main Campus | GT 297 | Dennis Hallford | Daniel Kim |
| 22 | 11/22/2006 | 12:00 AM | WWW | Anonymous | | | |

CAHE Focus-Group Response Breakdown

November, 2006



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Figure 1: Summary of Number of Comments by Issue (Top 90% of total comments). CAHE Focus Groups, November, 2006.

CAHE Focus-Group Response Breakdown

November, 2006

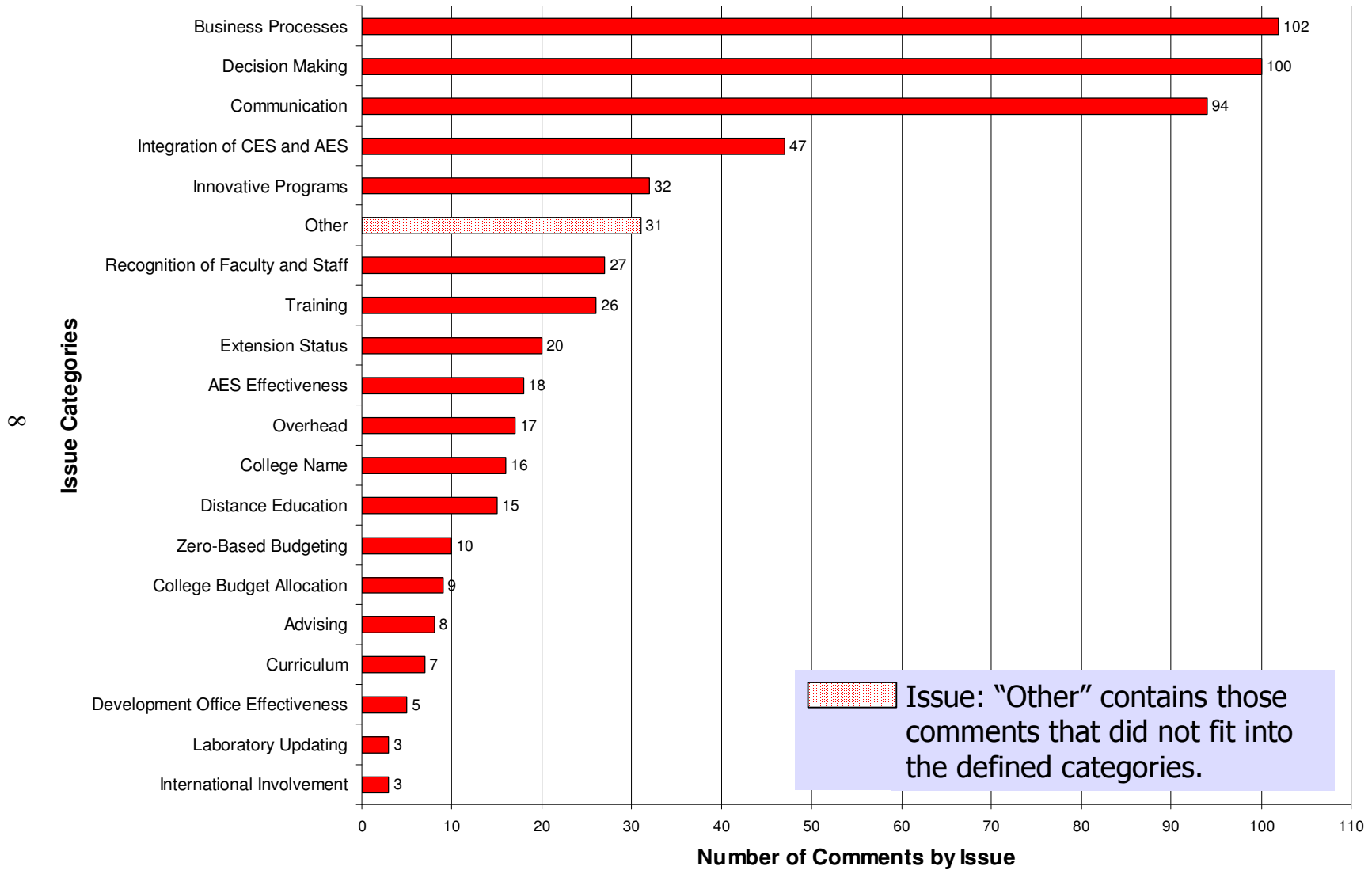


Figure 2: Breakdown of Focus Group Comments by Issue. CAHE Focus Groups, November, 2006.

CAHE Focus-Group Attendees and Sessions Breakdown

November, 2006

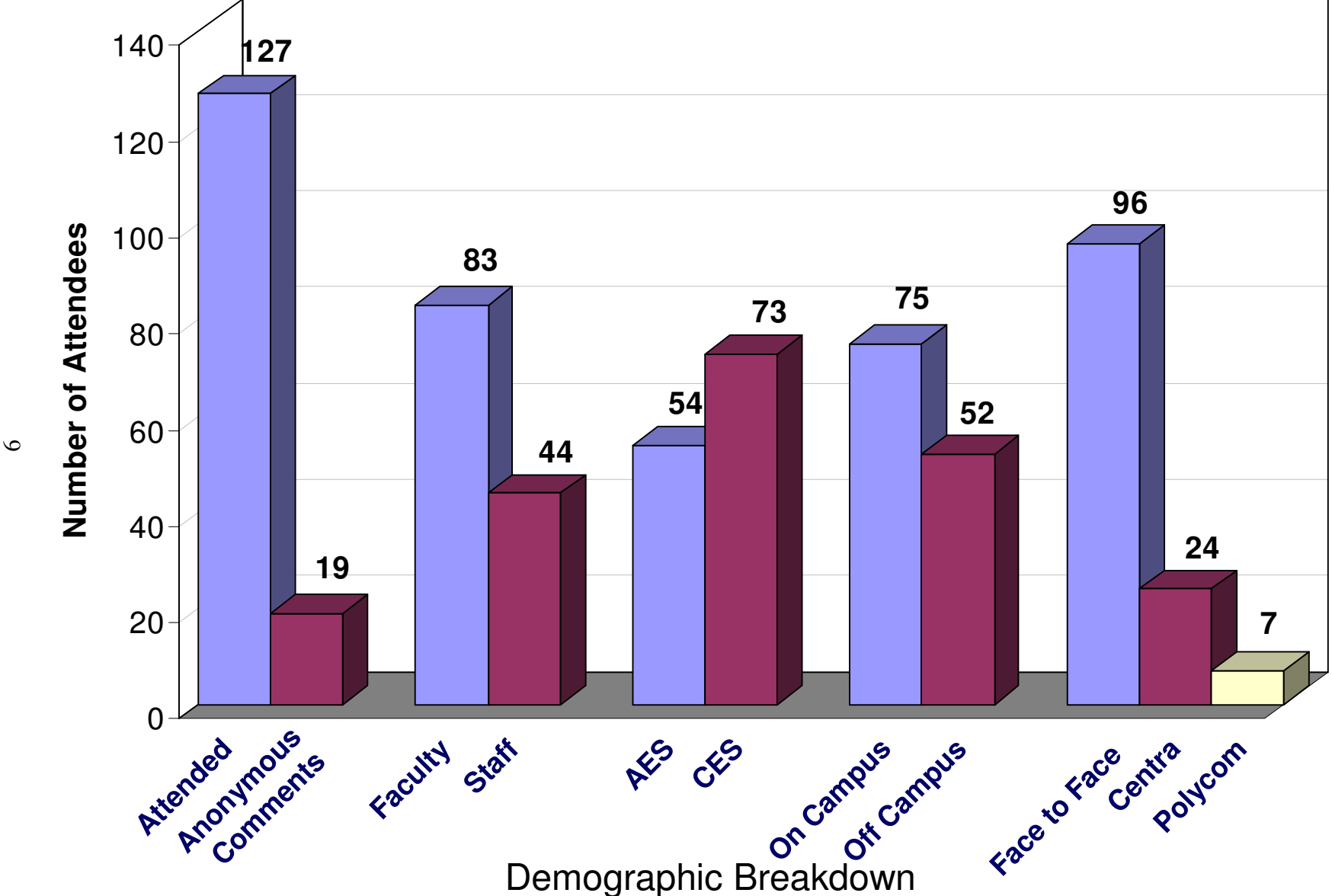


Figure 3: Breakdown of Focus Group Attendees and Sessions. CAHE Focus Groups, November, 2006. (Anonymous comments are those submitted to the online website, they are not included as being present at the Focus Group sessions).