

# **ALVERNO COLLEGE STUDENT PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEW**

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Careering After College:  
Establishing the Validity of  
Abilities Learned in College for  
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## INTRODUCTION

As a beginning, I'd like to give you an understanding of the kinds of things we'll be talking about, what you can expect and what I would like to know about your college experience.

First, I want it to be clear to you that what you say here will be kept confidential. No one but myself and Dr. Mentkowski will listen to this tape. When the tape is typed up, we remove any features, such as names and places, that could identify the speaker or anyone else involved. Even then, no one else is allowed to read these except for the research staff who are not Alverno students or faculty. Sometimes parts of student interviews are used as examples in reports or presentations, but when this is done we make sure that nothing is included that could possibly identify the student.

I am going to be asking you some questions about your educational experience at Alverno. I haven't been working here very long and it seems to me that there's a great deal to be understood about what they call the Alverno Learning Process. You may have to make some things clear for me as we talk. But what I am really interested in knowing is how you see things, not how Alverno sees things or how other students see them. I'm going to want to know what your educational experience has meant to you as an individual, how it has affected you and what you think about different aspects of your college experience. And I'll ask you about this in a variety of ways.

This means that you may have to really stop and think about some questions that you may never have thought about before. I want you and me to try to identify the things that stand out as most important to you and to try to understand why these things have been important. So while we're talking I'll give you time to stop and think whenever you need to. And occasionally I'll ask you to stop and focus on a particular point. I'd like you to let me know anytime a question isn't clear to you, and I'll let you know whenever I'm not sure I've understood what you said. The main thing that I want to get from our talk is a real understanding of your individual point of view.

At the end of the interview, I'll give you an opportunity to ask me anything that you'd like to know about this research or anything that comes to mind. For now, do you have any questions about what I've been saying? . . .

I'd like to start out by asking you how you would describe Alverno generally.

## Interview Questions

1. How would you describe Alverno generally?

Probe: What is this school like? What's it like to go to school here?

2. a. What would you want to communicate to someone who was thinking about coming to Alverno as a new student?

Probe: What would it be important for them to know—what should they consider to make that decision?

- b. What would you want to communicate to someone who was thinking about joining the faculty?
3. a. What do you think the ideal Alverno student should be like in order to get the most out of her learning experience?

Probe: What does it take to really do well at and benefit from Alverno?

Are students here really like that?

*If yes:* Why are they like that; do you think that that's the kind of person who comes here, or do you think they learn to be like that while they're here?

*If latter:* How does that happen?

*In no or can't say:* Do you think students get to be more like the ideal after they've been here awhile?

*If yes:* How does that happen?

- b. What do you think the ideal Alverno faculty member should be like?
- Are they really like that?
- If no:* In what ways do they generally not quite match up?
4. a. Have you known well anyone who has dropped out or transferred because she thought Alverno wasn't right for her?

*If yes:* What reasons did she give for leaving?

Why do *you* think she left?

- b. Have you yourself ever thought about dropping out or transferring?
- If yes:* When?

What reasons did you feel you had for leaving?

What reasons did you feel you had for staying?

5. Do you find that your educational experience at Alverno is any different from high school or from other colleges that you know about? (How?)

6. a. How would you describe the rationale for the Alverno learning process; what do you think the educational goals of this kind of program are?

Probe: Why would Alverno have this kind of program instead of some other kind? What do you think Alverno is trying to do for its students?

- b. From the standpoint of Alverno, what do you think the ideal Alverno graduate would be like?

How do they want you to turn out?

- c. Do you think there are any kinds of beliefs or values that Alverno encourages its students to adopt? (Specify)

How do they encourage them?

7. How has your impression of Alverno changed since you first got here; does it seem any different to you now than it did at the beginning?

Probe: I mean, when you first came here, you probably had a first impression of Alverno and what it was like to be going to school here-has that picture changed now that you've been here for awhile? *NOTE*: be sure student understands that you mean to compare her present impression with her impression during her first weeks or months, not her impression before arrival.

8. What about Alverno has influenced you most (If Fr. "so far"); is there anything that stands out in your mind that has really made an impression on you and influenced you? (Describe)

9. What do you think are the most important aspects of your experience here that have accounted for your learning?

Probe: Is there anything about Alverno that you can point to and say, well, I've learned because of that?

10. Have you changed in the way you approach learning since you've been here? (How?)

*If yes*: What do you think made you change?

11. Since you've gotten to know more and more about the Alverno program, how have your attitudes toward the program changed?

Why do you think that has happened?

Have your own changes in attitude affected your learning? (How?)

12. a. What kinds of challenges has being at Alverno created for you? (More General)
- b. Have there been any times since you've been here when you've really felt unsettled about something? Did anyone or anything make you feel uncomfortable?

Was it resolved?

*If yes:* How did you resolve that?

Was there anything about Alverno itself that helped you resolve it?

- c. What about right now, is there anything that you're feeling unsettled about right now? (What?)

*If yes:* How do you think that might become resolved?

Is Alverno helping you resolve it any way? (How?)

13. a. Do you think that you have created any challenges for Alverno? (Explain)

*If yes:* How did Alverno respond to your challenges?

Do you feel, then, that you've influenced Alverno at all—even in a small way?

- b. Do students have rights as learners here at Alverno?

*If yes:* What are these rights?

Do students influence the learning process?

*If yes:* How does this happen?

*If no:* Why not?

14. a. Are there any ways in which you have ever felt that the institution was not fair with you?

Probe: I mean when you really thought Alverno wasn't living up to its responsibility to you?

- b. Has Alverno lived up to its promises?

- c. Does Alverno do enough to make clear to you the things that you need to know in order to make important decisions about your program and other educational choices?

In what ways have you found Alverno's efforts to do this adequate or inadequate?

15. If you could have your way, how would you want to change Alverno to make a better program or better learning atmosphere?

[NOTE: If necessary, direct student away from utopian fantasies and financially contingent changes like “there shouldn't be any tuition” or “we should have a student union like UWM's”—In other words, limit her to changes she *believes* are feasible, e.g. you could say: Do think Alverno *could* really do that? Well, what do you think they *could* do to make it better?]

16. a. Now I'd like to talk a little bit about what being here means to you with respect to your own personal goals and values. And I'd like to begin by asking you why you decided to go to college?

b. Why did you decide on Alverno; what kinds of things influenced your decision?

17. a. What major goals did you have when you entered Alverno?

Have any of those goals been achieved?

*If yes:* What did Alverno have to do with that?

*If no or not yet:* Are you any closer to achieving any of them?

*If yes:* What did Alverno have to do with that?

*If no:* What do you think it would take to bring you closer?

- b. Have your goals changed at all since you came here, for example, do you have any goals you didn't have before, or do some goals seem less worthwhile now? (How?)

*If yes:* Did your experiences at Alverno have anything to do with that?

- c. What is the value of Alverno with respect to your present personal and career goals; in other words, how does coming here “make sense” as a contribution to your own goals?

18. Do you see any kind of relationship between your education and your personal life; do things carry over from one part of your life to the other or do these parts of your life affect each other in any way or are they more or less separate? (Describe) [If student mentions only one direction of influence ask for the other, e.g. “and do you feel your personal life affects your learning at all?”]

*If separate:* Can you describe that for me; what kinds of things are you concerned with at school and what other kinds of things are you concerned with outside of school?

19.
  - a. Does what you're learning at school affect the way that you approach your job or other work experience like OCEL or clinical work or field experience; is it of any immediate value to you at work?
  - b. Does your work experience have any effect on the way you approach learning at school?
20. How would you describe yourself at this point in your life?
21.
  - a. Are there any ways in which you, as a person, are different than you were before, as a result of your experience at Alverno? (Describe)  
  
Do other people ever tell you that you've changed since you've been here or do they respond to you differently than they did before?  
  
*If appropriate:* What do you think caused the changes you describe?
  - b. Again, if you could have your way, what kinds of changes in yourself would you like to result from your educational or career experience?  
  
Do you see this kind of change as possible or probable?  
  
What do you think it would take to make this kind of change?
22. Do you feel competent?  
  
Which competencies do you value most?  
  
Why these?
23.
  - a. What kinds of questions are you asking yourself right now?
  - b. What challenges do you see for yourself now or in the near future?
24. Of all the things that you can recall, what really comes home to you about your past year?

**NOTE:** These questions are printed at the bottom of each page of the interview so that the interviewer has them before her at all times. Through probing, it is hoped that the student's most sophisticated thinking about a question will surface. It is important to realize that a student who is highly sophisticated will say many of the things that less sophisticated students will. It is therefore very important to probe so as to elicit more than common responses where possible.

HOW?

COULD YOU FOCUS ON \_\_\_\_\_ FOR ME?

WHY?

I'D LIKE TO FOCUS ON \_\_\_\_\_ FOR JUST A MOMENT.

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

CAN I BRING YOU BACK TO \_\_\_\_\_?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

I'D LIKE TO BRING YOU BACK TO \_\_\_\_\_?

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THAT A BIT MORE FOR ME?

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SHARE THAT WITH ME?

YOU MENTIONED \_\_\_\_\_. CAN YOU CLARIFY THAT FOR ME?

COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE?

HOW IS THAT IMPORTANT FOR \_\_\_\_\_?

ANYTHING ELSE?

JUST OFF THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD...

WHAT DO (DID) YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

### **Some Questions Used in The Design of the Student Perspectives Interview**

1. How do students characterize Alverno?
2. Why did the student come to college and why did she choose Alverno?
3. What kinds of satisfactions does the student expect to obtain from participation in the educational system?
4. What kinds of immediate satisfactions does the student obtain from her participation in the educational system?
5. What educational values does the student express?
6. How does the student understand her role as a student?
7. How does the student understand the faculty role?
8. How does the student describe her learning?
9. How does the student understand and characterize competence?based learning?
10. How does the student perceive the rationale for the Alverno Learning Process?
11. How does the student perceive the institutional values?
12. What are the experiences within the educational environment that generate conflict for the student and what are the issues of the conflict?
13. How does the student describe her personal and intellectual development?
14. How does the student describe her professional development?
15. What kinds of experiences does the student describe as influential to her development?
16. How does the student describe the relation of her education and her work experience?
17. How does the student understand the relation of her education to her career objectives?
18. How does the student describe the relation of her education to her personal life?
19. What are the student's goals and expectations after college?
20. What are the student's questions and concerns about the future?
21. How does the student define what has been fair and unfair treatment by the college with respect to her own experiences?

22. What rights does the student believe accompany her role as a student?
23. How does the student perceive her capacity to influence her learning environment?
24. What kinds of satisfactions does the student obtain from her participation in the educational system?
25. How does the student describe her development?
26. What kinds of experiences does the student describe as influential?
27. What new awarenesses or insights does the student attribute to her college experience?
28. How has the student related her education to her work experience?
29. How does the student describe the relation of her education to her personal life?
30. What are the student's goals and expectations after college?
31. What are the student's questions and concerns about the future?