



# TCC INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BRIEF

## SPRING 2002 ACT STUDENT OPINION SURVEY

In an ongoing effort to measure student satisfaction with instruction and with student services, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at Tidewater Community College (TCC) administered the ACT Student Opinion Survey during spring 2002. This same survey was administered in 1999, 1996, and 1994. A random sample of students from each campus, from various disciplines, and with varying attendance patterns was chosen from across the college. Out of 742 students enrolled in the selected spring 2002 classes, 539 students (73%) completed a survey.

Respondents represented diverse backgrounds and a wide range of ages. The majority of respondents were Caucasian (53%), while the second largest group was African-American (29%). Twenty-seven percent (27%) were married, and 36% had one or more children. The majority of students (67%) reported being employed over 20 hours a week, and 61% indicated that they were full-time students. Almost one half (49%) ranged between 20 and 29 years of age. Seventeen percent (17%) were 19 years of age or younger, 20% of the students were 30-39, and 13% were between 40 and 61 years of age. It is important to note that 75% of the respondents had attended the college for one year or longer, indicating adequate exposure to the college in order to formulate opinions of their experience.

Survey respondents indicated they were pursuing their post-secondary education at TCC with varying needs, goals, and interests. Slightly less than half of the students (47%) received financial aid of some kind. One-half (50%) attended TCC with the primary goal of transferring to a senior institution. Another 31% intended to earn an Associate degree. Business and Management (29%) and the Health Sciences (14%) were the most popular areas of study.

The majority of students cited low cost (66%), the ability to work while attending (59%), convenient location (57%), and the availability of desired courses (57%) as major reasons for choosing TCC. Over one-third (36%) indicated that the potential for success was a major reason, and another 28% said that availability of scholarships and financial aid was a major factor. Interestingly, 84% reported that advice of a high school counselor or teacher was not a reason for selecting TCC.

Upon admission, students held positive impressions of TCC. Seventy-six percent (76%) indicated that TCC was their first choice in colleges, and 83% felt that the college provided a good or excellent quality of education. Once enrolled, students were very satisfied or satisfied with class size (91%), with the testing and grading system (87%), and with the attitude of teaching staff toward students (85%). More than three-fourths of students were very satisfied or satisfied with the variety of courses offered (82%), the quality of instruction in their major (80%), course content in their major (78%), and the challenge in their studies (76%).

The survey also sought to determine students' frequency of use and level of satisfaction with the spectrum of co-curricular services and facilities. Students reported that the most frequently used services were parking (89%), the library (80%), and the academic advising or course planning services (74%). While only 60% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with parking facilities, 87% had a high level of satisfaction with the library. Not only has there been an increase in student use of academic advising services (from 59% in 1994 to 74% in 2002), but there has also been an increase in satisfaction levels (from 62% in 1994 to 71% in 2002).

It is interesting to note that since 1994, the percentage of respondents who have access to a computer outside the college has increased dramatically from 54% to 92%. During the same time period, the use of computer services at TCC more than doubled from 34% of respondents in 1994 to 69% in 2002. Student users indicated satisfaction with the quality (90%) and accessibility of computer services at TCC (89%) on the 2002 survey.

Demographic indicators examined in 1994 targeted the need to increase student access to financial aid information and services; since that time, student use of financial aid services has increased steadily. The percentage of satisfied financial aid customers increased sharply in 2002 (82%) compared to those who used financial aid services in 1999 (68%).

Admissions, another area that has undergone many changes, including catalog redesign and intensive staff development training, received positive ratings in all aspects. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of student respondents were satisfied with general admissions procedures, and the level of satisfaction with the college catalog and admissions publications increased from 70% in 1994 to 83% in 2002. Expanded electronic services in the registration process likely contributed to the positive ratings students gave to the convenience of registering (84%), general registration procedures (83%), and billing and fee payment procedures (76%).

Three-fourths or more of students expressed satisfaction with buildings and grounds in general (81%), classrooms (81%), business training facilities and related equipment (77%), study areas (76%), and laboratory facilities (75%).

TCC is meeting the needs of students as indicated by the level of student satisfaction with the college, in general, as well as with the academic, student, and administrative services it provides. Ratings for TCC were aligned with national norms for community colleges. In addition, ratings for several of TCC's services stood above the national averages. TCC's students were more satisfied with computer services, library/learning resources facilities, financial aid services, and veteran services compared to satisfaction levels at community colleges around the nation. Students at TCC were also more satisfied with the testing/grading system, the variety of courses offered at TCC, and the flexibility they had to design their own program. Nearly all aspects of the admissions and registration processes received higher ratings than the national averages. Especially notable is the satisfaction level with the college catalog and admissions publications that were improved through revision. Overall, students were also more satisfied with TCC's rules and policies compared to the national averages. Based on students' rising satisfaction with TCC and favorable comparisons to national norms, it is evident that TCC is providing students with a positive educational experience.