



TCC INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BRIEF

Service Area Program Needs Assessment

In fall 2001, TCC retained the services of MGT of America, Inc., a national higher education and research firm, to obtain service area feedback on key planning issues such as preferred programs, course delivery methods and scheduling preferences, and student service needs. A telephone survey instrument, designed to focus on adult residents' higher education needs and plans, was utilized in the study. The results were combined with the results of identical questions asked of Portsmouth, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Chesapeake residents in a previous survey conducted in fall 2000. The combined sample included 1,748 respondents and provided an overview of the four cities "officially" served by the college, in addition to Suffolk, which is "unofficially" served by TCC. Key findings of the combined analysis are highlighted below:

- ❑ Over half of the respondents indicated that it is either likely or somewhat likely that they will take a college-level course within the next three years. In fact, 82% of those who were likely to take a course responded "yes" when asked if they would take a course from TCC if subjects of interest were offered.
- ❑ As age increased among respondents, they were less likely to plan on taking a course over the next three years. In addition, minority respondents were much more likely than Caucasian respondents to indicate plans to enroll in a college course during the next three years.
- ❑ The most preferred programs of study include computer science/information technology (14%), business management/marketing (10%), computer software training (8%), and nursing (5%). Teacher education, engineering, business technology, and other health related programs were also popular choices.
- ❑ By far, job related or career enhancement was cited as the most common motivation for taking a course (49%). Personal development was a strong second choice. The vast majority (78%) of respondents interested in taking courses prefer that the coursework count toward a degree; Bachelor's is the most preferred level (37%), followed by Master's (24%) and then Associate (16%).
- ❑ The great majority of residents (69%) prefer the traditional classroom method of course delivery. Internet courses ran a distant second (12%). The strong preference for classroom based instruction is generally consistent regardless of age, ethnicity, and level of educational attainment. Even among those working full time, the preference of classroom instruction (68%) appears to outweigh the superior convenience of other modes of course delivery.
- ❑ Well over half (56%) of respondents mentioned a TCC campus as their institution of choice for taking courses. As expected, respondents prefer the TCC campus located in the city in which they reside.
- ❑ Financial aid is the student service considered most important to respondents (66%), followed by academic advising (63%), computer access (60%), career planning (53%), and training in study skills (53%). In addition, the majority of Norfolk residents cited academic tutoring and a job assistance center as very important student services.
- ❑ The overwhelming majority of respondents (78%) prefer part-time to full-time attendance. Preferred class meeting times included weekday evenings, weekday lunch hour, and weekday mornings.

Although 61% do not desire weekend classes, Saturday morning is the preferred time for those who do prefer weekend class meetings.

- Respondents' demographic data indicated that the majority was employed full time (61%) and had lived in the service area for more than ten years (61%). Similar to TCC student demographics, most were female (61%), 18-44 years of age (58%), and Caucasian (63%).

The Service Area Program Needs Assessment Study provides a rich array of data pertaining to higher education perceptions and preferences among adult service area residents and serves as an internal guide to enhance educational programs and student services in new and more effective ways. The large portion of respondents who indicated plans to take a college level course within the next three years supports the enrollment demand analyses conducted by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV). The demand for education in South Hampton Roads will far exceed that of other areas in the state over the next ten years. In addition, an overwhelming preference for the traditional classroom experience will exacerbate the space shortages that already exist on TCC campuses.

The study lays a foundation for the college to work with each city to develop a shared vision for its campus and to look for creative ways to provide education and training in the midst of a state budget deficit. In fact, it is more important than ever to create a vision that together the cities and the college can realize. This vision will help guide the college in its strategic planning efforts as it endeavors to optimally respond to the needs of the local citizenry.