

Community Survey Spring 2007

Oakton recently sought community input to help the College plan and deliver desired credit and non-credit courses. Specifically, a printed survey with prepaid return postage was included in the Oakton class schedule distributed to nearly 190,000 households and businesses in March 2007. An online version of the survey was also available, with the URL included in the survey itself. To encourage participating in the survey, the College conducted a raffle; respondents who identified themselves were entered into a raffle for ten \$50 gift certificates to a popular area restaurant.

The College received only 480 completed surveys, fewer than half the number received when we conducted a similar survey in 2002. Of the 480 surveys, 434 were returned by mail and 46 were completed online. Respondents were primarily female (75%), Caucasian (83%), and 40 years of age or older (72%).

What did we learn?

Satisfaction with Oakton. Respondents who had taken an Oakton course, or who had a household member take a course, were very satisfied. On a five point scale, with 5 = very satisfied, the mean rating was 4.4. Put another way, 86% of these respondents gave satisfaction ratings of 4 or 5.

Interest in new programs. Given a list of programs Oakton is exploring, respondents indicated most interest in these (the number who said they were interested is in parentheses): Small business management (183), Entrepreneurship (173), Exercise/physical trainer (153), Massage therapy (140), Medical imaging (138), Sign language / interpreting (137), Environmental science (134), Horticulture (134), Paralegal (116), Landscape management (110), Veterinary technology (assist veterinarians) (106). It should be noted that expressing interest in a field does not mean a person will actually enroll in courses, so these data must be treated with caution. It should also be noted that in a number of these fields interest is as great or greater in non-credit than in credit offerings.

Campus preference. Survey respondents did not show a distinct preference for one campus over another, assuming they were actually to enroll in credit courses. While 48 percent said they preferred Des Plaines and 34 percent said they preferred Skokie, 18 percent had no preference.

Thinking about Oakton. Respondents were asked to list a word or phrase that came to mind when they thought of Oakton. The words most frequently used were (number of times word used is in parentheses): Convenient (58), Affordable (30), Close (14), Diverse (12), Education (11), Good (11), Quality education (10).

Characteristics of Oakton. Respondents were also given a list of community college characteristics and asked whether each of the characteristics reflected Oakton. Seventy-five percent or more said these attributes characterize Oakton: Convenient (94%), Affordable (92%), Evening and week-end courses (87%), Courses to upgrade employment skills (78%), Friendly (77%).

Learning about Oakton and course offerings. Mailings sent to homes were the most preferred way to learn about Oakton, with using the Web nearly as important. However, respondents overwhelmingly want to learn about class schedules via mailings; 77% preferred mailings, 9% preferred the Web and 16% had no preference.

Suggestions for Oakton. Respondents were asked for suggestions about what programs and events the College might offer to educate and entertain them. Many ideas were given, a number of which repeat what Oakton already provides. This is important information because it indicates what the community may not know about the College.