

## ***Market Demand for Oakton Credit Courses: Results of a Spring 2007 Study***

In Spring 2007, Oakton contracted with the Aslanian Group, a firm that specializes in conducting marketing and demand studies for higher education, to conduct a study of resident and employer interest in and demand for Oakton credit, non-credit and customized training courses and programs. The two primary populations targeted in this study were (a) those who recently enrolled in first- and second-year college programs, and (b) those who recently enrolled in career/job-related noncredit programs. Data from area employers provided additional insights into the market for Oakton offerings. Residents and employers were contacted by telephone. This is a different study than the Community Survey reported in the May 2007 *In the Abstract*; that study was based on a survey enclosed in the Summer Oakton class schedule distributed to homes and employers in the district.

The Aslanian group explains its emphasis on “demand” rather than “need” as follows:

This approach is based on the fact that we believe that what and how students have actually studied in the recent past are better predictors of what others will study in the future. To put it a different way, we have found, as a result of many studies, that examining demand is far more reliable than examining prospective interest. Our primary goal was to understand their past behavior and future plans and preferences in regard to postsecondary education so that Oakton’s supply can be best designed to meet the needs of prospective students.

This In the Abstract features important findings about students taking credit courses.

- Oakton strongly dominates the college student market in its service area. Approximately 20 percent of students recently enrolled in credit courses attended Oakton. Additionally, approximately 20 percent of students recently enrolled in credit courses said Oakton was their preferred college. Such data reveal that Oakton programs and policies satisfy the majority of the students who enroll here.
- In general, first- and second- year students in Oakton’s service area are only moderately familiar with the Des Plaines campus, but even less familiar with the Skokie campus. The large majority – 60 percent or so – compared the visibility of Oakton’s courses and program offerings as about the same as that of other area colleges, while 25 percent believed they are less visible.
- Students who had recently taken courses were asked to tell us the subject areas of the courses that they had taken recently. Overall, the data show that courses in business were most attractive to the largest proportion of first- and second-year students, followed by education, math, health, social science, and computer courses. Recall these data are for courses taken anywhere, not just at Oakton.
- Close to 30 percent of the students have had some recent experience with online courses. In regard to their willingness to take future courses in a classroom setting with an instructor present, partly online and partly in a classroom with an instructor present, or entirely online, the findings show that the most highly rated delivery method is taking a class that is delivered entirely in a classroom. However, the findings also reveal that about 45 percent of these students are willing or are extremely willing to take their next course partly online and partly in a classroom and half are willing or are extremely willing to take their next course entirely online, indicating this population is quite open to online or hybrid study.
- When asked to rate several statements about Oakton, the students recognized Oakton best for its highly reasonable costs for the quality education students receive, followed by its good overall reputation, its ability to meet the education/training needs of the business community, and its highly trained faculty.
- According to these students, the best method to get useful information to a prospective student is via a college’s Web site.

For more information about the Aslanian Group study and the Spring 2007 Community Survey, contact the Office of Research.