

LOOKING AT INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS TRENDS — COMMUNITY SERVICE AT OCC.

MISSION: TO PROVIDE QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS ON AN ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE BASIS.

PURPOSES:

- *COMMUNITY SERVICES including cultural social and enrichment opportunities for lifelong learning.*
- EDUCATIONAL TRANSFER
- OCCUPATIONAL/TECHNICAL/PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
- DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION
- GENERAL EDUCATION
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- purposes are operationalized, indicators of these definitions identified

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service defined as:

- I. Responsiveness to Community Needs
 - II. Participation Rate in Service area
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- I. Responsiveness to Community Needs
 - i) Residents' knowledge of OCC programs and services
 - ii) Community satisfaction with service
 - II. Participation Rate in Service Area
 - i) Community use of facilities
 - ii) Enrollment in career and personal enrichment courses

Methodological Notes

- where did the data come from
- what are its limitations
- what else do we need to know about it

Potential Avenues of Future Investigation

- multi-dimensional analysis; create matrix of Purpose x Mission effectiveness
- use of multiple methods of measurement (move beyond just using surveys)

External Focus Group Summary
Criterion III Subcommittee on Noncredit Curriculum

A mini-group was held on March 13, 1997 in order to determine external perceptions and opinions regarding OCC's noncredit curriculum. Four participants were present at the session. One is involved in a nonprofit organization, another is in the telemarketing field, a third is a business owner, and the fourth is in the automotive supply business.

Part One: Noncredit Curriculum Experiences

Have you ever participated in any noncredit course offerings here at OCC? If so, which courses?

One participant has taken a number of noncredit courses in financial planning and the stock market. She has also taken traditional credit courses in accounting and similar areas. As a "self-taught" accountant not interested in pursuing a formal degree, it did not matter to her whether the course offered credit or not. Another has taken a number of credit courses at the college with the goal of eventually transferring to a four-year institution. Her only personal experience with the noncredit curriculum was a golf class which she took as recreation.

Participants had become aware of OCC noncredit offerings in varied ways. One had been looking for a course in a specific area—technical writing—and called both the counseling department and the admissions office at OCC in order to get the information she needed. Others have gotten information about noncredit offerings through printed curriculum guides.

Are you aware of other kinds of noncredit offerings at the college?

One participant who has attended OCC in the past noted that she has not received the college's curriculum guide in the mail for a number of months and is probably not aware of all the offerings. She noted that her local school district sends a listing of adult education courses each term, and wondered why OCC could not provide a similar noncredit document for the general public, including those who have not taken courses previously.

Another participant noted that as she came to OCC looking for courses in a specific area, she has not looked into other offerings. Another is currently shopping around, looking at OCC's offerings as well as those of other schools in the area. Finally, the fourth participant reflected that based on her experience at OCC, it seems that most people in thirties and forties who come to the college for noncredit courses are looking for a particular skill, while younger students are often looking for credit courses which will transfer.

What have been your sources of information about OCC offerings?

One participant stated that the only place she has ever seen any information about noncredit course offerings at OCC is at the college itself. Another agreed, saying that in her experience you have to come to OCC to get this information as it is not made available outside the college. Several remembered receiving information on programs offered through the Womencenter, and the Writers at Work program, through the mail at home. When the Womencenter was mentioned, one participant recalled seeing an article in that Oakland Press describing some of their activities at the Orchard Ridge campus. Overall, however, there was no consistent source for information about noncredit offerings at the college.

*no consistent
Marketing-difficult
sources*

Which of these categories (continuing education, cultural programming, community affairs, personal enrichment, educational bridge programs) do you feel are most important to the community?

Most participants felt that continuing education is the most important aspect of the noncredit curriculum. Specifically, several felt that continuing education opportunities designed to assist people in furthering or enhancing their careers should be top priority. One gave an example from her field, mentioning that as competition increases and costs rise, many people will need to gain new technical skills to retain their jobs. Another concurred, noting that while cultural programming is important, the metro area offers many other cultural opportunities.

Another mentioned that personal enrichment courses are also important, particularly for older people who may not have career-related needs. While acknowledging that many of these kinds of courses are also available through adult education programs, she feels that college-level courses offer more opportunities for in-depth study of the topic. One participant noted that bridge programs for high school students are also important, although none were aware of any current programs sponsored by OCC.

In general, participants did not feel that other aspects of noncredit curriculum were nearly as important as continuing education. Career-related training—both for individuals and for employers—was seen as particularly important to the community.

Are there specific noncredit activities or programs you feel should be offered which currently are not?

One participant who is involved with several programs at the Womencenter noted that the college should encourage more external participation in the various literary journals and magazines published on campus. While some such publications are open to the public, a number accept submissions only from students. She feels that some of these publications are well known in southeast Michigan, and that by opening them up to the public, OCC could improve their quality and circulation, in addition to gaining publicity for the college.

Another participant who has marketing experience noted that OCC might benefit from establishing a community newsletter. In her experience, newsletters can provide a real sense of community as well as information about programs and services. She noted that as a resident of Oakland County, a newsletter from OCC would likely enhance her interest in the college by bringing a sense of a personal connection. Others agreed that the sense of community and belonging that a newsletter could provide would might spark an interest in members of the general public who might otherwise have felt no connection to the college.

When asked about opportunities which might be available elsewhere in the community but that should also be offered at OCC, two participants noted that more music and dance classes should be available on a noncredit basis, while others mentioned an interest in an exercise or fitness program open to the public. More opportunities for recreational courses such as tennis and golf would also be welcome.

What are the best times and days for noncredit classes?

All agreed that evenings and weekends are the best times for noncredit courses, as most people are busy during the day. One participant noted that short courses offered all day for three or four days might be easier to manage for some people with busy schedules. Most felt that employers will excuse an employee for a few days but only if the class is directly related to work responsibilities.

Part Two: Support for Noncredit Curriculum

What should a community college offer its community in noncredit areas?

Most felt that a community college should offer a wide variety of noncredit activities, as OCC does currently. However, several also noted that programs or activities for which there is high community demand should be offered more frequently, at more times and more locations. Participants felt that there is currently widespread community demand for work-related training, and that OCC could and should continue to develop partnerships with businesses in the communities. One participant who works in the banking industry noted that there is currently a great need for employee training due to the increase in automated banking systems and decrease in traditional pencil and paper systems.

In general, are community colleges meeting community needs?

Overall, participants feel that community colleges meet the needs of their communities. One noted that programs for recent high school graduates—particularly those which could help a student improve academic skills—are always needed.

What are the best ways for a community college to communicate information about noncredit offerings?

Participants agreed that local or regional newspapers could be used to boost awareness of programs and activities. Also, there was agreement that the concept of a newsletter distributed to the general public would be an effective way of communicating this information. One participant added that radio advertisements are also useful. When asked about the kind of information people need, participants noted that most residents are probably aware of the college, but need information about the availability of specific programs.

Participants also noted that continuing to strengthen relationships with local high schools would be an effective way to communicate information on both credit and noncredit programs.

Which of the activities mentioned earlier do you feel are a good use of taxpayer money?

One participant noted that from a taxpayer perspective, the primary purpose of the community college is to provide young people who cannot afford more expensive alternatives an opportunity for higher education. She felt that educating and training young people can only benefit the community in the long run. While none of the participants feel that taxpayer money is being misused in the noncredit area, several agreed that if cuts had to be made, the noncredit offerings which do not directly benefit the community or local economy should be cut first, while programs and courses that support the economy and that provide education for young people with no other alternatives should be preserved.