

# An Analysis of Student Life at the Orchard Ridge Campus

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## **Introduction**

In an attempt to assess what students think about the various aspects of student life on campus, the Office of Institutional Research conducted an analysis of student life and activities on the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College. This report measures the students' opinions about those services and activities conducted on the Orchard Ridge campus.

## **Methodology**

A total number of 401 students were randomly selected for this survey. These students represented a cross sectional sample (i.e., first-year students, night students, transfer and career oriented students, etc.) of students on the Orchard Ridge campus. The survey was administered via phone by the department's in-house surveyors.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections; service learning, the Enrichment Center, the Womencenter, and other campus clubs and activities. We also included open-ended questions to capture other points of view that may not have been asked in previous questions.

The following is analysis of students' responses to the survey questions.

## **Results**

### *Service Learning*

The first section of the survey included questions about service learning. Students were asked if they had heard of workshops on leadership, diversity, social awareness and other related topics. They were also asked if they knew about mentoring high school students and various volunteering programs (e.g., raising funds or awareness for hunger, improving the environment, improving quality of life for elderly, and tutoring underprivileged children). In all four categories, the majority of the students responded that they had not heard of these services. The largest percentage of those not knowing about a specific activity was 86 percent of the students surveyed did not know about mentoring high school students.

We also asked students' opinions whether they believed these services were valuable. Of those surveyed, 66 percent thought that tutoring underprivileged children was very valuable. This was closely followed by 61 percent who thought raising funds and/or awareness for hunger was very important and 58 percent who believed it was very important to improve the environment. Fifty-two percent of our respondents did think

that workshops on leadership, diversity, social awareness and other related topics, were somewhat important.

Finally, we asked the students if they would participate or utilize any of the aforementioned services. Although neither set of answers (definitely, maybe and definitely not) received a majority, the largest percentage of those who would definitely participate in an event would be those students who would tutor and mentor underprivileged children. Those who would maybe participate was tied with the service learning workshops and improving the environment at 46 percent. Mentoring high school students provided the largest definitely not answer to the question of which 44 percent answered in the negative.

Some of the students voiced a concern about the time element needed to participate in any of these services. Some students thought it was a great idea, but were not sure where they would find the time to participate in such activities.

### *Enrichment Center*

We asked the same series of questions for the Enrichment Center of our respondents. These questions were asked about developing the personal self and the Center's library resources. When we asked if they had heard of the workshops on developing the personal self, 76 percent stated they had not heard of the service. The students were also asked to assess whether the workshops focused toward developing the personal self were valuable. Fifty-two percent that they were somewhat valuable and 34 percent did think they were very valuable. Forty percent of the students stated they would not participate in the workshop if given a choice and 39 percent thought they might participate in such an activity if available.

The second part of this section asked whether students have heard of the Enrichment Center's library on the campus of Orchard Ridge. Fifty-seven percent stated they had, whereas the other 43 percent did not know of there being a library on site. Did the students believe the Enrichment Center's library to be a valuable resource? An overwhelming 69 percent said it was very important and 19 percent stated it was somewhat important. If given the chance to utilize the library, 58 percent said they would, 20 percent stated that they might and 22 percent that they would not utilize the library if given the opportunity. A caveat concerning the responses to the Center's library should be noted. It is very probable that students' believed they were answering the question about the main library (LRC) and not the Enrichment Center's library. This may have influenced the responses of the students.

### *Womencenter*

In this category, we asked interviewees if they have heard of any of the workshops (i.e., menopause, parenting skills, divorce, self-defense) sponsored by this unit. Of those answering the question, 62 percent stated they did not know of such a service. A majority of students also believed that the workshops were very to somewhat important. It was almost an even division between those who stated they would definitely or maybe participate and those who would not.

Other workshops offered by the Womencenter included stress management and career guidance. In both cases, a majority of students did not know of such services, but believed both services were very to somewhat important. Approximately 38 percent of students suggested that they would definitely participate in utilizing the unit to explore career opportunities, however, 42 percent stated they would not engage in the stress management workshops.

We also assessed if our respondents knew about legal counseling offered by the Womencenter. A significant percentage, 78 percent, did not know that such a service existed. They did believe that the service was valuable, but were divided on whether they would utilize legal counseling.

Crisis referral was also not well known among students surveyed. Only 22 percent stated that they had heard of such a service. Again, a large majority believed that the assistance was important, but 39 percent suggested they would not utilize the crisis referral service.

The largest percentage of students who did not know about a certain component of the Womencenter was in the area of women's health information. Eighty percent of our respondents did not know there was such a service provided by the unit. A majority of students, 56 percent, believed that the service was very valuable. However, 47 percent suggested they would not participate if given the opportunity.

Many of the students who did know about the center were introduced to it by obtaining extra credit in their coursework. Most stated they would not have been aware of it otherwise.

### *Other Student Activities and Services*

Five other areas of student services was evaluated to determine whether students found these areas to be important and integral in the students' collegiate experience. These additional student services areas include; the International Club, Phi Theta Kappa, The Recorder, the Forensics Club, and the Jewish Student Association.

As in other student service areas, 67 percent were not aware of the International Club. Again, a larger majority believed that the service was somewhat to very valuable. However, a large majority of students, 57 percent, stated they would not participate in such an activity. Some students believed that the program was only for international students, and that American students could not join.

Phi Theta Kappa fared well in recognition among students. Sixty percent of our respondents had heard of this activity. In addition, 53 percent thought it to be somewhat important and 33 percent believed it to be very important. A large percentage of students, 46 percent, stated that they were not interested in participating in such an activity. The largest complaint about this program was the time commitment needed to be a member. Although they were interested, they could not justify spending that much time on one activity.

The Recorder also was recognized among the students; 56 percent knew of the student paper and 44 percent were not aware of the publication. An overwhelming majority did believe that the paper was valuable and 47 percent stated they would be willing to participate in this student activity. Some students stated they did not know where to pick up the paper on campus and as shown above, some did not know there was a school paper.

The Forensics Club fared next to last in identification among students. Seventy-two percent of our respondents suggested that they had not heard of such a student group. Again, a large majority of students believed the group to be somewhat to very important. However, 47 percent expressed that they would not participate in this student activity.

The final area of student activity we surveyed was the Jewish Student Association. This student group was not recognized by 84 percent of those surveyed; the lowest recognition assessment. Approximately half, 52 percent, thought the service would be valuable. In contrast, 82 percent of these students stated they definitely would not participate in such an activity. Of those who were interested in the service, they did not know where to go to obtain the information or how to find the group.

## **Open-ended Questions**

Questions five through eight of the survey, attempted to obtain additional student thoughts and opinions which may not have been captured in the preceding questions. Narratives for each question are appended to this document. However, we have attempted to code or categorize those responses below.

Salient issues which emerged from question five (Do you have any comments?) suggested that the dining area/cafeteria, parking, safety, academic and student services

seem to be the most prominent areas which students referred. A few of their responses included: There is no where to socialize; food at the Rath is terrible; and I'm concerned about my safety at night.

In question six (Are there any other services that the student life center could provide for you?) seemed to address five distinct areas; social clubs, academic clubs, counseling, special interests, and a miscellaneous category. Student responses to this question included; do we have intramural sports? Can all students use the gym?

For question seven (Are there enough opportunities for socializing with other students?), we categorized the students responses in three areas; formal, informal, and other. Finally, in question eight (Do you find the campus to be friendly and student oriented?), we thought six categories emerged from the narratives. These codes included areas for students, faculty, staff, signage/directions, security, and other services. Narratives to this question included; classroom buildings are confusing, OCC needs more maps and signage, and the instructors are very good.

## **Discussion**

It seems evident from most of the responses that a large majority of the services available at Orchard Ridge were not recognized by the students. The only activities which a majority of students knew of were The Recorder, Phi Theta Kappa, and the Enrichment Center's library. When students were exposed to unknown activities on campus, a large majority suggested that the programs were either very or somewhat important or valuable. In addition, most respondents would either definitely or maybe participate or utilize those services. Hence, familiarizing students with the various student groups or activities may positively influence their perception of the services and also may increase their desire to participate if given the opportunity.

## **Limitations**

A few shortcomings about the analysis: First, some of the questions were ambiguous in the survey. For example, to whom are the students referring to when they answer whether the service was valuable or not valuable? Is it valuable for them as students or for those they perceive the activity is target toward?

Another limitation is the set of questions concerning the Enrichment Center and its library resources. As previously stated, students may have mistaken the Enrichment Center's library for the main Learning Resource Center on campus. This would have severely biased the results of the analysis about this particular student activity.

Also, the actual number of students who answered each inquiry differed from question to question. Although the difference in actual numbers is not great ( $n=374$  to  $n=401$ ), one should understand that not all 401 students chosen for the survey, answered each question. Thus, although the percentages may not be significantly affected, it is important to know that there are discrepancies in the actual number of responses from question to question.