

**CENTRAL OREGON UNIVERSITY CENTER
&
CENTRAL OREGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURVEY**

Summary of Survey Methodology and Results

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Introduction

The Central Oregon University Center (COUC) and the Central Oregon Community College (COCC) are both in the process of evaluating the programs they offer and considering future programs. In preparation for this COUC and COCC contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) to conduct research on what current and former students think about their educational experiences and what programs they would like to see in the future. Working closely with representatives of COUC and COCC, OSRL planned, and implemented a telephone survey in April of 2000. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The broad goals of the survey were to obtain valid and reliable information from students on the quality of services provided to them by COUC and COCC; their views around future higher educational offerings in Central Oregon and individual demographic information.

In designing the survey instrument, OSRL used a multi-path approach which included: reviewing other educational satisfaction surveys; creating original survey questions with the assistance of COUC and COCC staff; and pre-testing individual questions and the entire survey instrument with members of the survey population, and potential users of the

data from COUC and COCC. Most of the survey questions are OSRL/COUC/COCC originals.

The survey instrument was programmed into OSRL's computer-aided telephone interviewing (CATI) system and further pretested. A facsimile of the survey instrument is provided in Section 2 of this documentation. All interviews were completely confidential, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Interviewer training was conducted on April 12, 2000; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions. Interviewing was conducted from 9:00 AM until 9:00 PM, Monday through Sunday, until the target sample sizes of 276 for COUC and 288 for COCC were exceeded. Altogether, OSRL interviewers made 6,342 telephone calls to complete 608 interviews between April 13 - 22, 2000. Up to 30 calls were made to each valid telephone number. All former and current students supplied by COUC and COCC had an equal chance of being selected. The net response rate was 67% and the refusal rate was 2%; see Section 5 for the sample and response rate report. The average length of the interviews was 11 minutes.

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Large samples, as in this study, reduce sampling error. Results for survey questions in which there is low variability also have less sampling error; for example, a variable with a 50/50 proportional split has wider confidence intervals than a variable with a 5/95 proportional split. For this study, the sampling error, for either the COUC or the COCC population, is ± 5.0 percentage points on a variable with a 50/50 proportional split (at the 95% confidence level). For a variable with a 5/95 proportional split, the sampling error, for either the COUC or the COCC population is ± 2.0 percentage points.

Survey Results

The presentation of the survey results is organized around the individual institutions. Readers of this report may refer to the 51 banner-style tables for more detail. In the banner tables, the primary questions are cross-tabulated by educational experiences, satisfaction with their specific program and demographic information. The banner data include counts and percentages for each question overall, and counts and percentages for each row and column of the cross-tabulation.

Central Oregon Community College

In general respondents enrolled in COCC for two primary reasons, first because of their interest in their subject of study (36%) and second because the institution was close to their home (26%). An additional 16% enrolled primarily because they wanted the ability to work in a specific profession, independent of the location of their eventual job. For those students who had enrolled at both COCC and COUC the fact that COCC is near their home was slightly more important as the primary reason for their enrollment than their interest in the subject (35% vs. 32%).

Only a minority of COCC students enrolled because of the availability of financial aid (35%). However, among both younger students and older students, below age 21 and over age 29, the importance of financial aid as a reason for enrollment rose to the low 40% range. This was also true for those students with dependent children.

The major reason students leave COCC is because of graduation (47%), although a substantial percentage transfer to other schools (18%). In addition, a wide variety of other reasons account for why almost a third of students leave. These include: work and money issues; marriage and family issues; and cases where the respondent was not trying to complete a program but only take a few classes. Perhaps most importantly, almost no students (less than 2%) leave because they are dissatisfied with their program.

Overall, students are satisfied with COCC programs. In fact, 35% report being “extremely satisfied” and another 60% report being “satisfied.” Only 4% of students are either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied, with the latter category only selected by 2 respondents. Interestingly, the two dissatisfied students were both older students in their 30’s.

When asked what was the best part about getting a degree through COCC, students primarily replied with statements about the proximity of the institution, the quality of instruction and the small size of classes. On the opposite question, what was the worst part about getting a degree, respondents complained about financial aid, the limited class selection and the lack of a four-year degree.

Central Oregon University Center

The reason listed by the most respondents as the primary reason for enrolling in COUC programs was because these programs were offered close to home (38%). This reason was followed closely by interest in the subject (31%), with the desire for skills that would allow the respondent to work in Oregon a distant third with 14% of respondents listing it as their primary reason.

Most respondents said that financial aid was not a factor in their decision to enroll in COUC (72%). This finding was reasonably robust and was not influenced by gender, dependent children or employment status.

The majority of students left COUC programs because they graduated (57%), although some (9%) were dissatisfied. An additional 25% listed a variety of reasons, including the need to work or a lack of money and the completion of enough courses to satisfy their own personal or professional requirements.

When asked their overall level of satisfaction with their program and COUC the vast majority were either “satisfied” (64%), or “very satisfied” (23%). Only 7% were “dissatisfied” and one respondent responded that they were “very dissatisfied.”

When asked a similar set of questions about what were the best and the worst parts of getting their degree at COUC, by far the most common response as to what was best was the location of the program near their home. Issues included among the worst part of getting their degree were the limited selection of programs, the difficulties of traveling to the granting institution, the difficulty of communicating quickly with instructors and the costs.

New Programs in Central Oregon

Respondents were asked whether or not they intended to enroll in bachelor’s or master’s degree programs and almost half (49%) replied that they did. The programs people intend to study cover almost the entire universe of academic programs. However, most respondents who intend to pursue a degree program also want that program to be in Central Oregon (79%). Finally, when these same respondents are asked if they would definitely enroll if such a program were offered, 52% say they would definitely enroll either full or part time.

Conclusions

The purpose of this survey was to assess student attitudes about COCC and COUC programs and student desire for additional programs in Central Oregon. Clearly students like the programs currently offered and are highly satisfied with the institutions and the level of instruction. However, just as clearly students are concerned about the limited courses and programs offered and would like to see a much broader range of programs added, including bachelor’s and master’s degree programs