

LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY 1996

*Survey Results*¹

January 1997(revised)



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Introduction

As one part of an effort to better serve the needs of the community, Lane Community College (LCC) contracted with the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory at the University of Oregon (OSRL) to conduct research focused on the county's awareness and opinions of LCC, contact with LCC, sources of information about LCC, and overall assessment of the quality and value of LCC's educational services and the community's educational needs. Working closely with Diane Dann and Craig Taylor at LCC, OSRL planned, pretested and implemented a telephone survey of 403 Lane County residents in October 1996. This report summarizes the survey methodology and results.

Survey Methodology

Survey Instrument

The broad goals of the research were to obtain statistically valid and reliable information from citizens who reside in Lane County that will assist LCC in understanding the public's perceptions of LCC, assessing the educational needs and delivery preferences of county residents, and developing more effective communications throughout the region.

¹ This report was prepared by OSRL Project Director Craig D. P. Helmstter in consultation with OSRL Director Patricia A. Gwartney, OSRL Associate Director Steve Johnson, LCC Director of Institutional Advancement Diane Dann, and LCC Director of Research and Planning Craig H. Taylor.

To address these broad goals, OSRL conducted a representative, random sample survey of 403 adults in Lane County. The survey included questions which targeted six primary areas of interest:

1. perceptions of LCC's educational quality, value, strengths and weaknesses;
2. sources of information about LCC;
3. awareness of various LCC course offerings and services;
4. personal and household contact with LCC in the past, present, and future;
5. preferences for delivery of LCC courses, including reasons for taking classes, preferred time of week, and preferred format; and,
6. basic demographic and background characteristics including age, race/ethnicity, sex, employment, educational attainment, and place of residence (by zip code).

In designing the survey instrument, OSRL used a multipath approach which included: drawing from OSRL's survey archives and professional networks for questions related to LCC's needs; creating original survey questions; and extensively pretesting individual questions and the entire survey instrument with members of the survey population, professionals, survey experts, and potential users of the data from LCC.

Although most of the survey questions were designed by OSRL, some questions are direct parallels to those from similar surveys conducted earlier by LCC. The survey instrument was revised and pretested several times, in consultation with representatives of LCC. 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 anonymous, and human subjects approval was obtained.

Sample and Data Collection

Telephone numbers were drawn at random from all working banks of telephone exchanges in Lane County. All households with telephones had a virtually equal chance of being called. In order to further ensure representativeness, in households with more than one adult, respondents were chosen at random using the "last birthday" technique (see survey instrument, Section 2). Interviewer training was conducted on October 15, 1996; see Section 3 for interviewer instructions.

Interviewing was conducted all times of the day and all days of the week until the target sample size was achieved. Of the 1,646 randomly selected numbers that were dialed, 957 were determined to be ineligible for the survey because of being disconnected or non-residential telephone numbers, or because the respondent had not lived in Lane County for at least one calendar year. The average (mean) length of the interviews was 12.6 minutes, with interviews most commonly running 11 to 12 minutes (mode). Altogether, OSRL interviewers

made 3,082 telephone calls to complete 403 interviews with Lane County residents between October 16 and October 31, 1996.

Survey sampling errors are calculated to assist data users in assessing how much confidence to place in a particular survey result. Larger random samples 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 is ± 5 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 is ± 2.2 percentage points.

Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

To begin, a demographic profile of survey respondents is provided as context for responses reported below. Additionally, each of the demographic characteristics is cross-tabulated with answers to selected questions in the “Banner Tables” section of this report (Section 4), enabling the reader to recognize the presence or absence of question response patterns along demographic lines.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents were female and 42 percent were male. The age distribution of the sample is: 13% age 25 and under, 17% age 26-35, 20% age 36-45, 19% age 46-55, 12% age 56-65, and 12% age 65 or older. Fully 91% of the respondents self-identified as white or Caucasian. Two percent or fewer of the respondents identified as either “Asian and Pacific Islander,” “Hispanic or Latino,” “American Indian,” “Black or African American,” or “other/mixed.”

Respondents also were asked about their highest level of educational attainment, labor force status and income. Ten percent of the respondents indicated that their highest level of educational attainment was 12 or fewer years of formal education, 26% reported either a high school diploma or a GED, 30% reported “some college,” 16% had Bachelors degrees, 8% Masters degrees, and nearly 3% reported Doctorate or professional degrees (JD, MD, etc.). When asked about their labor force status, 56% of the respondents indicated that they were working for pay, 21% were retired, 8% were “not employed” (including those looking and those not looking for work), 7% were “keeping house,” and 6% indicated they were students. When questioned regarding their 1995 household income, 26% reported \$20,000 or below, 35% reported \$20,000 to \$40,000, 21% reported \$40,000 to \$60,000, and 12% reported \$60,000 or more.²

The distribution of a large random sample reflects the actual distribution of the population from which it is drawn. Thus, 49% percent of the respondents resided in Eugene, 22% were from Springfield, 4% were from Florence, and the remaining 25% were scattered throughout Lane County.

² Six percent of the respondents either did not know their yearly household income or chose not to answer that question.

Survey Results

The presentation of the survey results is organized around the first five survey subject areas identified on page 2. Readers of this report may refer to the 75 banner-style tables in Section 4 for a more detailed reporting of the survey results. The banner table data includes the overall counts and percentages for each question (on the top line of each table), as well as the cross-tabulated results of each question with 19 key variables. The cross tabulations allow the reader to assess how respondents answering one way on a particular question will tend to answer on other survey questions. This enables a variety of desired comparisons

Narrative responses to open-ended questions are provided in Section 6. Codes developed for those responses are provided in Section 7. The coded narratives are also included in tabular form at the end of the banners, Tables 71-74.

Perceptions of LCC's Educational Quality, Value, Strengths, and Weaknesses

The survey opened with a series of five questions which tapped the un-aided, “top of the head” feelings that Lane County residents have about LCC. In each of these broad questions respondents were instructed to give their impression of “how good a job” they thought LCC was doing using the categories “excellent,” “good,” “fair,” and “poor” (see Figure 1).

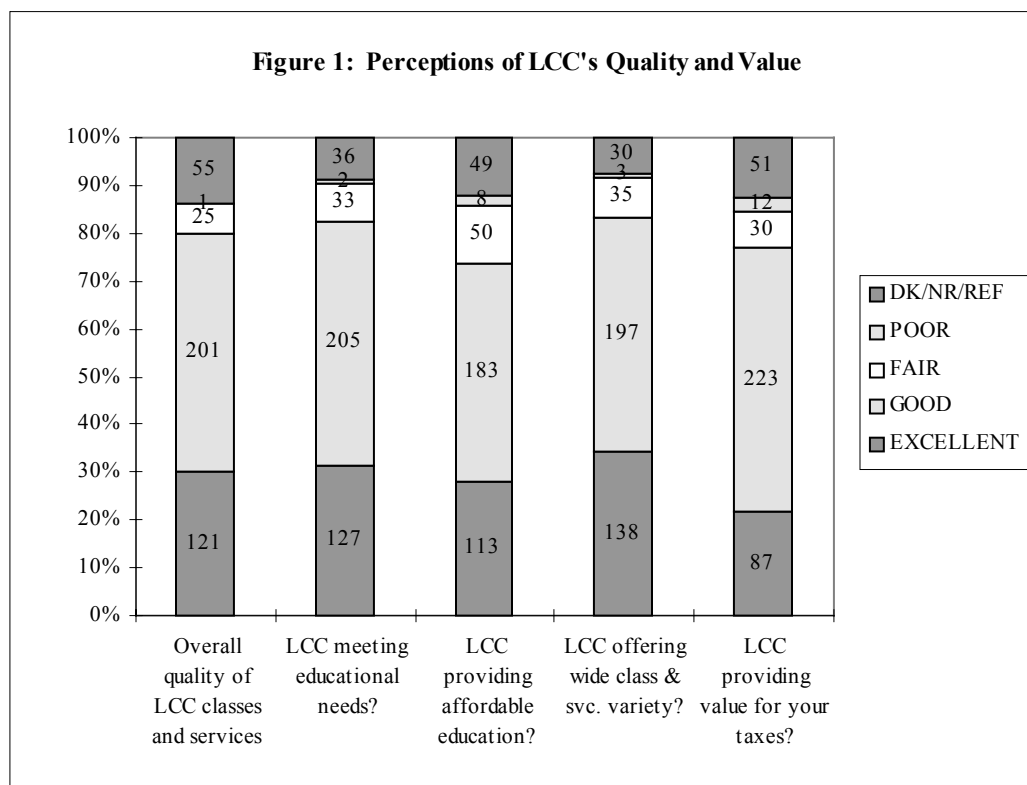
Respondents were first asked to think about “the overall quality of the classes and services offered by LCC.” Thirty percent of the respondents indicated “excellent,” 50% responded “good,” 6% said “fair,” and only 1 respondent indicated “poor.” Nearly 14% of the respondents stated that they did not know, usually because they had not had contact with LCC; 73% of those who responded “don’t know” later reported that they had never taken a class at LCC.³

Respondents then were asked how good a job they thought LCC was doing in “meeting the educational needs of the community.” Thirty-one percent reported “excellent,” 51% reported “good,” 8% stated “fair,” and less than 1% responded “poor.” Nine percent of the respondents stated that they did not know. Thirty-four percent of the respondents thought that LCC was doing an “excellent” job of offering a wide variety of classes and services; 49% reported “good,” 9% stated “fair,” and less than 1% indicated “poor.”

Two of the questions in this group had to do with finances. In response to the first, “How good a job do you think LCC is doing in providing education which people can afford?”,

³ “Don’t Know,” “Refused,” and “No Answer” answer categories are available on every question. However, in order to encourage respondents to answer every question in a meaningful way, interviewers do not read these answers as potential responses; that is, “Don’t Know,” “Refused,” and “No Answer” are only recorded when volunteered by the respondent.

28% stated “excellent,” 45% stated “good,” 12% responded “fair,” and 2% said “poor.” In response to the second, “How good a job do you think LCC is doing in providing value for your tax dollar?”, 22% said “excellent,” 55% said “good,” 7.4% said “fair,” and 3% reported “poor.” Between 12 and 13 percent gave responses of “don’t know” to each of these questions.

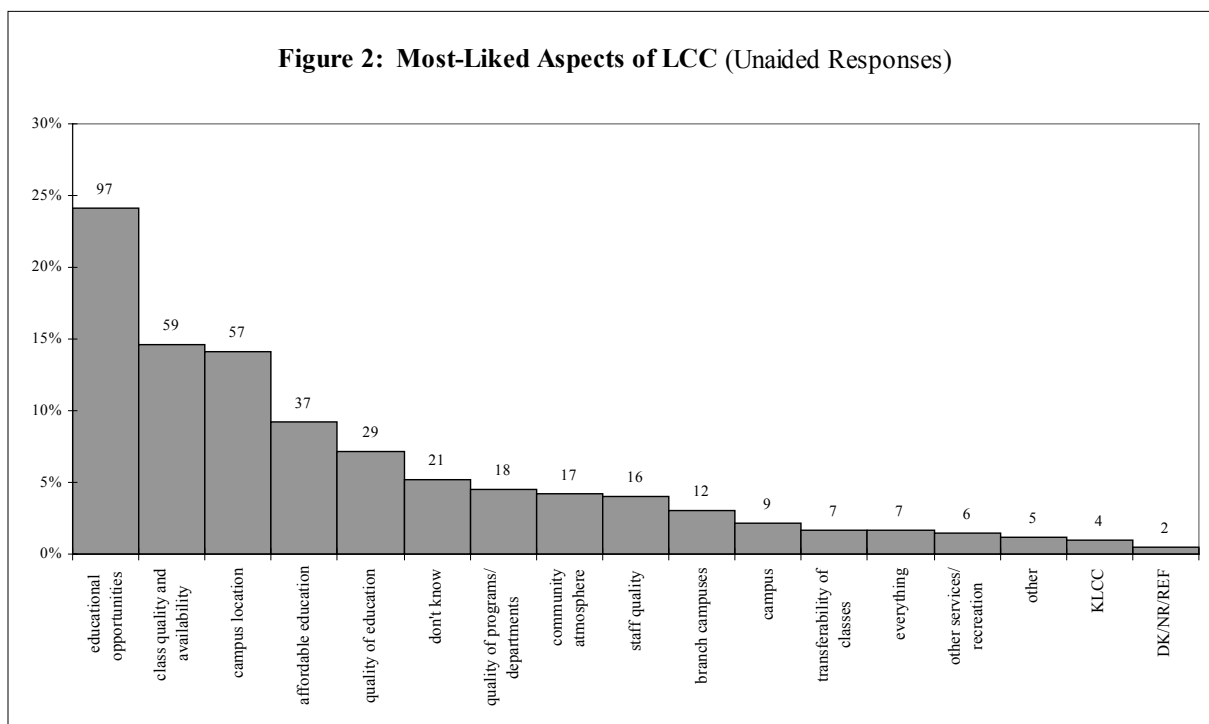


Note: Figures include both percentages (along left axis) and actual numbers of responses for each category (numbers inside of columns). For example, when asked what they thought of the overall quality of LCC classes and services 121 of 403 respondents, or 30 percent, answered “excellent” (far left column).

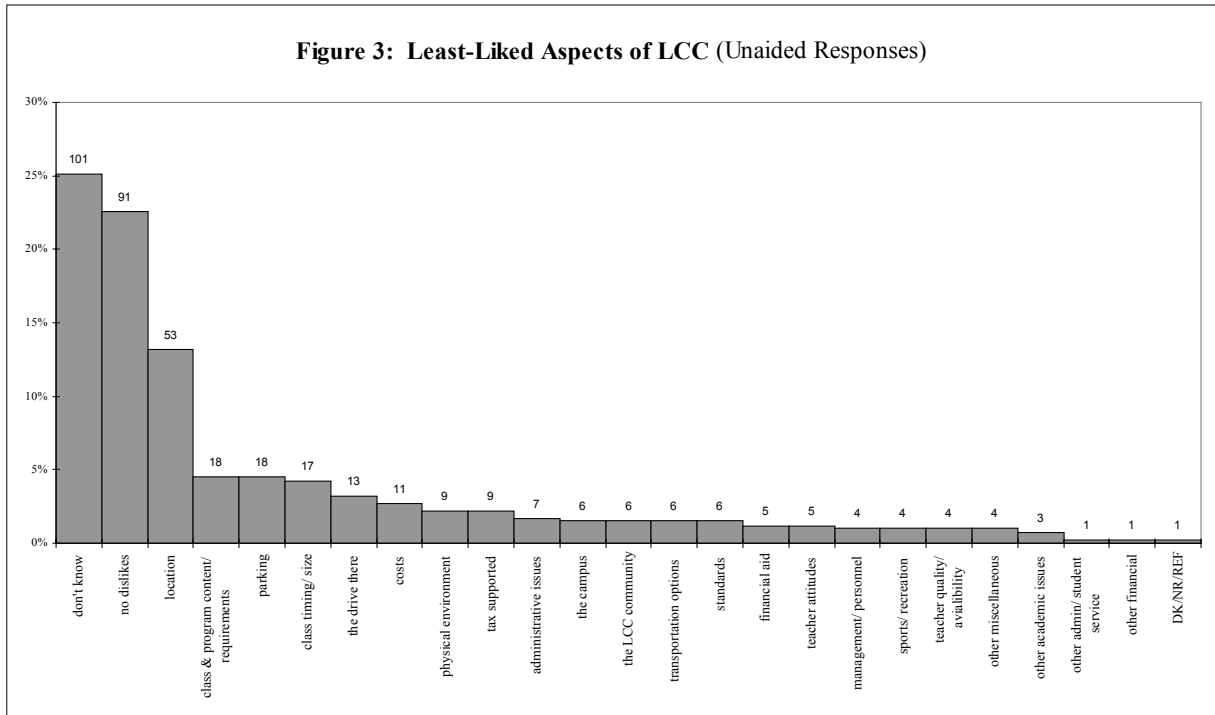
Three unaided open-ended questions allowed respondents to talk more freely about their impressions of LCC; these questions were included among the last few items on the survey. After going through the process of answering a wide array of questions regarding LCC, respondents were asked “What do you like most about LCC?”, “What do you like least about LCC?”, and a question regarding the types of classes and services that the respondent felt LCC should offer. The remarks made in response to these questions were transcribed verbatim by interviewers and can be found in Section 6 of this report. These responses also were categorized by OSRL staff. The open-ended answers were then grouped into the derived categories for analysis and ease of interpretation.

In response to the open-ended question, “What do you like most about LCC?” most of those interviewed made comments having to do with the educational aspects of the college, thus their answers were placed into the following categories; educational opportunity (24%), quality and availability of teachers (15%), and the availability of affordable education (9%;

see Figure 2). Other respondents favored non-academic aspects of LCC such as the location of the campus (14%) and the community atmosphere at LCC (4%). “Location” appeared again as a significant category in response to the question “What do you like least about LCC?” with 13% of the respondents giving answers that could be categorized as such. However, it is notable that even more respondents stated that they either did not know (25%) or did not have a least favorite aspect of LCC (23%; see Figure 3). In regard to the third open-ended question, which asked for class and service recommendations, just over 80% responded that they either did not know, did not have a recommendation, or that LCC does not need any more offerings. Some respondents did mention specific course offerings that they would like to see added while others mentioned that they would simply like to see LCC offer more classes (see Section 6 for verbatim responses).



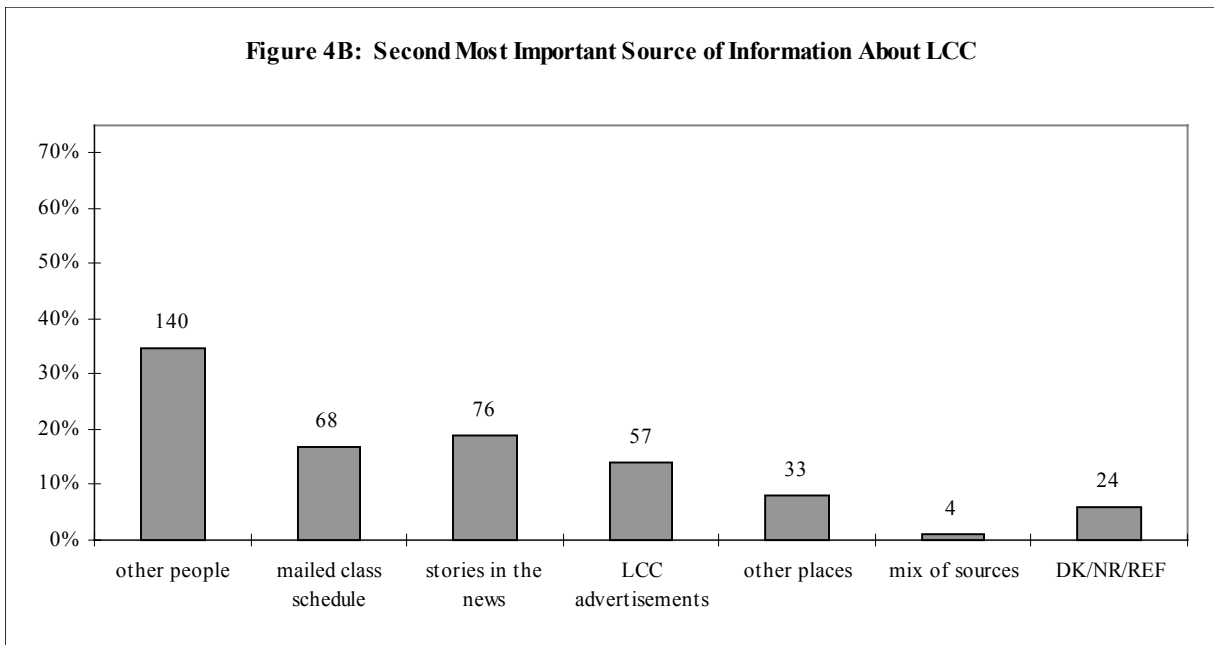
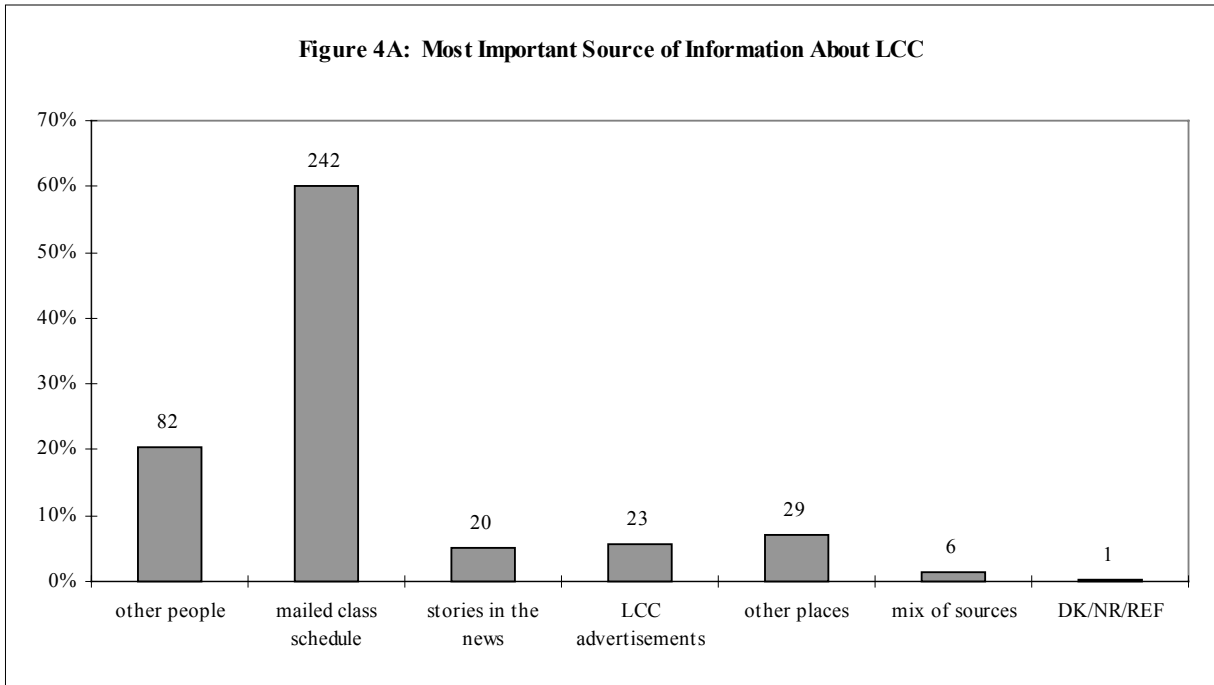
Note: These are the results of an open-ended question which allowed respondents to talk freely about their impressions of LCC (“What do you like most about Lane Community College?”). Responses were coded into categories for statistical analysis.



Note: These are the results of an open-ended question which allowed respondents to talk freely about their impressions of LCC (“What do you like least about Lane Community College?”). Responses were coded into categories for statistical analysis.

Sources of Information about LCC

Following the five opening questions regarding general impressions of LCC, respondents were asked to identify their first and second most important sources of information regarding LCC, based on a list that interviewers read aloud to them (see Figures 4A and 4B). Sixty percent of those interviewed said the mailed class schedule is their most important source of information, followed by “other people” (20%), “other places” (7%), “LCC advertisements” (6%), and “stories about LCC in the news” (5%). For the second most important sources of LCC information, 35% answered “other people,” 19% answered “stories about LCC in the news,” 17% cited the LCC schedule of classes, 14% stated “LCC advertisements,” and 8% said “other places.”

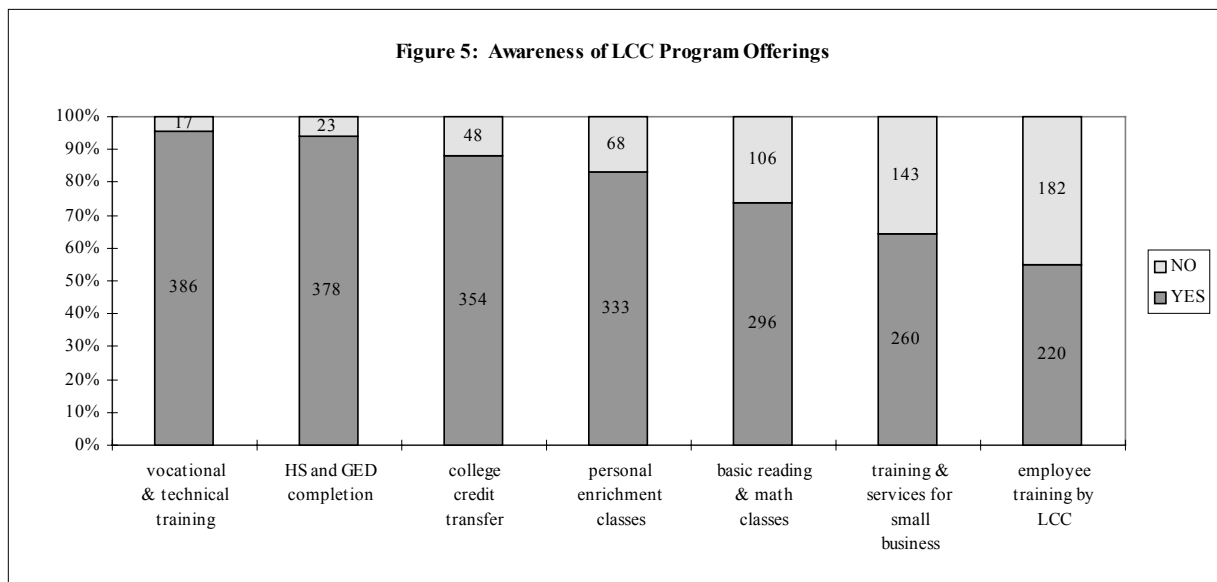


Awareness of Various LCC Course Offerings and Services

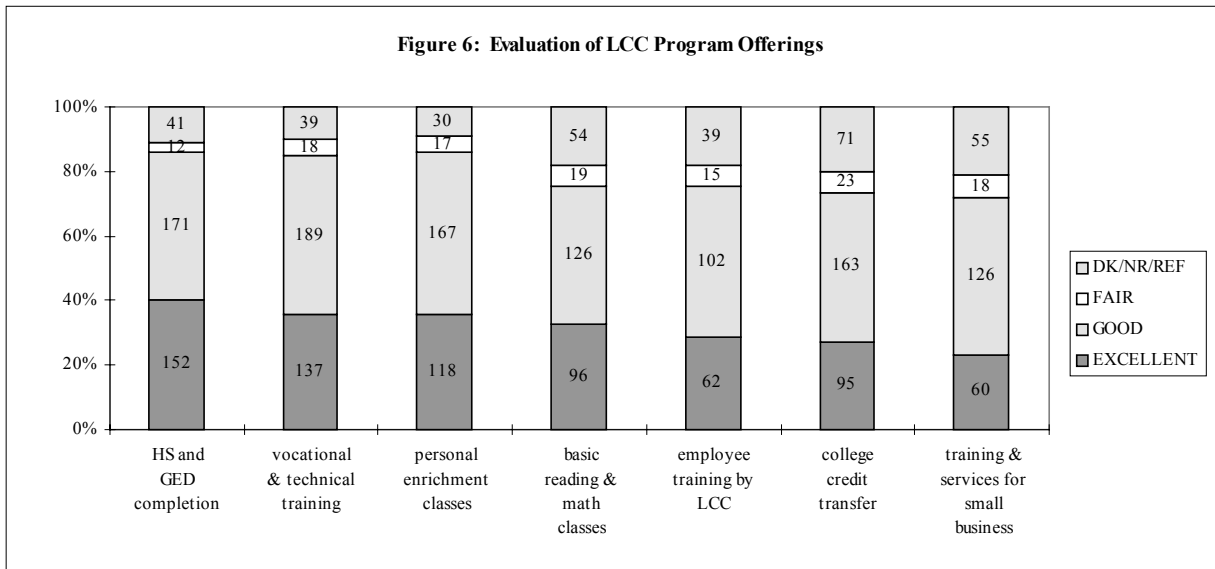
The middle section of the survey consisted of a long series of questions aimed at assessing the community’s awareness of the various classes and services offered by LCC. Respondents were asked a total of 24 questions of the following general format: “Are you aware that LCC offers personal enrichment classes which are taken for personal pleasure rather than college credit?” Seven of these questions were followed with the question, “How good a job do you

think LCC is doing with that?” The results of these questions are displayed in the four figures which follow.

Figure 5 displays the results of questions regarding awareness of various courses and programs offered by LCC. Most of the programs appear to be quite well known: well over nine-tenths of the respondents indicated an awareness of LCC’s vocational and technical training programs (96%) and high school and GED completion programs (94%). Even the least well known programs, training for small business owners and the hiring of LCC to train employees, were recognized by well over half of those interviewed (64% and 55% respectively).



Only the people who reported awareness of each of these programs were asked to evaluate the quality of the programs. Their responses are displayed in Figure 6. The responses indicate that people generally think highly of the programs offered by LCC. Most of the respondents who were aware of LCC’s various programs felt that these programs were either “excellent” or “good.”



Note: The “poor” category has been omitted from this figure for ease of interpretation. Three or fewer respondents indicated “poor” for each of the above questions.

Figure 7 displays responses to questions regarding awareness of various points of access to LCC, including branch locations, evening and weekend courses, televised courses, and courses offered over the internet. Respondents indicated a high level of awareness of LCC’s Downtown Center in Eugene (93%) and the fact that LCC offers classes in the evenings (96%). The only point of access of which less than half of the respondents were aware was that of classes offered “by computer over the Internet” (32% indicated awareness).

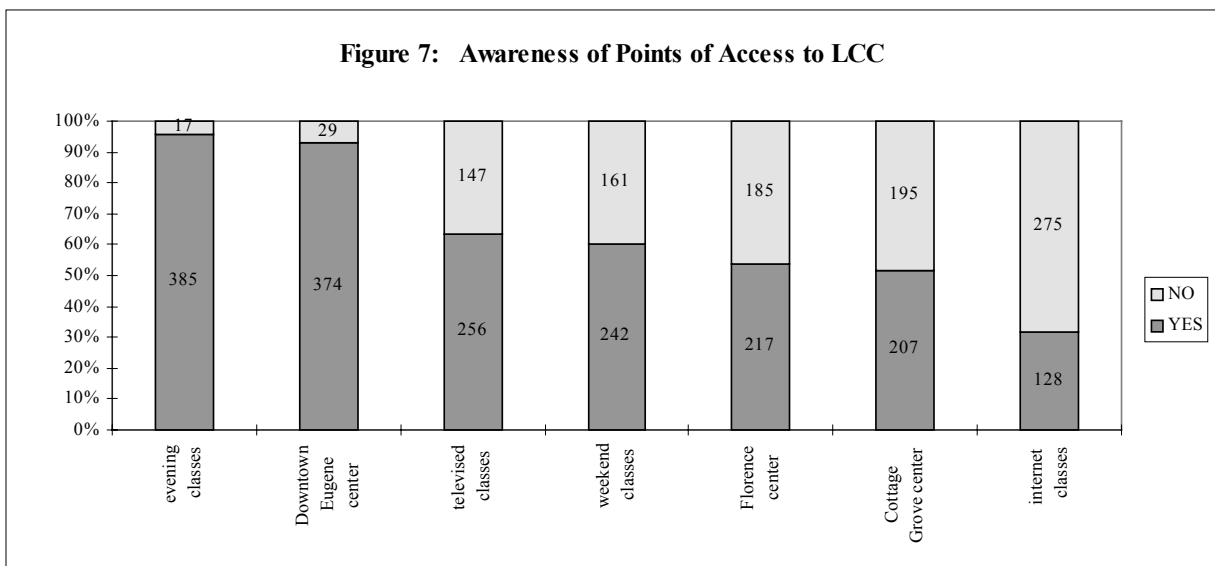
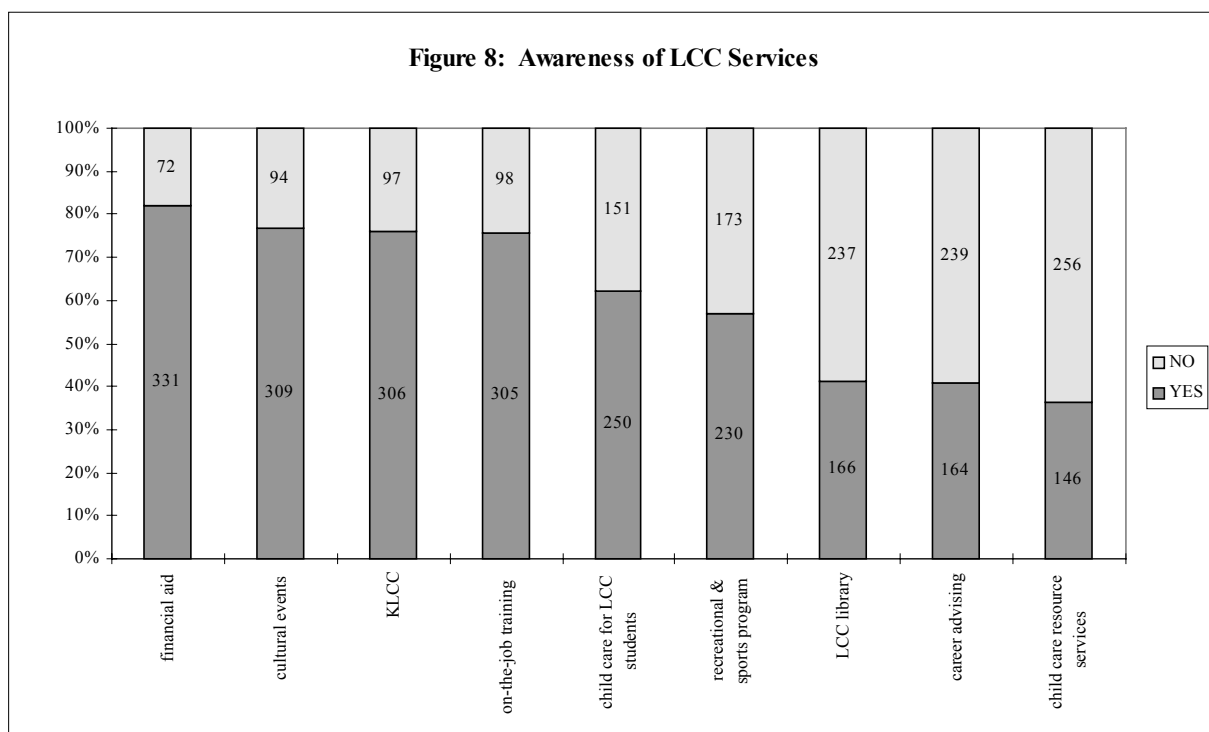


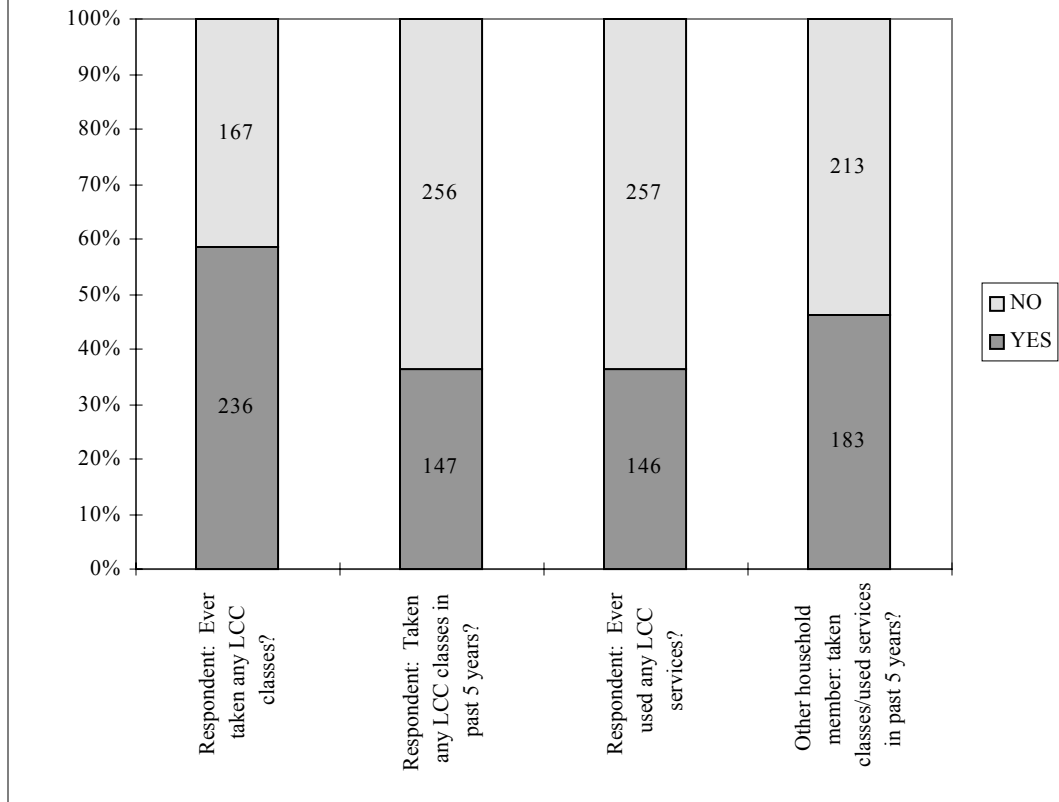
Figure 8 displays respondents' awareness of various services offered by LCC. Respondents indicated a high level of awareness for LCC's financial aid, on-the-job training, cultural events, and KLCC, all of which were recognized by over 75% of the respondents. Among the LCC services that were not as well recognized were: career advising for those who are not LCC students (41% indicated awareness), public use of the LCC library (41%), and LCC's child care resource and referral services (36%).



Personal and Household Contact with LCC in the Past, Present, and Future

Eighty percent of those interviewed reported having some form of household contact with LCC in the past or present. Nearly 59% of the respondents reported having taken a class from LCC at some time in their life; 36% of those surveyed reported taking classes through LCC within the past five years (see Figure 9). Thirty-six percent of the respondents reported making use of an LCC service. Forty-five percent of respondents reported that a household member besides themselves had either taken a class or used a service provided by LCC in the last 5 years.

Figure 9: Incidence of Contact with LCC



Finally, 56% of the respondents reported a likelihood of taking an LCC class sometime in the next 3 years; 30% of those surveyed indicated that they were “very likely” to do so. While there could be some unknown “desirability bias” influencing the responses to these questions, the large sample size and randomization technique used in this survey ensure that these percentages are *highly* representative of results we would get if we were able to ask these questions of *every* adult who has now been living in Lane County for at least a year.

Since finding out more about potential LCC students was one of the goals of the survey, a demographic profile of those who expressed interest in attending LCC in the next three years is presented below.

A demographic profile of those who were either “very” or “somewhat” likely to take a class from LCC in the next three years.*

Men and women are about equally likely to attend LCC in the next three years (54% and 58% respectively).

The likelihood of taking classes at LCC seems to decrease with age.** Those who indicated a likelihood of attending LCC in the next three years included:

- 79% (N= 41) of those 18-25,
- 64% (N= 144) of those 26-55,
- 46% (N= 23) of those 56-65, and
- 25% (N= 18) of those 66 and older.

In terms of educational attainment, the demand for LCC classes appears to be highest among those in the “middle” categories. Those who indicated a likelihood of attending LCC in the next three years included:

- 53% (N= 35) of those with a Bachelor’s degree as their highest level of education,
- 70% (N= 19) of those with an Associate’s degree,
- 61% (N= 75) of those with “some college,”
- 55% (N= 58) of those with a High School diploma or a GED, and
- 41% (N= 16) of those who had not completed High School.**

There appears to be somewhat of a relationship between labor force status and likelihood of attending LCC. Those who indicated a likelihood of attending LCC in the next three years included:

- 68% (N= 152) of those who were “working,”
- 65% (N= 17) of those who were “going to school,”
- 53% (N= 16) of those who were “keeping house,”
- 48% (N= 16) of those who were “not employed,” and
- 28% (N= 24) of those who were “retired.”

The likelihood of taking classes at LCC seems to *increase* with household income. Those who indicated a likelihood of attending LCC in the next three years included:

- 50% (N= 53) of those with 1995 household incomes below \$20,000
- 58% (N= 80) of those with 1995 household incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000
- 63% (N= 84) of those with 1995 household incomes above \$40,000.

* A more detailed breakdown of the demographic characteristics of those indicating a likelihood of attending LCC in the next years is presented in Section 4, Table 44.

** People age 17 and younger were ineligible for this survey, therefore many current high school students who plan on attending LCC in the next three years are not represented.

Preferences for Delivery of LCC Courses

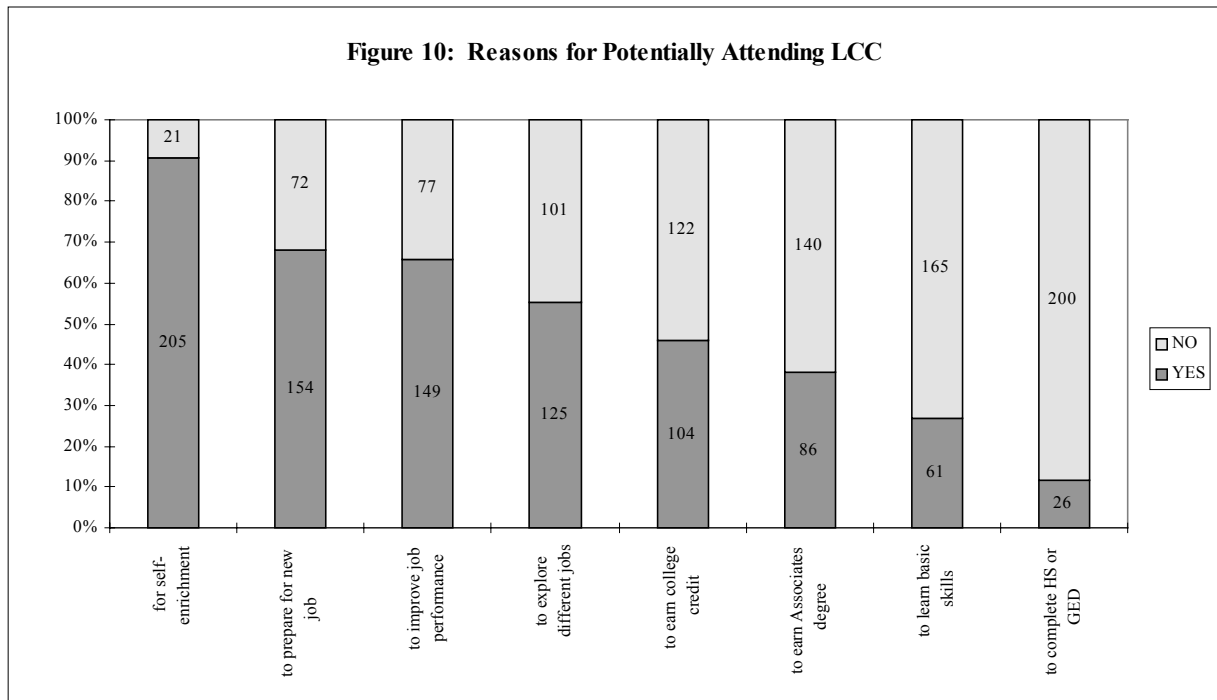
Those who indicated that they were either “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take a class from LCC in the next three years (56% of all respondents) were asked a series of questions that related to their reasons for taking classes at LCC and their preferences for LCC service delivery, including preferred time of week and preferred format.

First, respondents were asked several questions having to do with reasons for potentially attending LCC. In response to each of the offered reasons for attending LCC, each respondent was asked to indicate whether they felt personally motivated to take classes at LCC for the given reason. Respondents were free to answer in the affirmative for more than one reason for potentially attending LCC.

Overall, the most popular reason for potentially attending LCC, with 91% of the respondents answering “yes,” was “for personal interest, a hobby, or self interest.” This was followed by “to get ready for a new job, a new career, or a career change” with 68%, “to perform better in your present job or career” with 66%, and “to explore different kinds of jobs or careers” with 55% (see Figure 10). The least likely reason, with 12% answering in the affirmative, was “to complete high school or earn a GED.” However, it should be noted that among those respondents who had not graduated from high school, attaining a high school diploma or GED appeared to be a very important reason for potentially attending LCC; 75% of those with less than a 12th grade education indicated that the attainment of a High School diploma or a GED was a reason that they would have for taking a class at LCC.⁴

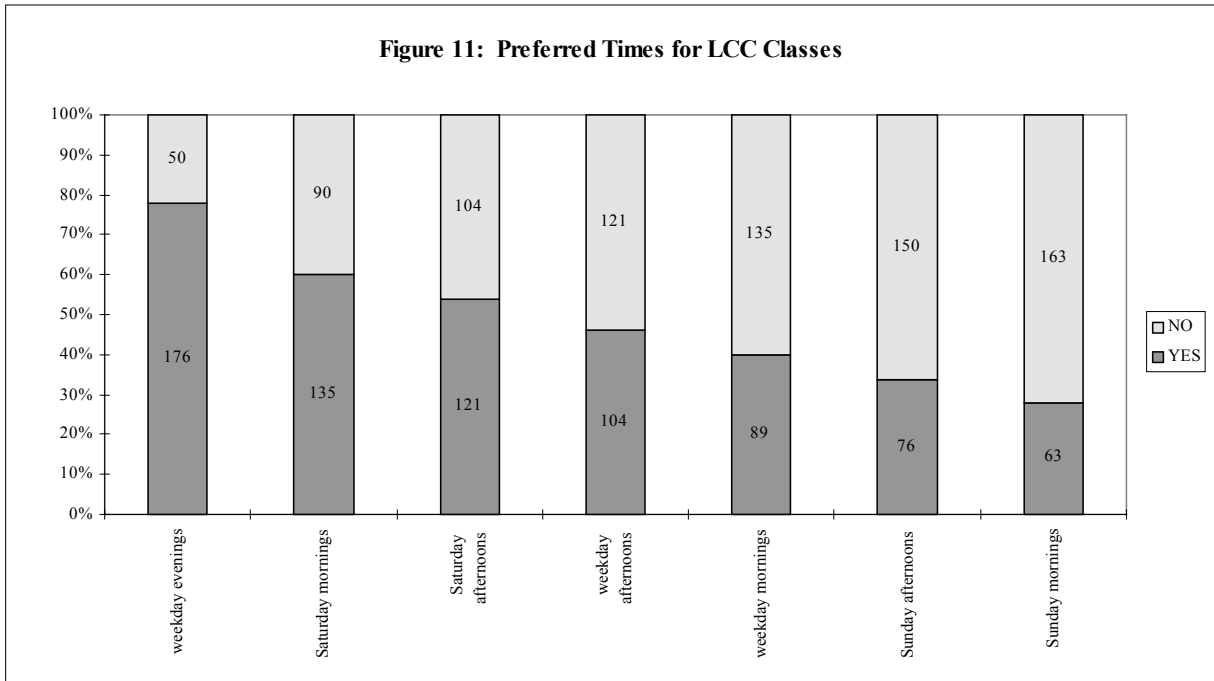
The 99 respondents who did not specify the attainment of a degree or the earning of transfer credits as reasons they might have for taking LCC classes were asked whether they would want “a transcript or anything in writing that shows you have completed the course.” The result was a near-even split with 47% answering “yes” and 51% answering “no.”

⁴ Among the 26 respondents who answered “yes” to the question which asked whether respondents would attend LCC “to complete high school or earn a GED” were 14 respondents who would not appear to need a high school diploma or a GED; 8 of these respondents later reported that they had completed “some college” and 6 reported that they had attained high school degrees. The former can be explained by the fact that some high school students take college level courses prior to graduation. The latter is likely explained by the chance variation commonly observed in survey research; minor “instability” in survey responses is a common and well-documented occurrence in telephone surveying. Additionally, there is likely some “social desirability bias” in questions about educational attainment; respondents may feel compelled to say that they have a higher level of educational attainment than is actually the case.

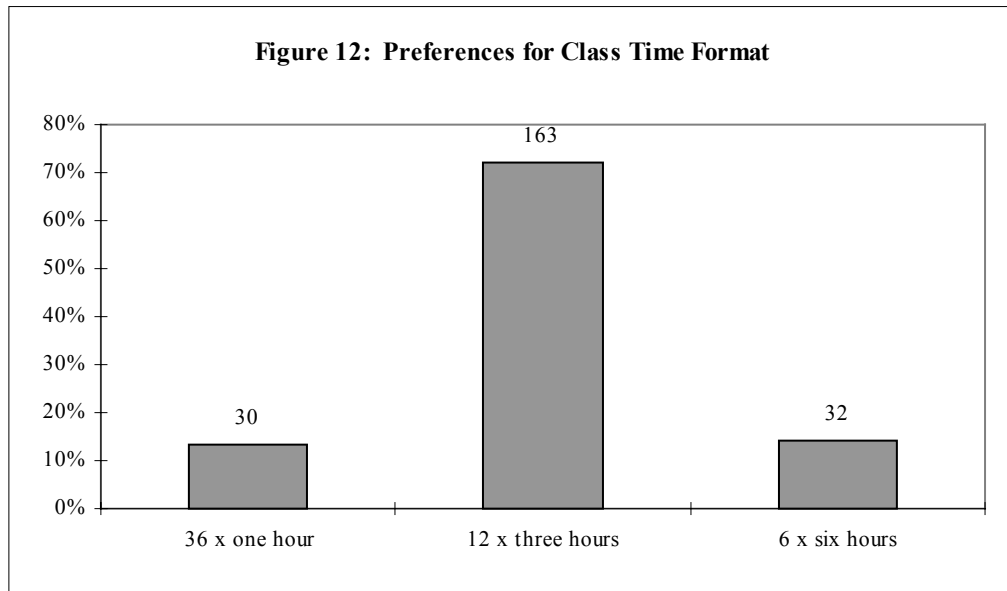


Note: Only those respondents who indicated they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take a class from LCC in the next three years are represented in Figure 10.

Respondents were then asked about their preferred times for taking classes (see Figure 11). In order of most favored to least favored, the time preferences were: weekday evenings (78%), Saturday mornings (60%), Saturday afternoons (54%), weekday afternoons (46%), weekday mornings (39%), Sunday afternoons (34%), and Sunday mornings (28%). When respondents were asked to give their preferences for the time formatting of a 36 hour class, 72% opted for the middle category “12 classes that last three hours.” “36 classes that last one hour” and “6 classes that last six hours” were chosen by 13% and 14% of the respondents, respectively (see Figure 12). Finally, in response to a question regarding the likelihood of taking a class from LCC “by computer over the Internet” only 8% of those interviewed answered “very likely,” 24% answered “somewhat likely,” 35% “not very likely,” and 32% said that they were “not at all likely.”



Note: Only those respondents who indicated they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take a class from LCC in the next three years are represented in Figure 11.



Note: Only those respondents who indicated they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to take a class from LCC in the next three years are represented in Figure 12.

Because preferences for the delivery of LCC classes varied depending on the reasons that respondents indicated they have for considering attendance of LCC, a demographic and delivery preference outline is presented reason by reason below.

A “reason by reason” demographic profile and breakdown of preferences for those indicating a likelihood of attending LCC in the next three years.

226 respondents indicated that they were either “somewhat” or “very” likely to take classes at LCC in the next three years. These respondents were asked about their reasons for potentially attending LCC. The following outline provides the two labor force categories which had the most interest in each reason, the two times during the week that people giving each reason would prefer to attend classes, and the time format that people giving each reason would prefer.*

91% - for self enrichment (N= 205):

100% (N= 24) of those retired, 93% (N= 142) of those working.

80%(N=163) likely to attend weekday evenings, 61% (N=124) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

73% (N= 149) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

68% - to prepare for a new job (N= 154):

88% (N= 15) of those going to school, 81% (N= 13) of those not employed.

79% (N=122) likely to attend weekday evenings, 65%(N=100) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

69% (N= 106) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

66% - to improve job performance (N= 149):

77% (N= 117) of those working, 63% (N= 10) of those not employed.

83% (N=123) likely to attend weekday evenings, 64% (N=95) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

71% (N= 105) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

55% - to explore different jobs (N= 125):

77% (N= 13) of those going to school, 69% (N= 11) of those keeping house.

81% (N=101) likely to attend weekday evenings, 65% (N= 81) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

68% (N= 85) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

46% - to earn college credit (N= 104):

82% (N= 14) of those going to school, 63% (N= 10) of those not employed.

78% (N= 81) likely to attend weekday evenings, 64% (N= 66) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

66% (N= 69) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

38% - to earn Associate’s degree (N= 86):

77% (N= 13) of those going to school, 50% (N= 8) of those not employed.

77% (N= 66) likely to attend weekday evenings, 61% (N= 52) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

69% (N= 59) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

27% - to learn basic skills (N= 61):

53% (N= 9) of those going to school, 27% (N= 41) of those working.

74% (N= 45) likely to attend weekday evenings, 64% (N= 39) likely to attend Saturday mornings.

59% (N= 36) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes.

12% - to complete high school or earn GED (N= 26):

35% (N= 6) of those going to school, 13% (N= 2) of those keeping house.

81% (N= 21) likely to attend weekday evenings, 69% (N= 18) likely to attend Saturday mornings

35% (N= 9) prefer a format of 12 three hour classes, 35% (N= 9) prefer 36 one hour classes.

*Respondents were provided reasons for potentially attending LCC in a list, and were free to answer in the affirmative to as many of the listed reasons as they chose. People under age 18 were ineligible for this survey, therefore the preferences of many current high school students who plan on attending LCC in the next three years are not represented in this survey. A more detailed “reason by reason” listing of respondent characteristics and preferences are presented in Section 4, Tables 45-53.

Conclusions

This survey's purpose was to assist Lane Community College in understanding the public's perceptions and preferences for service delivery in order to further enhance the manner in which LCC goes about the business of serving the community. The survey found that Lane County residents generally think highly of LCC as indicated by the large percentages of "good" and "excellent" responses on questions asking "how good a job" LCC is doing in a number of areas (Figures 1 and 6).

Additionally, 56% of those interviewed stated that they were either "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to take classes at LCC sometime in the next three years, with the most popular reasons being "self enrichment," "improvement of job performance," and preparation for a new job or career change (Figure 10).

This survey is an exceptionally rich source of current information on the opinions, awareness, and needs of LCC's constituents. These data will serve as a baseline against which LCC can measure changing perceptions and the effects of policy and communications innovations over the next several years. This survey also serves as a model which other community colleges may wish to use to guide their efforts to collect relevant information about the communities they serve.