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ABSTRACT

Howard Community College (HCC), in Maryland, surveyed telecourses and Weekend College (WC) students to collect information on their characteristics and satisfaction. Surveys were conducted for each set of students, obtaining a 34% response rate (n=109) among telecourse students and a 47% response rate (n=75) among weekend students. Results of the surveys include: (1) 1992 spring telecourse enrollment was up 15% over the previous spring, comprising 7% of all spring credit enrollees; (2) females made up fully 80% of telecourse respondents; (3) 58% of the respondents worked full time and 22% part time, and 8% considered themselves full-time homemakers; (4) over half (59%) of the telecourse respondents were new to the program; (5) 85% responded that they would take another telecourse; (6) over half (55%) of the telecourse respondents were planning to transfer to a four-year institution; (7) 94% of the respondents received information about telecourses from the class schedule; (8) the sex and age groups of WC students were similar to the overall statistics for all HCC students; (9) more than three-fourths (77%) of the WC students were employed full time; (10) nearly half (47%) of the WC students had earned a postsecondary degree, three-fourths had taken courses at HCC before, and 48% had prior WC experience; (11) 64% of the WC respondents were applying their credits toward a degree; (12) 88% of the WC students preferred the 10-week course format over the 5-week format; and (13) 90% said that they would take another weekend course. Extensive data tables are included. (MAB)

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HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
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**ALTERNATIVE LEARNING MODES: SPRING '92
TELECOURSE & WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLEES**

by Barbara B. Livieratos, Marketing Research Analyst and Jean M. Frank, Research Analyst

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ALTERNATIVE LEARNING MODES: SPRING '92 TELECOURSE & WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLEES

by Barbara B. Livieratos, Marketing Research Analyst and Jean M. Frank, Research Analyst

It's possible to earn an AA degree in General Studies or Business Administration in four or more semesters without attending regular weekday classes at Howard Community College. Telecourse offerings and Weekend College make it possible to accumulate college credits in ways that accommodate students' need for flexibility in scheduling classes around work and family responsibilities. This report presents findings of surveys of enrollees in telecourses and in Weekend College during the Spring 1992 semester. The first section of the report deals with telecourses and the second with Weekend College. Detailed tables following the report are included for reference.

SECTION ONE DISTANCE LEARNERS: SPRING '92 TELECOURSE ENROLLEES

A DIFFERENT WAY TO LEARN ATTRACTS DIFFERENT STUDENTS

Distance learning is gaining ground at Howard Community College and at other academic institutions. Enrollment in telecourses at HCC has grown by 15% between FY88 and FY92. Telecourse enrollment in the spring semester of 1992 was 324, up 15% over the previous spring. Telecourse students made up close to 7% of all spring credit enrollees. Table One shows that respondents to the spring 1992 telecourse survey accounted for 34% of all telecourse enrollees, and they represented 53% of the telecourses surveyed.

The telecourse enrollees who responded to the survey differed somewhat from the majority of credit students. While 61% of all spring students in 1992 were female, they made up fully 80% of spring telecourse respondents (Table Two). There were also more white telecourse survey respondents - 83% versus 77% for all spring students. The median age for both groups was 27 years.

While the above data might lead to the supposition that the majority of telecourse enrollees are homemakers, this is not supported by the employment data from the survey. The data show that 58% of the respondents worked full time, 22%

part time, and only 8% considered themselves full-time homemakers. On the other hand, telecourses did have some appeal to those on an irregular work schedule. This was true for 21% of the respondents who worked rotating or evening shifts. Another 79% worked regular daytime schedules.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH TELECOURSES

Over half of the respondents (59%) were new to telecourses last spring (Table Three). For 42% of the respondents it seemed to be the format rather than the subject matter that made them enroll in a telecourse, since they said that they would not enroll in a standard class for the same course. Of all the survey respondents, 85% said they would take another telecourse, a strong indication of the suitability of that format for those students.

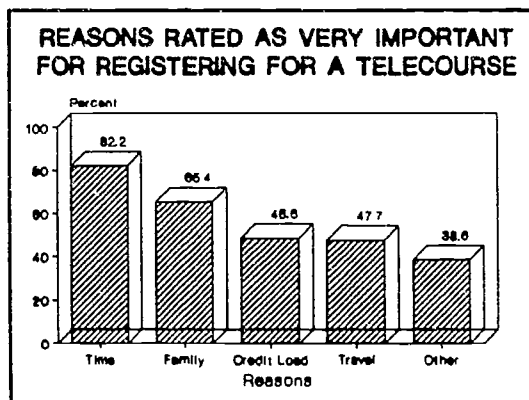
PRIMARY GOAL FOR ENROLLING

	Telecourse Students	All Credit Students
Transfer	55%	37%
New Career	31%	41%
Update Skills	5%	11%
Interest	4%	7%

The single most important goal for students (55%) taking telecourses was to transfer to a four-year institution. Another 31% wanted to prepare for or explore a new career. The flexibility of the telecourse format was evident when students were asked about their usual viewing patterns. Most said they recorded the class for later viewing. Surprisingly, 18% said that they did not watch the program or tapes but relied on the textbook instead.

HOW RESPONDENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT TELECOURSES AND WHY THEY REGISTERED

The class schedule was responsible for informing 94% of the respondents about telecourses. Of that number, 70% used the class schedule mailed to their home. That was also the clear preference for students to receive word about telecourses in the future, a choice of 84% of the respondents. Another sizeable group (60%) would like to have a separate telecourse brochure mailed to their homes.



Students were asked to rate how important certain reasons were in their decision to register for a telecourse. A lack of time for class attendance was cited as a "very important" reason by 82% of the respondents (Table Five). The fact that taking a telecourse could be combined with family responsibilities was very important to 65% of the respondents. Close to half of the respondents were convinced to take telecourses because they allowed a heavier credit load (49%) and/or minimized travel (48%).

SATISFACTION WITH TELECOURSES

RESPONDENTS' RATINGS OF THEIR SATISFACTION WITH TELECOURSES

Instructor contact	4.2
The text/study guide	3.9
Content of televised material	3.4
Presentation of televised material	3.4
Overall satisfaction with telecourse	4.0

Survey respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their telecourse and to rate four distinct elements of the telecourse. Ratings were done on a five point scale, with five indicating a high level of satisfaction. As shown above and on Table Six, respondents' overall satisfaction rating of telecourses was 4.0, labeled as "quite satisfied" on the survey. Their highest satisfaction rating was given to "instructor contact" (4.2). The text was rated at 3.9, and both the content and presentation of televised material rated 3.4 each.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As seen in the past, the spring 1992 telecourse enrollees who responded to the survey can be described as serious students. Indeed, a higher proportion of them (55%) than all credit enrollees (37%) had transfer to a four-year institution as their primary goal. Most of the respondents were employed women who were looking for a way to combine their family responsibilities and their jobs with their goal of earning college credits. If the survey respondents are representative of all telecourse enrollees, marketing efforts should be directed toward men (80% were women) and minority group members (83% were white).

Respondents' positive comments focused on the convenience of telecourses, and they generally expressed a high level of satisfaction. Not many survey respondents had heard about telecourses from their friends or families. Since word of mouth can be an effective recruitment tool, each semester's telecourse enrollees might be enlisted to assist in the marketing effort by spreading the good word about this learning alternative.

SECTION TWO

WEEKEND COLLEGE: STUDY OF SPRING '92 ENROLLEES

In the spring of 1992 seventeen credit courses were offered through Howard Community College's Weekend College program. In addition to core courses that can be applied toward a degree, special interest courses or those needed for professional recertification were also offered.

The students who were enrolled in the Weekend College program were surveyed to provide information for program planning and development. Seventy-five of the 159 Weekend College students completed the questionnaire, yielding an overall response rate of 47%. Table Seven details the Weekend College courses surveyed, including overall and respondent enrollment for each.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLEES

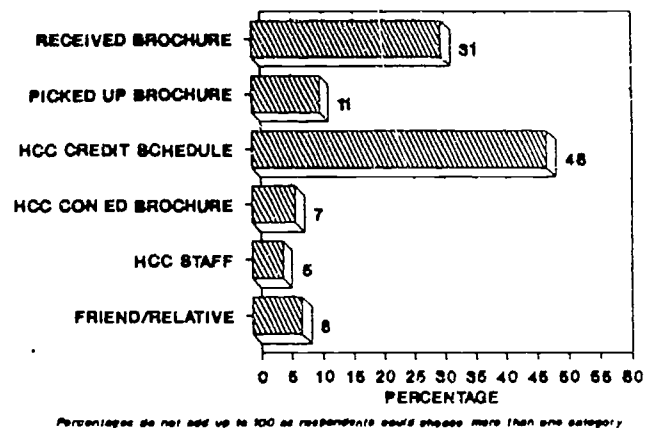
Weekend College survey respondents were typical of HCC's entire credit student population with regard to gender and age. In fact, unlike the characteristics of the 1990 Weekend College survey respondents, the similarities between the Weekend College students and all credit students were striking. The female/male ratio for both groups was close to 1.7 and students in the 21-40 age group comprised about 65% of the total population for both groups. However, while other minority groups were equally represented among both groups, the percentage of black students enrolled in Weekend College was 6% lower than for all credit students. Table Eight details the demographic characteristics and employment and educational status of 1992 survey respondents.

More than three-fourths (77%) of Weekend College students reported that they were employed full time, while only 3% worked part time. This compares with 75% and 17%, respectively in the 1990 survey.

Nearly half (47%) of Weekend College enrollees had earned a postsecondary degree. Three-fourths had taken courses at HCC before and 48% had prior Weekend College experience. Only 4% had not taken courses at any college before. Seventy-one percent combined their weekend college study with other classes at HCC, with evening being the most popular time for the other courses. Interestingly,

only 23% indicated that they were pursuing a degree through the college's "Attractive Alternative" program, which satisfies business administration and general studies degree requirements using only Weekend College and Telecourses.

HOW RESPONDENTS LEARNED ABOUT WEEKEND COLLEGE



The HCC credit schedule proved to be a valuable recruitment tool for Weekend College as it was the way almost half of the respondents learned about Weekend College. A separate brochure mailed to homes was also effective in spreading the word to 31% of respondents.

REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN WEEKEND COLLEGE

MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR ENROLLING IN WEEKEND COLLEGE

Academic Credit - Seeking Degree	64%
Personal Enrichment	24%
Academic Credit - Not Seeking Degree	9%
Professional Advancement	3%

The most prevalent reason given for enrolling in Weekend College was to earn academic credit leading towards a degree (64%). Following in order were personal enrichment (24%), academic credit without seeking a degree (9%) and professional advancement (3%).

In addition to specifying their reasons for enrolling in Weekend College, students were asked to rate the extent to which specific factors influenced their decision to register for a weekend college course. The factor cited by respondents most often as very important was a lack of time on weekdays or evenings (58%). The ability to combine course work with family responsibility followed with 52% rating this reason as very important. Thirty-three percent said that the particular course they were interested in was available only through weekend college. Table Nine summarizes respondents' ratings of several factors.

SCHEDULE, COURSE AND SERVICE PREFERENCES

The survey asked Weekend College enrollees about their preferences for courses and services. When asked if they would have enrolled in a standard class of the same course if it had not been offered in Weekend College format, 66% said they would have. The courses most frequently suggested by respondents for inclusion in the Weekend College format were math, computer and business courses.

A preponderance of enrollees (88%) preferred the ten-week course model over the five-week format. Saturday classes were preferred over other times by 56% of weekend college students. Friday night

classes and weekday night classes followed with 19% favoring each format.

Weekend College students expressed an interest in having access to the same support services that are available during traditional class times. The desire to have the bookstore available during their class times was indicated by 72% of respondents. The availability of cafeteria services was favored by 42%, while that for counselors was expressed by 21% of the respondents. Table Ten outlines respondents' schedule, course and service option preferences.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In a final measure of whether the Weekend College program met the needs of students as they combined family responsibilities and employment commitments with educational aspirations, a full 90% said they would take another weekend college course.

Weekend College's current class times and formats directly corresponded with enrollees' stated preferences. In fact, the most frequently offered ten-week format, which was also the most highly enrolled format, was rated top choice by Weekend College students. Saturday classes were preferred by over half of the respondents, and nearly three-fourths of Weekend College classes were held on Saturdays. While only 6% of the respondents noted a preference for Sunday afternoon classes, none were offered on Sundays. A continuation of current Weekend College course and format offerings is indicated in order to maintain the high level of student satisfaction that currently exists.

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' DECISIONS TO ATTEND WEEKEND COLLEGE

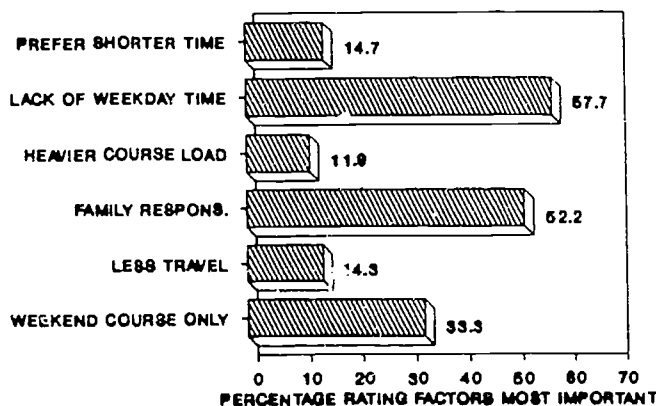


TABLE ONE
TELECOURSE SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND TELECOURSE ENROLLMENT
N=109

TELECOURSE		TOTAL SPRING 82 ENROLLMENT	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF ENROLLEES RESPONDING
BU100	Introduction to Business and Organization	10	7	70%
BU130	Principles of Marketing	8	6	75%
BU151	Business Law I	6	5	83%
CM111	Introduction to Composition	16	8	50%
EC102	Principles of Economics Micro	11	4	36%
HD200	Life Span Development	24	10	42%
HY102	Western Civilization from 1815	6	2	33%
HY112	American History Since 1877	19	4	21%
MU101	Music Appreciation	13	7	54%
PL101	Introduction to Philosophy	11	8	73%
PO101	American Federal Government	8	3	38%
PY101	General Psychology	18	12	67%
PY103	Child Growth and Development	17	9	53%
SC108	Physical Geology	20	10	50%
SO101	Introduction to Sociology	19	14	74%
	TOTAL enrolled in courses surveyed	206	109	53%
	ALL other Telecourses	118	--	--
	TOTAL TELECOURSE ENROLLMENT	324	109	34%

TABLE TWO
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE
SPRING 1992 TELECOURSE SURVEY
N=109

CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
GENDER:		
Male	21	19.8%
Female	85	80.2%
AGE:		
11 – 20	14	13.5%
21 – 30	54	51.9%
31 – 40	24	23.1%
41 – 50	9	8.7%
51 and over	3	2.9%
Mean age = 29; Median age = 27		
RACE:		
Black	11	10.8%
White	85	83.3%
Other	6	5.9%
CURRENT EDUCATION LEVEL:		
Less than 12th Grade	1	1.0%
G.E.D.	5	4.8%
High School Diploma	69	65.7%
Certificate	4	3.8%
A.A. Degree	14	13.3%
Bachelor's Degree	9	8.6%
Post Graduate Degree	3	2.9%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS*:		
Full-Time	70	57.9%
Part-Time	26	21.5%
Full-Time Homemaker	10	8.3%
Full-Time Student	9	7.4%
Not Employed	6	5.0%
Military	3	2.5%
WORK SCHEDULE:		
Regular Day Time	71	78.9%
Rotating Shifts	11	12.2%
Early Evening	5	5.6%
Late Evening	3	3.3%

*Since students could choose more than one response for this item, percentages may not add up to 100%.

TABLE THREE
SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
ENROLLMENT IN TELECOURSES
N=109

SURVEY ITEM	NUMBER	%
Have you Taken TV Credit College Courses Before:		
Yes, HCC	42	38.9%
Yes, elsewhere	2	1.9%
No	64	59.3%
Would You Enroll in Standard Class of Same Course:		
Yes	61	57.5%
No	45	42.5%
Number of Telecourses Now Taking:		
One	82	75.2%
Two	25	22.9%
Three or more	2	1.8%
Other College Classes This Semester		
Evening class on HCC campus	64	40.0%
Day class on HCC campus	45	28.1%
None	21	13.1%
Other telecourse(s)	19	11.9%
Class(es) at another college	7	4.4%
Weekend HCC class	3	1.9%
Off-campus HCC class	1	0.6%
Primary Goal in Taking Course:		
Transfer to a four-year institution	59	54.6%
Exploration of new career or academic area	12	11.1%
Preparation for immediate entry into a career	22	20.4%
Update skills for a job currently held	5	4.6%
Interest and self-enrichment	4	3.7%
Other	6	5.6%
Would Take Another Telecourse:		
Yes	88	84.6%
No	16	15.4%
Interested in Micro/modem to Communicate or Take Exams:		
Yes	68	64.2%
No	38	35.8%
Have a Micro Available for Use:		
Yes	48	45.3%
No	58	54.7%
Have a Modem Available for Use:		
Yes	34	32.4%
No	71	67.6%
Have a VCR:		
Yes	101	96.2%
No	4	3.8%
Viewing Pattern:		
Always record for later viewing	32	32.7%
Usually record for later viewing	26	26.5%
Usually watch as it is televised	11	11.2%
Always watch as it is televised	11	11.2%
Don't watch or record, but rely on textbook	18	18.4%
Have Used Library Tapes:		
Yes	68	64.2%
No	38	35.8%
Satisfied With Library Tapes:		
Yes	59	89.4%
No	7	10.6%

TABLE FOUR
SPRING 1992
HOW SURVEY RESPONDENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR TELECOURSE
AND THEIR PREFERRED SOURCE OF FUTURE INFORMATION

INFORMATION SOURCE	N=	%	FIRST CHOICE	SECOND CHOICE	THIRD CHOICE	CHOOSING	
						N	%
CLASS SCHEDULE MAILED TO HOME	75	70%	69	19	4	92	84%
CLASS SCHEDULE PICKED UP AT HCC	26	24%	6	22	13	41	38%
RECOMMENDED BY FRIEND/RELATIVE	3	3%	2	3	13	18	17%
TELECOURSE BROCHURE MAILED TO HOME	1	1%	14	36	15	65	60%
HCC COUNSELING CENTER/ADVISOR	1	1%	2	6	15	23	21%
TELECOURSE BROCHURE PICKED UP AT HCC	1	1%	2	4	9	15	14%
TELEPHONE CALL TO HCC TELECOURSE OFFICE	0	0%	1	3	6	13	12%
HOWARD COUNTY CABLE	0	0%	0	2	7	9	8%
MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION	0	0%	1	0	9	10	9%
TELECOURSE BROCHURE PICKED UP ELSEWHERE	0	0%	1	1	1	3	3%
OTHER	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%

TABLE FIVE
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SELECTING SPECIFIC REASONS
FOR REGISTERING FOR A TELECOURSE
SPRING 1992
N=109

REASON	VERY IMPORTANT %	SOME INFLUENCE %	NOT A FACTOR %
LACKED TIME FOR CLASS ATTENDANCE	82.2	12.1	5.6
POSSIBLE TO COMBINE FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY	65.4	13.5	21.2
ALLOWED A HEAVIER LOAD	48.6	19.6	31.8
MINIMIZE TRAVEL	47.7	26.2	26.2
TRY A NEW LEARNING METHOD	17.9	34.9	47.2
COURSE ONLY AVAILABLE AS TELECOURSE	9.4	5.7	84.9
THOUGHT TELECOURSE LESS DIFFICULT	8.5	26.4	65.1
HANDICAPS MAKE TCS MORE APPEALING	2.8	1.9	95.3

TABLE SIX
SURVEY RESPONDENTS' MEAN RATINGS OF SATISFACTION
WITH THEIR TELECOURSE
SPRING 1992

TELECOURSE ELEMENT	OVERALL MEAN RATING N=109	YES, WOULD TAKE ANOTHER TELECOURSE N=88	NO, WOULD NOT TAKE ANOTHER TELECOURSE N=16
INSTRUCTOR CONTACT	4.2	4.4	3.4
CONTENT OF TELEVISED MATERIAL	3.4	3.6	2.7
PRESENTATION OF TELEVISED MATERIAL	3.4	3.5	2.5
THE TEXT/STUDY GUIDE	3.9	4.1	3.2
OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THIS TELECOURSE	4.0	4.2	2.8

TABLE SEVEN
WEEKEND COLLEGE SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT
N=75

WEEKEND COLLEGE COURSE		TOTAL SPRING 92 ENROLLMENT	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% OF ENROLLEES RESPONDING
AR104	Art History I	12	7	58.3%
BU100	Intro to Business & Org.	7	4	57.1%
BY101	General Biology I	7	2	28.6%
CS120	Intro to Computer Systems	6	2	33.3%
CS124	Basic Programming Lab	12	8	66.7%
EC102	Prin. of Economics Micro	6	5	83.3%
HY112	Amer. History Since 1877	6	4	66.7%
MA120	College Algebra & Trig	13	5	38.5%
MA130	Precalculus	7	4	57.1%
MN240	Personnel Management	6	5	83.3%
PL900	Eastern Philosophy	24	13	54.2%
RU102	Elementary Russian II	9	6	66.7%
SC102	Int. Anatomy & Physiology I	14	10	71.4%
	TOTAL for courses surveyed	129	75	58.1%
	ALL Other Weekend College Courses	30	---	--
	TOTAL WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT	159	75	47.2%

TABLE EIGHT
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS TO THE
SPRING 1992 WEEKEND COLLEGE SURVEY

N=75

CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENT
GENDER:		
Male	26	35.6%
Female	47	64.4%
AGE:		
20 and younger	7	9.7%
21 - 30	26	36.1%
31 - 40	21	29.2%
41 - 50	12	16.7%
51 and over	6	8.3%
RACE:		
Black	6	8.0%
White	62	82.7%
Other/Unknown	7	9.3%
CURRENT EDUCATION LEVEL:		
Less Than 12th Grade	1	1.4%
G.E.D.	2	2.7%
High School Diploma	36	49.3%
Certificate	7	9.6%
A.A. Degree	10	13.7%
Bachelor's Degree	14	19.2%
Post Graduate Degree	3	4.1%
EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION STATUS:*		
Full-Time	58	77.3%
Part-Time	2	2.7%
Military	3	4.0%
Full-Time Student	8	10.7%
Part-time Student	13	17.3%
Full-Time Homemaker	1	5.3%
Not Employed	4	5.3%
Retired	2	2.7%
STATUS AS CREDIT STUDENT:		
First Semester at Any College	3	4.1%
First Semester at HCC	16	21.6%
Taken Courses at HCC Before	55	74.3%
ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE DEGREE PROGRAM:		
Business Administration	4	5.3%
General Studies	13	17.3%
No Program Indicated	58	77.3%
WEEKEND COLLEGE ENROLLMENT:		
5 Week Course	12	17.1%
10 Week Course	56	80.0%
Both 5 and 10 Week Courses	2	2.9%
OTHER CLASS TIMES AT HCC:		
Day	10	13.3%
Evening	32	42.7%
Weekend	11	14.7%
No Other Classes	22	29.3%
PREVIOUS WEEKEND COLLEGE:		
Yes	36	48.0%
No	39	52.0%

* Percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose more than one work/education category.

TABLE NINE
PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SELECTING SPECIFIC FACTORS
INFLUENCING THEIR DECISION TO REGISTER FOR A WEEKEND COLLEGE COURSE

FACTORS	VERY IMPORTANT %	SOME INFLUENCE %	NOT A FACTOR %
Prefer a shorter/more intense time commitment	14.7	38.2	47.1
Lack of time on weekdays or evenings	57.7	29.6	12.7
Possibility of carrying a heavier course load	11.9	29.9	58.2
Able to combine course work with family responsibility	52.2	24.6	23.2
Less travel to and from campus	14.3	22.9	62.9
Course available only through Weekend College	33.3	13.0	53.6

TABLE TEN
SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR WEEKEND COLLEGE
SCHEDULE, COURSE AND SERVICE OPTIONS

SURVEY ITEM	NUMBER	%
WOULD ENROLL IN STANDARD CLASS OF SAME COURSE:		
Yes	48	65.8%
No	25	34.2%
MODEL PREFERRED BY RESPONDENTS:		
Five week model	8	12.1%
Ten week model	58	87.9%
FIRST CHOICE OF CLASS TIMES:		
Friday night classes	14	19.4%
Saturday classes	40	55.6%
Sunday afternoon classes	4	5.6%
Monday through Thursday night	14	19.4%
KINDS OF COURSES PREFERRED:		
Math	9	24.3%
Computer Courses	4	10.8%
Business	4	10.8%
Philosophy	3	8.1%
History	2	5.4%
Others	15	40.5%
SUPPORT SERVICES DESIRED:*		
Bookstore open	51	72.0%
Cafeteria service	33	45.3%
Counselors available	16	21.3%
Financial aid information	5	6.7%
WOULD TAKE ANOTHER WEEKEND COLLEGE COURSE:		
Yes	66	90.4%
No	7	9.6%

* Percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose more than one category.