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ABSTRACT

This bulletin summarizes the chief quantitative findings of a survey of 264 small and medium sized colleges and universities in the midwest concerning their use of and interest in academic scheduling software. This type of software assists in planning course offerings, assigning instructors and course functions to facilities and time slots, and modifying schedules to meet enrollment shifts and variance in facility needs. The findings are presented in five figures. Some of those findings are: (1) 72 percent of institutions judged personal computer compatibility "absolutely essential" or "very important"; (2) 33 percent of these gave like priority to Macintosh and/or UNIX compatibility; (3) less than 30 percent of small colleges currently use any scheduling software due to cost factors; (4) at prices below \$5,000, 79 percent of responding institutions were at least "somewhat interested" in scheduling software; and (5) among the capabilities expected of such a program, most respondents expected course scheduling, master room scheduling, customized scheduling parameters, and override capability. (JB)

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MHEC Academic Scheduling Software Survey Results

***Institutional
survey identifies
academic
scheduling
software
benchmarks.***

The academic scheduling cycle faced by higher education institutions includes three general processes. These processes are patterned and information-intensive: (1) the planning of course offerings; (2) the assignment of instructors and course functions to facilities and timeslots; and (3) modifications of schedules to meet enrollment shifts and variance in facility needs. Automating these processes can help small colleges achieve significant administrative efficiencies, thereby conserving time and resources.

Thanks to the cooperation of 264 small and medium sized colleges and universities surveyed in 1994, the Midwestern Higher Education Commission has assembled benchmarks that may assist higher education institutions in assessing computer-supported academic scheduling options.

Data collected from the survey were instrumental in developing software specifications adopted for MHEC's Academic Scheduling and Management Software Project.

The chief quantitative findings of the survey are summarized in this bulletin. Included are data on features desired, software platform preferences, pricing preferences, and current use of scheduling software.

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Survey Facts

- 432 surveys were mailed to MHEC member institutions with less than 10,000 students; 264 institutions (61 percent) responded.
- Median enrollment at these institutions is slightly less than 2,000 students. Mean enrollment exceeds 4,500.
- The survey focuses on four main areas: scheduling software capabilities, platform preferences, cost parameters, and software currently in use, if any.

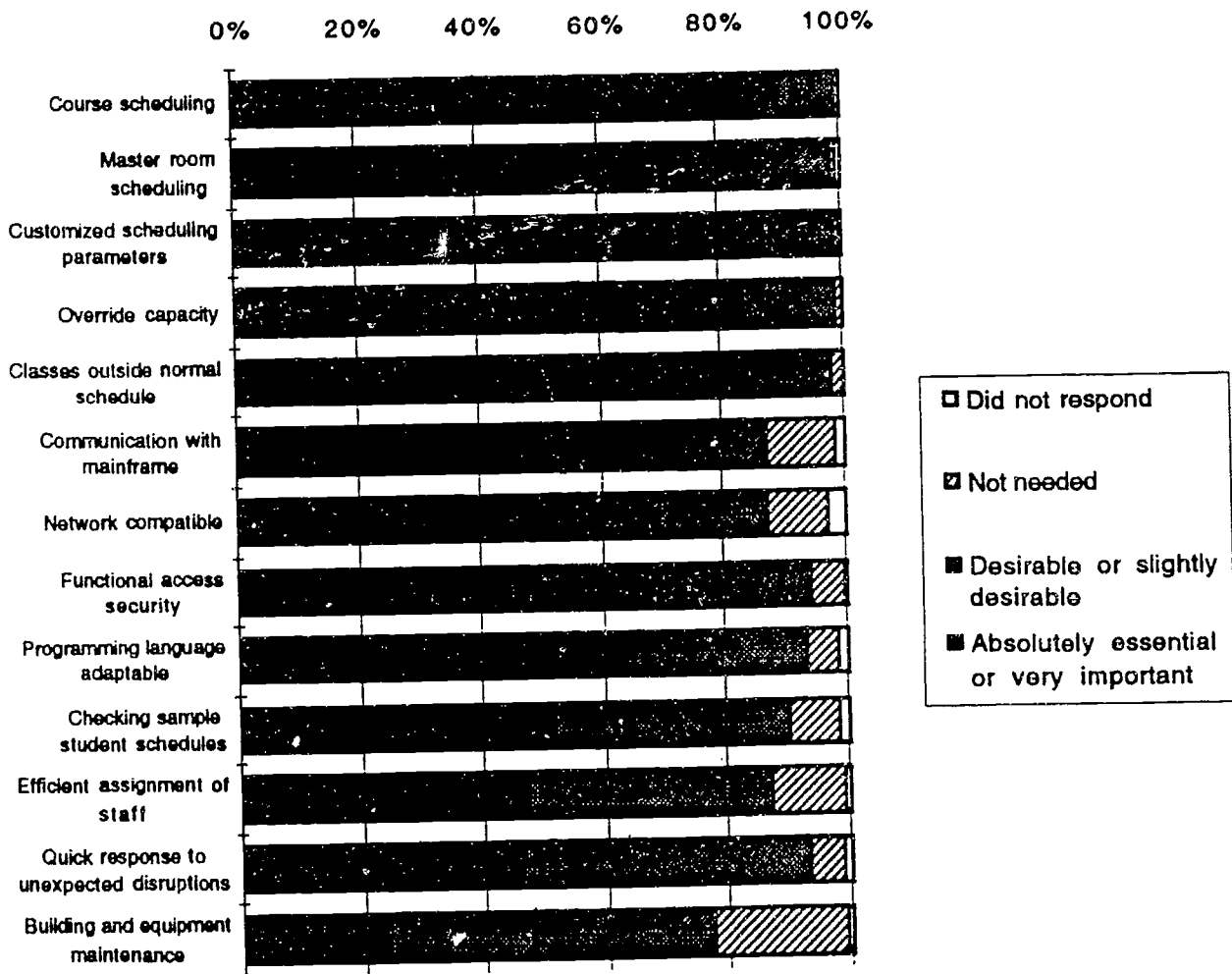
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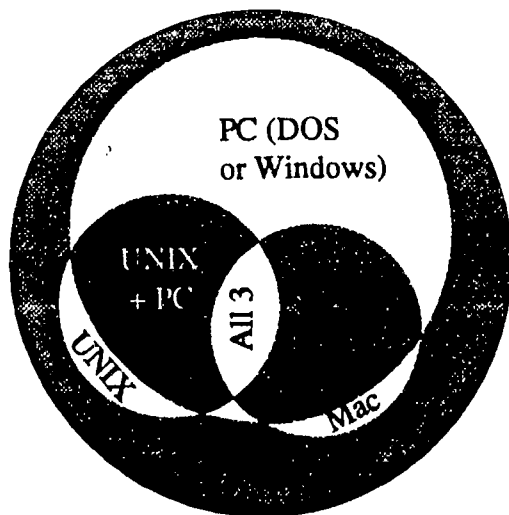
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Significance of Scheduling Software Capabilities



Demand for Platform Compatibility



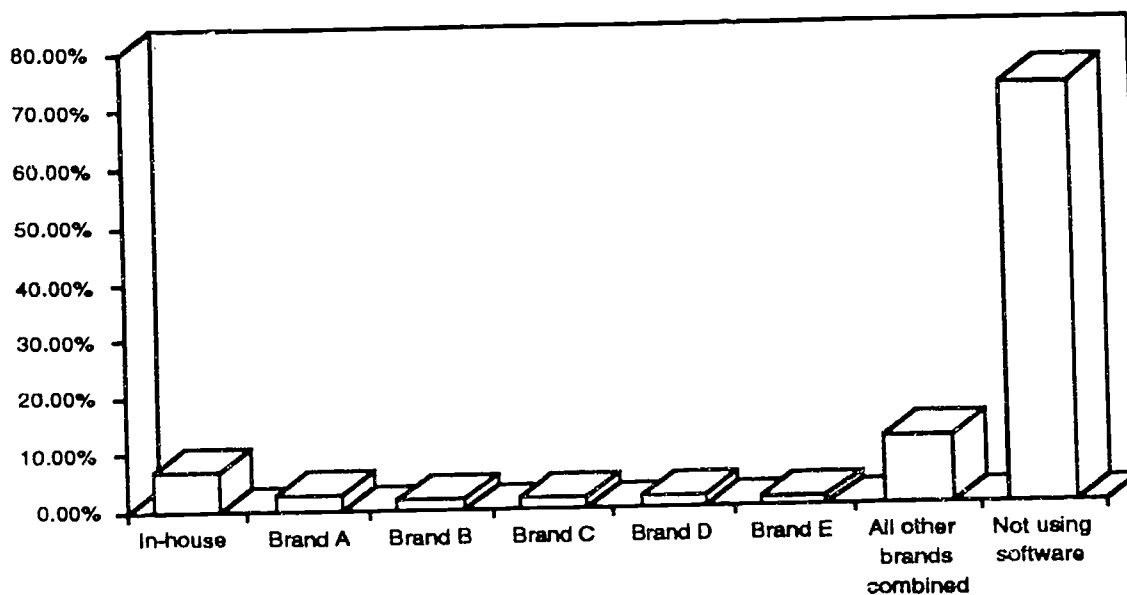
72% of institutions judged PC compatibility "absolutely essential" or "very important."

Nearly half of these (33%) gave like priority to Mac and/or UNIX compatibility as well.

Only 9% gave priority to Mac or UNIX exclusively.

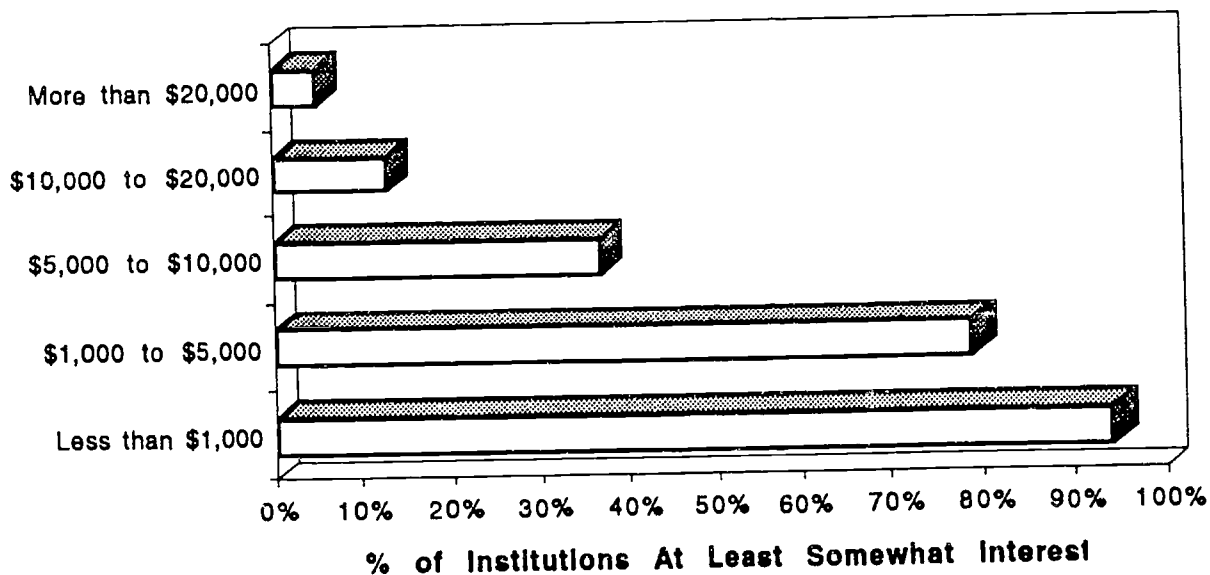
● = 100%

Current Software Usage for Surveyed Institutions



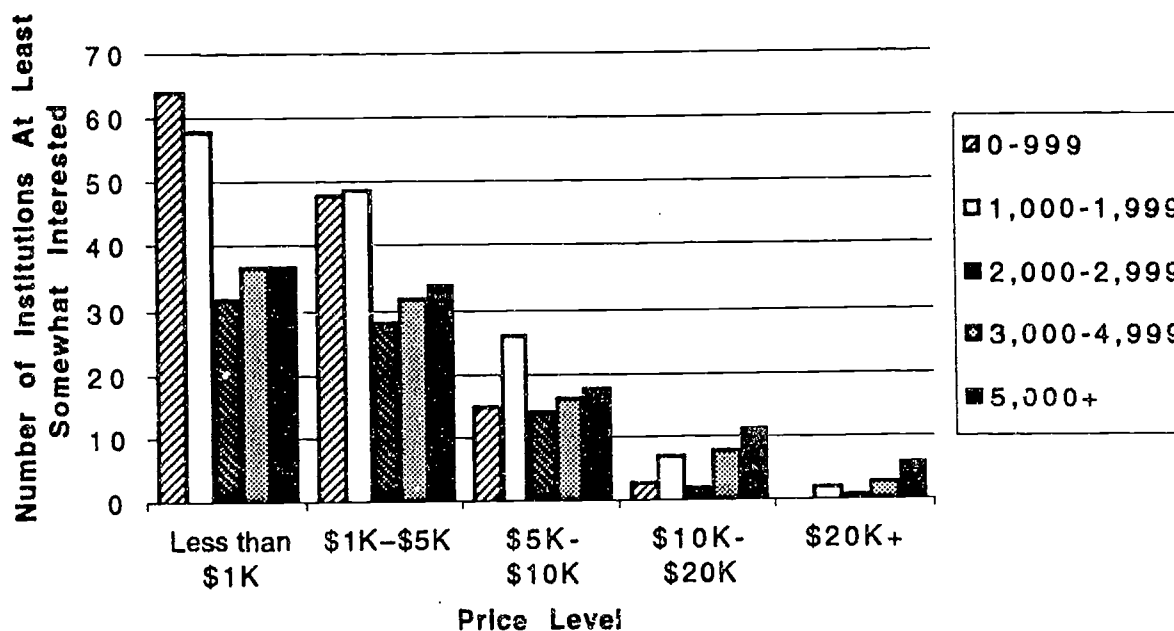
At many small colleges in the Midwest, scheduling processes are incompletely automated, if they are automated at all. MHEC has found that *less than 30 percent* of small colleges currently use software of some sort for scheduling. Cost is the major barrier. Although many sophisticated scheduling packages are available in today's market, most are too costly for small institutions to afford.

Anticipated Demand for Software by Price Level



As seen above, MHEC found considerably more demand for scheduling software at lower prices. Below \$5,000, 79 percent of responding institutions were at least "somewhat interested." Approximately 39 percent indicated interest in the possibility of purchasing packages in the \$5,000-\$10,000 range and only 13 percent in the \$10,000-\$20,000 range.

Anticipated Demand for Software by Institution Size



About the MHEC Academic Software Committee

The Academic Software Committee (ASC) was convened in March 1994 by MHEC to address the course scheduling needs of small and medium-sized institutions. At present, the Committee is seeking to make programmatically available scheduling software that is scaled to the requirements and budget constraints of the small college market. Through a Request For Proposals (to be released this winter), the Committee wishes to identify vendors that are willing to provide such software at affordable pricing to all interested institutions in MHEC member states.

Acknowledgments

MHEC expresses its gratitude to Mr. Jeff Dykehouse and Mr. Todd Graham for their efforts in analyzing survey results and in assembling this report.

The Midwestern Higher Education Commission (MHEC) was established in 1991 by the Midwestern Regional Education Compact, an interstate agreement among midwestern states. The current member states include Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The mission of MHEC is to improve higher education opportunities and services in the midwest region through interstate cooperation and resource sharing. Programs include activities to produce regional cost savings to benefit colleges and universities, expand student access, support public policy development through analysis and information exchange, facilitate regional cooperative academic programming, encourage quality management, and promote economic growth through higher education and industry innovation.

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