



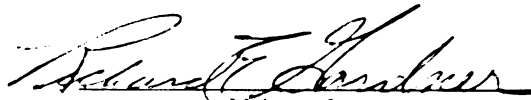
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AN INVESTIGATION OF CHARACTERISTICS AND
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THREE UNIQUE GROUPS
OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By

Susan J. Meeuwenberg

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF CHARACTERISTICS AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THREE UNIQUE GROUPS OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Susan J. Meeuwenberg

Community colleges are in the business of educating and training. Demands for their services are increasing with changing technologies and philosophies. A direct result of these changes is a diverse student population. Well over half of these student populations are comprised of nontraditional students who deserve attention and assessment. Community colleges have all the resources to meet this heterogeneous group of students. Much of the research has been devoted to the exploration of differences between traditional students (18 to 24 years old) and nontraditional students (25 years old and older). However, little research has been conducted to determine if and how various groups of nontraditional students may differ among themselves. A purpose of this study was to provide a focal point from which other community colleges may examine their nontraditional student populations. The results of the study may also have direct implications for both recruiting and retention strategies.

A questionnaire was designed to determine if differences existed between three select groups of nontraditional

students--(a) day and evening students, (b) program and non-program students, and (c) younger adults and older adults--in their perceived satisfaction levels with 11 academic/instructional practices, 22 institutional procedures, and overall perceptions of the community college. Questions concerning why the nontraditional students are attending college and why they specifically chose this community college were also addressed.

Based on this study, at one community college, significant differences were found to exist between and among groups. The greatest number of differences overall emanated from across the program and non-program student group, and the fewest number of differences emanated from across the younger adult and older adult group. Only students currently attending the college were surveyed. The reported satisfaction levels regarding academics and instruction were remarkably high for all groups and exhibited minimal differences between groups. Differences between groups concerning institutional procedures were more prevalent, but rankings of the attributes were high. Nontraditional students' reasons for attending college supported previous research with two exceptions. Unexpected results included the small proportion of nontraditional students attending at an employer's request and the small proportion citing that low cost was a major reason for selecting the community college.

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1991

Dedicated to
J.B. and Jerry

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

The question has been around for a long while--"What has happened to the traditional college freshman?" The fact is he/she is no longer necessarily typical, particularly in the community college. During the past fifteen years, increasing numbers of adults have chosen to pursue post-secondary schooling for the first time and for a variety of reasons by enrolling in a community college. Adults have begun to realize that their past formal education may not be relevant for a lifetime. Researchers have discussed and explained these increasing numbers of adult students as a result of technological, societal, and demographic changes as well as a universal emphasis upon lifelong education. These explanations have been explored and documented by such researchers as K. Patricia Cross (Adults as Learners, 1986); Aslanian and Brickell (Americans in Transition: Life Changes as Reasons for Adult Learning, 1980); and Alan Knox (Helping Adults Learn, 1986).

This phenomenon of increasing numbers of adults has resulted in predictions claiming that "by the year 2000, the U. S. population will be dominated by people in their middle years, with 33- to 44-year olds comprising the largest age group" (Cross, 1986). This increase in adult students has also come to represent, for the community college, the

presence of a special set of problems and challenges. Researchers claim that as adults age, they vary more from one another than do people at younger ages.

In so doing they become different from others; thus, an educational setting is not likely to include a homogeneous group of persons, regardless of the course, sponsor, or instructor. (Peterson, 1983)

Researchers refer to the adult student as a "nontraditional student," one who is typically over 24 years of age and who often has fulltime personal and professional commitments outside of the college. These students, therefore, are often parttime, and "for the most part, adults seeking education that is closely related to the world of work" (Hazelwood, 1984). As stated in the article "Building Skills and Proficiencies of the Community College Instructor of Adult Learners" by Galbraith and Shedd (1990),

Unlike the majority of the other sectors of higher education, community colleges have consistently had half their enrollment in the parttime student body (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1989).

Not only must community college educators and administrators make serious efforts to accommodate the diversity of the student population, they must be willing to support research which will reveal data about the characteristics of this diverse group of students.

For the most part, researchers have concentrated on the traditional student population and have established that differences do exist between traditional and non-traditional students. Part of the rationale for these differences arises from the assumptions concerning "andragogy," an alternative

method of teaching. Andragogy as a term was popularized in the U. S. by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s and was originally established to mean "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1977). Most recently the concept has been accepted by adult educators and researchers as a set of assumptions about adult learners and how they differ from younger learners. Significant differences include: self concept, levels of experience, readiness to learn, and motivation.

With the emphasis upon differences between traditional and nontraditional students, very little has been written about nontraditional students, themselves--about these students' perceived levels of satisfaction concerning community college experiences and how these students differ among themselves.

Statement of the Problem

It is imperative that we know our nontraditional population so that we can evaluate the adequacy of instructional offerings, practices, and requirements as well as the adequacy of the educational environment and the services provided. There is evidence in the research that significant differences between traditional and nontraditional students exist in motivation, readiness to learn, and reasons for attending college. There is little research which provides insight into whether differences in motivation, reasons for attending community college, and differences in

satisfaction levels exist within the nontraditional population.

The problem investigated in this research was to determine if differences existed in reported satisfaction levels between three distinct groups of nontraditional students currently attending a community college--(a) day students and evening students; (b) degree students and non-degree students; and (c) younger adults and older adults.

Need for the Study

It is no secret that community colleges are doing more business than ever before. Tinto acknowledged,

During the last two decades, the most common point of entry to higher education has become the two-year college. Less than half of new college entrants now begin their higher education in four-year colleges. (Tinto, 1987).

As an institution that refers to itself as a college for the people; that prides itself on its ability to be flexible and alter its programs in response to its students' needs; and that has always accepted any student, regardless of age, the community college should have a vested interest in a study concerning adult learners.

It is a fact that the research on college student retention and recruitment has greatly increased over the past two decades. It is also true that a majority of that research has focused upon traditional students in traditional four-year institutions. Both researchers and administrators in higher education are well versed in the knowledge of Tinto's 1975

model of student/college interactions which resulted in a theoretical foundation for research about student retention. Tinto's model is a longitudinal model of the college dropout in which emphasis is placed on integration. Integration by the student into the academic and social systems of an institution leads to new levels of loyalty to the respective college.

Other things being equal, the higher the degree of integration of the individual into the college system, the greater will be his commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion. (Tinto, 1975, p. 96).

As Tinto himself pointed out in 1987, differences in the natures of two-year and four-year colleges and their students, may make Tinto's model unsuitable for community colleges. Webb, in 1989, stated,

In addition, Tinto's model fails to place sufficient emphasis on subgroup characteristics such as those associated with age, gender or racial/ethnic category, as Tinto himself recognized. Because nontraditional students comprise a large proportion of the two-year college population, this is a serious flaw in the Tinto model. (Webb, 1989)

The community college is a multi-faceted institution in many senses. Its missions, however, are education based. As stated in the article by Galbraith and Shedd (1990),

The community college is one of the few institutions of higher education with the mission of providing exclusively educational services. It has no obligation to provide knowledge production research services, as do senior institutions, and as a result has been free to focus on the improvement of learning and teaching. (Knowles, 1977)

In view of the lack of research regarding retention and the focus upon nontraditional students at the two-year

institution and the rapid changes which have evolved within the community colleges, each institution must be willing to continually assess current students' needs. Such assessments have been successfully completed by looking at students' satisfaction levels. According to a recent article by Vaala, "most studies of student satisfaction in higher education are descriptive research" (Vaala, 16(4)).

Satisfaction has been defined in various ways. Aitken (1982) and Babbitt and Burbach (1985) defined satisfaction to mean "student acceptance of academic programs and living conditions"--again, probably based on four-year institutions. Astin (1974, 1978), after examining overall student satisfaction in a national sample of university students from 94 institutions, concluded that the students' overall satisfaction could be measured. Astin (1978) additionally identified specific facets of satisfaction that could be measured, including teaching, curriculum, facilities, career preparation, extra-curricular activities, and administrative services.

This study is based on the premise that satisfaction of academic/instructional practices and institutional practices promotes retention and that dissatisfaction with these practices may lead to student dropout. No longer can colleges look at graduation numbers as a reflection of student success. Far too many students are enrolling with goals other than graduation. "To examine or question the individual's goal commitment, the institution needs to ask, 'Why are you here?'

'What do you want to achieve during your time with us' (Noel 1986)?"

Not all students desire to complete two- or four-year programs. It must be realized that it is not a failure on the institution's part if a student has attained his/her personal educational goal and withdrawn from the institution before graduation. One institution cannot be all things to all people. (Peters, 1988)

With this in mind, institutions need to be aware of the feelings of these particular individuals. The students may depart after one or two semesters, and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the institution may be unknown. Did they leave because they were dissatisfied, or had they met their goal?

Importance of the Study

Most community colleges have communicated similar objectives in their mission statements. One objective which is inherently vital but often overlooked is to encourage students to continue and remain at the respective community college. The missions and philosophies of the community colleges also serve to expose their humanistic values. Frequently, the terms training and skills used within the stated objectives may eliminate those humanistic connotations and exchange processes which are essential in a successful educational exchange.

In order to successfully recruit and retain students, knowledge of their characteristics and differences in their perceptions about the college is critical. As stated by P. Kotler in 1985,

It is important to study the image of an institution because people respond to their perceptions of a college's image and not necessarily to its reality. (Kotler, 1985)

Every community college is unique regarding its student population and the community it serves. Therefore, a study is significant for every community college in surveying students' needs and developing academic programs and institutional practices relative to those needs.

This researcher collected data from 26 of the 29 community colleges in Michigan (see Appendix A). The data collected support the trend that the nontraditional population is a major student segment. Seventeen of the 26 community colleges reported that over 50 percent of the headcount is represented by students 25 years of age or older. The proportions of nontraditional students ranged from 32 percent to 68 percent, with a mode of 58 percent, and a mean of 53 percent. This information is depicted in Figure 1.1 on page 9. Responses from the community colleges indicated that the results of this study are of interest to them.

MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES
 Percentage of Nontraditional Population Age 25 and Over
 Winter 1991 Semester

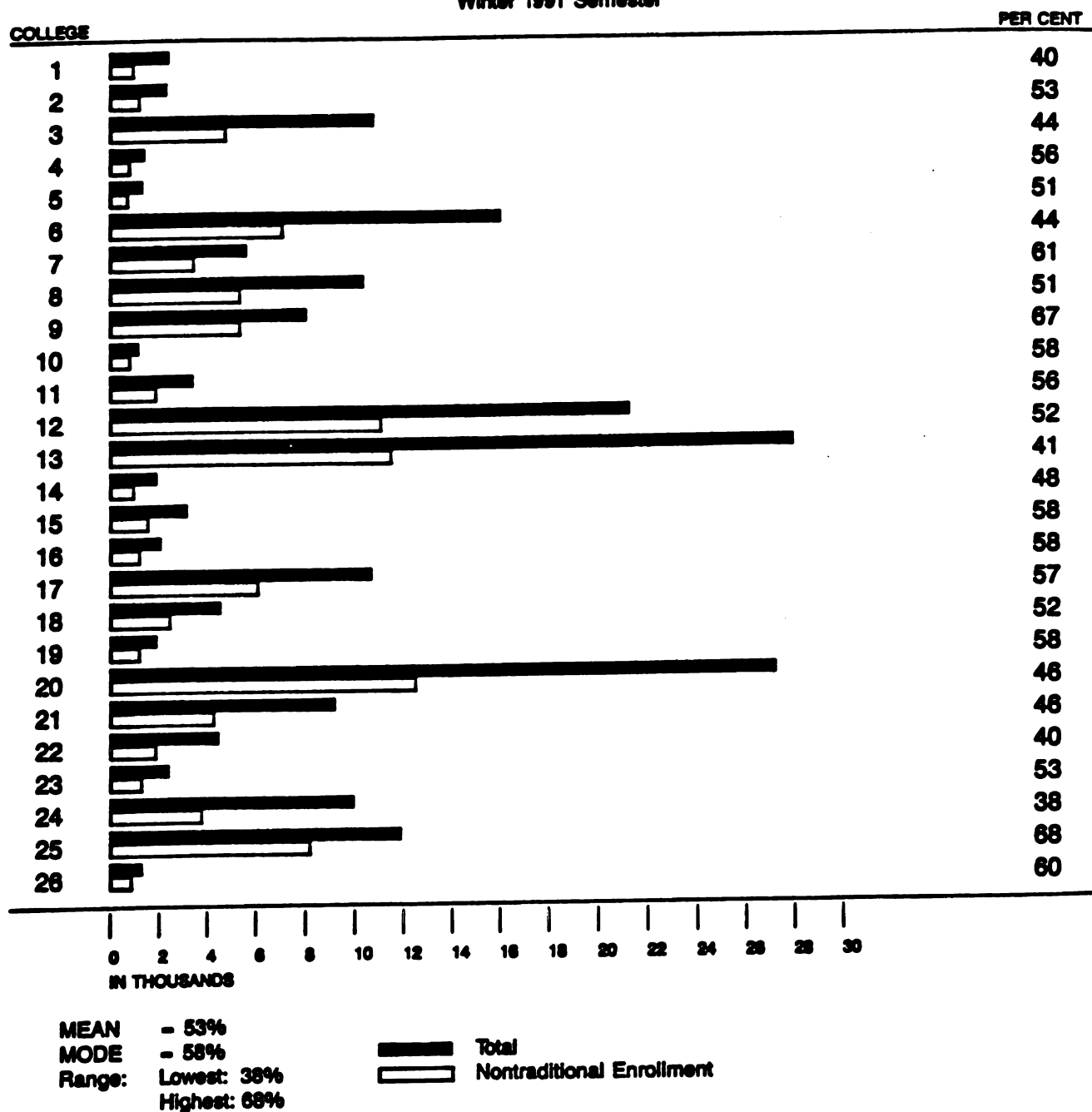


Figure 1.1: Proportions of Nontraditional Enrollments at Michigan Community Colleges

Purpose of the Study

Influenced by developmental, technological, demographic, and societal factors, nontraditional students are enrolling at the community college. According to statistics, the typical student is no longer the 18-20-year old transfer student, but instead, a more mature adult ranging in age from 25 to 70, returning to take advantage of educational opportunities for employment purposes. Many of these students are currently in the labor force and work fulltime during the day; therefore, they must rely on "education by night." Other nontraditional students are comprised of those who are displaced or dislocated homemakers, laid-off factory workers, and/or those individuals who have returned to school because of a triggering event (perhaps recently widowed or divorced or whose children have all left home). These students may be attending fulltime or parttime during the traditional hours.

As stated earlier, very little has been written about the possible differences in satisfaction levels, recruiting, motivation, and retention of these students at the community college. This researcher is interested in knowing what is important to these students. Are they satisfied? How do they respond to a set of constructed academic/instructional and institutional criteria?

The purpose of this study is to obtain feedback from nontraditional students attending community college both day and night concerning selected academic and institutional

attributes. The results and procedures subsequently may serve as a guide for other community colleges in assessing their academic programs and institutional practices. The questions addressed in this research are as follows:

Question No. 1

Is there a significant difference between nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding (a) reported satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) reported satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) general overall satisfaction.

Community college operations do differ between day and evening. Often the evening instruction is comprised of adjunct instructors. The image of the community college is in large part a reflection of the instructors--often the only representative of the community college with whom a student communicates during the course of the semester or term. It has also been confirmed in the research that more and more community colleges are hiring parttime instructors to meet the demand of evening students. In one recent study on instructional development needs in the community college, the findings indicated "two of every three faculty members employed were parttime" (Galbraith & Shedd, 1990). On the national level, parttime faculty now make up 63 percent of the community college instructional force (The NEA 1991 Almanac of Higher Education). The percent of parttime instructors at the

institution studied during this research, Muskegon Community College, is 56 percent.

Behrendt & Parsons claimed, "large numbers of parttime instructors play an important role in personifying an institution to its students" (Behrendt & Parsons, 1983).

Adjunct teaching effectiveness has been presented in the literature as "problematic." According to Galbraith's article,

A barrier to improved adjunct teaching effectiveness has been that a great majority of the parttime faculty have full employment outside the college. This outside allegiance has often been a stumbling block to full collegiality within the college and a point of contention among those who teach fulltime. (Hazelwood, 1984).

Other items cited by evening students as problematic included lack of available counselors; no secretaries on duty--therefore, no leaving messages; no offices for adjunct faculty to meet with students; no bookstore hours after classes are over; and lack of personnel available to answer questions or give appropriate information.

Based on this research question, the following three hypotheses are addressed in this study.

Hypothesis No. 1: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Hypothesis No. 2: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

Hypothesis No. 3: There is a significant difference between responses of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students to the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Question No. 2

Is there a significant difference between nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and those nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program at the time of this study, regarding (a) reported satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) reported satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) general overall satisfaction.

Of special interest are the responses from non-degree seekers, those students taking one or two courses for the purpose of upgrading job skills and/or at an employer's request. Throughout the literature, and discussed in the literature review in Chapter II, such students were characterized as those from the "corporate sector." They enroll at the community college with a specific objective and an immediate need. These students may feel satisfied with their community college experience. Their decision not to enroll the following semester may exist because they have met their objective, not because they are dissatisfied or because the community college failed to retain them. Nontraditional

students attend college for a variety of reasons. Obtaining an associates degree is only one reason.

A relatively small minority of all students enrolled at many community colleges are pursuing the associates degree. For example, less than half of the credit students beginning college at Prince George's Community College in Maryland in the fall of 1987 intended to earn the AA degree. (Clagett, 1989)

Based on this research question, the following three hypotheses are addressed in this research study.

Hypothesis No. 4: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Hypothesis No. 5: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 22 institutional procedures.

Hypothesis No. 6: There is a significant difference between responses of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program to the following questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Question No. 3

Is there a significant difference between younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding (a) reported satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) reported satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) general overall satisfaction.

Adult education theory is flooded with explanations and research concerning the various age and stage developments throughout the life cycle. The works of researchers Erikson, Gould, Havighurst, Loevinger, Lowenthal, Neugarten, and Sheehy contend that the needs of an adult 26 years of age can be very different from the needs of an adult 45 years of age. Therefore, an examination of differences in perceived levels of satisfaction between the age groups may prove insightful.

Based on this research question, the following three hypotheses are addressed:

Hypothesis No. 7: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Hypothesis No. 8: There is a significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

Hypothesis No. 9: There is a significant difference between responses of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Questions for Investigation

An article by Craig A. Clagett, "Student Goal Analysis for Accountability and Marketing," reflected the importance of knowing your student body. Before recruiting and retention strategies can be mapped out and assessment studies designed, the criteria for measuring student success must reflect these

same students' goals for attending. Community colleges need to understand why nontraditional students are attending college and why they have chosen the respective community college.

In the literature, community college students have been categorized into various goal-defined segments, including job seekers, job upgraders, transfer preparers, enrichers, and explorers. The thrust of many articles on recruiting and retention at the community college is that the number of graduates is not the criteria to use in describing and assessing the success of the students. Instead, the students' reasons for attending and their satisfaction (so that they will continue to enroll in classes and/or pass the good word along) has the greatest impact on description of student population.

Because of the importance in learning why the nontraditional students are attending the community college and why they specifically have chosen this community college, the following questions are addressed and posed for discussion:

1. What are the reasons nontraditional students pursue an educational experience? How do these reasons compare between nontraditional day and evening students, between nontraditional program and non-program students, and nontraditional younger and older students?

2. What are the reasons nontraditional students select this specific educational institution? How do these reasons

compare between nontraditional day and evening students, between nontraditional program and non-program students, and between nontraditional younger and older students.

Political Concerns

The results of the study may provide answers to several questions: (a) Are there differences in satisfaction levels between any of the three groups of nontraditional students; and if so, strategies need to be implemented toward this effect; (b) Are there no differences in satisfaction levels between any of the three groups; and if this is true, conclusions may reflect this outcome; (c) Are the nontraditional students satisfied; and if so, investigation of various academic and institutional practices may not be warranted; and (d) Are the nontraditional students dissatisfied; and if so, this is important in investigating the major sources of discontent.

The study may serve as a guide and be replicated by other community colleges. This researcher mailed a brief questionnaire to all community colleges in Michigan (see Appendix A); responses indicated interest in receiving a copy of the questionnaire, procedures used, and results of the study.

The results of this study will hopefully unveil immediate needs of the nontraditional student population, present any significant differences within unique groups of these students, and aid the community college in a better

understanding of its nontraditional population. This information could help the community college to increase its effectiveness in recruitment and retention. Additionally, the results may present well-documented suggestions to faculty, counselors, administrators, and policymakers of the college regarding instructional and academic practices, institutional practices, and needs as perceived by students.

The intent of this research is to report the students' perceptions about the importance of certain areas--it is not to directly study and evaluate the college as an organization. Analysis of the results may elicit political debate about instructional issues; institutional processes, such as registration and fee payments; counseling and advising; environmental issues, such as classroom facilities, and student services. All facets of the college may be prompted to engage in debate.

Terms Used in This Study

Traditional student--Any community college student between the ages of 18 and 24.

Nontraditional student--Any community college student 25 years of age or older.

Adjunct faculty--Any community college instructor teaching parttime--one or two classes--usually in the evening.

Day student--Any community college student taking classes from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Evening student--Any community college student taking classes beginning at 5 p.m. or after.

Student enrolled in a program--Any community college student who has indicated on the survey form that he/she has officially enrolled in a one-year certificate program, a degree program, or transfer program.

Student not enrolled in a program--Any community college student who has indicated on the survey form that he/she has not officially enrolled in a one-year certificate program, a degree program, or transfer program.

Younger nontraditional student--Any nontraditional community college student between the ages of 25 and 44.

Older nontraditional student--Any nontraditional community college student 45 years of age or older.

Adult student--Used interchangeably with "nontraditional student."

Limitations of This Study

This study is based on characteristics inherent to most community colleges and respective populations; however, the specific subhypotheses examined are not generalizable to all institutions. Although the findings are unique to one community college, they should be helpful in identifying possible evaluation criteria and areas for further investigation.

The survey was administered during the middle of the winter 1991 semester. The timing of the study may directly affect the outcome of the responses. Many new students begin college in the fall. This allows them to have formed an overall impression of many of the college's characteristics by winter semester. However, some students may be attending for the first time during winter 1991. This survey was administered late enough in the semester so that they should also have formed impressions.

Students were asked to identify themselves as either day or evening students--not as both. There are some students, however, who attend both day and evening on a fairly equal basis. Day and evening students are different from the other two groups investigated in that they are likely receiving different treatment, both academically and institutionally.

Faculty distributed the questionnaires, and students were requested to return them promptly. Although students were presented with the choice of returning the surveys to their instructor or to a central drop box, they may have felt inhibited in responding to all questionnaire items.

Students were asked to identify themselves as program students or non-program students. There are surely some students who have not officially declared a major or made a decision as to their intentions. They may have identified themselves either way.

The students surveyed were a select group. They were students who are currently attending--not students who have dropped out. Therefore, the reported satisfaction levels reflect perceptions only of students who stayed or persisted--not of those who may have been dissatisfied and dropped out.

Procedures Used in This Study

The following procedures were used in conducting this research study:

1. A survey instrument was constructed, extrapolating items from both the "the Survey of Student Needs

Questionnaire" and the "Student Opinion survey." (See Appendix B)

2. Feedback on the questionnaire was received from a team of Michigan State University research instructors, and the instrument was revised accordingly.

3. Selected items of the instrument were pilot tested on 15 community college students during the spring 1990 term for the purpose of feedback and modification. The instrument was revised where necessary.

4. The questionnaire was carefully examined and evaluated by a consultant from the Michigan State Department of Higher Education. Again, the instrument was modified where necessary.

5. Permission and support were obtained from the President and Dean of Students of Muskegon Community College to conduct the research study.

6. Permission was obtained from the University Council on Research Involving Human Subjects at Michigan State University.

7. Current enrollment statistics were collected on nontraditional students at the community college.

8. A current listing of contact personnel and addresses for all Michigan community colleges was collected. A letter was sent to all Michigan community colleges requesting enrollment figures of nontraditional students for the current semester or term. (See Appendix A)

9. A current roster of names of all nontraditional students enrolled for the winter 1991 semester at Muskegon Community College was obtained. A random sample was selected.

10. A cover letter was written to identified faculty, both fulltime and adjunct, requesting help and cooperation in delivering the questionnaires.

11. A cover letter to the students was written to accompany the questionnaire. (See Appendix C)

12. The questionnaire was administered to the sample of nontraditional students.

13. The obtained data were subjected to the following statistical procedures: Nine hypotheses were stated. Subhypotheses for Hypotheses Nos. 1 through 9 were analyzed separately. Significant individual differences were reported. Their analysis included presentation of the means and standard deviations for each group; a t-test was implemented to detect significance. The alpha .05 level was the criterion for statistical significance in this study.

Organization of This Study

This research study consists of five chapters. Chapter I prefaces the study by providing the theoretical background; the need for the study; the importance of the study; the statement of the problem; the purpose of the study, including hypotheses and questions for investigation; procedures used in the study; and organization of the study.

Chapter II consists of a literature review. This review is based on journal articles, texts, and doctoral dissertations of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which relate to the emergence and needs of nontraditional students at the community college and retention and recruiting strategies.

Chapter III includes the design of the study and description of the sample; instrumentation, including the reliability of the instrument; methods of data collection; methods of data analysis; and the hypotheses, in null format.

Chapter IV provides the findings of the research.

Chapter V includes a summary of the findings, a conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of the literature is based on journal articles, dissertation studies, and books of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which relate to nontraditional students at community colleges.

In the first section is a discussion of the emergence and needs of nontraditional students at the community college. It is important to explore research dealing with concerns and needs of nontraditional students if community colleges are serious about accommodating the diversity of students cascading their campuses.

The focus of the second section is upon recruiting and retention as integral components of educational marketing. Six major themes derived from the literature delineating approaches in recruiting and retaining the adult learner at the community college are presented. These themes support the extreme diversity within the adult student population and provide a framework for the formulation of the survey questions used in this research study.

Emergence of Nontraditional Students at Community Colleges

The emergence of adults into the educational arena can be attributed to changes that have been taking place in our society. Changes are occurring faster and are now so great

and so far reaching that no amount of education during youth can prepare adults to meet the demands that will be made on them. Perhaps this concept was best reflected by Margaret Mead who once said, "The world in which we are born is not the world in which we will live, nor is that the world in which we will die" (date of quote unknown). According to K. Patricia Cross (1981), the present and anticipated growth of lifelong learning in the United States can be attributed to three influences: (a) demographic factors, (b) social changes, and (c) technological changes.

Demographic Factors. Right now, at the onset of 1991, the nation's baby boomers are moving into middle age; and their impact continues. "In just five years, the first of the mass of 76 million individuals born between 1946 and 1964 will reach 50" (John Naisbitt, 1991). Naisbitt discusses in his "Trend Letter" the ins and outs of the next decade and is quick to point out that education for adults is in. If this is the case, community colleges are charged with the responsibility of meeting the demands of this heterogeneous group of students.

It has also been recognized in the literature that adults seeking educational opportunities are no longer limited to a specific age group. Older adults are becoming more visible in community college campus classes. As discussed by Peterson in 1983, many factors credit this increased learning at older age: financial security, health maintenance, and personal development. In 1900 the life expectancy of a woman was 48,

and middle age was 24. During the 1980s, life expectancy was declared to be 78; middle age would logically be 36 (Salazar, 1985).

Have you tried telling a 36-year old woman that she is middle aged? On the contrary, slogans abound convincing us that 'life begins at 40,' 'old is beautiful,' 'you're looking great at 60,' and 'you're never too old to learn.' Indeed, we are looking well. We have been awarded the most precious gift of all--time--and an opportunity to exercise new options and positive changes. (Salazar, 1985)

Technological Changes. Technological changes have had a great influence upon the number of adults returning to college. According to Cross in 1986, technological advances occur in quantum leaps which result in not just more or better, but in radically different ways of doing things.

For years, children learned by what their parents passed onto them; it is the rare child who learns the skills for his/her livelihood from parents today. (Cross, 1986)

A most dramatic technological change has taken place in the workplace--from people who produce things to people who produce information. A knowledge explosion has taken place; and "currently, about one-half of the American payroll goes for the manipulation of symbols rather than the production of things" (Cross, 1986). The implication of this explosion is that nearly all professionals must spend increasing amounts of time in a wide variety of learning activities. Paltridge and Regan in 1978 discovered that over three-fourths of the adults who were back in formal education and training programs after an interruption of five years or more were changing careers, thinking about doing so, or upgrading present careers.

Social Changes. The theme of most writing about social change has been the ratio of education, work, and leisure throughout a lifetime. The traditional linear life plan, where education is for the young, work is for the middle-aged, and leisure is for the elderly, has steadily advanced into the "blended" or cyclic life plan. The purpose of this latter plan as described by Best and Stern in 1976 is "to redistribute work, education, and leisure across the lifespan." According to Cross in her 1986 text, these three phases of life have been influenced by several factors, including:

1. Rising educational attainment--Based on a comparison to the turn of the century, "the more education people have, the more they want, thus the more they participate" (Cross, 1986).

2. Changing career patterns--Over one-half of the respondents in various studies of adult learning interests have claimed they are currently learning or would like to be learning to get a new job, advance in their present job, or get a better job. (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Boaz, 1978)

3. Increased leisure--Benjamin and Walz in their 1982 text discuss the approaches to leisure counseling and its importance in the lifetime balance. They remind us that leisure has had a long and sinful history in our society, and for years was viewed as the "devil's ploy." Fortunately, that has changed; according to Boaz,

Although job-related education continues to dominate the scene in adult education, learning for recreation and leisure is a most rapidly growing phenomenon. (Boaz, 1978)

4. Changing roles for women--Both Cross in 1986 and Boaz in 1978 reported that women have constituted the fastest growing segment of the lifelong learning movement during the 1970s and 1980s.

Two complementary forces are at work here; social and technological changes are pushing women out of the home, and new opportunities in the field of education and the labor market are pulling women into education. (Cross, 1986; Boaz, 1978)

Aslanian and Brickell in 1980 found that 83 percent of adult learners gave changes which had occurred, or will be occurring in their lives as their reason for returning to the learning environment.

With the continuing growth of adult learners, a major question to be addressed is, "What are adult learners' needs." Many researchers have responded to this question by citing the perceptions of Malcolm Knowles concerning his principles of andragogy. A major assumption of andragogy is that adults are self-directed learners. However, some researchers are asking, "Are adults really self-directed learners?" "Do most of them prefer self-paced learning styles?" In 1986, Stephen Brookfield challenged the notion that adults are self-directed learners by nature. He stated, "There is a consistent overestimation of the adult learner's readiness to be self-directed" (Brookfield, 1986). An interesting question was posed by Sharan Merriam in the 1987 Adult Education Quarterly,

Do adult educators employ andragogical techniques because adults really are self-directed learners, or do they use these methods because they believe adults should be self-directed learners? (Merriam, 1987)

It was highlighted in the literature that although adult learners may indeed differ from younger learners, they may differ even more among themselves.

A serious problem with lumping all adult learners together is that it overlooks the tremendous diversity among individuals in almost any group of adults. Ironically, many experts claim that the very thing that does clearly distinguish adult learners from schoolchildren is the much wider range of ages, attitudes, instructional goals, instructional settings and learning styles found in groups of adults. (Feuer and Geber, 1988)

Themes of many articles hinged upon approaches to take and guidelines to follow in helping meet adult learners' needs. Recommendations, from an academic standpoint, included formulating detailed and clearly written syllabi; using a more relaxed approach to lessen the risk of self-esteem so often felt by the adult learner; and exercising more sensitivity to the adult learner who has had to drive a distance to class after working all day. On the other hand, adult learners have been characterized in the literature as determined in their educational goals; forthright about the immediacy of their needs; and adamant about their desire for challenging, fast-paced, and informative class sessions.

The need for an understanding of the diversity of the needs of adult students is imminent and is supported in the literature (Aslanian, 1986; Hu, 1985; Kasworm, 1982; Kuh & Sturgis, 1980; Okun, 1984; and Pennington and Harris, 1980).

Much of this diversity relates to the different stages in the life cycle and warrants a wide range of support services for adults.

As an example, adult students with families often experience role conflict and role strain. It is difficult to choose between long-standing commitments to family, friends, church, and civic activities and the new demands of the classroom. (Puryear, 1988)

Other developmental concerns of adults may include divorce adjustment, dealing with the death of a spouse and physical appearance. (Puryear, 1988)

Financial concerns may result from a particular developmental-stage situation. More and more single-parent families exist, and the divorce rate has resulted in leaving some women no choice but to return to school to learn skills.

The ability to support one's family and simultaneously return to the campus may be more than a concern for adult students; it may indeed present a personal barrier to continued education that is difficult to overcome without institutional intervention. (Adams, 1986)

Although tuition at community colleges is comparatively lower than at other postsecondary institutions, financial aid officers may need to employ creative thinking to provide other avenues of financial assistance for those adults who are ineligible for federally-funded financial aid or for reimbursement from employers. Partial tuition waivers, activity fee waivers, scholarships for texts, and reduced interest loans designated for adults who meet specified institutional criteria may provide the financial boost that would enable an adult to return to the classroom without facing an undue financial burden. Funding for such financial assistance could be sought through donations from alumni and area business and industry, and through fund raising efforts by the students. (Puryear, 1988)

This diversity of adult students presents challenges to instructional and institutional practices. K. Patricia Cross raised the following question, "Do colleges have the right to

aggressively recruit adults in order to expose them to the lifelong satisfaction of the type of learning offered by the college curriculum?" It seems apparent that each community college should be cautioned to assess the needs of its institutional student populations prior to implementing specific programs and/or services. Furthermore, it seems apparent that students' reasons for attending college and their reasons for selecting the respective institution play an important role in planning and marketing courses and programs.

In trying to gain some predictive basis to attract and plan for the growth of the adult student population and, consequently use our buildings, curriculum, faculty, etc., better, we in the community college are obliged, if we are to plan accurately and properly, to look at what precipitates an adult's return to formal education. (Carbone, 1982)

Recruiting/Retention Strategies For Nontraditional Students

One point of interest in this research study is adult students' reasons for attending college and more specifically, this college. The second point of interest in this study is the students' satisfaction levels with the respective institution. This can be related to retention; therefore these two aspects of promotion deserve literature review.

Recruiting. An integral part of promotion, recruiting has been denoted as the personal component of marketing. Kathryn Gallien, in her article concerning adults returning to college, states,

For an adult who has been away from the classroom for many years, the decision to become a student again is hard. Remember, that many of these people feel out-of-date. They have forgotten how to type and how to use the

library. They are intimidated by computers. They are afraid of failing. Thus, it is no coincidence that our most successful student recruitment method is word of mouth. In fact, all of our best marketing techniques rely on some sort of personal contact. (Gallien, date unknown)

Recruiting adult students demands creativity and specific techniques. In Linda Reisser's article, "Recruiting the Adult Learner," she states,

Admission officials have routinely traveled to high schools and college transfer programs in order to contact potential students. Yet their approach to nontraditional students has been to wait for them to walk in and inquire, expect them to decode college catalogs and course schedules, and find their way around the alien environment of the campus. To recruit more effectively, colleges must be creative in attracting the attention of lifelong learners, proactive in translating academic jargon into practical language, and conscientious about making adult learners feel comfortable and confident. (Reisser, 1980, p. 48)

Cross, in 1986, exhibited a controversial element of recruiting adults. She felt she was hearing from educators that colleges were more interested in filling empty seats than in serving the needs of adult learners.

There is a big difference, they contend, between serving adults (that is, finding out what adults want and providing it) and recruiting them (offering predetermined programs and getting students to enroll in them). (Cross, 1986, p. 34)

Cross further stated:

Until recently, when traditional college programs became interested in the 'recruitment' of adults, adult learners were 'served' by extension divisions and any number of community agencies that, by and large, offered whatever classes and other activities adult learners seemed to want. (Cross, 1986, p. 34)

Authors of some articles addressed examples of recruitment and boasted the "it-works-for-me" attitude.

However, it was apparent from the readings containing theory and models that developing a positive internal commitment toward recruiting strategies for nontraditional students is of utmost importance. The writers of the recruiting model for Pitt Community College summarized their philosophy for utilizing the total marketing mix as follows:

The efforts of one or two individuals will not make a plan succeed. It takes the total efforts of an institutional team to market to recruit adult students. The following general strategies are noted adult recruiting strategies: (1) recruiting advisory committee formation, (2) identification by targeting groups and needs, (3) design of special courses, (4) design of special promotions to reach target groups, (5) flexible schedules and locations of classes, (6) evaluation of promotions, (7) determination of recruiting cost effectiveness per student, and (8) use of periodic surveys to evaluate the recruiting efforts and effectiveness. (1985, pp. 100-101)

Retention. It was frequently reported in the literature that retention is often ignored once a student has enrolled--but that it should be regarded as significant and pivotal as admissions--that many community colleges are far more successful in recruiting than in retention. What is meant by retention? Some say it refers to degree completion; some say, recurring participation, or even return business. It was revealed in the literature that retention results from satisfaction.

According to Duncan in his article "Four Models For Increasing Student Retention at the Community College of Denver,"

The major research on student attrition/retention has been conducted at four-year colleges with majority students. The scarcity of two-year college attrition/

retention studies may be due to the open door policy of two-year colleges. The open door policy makes it difficult to conceptualize variables contributing to attrition/retention because of the wide range of student abilities and other student characteristics. Four-year colleges on the other hand are more selective of their students and make it easier to define attrition/retention variables. (Duncan, 1985, p. 5)

Recent literature on retention suggests a need for an institution and its administration to justify retention. For example, why should an educational institution try and retain a student? An explanation was best stated by Duncan:

Retention is improved by directing recruiting efforts to whom the institution is best equipped to serve. (Duncan, 1985, p. 16)

According to Dressel and Simpson, the term "retention" implies:

a holding power, an adhesiveness, a quality or a set of characteristics of an institution such that an individual initially attracted to it will maintain the association and regard as both desirable and profitable. (Dressel and Simpson, 1985, p. 8)

Retention of the adult student takes on a different role and a different set of strategies compared to the traditional transfer student. Returning to school for the first time--during the first semester--can be stressful. Adult students are often faced with a difficult period of adjustment. Claus, in his paper, "Adult Students in the Community College," provided a list of adjustment factors:

1. Adults must become reacquainted with the classroom environments.
2. Adults must become reacquainted with formal evaluation (testing/grading).
3. Adults must adapt to a new social atmosphere.

4. Adults must learn to organize their time and resources in new ways. (Claus, 1986, p. 1)

For adults with no college experience, this first semester is a critical period which determines how and even whether they will proceed in their community college programs. (Claus, 1986, p. 3)

A discussion of recruiting and retaining students from the corporate sector alluded to the problem of price or tuition change from year to year at the community college. James O. Tatro speculated that although the modest rates of community colleges pose much less of a problem than other higher educational institutions,

Even increases in community college rates can be troublesome when they are unforeseen in the corporate budgeting process or when pressures to reduce expenses cut into corporate budgets for education.

Although community colleges do not pose a serious problem for the corporate sector student in terms of the amount of tuition and fees, they provide a major source of aggravation in terms of how they charge. To a lesser degree, other publicly supported colleges and universities pose the same problem--but not to the extent of some community colleges. Given the fact that colleges operate with funds that come from a number of different sources, that they may be accountable in different ways to the different funding sources, that some funds carry over from one year to the next while others lapse, and that some monies may be more restricted in their use than others, coming up with a tuition and fee structure that is intelligible to whomever pays it is not an easy task. (Tatro, 1986, p. 11)

Finally, the issue of requiring payment for a course the semester before it is offered--for many students who are being reimbursed for the cost of the course, this means putting up that money even before being eligible for reimbursement of the previous payment. This may not be attractive to a potential student.

The number of tuition-aid programs for employees' collegiate experiences is abundant. In addition, unions have negotiated contracts that provide an additional \$20 million a year for education for blue collar and white collar workers (Watkins, 1980). Unfortunately, there is still a large number of employed workers who must do their own financing.

However, millions of employees do not have access to tuition-refund programs and are seriously hindered in their efforts to acquire the educational goals desired. (Crawford, 1980)

The following discussion relates to the diversity of nontraditional students permeating community college classrooms. It furthermore represents findings and implications of various case studies and research problems concerning the recruiting and retention of these nontraditional students at the community college. This researcher has summarized six major themes resulting from the research and believes them to be conducive to further research.

1. Adults returning to college vary considerably along dimensions of cognitive filters on reality. This finding has implications for community college instructors and the tremendous role faculty play in the retention of adult students. As discussed by Susan W. Cameron in the "Perry Scheme" (1984):

Even though there is diversity within the population of adult students, faculty have been slow to respond to this new clientele. They have been rewarded mainly for teaching content regardless of who attends their classes. With the understanding of different cognitive frames of relationships, faculty can also interpret students' very

different responses to course content, academic environments, and ability to be successful in their coursework. (Cameron, 1984, p. 9)

A study conducted by John Carbone, "Americans in Transition: Implications for Community Colleges of a New Study About Adult Learners," reveals the need for faculty in-service training. He based his study on the findings of Aslanian and Brickell who found that "triggers" (significant events in one's life) stimulate a transition in an individual's life and supply the impetus for him or her to seek additional learning. Carbone concluded,

While the study identifies several aspects of life as prime areas for a trigger and subsequent transition to occur, Aslanian and Brickell found that more triggers occur in an adult's occupational area of life than in all other areas combined.

For these increasing transitions in life and the resultant return by adults to formal learning situations, the implications for community colleges are many. One area in particular--faculty in-service training and development--needs to be addressed. New findings in adult psychology and the "psychology of aging" must be brought to the college's fulltime and parttime faculty. (Carbone, 1982, p. 61)

One of the results of a study concerning the state of marketing recruiting and retention strategies utilized by Texas colleges was that faculty members were not adequately prepared to accept and process change or alterations in teaching assignments as suggested by results of the study.

The problem of faculty members resisting teaching assignments at times other than during traditional daytime hours as a part of their regular responsibility

at Texas colleges and universities may largely be due to the failure of the organization to articulate and support the concept of nontraditional education and/or instructional opportunities for the nontraditional student. (Loshier, 1983, p. 218)

2. As emphasized throughout the literature, the community college must incorporate the needs of adults into its daily operations and functions. Several studies concentrated specifically upon the areas of student services as an effective means of retaining and meeting the needs of the adult student. As explained by Dennis R. Parks, student services (also referred to by other names) has grown and matured over the years. Based in developmental theory, student development attempts to place the individual at the center of the learning and growing process. As the number of older adult students increases in community colleges, student services practitioners will realize that the answer to effective student services programs with adults lies in an understanding of how adults mature, grow, and age throughout the course of the life cycle. According to Parks, the problem is not directed at the philosophical base on which student development is constructed, but on its failure to broaden its base to service a growing diversity of the student population.

With increasing numbers of older students, student services in community colleges must once again look for a foundation on which to base its programs. While the current approach to student development focuses on developmental growth in the 17-23 year-old-age period, the new base of student development will look to developmental changes over the entire life cycle. (Parks, 1982, p. 5)

If student services in the community college is to respond to the needs of the older, more diversified student population, an understanding of the differences between the traditional college-age student and the adult student is imperative. Several methods for such examination were given in the literature. These suggested methods of examination included Eric Erickson's theory of discernible stages through which adults must pass and then complete or achieve one or more tasks in order to successfully advance to the next stage. Other theorists who are codified as being in this psychosocial family include Arthur Chickering (1981); Gail Sheehy (Passages, 1972); Roger Gould (1978); and Daniel Levinson (Seasons of a Man's Life, 1978).

A second method in understanding adults is through ethical, moral, and intellectual development. This family believes that development is a sequence of stages involving how the individual views the world in reference to individual perceptions and societal influences. The three cornerstones of this family of theory are "Kohlberg's stages of moral development, Perry's scheme of ethical and intellectual development, and Loevinger's (1970) theory of ego and personality development" (Parks, p. 6).

The third method of examining adult development as cited in the literature is to analyze the life cycle by means of empirical evidence. Such avenues include physical development (how the body grows, maintains, and deteriorates over the life span); intellectual development (the concepts of crystallized

and fluid intelligence); sex role development (how men and women develop their roles in relation to societal norms); and personality development (formulating and maintaining one's self concept or viewpoint). This theory of examination through empirical evidence is supported by such theorists as Schlossberg (1977) and Troll (1975). According to Parks,

One of the main contributions of adult development theories is that they permit student services practitioners to construct a conceptual framework from which to better serve all students, regardless of age. It is important for student services practitioners to recognize that differences in students can exist as a result of their stage in the life cycle. The late adolescent and the middle-aged student do not come to the community college on the same developmental level (Parks, 1982, p. 9).

3. Numerous studies have resulted in findings indicating that a typical profile of a community college student is the woman as a re-entry student. Much of the literature regarding recruiting of adult students at the community college focused upon women; therefore, appeared a relevant issue.

Still programs and courses for women are considered a relatively new dimension in higher education. As explained by Durnover in a presentation entitled "Strategies for Servicing the Neglected Majority: An Institutional Framework for Addressing Students' Needs Over the Next Decade,"

Colleges and universities were originally established by men for men. The structure was based on male values, male traditions and male goals. It has only been since 1834 that women were accepted into college and well into the 20th century before they enrolled in significant numbers. Considering today's enrollment, we really have come a long way. (Durnover, 1987, p. 2)

Although a considerable amount of literature existed concerning the adult woman at the community college, content suggested that little has been done to accommodate these women.

Since 1980, authors writing about women at the community college--like authors dealing with minorities and transfers--argue that the colleges have not done enough to promote social equity. (Palmer, 1986, p. 107)

In 1983, Bers maintains,

The promise of comprehensive and appropriate support services, an egalitarian academic world, and well-paying nontraditional careers for many has not been realized. (Bers, 1988, p. 17)

Bers also blamed societal norms, economic realities, and "old-fashioned sexism" (p. 32).

According to Palmer, in his extensive review of the community college role in promoting the social status of women, the literature calls on colleges to provide special support services for women, especially for older, returning women students and for women entering nontraditional occupational fields that are dominated by men.

Osterkamp and Hullett in 1983 marshalled demographic and economic data to underscore the need for a women's re-entry program at Bakersfield College in California. This program would focus on recruitment, orientation, advising, admissions assistance, counseling, career development, child care, financial aid, and job placement. This same set of objectives was suggested by Wintersteen's 1982 survey of returning women at North Shore Community College in Massachusetts. Most of the literature focused upon support services for those women

actually enrolled as students. Palmer mentioned one document in his study which described a community college's initiative to assist women in the population at large--a study conducted by McWilliams in 1982. This was an offshoot of the college's perceived obligation to meet the multiple needs of the mature women of South Dallas County.

4. Addressing the needs of students from the corporate sector appeared an important topic. The enrollment trends have predicted that community colleges are enrolling adult students seeking re-training and skill updating. Many of these students are already employed; and the employers need the community college's training services. James O. Tatro, a writer and consultant for university relations, states,

I believe that on-site programming will continue to increase and that it holds the potential for some of the most significant developments in higher education since the advent of the community college.

Since the number of working adults who take courses outside of work hours that are paid for by their employers is approaching 6 million, there is much to be excited about from the college point of view. While the number of traditional-age college students has declined and many continuing education populations have leveled off, students from the corporate sector continue to increase. (Tatro, 1986, p. 8)

Tatro felt there were several marketing factors about the corporate sector students which deserved special attention.

He compared the employee--the potential student--to the other types of returning students: veterans, displaced homemakers, unemployed workers, or other adult continuing education students:

While a small minority of employees may be interested in education that will give them the mobility to seek other employment, the overwhelming majority are interested in education that will enhance their opportunities with their current employer. (Tatro, 1986, p. 9)

He emphasized that whether these particular students are degree seeking or only interested in single courses, it is most likely their goals are more sharply focused. It would be advantageous to know where within the college these students are located.

Tatro's second point of interest was the company which employs the potential student. What is the company's overall stance on education, and does it encourage and/or require degree attainment? These are very meaningful and significant questions.

The third suggested marketing aspect was to look closely at the company's tuition-paying policy; specifically, Tatro stated,

I believe that it is important for you to know both how much of the costs of education the plan pays for and what kind of education it pays for. Does it pay for anything or just courses that are job related? What is the policy, if any, with respect to degree programs? If there is a job-related requirement, who determines what is job-related--a corporate official or individual supervisors? (Tatro, 1986, p. 10)

Tatro felt it was equally important, in order to understand your market for corporate sector students, to examine the supervisor.

When you have recruited a corporate sector student, you have acquired potential access to that student's supervisor, which in turn may provide you with access to other corporate sector students. (Tatro, 1986, p. 10)

Finally, reference was made to the course or program descriptions and the community college catalog. Tatro stated his views on the significance of a clearly stated, thoroughly written course/program description:

Do your course or program descriptions really provide enough information for someone to make an informed decision about whether or not a course or program is worth the cost in time and money? If certain courses are required of students, there may be no compelling reason to provide them with information about those courses in advance. You may offer a course that is equal to or even superior to one offered by a commercial provider who charges ten times what you do, but you may not be able to convince a corporate training official or an employee's supervisor to use your course instead--simply because you cannot provide adequate information about yours. (Tatro, 1986, p. 10)

5. Numerous studies stressed the importance of the first-semester success at the community college for the adult student. In general, the initial adult student experience in the community college can be a difficult and frustrating one (as indicated by high rates of attrition in studies by Astin, 1975; Pantages and Creedon, 1978; and Peng, Ashburn, and Dunteman, 1977). Duffy and Fendt stated,

Many adult students pursue this goal of education in the shadow of employment problems, limited academic backgrounds, long periods out of school, and patterns of lifestyle and family responsibility that are resistant to change. (Duffy and Fendt, 1984, p. 41)

Additionally, Friedlander in 1981, stated,

They may also be reluctant and have little time to participate in remedial or special support programs, and they may find certain standard institutional and instructional practices unfamiliar and/or alienating. (Friedlander, 1981, p. 29)

John Claus, in his study "Adult Students in Community College: Learning to Manage the Learning Process," researched and

interviewed adult students after their first semester. This study resulted in some of the following recommendations for retention of adult students: (a) college-sponsored child-care centers staffed by students in appropriate programs; (b) adult student support groups in which students could discuss their problems with peers and with already-successful adult students; (c) in-service training for advisors, counselors, and teachers to make them more sensitive to adult students' problems outside of school; (d) increased dissemination of information about financial aid options and the costs of returning to school; and (e) information about school transportation systems and car pooling.

In regard to instruction, the instructors who organized their courses around a detailed syllabus, who offered thorough explanation and review, who included dialogue and student questioning, and who were kind and thoughtful regarding students' problems, were seen as motivating and effective in contrast to instructors who lectured almost exclusively and who did not create an environment conducive to dialogue and explanation.

Beal and Noel in 1980 reported specifically on the process of researching the indicators of increased retention, defining responsive target groups and indicators of target areas of change. In regard to returning adult students, they stated,

Returning adults realize the greatest gains from special orientation programs, peer counseling, career assistance,

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and faculty-staff development programs. (Beal and Noel, 1980, p. 38)

Other retention tips for first-semester adult students mentioned in the literature included: (a) more mandatory advising sessions during the first semester; (b) a closer assessment of incoming adult students' skill levels; (c) a thorough reading level analyses of major texts and materials; (d) more thorough counseling at the time of enrollment regarding the formulation of appropriate goals; (e) more opportunities for students to explore vocational/career alternatives commensurate with their skills, abilities, and interests; (f) opportunities and skills for preparing for the job market; and (g) courses and counseling to develop student self confidence in relation to academics.

Many studies concerning retention at the community college were prefaced with the concern that the wealth of literature on retention and attrition has been based on four-year colleges and have only limited applicability to community colleges. Because of the complexity of student reasons for attending community colleges and the wide range of programs offered at these institutions, Walleri was prompted in his 1981 study to re-define retention for the community college. He felt that because retention has traditionally meant "on-time graduation," it was not relevant to all community college students. Many adult students return to update skills or to take a series of courses. This does not suggest a retention problem. Walleri has suggested defining retention in terms of

program completion, course completion, and student attainment of educational and career objectives.

6. Recruitment efforts have been aimed primarily at the traditional adult high school graduate. It is evident that very vigorous student recruiting efforts are being utilized by community colleges. Some of the recruitment strategies for attracting the adult students are: (a) holding off-campus registration at an industrial plant, making it easy for potential students to sign up for classes; (b) off-campus program offerings; (c) recruiting visits to employers of potential students; and (d) conducting needs assessments at the local level to determine clues useful for facilitating relevant learning by adults. As discussed by Raymond Young, in his 1980 study, "Discovering Clues for Facilitating Relevant Adult Learning,"

It is important to learn the variances among age groups and between sexes in terms of purposes for which adults in that area would be interested in participating in some kind of adult learning activity and the types of nontraditional delivery systems which are most attractive. They should also know more specifically about some conditions under which it is most likely adults would participate in an adult learning activity. (Young, 1980, p. 8)

Young suggested that after using mailed questionnaires and telephone contacts to elicit this type of information, the systematic interview technique of gathering this type of information has distinct advantages. One purpose, aside from obtaining information, is the opportunity to give information and to stimulate thought.

Summary

It is a fact that one of the most significant developments in higher education during the past fifteen to twenty years has been the increasing number of adult students enrolled in universities and community colleges. These institutions of higher education were originally established for the purpose of awarding degrees and certificates to students primarily engaged in two to four years of fulltime study. Until recently, these institutions were considered to be in the business of preparing traditional students for the world of work. The fact that this situation has changed irrevocably is evidenced in the literature.

This chapter has served as a literature review concerning the reasons for the emergence of adult learners at post-secondary institutions. Predictions about the increased number of middle-aged people in 1990 and the increased number of adult students have remained true. The old-fashioned picture of college life--the walls covered with ivy, classrooms filled with 18-22-year olds who are primarily males, students with definite career goals and expectations, students who have complete family support (emotional and financial), and students whose only "job" in their lives is to complete their college degree--has in large part dissipated with time and change. Colleges are realizing that they must probe to find out who their students really are and why they are really there.

It has been established in the literature that adult students return for many reasons--not all of them resulting in completion of a program or degree. Because of this very fact, community colleges are relying on needs assessments of currently enrolled students to find out if they are being satisfied. What are the academic and instructional concerns? What are the institutional/procedural concerns? Why are they attending this school? What enticed them to go to school? The answers to these questions provide a framework for recruiting and retention strategies. The answers to these questions inform colleges about the effectiveness of their promotional designs. Studies concerning recruiting and retention have focused upon the traditional student population. Answers to the above-questions may strengthen recruiting and retention techniques of the nontraditional students.

This chapter has also served to extrapolate from the literature various themes concerning nontraditional students returning to the learning environment. These students may be vulnerable, frightened, and threatened by the formal classroom environment. A number of strategies for recognizing and encouraging students who match this category was revealed. Many adults need an impetus to make that first step to return to school. The literature provided valuable data concerning recruiting steps in seeking out these students. It was emphasized in the literature that the community college family, including administrators, faculty, and support staff,

are all accountable for recognizing the needs of the nontraditional student. Faculty are responsible for teaching and disseminating information to all students. If satisfaction levels of the students are considered important, instructors may be expected to have a sound knowledge base in adult development stages and acknowledge diversity of the nontraditional population. The literature provided an abundance of clues for facilitating adult learning.

Chapter III will provide a discussion of the sample, the research design, and the data analysis procedures used to accomplish the objectives set forth in this study.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed between three unique groups of nontraditional students at a community college. The research was based on students' perceptions of satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices and institutional procedures as well as reasons for attending college. Based on theory and literature reviews concerning nontraditional students, the three unique groups chosen for perusal included: (a) nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students, (b) nontraditional students who indicated they were enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicated they were not enrolled in a program at the time of this study, and (c) younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students.

Levels of satisfaction and importance of reasons for attending college can be directly related to recruiting and retention. Both the procedures used in conducting this study and the survey instrument have been designed to serve as a guide enabling other community colleges to examine their nontraditional student population.

Population

The population in this research study included all nontraditional students enrolled at Muskegon Community College during the winter 1991 semester. The total population consisted of 2,269 nontraditional students.

Sample

A random sample of 1,135 nontraditional students was drawn from the population. Because the six subgroups were drawn from one sample, a computer program was designed to randomly select approximately 50 percent of the population. Controls were set to insure that at least 30 subjects were included in each of the subgroups and that there were no duplications.

Eighty-five of the students in the sample could not be identified because the instructor's name was not listed on the computer printout. Therefore, 1,050 surveys were sent to identified fulltime and adjunct faculty. Faculty members distributed the questionnaires to those identified students in their classes. There were 175 students reported to the researcher as either (a) dropped from the class, (b) a "no-show," (c) absent during the two-week period of data collection, or (d) transferred to another section. Therefore, the number of surveys distributed to students was 875. The number of surveys returned was 762 (87 percent), which was considered an excellent response rate.

Instrumentation

A structured (closed form) questionnaire was administered to a random sample of nontraditional students at Muskegon Community College. The questionnaire was designed to closely emulate the "Student Opinion Survey (Two-Year College Form)" developed by the American College Testing Program. The American College Testing Evaluation/Survey Services explained that the purpose of their survey "is to explore perceptions of enrolled students regarding the programs, services, and environment of the institution" (1985). Components of the questionnaire were fashioned after "The Survey of Students' Needs Questionnaire"--(1978) first developed by the two-year College Development Centre, State University of New York at Albany as part of a project to study adults returning to two-year colleges.

The five-page questionnaire used in this research requires approximately ten minutes to complete and consists of four major sections.

The first section of the questionnaire, labeled 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION, contains 23 items. Items 1 through 7 request basic demographic data. Items 7 through 15 are related to students' reasons for going to college. Items 16 through 23 are related to students' reasons for selecting this particular college.

The second section of the questionnaire, labeled 2. ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES, contains questions which relate to students' satisfaction levels regarding 11 academic

and instructional attributes. The 11 variables deal with instruction, course content, classroom technique, and comfort of the classroom.

The third section of the questionnaire, labeled 3. INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES, contains questions which relate to students' satisfaction levels regarding 22 institutional attributes. These 22 variables deal with registration procedures, various cost requirements, availability of information, flexibility and variety of course offerings, treatment and assistance provided by non-teaching staff, physical facilities, availability of adequate personnel, and various student services.

The fourth section of the questionnaire, labeled 4. GENERAL QUESTIONS, allows the students to express their overall impression of the college and to assess whether they would choose this college if they had it to do over again. It is important for the students to take a moment and make these assessments.

Validity. The following sequence of events provides the basis for the validity of the survey instrument used in this research study:

1. The components of this survey questionnaire were extracted from the "Student Opinion Survey (Two-Year College Form)," a nationally standardized survey which is published by the American College Testing Program. In the literature, it was confirmed that there were 15,000 cases in its pilot testing; the most recent validation copyright is 1985.

2. A team of Michigan State University statistics and survey design instructors evaluated and provided feedback on the questionnaire, and revisions were implemented accordingly.

3. All components in the survey were pretested in the spring 1990 semester, using 15 nontraditional students at a community college. Appropriate modifications and revisions were then incorporated.

4. The questionnaire was carefully examined and evaluated by personnel from the State Department of Higher Education. Once again, appropriate modifications were implemented.

See Appendix B for an example of the questionnaire used in this research study.

Data Collection

During the middle of the winter 1991 semester, questionnaires were administered to 875 nontraditional students at Muskegon Community College. This researcher chose to distribute questionnaires within the college environment as opposed to mailing. "A disadvantage peculiar to mailed questionnaires is low return" (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1972). Faculty at the college were involved in distributing questionnaires to the students who were enrolled in their classes and identified in the sample. Students were prompted to either return the questionnaire to the instructor or to deposit the questionnaire at the drop box provided at the switchboard. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire

explaining the purpose of the survey and urging students to complete the questionnaire. Students were informed that the questionnaire would take approximately ten minutes to complete. See Appendix C for a copy of the cover letter.

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the Dean of Students and the President of Muskegon Community College, as well as Michigan State's UCRIHS.

Anonymity

Students selected to participate in this study were guaranteed anonymity. A label with the respective student's name was affixed to the cover letter accompanying the questionnaire. Students were informed in the letter that they could detach the cover letter. This way there would be no means of identifying student responses.

Data Analysis

Nine hypotheses were tested. Following is a review of the testable hypotheses, stated in null form, and the procedures used for data analysis.

For Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8, responses to subhypotheses were analyzed separately; and individual differences were reported. Each response was assigned a value of 4, 3, 2, or 1, corresponding to the Likert Scale used in the survey of "Very Satisfied," "Satisfied," "Dissatisfied," and "Very Dissatisfied." The analysis included calculation of

a mean and a standard deviation for each of the two groups. A t-test was applied to detect significance.

For Hypotheses 3, 6, and 9, responses to each question were assigned a value of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1, corresponding to the Likert Scale used in the survey of "Definitely Yes," "Probably Yes," "Uncertain," "Probably No," and "Definitely No" for the first question, and "Excellent," "Good," "Average," "Below Average," and "Very Inadequate" for the second question. The analysis for both questions included calculation of a mean and a standard deviation for each of the two groups. A t-test was applied to detect significance.

An alpha level of .05 was applied for all tests of statistical significance.

Testable Hypotheses

Group I. Day and Evening Students

H₀1: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

H₀3: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students to the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Group 2. Program and Non-Program Students

H₀4: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

H₀5: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 22 institutional procedures.

H₀6: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program to the following questions?

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Group 3. Younger Adults and Older Adults

H₀7: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

H₀8: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

H₀9: There is no significant difference between responses of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

The research collected was also used to examine responses to the following questions:

1. What are the reasons nontraditional students pursue an educational experience? How do these reasons compare between nontraditional day and evening students, between nontraditional program and non-program students, and between nontraditional younger and older students?

2. What are the reasons nontraditional students selected this specific educational institution? How do these reasons compare between nontraditional day and evening students, between nontraditional program and non-program students, and between nontraditional younger and older students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed between three unique groups of nontraditional students at the community college. A proliferation of theoretical differences between traditional and nontraditional students exists throughout the literature; however, very little data concerning differences between groups of nontraditional students exist. A comparison of satisfaction levels regarding academic and institutional procedures between different groups may be helpful in understanding the needs of the community college nontraditional student population.

A look at the reasons these different groups chose to attend college and specifically why they chose to attend this college may further enhance understanding of the nontraditional student population.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

A study was conducted at a community college to determine if differences existed between select groups of nontraditional students. A random sample of nontraditional students responded to questions concerning reasons for attending college, reasons for selecting this particular college, satisfaction levels regarding areas of academics and instruction, satisfaction levels regarding institutional procedures, and overall perceptions of the college.

Specific groups within a college's population may have different impressions of the quality of services provided by the institution. It is important to recognize variables which students identify as those promoting a high level of satisfaction and to determine if there are varying levels of satisfaction between the different groups of students.

In this chapter, the study findings are presented in three sections relating to the three groups which were investigated. In each section, the three hypotheses and the research questions are restated. A demographic profile of the group is presented. The t-test was used to analyze the data, and the .05 alpha level of significance was selected to test subhypotheses.

Description of the Sample

The sample was drawn from a population of 2,395 nontraditional students enrolled for the winter 1991 semester at Muskegon Community College. This represents approximately 52 percent of the total number of students enrolled.

There were 762 nontraditional students who participated in the research study.

Group I--Day Students and Evening Students

Demographic Profile

A demographic profile representing the sample of day and evening students is presented in Table 4.1 on page 64.

Demographic data are similar for day and evening students with the exception of enrollment status and program status. Ninety-four percent of the evening students compared to 58 percent of the day students are enrolled in only one or two classes, and 79 percent of the day students claim to be enrolled in a program compared to only 59 percent of the evening students.

TABLE 4.1. PROFILE OF DAY AND EVENING STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
PERCENT OF NUMBER IN GROUP

| Variable | Day Students | | Evening Students | | Total | |
|------------------------------|--------------|------|------------------|-----|----------|-----|
| | <u>n</u> | % | <u>n</u> | % | <u>N</u> | % |
| GENDER | | | | | | |
| Male | 111 | 36 | 186 | 41 | 297 | 39 |
| Female | 197 | 64 | 267 | 59 | 464 | 61 |
| TOTAL | 308 | 100 | 453 | 100 | 761 | 100 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | | | | |
| Single | 52 | 17 | 83 | 18 | 135 | 18 |
| Married | 174 | 57 | 292 | 63 | 466 | 61 |
| Divorced | 67 | 22 | 67 | 15 | 134 | 18 |
| Separated | 8 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 16 | 2 |
| Widowed | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 307 | 101* | 453 | 99* | 760 | 100 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | |
| 25 to 44 years | 266 | 87 | 381 | 85 | 647 | 86 |
| 45 years or older | 41 | 13 | 68 | 15 | 109 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 307 | 100 | 449 | 100 | 756 | 100 |
| ENROLLMENT STATUS | | | | | | |
| 1 or 2 classes | 177 | 58 | 426 | 94 | 603 | 79 |
| 3 or more classes | 129 | 42 | 27 | 6 | 156 | 21 |
| TOTAL | 306 | 100 | 453 | 100 | 759 | 100 |
| PROGRAM STATUS | | | | | | |
| ENROLLED in program | 242 | 79 | 267 | 59 | 509 | 67 |
| NOT ENROLLED in a program | 65 | 21 | 186 | 41 | 251 | 33 |
| TOTAL | 307 | 100 | 453 | 100 | 760 | 100 |

*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.
Non-responses are not included.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Research Question No. 1. Is there a significant difference between nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding (a) satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) responses to general questions concerning overall satisfaction.

H_01 : There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Table 4.2 on page 66 presents the data for H_01 . All 11 subhypotheses did not meet the criterion for statistical significance. Therefore, H_01 was not rejected.

**TABLE 4.2. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF DAY AND EVENING STUDENTS
REGARDING 11 ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL VARIABLES**

| Subhypotheses | \bar{N} | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | Day | Eve | Day | Eve | Day | Eve | |
| Instructor's: | | | | | | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | 307 | 452 | 3.664 | 3.655 | 0.519 | 0.512 | .80 |
| 2. Method of teaching | 306 | 450 | 3.359 | 3.400 | 0.629 | 0.608 | .38 |
| 3. Academic challenge | 303 | 443 | 3.413 | 3.424 | 0.591 | 0.539 | .78 |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | 275 | 386 | 3.287 | 3.324 | 0.663 | 0.595 | .47 |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | 301 | 440 | 3.252 | 3.323 | 0.635 | 0.549 | .12 |
| 6. Relevance of course content | 298 | 446 | 3.362 | 3.350 | 0.659 | 0.587 | .79 |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | 307 | 448 | 3.580 | 3.618 | 0.557 | 0.513 | .34 |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | 306 | 446 | 3.542 | 3.556 | 0.578 | 0.545 | .75 |
| 9. Relevance of homework | 300 | 440 | 3.287 | 3.336 | 0.653 | 0.545 | .28 |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | 301 | 447 | 3.040 | 2.940 | 0.725 | 0.730 | .065 |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | 299 | 436 | 3.288 | 3.259 | 0.583 | 0.538 | .50 |

H₀2: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

Table 4.3 on page 69 presents the data for H₀2. Five of the 22 subhypotheses were found to be statistically significant.

Regarding Subhypothesis 12, "Adequate Study Areas," the data show that the mean for the day students was 3.069 compared to a mean of 3.202 for evening students. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0071 was generated. Therefore, H₀2 Subhypothesis 12 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 15, "Availability of Child Care," results indicate that the mean for the day students was 2.000 compared to a mean for evening students of 2.500. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0004 resulted. Therefore, H₀2 Subhypothesis 15 was rejected.

Subhypothesis 16, "Bookstore Hours," resulted in a mean of 3.201 for day students compared to a mean of 3.005 for evening students. A probability of .0000 resulted when the t-test was applied to the difference between the means. Therefore, H₀2 Subhypothesis 16 was rejected.

Regarding Subhypothesis 17, "Cost of Tuition," the mean for the day students was 3.188 compared to a mean of 3.097 for evening students. The t-test was applied to the difference between means, and a probability of .017 was generated. Therefore, H₀2 Subhypothesis 17 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 22, "College's Overall Concern," data show that the mean for the day students was 3.134 compared to a mean for evening students of 3.015. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0050 was generated. Therefore, H_02 Subhypothesis 22 was rejected.

Regarding the other 17 subhypotheses, H_02 was not rejected.

TABLE 4.3. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF DAY AND EVENING STUDENTS
REGARDING 22 INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES

| Subhypotheses | \bar{N} | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| | Day | Eve | Day | Eve | Day | Eve | |
| 1. Registration procedures | 298 | 449 | 3.228 | 3.267 | 0.626 | 0.575 | .39 |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | 298 | 452 | 3.000 | 3.007 | 0.696 | 0.681 | .90 |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | 295 | 441 | 3.176 | 3.102 | 0.614 | 0.585 | .10 |
| 4. Academic calendar | 293 | 434 | 3.191 | 3.143 | 0.521 | 0.507 | .22 |
| 5. Billing procedures | 281 | 426 | 3.231 | 3.204 | 0.500 | 0.498 | .48 |
| 6. Fee requirements | 286 | 429 | 3.140 | 3.117 | 0.490 | 0.521 | .54 |
| 7. Attitude non-teaching staff | 283 | 378 | 3.092 | 3.034 | 0.673 | 0.542 | .24 |
| 8. Telephone treatment by staff | 276 | 386 | 3.148 | 3.093 | 0.623 | 0.536 | .34 |
| 9. Information about courses | 299 | 444 | 3.145 | 3.104 | 0.636 | 0.544 | .50 |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | 293 | 431 | 3.242 | 3.225 | 0.561 | 0.465 | .66 |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | 276 | 412 | 3.127 | 3.160 | 0.640 | 0.557 | .48 |
| 12. Adequate study areas | 275 | 371 | 3.069 | 3.202 | 0.683 | 0.519 | .0071* |
| 13. Typing/computers available | 216 | 272 | 3.218 | 3.184 | 0.657 | 0.604 | .56 |
| 14. Availability of counselors | 258 | 350 | 3.004 | 2.977 | 0.669 | 0.586 | .61 |
| 15. Availability of child care | 82 | 92 | 2.000 | 2.500 | 0.943 | 0.883 | .0004* |
| 16. Bookstore hours | 293 | 425 | 3.201 | 3.005 | 0.527 | 0.603 | .0000* |
| 17. Cost of tuition | 282 | 424 | 3.188 | 3.097 | 0.488 | 0.512 | .017* |
| 18. Parking facilities | 292 | 432 | 2.572 | 2.634 | 0.820 | 0.771 | .30 |
| 19. Financial aid information | 215 | 210 | 3.005 | 2.929 | 0.652 | 0.626 | .22 |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | 283 | 391 | 3.064 | 3.041 | 0.604 | 0.525 | .61 |
| 21. Assistance of college staff | 281 | 388 | 3.167 | 3.103 | 0.630 | 0.579 | .18 |
| 22. College's overall concern | 290 | 410 | 3.134 | 3.015 | 0.582 | 0.514 | .0050* |

*Null hypothesis rejected

H₀3: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students to the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Results of both questions are displayed in Table 4.4 below. Regarding the first question, a probability of .20 resulted when the t-test was applied to the difference between means of the two groups. Therefore, H₀3 question No. 1 was not rejected.

Regarding the second question, the data show that the mean for the day students was 4.400 compared to a mean for evening students of 4.270. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0057 was generated. Therefore, H₀3 question No. 2 was rejected.

TABLE 4.4. COMPARISON OF DAY STUDENTS AND EVENING STUDENTS REGARDING OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | p |
|---|-----|-----------|-------|--------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | | | | |
| Day | 304 | 4.220 | 0.944 | .20 |
| Evening | 449 | 4.131 | 0.900 | |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | | | |
| Day | 305 | 4.400 | 0.626 | .0057* |
| Evening | 448 | 4.270 | 0.639 | |

*Null hypothesis rejected

Additional Research Questions

Two additional areas were examined to provide insight into the possible differences between nontraditional students. Students were asked to indicate the importance of nine reasons for attending college. Figure 4.1 on page 72 illustrates the comparison of students' responses.

Students were also requested to rate the importance of eight different reasons they selected this community college. Figure 4.2 on page 73 illustrates the comparison of students' responses.

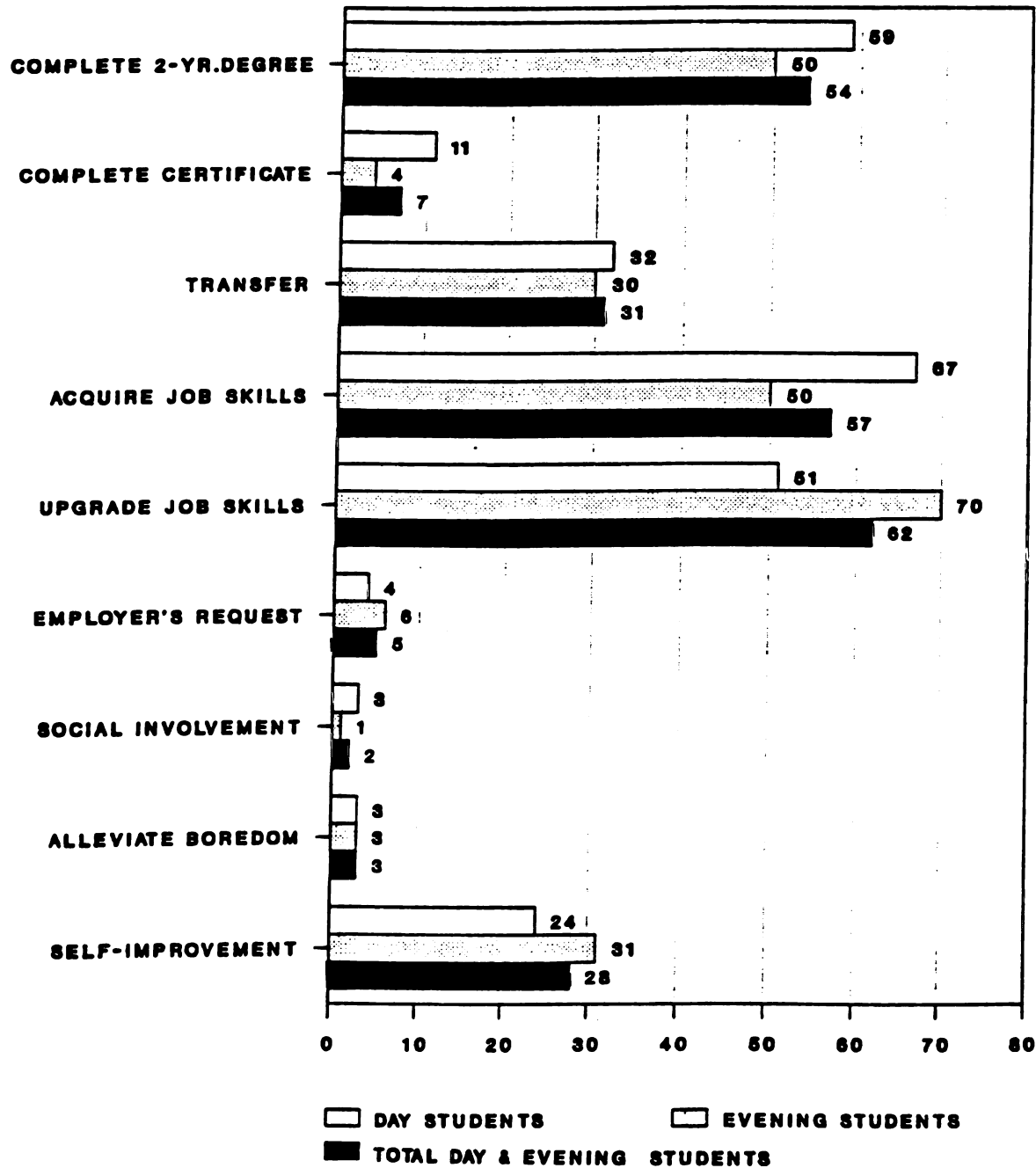


Figure 4.1: Comparison of Day Students and Evening Students Regarding the Major Reasons for Attending College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

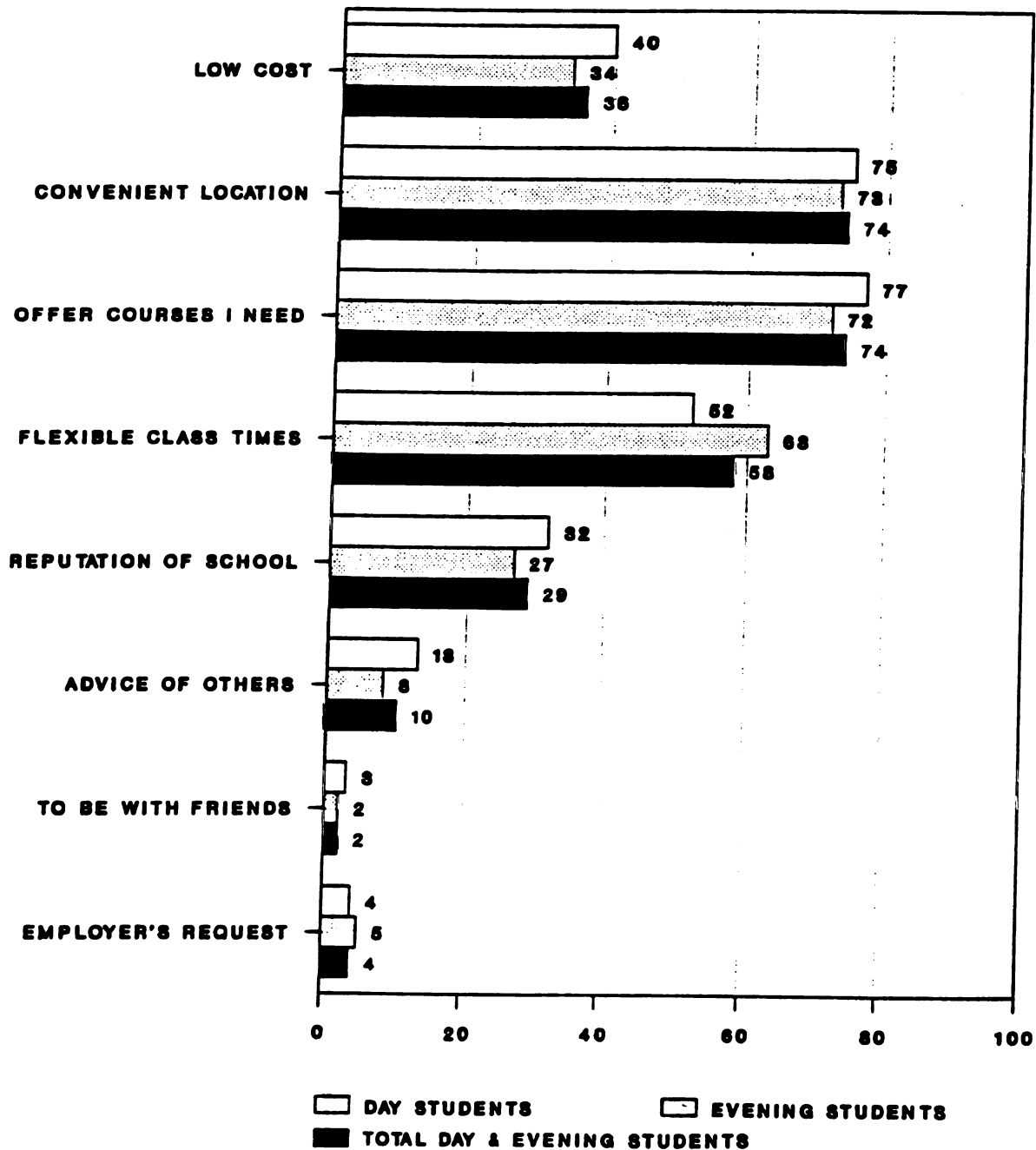


Figure 4.2: Comparison of Day Students and Evening Students Regarding the Major Reasons for Selecting This College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

Group 2--Program Students and Non-Program StudentsDemographic Profile

Table 4.5 on page 75 represents a demographic description of students enrolled in a program compared to students not enrolled in a program.

Enrollment status shows that 22 percent more of the non-program students are enrolled in only 1 or 2 classes than in 3 or more classes; and day or evening status shows that 22 percent more of the program students are enrolled for day classes than evening classes.

**TABLE 4.5. PROFILE OF PROGRAM AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS
PERCENT OF NUMBER IN GROUP**

| Variable | Program Students | | Non-Program Students | | Total | |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| GENDER | | | | | | |
| Male | 174 | 34 | 123 | 49 | 297 | 39 |
| Female | 335 | 66 | 128 | 51 | 463 | 61 |
| TOTAL | 509 | 100 | 251 | 100 | 760 | 100 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | | | | |
| Single | 88 | 17 | 48 | 19 | 135 | 18 |
| Married | 303 | 60 | 165 | 66 | 466 | 61 |
| Divorced | 103 | 20 | 29 | 11 | 134 | 18 |
| Separated | 10 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 16 | 2 |
| Widowed | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 509 | 100 | 251 | 99* | 760 | 100 |
| AGE GROUP | | | | | | |
| 25 to 44 years | 447 | 89 | 200 | 80 | 647 | 86 |
| 45 years or older | 58 | 11 | 50 | 20 | 108 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 505 | 100 | 250 | 100 | 755 | 100 |
| ENROLLMENT STATUS | | | | | | |
| 1 or 2 classes | 368 | 72 | 234 | 94 | 602 | 79 |
| 3 or more classes | 140 | 28 | 16 | 6 | 156 | 21 |
| TOTAL | 508 | 100 | 250 | 100 | 758 | 100 |
| DAY OR EVENING STATUS | | | | | | |
| Day Student | 242 | 48 | 65 | 26 | 307 | 40 |
| Evening Student | 267 | 52 | 186 | 74 | 453 | 60 |
| TOTAL | 509 | 100 | 251 | 100 | 760 | 100 |

*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.
Non-responses are not included.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Research Question No. 2. Is there a significant difference between nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and those nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program, regarding (a) satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) responses to general questions concerning overall satisfaction.

H₀₄: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Table 4.6 on page 78 illustrates the data for H₀₄. Three of the 11 subhypotheses were found to be statistically significant.

Regarding Subhypothesis 5, "Method of Testing and Grading," the mean for the program students was 3.255 compared to a mean for non-program students of 3.379. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0051 resulted. Therefore, H₀₄ Subhypothesis 5 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 6, "Relevance of Course Content," the data show that the mean for the program students was 3.319 compared to a mean of 3.429 for non-program students. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .016 was generated. Therefore, H₀₄ Subhypothesis 6 was rejected.

Subhypothesis 9, "Relevance of Homework Assigned," resulted in a mean of 3.281 for program students compared to a mean of 3.392 for non-program students. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0099 resulted. Therefore, H_0 Subhypothesis 9 was rejected.

Regarding the other eight subhypotheses, H_0 was not rejected.

TABLE 4.6. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF PROGRAM AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS REGARDING 11 ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL VARIABLES

| Subhypotheses | N | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|
| | Prog. | Non-Prog. | Prog. | Non-Prog. | Prog. | Non-Prog. | |
| Instructor's: | | | | | | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | 508 | 250 | 3.648 | 3.684 | 0.529 | 0.483 | .35 |
| 2. Method of teaching | 507 | 249 | 3.357 | 3.438 | 0.636 | 0.586 | .084 |
| 3. Academic challenge | 505 | 240 | 3.428 | 3.404 | 0.577 | 0.525 | .58 |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | 459 | 202 | 3.309 | 3.307 | 0.644 | 0.577 | .96 |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | 505 | 235 | 3.255 | 3.379 | 0.608 | 0.528 | .0051* |
| 6. Relevance of course content | 498 | 245 | 3.319 | 3.429 | 0.647 | 0.543 | .016* |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | 506 | 249 | 3.579 | 3.651 | 0.544 | 0.502 | .074 |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | 504 | 247 | 3.532 | 3.591 | 0.570 | 0.532 | .16 |
| 9. Relevance of homework | 502 | 237 | 3.281 | 3.392 | 0.625 | 0.506 | .0099* |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | 504 | 243 | 2.962 | 3.016 | 0.736 | 0.716 | .3411 |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | 495 | 239 | 3.257 | 3.301 | 0.566 | 0.536 | .30 |

*Null hypothesis rejected

H₀5: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 22 institutional procedures.

Table 4.7 on page 80 presents the data for H₀5. Five of the 22 subhypotheses were found to be statistically significant.

Regarding Subhypothesis 2, "Convenient Times of Courses," the data reflect that the mean for program students was 2.956 compared to a mean for non-program students of 3.107. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0041 was generated. Therefore, H₀5 Subhypothesis 2 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 12, "Adequate Study Areas," the data show that the mean for program students was 3.111 compared to a mean of 3.234 for non-program students. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0098 resulted. Therefore, H₀5 Subhypothesis 12 was rejected.

Subhypothesis 13, "Typewriters and Computers Available For Use," resulted in a mean of 3.162 for program students compared to a mean of 3.289 for non-program students. The t-test was applied to the difference between means, and a probability of .036 resulted. Therefore, H₀5 Subhypothesis 13 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 15, "Availability of Child Care," the data show that the mean for program students was 2.086 compared to a mean of 2.778 for non-program students. When

TABLE 4.7. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF PROGRAM AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS REGARDING 22 INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES

| Subhypotheses | N | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|
| | Prog. | Non-Prog. | Prog. | Non-Prog. | Prog. | Non-Prog. | |
| 1. Registration procedures | 504 | 243 | 3.248 | 3.259 | 0.598 | 0.591 | .81 |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | 505 | 244 | 2.956 | 3.107 | 0.697 | 0.652 | .0041* |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | 500 | 236 | 3.136 | 3.123 | 0.608 | 0.574 | .78 |
| 4. Academic calendar | 498 | 228 | 3.159 | 3.171 | 0.504 | 0.532 | .77 |
| 5. Billing procedures | 484 | 222 | 3.209 | 3.230 | 0.502 | 0.491 | .60 |
| 6. Fee requirements | 490 | 224 | 3.118 | 3.143 | 0.526 | 0.471 | .53 |
| 7. Attitude of non-teaching staff | 467 | 193 | 3.077 | 3.016 | 0.603 | 0.599 | .23 |
| 8. Telephone treatment by staff | 473 | 188 | 3.106 | 3.128 | 0.558 | 0.616 | .67 |
| 9. Information about courses | 504 | 238 | 3.117 | 3.113 | 0.624 | 0.486 | .93 |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | 497 | 226 | 3.245 | 3.204 | 0.512 | 0.493 | .30 |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | 483 | 204 | 3.159 | 3.118 | 0.606 | 0.558 | .38 |
| 12. Adequate study areas | 461 | 184 | 3.111 | 3.234 | 0.628 | 0.507 | .0098* |
| 13. Typing/computers available | 346 | 142 | 3.162 | 3.289 | 0.639 | 0.590 | .036* |
| 14. Availability of counselors | 462 | 145 | 2.981 | 3.014 | 0.633 | 0.589 | .56 |
| 15. Availability of child care | 128 | 45 | 2.086 | 2.778 | 0.931 | 0.795 | .0000* |
| 16. Bookstore hours | 496 | 221 | 3.071 | 3.118 | 0.594 | 0.552 | .30 |
| 17. Cost of tuition | 484 | 221 | 3.153 | 3.090 | 0.516 | 0.478 | .12 |
| 18. Parking facilities | 495 | 228 | 2.568 | 2.697 | 0.824 | 0.709 | .031* |
| 19. Financial aid information | 327 | 98 | 2.982 | 2.918 | 0.669 | 0.531 | .33 |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | 473 | 200 | 3.049 | 3.055 | 0.603 | 0.439 | .88 |
| 21. Assistance of college staff | 478 | 191 | 3.136 | 3.115 | 0.638 | 0.500 | .65 |
| 22. College's overall concern | 485 | 215 | 3.062 | 3.070 | 0.607 | 0.374 | .83 |

*Null hypothesis rejected

the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0000 resulted. Therefore, H_0 5 Subhypothesis 15 was rejected.

Regarding Subhypothesis 18, "Parking Facilities," the data reflect that the mean for program students was 2.568 compared to a mean of 2.697 for non-degree students. The t-test was applied to the difference between means, and a probability of .031 resulted. Therefore, H_0 5 Subhypothesis 18 was rejected.

Regarding the other 17 subhypotheses, H_0 5 was not rejected.

H_0 6: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program to the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

The results of H_0 6 are displayed in Table 4.8 on page 82. Regarding the first question, the mean for program students was 4.229 compared to a mean of 4.037 for non-program students. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0096 resulted. The second question resulted in a mean for program students of 4.362 compared to a mean for non-program students of 4.240. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .015 resulted. Therefore, H_0 6 was rejected.

TABLE 4.8. COMPARISON OF PROGRAM STUDENTS AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS REGARDING OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | p |
|---|-----|-----------|-------|--------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | | | | |
| Program | 506 | 4.229 | 0.878 | |
| Non-Program | 246 | 4.037 | 0.987 | .0096* |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | | | |
| Program | 506 | 4.362 | 0.627 | |
| Non-Program | 246 | 4.240 | 0.648 | .015* |

*Null hypothesis rejected

Additional Research Questions

Students rated the importance of nine different reasons for attending college. A comparison of program students and non-program students' responses is depicted in Figure 4.3 on page 83.

Students also rated the importance of eight different reasons for selecting this college to pursue their education. Figure 4.4 on page 84 presents the comparison of students' responses.

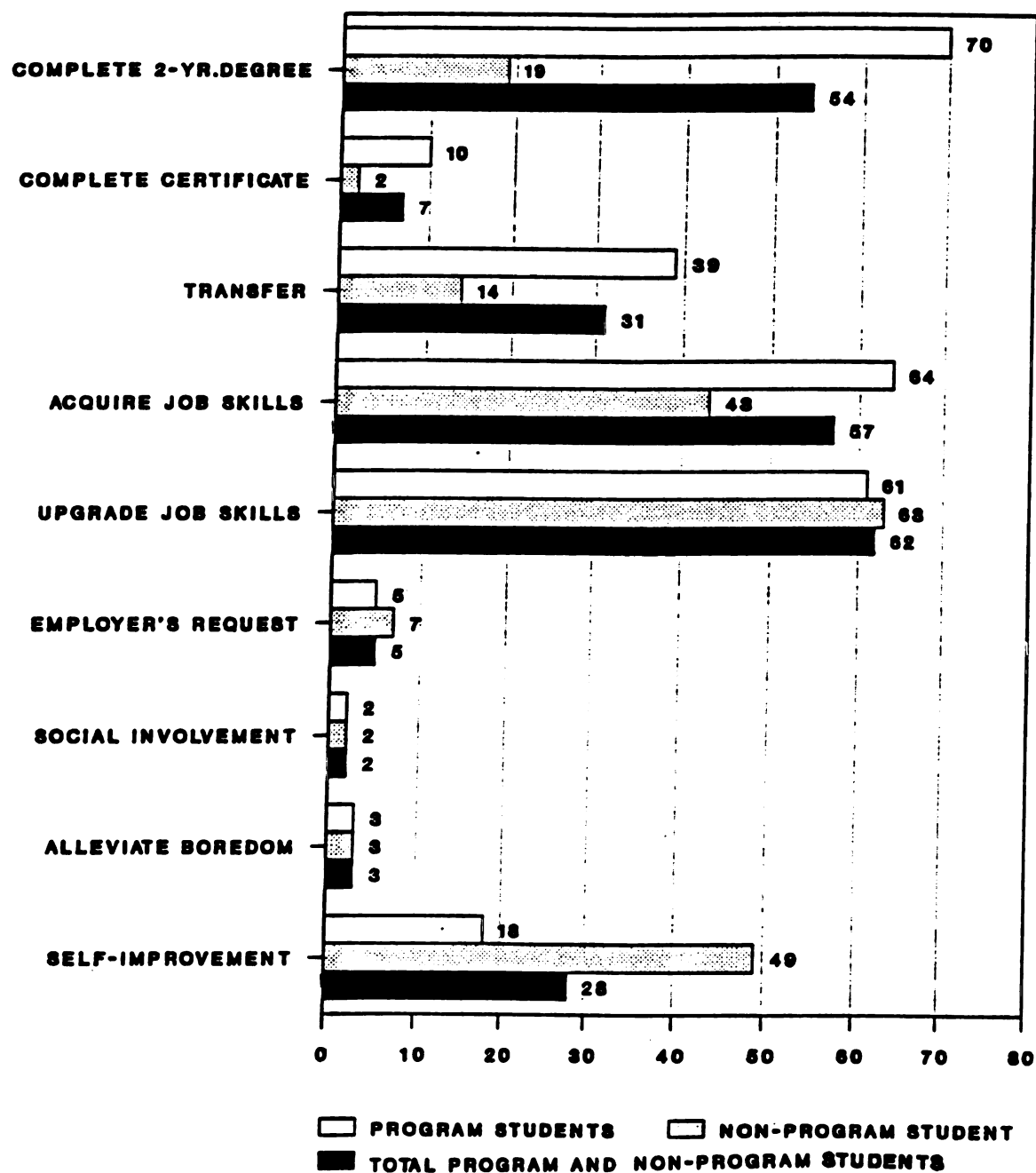


Figure 4.3: Comparison of Program Students and Non-Program Students Regarding the Major Reasons for Attending College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

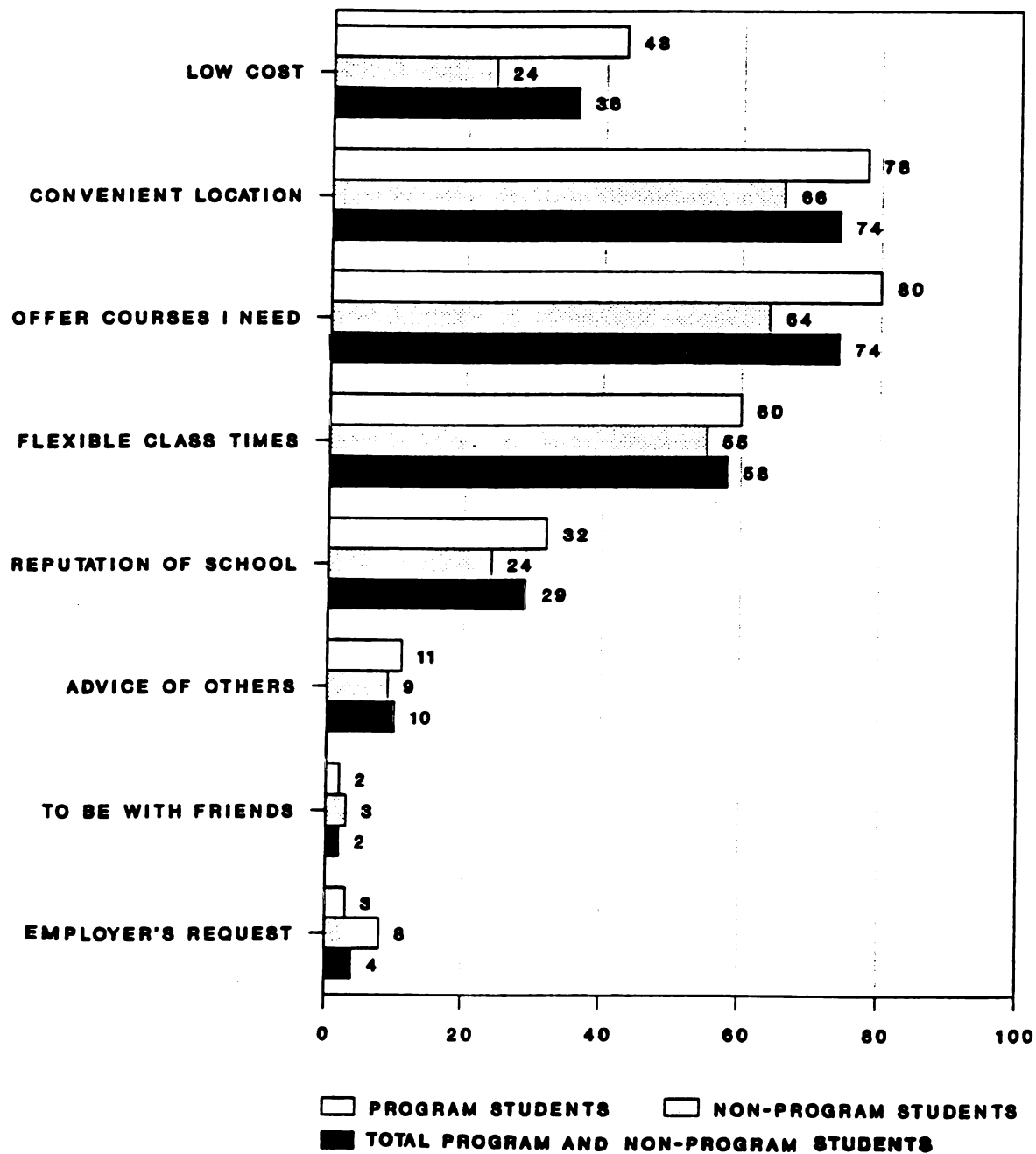


Figure 4.4: Comparison of Program Students and Non-Program Students Regarding the Major Reasons for Selecting This College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

Group 3--Younger Adults and Older AdultsDemographic Profile

Table 4.9 on page 86 illustrates a demographic profile of younger adults compared to older adults.

Most demographic data is similar between the two groups. The only variable which appears to differ more than slightly is program status. Data show that 15 percent more of the younger adults are enrolled in a program than are older adults.

TABLE 4.9. PROFILE OF YOUNGER ADULT AND OLDER ADULT STUDENTS
PERCENT OF NUMBER IN GROUP

| Variable | Younger Adults | | Older Adults | | Total | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----|--------------|-----|-------|-----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| GENDER | | | | | | |
| Male | 258 | 40 | 36 | 33 | 294 | 39 |
| Female | 389 | 60 | 73 | 67 | 462 | 61 |
| TOTAL | 647 | 100 | 109 | 100 | 756 | 100 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | | | | |
| Single | 125 | 19 | 9 | 8 | 134 | 18 |
| Married | 395 | 61 | 67 | 61 | 462 | 61 |
| Divorced | 110 | 17 | 24 | 22 | 134 | 18 |
| Separated | 11 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 16 | 2 |
| Widowed | 5 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 646 | 100 | 109 | 100 | 755 | 100 |
| ENROLLMENT STATUS | | | | | | |
| 1 or 2 classes | 508 | 79 | 90 | 83 | 598 | 79 |
| 3 or more classes | 137 | 21 | 19 | 17 | 156 | 21 |
| TOTAL | 645 | 100 | 109 | 100 | 754 | 100 |
| PROGRAM STATUS | | | | | | |
| ENROLLED in a program | 447 | 69 | 58 | 54 | 505 | 67 |
| NOT ENROLLED in a program | 200 | 31 | 50 | 46 | 250 | 33 |
| TOTAL | 647 | 100 | 108 | 100 | 755 | 100 |
| DAY OR EVENING STATUS | | | | | | |
| Day Student | 266 | 41 | 41 | 38 | 307 | 41 |
| Evening Student | 381 | 59 | 68 | 62 | 449 | 59 |
| TOTAL | 647 | 100 | 109 | 100 | 756 | 100 |

Non-responses are not included.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Research Question No. 3. Is there a significant difference between younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding (a) satisfaction levels with academic/instructional practices, (b) satisfaction levels with institutional procedures, and (c) responses to questions concerning overall satisfaction.

H_07 : There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

Table 4.10 on page 88 presents the data comparing satisfaction levels of academic practices between the two groups. All 11 subhypotheses did not meet the criterion for statistical significance. Therefore, H_07 was not rejected.

H_08 : There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

The data comparing satisfaction levels of institutional procedures between the two groups is found in Table 4.11 on page 90. Four of the 22 subhypotheses were found to be statistically significant.

Regarding Subhypothesis 4, "Academic Calendar," the data show that the mean for younger adults was 3.145 compared to a mean for older adults of 3.269. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .020 resulted. Therefore, H_08 Subhypothesis 4 was rejected.

Subhypothesis 6, "Fee Requirements," resulted in a mean of 3.104 for younger adults compared to a mean of 3.260 for

TABLE 4.10. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF YOUNGER ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS REGARDING 11 ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL VARIABLES

| Subhypotheses | N | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----|
| | Younger Adults | Older Adults | Younger Adults | Older Adults | Younger Adults | Older Adults | |
| Instructor's: | | | | | | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | 646 | 108 | 3.649 | 3.713 | 0.521 | 0.475 | .20 |
| 2. Method of teaching | 644 | 107 | 3.370 | 3.458 | 0.629 | 0.571 | .15 |
| 3. Academic challenge | 636 | 105 | 3.410 | 3.467 | 0.561 | 0.556 | .34 |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | 571 | 86 | 3.294 | 3.407 | 0.625 | 0.602 | .11 |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | 632 | 104 | 3.285 | 3.337 | 0.586 | 0.585 | .40 |
| 6. Relevance of course content | 633 | 107 | 3.349 | 3.393 | 0.626 | 0.545 | .46 |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | 643 | 107 | 3.603 | 3.598 | 0.529 | 0.547 | .93 |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | 641 | 107 | 3.546 | 3.579 | 0.560 | 0.550 | .56 |
| 9. Relevance of homework | 631 | 104 | 3.312 | 3.327 | 0.593 | 0.582 | .81 |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | 637 | 106 | 2.983 | 2.943 | 0.723 | 0.766 | .62 |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | 628 | 102 | 3.272 | 3.255 | 0.542 | 0.624 | .79 |

older adults. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .0043 was generated. Therefore, H_{08} Subhypothesis 6 was rejected.

For Subhypothesis 16, "Bookstore Hours," results indicate that the mean was 3.064 for younger adults compared to a mean of 3.178 for older adults. The t-test was applied to the difference between means, and a probability of .045 resulted. Therefore, H_{08} Subhypothesis 16 was rejected.

The fourth significant difference between the two groups concerned Subhypothesis 18, "Parking Facilities." Data indicate that the mean was 2.587 for younger adults compared to a mean of 2.745 for older adults. When the t-test was applied to the difference between means, a probability of .043 was generated. Therefore, H_{08} Subhypothesis 18 was rejected.

Regarding the other 18 subhypotheses, H_{08} was not rejected.

TABLE 4.11. SATISFACTION LEVELS OF YOUNGER ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS REGARDING 22 INSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURES

| Subhypotheses | N | | \bar{X} | | SD | | p |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| | Younger Adults | Older Adults | Younger Adults | Older Adults | Younger Adults | Older Adults | |
| 1. Registration procedures | 638 | 105 | 3.234 | 3.352 | 0.593 | 0.604 | .063 |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | 640 | 105 | 2.987 | 3.095 | 0.680 | 0.714 | .15 |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | 631 | 101 | 3.120 | 3.188 | 0.597 | 0.595 | .29 |
| 4. Academic calendar | 629 | 93 | 3.145 | 3.269 | 0.517 | 0.469 | .020* |
| 5. Billing procedures | 606 | 96 | 3.208 | 3.260 | 0.501 | 0.487 | .33 |
| 6. Fee requirements | 614 | 96 | 3.104 | 3.260 | 0.510 | 0.487 | .0043* |
| 7. Attitude non-teaching staff | 570 | 87 | 3.044 | 3.161 | 0.613 | 0.525 | .061 |
| 8. Telephone treatment by staff | 572 | 86 | 3.103 | 3.163 | 0.581 | 0.528 | .34 |
| 9. Information about courses | 634 | 104 | 3.106 | 3.183 | 0.589 | 0.535 | .18 |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | 619 | 100 | 3.226 | 3.260 | 0.503 | 0.525 | .55 |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | 589 | 94 | 3.131 | 3.245 | 0.599 | 0.522 | .057 |
| 12. Adequate study areas | 563 | 78 | 3.151 | 3.090 | 0.594 | 0.628 | .42 |
| 13. Typing/computers available | 421 | 64 | 3.202 | 3.172 | 0.625 | 0.656 | .73 |
| 14. Availability of counselors | 531 | 72 | 2.981 | 3.042 | 0.623 | 0.638 | .45 |
| 15. Availability of child care | 163 | 9 | 2.221 | 2.889 | 0.936 | 0.928 | .069 |
| 16. Bookstore hours | 612 | 101 | 3.064 | 3.178 | 0.587 | 0.518 | .045* |
| 17. Cost of tuition | 604 | 97 | 3.123 | 3.196 | 0.504 | 0.492 | .18 |
| 18. Parking facilities | 617 | 102 | 2.587 | 2.745 | 0.801 | 0.713 | .043* |
| 19. Financial aid information | 378 | 44 | 2.971 | 3.000 | 0.624 | 0.715 | .80 |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | 582 | 87 | 3.050 | 3.069 | 0.568 | 0.501 | .74 |
| 21. Assistance of college staff | 575 | 89 | 3.125 | 3.157 | 0.600 | 0.620 | .65 |
| 22. College's overall concern | 602 | 94 | 3.056 | 3.096 | 0.547 | 0.530 | .51 |

*Null hypothesis rejected

H_0 9: There is no significant difference between responses of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding the following two questions:

1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?
2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Results of both questions are displayed in Table 4.12 below. Regarding the first question, a probability of .084 resulted when the t-test was applied to the difference between means of the two groups. Therefore, H_0 9 question No. 1 was not rejected.

Regarding the second question, the data reflect that the mean for younger adults was 4.304, and the mean for older adults was 4.453. The t-test generated a probability of .021. Therefore, H_0 9 question No. 2 was rejected.

TABLE 4.12. COMPARISON OF YOUNGER ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS REGARDING OVERALL PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

| Group | N | \bar{X} | SD | p |
|---|-----|-----------|-------|-------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | | | | |
| Younger Adults | 642 | 4.142 | 0.918 | |
| Older Adults | 106 | 4.311 | 0.930 | .084 |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | | | |
| Younger Adults | 642 | 4.304 | 0.639 | |
| Older Adults | 106 | 4.453 | 0.604 | .021* |

*Null hypothesis rejected

Additional Research Questions

Both groups of nontraditional students rated the importance of nine different reasons for attending college. A comparison of responses between younger adults and older adults is illustrated in Figure 4.5 on page 93.

Both groups also rated the importance of eight different reasons for selecting this college to pursue their education. The results are depicted in Figure 4.6 on page 94.

In Chapter V, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented.

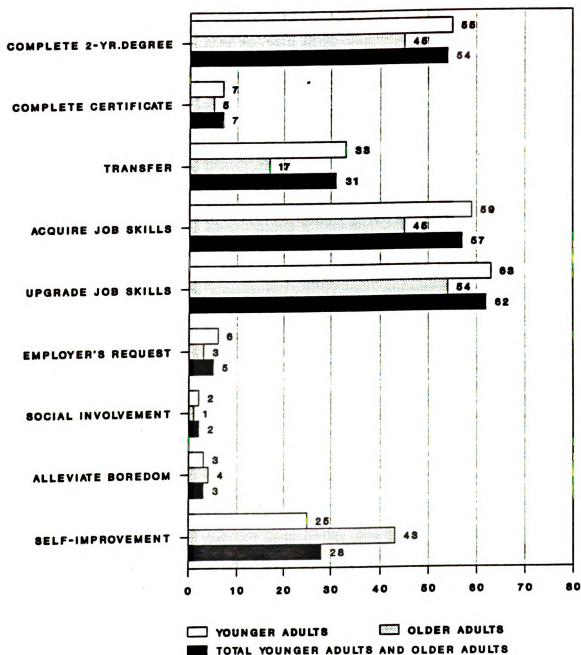


Figure 4.5: Comparison of Younger Adults and Older Adults Regarding the Major Reasons for Attending College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

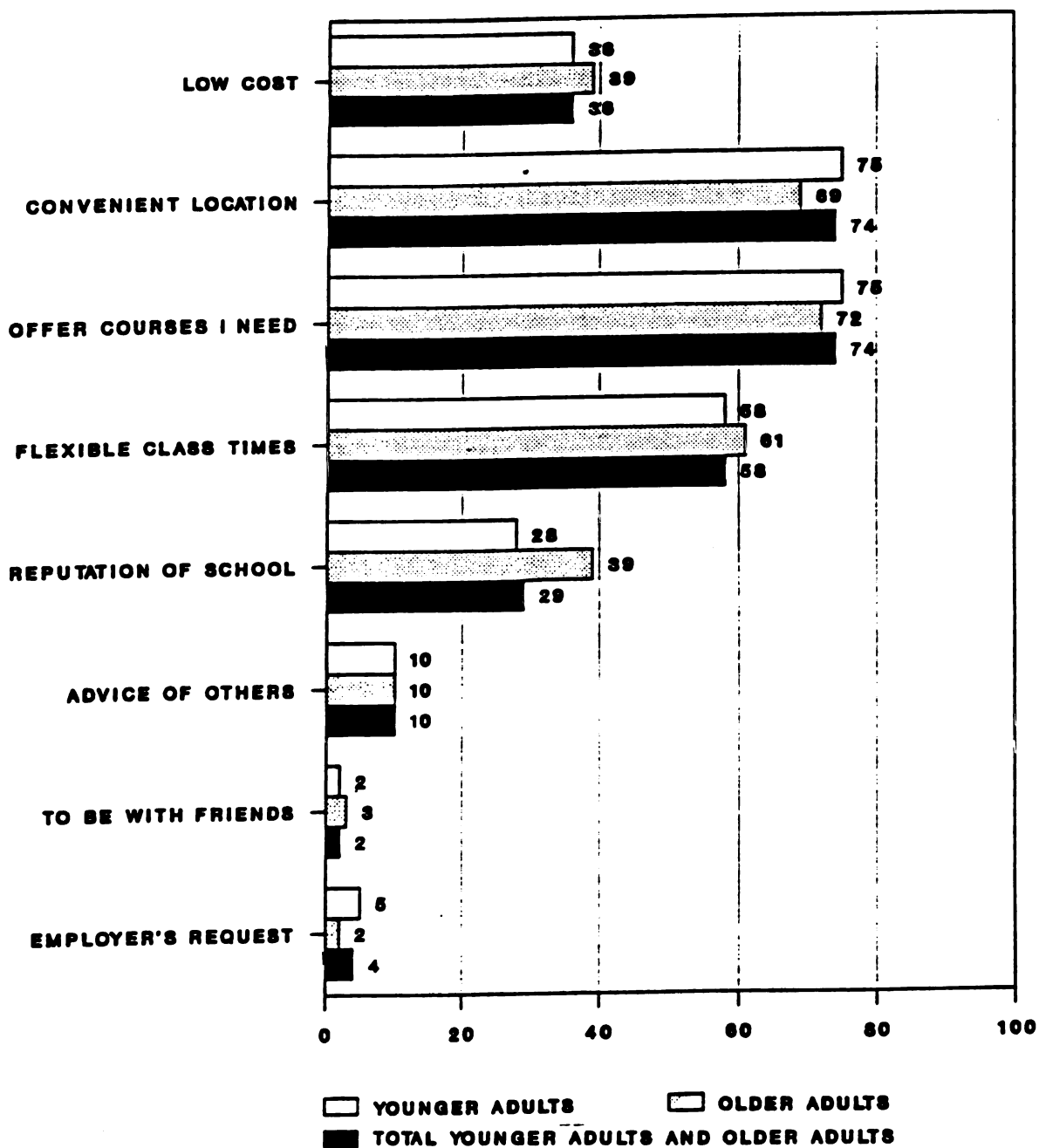


Figure 4.6: Comparison of Younger Adults and Older Adults Regarding the Major Reasons for Selecting This College. (Percent Totals are Representative of the Respective Group.)

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed between different groups of nontraditional students at a community college. Literature and theory have incorporated the central theme of age-related differences between traditional and nontraditional college students. However, little research has been conducted to determine if and how the nontraditional students may differ among themselves. The study was conducted to find out why the nontraditional students are attending the community college and if the results are consistent with the literature.

The purpose of the study was also to provide a focal point from which other community colleges may examine their nontraditional student population. A means of comparison is possibly the most important use for the results of this study.

Methodology

A questionnaire was designed to determine if differences existed between three groups of nontraditional students in their perceived satisfaction levels with academic practices, institutional procedures, and overall feelings about the college experience; reasons for attending college; and reasons for selecting this college. The three groups chosen for perusal included day and evening students, program and non-program students, and younger adults and older adults.

The t-test was used to detect significant differences, and the alpha .05 level of significance was the determining criteria.

The questionnaire was administered to 875 nontraditional students at a community college during the middle of the 1991 winter semester. There were 762 respondents.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Group I--Day Students and Evening Students

H₀1: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Instructors' | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | x | |
| 2. Method of teaching | x | |
| 3. Academic challenge | x | |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | x | |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | x | |
| 6. Relevance of course content | x | |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | x | |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | x | |
| 9. Relevance of homework | x | |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | x | |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | x | |

Based on the 11 academic/instructional practices in H₀1, there were 11 subhypotheses for which H₀1 was not rejected and no subhypotheses for which H₀1 was rejected. It is suggested, therefore, that there are no significant differences between day and evening students regarding these 11 academic/instructional practices at the community college.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students regarding 22 institutional practices.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Registration procedures | x | |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | x | |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | x | |
| 4. Academic calendar | x | |
| 5. Billing procedures | x | |
| 6. Fee requirements | x | |
| 7. Attitude of non-teaching staff | x | |
| 8. Telephone treatment/non-teaching staff | x | |
| 9. Information about courses | x | |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | x | |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | x | |
| 12. Adequate study areas | | x |
| 13. Typewriters/computers available | x | |
| 14. Availability of counselors | x | |
| 15. Availability of child care | | x |
| 16. Bookstore hours | | x |
| 17. Cost of tuition | | x |
| 18. Parking facilities | x | |
| 19. Pre-financial aid data | x | |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | x | |
| 21. Assistance provided by college staff upon entering | x | |
| 22. College's overall concern | | x |

There were 17 subhypotheses for which H₀2 was not rejected. Data, therefore, denote that no significant differences exist between day and evening students regarding these 17 institutional practices at the community college.

Based on the 22 subhypotheses in H₀2, the research revealed that there were 5 subhypotheses for which H₀2 was rejected. Focusing on these subhypotheses, it is interesting to recognize that day students were less satisfied than evening students with two of the five areas--adequate study areas and availability of child care facilities. The

demographic data support the fact that more day students than evening students are attending fulltime; therefore, these two items may be more relevant to them.

However, evening students felt less satisfied with the other three areas--bookstore hours, cost of tuition, and college's overall concern. Many evening students may rush from work to school and attend a class from 6 to 9 p.m. and are not able to use the bookstore facilities. The cost of tuition may be a more relevant factor for the evening students.

H₀3: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional day students and nontraditional evening students to the following two questions:

| <u>Questions</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | x | |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | x |

Based on the question concerning whether students would choose again to attend this college, research showed that there were no significant differences between day and evening students. More than 80 percent of both groups answered "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes,"; less than 9 percent of both groups answered "Probably No" or "Definitely No" (see Appendix D).

However, significantly more day students (49 percent) described the overall impression of the quality of education at this college as "Excellent" than did evening students (36 percent).

Group 2--Program Students and Non-Program Students

H₀4: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 11 academic/instructional practices.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Instructors' | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | x | |
| 2. Method of teaching | x | |
| 3. Academic challenge | x | |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | x | |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | | x |
| 6. Relevance of course content | | x |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | x | |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | x | |
| 9. Relevance of homework | | x |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | x | |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | x | |

There were eight subhypotheses for which H₀4 was not rejected. Data support the null hypotheses that there are no significant differences between program students and non-program students regarding these eight academic/instructional practices at the community college.

There were three subhypotheses for which H₀4 was rejected. It was found that program students are less satisfied than non-program students regarding method of testing and grading, relevance of course content, and

relevance of homework. These differences are feasible in that program students may be more concerned than non-program students with scholarship and grades.

H₀5: There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program regarding 22 institutional procedures.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Registration procedures | x | |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | | x |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | x | |
| 4. Academic calendar | x | |
| 5. Billing procedures | x | |
| 6. Fee requirements | x | |
| 7. Attitude of non-teaching staff | x | |
| 8. Telephone treatment/non-teaching staff | x | |
| 9. Information about courses | x | |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | x | |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | x | |
| 12. Adequate study areas | | x |
| 13. Typewriters/computers available | | x |
| 14. Availability of counselors | x | |
| 15. Availability of child care | | x |
| 16. Bookstore hours | x | |
| 17. Cost of tuition | x | |
| 18. Parking facilities | | x |
| 19. Pre-financial aid data | x | |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | x | |
| 21. Assistance provided by college staff upon entering | x | |
| 22. College's overall concern | x | |

There were 17 subhypotheses for which H₀5 was not rejected. Data support the null hypotheses that there are no significant differences between program and non-program students regarding these 17 institutional practices at the community college.

There were five subhypotheses for which H₀5 was rejected. Program students were less satisfied than non-program students

with all five, including convenient times of courses, adequate study areas, typewriters and computers available, availability of child care facilities, and parking facilities. These findings may coincide with the demographic data which indicate that 28 percent of the program students compared to 6 percent of the non-program students are fulltime. All five of these practices may be more relevant to fulltime students.

H₀6: There is no significant difference between responses of nontraditional students who indicate they are enrolled in a program at the time of this study and nontraditional students who indicate they are not enrolled in a program to the following two questions:

| <u>Questions</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | | x |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | x |

Based on the first question concerning choosing this college a second time, H₀6 was rejected. Although more than 75 percent of both groups answered, "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes," 11 percent more of the program students answered in this manner than did non-program students (see Appendix D). It is possible that students interpreted the question as, "Are you continuing?" If so, non-program students may have met their goal and have no plans of returning to school.

Concerning the second question, more program students than non-program students felt the quality of education at the community college was "Excellent." Therefore, H_06 was rejected.

Group 3--Younger Adults and Older Adults

H_07 : There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 11 academic/ instructional practices.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Instructors' | | |
| 1. Knowledge of course content | x | |
| 2. Method of teaching | x | |
| 3. Academic challenge | x | |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | x | |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | x | |
| 6. Relevance of course content | x | |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | x | |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | x | |
| 9. Relevance of homework | x | |
| 10. Physical comfort of classroom | x | |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | x | |

Based on the 11 academic/instructional practices in H_07 , there were 11 subhypotheses for which H_07 was not rejected. It is suggested, therefore, that there are no significant differences between younger adults and older adults regarding these 11 academic/instructional practices at the community college.

H_08 : There is no significant difference between satisfaction levels of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding 22 institutional procedures.

| <u>Subhypotheses</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Registration procedures | x | |
| 2. Convenient times of courses | x | |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | x | |
| 4. Academic calendar | | x |
| 5. Billing procedures | x | |
| 6. Fee requirements | | x |
| 7. Attitude of non-teaching staff | x | |
| 8. Telephone treatment/non-teaching staff | x | |
| 9. Information about courses | x | |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | x | |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | x | |
| 12. Adequate study areas | x | |
| 13. Typewriters/computers available | x | |
| 14. Availability of counselors | x | |
| 15. Availability of child care | x | |
| 16. Bookstore hours | | x |
| 17. Cost of tuition | x | |
| 18. Parking facilities | | x |
| 19. Pre-financial aid data | x | |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-enrollment data | x | |
| 21. Assistance provided by college staff upon entering | x | |
| 22. College's overall concern | x | |

There were 18 of the 22 subhypotheses for which H_0 was not rejected. It can be concluded that no significant differences exist between younger adults and older adults regarding these 18 institutional procedures at the community college.

H_0 was rejected on the basis of four subhypotheses. It is apparent that younger adults feel less satisfied than older adults with all four of the procedures: academic calendar, fee requirements, bookstore hours, and parking facilities.

It is possible that younger adults are more likely to have school-aged children and are thus affected by the conflict with academic calendars. Since fee requirements are an additional cost to the students, the younger adults who are

more likely to be raising a family or to be a single parent, may feel the economic crunch more severely than the older adults. Additionally, those students over a certain age in many community college are exempt from paying tuition.

H₀9: There is no significant difference between responses of younger nontraditional students and older nontraditional students regarding the following two questions?

| <u>Questions</u> | <u>Not Rejected</u> | <u>Rejected</u> |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college? | x | |
| 2. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college? | | x |

It was revealed in the data that there were no significant differences between younger adults and older adults based on the question concerning choosing this college a second time. More than 80 percent of both groups responded with "Definitely Yes" or "Probably Yes" (see Appendix D).

However, 11 percent more of the older adults rated the quality of education as "Excellent" than did the younger adults.

Summary of Differences Among the Groups

Academic and Instructional Practices. Table 5.1 below includes a summary of all groups studied showing if and where differences occurred among the three groups regarding satisfaction with academics and instruction.

TABLE 5.1. COMPARISON OF ALL GROUPS CONCERNING SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMICS AND INSTRUCTION.

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Day/ Eve</u> | <u>Prog/ Non-Prog</u> | <u>Younger/ Older</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Knowledge of course content | = | = | = |
| 2. Method of teaching | = | = | = |
| 3. Academic challenge offered | = | = | = |
| 4. Out-of-class availability | = | = | = |
| 5. Method of testing/grading | = | D (Prog) | = |
| 6. Relevance of course content | = | D (Prog) | = |
| 7. Enthusiasm for teaching | = | = | = |
| 8. Preparation for teaching | = | = | = |
| 9. Relevance of homework | = | D (Prog) | = |
| 10. Physical comfort of class | = | = | = |
| 11. Use of class visual aids | = | = | = |

Note: = denotes "no differences between groups"
 D denotes "differences between groups"
 Parenthetical indicates group less satisfied

Very few differences existed between any of the groups concerning academic/instructional practices. The program and non-program group was the only one to elicit differences; the differences within this group centered around coursework and grading.

Institutional Practices. Table 5.2 on page 106 includes a summary of all groups studied showing if and where

differences occurred among the groups regarding satisfaction with institutional practices.

TABLE 5.2. COMPARISON OF ALL GROUPS CONCERNING INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Day/ Eve</u> | <u>Prog/ Non-Prog</u> | <u>Younger/ Older</u> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Registration procedures | = | = | = |
| 2. Convenient times of classes | = | D (Prog) | = |
| 3. Variety of classes offered | = | = | = |
| 4. Academic calendar | = | = | D (Young) |
| 5. Billing procedures | = | = | = |
| 6. Fee requirements | = | = | D (Young) |
| 7. Attitude of non-teaching staff | = | = | = |
| 8. Telephone treatment by staff | = | = | = |
| 9. Information about courses | = | = | = |
| 10. Usefulness of course schedule | = | = | = |
| 11. Usefulness of college catalog | = | = | = |
| 12. Adequate study areas | D (Day) | D (Prog) | = |
| 13. Typing/computers available | = | D (Prog) | = |
| 14. Availability of counselors | = | = | = |
| 15. Availability of child care | D (Day) | D (Prog) | = |
| 16. Bookstore hours | D (Eve) | = | D (Young) |
| 17. Cost of tuition | D (Eve) | = | = |
| 18. Parking facilities | = | D (Prog) | D (Young) |
| 19. Financial aid information | = | = | = |
| 20. Accuracy/pre-college data | = | = | = |
| 21. Assistance provided by staff upon entering college | = | = | = |
| 22. College's overall concern | D (Eve) | = | = |

Note: = denotes "no differences between groups"
D denotes "differences between groups"
Parenthetical indicates group less satisfied

All three groups exhibited differences. The differences between the day and evening students indicated that day students felt less satisfied with two of the five variables-- "adequate study areas" and "availability of child care." The other three significant differences indicated evening students

to be less satisfied. All significant differences between program and non-program students revealed that the program students were less satisfied. Regarding the younger adults and older adults, the four significant differences indicated that younger adults were less satisfied than older adults.

Overall Perceptions. Table 5.3 below includes a summary of differences among the groups regarding two overall opinions about education at this college.

TABLE 5.3. COMPARISON OF ALL GROUPS CONCERNING OVERALL OPINIONS OF THE COLLEGE

| <u>Question</u> | <u>Day/ Eve</u> | <u>Prog/ Non-Prog</u> | <u>Younger/ Older</u> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| If starting over, would you choose this college again | = | D (NP) | = |
| Overall impression of quality | D (Eve) | D (NP) | D (Young) |

Note: = denotes "no differences between groups"
 D denotes "differences between groups"
 Parenthetical indicates group less satisfied

All three groups exhibited differences regarding their overall impression of the quality of education; however, only the program compared to the non-program students displayed differences in response to the first question.

Satisfaction Levels

Academic/Instructional Practices. It was indicated in the data that satisfaction levels were rated high by all

groups. On a 4.0 scale, the only variable to consistently rank less than 3.0 was "physical comfort of the classroom."

Institutional Variables. Again, satisfaction levels were found to be remarkably high. The four variables which consistently ranked a mean of 2.9 or below were "parking facilities," "availability of courses at convenient times," "availability of counselors," "availability of child care facilities," and "availability of financial aid information."

It should be emphasized that the students who participated in this study were a select group--students currently attending classes. Students who may have dropped out because they were dissatisfied with any of the academic or institutional practices were not included in this survey.

Why Do Nontraditional Students Attend College and How Do the Different Groups Compare?

Nontraditional students attend the community college for a variety of reasons. Students were asked to rate the importance of nine different reasons for attending college. Some of the reasons were described as a "major reason" by more than 50 percent of the students. Some of the reasons were described as "not a reason" by more than 50 percent of the students. Some of the reasons were rated differently between the groups studied. Appendix E shows a detailed breakdown of the responses to these nine questions.

To Complete a Two-Year Degree. A little more than 50 percent of the nontraditional students claimed this was a

major reason for attending community college. Day and evening students did not differ in their rating. However 70 percent of the program students compared to 19 percent of the non-program students expressed this as a major reason. This is certainly understandable since the definition of a program student is that he/she is enrolled in a two-year degree program, a certificate program, and/or a transfer program. Younger adults and older adults also differed in that 21 percent more of the older adults claimed this was not a reason.

To Complete a One-Year Certificate. Only 7 percent of the nontraditional students claimed this to be a major reason for attending college. Although groups differed very little, the program and non-program students differed the most.

To Transfer to a Four-Year School. One-third of the nontraditional students attend community college for this reason. Although day students and evening students differed little concerning this reason, 25 percent more program students than non-program students and 16 percent more younger adults than older adults cited this as a major reason for attending college.

To Acquire Skills to Get a Job. Nearly 60 percent of the nontraditional students are attending college for this reason. This was cited as a major reason by 17 percent more day than evening students, 21 percent more program students than non-program students, and 15 percent more of the younger adults than older adults.

To Upgrade Skills for a Better Job. Results showed that 62 percent of the nontraditional students are attending college for this reason. The only group to show more than 10 percent difference was day and evening students; 20 percent more of the evening students cited this as a major reason. This coincides with the thought that evening students are already employed and, therefore, must attend in the evening.

At Employer's Request. Only 5 percent of the nontraditional students are attending college for this reason. Eighty-six percent of the students claimed this was "not a reason."

To Meet New People--Social Involvement. According to the survey, only 2 percent of the nontraditional students are attending for this reason; and 81 percent claimed this was "not a reason."

To Alleviate Boredom. Results showed that only 3 percent of the nontraditional students are attending for this reason. Eighty-three percent of the students claimed this was "not a reason."

For Self-Improvement. According to the survey results, 28 percent of the nontraditional students are attending college for this reason. The most observable difference was between program and non-program students. There were 31 percent more non-program students to cite this as a major reason. Younger adults and older adults also differed; 18 percent more of the older adults cited this as a major reason for attending college.

Why Do Nontraditional Students Choose to Attend This Community College and How Do the Different Groups Compare?

Students were asked to rate the importance of eight different reasons for selecting this community college. A detailed breakdown of the responses to all eight reasons are provided in Appendix E.

Low Cost. Results indicate that 36 percent of the nontraditional students chose this community college because of the low cost. Both the day and evening student group and the younger and older adult group differed very little; however, 20 percent more of the program than non-program students cited this as a major reason.

Convenient Location. According to the survey results, 74 percent of the nontraditional students chose to attend this college because of its convenient location. The only group to show a difference was the program and non-program students. Sixteen percent more of the program students cited this as a major reason.

Flexible Times of Classes. Results indicate that 58 percent of the nontraditional students are attending this college because of class time flexibility. The only group to demonstrate a difference was the day and evening student group. It appears that 11 percent more of the evening students related that this was important to them.

Reputation of School. This characteristic was of major importance to 29 percent of the nontraditional students.

Program students indicated this was more important than did non-program students. The other groups did not differ.

Advice of Someone Else Who Attends. Results indicated that only 10 percent of the nontraditional students claimed this was an important reason for attending this college. Three-fourths of the students cited this as "not a reason."

To Be With Friends. Two percent of the nontraditional students claimed that this was a major reason for attending this college, and 92 percent stated that this was "not a reason."

Employer's Request. Only 5 percent of the nontraditional students claimed this to be a major reason for selecting this college, and 89 percent of the students claimed this was "not a reason."

Conclusions

Nontraditional students do exhibit differences, and the differences are varied among the groups. The following conclusions are drawn from the data gathered and thus far presented.

1. Groups of nontraditional students differ very little concerning their satisfaction with academic and instructional practices at the community college. It was particularly interesting that day and evening students do not differ in their satisfaction with academics and instruction because it was evidenced in the literature that evening students may be less satisfied with various areas of instruction. This is

also interesting because the day and evening students are most likely subjected to different treatment. The only group to demonstrate differences was the program and non-program student group. Program students expressed less satisfaction with grading and testing, course content, and homework. This seems sensible since those students who plan to continue their education may rely heavily on scholarship and/or grade point average to attain their goals. Non-program students may be less concerned with those components.

2. Differences do exist between and among groups of nontraditional students concerning their satisfaction with institutional practices. Evening students are less satisfied than day students with several institutional procedures, including bookstore hours. It was suggested in the research that evening students may receive different treatment and be at a disadvantage concerning availability of certain college services. Day students were found to be less satisfied with adequate study areas and availability of child care. Demographic data indicate that more fulltime students attend during the day hours, and these areas appear more relevant to fulltime students.

Program students are less satisfied than non-program students with convenient class times, adequate study areas, availability of typewriters and computers, availability of child care, and parking facilities. It was suggested in the literature, however, that the non-program student or student from the corporate sector, who may be taking only one class

with no intention of a degree, may feel more dissatisfaction with the collegiate environment. This is not an indication from the study.

Younger adults are less satisfied than older adults with the academic calendar, fee requirements, bookstore hours, and parking facilities. This finding is consistent with the obvious age stages. The younger adults are more likely to have school-aged children, financial burdens, and more stringent time constraints. Demographic data also indicate that more of the younger adults are fulltime students compared to the older adults.

3. The total population of nontraditional students attend college for a variety of reasons. Slightly more than half of the nontraditional students are attending college primarily for purposes of completing the two-year degree. This certainly agrees with the theory that a generous proportion of the nontraditional population attends college for reasons other than degree attainment.

Results concerning job skills acquisition and job upgrading are also consistent with the literature review. More than 60 percent of all nontraditional students are enrolled in college to upgrade job skills. This implies that these students are currently or have been employed and have immediate needs to satisfy.

Also expected was the finding that 57 percent of the nontraditional students are attending for purposes of acquiring job skills. Since 64 percent of the program

students indicated this was a major reason for attending college, it is likely that students answered this question with a long-term goal in mind. "Acquiring job skills" may have been interpreted to mean learning a new skill by taking only one or two classes, or to mean attaining a degree which will guarantee new job skills and an employable future.

Fewer than 10 percent of the nontraditional students claim to be attending for purposes of certification, social involvement, alleviating boredom, or at employer's request. The implication that students are not attending due to employer's request was rather surprising. The partnerships between colleges and business and industry are flourishing. Literature supports the trend that a large proportion of the nontraditional students are attending school for this reason. This is indubitably an area worth investigating.

4. There are some differences between groups of nontraditional students in their reasons for attending college. The two areas where day and evening students noticeably differ are job skills acquisition and job upgrading. Nearly 20 percent more of the evening students attend for the major reason of upgrading job skills, and nearly 20 percent more of the day students attend in order to acquire job skills.

Program and non-program students differ primarily in reasons concerning degree attainment, job seeking skills, and self-improvement. It is obvious that program students, by definition, would be attending for reasons of degree,

certification, or transfer. The interesting finding is that 19 percent of the students who indicated they were non-program status claim to be attending for the purpose of a two-year degree. The most apparent explanation is that there are students currently attending who plan to pursue a degree but who have not officially declared this and, therefore, assumed they should be classified as non-program status for purposes of this survey. Consistent with the other data, over 20 percent more of the program students than non-program students claim to be attending because they want to acquire job skills. Nearly one-half of the non-program students compared to less than 20 percent of the program students cited self-improvement as a major reason for attending college.

The two areas where younger and older adults most noticeably differ in reasons for attending college involve transfer purposes and self-improvement. Approximately twice as many younger adults are planning to transfer to a four-year institution, and nearly 20 percent more of the older adults claim to be attending college for self-improvement. These results are not surprising. According to research, adults 45 years and over have more likely reached a passage or stage in their life cycle where it is time for reflection and self-depiction.

5. The total population of nontraditional students select this community college for a variety of reasons. Consistent with the purpose and mission statement for the community college, over 70 percent of the nontraditional

students select the community college because of its convenient location and course offerings. The unexpected finding was that only 36 percent of the nontraditional students cited the low cost as a reason for selecting this college.

Less than 10 percent of the nontraditional students claim to attend the community college because of the advice of other people who have attended, to be with friends, and at the employer's request. These proportions are lower than expected. According to research, word-of-mouth is a major recruiting tool for community colleges.

6. There are very few differences between groups of nontraditional students in their reasons for selecting this community college. The program and non-program students exhibited the most noticeable differences. It is also plausible that program students who are planning to seek degrees and continue their education would feel that the convenient location, curriculum of choice, reputation of the school, and the low cost would be of key importance and more important than to those students not interested in seeking degrees.

Eleven percent more of the evening students than day students claim that flexibility of class times is a reason for attending the community college. It is important for the community college to continue to recognize that evening students are counting on the institution to accommodate these needs.

7. Nontraditional students are satisfied with academic and instructional practices and institutional procedures at the community college. Satisfaction levels are high for all groups studied. Out of 33 variables concerning 11 academic and instructional practices and 22 institutional practices, there are only five with which all groups consistently ranked lower than 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. These include the physical comfort of the classrooms, availability of courses at convenient times, parking facilities, availability of financial aid information, availability of counselors, and child care facilities.

8. There are no clear-cut differences between or among sectors of nontraditional students. Significant differences between groups are valuable insights for pursuing further investigations. They are not, however, indicative of hard and fast distinctions.

Most findings are consistent with the literature and the community colleges' objectives. Diversity of students does exist. However, the community college is not catering to only two populations, the traditional college-aged students and the nontraditional students. It is responsible for meeting the needs of various groups of students who differ in their reasons for attending the community college and who differ in their perceptions about the institution's procedures.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been categorized into three sections: (a) further investigation of those survey items which resulted in a mean of 2.0 to 2.9 on a 4.0 scale; (b) further investigation of areas where findings are not consistent with other research; and (c) recommendations of support and reinforcement.

Further Investigation of Survey Findings

1. Although the students' satisfaction levels were not remarkably low for physical comfort of the classrooms, it is recommended that further investigation be conducted. It is unlikely that changes can even be addressed at this point because there is no clue as to the precise nature of the complaints. Ergonomics is a key issue in business and industry and is becoming more pertinent to education. Health and "wellness" are encouraged throughout the college community; and the reality of nearly smoke-free campuses is imminent. It seems realistic to include physical comfort of the classrooms--chairs, lighting, ventilation, and work areas --as an equally important target of evaluation.

Parking facilities can be considered another form of ergonomics. Forty percent of the nontraditional students claimed they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the parking facilities (see Appendix E). The parking lots at this college have been renovated and are in excellent shape. The problem may be that students are uninformed about

alternative parking. It is recommended, therefore, that action be taken to find out if students are aware of the alternative parking option, and if so, why they are not using it. This issue may also go hand in hand with prime-time class scheduling. The parking problem occurs at peak times only. Unfortunately, students cannot find a place to park, become frustrated, and miss class. A student may even drop out. It is recommended that school officials make a concerted effort to encourage car pooling.

2. Availability of child care facilities was expressed as a concern by some students. Although this was not a prime area of dissatisfaction, it may be a concept worth investigating. This concept is growing in the United States and is certainly consistent with the community services philosophy. It should be carefully studied to discern if such facilities are warranted at the community college. Demographic data revealed that 61 percent of the nontraditional students participating in this study were women. There has been an emphasis in the literature upon the importance of meeting the needs of the woman as a re-entry student. Any attempt to make it easier for women who are single parents or displaced homemakers is certainly in the realm of the community college philosophy. Availability of childcare facilities would be a start.

Further Investigation of Areas Not Consistent With Previous Research

3. Data confirmed that many evening students are attending college to upgrade skills. Very few students claimed to be pursuing education at the community college because employers requested them to do so. As pointed out by James O. Tatro (1986) in Chapter II of this dissertation, it is the responsibility of an institution to know where certain students are. Where are those students from the corporate sector? It would seem beneficial to the recruiting process of the community college that these students be located. Find out who the employers are and focus recruiting efforts in their direction. Tatro emphasized that when an institution has recruited an employed student, it has also recruited potential access to the respective student's employer, which in turn may provide access to other corporate sector students.

4. The data indicated that few students are attending the community college due to advice of some other person who attends. Why is this the case? Word-of-mouth promotion has been paraded as a popular source of recruiting with community colleges. Perhaps the participants in this survey indicated this was not a reason because other reasons took precedence. This is worth investigation.

5. Only 36 percent of the nontraditional students claim to be attending the community college because of its low cost. The cost factor has been revealed as one of the community college's most valuable recruiting tools. Financial aid may

play a role in this finding. Further investigation appears warranted.

Areas of Support and Reinforcement

6. Community college efforts should continue to focus on the nontraditional students. There should be a concerted effort to promote the community college's attractive attributes of low cost, convenient location, varied curricula, and reputation to these students as well as to traditional-age students. Too often, nontraditional students are assumed to be attending college for purposes of enrichment or leisure--not for purposes of degrees or transfer purposes. It was confirmed in this study that 31 percent of the nontraditional students are attending with plans to transfer to a four-year school, 62 percent are attending to upgrade skills, and 28 percent are attending for purposes of self-improvement.

7. Both fulltime and adjunct faculty should be supported in their ability to teach to a diverse nontraditional student population. Nontraditional students feel satisfied with academic and instructional strategies. Very few differences concerning satisfaction with academics and instruction were indicated between the different groups. It is advised that faculty continue to evaluate their methods of deciphering what their students' needs are. Data indicate that nontraditional students attend for many different reasons. It is highly likely that an instructor may have a homogeneous group of

students in one class and a very diverse composite in another; ie., enrichment seekers and job upgraders.

Suggestions for Related Research

This research study examined three sets of nontraditional students who were established in the literature reviews and theory as student groups with conceivable differences. It may be interesting to examine other groups and questions on the same bases. Such examinations may include:

1. Are there differences between women who are career advancers and displaced homemakers? The woman as a re-entry student has been an extensive and relevant topic of study.

2. Are there differences between first-semester students, who have never experienced post-secondary education, and experienced students? The literature review (Chapter II of this dissertation) alluded to articles by John Claus (1986), who discussed the importance of first-semester success at the community college for the adult learner.

3. Are there differences between fulltime students and parttime students? Demographic data support the concept that much of the community college population consists of parttime students.

4. Are there differences between smaller breakdowns of age groups--for example, 25-34, 35-44, 45-55, and 56 and over? Such a breakdown may confirm more significant findings due to life cycle theories and trigger events.

5. Are their differences between or among ethnic groups on campus? Community colleges with blended ethnic groups may find this question worth examining.

6. Are there differences in preferred learning styles? Controversy exists among adult educators concerning the assumption that adult learners are self-directed learners? Nontraditional students at a community college most likely have preferences concerning both teaching methods and learning styles. What are they? How do they differ among groups?

7. This study dealt with students currently attending the college. It would seem beneficial to survey those students who dropped out during the first month of the semester.

8. Perhaps an examination of differences between the traditional and nontraditional students at the community college of the 90s would prove worthwhile.

This study was conducted at a Michigan community college. It would be worthwhile to regard the results of the same study from other community colleges in Michigan.

Final Thoughts

Community colleges are in the business of educating and training. Demands for them are increasing with changing technologies and philosophies. A direct result of these changes is a diverse student population. Well over half of these student populations are comprised of nontraditional students, who deserve attention and assessment of needs.

Community colleges have all the resources to meet this heterogeneous group of students. They must, however, compete with other institutions of learning and prove they have a marketable product.

Recruitment has become a necessary tool in community college planning; it is an essential part of the marketing process. Knowing why the nontraditional students are attending college and specifically why they have chosen a particular community college is the first step in planning the recruiting strategies.

Retention is perhaps a more challenging task than recruitment. Assessing current students' needs and perceptions of the institution's components are vital. The key word is current, which implies that these needs and perceptions may change from year to year. The old adage, "You can't please everyone all of the time" is certainly true. However, it is consistent with community college philosophy to attempt to assess and meet the needs of all students.

It was concluded in this study that few differences exist within the nontraditional population concerning satisfaction levels with academics and instruction. The point should, therefore, be accepted that the community college's faculty and staff are attuned to the diverse population and have been successful in satisfying and retaining these students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES REQUESTING
ENROLLMENT NUMBERS OF NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

January 28, 1991

Admissions Director:

I am writing you in request for some information which is vital to me in completing a dissertation project concerning characteristics and satisfaction levels of nontraditional students at Muskegon Community College. I am currently a full-time instructor in the Business Department at Muskegon Community College. Mr. John Bamfield, director of admissions at Muskegon Community College has kindly lent me the 1989-90 Michigan Postsecondary Admissions & Financial Assistance Handbook, to use in accessing the names of admissions directors and respective addresses of all community colleges in Michigan.

As a preface to my study, I need to know the current total enrollment (this would be a headcount of all students this semester or term) AND the total number of students who are age 25 and over. If your breakdown of students begins with age 24 or 26 or something close to 25, that will suffice; but please indicate this is the case. The point is to determine the approximate percentage of nontraditional students in each community college. My definition of "nontraditional" is age 25 and over.

If you would please supply responses to the two enclosed questions and mail to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope, I would be so grateful.

I would be more than happy to send you a copy of my questionnaire and results of my study. If you desire a copy, please indicate so on the enclosed sheet and supply your name and address. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Susan J. Meeuwenberg
Ph.D. Candidate
Muskegon Community College Instructor

enclosure

NONTRADITIONAL POPULATION--1991

Name of College (optional) _____

Total Number of Students _____

Total Number of Students
Age 25 and Over _____

Yes, I would like a copy of your questionnaire and results of
your study. _____

Name and address _____

PLEASE RETURN BY WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, IF POSSIBLE. THANK
YOU.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this survey. This should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please answer EVERY question.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Marital Status: Single _____
Married _____
Divorced _____
Separated _____
Widowed _____
3. Which of the following describes your current enrollment status at Muskegon Community College?
- I am enrolled in 1 or 2 classes _____
I am enrolled in 3 or more classes _____
4. Age Group: 25-44 _____
45 or over _____
5. This semester, which of the following better describes the times you are in classes? MARK ONLY ONE.
- Between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. _____
Between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. _____
6. Which of the following describes your status at Muskegon Community College this semester?
- Enrolled in a degree program, certificate program, and/or transfer program _____
- NOT enrolled in any degree program, certificate program, or transfer program at this time

Please indicate, by placing an "x" in the appropriate blank, whether each of the following was a MAJOR REASON, a MINOR REASON, or NOT A REASON you chose to go to college. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 7. To complete a two-year degree | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. To complete one-year certification | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. To transfer to a four-year college/university | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. To acquire skills that will help me get a job | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. To upgrade skills to obtain a better job or advance in my present job | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. At employer's request | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. To meet new people--simply for social involvement | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. To alleviate boredom | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 15. To take a class or two for self-improvement | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please indicate, by placing an "x" in the appropriate blank, whether each of the following was a MAJOR REASON, a MINOR REASON, or NOT A REASON you chose THIS college, Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 16. Low cost | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Convenient location | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. Offers the course(s) I need | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Flexible times of classes | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Reputation of school | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 21. Advice of someone else who attends | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 22. To be with friends | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 23. Employer's request | _____ | _____ | _____ |

2. ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The following eleven (11) characteristics concern instruction in your class(es) this semester. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by placing an "x" under the level that best corresponds to your overall feelings about the class(es) you are currently taking at Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|----------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 24. Knowledge of course content by instructors | — | — | — | — | — |
| 25. Method of teaching used by instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 26. Academic challenge offered by instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 27. Out-of-class availability of instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 28. Method of testing and grading of instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 29. Relevance of course content to my needs | — | — | — | — | — |
| 30. <u>Enthusiasm</u> for teaching by instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 31. <u>Preparation</u> for teaching of class by instructor(s) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 32. Relevance of homework assigned | — | — | — | — | — |
| 33. Physical comfort of classroom environment (desks, chairs lighting, etc.) | — | — | — | — | — |
| 34. Use of classroom visual aids (chalkboard, computer monitors, etc.) | — | — | — | — | — |

3. INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

For the following twenty-two (22) institutional characteristics, please indicate your level of satisfaction by placing an "x" under the level that best describes your overall feelings about Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|----------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 35. Registration procedures | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 36. Availability of courses at times convenient for me | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 37. Variety of classes offered | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 38. Academic calendar for this college (semesters, vacation, etc.) | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 39. Billing procedures | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 40. Fee requirements for courses | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 41. Attitude of NON-TEACHING personnel toward students | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 42. Telephone treatment by NON-TEACHING personnel toward students | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 43. Information available about courses and programs | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 44. Usefulness of the semester/term "Schedule of Courses" | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 45. Usefulness of college catalog | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 46. Adequate study areas | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 47. Typewriters and computers available for me to use | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 48. Availability of counselors | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 49. Availability of child care facilities | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|----------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 50. Bookstore hours | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 51. Cost of tuition | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 52. Parking facilities | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 53. Availability of financial aid information BEFORE enrolling | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 54. Accuracy of college information BEFORE enrolling | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 55. Assistance provided by the college staff when you entered this college | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 56. College's overall concern for for me as an individual | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

4. GENERAL QUESTIONS

57. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?

Definitely Yes _____
 Probably Yes _____
 Uncertain _____
 Probably No _____
 Definitely No _____

58. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

Excellent _____
 Good _____
 Average _____
 Below Average _____
 Very Inadequate _____

END OF SURVEY--THANK YOU.
 PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR

If there are any questions, please contact Sue Meeuwenberg at 777-0390, or leave a message with the Business Department Secretary, 777-0378.

APPENDIX C
COVER LETTER TO STUDENTS

February 18, 1991

Dear Student:

As an instructor at Muskegon Community College and a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University, I am involved in a research project which examines the satisfaction levels of nontraditional students here at the college. Please take 10 minutes and complete the enclosed questionnaire.

The results of this study will hopefully unveil any immediate needs expressed by the students and will enable Muskegon Community College to address those needs. YOUR response is absolutely vital in accurately assessing the needs of all students.

- THIS STUDY IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

- UPON COMPLETION OF THE STUDY, THE LIST OF RESPONDENTS WILL BE DESTROYED

Return the questionnaire to your instructor immediately. If for some reason you cannot return it to your instructor during class, there is a "dropbox" at the switchboard for return of these questionnaires. You may detach this letter from the survey before returning it so that you are not identified.

It is so very important to the accuracy of the study that you return the surveys. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. Thank you very much for your participation.

Sincerely,

Thank you for your support,

Susan J. Meeuwenberg
Instructor and Ph.D.
Candidate, Michigan
State University

Dr. Frank Marczak
Dean of Faculty and Vice
President, Muskegon
Community College

attachment

Please indicate, by placing an "x" in the appropriate blank, whether each of the following was a MAJOR REASON, a MINOR REASON, or NOT A REASON you chose to go to college. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 7. To complete a two-year degree | <u>53.7%</u> | <u>16.1%</u> | <u>30.3%</u> |
| 8. To complete one-year certification | <u>7.3%</u> | <u>8.9%</u> | <u>83.8%</u> |
| 9. To transfer to a four-year college/university | <u>30.9%</u> | <u>17.3%</u> | <u>51.8%</u> |
| 10. To acquire skills that will help me get a job | <u>56.8%</u> | <u>17.6%</u> | <u>25.6%</u> |
| 11. To upgrade skills to obtain a better job or advance in my present job | <u>61.6%</u> | <u>13.7%</u> | <u>24.7%</u> |
| 12. At employer's request | <u>5.2%</u> | <u>8.9%</u> | <u>85.9%</u> |
| 13. To meet new people--simply for social involvement | <u>2.0%</u> | <u>16.9%</u> | <u>81.1%</u> |
| 14. To alleviate boredom | <u>3.1%</u> | <u>13.5%</u> | <u>83.4%</u> |
| 15. To take a class or two for self-improvement | <u>28.1%</u> | <u>33.6%</u> | <u>38.3%</u> |

Please indicate, by placing an "x" in the appropriate blank, whether each of the following was a MAJOR REASON, a MINOR REASON, or NOT A REASON you chose THIS college, Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 16. Low cost | <u>36.4%</u> | <u>26.9%</u> | <u>36.8%</u> |
| 17. Convenient location | <u>73.8%</u> | <u>18.0%</u> | <u>8.2%</u> |
| 18. Offers the course(s) I need | <u>74.2%</u> | <u>20.0%</u> | <u>5.8%</u> |
| 19. Flexible times of classes | <u>58.6%</u> | <u>27.0%</u> | <u>14.4%</u> |
| 20. Reputation of school | <u>29.3%</u> | <u>37.4%</u> | <u>33.3%</u> |
| 21. Advice of someone else who attends | <u>10.1%</u> | <u>15.0%</u> | <u>74.8%</u> |
| 22. To be with friends | <u>2.4%</u> | <u>5.5%</u> | <u>92.1%</u> |
| 23. Employer's request | <u>4.5%</u> | <u>6.5%</u> | <u>89.0%</u> |

2. ACADEMIC/INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The following eleven (11) characteristics concern instruction in your class(es) this semester. Please indicate your level of satisfaction by placing an "x" under the level that best corresponds to your overall feelings about the class(es) you are currently taking at Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 24. Knowledge of course content by instructors | <u>67.6</u> | <u>31.0</u> | <u>1.2</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u> </u> |
| 25. Method of teaching used by instructor(s) | <u>44.5</u> | <u>49.8</u> | <u>4.2</u> | <u>1.1</u> | <u>0.4</u> |
| 26. Academic challenge offered by instructor(s) | <u>44.5</u> | <u>51.1</u> | <u>2.6</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u>1.5</u> |
| 27. Out-of-class availability of instructor(s) | <u>33.3</u> | <u>49.1</u> | <u>3.7</u> | <u>1.3</u> | <u>12.6</u> |
| 28. Method of testing and grading of instructor(s) | <u>34.9</u> | <u>57.5</u> | <u>5.0</u> | <u>0.5</u> | <u>2.0</u> |
| 29. Relevance of course content to my needs | <u>41.8</u> | <u>51.3</u> | <u>5.1</u> | <u>0.8</u> | <u>1.1</u> |
| 30. <u>Enthusiasm</u> for teaching by instructor(s) | <u>62.0</u> | <u>35.3</u> | <u>2.1</u> | <u> </u> | <u>0.7</u> |
| 31. <u>Preparation</u> for teaching of class by instructor(s) | <u>57.6</u> | <u>39.1</u> | <u>2.4</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u>0.7</u> |
| 32. Relevance of homework assigned | <u>36.6</u> | <u>56.3</u> | <u>4.1</u> | <u>0.8</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| 33. Physical comfort of classroom environment (desks, chairs lighting, etc.) | <u>20.9</u> | <u>58.9</u> | <u>14.5</u> | <u>4.2</u> | <u>1.4</u> |
| 34. Use of classroom visual aids (chalkboard, computer monitors, etc.) | <u>31.3</u> | <u>61.1</u> | <u>4.2</u> | <u>0.4</u> | <u>3.0</u> |

3. INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

For the following twenty-two (22) institutional characteristics, please indicate your level of satisfaction by placing an "x" under the level that best describes your overall feelings about Muskegon Community College. Give only ONE answer for each item.

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 35. Registration procedures | <u>32.3</u> | <u>60.0</u> | <u>5.8</u> | <u>0.8</u> | <u>1.1</u> |
| 36. Availability of courses at times convenient for me | <u>21.3</u> | <u>59.2</u> | <u>16.4</u> | <u>2.2</u> | <u>0.9</u> |
| 37. Variety of classes offered | <u>23.8</u> | <u>64.0</u> | <u>9.0</u> | <u>0.9</u> | <u>2.3</u> |
| 38. Academic calendar for this college (semesters, vacation, etc.) | <u>21.2</u> | <u>70.2</u> | <u>4.5</u> | <u>0.5</u> | <u>3.6</u> |
| 39. Billing procedures | <u>23.7</u> | <u>66.5</u> | <u>3.3</u> | <u>0.1</u> | <u>6.4</u> |
| 40. Fee requirements for courses | <u>18.4</u> | <u>70.3</u> | <u>5.4</u> | <u>0.5</u> | <u>5.3</u> |
| 41. Attitude of NON-TEACHING personnel toward students | <u>16.7</u> | <u>61.4</u> | <u>7.8</u> | <u>1.9</u> | <u>12.2</u> |
| 42. Telephone treatment by NON- TEACHING personnel toward students | <u>18.3</u> | <u>62.4</u> | <u>5.3</u> | <u>1.6</u> | <u>12.4</u> |
| 43. Information available about courses and programs | <u>21.8</u> | <u>67.2</u> | <u>8.1</u> | <u>1.2</u> | <u>1.7</u> |
| 44. Usefulness of the semester/term "Schedule of Courses" | <u>25.8</u> | <u>67.3</u> | <u>2.9</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u>3.7</u> |
| 45. Usefulness of college catalog | <u>22.4</u> | <u>60.8</u> | <u>6.6</u> | <u>1.2</u> | <u>9.0</u> |
| 46. Adequate study areas | <u>21.1</u> | <u>57.4</u> | <u>6.0</u> | <u>1.3</u> | <u>14.2</u> |
| 47. Typewriters and computers available for me to use | <u>19.7</u> | <u>38.7</u> | <u>5.6</u> | <u>0.7</u> | <u>35.4</u> |
| 48. Availability of counselors | <u>13.3</u> | <u>55.0</u> | <u>10.5</u> | <u>1.9</u> | <u>19.4</u> |
| 49. Availability of child care facilities | <u>1.1</u> | <u>11.0</u> | <u>4.3</u> | <u>7.0</u> | <u>76.6</u> |

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Does Not Apply |
|--|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 50. Bookstore hours | <u>19.2</u> | <u>66.0</u> | <u>8.7</u> | <u>1.2</u> | <u>4.9</u> |
| 51. Cost of tuition | <u>18.8</u> | <u>69.1</u> | <u>5.7</u> | <u>0.3</u> | <u>6.1</u> |
| 52. Parking facilities | <u>8.0</u> | <u>53.3</u> | <u>24.3</u> | <u>10.6</u> | <u>3.9</u> |
| 53. Availability of financial aid information BEFORE enrolling | <u>9.7</u> | <u>36.3</u> | <u>9.7</u> | <u>0.9</u> | <u>43.3</u> |
| 54. Accuracy of college information BEFORE enrolling | <u>14.5</u> | <u>67.1</u> | <u>6.3</u> | <u>1.9</u> | <u>10.3</u> |
| 55. Assistance provided by the college staff when you entered this college | <u>21.1</u> | <u>59.9</u> | <u>6.7</u> | <u>10.8</u> | <u>10.8</u> |
| 56. College's overall concern for for me as an individual | <u>15.9</u> | <u>69.8</u> | <u>7.1</u> | <u>1.3</u> | <u>5.9</u> |

4. GENERAL QUESTIONS

57. If you could start college over, would you choose to attend this college?

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Definitely Yes | <u>42.6</u> |
| Probably Yes | <u>39.6</u> |
| Uncertain | <u>10.9</u> |
| Probably No | <u>5.7</u> |
| Definitely No | <u>1.2</u> |

58. What is your overall impression of the quality of education at this college?

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Excellent | <u>41.4</u> |
| Good | <u>49.5</u> |
| Average | <u>8.9</u> |
| Below Average | <u>0.1</u> |
| Very Inadequate | <u> </u> |

END OF SURVEY--THANK YOU.
PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR

If there are any questions, please contact Sue Meeuwenberg at 777-0390, or leave a message with the Business Department Secretary, 777-0378.

APPENDIX D

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES FOR ALL
58 QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

APPENDIX E

**TABLES E.1 THROUGH E.6--NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS' REASONS FOR
ATTENDING COLLEGE AND REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS COLLEGE**

TABLE E.1 COMPARISON OF DAY STUDENTS AND EVENING STUDENTS
REGARDING THE REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE

| Importance | Day Students | | Evening Students | | Total | |
|---|-----------------|----|---------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Complete a Two-Year Degree | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 181 | 59 | 223 | 50 | 404 | 54 |
| Minor Reason | 42 | 14 | 79 | 18 | 121 | 16 |
| Not a Reason | 83 | 27 | 145 | 32 | 228 | 30 |
| To Complete a Certificate Program | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 34 | 11 | 20 | 4 | 54 | 7 |
| Minor Reason | 24 | 8 | 42 | 10 | 66 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 242 | 81 | 380 | 86 | 622 | 84 |
| To Transfer to a Four-Year School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 96 | 32 | 135 | 30 | 231 | 31 |
| Minor Reason | 50 | 17 | 79 | 18 | 129 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 153 | 51 | 234 | 52 | 387 | 52 |
| To Acquire Skills to Get a Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 204 | 67 | 222 | 50 | 426 | 57 |
| Minor Reason | 45 | 15 | 87 | 20 | 132 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 56 | 18 | 136 | 31 | 192 | 25 |
| To Upgrade Skills For a Better Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 156 | 51 | 306 | 70 | 462 | 62 |
| Minor Reason | 34 | 11 | 69 | 15 | 103 | 14 |
| Not a Reason | 114 | 38 | 71 | 15 | 185 | 24 |
| At Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 12 | 4 | 27 | 6 | 39 | 5 |
| Minor Reason | 15 | 5 | 51 | 12 | 66 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 274 | 91 | 364 | 82 | 638 | 86 |
| To Meet New People--Social Involvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 9 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 15 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 46 | 15 | 80 | 18 | 126 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 247 | 82 | 358 | 81 | 605 | 81 |

TABLE E.1 CONTINUED

| Importance | Day Students | | Evening Students | | Total | |
|----------------------|--------------|----|------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Alleviate Boredom | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 10 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 23 | 3 |
| Minor Reason | 50 | 17 | 51 | 11 | 101 | 14 |
| Not a Reason | 243 | 80 | 381 | 86 | 624 | 83 |
| For Self-Improvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 72 | 24 | 139 | 31 | 211 | 28 |
| Minor Reason | 92 | 30 | 160 | 36 | 252 | 34 |
| Not a Reason | 140 | 46 | 147 | 33 | 287 | 38 |

Non-responses are not included.

TABLE E.2. COMPARISON OF DAY STUDENTS AND EVENING STUDENTS
REGARDING THE REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS COLLEGE

| Importance | Day Students | | Evening Students | | Total | |
|---|--------------|----|------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| Low Cost | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 122 | 40 | 151 | 34 | 273 | 36 |
| Minor Reason | 72 | 23 | 131 | 29 | 202 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 111 | 37 | 165 | 37 | 276 | 37 |
| Convenient Location | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 231 | 75 | 327 | 73 | 558 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 48 | 16 | 88 | 19 | 136 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 27 | 9 | 35 | 8 | 62 | 8 |
| Offers the Courses I Need | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 236 | 77 | 325 | 72 | 561 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 52 | 17 | 99 | 22 | 151 | 20 |
| Not a Reason | 19 | 6 | 25 | 6 | 44 | 6 |
| Flexible Times of Classes | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 161 | 52 | 282 | 63 | 443 | 58 |
| Minor Reason | 90 | 29 | 114 | 25 | 204 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 56 | 19 | 53 | 12 | 109 | 14 |
| Reputation of School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 99 | 32 | 121 | 27 | 220 | 29 |
| Minor Reason | 102 | 34 | 179 | 40 | 281 | 38 |
| Not a Reason | 103 | 34 | 147 | 33 | 250 | 33 |
| Advice of Someone Else Who Attends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 38 | 13 | 38 | 8 | 76 | 10 |
| Minor Reason | 43 | 14 | 70 | 16 | 113 | 15 |
| Not a Reason | 224 | 73 | 338 | 76 | 562 | 75 |
| To Be With Friends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 9 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 18 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 18 | 6 | 23 | 5 | 41 | 6 |
| Not a Reason | 279 | 91 | 413 | 93 | 692 | 92 |

TABLE E.2 CONTINUED

| Importance | Day Students | | Evening Students | | Total | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|----|---------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 11 | 4 | 23 | 5 | 34 | 4 |
| Minor Reason | 14 | 4 | 35 | 8 | 49 | 7 |
| Not a Reason | 282 | 92 | 387 | 87 | 669 | 89 |

Non-responses are not included.

TABLE E.3. COMPARISON OF PROGRAM STUDENTS AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS REGARDING THE REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE

| Importance | Program Students | | Non-Program Students | | Total | |
|---|------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Obtain a Two-Year Degree | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 356 | 70 | 47 | 19 | 403 | 54 |
| Minor Reason | 68 | 13 | 53 | 22 | 121 | 16 |
| Not a Reason | 83 | 16 | 145 | 59 | 228 | 30 |
| To Obtain a Certificate | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 48 | 10 | 6 | 2 | 54 | 7 |
| Minor Reason | 41 | 8 | 24 | 10 | 65 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 410 | 82 | 212 | 88 | 622 | 84 |
| To Transfer to a Four-Year School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 196 | 39 | 35 | 14 | 231 | 31 |
| Minor Reason | 105 | 21 | 24 | 10 | 129 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 202 | 40 | 184 | 76 | 386 | 52 |
| To Acquire Skills to Get a Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 320 | 64 | 106 | 43 | 426 | 57 |
| Minor Reason | 86 | 17 | 46 | 19 | 132 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 97 | 19 | 94 | 38 | 191 | 25 |
| To Upgrade Skills For a Better Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 306 | 61 | 155 | 63 | 461 | 62 |
| Minor Reason | 58 | 14 | 35 | 14 | 93 | 13 |
| Not a Reason | 129 | 26 | 56 | 23 | 185 | 25 |
| At Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 23 | 5 | 16 | 7 | 39 | 5 |
| Minor Reason | 38 | 8 | 28 | 11 | 66 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 437 | 88 | 200 | 82 | 637 | 86 |
| To Meet New People--Social Involvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 9 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 15 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 78 | 16 | 48 | 20 | 126 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 415 | 83 | 189 | 78 | 604 | 81 |

TABLE E.3 CONTINUED

| Importance | Program Students | | Non-Program Students | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Alleviate Boredom | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 15 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 23 | 3 |
| Minor Reason | 62 | 12 | 39 | 16 | 101 | 14 |
| Not a Reason | 426 | 85 | 197 | 81 | 623 | 83 |
| For Self-Improvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 91 | 18 | 120 | 49 | 211 | 28 |
| Minor Reason | 169 | 34 | 82 | 33 | 251 | 34 |
| Not a Reason | 242 | 48 | 45 | 18 | 287 | 38 |

Non-responses are not included.

TABLE E.4. COMPARISON OF PROGRAM STUDENTS AND NON-PROGRAM STUDENTS REGARDING THE REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS COLLEGE

| Importance | Program Students | | Non-Program Students | | Total | |
|---|------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------|----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Low Cost | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 214 | 43 | 59 | 24 | 273 | 36 |
| Minor Reason | 133 | 26 | 69 | 28 | 202 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 158 | 31 | 117 | 48 | 275 | 37 |
| Convenient Location | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 395 | 78 | 163 | 66 | 558 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 82 | 16 | 53 | 22 | 135 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 32 | 6 | 30 | 12 | 62 | 8 |
| Offers the Courses I Need | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 404 | 80 | 157 | 64 | 561 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 86 | 17 | 64 | 26 | 150 | 20 |
| Not a Reason | 18 | 4 | 26 | 11 | 44 | 6 |
| Flexible Times of Classes | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 306 | 60 | 137 | 55 | 443 | 59 |
| Minor Reason | 137 | 27 | 66 | 27 | 203 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 65 | 13 | 44 | 18 | 109 | 14 |
| Reputation of School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 161 | 32 | 59 | 24 | 220 | 29 |
| Minor Reason | 202 | 40 | 78 | 32 | 280 | 37 |
| Not a Reason | 142 | 28 | 108 | 44 | 250 | 34 |
| Advice of Someone Else Who Attends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 54 | 11 | 22 | 9 | 76 | 10 |
| Minor Reason | 75 | 15 | 38 | 16 | 113 | 15 |
| Not a Reason | 376 | 74 | 185 | 76 | 561 | 75 |
| To Be With Friends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 10 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 18 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 23 | 5 | 18 | 7 | 41 | 5 |
| Not a Reason | 473 | 93 | 218 | 89 | 691 | 92 |

TABLE E.4 CONTINUED

| Importance | Program Students | | Non-Program Students | | Total | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------|----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 15 | 3 | 19 | 8 | 34 | 5 |
| Minor Reason | 27 | 5 | 22 | 9 | 49 | 7 |
| Not a Reason | 464 | 92 | 204 | 83 | 668 | 89 |

Non-responses are not included.

TABLE E.5. COMPARISON OF YOUNGER ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS REGARDING THE REASONS FOR ATTENDING COLLEGE

| Importance | Younger Adults | | Older Adults | | Total | |
|---|----------------|----|--------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Complete a Two-Year Degree | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 353 | 55 | 47 | 45 | 400 | 53 |
| Minor Reason | 113 | 18 | 8 | 8 | 121 | 16 |
| Not a Reason | 177 | 27 | 50 | 48 | 227 | 30 |
| To Complete a Certificate Program | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 47 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 52 | 7 |
| Minor Reason | 57 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 66 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 529 | 84 | 90 | 87 | 619 | 84 |
| To Transfer to a Four-Year School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 212 | 33 | 18 | 17 | 230 | 31 |
| Minor Reason | 118 | 18 | 10 | 10 | 128 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 309 | 48 | 76 | 73 | 385 | 52 |
| To Acquire Skills to Get a Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 375 | 59 | 48 | 45 | 423 | 57 |
| Minor Reason | 119 | 19 | 12 | 11 | 131 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 145 | 23 | 46 | 43 | 191 | 26 |
| To Upgrade Skills For a Better Job | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 402 | 63 | 57 | 54 | 459 | 62 |
| Minor Reason | 84 | 13 | 18 | 17 | 102 | 14 |
| Not a Reason | 154 | 24 | 30 | 29 | 184 | 25 |
| At Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 35 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 38 | 5 |
| Minor Reason | 62 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 66 | 9 |
| Not a Reason | 537 | 85 | 97 | 93 | 634 | 86 |
| To Meet New People--Social Involvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 14 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 108 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 125 | 17 |
| Not a Reason | 516 | 81 | 86 | 83 | 602 | 81 |

TABLE E.5 CONTINUED

| Importance | Younger Adults | | Older Adults | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----|--------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| To Alleviate Boredom | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 18 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 22 | 3 |
| Minor Reason | 83 | 13 | 18 | 17 | 101 | 14 |
| Not a Reason | 537 | 84 | 83 | 79 | 620 | 83 |
| For Self-Improvement | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 162 | 25 | 46 | 43 | 208 | 28 |
| Minor Reason | 225 | 35 | 27 | 25 | 252 | 34 |
| Not a Reason | 252 | 39 | 33 | 31 | 285 | 38 |

Non-responses are not included.

TABLE E.6. COMPARISON OF YOUNGER ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS REGARDING THE REASONS FOR SELECTING THIS COLLEGE

| Importance | Younger Adults | | Older Adults | | Total | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----|--------------|----|-------|----|
| | n | % | n | % | N | % |
| Low Cost | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 232 | 36 | 41 | 39 | 273 | 36 |
| Minor Reason | 180 | 28 | 19 | 18 | 199 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 228 | 36 | 46 | 43 | 274 | 37 |
| Convenient Location | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 482 | 75 | 72 | 69 | 554 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 113 | 17 | 22 | 21 | 135 | 18 |
| Not a Reason | 51 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 62 | 8 |
| Offers the Courses I Need | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 482 | 75 | 76 | 72 | 558 | 74 |
| Minor Reason | 131 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 150 | 20 |
| Not a Reason | 33 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 44 | 6 |
| Flexible Times of Classes | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 375 | 58 | 65 | 61 | 440 | 59 |
| Minor Reason | 177 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 203 | 27 |
| Not a Reason | 93 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 108 | 14 |
| Reputation of School | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 178 | 28 | 41 | 39 | 219 | 29 |
| Minor Reason | 250 | 39 | 28 | 27 | 278 | 37 |
| Not a Reason | 215 | 33 | 35 | 34 | 250 | 33 |
| Advice of Someone Else Who Attends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 66 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 76 | 10 |
| Minor Reason | 101 | 16 | 12 | 11 | 112 | 15 |
| Not a Reason | 475 | 74 | 83 | 79 | 558 | 75 |
| To Be With Friends | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 14 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 17 | 2 |
| Minor Reason | 38 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 41 | 5 |
| Not a Reason | 589 | 92 | 99 | 94 | 688 | 92 |

TABLE E.6 CONTINUED

| Importance | Younger Adults | | Older Adults | | Total | |
|--------------------|----------------|----|--------------|----|----------|----|
| | <u>n</u> | % | <u>n</u> | % | <u>N</u> | % |
| Employer's Request | | | | | | |
| Major Reason | 31 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 33 | 5 |
| Minor Reason | 43 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 48 | 7 |
| Not a Reason | 568 | 88 | 98 | 93 | 666 | 89 |

Non-responses are not included.

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